

CONVERSION IN PRESENT DAY ENGLISH, SUBSTANTIVATION, CONVERSION IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF SPEECH, CONVERSION AND OTHER TYPES OF WORD- FORMATION

Israfilova Afat Nariman

Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Oil and Industry University

Abstract. *Conversion as a phenomenon is considered to be the most productive means of forming new words in English morphology. It is a derivational process that includes no overt marking; for example, there is no difference in the form now withstanding the lexical category of the word has changed from one class to another. It will be argued that the phenomenon of conversion or zero-derivation, typical of marginally inflected languages, such as English, solves the problem of word formation without affixal attachment to the base. The scope of this study is to expose the most productive cases of conversion and show how the unmarked derivational affix may produce new words at the same pace as an overt form. Moreover, it will be shown that being a stem language, there exist instances of conversion by using identical stems for both Nouns and Verbs.*

Keywords: *conversion, substantivization, synchronic analysis, a historical perspective, the problem of directionality, stylistic approach of conversion, the issue of productivity.*

The predominant purpose of this article goes through by shaping a critical and informative analysis of conversion in English throughout multifarious time periods as well as explaining the causal of the challenges including questions which are left unanswered affiliated to this topic. There are two main approaches that are to be taken into consideration:

- 1) synchronic analysis
- 2) a historical perspective

For the first analysis which is called synchronic analysis, following this further, representing the types of conversion in Present-Day English in greater detail, many controversial questions raised on conversion in English will be thoroughly investigated with numerous examples explicated

However, there are four main problems that are raised in this linguistic field. They are as follows:

1. the problem of directionality
2. the problem of definition of conversion
3. syntactic approach of conversion
4. the issue of productivity.

The purpose of this part of study is to outline a number of different linguistic theories that has been proposed on conversion. In addition to this, a historical perspective of conversion in English will be examined as a diachronic approach of analysis. The word formation process of conversion has been present for centuries in the language. Little attention has been drawn on conversion historically. Apart from this point, there have not been many studies in this linguistic area, the purposes of this diachronic study are to deliver instructive, unified and meticulous descriptions on conversion with a great deal of comprehensive historical exemplifications and also to be able to trace, with confidence, the practicable and more reliable explanations to the essential questions that arise. This part as well in terms is divided into four sub-sections, namely:

1. conversion in Old English
2. conversion in Middle English
3. conversion in Early Modern English, and manipulate the instances of conversion in each

period and find out how the morphological process; i.e. conversion, evolved which hopefully shed insights on rather practical and explicative answers to the problems of conversion. Derivation without affixes, which is also one of the very productive means of forming new words in English morphology. It is a derivational process that includes no overt marking; i.e. there is no difference in form even though the lexical category of the word has changed from one class to another. Aforementioned fact that conversion is a productive process reflects on two prospects: speakers of English prefer invariable base forms, and English is tending to become a more isolated language.

There are several types of conversion: noun to verb, verb to noun, adjective to verb, this is also proved by the declining umlaut nouns. Marginal types of conversion such as phrase-compounds and

other kinds, like prepositions. As can be seen in the data above, each pair of words is derivationally linked, and they are exactly the same in their phonetic realisations. Although conversion appears to be simple, there are a variety of problems regarding conversion. Thus, the aim of this study is to provide a theoretical and informative analysis of conversion in English throughout distinct time periods. There are two main approaches that are going to be presented in this study; namely synchronic and diachronic approaches. For the synchronic analysis, in addition to representing the types of conversion in Present-Day English in greater detail, many controversial questions raised on conversion in English will be thoroughly investigated with numerous examples explicated. According to Bauer and Valer, there happen to be two groups of questions confronting conversion, namely standard problems and so-called „unexpected“ problems. Standard problems are the unsolved and uncertain ones that have been examined for a long period of time so that these questions always resurface whenever there is a discussion on conversion, such as different considerations on the definition of conversion, directionality and the varied approaches on conversion such as syntactical analysis. On the other hand, there are also some other new problems which were not expected before: for example, the questions of typology, the distinction between word-formation and figurative extension, and the question of the extent to which the meaning of conversion is predictable. For the purpose of this study, it should be aimed to analyse only the standard questions that arise on conversion for this research and to depict them coherently. In addition to this, a historical perspective of conversion in English will be examined as a diachronic approach of analysis. The word formation process of conversion has been present for centuries in the language. Little attention has been drawn on conversion historically. Apart from the fact that there have not been many studies in this linguistic area, the purposes of this diachronic study are to deliver instructive, unified and meticulous descriptions on conversion with a great deal of comprehensive historical exemplifications and also to be able to trace, with confidence, the practicable and more reliable explanations to the essential questions that arise.

