

Translating English Articles from Mongolian: A Case Study of Natsagdorj's *Shuvuun Saarl*

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Abstract

This study investigates the complexities involved in translating English articles into Mongolian, focusing on Natsagdorj D.'s seminal work, *Shuvuun Saarl*. The absence of articles in Mongolian presents significant challenges for translators, educators, and learners, necessitating sophisticated linguistic strategies to convey intended meanings accurately. By analyzing sentences from the Mongolian novel translated into English by Western Washington University, this study explores the translation of indefinite, definite, and zero articles. The theoretical framework integrates Hawkins' (1978) referential or location theory and Bickerton's (1981) language roots theory. This study provides insights into contextual meaning conveyance, elucidates how English definite articles are translated into Mongolian, and interprets the strategies employed by translators, along with the challenges and opportunities in article translation.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, translation, English articles, indefinite articles, definite articles, determiners

1. Introduction

Mongolian, an Altai-Turkic language similar to Japanese and Korean, is classified as a [–ART] language (Master, 2010). Mastery of English articles poses significant challenges for Mongolian learners. Translation plays a crucial role in bridging intercultural communication gaps, demanding a profound understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances. This study conducts a discourse analysis of English article translations into Mongolian, exploring how meaning, style, and intent are negotiated across languages. Definite and indefinite articles are foundational in English grammar, shaping discourse structure and preferentiality, thereby enhancing communication clarity and audience interpretation.

Translating English articles from Mongolian into English involves unique challenges, particularly in conveying the subtleties of definite and indefinite articles. This study focuses on Natsagdorj D.'s *Shuvuun Saarl*, renowned for its linguistic precision, to unravel the complexities of translating articles into English. The primary objective is to analyze how Mongolian contexts, which lack explicit English articles, are translated into English using definite and indefinite articles. The study demonstrates that Mongolian zero articles are often translated into English with definite articles, reflecting different conceptualizations of definiteness in English and Mongolian, possibly influenced by the nomadic lifestyle depicted in the novel.

By scrutinizing translation choices, this study aims to illuminate the linguistic, cultural, and stylistic dimensions of article usage, enhancing cross-cultural communication and literary



interpretation. It seeks to elucidate translators' strategies and challenges in maintaining fidelity to the original text while navigating linguistic disparities. Definiteness varies from discourse-pragmatic to semantic features. Chafe (1976) defines definiteness as a discourse-pragmatic notion, identifying a referent assumed to be recognizable by the hearer. This study contributes to understanding the intricacies of article translation and its implications for literary translation.

2. Methodology

This research employed a discourse analysis approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the translation of English articles into Mongolian. A corpus of 30 sentences from Natsagdorj D.'s *Shuvuun Saaral* was analyzed to elucidate translation strategies and their manifestations. Textual studies, including rigorous textual analysis and textology methods, facilitated a comprehensive examination of texts, employing both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. These approaches are invaluable for comparing original texts with their translations, discerning translation methods, and evaluating outcomes.

The comparative analysis involved meticulous scrutiny of linguistic subtleties, cultural connotations, and stylistic nuances in both the source and target texts. Through systematic summarization and evaluation, conclusions were drawn regarding the effectiveness and fidelity of the translation process.

3. Discussion

Sentences from *Shuvuun Saaral* by Natsagdorj D. were analyzed to identify how English articles are translated from Mongolian. The examples below illustrate how zero articles in Mongolian texts are translated into English using definite and indefinite articles:

Example 1:

Mongolian: Khundii taliin zereglee myaralzan jirelzeh ni kholoos uzehed sonin.

Translation: "It is interesting to watch a mirage quivering and rippling in the distance, but it is hard to determine what the tiny dots are that shift in the haze."

Analysis: 'Zereglee' is translated as 'a mirage' with an indefinite article. 'Heden jijighen yum' is translated as 'the tiny dots' with a definite article, whereas Mongolian uses zero articles.

Example 2:

Mongolian: Uudam gazar duraar selguutseh heer huduugiin tsengel, hurdan morinii irelzen ireh er hunii bahdal, oirton uzvel heden zaluus mori taralaj baina.

Translation: "Only when you come closer do you see that they are horsemen racing across the plain. Racing is the favorite sport of plainsmen, and a fast horse fills every Mongol with admiration and delight."

Analysis: 'Uudam gazar' is translated as 'the plain' with a definite article. 'Hurdan morinii' is translated as 'a fast horse' with an indefinite article. 'Bahdal' is translated as 'the favorite sport' with a definite article.

Example 3:

Mongolian: Surenkhuu saaral morinii amiig araikhan togtooj, ovoonii derged buun, hulsii nihusaad, tamhi tatan baih.

