

CONVERSION IN ENGLISH GEODETIC TERMINOLOGICAL SYSTEM: STRUCTURAL, SEMANTIC AND FUNCTIONAL PECULIARITIES

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The article investigates conversion (zero derivation) as a productive mechanism of term formation in contemporary English geodetic terminology. The relevance of the research is determined by the rapid development of geodesy and digital surveying, which continuously enrich English professional vocabulary with new terminological units. The aim of the study is to identify structural, semantic, and functional characteristics of conversion in English geodetic terminological system, determine principal conversion patterns, and evaluate their role in the development of contemporary geodetic terminology. The research material consists of English geodetic terms extracted from specialized dictionaries and glossaries, state standards, technical documentation, and recent scientific publications in the field. The study employs descriptive, structural, semantic, functional, comparative, and quantitative methods of linguistic analysis. The investigation identified six basic conversion models in the structure of English geodetic terminology: Verb → Noun, Noun → Verb, Noun → Adjective, Adjective → Noun, Verb → Adjective, and Adjective → Verb. The findings demonstrate that Verb → Noun and Noun → Verb are the most productive patterns, serving to designate surveying operations, measurement procedures, technical processes, instruments, products, and measurement results. The study shows that conversion contributes to terminological economy, semantic transparency, lexical cohesion, and the systematic organization of English geodetic terminology while facilitating the efficient nomination of emerging concepts in the field of geodesy and surveying. The results confirm that zero derivation is a productive mechanism of terminology development in modern English geodetic terminology and reflects the close conceptual relationship between technical operations and their outcomes. The findings may be applied in terminology studies, lexicology, technical translation, English for Specific Purposes, and the standardization of professional vocabulary. Further research should focus on the functioning of converted terms in professional discourse and specialized linguistic corpora.

КОНВЕРСИЯ В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ ГЕОДЕЗИЧНОЙ ТЕРМИНОЛОГИЧНОЙ СИСТЕМЕ: СТРУКТУРНЫЕ, СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЕ И ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ

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статті досліджується конверсія (нульова деривація) як продуктивний механізм терміноутворення в сучасній англійській геодезичній термінології. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена стрімким розвитком геодезії та цифрової геодезичної зйомки, що постійно збагачують англійську фахову лексику новими термінологічними одиницями. Метою дослідження є виявлення структурних, семантичних та функціональних особливостей конверсії в англійській геодезичній термінологічній системі, визначення основних моделей конверсії та оцінка їхньої ролі у розвитку сучасної геодезичної термінології. Матеріал дослідження складається з англійських геодезичних термінів, вибраних із спеціалізованих словників і глосаріїв, державних стандартів, технічної документації та останніх наукових публікацій у цій галузі. У дослідженні застосовано описовий, структурний, семантичний, функціональний, порівняльний та кількісний методи лінгвістичного аналізу. У ході дослідження було виявлено шість основних моделей конверсії в структурі англійської геодезичної термінології: дієслово → іменник, іменник → дієслово, іменник → прикметник, прикметник → іменник, дієслово → прикметник та прикметник → дієслово. Отримані результати свідчать про те, що моделі дієслово → іменник та іменник → дієслово є найпродуктивнішими і використовуються для позначення геодезичних операцій, процедур вимірювання, технічних процесів, приладів, виробів та результатів вимірювань. Дослідження показує, що конверсія сприяє термінологічній економії, семантичній прозорості, лексичній згуртованості та систематичній організації англійської геодезичної термінології, водночас полегшуючи ефективне найменування нових понять у галузі геодезії та геодезичної зйомки. Результати підтверджують, що нульова деривація є продуктивним механізмом розвитку термінології в сучасній англійській геодезичній термінології та відображає тісний концептуальний зв'язок між технічними операціями та їхніми результатами. Отримані результати можуть бути застосовані в термінологічних дослідженнях, лексикології, технічному перекладі, англійській мові для спеціальних цілей та стандартизації професійної лексики. Подальші дослідження слід зосередити на функціонуванні утворених в результаті конверсії термінів у професійному дискурсі та спеціалізованих лінгвістичних корпусах.

Introduction. One of the central issues in contemporary linguistic research is the analysis of subject-specific terminological systems and their vocabulary in terms of its formation, structural and functional peculiarities. While conducting such research, it is important to bear in mind that terminology refers to a subset of a language as a whole

and is a kind of a “special language” (specialized language), which differs from “common language” regarding the meaning and function of its lexical items – terms. Like all other meaningful units of a linguistic system, terms are part of a structured language system. They belong to a specific level within that system, and are related to other units on

the same level, as well as to the units on the other levels with which they build the discourse. Within a language's lexical component, terms are much more closely related to the other terms in the same discipline, with which they form specific structures, than to other terms from different subject fields (Cabre, 1999). Subject-specific terminological systems consist of terms which are lexical units with a specific meaning in a specialized domain. They can be analyzed from three points of view: the formal (the designation), the semantic (the concept), and the functional (grammatical category and distribution) (Cabre, 1999).

The theory of word and term formation, as well as current terminological issues is a significant component of modern linguistic research, which is the focus of attention for many linguists, such as: M. T. Cabré, Chulieva Shakhnoza, D. S. Lotte, A. L. Mishchenko, O.I. Pavlova, I. Plag and others; peculiarities of conversion as a productive word-building mechanism are actively studied by D. A. Azimbayeva, L. Bauer, & S. Valera, M. Vaneva & M. I. Bojadjiev and others.