Every lexical item has its own word-class. Therefore, words can be easily grouped together by virtue of their various parts of speech; for example, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. In contrast, some argue that there are rather fuzzy boundaries between each of the word classes, making it quite unreasonable to classify all the elements. However, it is inevitable to speak of word-class when discussing conversion, since conversion is strictly the change of one word category into another word category. Thus, it is sensible and important to differentiate words that are involved in the derivational process of conversion centered on lexical categories. In this chapter, two main types of conversion in English to a different word-class are considered in detail as it is shown below;

1. so-called major
2. minor types.

The major types of conversion comprises of three main traditionally known word-classes;

1. nouns
2. verbs
3. adjectives.

It goes without saying that these that are enumerated afore are to be the most common types of English conversion. Due to the purpose of this section, which is to provide a short description of the cases of conversion in English, only the prototypical characteristics of each lexical category are considered here, despite the fact that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the parts of speech. Nouns are normally defined as lexical items denoting persons, objects and animals. They mostly function as subject and object, but they can sometimes be used as modifiers, too. Usually, distribution of nouns is preceded by articles, both definite and indefinite, and number inflection and genitive inflection are applied to nouns. The definition of verbs is normally in reference to actions or activities, and the prime function of verbs is as predicates. Number, tense, modality, and person inflections are used with verbs. Adjectives function as modifiers and also can be modified by adverbs, and their typical meanings are referring to properties of people or things. There are two inflections that can be applied to adjectives, comparative and superlative attaching either suffixes or more/ the most.

The flexibility of the English vocabulary system makes a word formed by conversion capable of further derivation, so that it enters into combinations not only with functional but also with derivational affixes characteristic of a verbal stem, and becomes distribution ally equivalent to it. For example, view ‘to watch television’ gives viewable, viewer, viewing. Conversion may be combined with other word-building processes, such as composition. Attributive phrases like black ball, black list, pin point, stone wall form the basis of such firmly established verbs as blackball, blacklist, pinpoint, stonewall. The same pattern is much used in noncewords such as to my-dear, to my-love, to blue-pencil. This type should be distinguished from cases when composition and conversion are not

simultaneous, that is when, for instance, a compound noun gives rise to a verb: corkscrew n: corkscrew v; streamline n : : streamline v. A special pattern deserving attention because of its ever increasing productivity results as a combined effect of composition and conversion forming nouns out of verb-adverb combinations. This type is different from conversion proper as the basic forms are not homonymous due to the difference in the stress pattern, although they consist of identical morphemes. Thanks to solid or hyphenated spelling and single stress the noun stem obtains phonetical and graphical integrity and indivisibility absent in the verb-group, cf. to 'draw 'back : : a 'drawback. Further examples are: blackout n : : black out v; breakdown n : : break down v; come-back, drawback, fall-out, hand-out, hangover, knockout, link-up, lookout, lockout, makeup, pull-over, runaway, run-off, set-back, take-off, takeover, teach-in.

The question now arises whether such cases when words with an adjective stem have the paradigm of a noun should also be classified as conversion, e. g. *a private, the private*s uniform, a group of privates*. Other examples of words that are completely substantivized (i.e. ma, have the plural form or be used in the Possessive case) are *captive, conservative, criminal, female, fugitive, grown-up, intellectual, male, mild, native, neutral, radical, red, relative* and many more.

