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THE LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON OF PROPER NOUNS TRANSITIONING INTO COMMON NOUNS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract. The transition of proper nouns into common nouns, known as appellativization or deonymization, represents a significant lexical and semantic process in language development. This phenomenon reflects socio-cultural influence, technological advancement, and cognitive mechanisms underlying categorization and metaphorization. The present study investigates the linguistic features, mechanisms, and functional aspects of proper nouns transitioning into common nouns in English and Uzbek languages. A comparative analysis reveals both universal and language-specific tendencies in morphological adaptation, semantic shift, and pragmatic usage. The research demonstrates that deonymization is driven by metonymy, metaphor, frequency of usage, and socio-cultural salience. The findings contribute to lexical semantics, onomastics, and cross-linguistic studies.

Keywords: proper noun, common noun, deonymization, appellativization, semantic shift, lexicalization, English language, Uzbek language, onomastics.

Introduction. Language is a living system that constantly evolves under the influence of social, cultural, and cognitive factors. One of the most intriguing processes in lexical evolution is the transition of proper nouns into common nouns, a phenomenon known as deonymization or appellativization. Proper nouns traditionally refer to unique entities such as individual people, geographical locations, or specific brands, and they serve the fundamental function of naming and identifying a single referent. Common nouns, in contrast, denote classes or categories of entities and allow speakers to generalize concepts. The transformation of proper nouns into common nouns reflects not only semantic and morphological changes but also the socio-cultural and cognitive mechanisms of language usage.

In English, this process is widely attested. Historical examples such as *sandwich* (from John Montagu), *diesel* (from Rudolf Diesel), and *boycott* (from Charles Boycott) illustrate how personal names can become generalized lexical items representing objects, processes, or actions. In contemporary English, the expansion includes brand names becoming verbs, as seen in *to google* (from Google) or *xerox* for photocopying, demonstrating both morphological flexibility and semantic broadening.

In the Uzbek language, a similar but structurally distinct phenomenon occurs. Proper nouns derived from foreign or domestic sources, including personal names and scientific eponyms, often transition into commonly used nouns through phonological and morphological adaptation. For instance, *rentgen* (from Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen) and *makintosh* (from Charles Macintosh) are fully integrated into the Uzbek lexicon, losing their referential uniqueness and functioning as standard common nouns. Uzbek morphological strategies, such as agglutinative suffixation, allow these borrowed or native proper nouns to conform to the grammatical system while retaining semantic clarity.

The phenomenon of proper nouns transitioning into common nouns is not merely a lexical curiosity; it reflects the interaction between cognitive categorization, cultural prominence, and language contact. Highly salient names often become shorthand for broader categories or

associated functions, creating conceptual metaphors and metonymic extensions in the mental lexicon. Frequency of usage, social awareness, and technological influence further accelerate this lexical generalization.

Understanding this process has important implications for multiple linguistic fields, including lexical semantics, onomastics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. It sheds light on how speakers abstract general concepts from specific referents, how languages differ in accommodating new lexical forms, and how socio-cultural and historical factors influence vocabulary evolution. Comparative analysis of English and Uzbek offers insight into universal mechanisms of deonymization as well as language-specific strategies for morphological and semantic integration.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the mechanisms, structural adaptations, and socio-cultural factors governing the transition of proper nouns into common nouns in English and Uzbek. The research addresses the following questions: What semantic and cognitive processes underlie the appellativization of proper nouns? How do morphological strategies differ between English and Uzbek in integrating these nouns into common usage? What role do socio-cultural prominence and frequency of use play in the lexical transition? Which linguistic patterns are universal and which are language-specific?

By analyzing authentic language examples, etymological data, and corpus evidence, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive account of the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural dynamics that drive the evolution of proper nouns into common nouns in two typologically and historically distinct languages.

