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INSTITUTIONAL REFERENCE AND SOURCE ATTRIBUTION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK NEWS DISCOURSE: A CONTRASTIVE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This article investigates the interaction between institutional referring expressions and the linguistic attribution of information sources in English and Uzbek news discourse. Its central premise is that identifying an institution and identifying the evidential basis of a proposition are distinct communicative operations, although they frequently co-occur in journalism. The discussion integrates recent scholarship on referential accessibility, evidentiality, epistemic stance, and news production. A qualitative contrastive procedure is applied to seven explicitly constructed bilingual news-style examples, with attention to institution naming, source specificity, reportative and inferential marking, and journalistic responsibility. The analysis distinguishes culturally recoverable institutional labels from explicit source attribution and proposes a three-stage account of reference, provenance, and verifiability. English and Uzbek achieve comparable discourse functions through partly different grammatical resources, but neither definiteness nor institutional prestige establishes the truth of a claim. The contribution is an operational framework for evaluating source transparency in comparative media linguistics and translation. As the examples are illustrative rather than corpus-derived, the conclusions are analytical propositions requiring further empirical testing.

Keywords: institutional reference; source attribution; homophoric reference; evidentiality; English and Uzbek; news discourse; epistemic responsibility; contrastive pragmatics.

INTRODUCTION

News reporting conveys information by placing propositions within frames of public knowledge: institutions are named, events are presented as reportable, and sources are made more or less visible. Readers may recognize expressions such as “the ministry,” “the central bank,” or “the committee” without a full identifying description because they share a national, professional, or local frame with the writer. Such reference can be homophoric when the identification depends on culturally shared knowledge rather than a textual antecedent or an immediately visible referent. Yet being able to identify a public institution does not answer the different question of how a journalist learned that it acted, decided, or made a statement. The first problem concerns reference; the second concerns the linguistic representation of evidence and provenance. Both matter to the interpretation of journalistic authority, but their analytical separation is necessary for evaluating the transparency of a news report.

In English, institutional visibility is routinely produced by definite noun phrases, proper names, abbreviations, and metonymic constructions in which the institution is presented as an actor or speaker. Uzbek likewise uses official names, shortened designations, and institution-based subjects, although it does not have an article system corresponding directly to English the. Uzbek readers can recover a referent from shared national knowledge, a previous news item, or a local administrative situation; these routes to identification cannot be inferred from the surface form alone. Thus, the occurrence of an institutional title in either language should not automatically be coded as homophoric. Interpretation requires the analyst to establish whether identification comes from prior text, situation, or an assumed cultural frame. Jones (2018) shows, from a different angle, that newspaper writing may make a referent identifiable even where conventional grammatical marking would seem to suggest otherwise.

A second distinction concerns information provenance and epistemic commitment. A sentence that names an organization may still be an unattributed assertion, while an utterance introduced by "according to a published statement" makes the communicative source explicit without itself independently verifying the statement. Reportative signals such as "reportedly" and Uzbek xabarlarga ko'ra indicate mediated knowledge but can leave the original informant undisclosed. Expressions of inference, including English apparently or Uzbek chog'i in appropriate contexts, locate knowledge in a reasoning process rather than an identifiable document. Bergqvist and Grzech (2023) emphasize the importance of participants' epistemic authority and the pragmatic uses of evidential expressions; their analysis provides grounds for not reducing evidentiality to a mechanically identifiable word list.

The objective of this study is to clarify the pragmatic relationship between institutional reference and source attribution in English and Uzbek news-style statements. The guiding questions are whether cultural accessibility can be mistaken for documented evidence, how each language packages explicit and implicit source relations, and what translation decisions preserve responsibility for a proposition. Rather than announcing a frequency difference between national media cultures, the article develops an interpretive model that may subsequently be tested on a balanced corpus of authentic texts. This distinction between an analytic proposal and a measured result is especially important where the reliability of public information is at stake.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Research on referring expressions establishes that identifiability is discourse-dependent rather than a fixed consequence of grammatical form. Jones (2018) demonstrates how newspaper opinion texts may secure identification through contextual and lexical relations even when an expression is formally indefinite. Applied to institutional labels, this insight makes it necessary to distinguish an anaphoric use ("a commission ... the commission"), a situation-bound use ("the council" in a local meeting report), and a homophoric use ("the central bank" for readers for whom the national institution is conventionally salient). Identifiability must also be kept apart from credibility. Recognizing the intended source is one condition for assessing a claim, not proof that the source supports it. This point enables a more discriminating analysis of the familiar institutional metonymies of news production, particularly headlines that suppress named human informants while foregrounding public bodies.

