

Linguistic Features of English and Uzbek Anthroponyms

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Abstract: *Name structures, historical origins, semantic features, and social functions are compared in English and Uzbek anthroponyms. English names developed through contact with Germanic, Latin, Norse, Norman-French, and biblical traditions. Uzbek names reflect Turkic, Islamic, and Persian cultural influences. Particular attention is given to morphological patterns in Uzbek naming and to meaning loss in English names over time. The comparison shows that anthroponyms carry more than individual identity — they preserve collective history, religion, and culture.*

Key words: *Anthroponyms, Onomastics, English Names, Uzbek Names, Comparative Linguistics, Etymology, Cultural Identity, Naming Conventions, Morphological Structure, Semantic Transparency*

1. Introduction

Personal names hold a unique place in language. Every society uses them, yet each naming system is shaped differently by history, religion, and culture. They are not simply labels. Names carry meaning, tradition, and social identity. English and Uzbek are very different in both type and geography. Their naming systems have followed separate paths. English names show several layers of historical influence: early Germanic migrations, Roman church contact, Viking raids, and the Norman Conquest of 1066. Each period left its mark.[1] Uzbek names, developed at the heart of Central Asia, reflect Turkic tribal roots, Islam from the eighth century onward, Persian literary culture, and later Soviet administrative influence, followed by a post-independence cultural revival. Comparing these systems helps explain how names are formed and transmitted across generations. Religion, politics, and cultural traditions also influence naming patterns in ways that differ considerably between the two languages.[2] We observed, in the course of this research, that names function as a kind of cultural record — storing information that persists for centuries. Phonological, morphological, semantic, and socio-cultural aspects of both systems are examined below.

2. Methodology

The study of proper names goes back to ancient times. In his dialogue *Cratylus*, Plato raised the question of whether names naturally connect to things or are simply conventional signs. Aristotle also discussed names as part of speech. In the first century BC, Julius Pollux compiled one of the earliest lists of proper names in the ancient world. Later thinkers developed these ideas further.[3] Chrysippus distinguished proper names from common nouns. Enlightenment philosophers — Hobbes, Locke, Leibniz — each looked at how names relate to meaning. In the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill

argued that proper names simply refer, carrying no descriptive content. It later became a central reference point in linguistic and philosophical discussions of naming.[4]

Modern onomastics grew largely from nineteenth and early twentieth-century philology. Ernest Weekley's work on English surnames laid the early groundwork [5]. The dictionaries by Reaney & Wilson and Hanks & Hodges are still standard references for English name etymology. The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming edited by C. Hough, gives a broad picture of current research [6]. In Uzbek linguistics, Erkin Begmatov's Uzbek Anthroponymy is the foundational text. Begmatov described etymological layers, semantic categories, and structural features of Uzbek given names. G. Sattorov examined regional variation; M. Norqulova investigated name semantics [7]. Russian onomasticist O.A. Leonovich proposed a five-part taxonomy, which Uzbek scholars R. Nuriddinova and B. Yuldashev later extended to more than ten sub-disciplines. Several methods were used in the research. Descriptive analysis examines structural and semantic properties within each language. Comparative analysis identifies similarities and differences. Etymological analysis traces the historical origins of representative names. Linguo-cultural analysis reads anthroponyms as markers of cultural value and group identity.[8]

3. Results and Discussion

Anthroponymy as a Linguistic Discipline

Anthroponymy — from the Greek *anthropos* (human) and *onyma* (name) — studies personal names in all their forms: given names, surnames, patronymics, nicknames, and pseudonyms. Unlike common nouns, which name categories, anthroponyms identify specific people. A name may be unique to one person in a social setting, yet shared by many, which is why supplementary identifiers like surnames and patronymics developed. The field connects with several disciplines. Historical linguistics traces how names change. Sociolinguistics looks at naming norms and social variation. Cultural studies reads names as carriers of collective memory. Cognitive science investigates how names are stored and recalled. Each angle adds something different to the overall picture.[9] Every society develops what we might call a naming system — a shared set of names with conventions for choosing, combining, and passing them on. These systems change over time. They respond to religion, migration, politics, and cultural contact. English and Uzbek offer a good example of how differently such systems can develop.[10]

Linguistic Features of English Anthroponyms

The English name stock is notable for its etymological variety. It can be explained by the many cultural influences English absorbed over fifteen centuries. The oldest layer comes from Anglo-Saxon settlers. Names like Alfred (Old English *aelf* 'elf' + *raed* 'counsel'), Edgar ('rich spear'), Edith ('riches and war'), and Godwin ('friend of God') reflect early Germanic values: courage, nobility, and divine favor [11].

The Norman Conquest of 1066 brought a significant shift. The new ruling class introduced Continental Germanic names through Old French — William, Robert, Richard, Henry, Alice. These displaced many native English names, especially among the upper classes. By the twelfth century, a small set of names dominated, with William alone carried by an unusually high share of recorded men [12]. Christianity added another layer. Biblical names entered through Latin church culture: Johannes became John, Petrus became Peter, Maria became Mary. The Reformation pushed Old Testament names further — Abraham, Isaac, Ezekiel, Deborah, Ruth — as markers of Protestant identity. Celtic traditions in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland contributed names like Brian, Duncan, Gwendolyn, and Siobhan, which still retain their specific phonological character [13].

