

"THE INTERACTION OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN THE TRANSLATION OF CONVERSION WORDS"

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Abstract:

In this article the interaction of language and cultural factors in the translation of conversion words with the help of English conversion characteristics. Peculiarities of conversion are numbered alongside with the ways of transferring it by means of the English language.

Key words: conversion, cognitive semantics, translation, word building.

English has a very rich repository of lexical items. Certain authorities even contend that up to a million words exist in the language,¹ thus rendering English vocabulary probably as the crucial factor in successful learning of English as a foreign language and students' command of the language. This conspicuous lexical abundance may be a direct consequence of a variety of productive word formation mechanisms, and the majority of the words in the language can be accounted for by any of the 12 primary and secondary word formation processes. This presentation has conversion (or zero derivation, functional shift, category change) as its focus, one of the most productive word formation processes in English. As for the objectives of this presentation, we shall consider some of the basic characteristics of this process which, as S. Valera has put it succinctly, "is traditionally a matter of same form and different word-class". Then, we shall briefly refer to the most important kinds of conversion, stressing the importance of conversion for the overall command of the language with non-native speakers and learners of English. The greatest segment of the presentation is dedicated to different approaches and possible modalities of practicing with conversion in EFL classes or for self-study purposes. Instances of many exercise types and strategies have been offered as potential to create resource material for primary and secondary teachers of English.

Word Conversion can be defined as a characteristic word formation phenomenon which involves a change in the word class, function and meaning of a particular lexical unit without any corresponding change in the form of that word in terms of adding or subtracting any derivational affixes. This, however, does not mean that in the process the original word stops existing, but only that its functional pair is obtained. Four inches of unmarked snow blanketed the ground. He forked steak into his mouth. When Joanna Trollope swanned into my living room, I was still grumpy... As opposed to affixation and composition, this is a non-combinatory process whereby a stem belonging to one class is simply taken over into another class as in. The novel verb stems blanket, fork, and swan in this example are not complex in the same sense as a compound or suffixation-based derivative would be; i.e., these are not made up of two discrete structural units. Strictly speaking, as I. Plag defined it, conversion is derivation of a new word without any overt marking. I insisted on labelling the term in the title as word conversion, with the intention of separating this phenomenon from another in word formation, the products of which are phrasal compounds, and which are sometimes perhaps injudiciously viewed as conversion words. So, for his birthday present, I gave him an all-expenses-paid visit to the tattoo. It sounds eery like the old southern they-are-happy-being-slaves excuse. This could be treated as a process of obtaining compound words the bases of which are phrases or even clauses of different kind. In linguistics this phenomenon has been more broadly determined as lexicalization - a process by which a word group comes to be fixed by usage and to behave as a single lexical entity. The above definition of conversion incorporates one aspect of conversion which has been quite often neglected in literature, namely that along with class and function words change their meaning as well. One kind of semantic change is almost omni-present in conversion, and that is the change of the prototypical, lexical word-class meaning (e.g., from that of nouns to that of verbs). The meaning of the words honeymoon and to honeymoon is simply not the same. However, with a certain number of cases the conversion-word retains only one of the many senses of a word, or one of the entire gamut of possible interpretations. The noun paper has various meanings, such as newspaper, or material to wrap things, etc. The denominal verb only contains the sense of putting that material on places like walls. Another remark about meaning is that often the meaning changes in the domain of implication, since certain conversion-words have rather negative meaning, while their counterparts may be rather neutral. The noun

total and the verb to run around do not imply anything negative, but if someone totals your car, and the insurance company of this person gives you the run-around, you become aware of the negative meanings of both. Complete conversion means that the word is completely adapted to a new class and obtains all the characteristics of that class (including inflection): Yes, on some nights it really is becoming difficult to find an original programme among the repeats. Sometimes conversion can be accompanied with minor changes in the form, basically in terms of voicing and stress shift: abuse > to abuse, to trans'port > 'transport with partial conversion, words do not stop belonging to the original word class, and they obtain only particular characteristics of the new word class, so that we say that they belong to two classes at the same time: adjective > noun, the ignorant, the wealthy, the accused, the wounded, the kind, the Welsh. Sometimes adjectives refer to an abstract quality and can be found in nominal positions: You must take the rough with the smooth. Otherwise known as change of secondary word-class, this is a conversion of uncountable into countable nouns and vice-versa, transitive verbs into intransitive, etc. beer > two bottles of beer > Two beers for us, please! bread > a bread > This is a better bread than the one I bought. read trans. > read intrans. > Your book reads well. Conversion is an important feature of English. This non-affixational process has been often referred to as "...typically English..." or "specifically English". Furthermore, some 30.000 conversion-words in English that Y. M. Biese claimed to have been in existence by 1940s, must have doubled in number by now. Next, conversion is a lexicological phenomenon with significant syntactic and semantic implications for the language as a whole and is therefore certainly worth studying and viewed as an important constituent part of TEFL. Actually, a competent and proficient speaker of English cannot be envisaged without the ability to respond adequately both in terms of comprehension and language production to any recombination of language units based on the principles of conversion. Even though there is still certain dispute among scholars concerning some of the main issues in conversion, many agree that conversion will become even more active in the future because it is a very easy way to create new words in English. Along with enhancing language economy, this process is an effective device for maintaining sentence cohesion and bridging syntactic gaps. Furthermore, many authors have claimed so far that conversion is a free process, that there seem to be no morphological (formal) restrictions to converting of words in English. Compounds, derivatives, acronyms,

abbreviations and even borrowed words can obtain functions other than their original, as shown by the illustrations in Drawing the curtain is still popular with many people, but during daylight hours it is an obvious giveaway. On Thursday, the nation that had burnt books in a fire practice for the great European inferno was being précis-ed for the benefit of neighbours still inclined to pour cold water on its advances. On the other hand, conversion in Serbian which is a synthetic language with a highly developed inflectional system is almost always partial and may therefore present a difficulty to Serbian learners of English. As Serbian, the mother tongue of the majority of the speakers in our country does not have the propensity for easy word conversion, it can be justly assumed that at the intermediate level of studying English, students are not all that well aware of the different expression potentials of English in terms of employing varying word classes or syntactic patterns, particularly in terms of conversion, as in the example: It was from there on the night of 10 March 1945 that 67 prisoners tunnelled to freedom, instead of It was from there on the night of 10 March 1945 that 67 prisoners escaped through the tunnel to freedom. That the relation of English and Serbian is imbalanced in terms of conversion, and therefore a potential cause of difficulty in TEFL may be shown by the results of a research project I have conducted. The empirical data have shown that in translation from English into Serbian up to 40% of cases of conversion-words would be translated with a different word class translation equivalent than the original word.

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