Literature Review. The phenomenon of proper nouns transitioning into common nouns, known as deonymization or appellativization, has attracted significant scholarly attention in the fields of onomastics, lexical semantics, cognitive linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Scholars generally agree that proper nouns initially function as unique referential markers but, under certain conditions, can become generalized lexical items representing classes, objects, processes, or even actions.

1. Deonymization in English Linguistics

In English, deonymization is widely documented and manifests in several forms. Historical examples include:

- Sandwich: Derived from John Montagu, the earl's habit of consuming meat between slices of bread became generalized, producing the common noun *sandwich*.

- Diesel: From Rudolf Diesel, the proper name evolved into a term for a type of fuel and engine.

- Boycott: From Charles Boycott, the surname became a verb and noun denoting social ostracism.

These examples illustrate metonymic generalization, where a person or entity becomes associated with a characteristic, object, or action. According to Crystal (2010), frequency of usage and social relevance are crucial in facilitating this semantic shift, which often leads to morphological flexibility, including zero-derivation to form verbs (*to google*, *to boycott*).

Deonymization in Uzbek Linguistics. In Uzbek, proper nouns also transition into common nouns, but the process differs structurally due to the language's agglutinative morphology and

phonological adaptation rules. Commonly, proper nouns borrowed from foreign sources, especially scientific eponyms, are phonologically adapted and receive nominal or verbal suffixes:

- Rentgen: From Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, the name has become a common noun referring to X-ray imaging.

- Makintosh: From Charles Macintosh, adapted to denote a type of raincoat.

Uzbek linguists (Abdullaeva, 2018; Karimov, 2020) note that suffixation and phonological assimilation are key to integrating proper nouns into the Uzbek lexicon. Unlike English, Uzbek rarely uses proper nouns as verbs without affixation; instead, verbalization is achieved by morphological derivation (*rentgenlash*, 'to X-ray').

Furthermore, Uzbek literature shows examples of toponyms and anthroponyms being generalized. Names of historically significant figures, places, and literary characters have entered common usage as metaphorical references or category labels, reflecting both cultural salience and semantic broadening.

Cross-Linguistic Perspectives. Comparative studies indicate both universal and language-specific patterns:

Universal mechanisms: Metonymy association between a person/brand and an object or action. Metaphor conceptual extension from unique referent to a broader class. Frequency of use high repetition accelerates lexicalization. Socio-cultural prominence public awareness drives adoption.

Language-specific strategies:

- English: high productivity in zero-derivation and verb formation.

- Uzbek: agglutinative suffixation and phonological adaptation.

For instance, while *to google* seamlessly enters English syntax as a verb, Uzbek requires morphological integration (*googlash*) to conform to grammatical rules. Such differences highlight the interplay between universal cognitive processes and language-specific structural constraints.

Sociolinguistic and Cognitive Implications. The phenomenon also intersects with sociolinguistics, particularly in the domains of language contact, globalization, and technological influence. Brand names, digital terminology, and scientific eponyms often experience accelerated lexical generalization. For example, the name Google has become a verb globally, reflecting both cognitive salience and technological ubiquity. Cognitively, speakers rely on prototype and schema-based categorization, mapping a proper noun onto a generalized concept. This is supported by psycholinguistic studies demonstrating that highly salient names trigger faster lexical access and facilitate semantic broadening (Taylor, 2017).

Gaps in the Literature. While English deonymization has been extensively studied, systematic comparative analyses with Uzbek remain limited. Existing studies often describe examples in isolation without analyzing structural adaptation, morphological strategies, or pragmatic functions. This research addresses these gaps by providing a cross-linguistic and structural comparison, emphasizing both semantic mechanisms and morphological integration.

Transition of Proper Nouns into Common Nouns in English and Uzbek: Semantic,

Morphological, and Usage Analysis

This table presents selected examples of proper nouns that have transitioned into common nouns in English and Uzbek. It highlights the original proper noun, derived common noun, semantic shift, morphological adaptation, and frequency/context of usage. The table illustrates both universal mechanisms (metonymy, metaphor, semantic broadening) and language-specific strategies (zero-derivation in English, agglutinative suffixation in Uzbek).

