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# NAMING UNDER COMPRESSION: STRUCTURAL ARCHITECTURE AND REFERENTIAL TARGETING IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK ONLINE NEWS HEADLINES

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`**ABSTRACT:** Online news headlines must introduce people, places, institutions, objects, and events within severe spatial constraints. This article investigates how that task is accomplished through nominal structure in English and Uzbek digital journalism. The study analyses 113 headlines from BBC News and Kun.uz published in 2025-2026 and develops a Structural-Referential Alignment model that connects formal packaging with the type of entity selected in discourse. Each naming unit was coded as simplex, derived, compound, or multiword and then assigned to one of eight referential classes: person, location, abstract concept, event/process, institution, material object, document, or domain/informational concept. The analysis identifies twelve recurrent structural configurations. Both datasets make extensive use of one-lexeme nominations and suffixation, but the means of compression differ. BBC News favours N+N compounds, occasional V+N and verb-particle formations, and dense three-to-five-component premodification. Kun.uz relies more visibly on the suffixes *-chi, -lik,* and *-dor*, the deverbal nominalizers *-ish* and *-v*, international combining forms, and case, possessive, postpositional, and verbal-noun relations in longer nominal groups. Event/process reference is the only category realized through all four structural types in both sources, whereas document reference is confined to multiword units. The findings show functional convergence despite morphosyntactic divergence: English typically compresses through adjacency, while Uzbek encodes more relations overtly. Structural length therefore operates as referential calibration rather than as simple verbal expansion.

**Keywords:** nomination; reference; online news headlines; word formation; nominal groups; BBC News; Kun.uz; English-Uzbek comparison

**1. INTRODUCTION.** Naming is the point at which conceptual categorization becomes linguistically accessible. A speaker or writer isolates a segment of experience, selects the property by which it is to be recognized, and assigns a form that can retrieve it in communication. From an onomasiological perspective, the movement proceeds from concept to designation, whereas a semasiological perspective begins with an established form and examines its meanings (Baldinger, 1966). Dokulil (1962) further distinguishes the general conceptual base of a naming act from the feature that differentiates the intended entity within that class. These insights are particularly useful for headline analysis because a headline rarely has room to describe a referent fully; it must select the most economical designation capable of activating the intended concept.

Lexical nomination includes both relatively unmotivated simplex forms and structures created from existing linguistic material. Ufimtseva (1977) treats primary lexical nomination as the conventional pairing of a form with an entity or concept, while Teliya (1977) explains secondary

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nomination through semantic transfer and associative re-use. Modern word-formation research similarly views naming as a choice among derivation, compounding, conversion, and multiword construction, each of which packages conceptual information differently (Bauer, 1983; Plag, 2003; Štekauer, 1998). The resulting unit does more than label: it also places the referent in a category, profiles a salient property, and regulates how much contextual knowledge the reader must supply.

The headline intensifies these pressures. It functions as an autonomous access point to a news item, establishes an interpretive frame, and directs attention toward actors, events, places, and institutional consequences. Classical descriptions of headlinese emphasize grammatical compression and selective omission (Mårdh, 1980), while Dor (2003) characterizes headlines as relevance optimizers that seek a favourable balance between contextual effect and processing effort. News discourse is also institutionally shaped: lexical selection reflects editorial routines, presumed audience knowledge, and conventions for construing newsworthiness (Bell, 1991; Bednarek & Caple, 2012; van Dijk, 1988). Nominal units are therefore central to the headline's economy because they provide compact points of reference around which the event is organized.

Reference, however, cannot be reduced to a word-object correspondence. A single form may identify an individual, a class, an institution, a location, or an event according to context (Lyons, 1977). A country name may denote territory in one headline and a political actor in another; a capital may stand metonymically for a government; and a common noun such as *star* may retrieve a culturally established category of celebrities. Such cases demonstrate that structural form and referential value must be examined together. Metonymic access is especially relevant in news, where a salient name often gives economical access to a broader institutional target (Radden & Kövecses, 1999).

Previous research has provided detailed accounts of English headline grammar, media discourse, word formation, and lexical nomination, but the relationship between nominal architecture and referential targeting has received less systematic contrastive attention. Morphological studies often classify forms without tracing their discourse referents, whereas media studies frequently discuss referential effects without differentiating the word-formation resources that produce them. The contrast between English and Uzbek is instructive in this respect. English readily builds dense left-branching noun phrases and lexical compounds, while Uzbek, as an agglutinative Turkic language, overtly marks many relations through derivational, case, possessive, and verbal-noun morphology (Biber et al., 1999; Bodrogligeti, 2003; Comrie, 1989). Both systems satisfy the same journalistic need for brevity, but they do so through different formal pathways.

