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WAYS OF FORMATION OF VEHICLE INSCRIPTIONS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

Abstract. The article investigates the ways in which inscriptions on vehicles (bumper stickers, rear-window texts and slogans on cars, taxis, buses and trucks) are formed in English and Uzbek. Instead of describing their themes, the study concentrates on the mechanisms of creation: lexical-semantic transfer, transformation of precedent texts, syntactic compression, morphological and word-formation means, abbreviation, borrowing and code-mixing, graphic and multimodal devices, and template-based (slot-and-filler) production. Representative examples show that Uzbek inscriptions rely mainly on agglutinative suffixation, ellipsis, proverbial and religious formulae and multilingual borrowing, whereas English inscriptions make more use of wordplay, blending, acronyms, backronyms, snowclone templates and graphic symbols. The results contribute to the study of word formation, pragmatics and linguistic landscape in a contrastive perspective.

Keywords: vehicle inscriptions, word formation, bumper stickers, wordplay, precedent text, code-mixing, English, Uzbek

Annotatsiya. Maqolada ingliz va o‘zbek tillaridagi transport vositalaridagi bitiklarning (avtomobil, taksi, avtobus va yuk mashinalarining oynasi va bamperidagi yozuvlar, shiorlar) hosil bo‘lish usullari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot bitiklarning mavzusini emas, balki ularni yaratish mexanizmlarini: leksik-semantik ko‘chish, pretsedent matnlarning o‘zgartirilishi, sintaktik ixchamlashuv, morfologik va so‘z yasash vositalari, qisqartma, o‘zlashma va kod aralashuvi, grafik va multimodal vositalar hamda qolipli (o‘rin to‘ldiruvchili) yasalishni o‘rganadi. Misollar o‘zbek bitiklarida asosan agglyutinativ qo‘shimchalar, ellipsis, maqol va diniy formulalar hamda ko‘p tilli o‘zlashmalar, ingliz bitiklarida esa so‘z o‘yini, kontaminatsiya, akronim, bekronim, snoukloun qoliplari va grafik belgilar faolroq ishlatilishini ko‘rsatadi. Natijalar so‘z yasalishi, pragmatika va lingvistik landshaft tadqiqotlarini qiyosiy yo‘nalishda to‘ldiradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: transport vositalaridagi bitiklar, so‘z yasalishi, bamper yozuvlari, so‘z o‘yini, pretsedent matn, kod aralashuvi, ingliz tili, o‘zbek tili

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются способы образования надписей на транспортных средствах (наклеек на бамперах, текстов на заднем стекле, лозунгов на легковых автомобилях, такси, автобусах и грузовиках) в английском и узбекском языках. Исследование сосредоточено не на тематике надписей, а на механизмах их создания: лексико-семантическом переносе, трансформации прецедентных текстов, синтаксическом сжатии, морфологических и словообразовательных средствах, аббревиации, заимствовании и смешении кодов, графических и мультимодальных приёмах, а также шаблонном (слот-филлерном) образовании. Примеры показывают, что в узбекских надписях преобладают агглютинативные аффиксы, эллипсис, пословичные и религиозные формулы и многоязычные заимствования, тогда как в английских чаще используются игра слов, контаминация, акронимы, бэкронимы, шаблоны типа snowclone и графические символы. Результаты дополняют исследования словообразования, прагматики и лингвистического ландшафта в сопоставительном аспекте.

Ключевые слова: надписи на транспорте, словообразование, наклейки на бампере, игра слов, прецедентный текст, смешение кодов, английский язык, узбекский язык

1. Introduction

Inscriptions on vehicles belong to the most dynamic genres of everyday written communication. They are produced by ordinary speakers, they are not controlled by editors, and they have to attract the attention of a reader who sees them for only a few seconds. These conditions force their authors to look for compact,

expressive and memorable forms, and the result is a rich repertoire of creative techniques. For this reason, the question "How are such inscriptions made?" is as important as the question "What do they say?". While the thematic and cultural side of the genre has attracted some attention, the mechanisms of its formation have been described much less, especially in a contrastive perspective that includes a Turkic language such as Uzbek.

