

CONVERSION PROCESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Annotation:**

English is considered as one of the universal languages. It is growing considerably than before. There are more new age words nowadays compared to those in the previous era. English dictionary is thicker now and there are a wide range of dictionaries now than before. How can new words be created in languages? One of the processes of English word-formation is called conversion. It refers to an alteration in the function of a word, for instance when a noun comes to be used as a verb without any degradation or addition of affixes. Conversion is mainly found on nouns and verbs. Some examples of words constructed by conversion are look (verb to noun), email (noun to verb), native (adjective to noun).

The term of Conversion in English refers to the process of converting a word into a new word with different part of speech without any differences in spelling. This is a regular process in English since there are plenty of words in English that have similar identity but have different part of speech.

The process of forming new words through conversion involves the existence of zero-affix and zero-morpheme. They are called zero because the affix and morpheme are invisible in the new words, but still, they do exist. The following tables illustrate how conversion is used in English.

Table 1

Adjective	Clean	Clear	Complex	Empty	Dry
Verb	Clean	Clear	Complex	Empty	Dry

Table 2

Adjective	Bright	Weak	Strength	Dark	Wide
Verb	Brighten	Weaken	Strengthen	Darken	Widen

Both Tables above illustrate the inflexion in the part of speech of the words, from adjectives into verbs. The main difference between the first and the second tables

is that the suffix added to the verbs in the first table. In the 1<sup>st</sup> table, the suffix *en* is attached to the adjectives as a morpheme which means 'make (something) adjective' or 'turn (something) into adjective'. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> table, there are no suffixes added on the verbs taken from the adjectives. It is obvious that conversion is happening in this situation. A new term with a new part of speech and meaning can be created without changing the previous word. Zero-affix or zero-morpheme always goes with any word that undergoes conversion.

### **Conversion from Verb, Noun, and Adjective**

There are many instances illustrating the existence of conversion. However, "the method of conversion is not as straightforward as it seems. This process is simply to be recognized since both words included (the original and derivative) are identical in spelling. Besides the change in the function, the inferred words shaped through conversion sometimes also have diverse meanings from those of the original.

The words included in conversion are usually nouns and verbs. However, it is practicable that other groups of word also undertake the method of conversion. Several types of conversion in English are introduced below.

#### **1. Conversion from verb to noun.**

A noun that is taken from a verb" through the process of conversion can have several meanings such as:

a. To show the state of mind or sensation.

(1) He had no idea what the answer was, but he decided to make a guess anyway.

(2) He was seized by a sudden doubt of his own sanity

In example (1) and (2), the verbs *guess* and *doubt* are converted into nouns. Based on the semantic dependence, the meanings of the converted nouns report the meanings of the original verbs. Both of the words have the meaning of 'showing the state of guess/doubt'.

b. To show an activity or event.

(3) He made a sudden jump and caught the ball in mid-air.

(4) He knew it was a hopeless try, but he had to do something to save her.

People tend to know the words *jump* and *try* as verbs. However, grammatically, in the third and fourth examples, both words are used as nouns. This is obvious by the plural markers added to the word *jump* and the article *a* immediately before *try*. Based on the meanings, compared to the meanings conveyed by the verbs *jump* and *try*, both nouns in example (3) and (4) have narrower meanings than the original verbs. They only show 'the event of jumping/trying'.

c. To show the object of the original verb.

(5) She looked at the painting and saw the highlights of the sun on the water, shimmering like gold.

(6) He had no access to his father's papers and had to rely on his own memory and imagination.

The meaning conveyed by both highlight (n) and access (n) is showing the object of the original verb. Highlight (n) means 'an outstanding period of time', whereas access (n) means 'an opportunity to enter a place'.

d. To show the subject of the original verb.

(7) She was a good cook, but she hated cooking for Mr. Rochester, who was always dissatisfied with her dishes.

(8) He looked up at the building and felt a surge of emotion. It was the place where he had met her, where he had fallen in love, where he had proposed.

In examples (7) and (8) both of the underlined words are nouns. This is proven by the articles before them. The word *cook*(n) and *building*(n) are converted from the verbs without any changes in spelling. Both nouns convey the meaning of 'something/someone that is doing the verb'. Thus, the word *cook* (n) in example (7) means 'someone that cooks' and *building* (n) in example (8) means 'something is building now'.

e. To show an instrument

(9) He swung the axe with all his might, hoping to split the skull of the orc that had killed his brother.