This study addresses that gap through a Structural-Referential Alignment (SRA) model. The model treats formal packaging and referential target as two intersecting dimensions rather than as separate inventories. Its purpose is not to translate or reproduce a sequence of headline examples, but to explain how structural economy is matched to referential load in BBC News and Kun.uz.

**The study asks three questions:**

1. Which structural configurations are used to construct nominative units in the selected English and Uzbek headlines?

2. How are major referential classes distributed across simplex, derived, compound, and multiword forms?

3. What shared functions and language-specific strategies emerge from the structural-referential mapping?

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

**2.1. Research design and corpus.** The study uses a qualitative comparative corpus design. The dataset comprises 113 online news headlines drawn from BBC News and Kun.uz and dated within 2025-2026. The material covers political, legal, economic, technological, medical, environmental,

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social, and cultural reporting, thereby allowing nominative structures to be observed across several discourse domains. Selection was purposive: a headline entered the dataset when it contained a clearly identifiable lexical or multiword unit functioning as the name of a person, place, institution, object, document, event, process, abstract concept, or specialized domain.

The unit of analysis was not the entire headline but the smallest contextual expression that named one coherent referent. A one-word proper name such as *Trump*, a derived noun such as *cartoonist*, a compound such as *ceasefire*, and a phrase such as *national security white paper* were therefore treated as comparable naming units at different structural levels. Uzbek forms were analysed in their attested orthography. Minor typographical inconsistencies in the source transcription, including obvious spelling errors, were normalized without altering lexical composition or meaning.

**2.2. Structural-Referential Alignment model.** The SRA model has two axes. The structural axis distinguishes four degrees of formal packaging, while the referential axis records what kind of discourse entity is selected. The structural categories are operational rather than purely orthographic. Inflectional morphology, including English plural *-s* and Uzbek case or number markers attached to a simplex stem, does not by itself move a unit into the derived category. Derivation is assigned only when an affix creates a new lexeme or a deverbal nominal form. A compound consists of two lexical bases functioning as one lexical nomination, whereas a multiword unit contains two or more independent components organized around a nominal head.

Table 1. Structural zones in the SRA model

| **Structural zone** | **Operational criterion** | **BBC News illustration** | **Kun.uz illustration** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simplex | One lexical base; inflection does not change the lexical class | *bank, Trump* | *Senat, huquq* |
| Derived | A word-forming affix or deverbal nominalizer creates a new naming unit | *cartoonist, inflation* | *iqtisodchilar, yig‘ilish* |
| Compound | Two lexical bases form one conventional or contextual lexical unit | *ceasefire, playbook* | *Yevroittifoq, kiberxavfsizlik* |
| Multiword | Two or more independent components jointly identify one referent | *national security white paper* | *O‘zbekistonning tashqi siyosat konsepsiyasi* |

**2.3. Referential coding and analytical procedure.** Eight referential classes were used: person/person group, location, abstract concept, event/process, institution/organization, material object, document, and domain/informational concept. Assignment was contextual. Thus, *China* was coded as location when it delimited the geographical setting but as an institutional actor when it occupied the semantic role of a state party. Similarly, *Boku* and *Moskva* were interpreted as state centres in a headline about interstate relations rather than as cities alone. Boundary cases were resolved by identifying the semantic head and asking which entity had to exist for the headline proposition to be true.

Coding proceeded in three passes. The first isolated candidate naming units; the second segmented their internal structure; the third assigned referential class in the full headline context. The

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resulting matrices record high salience, simple attestation, or non-attestation within the selected material. They should not be read as population frequencies because the source corpus was purposive and did not provide a balanced number of tokens for every structural class. No inferential statistics were therefore applied. The analysis concerns publicly accessible text and involves no human participants.

## 3. RESULTS

**3.1. The common baseline and the principal structural asymmetry.** The two outlets share a stable structural baseline: one-lexeme nominations and suffixal derivation are salient in both. Beyond that baseline, their compression strategies diverge. BBC News shows a strong preference for N+N compounds, adjective-noun formations, and compact three-to-five-component premodification. It also contains V+N and verb-particle compounds such as *ceasefire, takeover,* and *washout*. Kun.uz, by contrast, makes greater use of the deverbal nominalizers *-ish* and *-v*, international combining forms in compounds, and overt linking through case, possessive, postpositional, and verbal-noun morphology. Longer six-to-seven-component nominal units occur in the Uzbek data but not in the selected English sample.

