



# Cognitive Foundations Of Toponym Formation (Based On Materials From Southern Uzbekistan)

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**ABSTRACT**

This article provides a scholarly analysis of toponyms as products of human intellectual, cognitive, and discursive activity. The phenomenon of onomastic transfer is interpreted as a speech process, and the semantic, onomasiological, and cognitive mechanisms involved in object naming are identified. The processes of appellativization of proper names and onymization of common nouns are examined as manifestations of the intrinsic relationship between language and speech units. The formation of natural and artificial nominations is demonstrated through the interaction between toponyms and appellative units in connection with the semantic sources of geographical names. Toponymic lexis is evaluated from cognitive and ethnolinguistic perspectives, substantiating its status as one of the most significant layers of language reflecting collective thinking, historical memory, and cultural experience.

**Keywords:**

onomastics, toponymy, nomination, onymization, appellativization, semantic derivation, cognitive linguistics, onomasiology.

**Introduction**

In modern linguistics, the problem of toponyms is considered not only as part of the naming system but also as a complex linguistic phenomenon that is the product of human cognition. Geographical names constitute one of the most ancient layers of language and are closely connected with the historical development, social life, worldview, and cultural values of a people. Therefore, the study of toponyms not merely as linguistic units but as carriers of cognitive, cultural, and social information represents one of the most pressing issues in contemporary linguistic research.

The relationship between appellative and onomastic lexis plays a crucial role in identifying the mechanisms of interaction between language and speech units. It is well

known that when a geographical object is named, it transcends the status of a common noun and becomes an individualized marker—a toponym. Such names reflect specific characteristics of the object and serve to distinguish it from other similar entities.

The semantic structure of toponyms is complex and includes not only denotative meaning but also a strong motivational component. Motivation is a decisive factor in both the formation and semantic development of toponyms. From this perspective, toponyms represent the result of secondary nomination and are often based on an object’s external appearance, location, size, natural features, or historical and social characteristics.

The onomasiological approach interprets the process of nomination as a unity

of discursive and cognitive activity. In this process, humans perceive their environment, select salient features, and consolidate them through linguistic means. Thus, toponyms are products of human cognition that reflect a subjective interpretation of objective reality.

### Methodological Framework And Research Methods

The present study was conducted on the basis of the principles of historicity and sociality, interpreting linguistic phenomena in close connection with specific historical periods and social conditions. The theoretical foundation of the research is grounded in scholarly concepts related to onomasiology, cognitive linguistics, and the theory of semantic derivation.

The research employed methods of classification, description, structural-semantic analysis, comparative analysis, and generalization. Toponymic material was analyzed from the perspectives of naming motivation, semantic development, and nominative function. In addition, the processes of transition between appellative and onomastic lexis were examined in relation to cognitive and discursive activity.

### Results And Discussion

Onomastic material can serve as an object of study within the framework of the problem of natural and artificial onym nomination from sociolinguistic, pragmatic, cognitive, and onomasiological perspectives. The issue of artificial onymic naming raises three types of problems that are considered relatively closed in contemporary research. The first is related to the necessity of clarifying the criteria for distinguishing natural and artificial nominations as separate types of lexical nomination. The second concerns identifying the specific features of artificial nominations within onomastics. The third problem involves developing methodological approaches to the cognitive analysis of name formation [3, 7].

Research has shown that toponyms not only possess nominative meaning but also demonstrate a general tendency to interconnect concepts of objects and space. From a

component-based semantic perspective, the following mechanisms of semantic change have been identified in word meanings: the narrowing and expansion of the number of components, as well as their substitution against the background of associative connections. Consequently, various mechanisms of semantic derivation participate in changes to the semantic structure of meaning during the transition of proper nouns into common nouns. Associative relations within the lexical background of non-standard toponyms and anthroponyms are realized through word-formation models that function as specific prototypes, giving rise to new derivatives [6, 37].

The semantic analysis of toponymic derivatives demonstrates that the most productive lexical-semantic groups include oikonyms, hydronyms, and oronyms. In particular, the following cognitive models of semantic derivation are observed in the oronyms of Southern Uzbekistan:

1. Naming based on the shape characteristics of the object: *Do'g'irtosh*, *Kindiktepa*, *Lo'ndasang*, and others;
2. Naming based on size and dimensional characteristics: *Kattadapsan*, *Kattazov*, *Kattataxta*, *Kichikdapsan*, *Kichikxovar*, *Kichikchambar*, *Kichikqovoq*, *Uzunshiram*, *Uzunmo'la*, *Uzunqir*;
3. Naming based on relative location: *Boshalang*, *Boshqop*, *Bog'ibaland*;
4. Naming based on temporal features or characteristics: *Qaritepa*, *Qariqiz*, *Qarilalmi*;
5. Naming based on numerical and quantitative features: a) based on numerals: *Birovuzli*, *Beshbo'la*, *Beshdara*, *To'rtgul*, *Mingchuqur*;  
b) based on quantifying words: *Yetimoq*, *Yetimtaxta*, *Egizaktuva*, and others;
6. Naming based on structural or compositional characteristics: *Ahalli*, *Cho'yanli*, *Cho'yndara*, *Mumlayxona (rock)*.

