

Object Marking in Uzbek

Glynis MacMillan

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

1 Introduction

The topic of this paper is the syntax of marked objects in Uzbek.¹ In Uzbek, these are marked with the morpheme *-ni*, as seen in sentence (1) below. The object marker *-ni* initially appears to be optional when the object is adjacent to the verb. That is, sentences (1) and (2) are equally grammatical. However, I will argue that use of *-ni* is not optional, but rather is predictable from the meaning and position of the object. In (1), where the object bears *-ni*, it is definite, while in (2) the object does not bear *-ni* and is indefinite.

(1) qɨz qoʃiq-ni sətib ɔldı
girl spoon-NI buy.PAST
‘The girl bought the spoon.’

(2) qɨz qoʃiq sətib ɔldı
girl spoon-∅ buy.PAST
‘The girl bought a spoon.’

When the object is separated from the verb by an adverb or an indirect object, *-ni* is obligatory, as shown in (3-4).

(3) qɨz qoʃiq-ni tezda sətib ɔldı
girl spoon-NI quickly buy.PAST
‘The girl quickly bought the spoon.’

(4) *qɨz qoʃiq tezda sətib ɔldı
girl spoon-∅ quickly buy.past

The pattern in Uzbek unsurprisingly resembles that of Turkish (Enç, 1991), a closely related language.

There is disagreement in the literature as to the syntactic analysis of marked objects. One theory is that the marked object is moved from its base

¹I owe a great deal of thanks to Mekhrison ‘Mika’ Abdullaeva, the native speaker who provided the data presented in this paper.

position to a functional projection above vP but below IP (Diesing, 1992). Another view is that the marked object case is simply spelled out or not spelled out for some reason related to its meaning. In this paper, I argue for the movement theory, using adverbs as a diagnostic of the edge of the VP (Diesing, 1992). I will argue against the linear adjacency account based on sentences with coordinated objects. I will discuss possible questions posed by the data on embedded clauses.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 is an introduction to marked objects, illustrated with data from Persian and Turkish. Section 3 will be a description of the behavior of *-ni* in Uzbek and a broad description of its semantics. This data from Uzbek will also be a contribution from a previously understudied language on marked objects and object shift. Section 4 will discuss the attachment of *-ni* to NPs as opposed to Ns, using data from conjoined objects. In section 5 I will use coordinated phrases as evidence against the adjacency approach and adverb placement as evidence for movement. Section 6 will discuss embedded clauses bearing the object marker and the possible theoretical implications of this phenomena.

2 Marked Objects

In the literature, objects behaving like those in Uzbek are known as marked objects (Aissen, 2003). In this section, I will review data from languages known to have marked objects: Persian and Turkish.

2.1 Persian

Persian is an example of a language with a marked object. In Persian, the accusative case morpheme also marks definiteness of an object (Givón, 1978).

- (5) mard-e dar-o boz-kart
 man-NOM door-ACC open-did
 ‘The man opened **the** door. (Givón, 1978)
- (6) mard-e ve-dar boz-kart
 man-NOM a-door open-did
 ‘The man opened **a** door. (Givón, 1978)

In (5) the object bears the accusative case and has a definite reading, while in (6) the object does not bear accusative case and the object is indefinite.

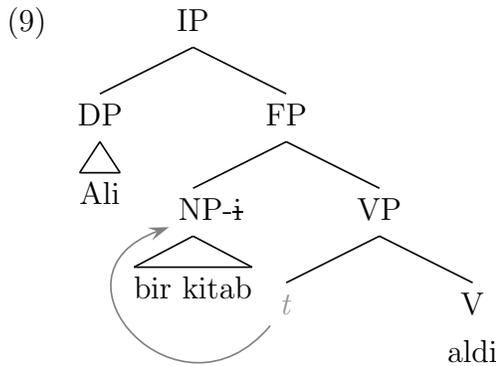
2.2 Turkish

Enç (1991) and Diesing (1992) analyze the morpheme *-yi/i* in Turkish as accusative case. It may or may not be present on the object. The morpheme’s

presence marks a corresponding semantic definiteness (or perhaps specificity) of the NP (Diesing, 1992).