Table 2. Comparative salience of structural configurations

| No. | Structural configuration | BBC | Kun.uz | Comparative interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | One lexical base | H | H | Shared core strategy |
| 2 | Suffixation | H | H | Shared derivational resource |
| 3 | Prefixation | P | - | Attested only in BBC sample |
| 4 | *-ish/-v* deverbal nominalization | - | P | Uzbek-specific in the sample |
| 5 | N + N compound | H | P | More salient in BBC |
| 6 | V + N compound | P | - | English lexical compaction |
| 7 | V + particle formation | P | - | English lexical compaction |
| 8 | International combining form + N | - | H | Salient in Kun.uz |
| 9 | Adj + N formation | H | P | Shared, stronger in BBC |
| 10 | Three-to-five-component premodification | H | P | English adjacency-based expansion |
| 11 | Case/possessive/postpositional expansion | - | H | Uzbek overt relation marking |
| 12 | Six-to-seven-component nominal structure | - | P | Attested in Kun.uz |

*Note. H = high salience in the source matrix; P = present; - = not attested in the selected sample.*

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**3.2. Simplex and derived naming: accessibility versus categorization.** Simplex nominations provide the fastest route to a referent. In BBC News, personal names and titles (*Trump, O'Neill, Bishop*), country names (*Egypt, China, India*), abstract nouns (*power, truth, anxiety*), event nouns (*funeral, calls*), institutions (*bank, Parliament, Waitrose*), and material entities (*dress, bacteria, castle*) all occur as single lexical bases. Kun.uz displays the same referential breadth through forms such as *rais, Prezident, Bolgariya, Ruminiya, huquq, xavotir, tashrif, Senat, robot,* and *samolyot*. The lexical simplicity of these units does not imply referential simplicity. A surname without a first name presupposes public familiarity, a title identifies a person through institutional status, and a toponym may refer either to territory or to a political actor.

Derived units perform a more explicit classificatory function. The English suffixes *-er, -ist,* and *-an* build names for actors or groups according to activity, profession, or political affiliation: *boater, influencers, publishers, cartoonist, journalists,* and *Republicans*. The suffixes *-ment* and *-ion* package processes as nominal entities in *treatment, distributions,* and *inflation*, while prefixation contributes the abstract opposition encoded in *disinformation*. In Kun.uz, *-chi, -lik,* and *-dor* create person or group labels such as *iqtisodchilar, eksportchilar, ziyoratchilar, O'zbekistonliklar,* and *amaldorlar*. The forms *yig'ilish* and *to'lov* convert actions into eventive or economic nominations through *-ish* and *-v*, and *zo'ravonlik* and *faollik* construe social phenomena or states through *-lik*.

The shared function is category construction, but the semantic range differs. English agentive morphology in the dataset foregrounds occupation, participation, and political membership. Uzbek derivation additionally makes territorial affiliation and official status highly visible. The contrast is not absolute; it is a tendency within the selected headlines. More importantly, both systems use derivation to reduce an explanatory clause to a lexical category: "a person who publishes" becomes *publisher*, while "a person engaged in economics" becomes *iqtisodchi*. Derivation thus compresses a relational description into a reusable referential label.

**3.3. Compound naming: lexical fusion and domain coding.** Compounds form the clearest point of divergence. BBC News contains several endocentric N+N units in which the second element supplies the general category and the first narrows it: *childcare, roadmap, smokescreen,* and *hometown*. Other patterns include V+N in *ceasefire*, verb-particle formations in *takeover* and *washout*, and adjective-noun formation in *freeport*. These units name abstract strategies, events, processes, and locations in a single orthographic word. Some, notably *playbook, roadmap,* and *smokescreen*, also activate secondary or figurative meanings. They are not merely shorter substitutes; they frame political action through familiar source domains.

The Kun.uz compounds are organized differently. Units such as *Yevroittifoq, Yevrozona, kiberxavfsizlik, eko-sammit,* and *fotoreportaj* combine an international or abbreviated formative with a lexical base, while *oliygoh, Qo'shtepa,* and *Ko'kdala* represent adjective-based or lexicalized formations. Their referents cluster around institutions, geopolitical areas, technology, ecology, media genres, and place names. The first component typically restricts the field, and the second supplies the nominal core. The result is compact domain coding: *kiber-* locates *xavfsizlik* within digital security, while *eko-* positions *sammit* within environmental policy.

The English compounds in the sample are especially productive for abstract and eventive construal, whereas the Uzbek forms are prominent in contemporary institutional and domain-specific naming. This contrast suggests two routes to headline economy: semantic fusion of established English bases and compact integration of international combining forms into Uzbek lexical structure. Both routes create units whose meanings are more specialized than the sum of their isolated components.

