

Conversion in Uzbek And English Anthroponymy: Comparative Study

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Abstract: This study investigates the formation of anthroponyms through the conversion method in Uzbek and English. The research focuses on the structural, semantic, and cultural mechanisms underlying the transformation of common nouns into proper names without morphological alteration. A comparative analysis demonstrates that while conversion functions in both languages as a primary means of proprialization, its productivity, semantic transparency, and cultural embeddedness differ significantly. The findings indicate that in Uzbek, the conversion method remains a highly active and semantically transparent nominative mechanism, frequently utilized in contemporary naming practices. Conversely, in English, it is largely lexicalized within historical naming strata, particularly concerning occupational surnames and historical virtue names. Through a detailed examination of theoretical foundations and specific naming categories, this article reveals how linguistic typology and cultural cognition intersect in the domain of onomastics.

Keywords: Conversion method, anthroponymy, proprialization, semantic shift, comparative linguistics, nomination.

Introduction: Anthroponymy represents one of the most culturally and linguistically sensitive domains of lexical organization within any language system. Personal names are not merely arbitrary labels functioning solely for identification; rather, they emerge from highly structured nominative processes shaped by linguistic typology, historical development, and the collective worldview of a speech community. Among the various morphological and syntactic processes utilized in creating new names, the conversion method occupies a particular and significant place.

Conversion is understood in this context as the transition of a lexical unit from the class of common nouns (appellatives) into the class of proper names (proprial units) without any overt morphological marking or derivational affixation [2]. Unlike standard morphological derivation, which relies on suffixes or prefixes, conversion does not involve phonological modification. The structural form of the word remains entirely intact, while its referential status, semantic scope, and grammatical behavior undergo a

fundamental transformation.

Although conversion has been extensively discussed in general linguistics regarding word-class shifts (e.g., from noun to verb), its specific function within anthroponymic systems remains comparatively underexplored, particularly from a cross-linguistic and typological perspective. This study aims to address that gap through a systematic and comprehensive comparison of two typologically distinct languages: Uzbek, an agglutinative Turkic language, and English, an analytic Germanic language. By analyzing how common nouns become personal names in these languages, we can uncover deeper socio-linguistic patterns and cultural values.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONVERSION METHOD

In modern linguistic theory, conversion is frequently treated as a zero-derivation process or a category shift based on functional reanalysis [5]. Within the specific domain of anthroponymy, this functional shift corresponds directly to the process of proprialization — the semantic and referential individuation of a formerly

appellative lexeme [1]. When a common noun becomes a proper noun, it sheds its general categorical meaning and acquires a specific identifying function.

The defining features of the conversion method in anthroponym formation include several key parameters:

- Preservation of phonological structure: The phonetic shape of the word remains identical to its source noun.
- Absence of derivational morphology: No name-forming affixes are added to the root.
- Referential narrowing: The word shifts from denoting a class of objects or concepts to identifying a specific human individual.
- Acquisition of onomastic status: The lexeme begins to function syntactically and pragmatically as a proper noun within discourse.

Thus, the transformation that occurs during anthroponymic conversion is primarily semantic, pragmatic, and socio-cultural rather than strictly morphological. The lexeme transitions from the dictionary (lexicon) to the name inventory (onomasticon), losing its translation potential and gaining an identifying label function.

CONVERSION-BASED ANTHROPONYMS IN UZBEK

1 Structural Features and Vitality

Uzbek, as an agglutinative language, possesses a highly developed and regular derivational system. However, in the realm of anthroponymy, numerous personal names arise entirely without affixation through the direct conversion of common nouns. The grammatical category remains nominal, but the crucial shift concerns referential individuation. For example, common nouns such as Sher ("lion"), Oy ("moon"), Umid ("hope"), Sabr ("patience"), and Amir ("commander") are directly repurposed as given names. In these instances, the conversion method acts as a highly productive onomastic tool.

2 Motivational Typology in Uzbek

The conversion process in Uzbek naming is deeply rooted in cultural motivation. We can categorize these names based on their semantic origins:

a) Religious and Ethical Motivation: Names such as Muslim (Muslim), Mo'min (believer), and Zohid (ascetic) reflect Islamic semantic fields. Conversion here encodes ethical and spiritual aspirations, transferring religious ideals directly onto the individual. The cultural embedding of such names demonstrates the profound interaction between language and the religious worldview of the Uzbek people [3].

b) Metaphorical and Zoomorphic Motivation: Animal-

based anthroponyms like Sher (lion), Burgut (eagle), and Lochin (falcon) rely on metaphorical transfer. The semantic features associated with these animals — such as "strength," "bravery," "vision," and "elevation" — become individualized character traits projected onto the child.

c) Axiological and Abstract Motivation: Abstract nouns are frequently subjected to conversion to express parental expectations, desires, or protective symbolism. Examples include Umid (hope), Sabr (patience), Baxt (happiness), and Shodlik (joy). These names serve as permanent verbalizations of parental wishes.

d) Natural and Cosmic Motivation: Lexemes such as Oy (moon), Quyosh (sun), Yulduz (star), Buloq (spring), and various floral terms like Lola (tulip) and Atirgul (rose) indicate aesthetic and cosmological symbolism deeply rooted in the broader Turkic cultural tradition.