- (7) Ali bir kitab-ı aldı.
 Ali one book-ACC bought
 ‘A book is such that Ali bought it.’ (Enç, 1991)
- (8) Ali bir kitap aldı.
 Ali one book bought
 ‘Ali bought some book or other.’ (Enç, 1991)

Diesing analyzes the syntax of marked objects in Turkish as involving object shift. Object shift is the movement of an object out of the VP to the specifier of a higher functional projection. Diesing cites Wyngærd (1989) and Mahajan (1990) in support of the hypothesis that definite objects move out of the VP to the specifier of a functional head between IP and vP. A simplified tree displaying this movement is shown below.²



- (10) Ali bir kitab-ı aldı.
 Ali one book-ACC bought
 ‘A book is such that Ali bought it.’ (Enç, 1991)

Thus in Turkish the presence of morphological case marking on an object is an indication of object shift (movement of an object to a position outside of the VP).

3 Uzbek

The basic word order of Uzbek is SOV, and the verbal arguments are typically arranged agent, goal, theme. The Uzbek object marker *-ni* appears optionally

²Because it is not essential to the discussion of object shift, vP is not shown in the tree in (9). The subject *Ali* is generated at [SPEC,vP] and moves to [SPEC,IP] to satisfy the EPP, but this movement is not shown in the tree. This will also be true of further trees shown in this paper.

on objects when they are verb-adjacent.

- (11) bola haiβon-ni kørđi
child animal-NI see.PAST
'The child saw the animal.'
- (12) bola haiβon kørđi
child animal see.PAST
'The child saw an animal'

However, when the objects are removed from the verb by an adverb or adverb phrase, the object marker *-ni* is obligatory.

- (13) bola haiβon-ni al:a qatʃon kørđi
child animal-NI already see.PAST
'The child already saw the animal.'
- (14) *bola haiβon al:a qatʃon kørđi
child animal already see.PAST

The object marker morpheme can never occur on subjects, regardless of transitivity.

- (15) *qʃz-ni qofıq sətıb ɔldı
girl-NI spoon buy.PAST
- (16) *qʃz-ni uxladı
girl-NI sleep.PAST

The morpheme cannot appear on a noun that bears dative case, as shown below.

- (17) *qʃz aka-sı-ga-ni xat dʒøntadı
girl brother-POSS-DAT-NI letter sent.PAST
- (18) *qʃz aka-sı-ni-ga xat dʒønatdı
girl brother-POSS-NI-DAT letter sent.PAST

However, it can occur after other morphemes, such as the possessive marker.

- (19) qʃz aka-sı-ni kørđi
girl brother-3SG.POSS-NI see.PAST
'The girl saw her brother.'

It cannot appear before this marker, as in the sentence below.

- (20) *qʃz aka-ni-sı kørđi
girl brother-NI-3SG.POSS see.PAST

When an embedded clause functions as an object, it obligatorily receives the object marker *-ni* on the verb of the nominalized clause. An example sentence of this is shown below.

- (21) u uxlaʃ-ni xoxlajdi
 she sleep-NI want.PRES
 ‘She wants to sleep.’

The syntax of this construction and the possible theoretical implications will be discussed in section 6.

4 Marking NPs

In this section, I will use sentences with conjoined objects to show that the morpheme *-ni* attaches to NPs, but not to Ns. Coordinated objects in Uzbek occur in three patterns. Either both objects receive the object marker, as in (25), neither object receives the object marker, as in (22), or only the second object marker receives the marker, as in (23).

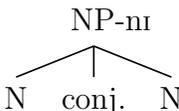
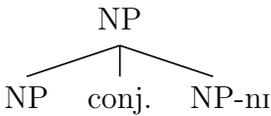
- (22) u xat va kitob dʒʊnatdi
 she letter- \emptyset and book- \emptyset send.PAST
 ‘She sent a letter and a book.’
- (23) u xat va kitob-ni dʒʊnatdi
 she letter- \emptyset and book-NI send.PAST
- (24) *u xat-ni va kitob dʒʊnatdi
 she letter-NI and book- \emptyset send.PAST
- (25) u xat-ni va kitob-ni dʒʊnatdi
 she letter-NI and book-NI sent.PAST
 ‘She sent the letter and the book.’