(10) He took the measure of his opponent, noting his height, weight, and reach.

Besides stating an activity and other meanings that are previously discussed, the conversion from verb to noun might also show an instrument. The term instrument is defined as (a) a device used to perform a particular piece of work and (b) a way of achieving or causing something. The word *axe* in example (9) conveys the meaning (a), while the word *measure* has the meaning (b).

**b. Conversion from noun to verb**

The meanings aroused by the process of conversion from noun to verb are:

a. To show an activity of putting something in/on noun

(11) He packeted the letter and sealed it with wax.

(12) He placed the ring on her finger and kissed her softly

The words *packet* and *place* are more familiar as nouns than as verbs. As nouns, they also have different meaning and usage. Therefore, the word *packet* (v) and *place* (v) are considered as the converted forms. These words clearly show the activity of putting something in/on noun putting something in the packet(11)/ place(12).

b. To give noun

(13) He named the stars for her, pointing out each one with his finger.

(14) He shaped his hands into a cup and scooped up the water.

The words *name* (v) and *shape* (v) are converted from their nouns. This conversion also cause slight changes in the meaning of both words. *Name* (v) means 'to give a name' and *shape* (v) means 'to give shape'.

c. To show an activity done with the noun as the instrument.

(15) He knifed the guard in the throat and ran towards the exit.

(16) She needled him with her sharp tongue, making fun of his clothes, his hair, his accent.

The underlined words are converted from *knife*(n) and *needle*(n). The meaning aroused by the conversion is 'an activity done with the noun as the instrument'. Thus, the meaning of *knife* (v) in example (15) is 'an activity done with knife' and *needle*(v) in example (16) means 'an activity done with needle'.

d. To make something into noun.

(17) She scheduled a meeting with her editor, hoping to convince him to publish her novel.

(18) He ruled the land with an iron fist, crushing any rebellion or dissent.

The meaning of the words *schedule* (v) and *rule* (v) in the above examples is 'to make something into noun'. Therefore, the meaning of *schedule* in example (17) is 'to make something into schedule' and *rule* in example (18) is 'to make something into rule'.

e. To send with noun.

(19) He emailed her every day, telling her about his life in New York, his hopes and dreams, his fears and doubts.

(20) He messaged her every night, telling her stories of his adventures in the faraway lands.

he converted words *email* (v) and *message* (v) have direct connection in meaning with the original nouns. Both words mean 'to send with noun\*' to send with email/message.

#### c. Conversion from adjective to verb

An adjective may go through the conversion process, particularly into a verb. This technique has the sense of "making an adjective." Here are a few instances of adjective to verb conversions:

(21) He slowed his horse to a trot and looked around, searching for a sign of the enemy.

(22) He closed his eyes and tried to remember her face, the way she smiled, the sound of her laugh.

The words *slow* (adj) and *close* (adj) are converted into verbs. However, the meaning of the verbs is still in relation with the adjectives that is 'to make slow/open'.

#### 4. Conversion from adjective to noun

Although it does not happen often, an adjective can also transform into a noun through the conversion process. Usually, when the adjective is included in a noun phrase, this occurs. The adjective functions as a noun syntactically, which is occasionally discernible by the use of the article *the* or *a*.

For example:

(23) He was the best at everything he did, but he never felt satisfied.

(24) This is for your own good, boy. You'll thank me when you're older

However, in some cases, if the number of the adjective is changed, it can no longer function as a noun, and the sentence formed is ungrammatical. For example:

(25) All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.

If the word more is changed into plural by adding the suffix *s* to become *mores*, the sentence is no longer grammatical:

(26) All animals are equal but some animals are mores equal than others.

In English, conversion is a very common process for word formation. The derivation is the process of an item changing its word affix class with no addition. It can be done by converting a lexeme in one class into another without changing its shape. However, in a pair of words that are exactly the same in spelling, it is not easy to determine the original and the converted word.

Some elements need to be considered: the semantic dependency, range of use, syntax level and phonetic shape. The conversion is almost always accompanied by an open class vocabulary, in particular, noun, verb, and adjective. Those three categories also contain converted words that have been generated by this process. More meanings and usage are commonly found in old words compared to those that have been converted.

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