In contemporary Uzbek naming practices, the conversion method remains remarkably productive. New names continue to be formed using this method, and the semantic transparency of these names ensures that their original dictionary meanings remain accessible and culturally relevant to speakers.

CONVERSION-BASED ANTHROPONYMS IN ENGLISH

1 The Historical Dimension and Surnames

In the English language, conversion in anthroponymy is historically prominent, particularly in the formation of surnames derived from occupations and trades. English surnames such as Smith, Baker, Taylor, Carpenter, Mason, and Fisher serve as prime examples. Originally functioning as common appellative nouns denoting a person's profession within medieval society, these lexemes underwent conversion and became hereditary proper names during the Middle English period [4]. As society evolved, the occupational link was severed, but the onomastic form remained.

2 Virtue Names and Abstract Concepts

English also demonstrates a rich history of converting abstract nouns into given names. This practice is most notably associated with the Puritan naming traditions of the 16th and 17th centuries, which sought to embed moral values into personal identity. Examples include Hope, Faith, Grace, Charity, Prudence, and Chastity. While some of these (like Grace and Hope) remain popular today, they often function more as established names rather than transparent moral imperatives.

3 Natural, Floral, and Modern Trends

Nature-based names in English exhibit an aesthetic motivation somewhat comparable to Uzbek flora-based names. Conversions such as Rose, Lily, Summer, Autumn, River, Willow, and Hunter are well-integrated

into the modern English onomasticon. In recent decades, there has been a resurgence in converting common nouns into names (e.g., Apple, Journey, Justice), reflecting a modern desire for unique individualization.

However, unlike Uzbek, where conversion operates as a systematic and pervasive cultural norm, English tends to preserve many conversion-based names (especially surnames) as lexicalized, historical traditions rather than dynamically productive formations in everyday naming.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

1 Productivity

A direct comparison reveals diverging levels of productivity. In Uzbek, the conversion method functions as an active, living nominative mechanism. New names frequently emerge from abstract, natural, and symbolic nouns, reflecting contemporary values and continuous cultural traditions. In contrast, while English still sees occasional new conversions (especially in celebrity naming or nature names), the bulk of its conversion-based anthroponyms (like occupational surnames) are historically established and closed systems.

2 Semantic Transparency

Uzbek conversion-based names consistently retain immediate semantic transparency. The lexical meaning of words like Baxt or Oy remains completely accessible to native speakers, and this transparency is intentionally utilized for symbolic effect. In English, semantic opacity frequently occurs due to diachronic fossilization. For instance, the surname Smith no longer evokes the mental image of a blacksmith for most modern speakers; it functions purely as an identifying label.

3 Cultural Embeddedness

Uzbek anthroponymy demonstrates a stronger, more immediate integration of the conversion method with the collective worldview, religious beliefs, and poetic symbolism of the community. English anthroponymy, on the other hand, acts as a historical repository, reflecting past socio-economic structures (medieval guilds and occupations) and historical religious movements (Puritanism).

LINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS

The comparative analysis indicates that the conversion method interacts differently with the typological structures of the two languages. In agglutinative Uzbek, conversion operates as a powerful alternative to its otherwise rich derivational affixation, providing a direct route from concept to name. In analytic English, flexible category boundaries have historically facilitated

widespread conversion, but present-day grammatical and cultural shifts have limited its broad applicability as a primary name-generating tool. Thus, the conversion method illustrates how structural linguistic typology and cultural tradition jointly and continuously shape naming systems.

CONCLUSION

The conversion method serves as a universal mechanism in anthroponym formation, yet its productivity, semantic clarity, and cultural significance vary significantly across languages. The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that Uzbek exhibits ongoing semantic vitality and transparency in its conversion-based names, reflecting an active cultural engagement with the lexicon. Conversely, English demonstrates historical consolidation, where significant portions of its conversion-based names have undergone partial or complete lexical fossilization.

Ultimately, this study confirms that anthroponymic conversion is not merely a dry grammatical phenomenon or a simple word-class shift. It is a profound reflection of socio-cultural cognition, historical evolution, and human values. Further research may extend this comparative framework to other Turkic and Germanic languages to establish broader, more comprehensive typological generalizations regarding the universal human drive to name.

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