Example (23) is ambiguous as to the definiteness of the first object. In one reading, both objects are definite, in the other only the second is definite. NPs in Uzbek can be conjoined in the same pattern as bare nouns can be, with respect to the placement of *-ni*. In these sentences, I have used an adjective with each noun to create an NP. When conjoining NPs, the semantic scope of *-ni* is changed. (27) does not display the ambiguity that we see in (23) where either both or only the second NP is definite.

- (26) u uzun xat va kat:a kitob dʒʊnatdi
 she long letter- \emptyset and big book- \emptyset send.PAST
 ‘She sent a long letter and a big book.’
- (27) u uzun xat va kat:a kitob-ni dʒʊnatdi
 she long letter- \emptyset and big book-NI send.PAST
 ‘She sent **a** long letter and **the** big book.’

- (28) * u uzun xat-ni va kat:ra kitob dʒonatdi
 she long letter-NI and big book-ø send.PAST
- (29) u uzun xat-ni va kat:ra kitob-ni dʒonatdi
 she long letter-NI and big book-NI send.PAST
 ‘She sent the long letter and the big book.’

The lack of ambiguity in (27) can be accounted for by an analysis in which *-ni* attaches only to NPs and not to Ns. Using this analysis, the structural ambiguity present in (23) is represented in the two structures below, whereas (27) can only be represented by the structure in (30b) and not by the one in (30a).³ In this analysis, when conjoining the sentences in (22-25), either Ns or NPs can be coordinated and this structural choice changes the placement and scope of *-ni*. In (26-29), there is not the choice between conjoining Ns or NPs – only the NP option is available, and thus only the the structure in (30b).

- (30) a. 
- b. 

With this analysis, what requires a moved object to also be a marked object accepts a coordinated noun phrase in which only the second NP is marked to be sufficiently marked. A sentence in which this occurs, is one with coordination of an indefinite and definite object, as in sentence (27). Coordinating these two types of objects is possible in English, as in (31).

- (31) I like coffee and the paper in the morning.

When a sentence like this is constructed in Uzbek, two NPs are conjoined and the definiteness of the second object is expressed on the higher NP with the morpheme *-ni*.

5 The Syntax of Marked Objects

In section 5.1, I will show that what governs the markedness of objects in Uzbek is more than linear adjacency. I will do this by showing data on the possible placements of *-ni* in sentences with conjoined N and NP objects. In section 5.2, I test the hypothesis that marked objects move out of the VP in

³The structure of coordination using binary branching is controversial in the literature. For this reason, I will use the older ternary branching structure.

Uzbek as in Turkish. I use adverbs as a diagnostic for the edge of the VP following Diesing (1992). An object separated from the verb by an adverb in Uzbek must have the morpheme *-ni*.

5.1 The Adjacency Hypothesis

There are languages in which the object case morpheme is not obligatorily spelled out when the object is adjacent to the verb. One of these is Choctaw. In Choctaw, the most normal and preferred word order is subject-object-verb. (Broadwell, 2006) A simple sentence of this nature is presented below.

- (32) John-at tákkon(-a) chopa-tok.
 John-NOM peach(-ACC) buy-TNS
 ‘John bought a peach.’ (Broadwell, 2006)

Other word orders are possible, such as object-subject-verb or subject-verb-object. These other word orders, however, require the accusative case (Broadwell, 2006), as shown below in (8-9).

- (33) Tákkon-a/?*Tákkon, John-at chopa-h.
 peach-ACC/?*peach- \emptyset John-NOM buy-TNS
 ‘John bought a peach.’ (Broadwell, 2006)

- (34) John-at chopa-h, tákkon-a/?*tákkon.
 John-NOM buy-TNS peach-ACC/?*peach- \emptyset
 ‘John bought a peach.’ (Broadwell, 2006)

In both examples, the accusative case must be present because the object is not linearly just left of the verb (Broadwell, 2006). To show that Uzbek is not like Choctaw, and that what governs the grammaticality of the morpheme *-ni* is more than mere linear adjacency, we can again look at the pattern that occurs when objects are coordinated. Two of these sentences are presented again below.