Translation: "Pulling hard on the bit, Surenhuu dashed to the winning post. He wiped the lather from his horse and lit a cigarette. The graceful dun horse, its sides heaving so that the ribs stood out, pawed the ground with its graceful legs and shook its beautiful head. From time to time, it tossed its head high until it appeared to be ready to take off for the clouds."

Analysis: 'Morinii amiig' is translated as 'the bit' with a definite article. 'Ovoonii' is translated as 'the winning post' with a definite article. 'Hulsii ni' is translated as 'the lather' with a definite article. 'Tamhi' in Mongolian, with a zero article, is translated as 'a cigarette' with an indefinite article.

Example 4:

Mongolian: Tsugaar negen zereg shuvuun saarliin tuhai yaria bololtsood oroin shar narand zug, Isgerelden odotsgoono.

Translation: "All the men discussed the merits of the horse. Only toward the end of the day did they ride off into the rays of the setting sun in groups of two and three, heading for home. When they halted on the way, they continued to discuss the horse."

Analysis: 'Tsugaar', 'shuvuun saarliin tuhai', and 'oroin shar narand zug' are translated as 'the men', 'the merits', and 'the end of the day' with definite articles.

Example 5:

Mongolian: Surenhuu uund sonirhoh ni бага, туунд шамдах их тул чигlesen zug hatirsaar, nariin saikhan durvun hul ni uul uhaagiin toosiig budruulsaar, oir zergeldee suusan nutgiin ailiin hugshid Zaluustuunii baraag harj gaihna.

Translation: "Surenhuu was not interested. He was in a hurry, and so he galloped past without halting. Shuvuun Saaral was tearing along as swiftly as he had in the morning. His graceful legs raised clouds of dust. The nomad dwellers, young and old, gazed in surprise after the horseman flying ahead on his beautiful horse. But Surenhuu had already vanished from view."

Analysis: 'Shamdah', 'chiglesen zug', 'nutgiin ailiin hugshid', and 'tuunii' are translated as 'a hurry', 'the morning', 'the nomad dwellers', and 'the horseman' with indefinite and definite articles.

Example 6:

Mongolian: Udalgui neg bugluu gazart hoyor gурvan geriin hayand hurehiin hamt mun nohoi horih buguud hasiin tsarai ni hav haranhuin dund туга тугана.

Translation: "Soon he came to two or three gers huddled at the foot of a hill. Sunjidmaa emerged from the first ger to quiet the dogs. Her sweet face shone in the gloom of the night."

Analysis: 'Neg bugluu gazart', 'hayand', 'gerees', 'nohoi', and 'hav haranhuin dund' are translated as 'huddled', 'the foot', 'the first', 'the dogs', 'the gloom', and 'the night' with indefinite and definite articles.

4. Conclusion

The research highlights that translating English articles from Mongolian into English involves significant linguistic adjustments, reflecting deep cultural and linguistic nuances. The analysis underscores the complexities of translating articles and demonstrates how

translators must employ sophisticated strategies to maintain meaning and coherence across languages. The study reveals that while Mongolian lacks explicit articles, translators frequently use definite and indefinite articles in English to convey specificity and generality, adapting the translation to fit English grammatical norms.

In particular, the analysis of Natsagdorj D.'s *Shuvuun Saaral* illustrates that translating zero articles from Mongolian into English often necessitates the addition of definite or indefinite articles to align with English discourse conventions. This transformation is not merely a grammatical necessity but also a reflection of how different languages encode and interpret definiteness and specificity. The examples provided in the discussion section demonstrate that translators navigate these differences by making context-driven choices that impact the overall clarity and impact of the translated text.

For instance, translating zero articles into definite articles often highlights specific references that might be implicit in Mongolian but require explicit articulation in English. Conversely, translating zero articles into indefinite articles can generalize concepts that are culturally or contextually specific in the original text. These decisions are influenced by factors such as the nomadic lifestyle depicted in the novel and the inherent differences in how languages conceptualize and refer to entities.

Furthermore, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the strategies employed in literary translation, shedding light on the challenges faced by translators in preserving the stylistic and rhetorical elements of the original work. The intricacies of article translation underscore the importance of considering both linguistic and cultural dimensions in achieving a faithful and effective translation.

In conclusion, the discourse analysis of Mongolian text translation into English emphasizes the intricate interplay among linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical factors. Translators must navigate these complexities with sensitivity to both the source and target languages to produce translations that respect the original text's nuances while making it accessible and meaningful in the target language. This study provides valuable insights for translators, educators, and language learners, offering a framework for understanding the nuances of article translation and its broader implications for cross-linguistic communication. By highlighting the challenges and strategies involved, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on translation theory and practice, advocating for a nuanced approach to translating articles and other linguistic elements across languages.

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