In the process of oronymic naming, the flora present at the object also serves as an important factor: *Abrikli* (hill), *Andizli* (gorge), *Andizlov* (hill), *Archamaydon* (mountain),

*Archaxut* (gorge), *Burg'onli* (hill), *Daraytut* (gorge), *Darg'oz* (gorge), and others.

Animal names likewise constitute a significant factor in nomination: *Ayiquchdi* (gorge), *Asppar* (gorge), *Biyasig'mas* (gorge), *Bo'ridahna* (gorge), *Jayraxona* (hill), *Jo'jali* (gorge).

In addition, hydronyms may function as distinctive features in the formation of oronyms: *Chashmako'l* (hill), *Chashmikenagas* (hill), *Chashmiqipchoq* (hill), *Churanquduq* (pasture), *Chuchchikquduq* (pasture), *Chakanda* (< *chohi kanda* "a dug well"; hill).

Furthermore, a naming model based on historical-social, economic-political, and other extralinguistic factors plays an important role in the emergence of oronyms. In this context:

1. Ethnonyms function as distinguishing features: *Avg'ontaxta* (height), *Batoshoq* (elevation), *Bahrin-tepa* (hill), *Darajovi* (gorge);

2. Personal names serve as distinguishing features: *Avzgardon* (hill), *Ahmadshayit* (elevation), *Odil do'g'ma* (pasture), *Qoraboytepa* (hill);

3. Religious concepts and beliefs function as distinguishing features: *Ajinazov* (elevation), *Bobotog'* (mountain), *Xo'jaalmati* (elevation), *Xo'jabarko'h* (mountain), *Xo'jaqiz* (hill);

4. Titles, ranks, offices, and social strata names function as distinguishing features: *Darg'amurda* (hill), *Hojiqiroq* (hill) [1, 21].

These models may be described as dominant, since they display the most general and universal character in the development of common noun semantics within toponyms. The main methods of non-standard semantic formation in toponymy include metaphorical and metonymic transfers, as well as semantic shifts.

The ethnolinguistic study of toponymy makes it possible to identify its specificity as a linguistic source of information about the spiritual culture of a people through the modeling of real and unreal space. In this case, the required conceptual interpretation involves traversing the distance from the features of a real-world object captured by linguistic means

to the characteristics of the subject's—namely, the native speaker's—attitudes and intentions. To reduce this distance, it is necessary, first of all, to determine the volume of similar information provided by a given object and by language, and, when applied to toponymic material, to present toponymy as fully as possible [6, 57].

The need for onomasiological analysis arises from the fact that it represents the logical development of structural-semantic analysis and, in turn, prepares the ground for the cognitive analysis of lexis. It is precisely onomasiological analysis that makes it possible to identify the conceptual mechanisms underlying the formation of a particular onym and to determine the principles of their motivation. Onomasiological studies demonstrate that the ultimate goal of such analyses lies in providing a general characterization of toponymic features and, most importantly, in developing concrete methods for their modeling. Cognitive linguistics, by analyzing data obtained from a cognitive perspective in terms of their role in processes of knowledge acquisition, has opened up opportunities for deeper generalization. In this sense, onomasiological analysis, like word-formation analysis, represents a specific stage in the study of the formal and semantic properties of the lexical layer under investigation and constitutes a stage preceding the cognitive perception of this layer of lexis.

Onomasiological analysis recognizes the act of nomination as a cognitive and discursive process of thinking. According to O. V. Raevskaya, an onomasiological approach to the process of nomination makes it possible to view words as the result of human cognitive activity, establishes relationships among various entities of the surrounding world, and expresses these relationships in the created name [7, 82].

Fundamental studies in the theory of linguistic nomination, as well as specialized research on methods of nomination, demonstrate the extreme complexity of the problem of studying human nominative activity. It is described as "a complex speech and mental process which, to the extent that it is cognitive, is psychological; to the extent that it is

biological, is social; and to the extent that it is physiological, is grounded in purely linguistic foundations" [4, 13]. Human activity is goal-oriented, and names are assigned to objects that are relevant and useful to human beings. In the process of nomination, a person identifies the most significant features of an object and records them in its mental image. The means of representation is an adequate linguistic unit, which connects the world of reality with the world of language and establishes a relationship between the object and the segment of language chosen to designate it. The analysis of word-formation processes and the onomasiological structure of toponyms allows us to reconstruct an individual's nominative activity and to identify certain principles of nomination that are formed and serve as a basis for new names through the generalization of the motivational features of previously existing objects.