Studies of journalistic knowledge practices supply a complementary framework. Ekström, Ramsälv and Westlund (2021) distinguish the articulation of a knowledge claim from the way news practitioners know and justify what they report. Koivunen and colleagues (2021) show that epistemic and evaluative resources are entangled in the linguistic production of news, complicating the assumption that an apparently neutral institutional reference is pragmatically neutral. Carretero (2023), in a corpus study of English newspaper coverage at different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, describes how expressions of commitment and source-related meaning vary under conditions of uncertainty. Together these findings support a functional approach in which institutional subjecthood, evidential marking, and the writer's degree of commitment are coded separately rather than treated as interchangeable evidence of objectivity.

The referential status of a reported source is particularly relevant. Basovets (2023) examines subject reference in evidential markers across English- and Belarusian-language media and shows that the referential specificity of the source participates in the discourse management of authorial responsibility. This account offers a useful contrast between a traceable institution or report and anonymous collectivities such as "experts" or "observers." A named agency may be identifiable but still function as an opaque authority when no document, speaker, or date is supplied; conversely, an explicitly located study can provide source transparency without depending upon

cultural familiarity. The relevant contrast is therefore not simply named versus unnamed sources but a graded relation between referent recoverability, documentary localization, and the possibility of checking what has been attributed.

Uzbek scholarship and cross-linguistic research establish the resources needed for a cautious contrast. Khamraeva (2022), writing from the Uzbek academic context, differentiates direct and indirect evidential meanings in English and Uzbek examples. Üzüm (2023) offers a focused analysis of Uzbek chog‘i as an inferential marker and situates it among non-obligatory source-marking resources, while Üzüm (2024) surveys broader semantic tendencies of Uzbek evidentials. Amonova (2026) addresses the contribution of quotation and source attribution to credibility in English and Uzbek online news; Satibaldiyev (2026) considers how agency and evidentiality are redistributed when English news is rendered into Uzbek and Russian. These publications are relevant without warranting the stronger claim that all Uzbek news outlets follow one stable attribution pattern or that a single Uzbek marker has only one meaning in every syntactic environment.

Methodologically, the article adopts qualitative contrastive pragmatics combined with a controlled analytical demonstration. Seven pairs of short news-style sentences were created by the author to isolate linguistic variables; none is presented as a quotation, a verified report about a real institution, or a statistically representative corpus item. The illustrative material is coded across four independent dimensions: (i) referent accessibility, including possible homophoric interpretation; (ii) source identification, ranging from absent to expressly named; (iii) evidential route, including report, inference, and documentary attribution; and (iv) accountability, understood narrowly as whether a reader can locate the claimed informational origin from the wording. The method compares functional equivalence rather than word-for-word translation, particularly because Uzbek articlelessness and the contextual values of ekan, emish and chog‘i prevent simple one-to-one mapping. No frequency claims, significance tests, or causal effects are inferred from the constructed examples.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The controlled comparison supports a distinction between institutional accessibility and evidential traceability. A familiar title such as “the ministry” or vazirlik may allow readers to infer a relevant organization, but it leaves the origin of the reported proposition unspecified. Adding “according to its official statement” / rasmiy bayonotiga ko‘ra changes the evidential configuration: the utterance now reports a particular type of source, although the existence and contents of the statement still require verification. Generic formulas such as “sources say” / manbalarning aytishicha mark information as second-hand without making source identity independently recoverable. Inferential forms express a different knowledge route and must not be treated as quotations from a public authority. The following table summarizes these functional contrasts.