- (35) u xat va kitob-ni d3 \emptyset natd \dot{r}
 she letter and book-NI send.PAST
 (36) *u xat-ni va kitob d3 \emptyset natd \dot{r}
 she letter-NI and book send.PAST

In sentence (35), the second NP in the coordinated noun phrase is the closest linearly to the verb, and it takes the morpheme *-ni*. In (36), the NP closer to the verb does not have the morpheme *-ni* on it, and the first NP does. If all that was governing the behavior of *-ni* was linear adjacency, we would expect to see (36) as grammatical and (35) as ungrammatical.

These sentences show that linear adjacency is not what is governing assignment of the object marker in Uzbek. Instead, a need for a marked object

is related to the movement of the object. From this we can say that Uzbek object marking is not like object marking in Choctaw, and we can begin to consider an object shift hypothesis for Uzbek.

5.2 The Object Shift Hypothesis

Icelandic is one of the languages known to possess object shift. Objects in Icelandic are not marked as they are in Turkish and Uzbek. Below are two sentences taken from Thráinsson (2001) to show the object movement.

- (37) Nemandinn las ekki bókina.
 student-the read not book-the
 ‘The student didn’t read the book.’ (Thráinsson, 2001)
- (38) Nemandinn las bókina_i ekki t_i
 student-the read book-the not
 ‘The student didn’t read the book.’ (Thráinsson, 2001)

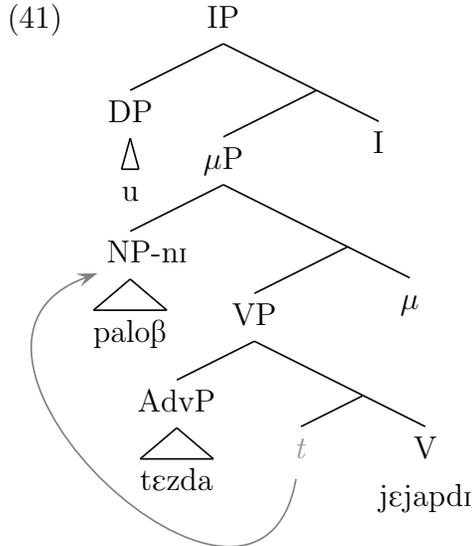
In this section, I test the object shift hypothesis of marked objects advocated for in Turkish by Diesing (1992) by placing adverbs and the indirect object between the direct object and the verb. When the object is separated from the verb in this manner, the object marker is obligatory. These sentences display object shift as the adverb marks the edge of the verb phrase (Diesing, 1992) and the object outside the verb phrase must be marked with *-ni*.

In Uzbek, when an adverb intervenes between the object and the verb, the object marker *-ni* becomes obligatory. This change from optionally to obligatorily marking the object when an adverb is used is indicative that in word order scrambling, the object moves to a place hierarchically higher than the adverb or the object’s base position.

- (39) qɨz xat-ni tezda dʒɔnatdı
 girl letter-NI quickly sent.PAST
 ‘The girl quickly sent the letter.’
- (40) *qɨz xat tezda dʒɔnatdı
 girl letter-∅ quickly sent.PAST

The morpheme *-ni* is obligatory when the object is separated from the verb in conjunction. This fact along with the evidence on coordination suggests that what is happening in Uzbek is a movement of the object from its position as a VP internal argument to the specifier of a functional projection above vP but below IP. In this paper, I will call this functional projection μ P, but this choice is not of consequence.⁴

⁴See Johnson (1991) regarding μ P.



- (42) u palob-ni tezda je-jap-di
 she pilaf-NI quickly eat-PRES.PROG-3SG
 ‘She is quickly eating the pilaf.’

In the above tree, the object *palob* is generated as an internal argument of the VP and moves to [SPEC, μ P]. Under this analysis, movement of the object is optional, but when the object is a moved object, it must receive the object marker.

Marked objects in sentences in which the adverb comes before the object and the verb are found in Uzbek. They can be accounted for by a structure that generates the adverb somewhere in the tree higher than μ P.

- (43) qiz tezda xat-ni dzonatdi
 girl quickly letter-NI send.PAST
 ‘She quickly sent the letter.’

