

Lesson 1: Indefinite Articles

Nouns

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing or idea. For example: Peter, bicycle, dog, Alexandria, and truth are all nouns. Coptic nouns are classified by number and gender.

Number: They can be singular (s.) or plural (pl.) like in English. Contrast this with Arabic where a noun can be singular, dual (du.) or plural. Many Coptic nouns do not have a distinct plural form, but some do. We will call these the irregular plural form. The number (singular or plural) is only evident from the preceding article.

Gender: Singular nouns can also be either masculine (m.) or feminine (f.) like in French, Spanish or Arabic. There is no neuter gender in Coptic (like in Greek or English).

Indefinite Articles

Indefinite articles are used to denote a noun that is not specified. For example, when we talk of "a book," we are referring to any book. Coptic has two forms of the indefinite article (singular and plural), which are attached directly to the beginning of the noun.

ⲁⲓ : Singular Indefinite Article for both masculine and feminine nouns. Translated to "a" or "an" in English

ⲉⲓⲓ : Plural Indefinite Article which translates to the "s" at the end of a noun

Examples

ⲁⲓ	a, an	ⲉⲓⲓ	-s
ⲛⲁⲙⲉ	a name	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲉ	names
ⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛ	a man	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛ	men
ⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛ	a woman	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛ	women
ⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛ	an elder	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛ	elders
ⲛⲁⲙⲁ	an eye	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲁ	eyes
ⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁ	a god	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁ	gods
ⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁ	a dome	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲙⲁ	domes
ⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛⲁⲛ	a tower	ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲁⲙⲁⲛⲁⲛ	towers

Application

Application 1: Singular Articles

This is an excerpt from the priest's prayer during the Offertory. All of the definite and indefinite articles are underlined below, and an explanation for each follows.

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1. الجلال - the article الـ is the singular indefinite article. الجلال means "glory"
2. الاعزاز - the article الـ is the singular indefinite article. الاعزاز means "honor"
3. السلامة - The article الـ is the singular indefinite article. So السلامة means "peace."
4. البناء - The article الـ is the singular indefinite article. البناء is a verb meaning "to edify." It is used here as a noun, so البناء means "edification."

Application 2: Plural Indefinite Articles

This is an excerpt from Psalm 148 as it is chanted during the Fourth Canticle in the Vespers and Midnight Praises. All of the plural indefinite articles are underlined below, and an explanation for each follows.

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1. **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** - The article **ረጅም** is the plural indefinite article. So **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** means "young men"
2. **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** - The article **ረጅም** is the plural indefinite article. So **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** means "virgins" or "maidens"
3. **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** - The article **ረጅም** is the plural indefinite article. So **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** means "old men" or "elders"
4. **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** - The article **ረጅም** is the plural indefinite article. So **ረጅም ጊዜ ሠዎች** means "children"

Exercises

Exercise 1: Translate to Coptic

Translate the following phrases into Coptic. Note that you can use the preposition ⲛⲓ as "and" to connect two nouns.

1. a man and a woman
2. a boy and a girl
3. a father and a mother
4. a father and a son
5. fathers and mothers
6. women and men
7. boys and girls
8. a king and a queen

Exercise 2: Translate to English

Translate the following phrases into English:

1. ⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ
2. ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ
3. ⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ
4. ⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ
5. ⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ
6. ⲛⲓⲛⲓ
7. ⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ
8. ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ
9. ⲛⲓⲛⲓ

Resources

- Moawad Daoud Lesson 1
- ACTS 2990 Lesson 2A
- Sameh Younan Chapter 2 (2.1.i, 2.1.ii)
- Nabil Mattar Chapter 2, Chapter 4

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