Table 1. Institutional reference and information-source configurations (illustrative examples)

Pattern	English / Uzbek news-style formulation	Source-related interpretation
Institutional assertion	The ministry revised the guidelines. / Vazirlik yo‘riqnomani qayta ko‘rib chiqdi.	Potentially shared referent; no information source specified.
Named documentary source	According to the ministry’s published statement, the guidelines were revised. / Vazirlikning e’lon qilingan bayonotiga ko‘ra, yo‘riqnoma qayta ko‘rib chiqilgan.	Explicit document type; claim remains subject to external checking.

Pattern	English / Uzbek news-style formulation	Source-related interpretation
Unspecified report	The regulator reportedly changed the rule. / Xabarlarga ko‘ra, regulyator qoidani o‘zgartirgan.	Second-hand information, with incomplete source identification.
Anonymous human source	Officials say the proposal is being reviewed. / Mas’ullar aytishicha, taklif ko‘rib chiqilmoqda.	Reported speech; human informants not individually traceable.
Inferential stance	The agency seems to have changed its position. / Agentlik o‘z pozitsiyasini o‘zgartirgan chog‘i.	Inference rather than a quoted or documentary source.
Specific document	The published audit report lists the changes. / E’lon qilingan audit hisobotida o‘zgarishlar sanab o‘tilgan.	A document is nominated; attribution becomes more inspectable.
Unmarked evidentiality	The central bank expects slower growth. / Markaziy bank o‘sish sekinlashishini kutmoqda.	Institutional mental-state attribution without indicated reporting channel.

Note. All sentence pairs are author-constructed analytical examples, not quotations from news outlets or claims that the described events occurred.

Three consequences follow for contrastive interpretation. First, institutional naming may increase perceived authority while decreasing transparency if a writer attributes a decision to an organization without specifying the communicative channel through which it became known. Second, English definite descriptions and Uzbek institutional nominals can be functionally parallel even though their grammatical expression of definiteness is not identical; the identification mechanism must be determined from discourse context. Third, translation should maintain the distinction between official records, unnamed testimony, and the translator’s own inferential framing. Rendering “reportedly” as a categorical Uzbek assertion or adding emish to a documented statement can change the reported degree or type of epistemic mediation. These are pragmatic risks illustrated by the model, not measured frequencies in the contemporary press.

For editorial practice, source specificity is more informative than institutional prominence alone. A reproducible attribution identifies a speaker, document, publication date, or accessible record; institutional titles without such localization are weaker for tracing a claim, even when the institution is familiar. The proposed three-stage test therefore asks: can the institution be identified, is the asserted proposition linked to a specified informational channel, and can that channel be checked? This operational distinction is consistent with the broader insights of journalism epistemology and provides a basis for future corpus annotation of English and Uzbek headlines, leads, and reported quotations.

CONCLUSION

The comparison shows that institutional reference and source attribution should be analyzed as related but independent dimensions of news discourse. A homophorically recoverable institution is a referential achievement grounded in shared knowledge; it does not, by itself, encode observation, inference, or second-hand testimony. Explicit documentary or quotative structures

make provenance more visible, but do not automatically establish accuracy. Likewise, reportative and inferential expressions may indicate a route to knowledge while leaving the institutional or individual source unidentified. Treating these dimensions separately yields a more precise account of evidential responsibility and avoids equating public authority with substantiated information.

The English–Uzbek comparison further indicates why formal correspondences cannot substitute for pragmatic equivalence. English article-based institutional reference and Uzbek culturally recoverable noun phrases can serve similar informational functions, whereas source-marking expressions may introduce meaning differences involving quotation, inference, or uncertainty. The translator or editor should preserve whether the original text names a verifiable record, invokes an anonymous voice, or advances an interpretation. Consequently, an attribution-sensitive annotation framework can contribute to comparative discourse research, news translation, and media literacy without presupposing that either language is inherently more evidentially explicit.

The present contribution is deliberately theoretical and illustrative. Its seven constructed bilingual pairs demonstrate analytical possibilities but cannot support claims about frequencies, audience effects, or the actual editorial behavior of news organizations. A subsequent empirical study should assemble date-matched and genre-matched news articles in both languages, record article-level context, code inter-annotator agreement, and examine whether the distinctions between recoverability, attribution, and verifiability remain stable across hard news and commentary. Such a design would turn the proposed criteria into testable hypotheses while maintaining the essential difference between linguistic evidence marking and factual verification.

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