5.2.1 The Indirect Object

Examples in which an indirect object occurs between the direct object and the verb results in the morpheme *-ni* becoming obligatory. In the same way that the changes caused by adverb placement to the optionality of the morpheme *-ni* is indicative of object shift, so is this identical change in the optionality of the same morpheme when an indirect object is present in the sentence. This is shown in the sentences below.

- (44) u gul-ni bola-ga berdi
 he flower-NI child-DAT give.PAST
 ‘He gave the flower to the child.’
- (45) *u gul bola-ga berdi
 he flower- \emptyset child-DAT give.PAST

- (46) u bola-ga gul(-ni) berdi
 he child-DAT flower(-NI) give.PAST
 ‘He gave a flower to the child.’

6 Embedded Clauses

In Uzbek, as in its close relative Turkish, embedded clauses are nominalized. The object marker *-ni* is obligatory on clauses in object position. The morpheme is attached to the nominalized verb form. This is true of transitive and intransitive embedded clauses, as shown below.

- (47) u uxlaʃ-ni xoxlajdi
 she sleep-NI want.PRES
 ‘She wants to sleep.’
- (48) u duxtur bəliʃ-ni xoxlajdi
 she doctor be-NI want.PRES
 ‘She wants to be a doctor.’
- (49) *u uxlaʃ xoxlajdi
 she sleep-∅ want.PRES
- (50) *u duxtur bəliʃ xoxlajdi
 she doctor be-∅ want.PRES

However, the morpheme *-ni* is not a complementizer. We can see this because it cannot appear on embedded clauses in subject position.

- (51) nargiza-niŋ paloʃ jəjɪʃ-ɪ dʒamol-ni xairatga səlɪ
 Nargiza-GEN pilaf eat-S-3SG.POSS Jamol-NI surprise put.PAST
 ‘That Nargiza ate pilaf surprised Jamol.’
- (52) *nargiza-niŋ paloʃ jəjɪʃ-ɪ-ni dʒamol-ni xairatga səlɪ
 Nargiza-GEN pilaf eat-3SG.POSS-NI Jamol-NI surprise put.PAST

The object marking morpheme can appear on embedded clause verbs even when they do not end in *-ʃ* (the nominalizer morpheme for embedded clause verbs). It can occur on verbs with the suffix *-gan*, which is hypothesized to create a gerund type verb (as seen in the literal translation below).

- (53) u mənɪŋ uxla-gan-ɪm-ni xoxlajdi
 she 1.SG.POSS sleep-GER-1SG.POSS-NI want.pres
 ‘She wants me to sleep.’ (lit. ‘She wants my sleeping.’)

Adding an adverb phrase to a sentence with an embedded clause does not affect the obligatory status of *-ni*. This is to be expected as *-ni* on verbs is always obligatory. An example sentence with an embedded clause and an adverb phrase is presented below.

- (54) u paloβ jɛjɪf-nɪ dʒuda ham xoxlajdɪ
 she pilaf eat-NI very much want.PAST
 ‘She really wants to eat pilaf.’

Coordinated embedded clauses come in two of the patterns that coordinated object NPs can, with respect to *-nɪ*. The object marker may appear on both embedded clauses or only the second. There is no semantic difference being marked by *-nɪ* on embedded clauses. Coordinated embedded clauses can never be without the morpheme *-nɪ*, even if there is nothing separating the embedded clause from the verb. This pattern is to be expected, given that the same is true with only one embedded clause.

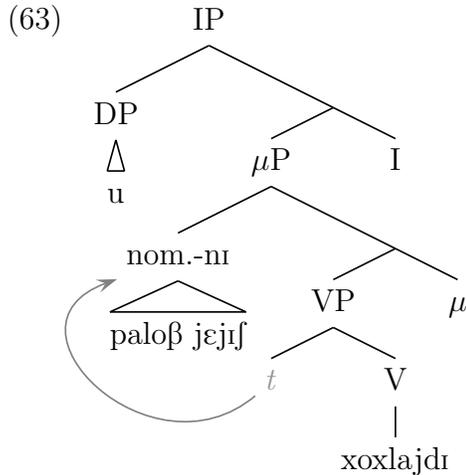
- (55) u paloβ jɛjɪf-nɪ va suβ itʃɪf-nɪ xoxlajdɪ
 she pilaf eat-NI and water drink-NI want.PAST
 ‘She wants to eat pilaf and drink water.’
- (56) u paloβ jɛjɪf va suβ itʃɪf-nɪ xoxlajdɪ
 she pilaf eat-∅ and water drink-NI want.PAST
 ‘She wants to eat pilaf and drink water.’
- (57) *u paloβ jɛjɪf-nɪ va suβ itʃɪf xoxlajdɪ
 she pilaf eat-NI and water drink-∅ want.PAST
- (58) *u paloβ jɛjɪf va suβ itʃɪf xoxlajdɪ
 she pilaf eat-∅ and water drink-∅ want.PAST