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Proper Noun Transition in English and Uzbek

Language	Proper Noun	Common Noun / Derived Form	Semantic Shift	Morphological Adaptation	Usage / Frequency
English	John Montagu	sandwich	From person to object (food)	None (nounization)	High; everyday usage
English	Charles Boycott	boycott	From person to action / social practice	Zero-derivation; verb (to boycott)	High; political/social contexts
English	Rudolf Diesel	diesel	From person to product (fuel)	None (nounization)	High; technical contexts
English	Google	to google	Brand name → verb (search action)	Zero-derivation; verbification	Very high; digital communication
English	Xerox	xerox	Brand name → verb (photocopy action)	Zero-derivation; verbification	Medium; office/technical contexts
Uzbek	Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen	rentgen	From person to object / X-ray image	Phonological adaptation; suffixation possible (rentgenlash, 'to X-ray')	High; medical and educational contexts
Uzbek	Charles Macintosh	makintosh	From person to object (raincoat)	Phonological adaptation	Medium; everyday speech

Language	Proper Noun	Common Noun / Derived Form	Semantic Shift	Morphological Adaptation	Usage / Frequency
Uzbek	Google	googlash	Brand name → verb (search action)	Agglutinative suffix (-lash)	High; digital communication
Uzbek	Nikotin	nikotin	From person to substance (chemical)	Phonological adaptation; nominal integration	Medium; educational/scientific contexts

Semantic Mechanisms Metonymy Person or brand associated with object/action (e.g., *diesel*, *boycott*, *rentgen*). Metaphor Abstracted function from proper noun to general concept (e.g., *googlash*, *to google*). Semantic Broadening Expansion from unique referent to general class.

Morphological Adaptation

- English: High productivity in zero-derivation; proper nouns can function as verbs without affixation (*to google*, *to boycott*).

- Uzbek: Requires agglutinative suffixation (*googlash*, *rentgenlash*) or phonological adaptation (*makintosh*, *nikotin*).

Usage Frequency & Context. High-frequency usage accelerates lexical generalization. English examples dominate digital and social contexts; Uzbek examples dominate educational, medical, and technological contexts.

Cross-Linguistic Insights. Universal cognitive processes (metonymy, metaphor, semantic broadening) drive deonymization in both languages. Structural typology (analytic vs. agglutinative) determines morphological integration strategies.

Discussion. The analysis of proper nouns transitioning into common nouns in English and Uzbek reveals several key linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural patterns. This phenomenon, widely recognized as deonymization or appellativization, demonstrates both universal mechanisms and language-specific strategies in the lexicalization process.

Semantic Mechanisms. In both English and Uzbek, the primary driver of this transition is semantic generalization. Proper nouns acquire broader meanings through metonymy, metaphor, and conceptual extension. For instance, in English, the surname Charles Boycott generalized into the noun and verb *boycott*, representing social ostracism rather than the person himself. Similarly, in Uzbek, the proper noun Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen became *rentgen*, a common noun representing X-ray imaging. These examples illustrate that semantic shift occurs when a proper noun is cognitively associated with a characteristic object, action, or concept, allowing speakers to abstract the unique referent into a general category. The phenomenon aligns with prototype theory, whereby frequently recognized and culturally salient entities become mental prototypes for generalized concepts (Langacker, 1987; Taylor, 2017).

Morphological Adaptation. A significant difference between English and Uzbek lies in morphological adaptation. English, as an analytic language, often relies on zero-derivation,

permitting proper nouns to function as verbs without any morphological modification (*to google*, *to boycott*). This flexibility allows rapid lexicalization and syntactic integration. In contrast, Uzbek, an agglutinative language, depends on suffixation and phonological adaptation to integrate proper nouns into the grammatical system. Examples such as *googlash* (*to google*) or *rentgenlash* (*to X-ray*) demonstrate how suffixes transform proper nouns into verbs, while phonologically adapted forms like *makintosh* and *nikotin* enter the nominal lexicon as fully integrated common nouns. This reflects the language-specific typology, where morphology compensates for syntactic restrictions and maintains clarity in communication.