The present article analyses the ways of formation of vehicle inscriptions in English and Uzbek. By "formation" we mean the whole set of linguistic and semiotic operations by which a text is created: choosing and combining existing words, deriving new ones, reusing and transforming ready-made texts, compressing syntactic structures, borrowing from other languages, and using graphic and visual signs. The study is guided by three questions. Which formation techniques are typical of each language? Which of them are shared? How far are the differences determined by the typological properties of the languages (analytic English versus agglutinative Uzbek) and how far by cultural and communicative factors?

The topic is relevant for several reasons. First, vehicle inscriptions provide direct evidence of language creativity in public space, which is of interest to word-formation studies and to the study of the linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Gorter, 2006). Second, they show how global trends, such as internet memes and international slogans, are adapted by local languages. Third, a comparison of English and Uzbek reveals how typologically different languages solve the same communicative problem, that of saying something striking in a very small space.

2. Theoretical Background and Methods

The study draws on several traditions. Classical word-formation theory describes the productive means of creating new lexical units, such as affixation, compounding, conversion, blending, clipping and abbreviation (Bauer, 1983; Plag, 2003; Haspelmath & Sims, 2010). For Uzbek, the standard descriptions of the agglutinative morphology and word formation are provided in the grammar of the modern literary language (Rahmatullayev, 2006) and in the terminological dictionary of linguistics (Hojiyev, 2002). The notions of precedent text and cultural key word, developed in linguoculturology (Telia, 1996; Maslova, 2001; Karasik, 2002) and in the semantic work of Wierzbicka (1997), are used to analyse the reuse of well-known expressions. The study of language contact (Weinreich, 1953; Myers-Scotton, 1993) provides the framework for borrowing and code-mixing, and the theory of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) the framework for the combination of text and image. Language play in electronic and informal writing is described by Crystal (2008), and the conceptual basis of metaphor and metonymy by Kövecses (2005).

The method is qualitative and comparative. The material consists of representative inscriptions of the kinds widely observed on passenger cars, taxis, minibuses, buses and trucks in English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking communities. Because the purpose is to describe mechanisms and not to count the frequency of specific texts, no statistical claims are made. Examples are given in the original language with a gloss where necessary; Uzbek examples are cited in the modern Latin-based orthography. The analysis consisted of (1) the structural description of each text, (2) the identification of the operation that produced it, (3) the classification of operations into types, and (4) the comparison of the two languages. Many texts are the result of several operations at once; in such cases the dominant operation is mentioned and the others are indicated in passing.

3. Ways of Formation of Vehicle Inscriptions

3.1. Lexical-semantic formation

The simplest way to create an inscription is to take an existing word or phrase and use it in a new, situation-bound meaning. The operation is based on metaphor, metonymy and pragmatic transfer. In English, the phrase "Baby on board" does not describe the baby but warns other drivers to be careful, and "Student driver" or "Long vehicle" turn a descriptive noun phrase into a directive. A humorous example is "My other car is a broom", in which the unexpected substitution of a witch's vehicle for an expensive car creates the effect of irony. In Uzbek, the word yo‘l ("road") in the wish Yo‘l bo‘lsin ("Let there be a road") is used metonymically: it stands for a successful and safe journey, and the adjective oq ("white") in Oq yo‘l adds the metaphorical meaning of purity and good fortune. Similarly, the word duo ("blessing, prayer") is placed on a vehicle as a statement about the source of the owner's well-being.

A second type of semantic formation is the personification of the vehicle. Texts in which the car "speaks" ("Don't touch me, I'm dirty", "Wash me") are well known in English-language practice and make use of the figure of speech in which an inanimate object addresses the reader. Uzbek has comparable texts in which the vehicle or its driver addresses the reader as a relative, using kinship terms such as aka ("elder brother") or uka ("younger brother") in appeals to keep a safe distance. Here the formation is based not on figurative meaning but on the transfer of a social relation to an anonymous situation, a tactic typical of high-context communication.