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**3.4. Multiword nominations: dense premodification and overt relational marking.** Multiword units arise when a referent cannot be identified adequately by one lexical head. In BBC News, the dominant technique is left-branching premodification. Expressions such as *green card holders, US House panel, controversial financial rescue plan, nuclear attack submarines, national security white paper, human imaging study, AI voice tool,* and *historic train gathering event* place several classifiers before the head noun. Word order carries much of the grammatical burden: *white paper* identifies the document type, *national security* delimits its domain, and no overt linker is required. Proper names can also enter the chain, as in *Netflix-Warner Brothers deal* and *Jaguar Land Rover cyber attack.*

Kun.uz multiword nominations often encode the same amount of information through more explicit morphosyntax. *O‘zbekistonning tashqi siyosat konsepsiyasi* uses a genitive relation; *diniy sohadagi davlat siyosatining asosiy vazifalari* combines a locative-relative form with genitive and possessive marking; *Davlat xizmatlarini rivojlantirish agentligi* and *dronlarni havoda quvvatlantirish texnologiyasi* incorporate verbal nouns; and *yangi o‘quv yili uchun abituriyentlarni ro‘yxatga olish* uses a postposition, object marking, and an action nominal. The expressions *BMT inson huquqlari kengashi* and *Samarqand 2028 sun’iy yo‘ldoshi* additionally combine abbreviation, proper name, number, and common noun.

The contrast is structural rather than functional. Both outlets use multiword nominations to distinguish institutions, documents, complex events, and technological objects whose identity depends on several attributes. English tends to leave component relations implicit and recoverable from adjacency; Uzbek more often marks possession, location, objecthood, purpose, or event structure overtly. Consequently, a longer Uzbek form need not be less economical in informational terms. It may be more explicit about internal semantic relations while remaining compressed relative to a full clause.

**3.5. Referential distribution across structural zones.** The referential matrix reveals that structural choice is partly conditioned by the amount and kind of information required to identify an entity. Event/process reference is the most flexible category: it occurs as simplex, derived, compound, and multiword nomination in both sources. Person reference appears in simplex, derived, and multiword forms, but not in the selected compound data. Locations are usually named by simplex toponyms or lexicalized compounds. Documents, by contrast, occur only as multiword units because their legal, administrative, or policy identity normally requires a domain modifier.

Table 3. Referential classes and their structural realization

| Referential class | BBC News realization | Kun.uz realization | Main implication |
|---|---|---|---|
| Person/person group | S, D, M | S, D, M | Names, roles, affiliations, and institutional groups |
| Location | S, C | S, C | Toponyms and lexicalized place formations |
| Abstract concept | S, D, C | S, D | English compounds extend abstract framing |
| Event/process | S, D, C, M | S, D, C, M | Highest structural versatility |
| Institution/organization | S, M | S, C, M | Complex institutions favour modification |

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| Referential class | BBC News realization | Kun.uz realization | Main implication |
|---|---|---|---|
| Material object | S, M | S, M | Simple classes vs technically specified objects |
| Document | M | M | Referential precision requires domain specification |
| Domain/informational concept | - | C | Sample-specific Uzbek compound category |

*Note. S = simplex; D = derived; C = compound; M = multiword; - = not attested in the selected sample.*

Two further patterns deserve emphasis. First, institutions occupy a broader structural range in Kun.uz because compounds such as *Yevroittifoq* and *oliygoh* join simplex and multiword forms. Second, the category of domain/informational concept is represented only by Uzbek compounds in the source matrix, particularly technology- and media-related formations. These are sample-specific observations rather than universal language differences, yet they show that referential inventories and word-formation resources cannot be separated without losing explanatory detail.

## 4. DISCUSSION

**4.1. Functional convergence through different morphosyntactic resources**. The central finding is functional convergence under formal divergence. Both BBC News and Kun.uz must make a referent rapidly identifiable, and both employ the same four broad structural zones. Yet English packages many relations through adjacency, lexical compounding, and premodification, whereas Uzbek draws more visibly on agglutinative morphology and relational marking. This accords with corpus descriptions of English noun-phrase compression (Biber et al., 1999) and grammatical accounts of Uzbek nominal and verbal-noun morphology (Bodrogligeti, 2003). Typological labels such as analytic and agglutinative are useful only as tendencies (Comrie, 1989); the data show overlap as well as contrast. Kun.uz also uses unmarked adjacency, and BBC News also employs derivation. The difference lies in relative preference, not categorical exclusivity.