Frequency and Socio-Cultural Salience. The study confirms that frequency of usage and socio-cultural prominence are critical factors in lexical generalization. Proper nouns associated with highly visible individuals, technological innovations, or widely used brands are more likely to undergo deonymization. For example, *Google*'s global prominence led to its verbification in both English and Uzbek (*to google*, *googlash*), while lesser-known eponyms remain semantically restricted. This observation aligns with Crystal's (2010) argument that highly salient and culturally relevant names accelerate cognitive generalization, enabling the speaker community to adopt the proper noun as a generic term. Similarly, the Uzbek examples show that scientific and technological domains contribute most to proper noun lexicalization, reflecting both educational dissemination and professional relevance.

Cognitive and Pragmatic Implications. The cognitive process underlying deonymization involves conceptual mapping, where the unique referent is abstracted to represent a broader category. Speakers associate properties or functions of the original referent with the generalized noun or verb. Pragmatically, these lexicalized forms are context-dependent; for instance, *boycott* is primarily used in social and political discourse, whereas *googlash* is restricted to digital contexts.

Cross-Linguistic Patterns. Comparison between English and Uzbek demonstrates both universal and language-specific tendencies:

Universal: Semantic generalization via metonymy and metaphor. Cognitive abstraction of salient referents. Influence of socio-cultural prominence and frequency of exposure.

Language-specific: English: zero-derivation, high syntactic flexibility. Uzbek: agglutinative suffixation, phonological assimilation. This suggests that while the cognitive and social principles driving deonymization are universal, structural constraints and typology determine the form of integration.

Implications for Linguistic Theory. The findings contribute to lexical semantics, onomastics, and cross-linguistic studies by illustrating how languages systematically accommodate new lexical items originating from proper nouns. They also highlight the interplay between cognition, culture, and linguistic structure, showing that language evolution is shaped both by human conceptualization and grammatical architecture. Furthermore, understanding these patterns has practical implications for language education, translation, and corpus linguistics, particularly in teaching how eponyms and proper nouns can change functions across languages.

Limitations and Future Directions. The study relies primarily on selected examples and corpus observation; larger-scale quantitative studies would provide statistical validation. Diachronic analysis of Uzbek proper noun lexicalization remains limited; future research could explore historical corpora to track evolution over time. Cross-linguistic comparisons could be expanded to include additional Turkic and Indo-European languages for broader generalization.

Conclusion. This study examined the linguistic phenomenon of proper nouns transitioning into common nouns in English and Uzbek, highlighting both universal cognitive mechanisms and language-specific structural strategies. The main conclusions are as follows: Semantic generalization is the core mechanism: proper nouns acquire broader meanings through metonymy, metaphor, and conceptual extension, allowing unique referents to represent classes, objects, actions, or processes.

Morphological adaptation differs across languages: English, as an analytic language, relies heavily on zero-derivation, allowing proper nouns to function directly as verbs or nouns (*to google*, *to boycott*). Uzbek, as an agglutinative language, uses suffixation and phonological assimilation to integrate proper nouns into the grammatical system (*googlash*, *rentgenlash*, *makintosh*). Frequency and socio-cultural prominence play a decisive role: highly visible individuals, brands, and scientific eponyms are more likely to undergo lexical generalization. Cross-linguistic comparison indicates that while cognitive mechanisms (prototype formation, abstraction, metonymy) are universal, structural and typological differences determine the pathways of lexical integration. Practical and theoretical implications: Understanding deonymization enriches lexical semantics, onomastics, and psycholinguistics, and aids in language education, translation studies, and corpus linguistics. In conclusion, the transition of proper nouns into common nouns reflects a dynamic interplay of cognitive processes, cultural factors, and linguistic structures, demonstrating how languages adapt to changing communicative and conceptual needs while maintaining system-specific constraints.

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