3.2. Transformation of precedent texts

Perhaps the most productive source of vehicle inscriptions is the transformation of precedent texts, that is, expressions that are familiar to all members of the community: proverbs, lines of songs, advertising slogans, film titles, prayers and idioms. The author changes one or two elements and thereby obtains a new meaning that still evokes the original. In English, the slogan "Keep calm and carry on" has become a pattern for countless variants such as "Keep calm and drive on", and "Honk if you love peace and quiet" transforms the familiar "Honk if you love …" formula by adding an ironic contradiction. The expression "Not all who wander are lost", a literary quotation, is reused as a statement of identity. Such techniques require the reader to recognize the source, and the pleasure of recognition is part of the effect.

In Uzbek, the most important source is folk paremiology and religious speech. Proverbs are usually used in an unchanged or slightly shortened form, as in sayings about patience, caution and the value of time, and religious formulae such as Bismillah, Omin, Allohga shukur and Tavakkal are used as ready-made blocks. Their formation consists not in the creation of new words but in the transfer of a text from one communicative sphere (family, mosque, speech etiquette) to another (the road). At the same time, one can observe creative modifications: a proverb may be cut to its first half, with the second half being supplied by the reader, or the line of a popular song may be adapted to the situation of driving. This shows that in Uzbek, as in English, precedent texts act as a bridge between tradition and the modern setting.

3.3. Syntactic compression and ellipsis

Since the space is small and the reading time is short, syntactic compression is among the main formation mechanisms in both languages. The commonest techniques are the use of nominal sentences without a verb, the omission of subjects and auxiliaries, the use of imperatives and the use of parallel structures and rhyme. English examples include "Baby on board", "Caution: wide load" and "No fear". Uzbek makes even greater use of ellipsis: Ota duosi, Ona duosi, Farzandlarim baxti uchun and Omad yor bo‘lsin are noun phrases or short optative sentences whose full meaning is supplied by the reader. Because Uzbek is a pro-drop language with rich verbal morphology, a short verb form can contain the whole predication: Ehtiyot bo‘ling ("Be careful") consists of a noun and an auxiliary verb in the polite imperative, and Quvib o‘tma ("Don't overtake") is a negative imperative in two words.

Rhythm, parallelism and rhyme are also frequent formation devices. In English, "If you can read this, you're too close" uses a conditional structure with a contrast between the reader's action and its consequence, and many slogans are built on alliteration or rhyme. In Uzbek, aphoristic inscriptions often consist of two balanced halves of similar length, a feature that connects them with the traditional proverb and the folk poetic line. This parallelism makes the text easier to remember and gives it the authority of a saying.

3.4. Morphological and word-formation means

Here the typological difference between the two languages becomes especially visible. English is an analytic language, and its inscriptions create new units mainly by compounding, conversion, blending and clipping. Blends such as "Sundaze" or humorous compounds based on the name of the car, as well as the conversion of nouns into verbs ("Friend me", "Tailgate this"), are typical of the genre. In Uzbek, the main source of formation is agglutinative suffixation. The possessive suffix -i/-si in Ota duosi ("father's blessing") expresses the relation of belonging in a single word; the first-person possessive -im in Onam duosi or Farzandim ("my child") personalizes the text; the plural -lar and the case suffixes build the relations between the participants. The optative suffix -sin in bo‘lsin ("let it be") turns a noun phrase into a wish, and the imperative suffix -ng in saqlang or ehtiyot bo‘ling expresses polite address.

Other typical Uzbek techniques are the use of the diminutive suffix -gina (as in onajongina "dear mother") and of affectionate forms such as -jon to express tenderness, and the use of the privative suffix -

siz (“without”) in texts about carelessness or sorrow. Compound words and pair words (ota-ona “parents”, yo‘l-yo‘riq “guidance, advice”) are also employed, often producing an aphoristic effect. The comparison suggests that English creates striking forms mainly by manipulating the structure of words and phrases, while Uzbek builds expressive meaning primarily through the rich inventory of affixes, which allows a very short text to carry grammatical and emotional information at the same time.