Completely substantivized adjectives may be associated with determinatives, e. g.: *Swinton combed out all the undesirables* (Lindsay). There is no universally accepted evaluation of this group. E. Kruisinga² speaks of conversion whenever a word receives a syntactic function which is not its basic one.

The prevailing standpoint among Leningrad linguists is different. L. P. Vinokurova, I. P. Ivanova and some other scholars maintain that substantivation in which adjectives have the paradigm and syntactic features of nouns differs from conversion, as in substantivation a new word arises not spontaneously but gradually, so that a word already existing in the language by and by acquires a new syntactic function and* changes its meaning as a result of a gradual process of isolation. There are other scholars, however, who think this reasoning open to doubt: the coining of a new word is at first nothing but a fact of contextual usage, be it a case of recognized conversion or substantivation. The process of conversion is impossible outside a context. No isolated word can ever be formed by conversion.

L. P. Vinokurova distinguishes two main types of substantivation: (1) it may be the outcome of ellipsis in an attributive phrase, e. g. *theelastic (cord)*, or (2) it may be due to an unusual syntactic functioning. E.g.: *I am a contemplative, one of the impossibles*.

It may be argued, however, that there must be a moment of the first omission of the determined word or the first instance when the adjective is used in speech in a new function.

There is one more point to be considered, namely a radical difference at the synchronic level: whereas words coined by conversion form regular pairs of homonyms with words from which they are derived, no such regular pattern of modelled homonymy is possible in substantivation of adjectives. It has already been emphasized that in nouns and verbs it is the morphologically simple words that form the bulk of material used in conversion. The predominance of derived adjectives prevents this class of words from entering modelled homonymy.

The degree of substantivation may be different. Alongside with complete substantivation of the type already mentioned (*the private, the private's, the privates*), there exists partial substantivation. In this last case a substantivised adjective or participle denotes a group or a class of people: *the blind, the dead, the English, the poor, the rich, the accused, the condemned, the living, the unemployed, the wounded, the lower-paid*.

These words are called partially substantivised, since they undergo no morphological changes, i.e. do not acquire a new paradigm and are only used with the definite article and a collective meaning. Besides they keep some properties of adjectives. They can, for instance, be modified by adverbs. The following sentence may be pertinent example for this. *Success is the necessary misfortune of human life, but it is only to the very unfortunate that it comes early* (Trollope). *It was the suspicious and realistic, I thought, who were most easy to reassure. It was the same in love: the extravagantly jealous sometimes needed only a single word to be transported into absolute trust* (Snow).

Besides the substantivised adjectives denoting human beings there is a considerable group of abstract nouns, as is well illustrated by such grammatical terms as: *the Singular, the Plural, the Present, the Past, the Future*, and also: *the evil, the good, the impossible*. For instance: "One should never struggle against the inevitable," he said

It is thus evident that substantivation has been the object of much controversy. Some of those, who do not accept substantivation of adjectives as a variant of conversion, consider conversion as a process limited to the formation of verbs from nouns and nouns from verbs. But this point of view is far from being universally accepted.

In this part of article, the types of conversion according to parts of speech and secondary word classes involved. By secondary word classes we mean lexico-grammatical classes, that is subsets within parts of speech that differ in meaning and functions, as, for instance, transitive and intransitive verbs, countable and uncountable nouns, gradable and non-gradable adjectives, and so on. We know already that the most frequent types of conversion are those from noun to verb, from verb to noun and from adjective to noun and to verb. The first type seems especially important, conversion being the main process of verb-formation at present. Less frequent but also quite possible is conversion from form words to nouns. E. g. He liked to know the ins and outs. I shan't go into the whys and wherefores. He was familiar with ups and downs of life. Use is even made of affixes. In all the above examples the change of paradigm is present and helpful for classifying the newly coined words as cases of conversion. But it is not absolutely necessary, because conversion is not limited to such parts of speech which possess a paradigm.

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