If we compare the sentences in (55-58) to the sentences with conjoined NP objects that have moved over adverbs (presented below), we see a similarity in the pattern of allowability of *-nɪ*.

- (59) u xat-nɪ va kitob-nɪ tɛzda dʒənatdɪ
 she letter-NI and book-NI quickly sent.PAST
 ‘She sent the letter and the book.’
- (60) u xat va kitob-nɪ tɛzda dʒənatdɪ
 she letter-∅ and book-NI quickly send.PAST
 ‘She quickly sent the letter and the book.’
- (61) *u xat va kitob tɛzda dʒənatdɪ
 she letter-∅ and book-∅ quickly send.PAST
- (62) *u xat-nɪ va kitob tɛzda dʒənatdɪ
 she letter-NI and book-∅ quickly send.PAST

In the case of both conjoined NP objects and conjoined clausal objects, *-nɪ* can appear optionally on the first conjoined item but is obligatory on the second. This similar pattern in placement of *-nɪ* with respect to NPs and embedded clauses suggests that these nominalized object may be truly treated as

objects in all respects, including shifting. If *-ni* marks NPs out of the verb phrase, in a specifier of a higher functional projection, then perhaps embedded clauses in Uzbek are raised. An example tree diagram of this is below.



- (64) u paloβ jejiʃ-ni xoxla-j-di
 she pilaf eat-NI want-PRES-3SG
 ‘She wants to eat pilaf.’

In the above derivation, the embedded nominalized clause is generated as a VP internal argument and moves to [SPEC,μP]. In order to be sure of such an analysis, we would need to find conclusive evidence that *-ni* only appears on objects that have moved in the hierarchical structure, and therefore the presence of this morpheme indicates a moved object.

7 Conclusion

Object marking in Uzbek appears optional in a simple SOV sentence. However, if the object is separated from the verb, object marking becomes obligatory. This change from optional to obligatory is seen to be due to more than linear adjacency. Sentences with coordinated objects require the object marker to be present on the second NP and will not allow the first NP to be marked without the second NP also being marked. Instead, the pattern we see in Uzbek is one where objects that have moved over the adverb (used as a marker of the edge of the VP (Diesing, 1992) are obligatorily marked – a pattern indicative of object shift. Embedded clauses in Uzbek are also seen to take the object marker *-ni*, though it is never optional on these clauses. The morpheme behaves the same on coordinated embedded clauses as it does on coordinated objects. This is perhaps a sign that all embedded clauses in Uzbek are raised (this is not surprising as they are nominalized), as *-ni* on NPs seems to mark a moved

object. If the morpheme's behavior is similar on nouns and embedded clauses, its marking of movement may be as well.

References

- Aissen, Judith L. 2003. Differential object marking: Iconicity vs. economy. Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 21:435–483.
- Broadwell, George Aaron. 2006. A Choctaw reference grammar. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Diesing, Molly. 1992. Indefinites. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Enç, Mürvet. 1991. The semantics of specificity. Linguistic Inquiry 22:1–27.
- Givón, Talmy. 1978. Definiteness and referentiality. Language 4:291–330.
- Johnson, Kyle. 1991. Object positions. Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 9:577–636.
- Mahajan, Anoop. 1990. The A/A-bar distinction and movement theory. Doctoral Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Thráinsson, Höskuldur. 2001. Object shift and scrambling. In The handbook of contemporary syntactic theory, ed. Mark Baltin and Chris Collins, 439–479. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Wynğærd, G. Vanden. 1989. Object shift as an A-movement rule. MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 11:256–271.