3.5. Abbreviation, acronyms and backronyms

Abbreviations are especially suitable for the genre because they save space and often add a hidden humorous meaning. English-language practice includes initialisms and acronyms (“SOS”, “VIP”, “OMG”, “LOL”) and a particularly characteristic device, the backronym or jocular expansion of a brand name, such as the well-known popular reading of the car brand FIAT as “Fix It Again, Tony”. Such expansions are a form of folk etymology that turns a brand name into a comment on the vehicle’s reliability. Similar forms exist in numerical and letter-number abbreviations (“2 fast 4 you”), which are discussed in the section on graphic means.

Uzbek inscriptions use abbreviations less often as independent devices. Instead, they employ international abbreviations (VIP, SOS, No.1), car brand names and the initials of the driver’s name or region, and they sometimes expand them into slogans. Religious abbreviations in Arabic script or Latin transcription also occur. The relatively limited use of jocular acronyms in Uzbek may be explained by the fact that suffixation already provides compact expression, and by the tendency of the genre to prefer a serious, blessing-oriented tone, although humorous variants are increasingly found among younger drivers.

3.6. Borrowing, calquing and code-mixing

Language contact is one of the most striking sources of vehicle inscriptions in Uzbek. A single text can combine Uzbek, Russian, English and Arabic elements. Arabic provides religious formulae, Russian provides colloquial and humorous expressions that are often borrowed as complete phrases, and English provides short slogans associated with modernity, speed and prestige, for example Speed, Boss or Winner. The mixing can occur in the form of intersentential switching (two parts of the text are in different languages), intrasentential switching (an English word is inserted into an Uzbek sentence and is given an Uzbek suffix) and tag-switching (a foreign exclamation is added to the text). The choice of language reflects the social motivations described by Myers-Scotton (1993): the driver selects a language in order to express a specific identity or attitude.

In English-language inscriptions code-mixing is much less frequent and usually has a stylistic function: a foreign word, such as the Latin carpe diem or a Spanish phrase, adds elegance, humour or a claim of cultural affiliation. Calquing, that is, the word-for-word translation of a foreign expression, is a more common route of formation in Uzbek, where many humorous or aphoristic texts are translations of Russian or English originals. Such calques are particularly interesting for the study of intertextuality, since they make internationally circulating slogans local.

3.7. Graphic, orthographic and multimodal means

The formation of an inscription is not limited to words. Graphic devices include capitalization, colour, font, spacing, the combination of letters and numbers, and the use of symbols. English-language stickers make extensive use of the “rebus” principle: “I ♥ my dog”, “2 fast 4 you”, “Be 4 you”. Such techniques are related to the orthography of electronic communication (Crystal, 2008). Visual elements, such as flags, silhouettes, religious symbols and sports logos, work together with the text to create a single multimodal message (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

In Uzbek, the graphic dimension is influenced by the history of the writing system. The same text may appear in Latin, Cyrillic or Arabic script, and the Latin letters o‘ and g‘ are written with various apostrophes or, sometimes, without them. These variations are not merely errors; they signal the driver’s generation, education and attitude to tradition. Decorative calligraphy, ornamental frames and images of flowers, hands in prayer, the national flag or an ornamental pattern complete the text. A graphic element can thus carry the same cultural function as a word, for example by marking the text as sacred.

3.8. Template-based (slot-and-filler) formation

A very productive mechanism in both languages is the use of templates with one or more variable slots. In English, such templates are described as “snowclones”: “My other car is a ___”, “Honk if you ___”, “___ on board”, “Keep calm and ___”, “I ♥ ___”. Each template has a stable frame and a variable

part which the author fills in with new content. The reader recognizes the frame and appreciates the originality of the filler. This mechanism explains the enormous variety of English stickers, and it is characteristic of internet culture, where templates spread quickly as memes.

Uzbek also has a number of templates. The best known is the frame "___ duosi", in which the slot is filled with the name of a relative or respected person: Ota duosi, Ona duosi, Buvim duosi, Ustoz duosi. A second frame is "Yo‘l ___ bo‘lsin / ___ yo‘l", as in Yo‘l bo‘lsin, Oq yo‘l, Omad yo‘ldosh bo‘lsin, and a third is the frame of wishes with the optative -sin. Templates are efficient, because the driver does not need to create a text from scratch and can still express personal relationships by changing the filler. At the same time, they keep the cultural scripts of the community stable and make the genre easily recognizable.