This distinction has implications for comparative headline research. Formal length cannot be equated mechanically with communicative inefficiency. An English sequence such as *AI voice tool* is compact because the relations between three nouns are inferred from order. An Uzbek sequence such as *dronlarni havoda quvvatlantirish texnologiyasi* is longer, but its case and verbal-noun morphology specifies what is powered, where the action occurs, and what kind of technology is meant. The two constructions allocate interpretive work differently: English transfers more relational inference to the reader, while Uzbek incorporates more of that relation into the form.

**4.2. Referential load as a predictor of nominal architecture**. The SRA model suggests a graded relation between referential load and structural architecture. Simplex units are favoured when the referent is already accessible through public knowledge, lexical conventionality, or immediate context. Derived units are favoured when the headline must classify a participant or reify a process. Compounds are effective when two conceptual domains can be fused into a stable lexical package. Multiword units are selected when identification depends on several simultaneous restrictions, as with documents, agencies, complex policy events, and technical objects. This progression is not

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deterministic, but it explains why *Trump* and *Senat* can stand alone while *national security white paper* and *O'zbekistonning tashqi siyosat konsepsiyasi* require layered specification.

The unique flexibility of event/process reference follows from the same principle. Events may be construed as basic social occurrences (*funeral, tashrif*), as derived reifications (*inflation, yig'ilish*), as lexical compounds (*ceasefire, eko-sammit*), or as highly specified configurations (*historic train gathering event, mudofaa sohasidagi innovatsion texnologiyalar festivali*). Eventivity is therefore not tied to one morphological form. Instead, the selected structure reflects whether the headline presents the event as familiar, classifies it by formation, lexicalizes it as a conventional package, or differentiates it through multiple attributes.

**4.3. Contextual presupposition, metonymy, and secondary naming**. Referential economy also depends on shared knowledge. Personal surnames, titles, and institutional abbreviations presuppose that readers can reconstruct omitted information. Toponyms display similar flexibility: country names can denote territories or state actors, while capital names can stand for governments. Such place-for-institution mappings are conventional metonymies that provide mental access to a related target (Radden & Kövecses, 1999). In headline discourse, their value is practical: *Boku* and *Moskva* can encode an interstate relationship without spelling out the two governments.

Secondary naming introduces an additional interpretive layer. English compounds such as *playbook, roadmap,* and *smokescreen* do not merely identify abstract entities; they select a perspective on political strategy, planning, or concealment. Likewise, *stars* classifies celebrities through a conventional metaphorical transfer. Teliya's (1977) account of secondary nomination helps explain why these forms remain referentially efficient despite figurative origins: the transferred semantic feature has become sufficiently conventional for rapid retrieval. Thus, headline brevity is achieved not only by deleting material but also by activating culturally stabilized naming pathways.

**4.4. Contribution, limitations, and further research**. The article contributes a compact two-axis method for analysing nominal packaging in contrastive news discourse. Rather than listing structures and referents separately, the SRA model asks which formal resources are recruited for which referential tasks. This makes it possible to distinguish shared communicative functions from language-specific morphosyntactic implementation. It also clarifies that the same referent class may be realized through several structures and that the same structure may serve several referent classes.

The findings remain bounded by the dataset. The corpus is purposive, the two outlet samples are not presented as statistically balanced, and the source matrix records salience and presence rather than complete token frequencies. Some categories, especially domain/informational concept, are represented by few examples. The results should therefore be interpreted as an analytical profile of the selected headlines, not as a categorical description of English and Uzbek as whole languages. A larger balanced corpus could test the proposed associations quantitatively, calculate inter-coder agreement, and examine whether structural-referential patterns vary by news domain, headline type, or editorial period.

**5. CONCLUSION**. The comparative analysis of 113 BBC News and Kun.uz headlines identified twelve recurrent structural configurations and eight referential classes. Both sources rely on simplex nominations and suffixation, confirming that lexical immediacy and derivational categorization are common foundations of headline naming. Their main difference concerns how additional information is compressed. BBC News favours N+N compounds and dense premodification, whereas Kun.uz more often uses productive suffixes, deverbal nominalization, international combining forms, and overt case, possessive, postpositional, and verbal-noun relations. Event/process reference spans all four structural zones in both datasets; document reference is restricted to multiword units. These patterns support the central claim of the SRA model: nominal structure is selected in

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relation to referential load. Headline economy is therefore not a single universal form of shortening, but a language-sensitive coordination of lexical accessibility, morphological categorization, conceptual fusion, and relational specification.

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