In recent years, the onomasiological approach to the study of word formation has gained particular importance. In conducting onomasiological analysis, it should be borne in mind that this is an analysis of linguistic activity based on word-formation material and supported by a well-developed methodology. In the field of onomasiological application, the main focus has been on the general study of nomination processes derived from object names, and "appropriate attention is directed to all nominative activity involved in assigning a specific name in the process of naming one or another object of the surrounding world" [4, 13].

The mechanisms of interaction between language and speech units can be observed through the example of semantic derivation. The processes of appellativization of proper names (toponyms and anthroponyms) and onymization of common nouns indicate the constant interaction between common nouns and proper names in language. When the individuality of a named object becomes less salient, a proper name tends to shift into a common noun (either within the language system as a whole or in a specific speech situation). In such cases, one may speak of the loss of the expressive force of the proper name and its deonymization [5, 42].

Conversely, the opposite process may also be observed in language. When a common noun becomes more specific, the likelihood of its transformation into a proper name increases. This type of transition is referred to as onymization. In most cases, both onymization and appellativization are based on semantic derivation.

Appellativization is observed in the following cases:

a) when the denotation of a noun is sufficiently well known among all members of a given speech community;

b) when the association of a name with a specific denotatum is weakened, and the name becomes characteristic of numerous similar natural-geographical objects, settlements, and the like.

At the same time, having detached from a single concept, words become firmly connected with other concepts through logical relations. In order to establish such a connection, a proper name must contain a certain amount of intellectual information. The saturation of a proper name with such information gradually leads to the loss of its expressive force. This process may occur both naturally and artificially. The artificial path is realized within specialized lexical domains and involves a one-time act of word creation based on deliberately adopted decisions aimed at purposeful transition.

Natural loss of expressiveness as a result of the semantic development of toponyms can be observed in the following cases: *canary* ← Canary Islands; *eldorado* ← El Dorado, the legendary city of gold; *Hollywood* ← a city in the United States; *jersey* ← an island; *marathon* ← a city in Greece; *mausoleum* ← the burial place of Mausolos in Asia Minor; *mattress* ← the Indian city of Madras; *Olympic Games* ← Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. In all these cases, the toponym becomes an appellative as a result of the gradual expansion of knowledge associated with it. The denotatum becomes widely known within a given society, the name becomes typical, and it loses its connection with the original name of a city, island, or river.

In language, the process of appellativization becomes a regular

phenomenon in which almost any name may participate. As a result, qualitatively new lexical units are created that actively participate in various word-formation processes such as affixation, composition, and conversion. In the process of appellativization, the same name may be involved repeatedly, and each time different components of its lexical background are actualized, which leads to the emergence of homonyms. The original meaning of an appellative name changes very rapidly, and semantic nuances become independent units; therefore, one of the most characteristic features of modern appellative names is polysemy. Appellative names provide favorable material for the development of word formation by analogy. It should be noted that the process by which common nouns acquire the features of appellative names (use in the plural, lowercase spelling, and the like) is highly simplified.

Thus, in modern language there is a clear tendency toward convergence between proper nouns and common nouns, which indicates significant changes in native speakers' attitudes toward the status of names. Contemporary proper nouns are increasingly losing their traditional status and undergoing desemantization, that is, they are transformed into common nouns within the language system. In this way, various proper names are frequently drawn into the process of appellativization. As a result, vivid and imaginative lexical units are created, which contributes to their increased popularity. On the other hand, as these units are used in language, the number of formations increases that preserve a clearly expressed connection with the proper name but are employed in functions that are not typical for it.

### Conclusion

The principal processes governing the interaction between proper nouns and common nouns are appellativization (the transition of a proper noun into a common noun) and onymization as a result of semantic derivation (the transition of a common noun into a proper noun). The salience and attractiveness of a proper name depend on the degree to which it is saturated with intellectual information. This

process may be complete or partial, and may occur naturally or artificially. In modern Uzbek, there is a distinct tendency toward the convergence of proper and common nouns, which reflects an ongoing change in native speakers' attitudes toward the status of names.

The object of onomasiological research may primarily include words and terminology from various thematic groups, as well as anthroponyms and toponyms. Despite the fact that a number of studies have been carried out on toponymic lexis from onomasiological and cognitive perspectives, the thematic grouping of toponyms remains one of the least explored areas and can therefore be considered in need of further research.

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