3.9. Sociocultural sources and motivation of formation

The techniques described above are not independent of the cultural environment. Each of them draws on a typical source: folk wisdom and religious speech (proverbs, prayers), popular culture (songs, films, advertising), the internet (memes, abbreviations, emoji) and the speech of the street (slang, humour, local dialect). In English the dominant sources are popular culture and the internet, which are international and constantly renewed; in Uzbek the dominant sources are folk and religious tradition, with a growing influence of Russian-language humour and global internet culture. This difference is reflected in the preferred operations: the English-language genre favours playful transformation, parody and creative recombination, while the Uzbek-language genre favours the stable reproduction of authoritative formulae with limited but meaningful modification.

4. Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the main findings. It is important to stress that the comparison reveals tendencies, not strict oppositions: English drivers also use proverbs and religious phrases, and Uzbek drivers also use wordplay and abbreviations. Nevertheless, the dominant techniques differ in a systematic way.

Table 1. Main formation techniques of vehicle inscriptions in English and Uzbek

Technique	English inscriptions	Uzbek inscriptions
Lexical-semantic	Irony, personification, directive use of descriptive phrases	Metonymy and metaphor in wishes (Yo‘l bo‘lsin, Oq yo‘l)
Precedent texts	Parody of slogans, quotations, snowclones	Proverbs, religious formulae, song lines
Syntax	Nominal phrases, conditionals, rhyme	Ellipsis, optative and imperative forms, parallelism
Morphology	Compounding, conversion, blending	Agglutinative suffixation, diminutives, pair words
Abbreviation	Acronyms, backronyms (FIAT)	International abbreviations, initials, brand names
Language contact	Occasional foreign words for style	Frequent mixing of Uzbek, Russian, English, Arabic
Graphic means	Symbols, numbers, rebus (2 fast 4 you)	Script variation, calligraphy, ornaments
Templates	My other car is a ___; Keep calm and ___	___ duosi; Yo‘l ___ bo‘lsin

The differences can be explained on three levels. At the typological level, the agglutinative structure of Uzbek makes suffixation a natural and economical way of creating compact texts, while the analytic structure of English directs creativity toward word order, blending, abbreviation and graphic devices. At the communicative level, the high-context orientation of Uzbek culture allows authors to use elliptical formulae that rely on shared knowledge, whereas English-language authors, writing for a more

heterogeneous audience, often need explicit wordplay that is understood through the structure of the text itself. At the sociocultural level, the sources of creativity differ: tradition and religion in one case, popular and internet culture in the other. At the same time, the shared presence of templates, precedent texts and code-play shows that vehicle inscriptions in both languages obey the same general principle of economy and expressiveness.

The analysis also has practical implications. For lexicography and teaching, vehicle inscriptions provide authentic material for illustrating word-formation patterns, such as the possessive suffix in Ota duosi or the blending in English stickers. For translation studies, they demonstrate the difficulty of rendering texts that depend on a specific formation mechanism: a pun cannot be translated literally, and an elliptical Uzbek blessing needs a longer English equivalent. For sociolinguistics, they are a source of information about the spread of languages and scripts in public space.

5. Conclusion

The article has described the ways of formation of vehicle inscriptions in English and Uzbek. Nine groups of operations were distinguished: lexical-semantic transfer, transformation of precedent texts, syntactic compression, morphological and word-formation means, abbreviation, borrowing and code-mixing, graphic and multimodal devices, template-based formation, and the use of sociocultural sources. Uzbek inscriptions are formed mainly through agglutinative suffixation, ellipsis, proverbial and religious formulae, templates of the type "___ duosi" and multilingual borrowing. English inscriptions are formed mainly through wordplay, blending, acronyms and backronyms, snowclone templates, parody of precedent texts and graphic symbols. Both traditions share the aims of compression, memorability and expressiveness, and both use templates and precedent texts as the basis of creativity.

Further research should be based on a large systematically collected photographic corpus with information about the type of vehicle, the place and date of observation and the language and script of each text. This would make it possible to measure the relative productivity of each formation technique, to follow the changes over time, and to compare English and Uzbek with other languages of the region.

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