One major feature of English names is semantic opacity. Most originally had clear meanings. This opacity developed gradually as the language changed over time and source languages moved further from everyday use. Someone named Dorothy is unlikely to know its Greek roots (*doron* 'gift', *theos* 'God'). Someone named Roger probably does not associate it with Germanic 'fame' and 'spear'. This is not just a matter of personal knowledge — it is a structural feature of how English naming

developed [14]. English also makes heavy use of hypocoristics — shortened informal forms. William becomes Will, Bill, or Willie. Elizabeth produces Liz, Beth, Eliza, and Betty. Robert gives Bob and Rob. Some forms — Bill from William, Bob from Robert — go back to older consonantal substitution patterns. Their social function is to mark closeness and informality rather than simply identify a person.

Linguistic Features of Uzbek Anthroponyms

Uzbek naming draws on three main sources: Turkic heritage, Islamic theology, and Persian literary tradition. These are not simply historical layers. All three remain active in contemporary naming practice. The Turkic stratum is the oldest. It reflects pre-Islamic Central Asian values. Names such as Temur ('iron'), Ulmas ('indestructible'), Botir ('brave'), Qodir ('powerful'), and Barcha ('abundant') belong here. A speaker of Uzbek today immediately understands what Temur means and what qualities it is meant to invoke. This is an important contrast with English.

Arabic names entered through Islam, which spread across Central Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Prophet's name, those of his family, and early Muslim figures — Muhammad, Ali, Hasan, Fatima, Khadija, Aisha — came into use with full religious authority. The Abd + divine epithet formula became very productive: Abdulloh ('servant of God'), Abdulaziz, Abdurrahmon.

The Persian stratum reflects the long influence of Persian as the language of courts and literature across Central Asia — from the Samanid dynasty through the Timurid period in the fifteenth century. Persian-derived names draw on beauty, nature, and poetry: Bahor ('spring'), Dilorom ('she who calms the heart'), Shirin ('sweet'), Gulnora ('pomegranate blossom'), Farzona ('wise'). The prestige of Timurid literary culture, especially associated with Alisher Navoiy, kept Persian poetic vocabulary alive as a resource for name-givers.

A notable morphological feature is the use of affixes that carry social and emotional meaning. The suffix -jon (from Persian jan, 'soul') adds warmth: Sarvarjon, Zulfiyajon, Muhammadjon. The element -bek (from Turkic beg, 'lord') signals dignity: Temurbek, Mansurbek. The suffix -oy ('moon') is used in feminine names to evoke beauty: Oydin, Oygul, Oynur. English naming has nothing quite like this affixal system. The material shows that Uzbek names are generally easy for speakers to understand, because their Turkic, Arabic, and Persian source languages are still culturally active. Bahodir means 'brave'; Mehribon means 'compassionate'; Dilshod means 'one whose heart is joyful'; Sarvinoz means 'graceful as a cypress'. Name selection is, therefore, a meaningful choice — parents articulate hopes for a child's character. Such intentionality is largely absent from contemporary English naming practice.

Comparative Analysis

Looking at both systems together, several patterns emerge. Both are multi-layered in etymology, but their sources differ fundamentally. English draws on Germanic, Latin, Celtic, and French traditions filtered through Christianity. Uzbek draws on Turkic, Arabic, and Persian sources structured by Islam and classical Central Asian literary culture. The two systems preserve different histories of cultural contact. One major difference concerns how meaningful names are to their speakers. Most English given names function as empty identifiers for contemporary speakers. Their meanings were lost as the language changed and source languages faded from everyday use. Uzbek names remain largely understandable to their bearers. Such a contrast can be explained by the continued cultural vitality of the Turkic, Arabic, and Persian sources.

Morphological productivity is another point of difference. The Uzbek affixation system encodes affection, social rank, and gender within the name itself. English relies more on a pre-formed hypocoristic system than on active affixation.

The surname systems differ in origin. English surnames developed through patronymics (Johnson, Richardson), place names (Hill, Wood), occupational names (Smith, Taylor), and descriptive names (Black, Hardy) — each reflecting a natural social process over centuries. Uzbek surnames were largely created by Soviet administrative policy, adding Russian-derived suffixes (-ov/-eva) to paternal given names. After independence, there has been a growing effort to reclaim

Uzbek surname forms [15]. Both systems have also changed in recent decades. In English, gender-neutral names have spread, names cross ethnic boundaries more freely, and the media shape name fashions. In Uzbek, traditional Turkic and Islamic names have revived, names associated with historical figures like Navoiy and Temur are again popular, and globalization continues to bring new pressures. Both naming systems continue to change today.

4. Conclusion

English and Uzbek anthroponyms were compared across etymology, morphology, semantics, and socio-cultural function. Both systems identify individuals and place them within family, community, and culture. Both were shaped over time by language change, religion, and cultural contact. Both continue to evolve. One major difference concerns semantic transparency. Uzbek names generally retain their meaning because their Turkic, Arabic, and Persian source languages remain culturally active. English names are mostly opaque to contemporary speakers — a consequence of phonological change and cultural distance from source languages. We observed that this reflects a real difference in what naming is expected to do: in Uzbek tradition, a name says something meaningful about its bearer; in contemporary English practice, social recognition and sound tend to matter more.

A second difference is morphological productivity. Uzbek naming uses an active affixation system to encode affection, social rank, and gender within the name. English has no direct equivalent. Overall, the data suggest that personal names preserve important information about the history and culture of a society. They carry traces of historical migration, religion, political influence, and changes in society. Further research may focus on how digital culture, transnational migration, and intercultural communication are changing naming practices in both languages.

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