This paper is mainly based on structural and functional analysis of English geodetic terminological units from the point of view of their formation, focusing on conversion as one of important term-building mechanisms. In terminology studies, term-building is the formation of lexical units that denote specialized concepts of a discipline. The common term-building mechanisms are: affixation, compounding, abbreviation and acronymy, semantic specialization / terminologization, conversion or zero derivation. Within English geodetic terminological system conversion is quite productive because it allows to create paired names to denote process and result, operation and product, procedure and document, action and measurement, or instrumental operation and its output without increasing formal complexity.

The relevance of this study is due to significant development of subject-specific terminological systems, namely English geodetic terminology, which necessitates the analysis of its vocabulary and term-formation mechanisms, one of which is conversion or zero deviation.

The aim of this paper is to investigate conversion as a productive term-building mechanism in the English geodetic terminological system by identifying its structural, semantic, and functional characteristics, determining the main conversion patterns, and evaluating their role in the development of contemporary geodetic terminology. To achieve this aim, the study pursues the following objectives: to define conversion (zero derivation) within the framework of contemporary

word-formation and terminology theory; to examine theoretical approaches to conversion proposed in modern linguistic research; to identify principal conversion models functioning in English geodetic terminological system; to classify converted geodetic terms according to their structural and semantic characteristics; to analyse the functional role of conversion in the formation and development of English geodetic terminology; to determine the productivity of different conversion models; to evaluate the significance of conversion for the systematic organization and conceptual development of contemporary English geodetic terminology.

According to traditional linguistic studies, conversion is interpreted in several ways, based on morphological (conversion is a type of derivation involving a zero suffix / zero morpheme), syntactic (conversion is viewed as a change in syntactic function / category without necessarily positing a zero morpheme) and lexical-semantic (the emphasis is placed on semantic relation between source and derivative) approach. Morphological approach is dominant in lexicological and terminological studies, as far as it allows conversion to be described within the general system of derivation.

The notion of conversion is especially productive in English because it has: weak inflectional morphology, high positional and syntactic flexibility, a long tradition of a Noun – Verb alternation, a strong tendency toward economy and compactness of scientific naming. For this reason, conversion is highly relevant not only in general vocabulary but also in specialized languages, including specialized language of geodesy.

Functional methods, available for creation of new terms, as stated by M. T. Cabre comprise two processes: conversion and lexicalization. Conversion or zero derivation i.e. changing the category of an existing word without changing its form (except that in this grammatical conversion any characteristics of inflection belonging to the former category are eliminated and replaced by those corresponding to the new category) belongs to functional methods of terms creation. For example: *to survey* (Verb) – *a survey* (Noun); *to plot* (Verb) – *a plot* (Noun); *a grid* (Noun) – *to grid* (Verb), etc. Another functional method, distinguished by the linguist is lexicalization, which occurs as a result of converting one of the inflected forms of a lexeme into a new word with a different grammatical category. For example: *to level* – *leveling* (*spirit leveling, geometric leveling, differential levelling*); *to position* – *positioning* (*satellite positioning, absolute positioning, precise positioning*); *to map* – *mapping* (*3D mapping, drone mapping, mobile mapping*), etc.

M. Vaneva and M. I. Bojadjiev described zero derivation as a process which is lexico-grammatic,

that is, syntactic, connected with both derivation and inflection. The lexical part of the process is pictured in the lexical changes of the word and the creation of a new lexeme, while the grammatical or syntactic aspect is seen in a different function that the element obtains depending on its position in the sentence (Vaneva, 2020).

Chulieva Shakhnoza underlines the importance of conversion and explains that it allows for the efficient reuse of existing words in different grammatical contexts, contributing to the adaptability and versatility of a language. It reflects how languages can innovate without having to invent entirely new forms, relying instead on the flexible application of existing words (Chulieva, 2025).

Conversion, as one of the mechanisms of word formation, plays a significant role in expanding the vocabulary of the English language, as well as that of English geodetic terminology, which forms a part of the national language. The essence of conversion as a word-formation process lies in the functional shift of a word from one part of speech to another, or the formation of one part of speech from the root of another without altering the original form. In this case, not only a grammatical, but also a semantic restructuring takes place. The derived word adopts the semantics of the root, adding its own meaning, determined by the status of the new part of speech.

According to Ukrainian researcher A. L. Mishchenko, with whom we agree, as a result of conversion, the semantics of derived words narrows, since the formation of a new lexical unit is based on the modification of only one lexical meaning within the semantic field of a polysemous word. Thus, as a result of conversional word formation, words belonging to one part of speech are transformed into lexical units of a different morphological composition, without, however, exhibiting any formal, explicitly expressed differences (Mishchenko, 2013).

As the German linguist I. Plag notes, conversion refers to derivation without affixation and can be defined as the derivation of a new word without obvious markers. In order to identify instances of conversion, one should look for pairs of words that are derivationally related and are completely identical in phonetic sound (Plag, 2003).

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics, conversion (or zero derivation) is the process by which a lexical unit that originally belonged to one syntactic class also belongs to another (Matthew, 2014). In other words, the essence of such conversional changes lies in the fact that, as a result of the grammatical and lexical reinterpretation of a word, it shifts from one part of speech to another.

A major contribution to the contemporary theory of conversion was made by L. Bauer and S. Valera in

their article "On the borders of conversion", where the authors focus their attention on the long-standing problem of how conversion should be defined and analyzed within the system of word-formation. Their central argument is that conversion cannot always be treated as a fully homogeneous and unequivocally bounded process, because its identification depends on a cluster of formal, grammatical, and semantic conditions rather than on a single diagnostic feature. According to Bauer and Valera, the description of conversion exceeds the limits of morphology in a narrow sense because the process involves several descriptive levels simultaneously: orthographic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic. In other words, the identification of a converted lexeme does not rest solely on the fact that a word appears in another lexical category; rather, it requires attention to a set of interrelated properties that together shape what may be called the profile of conversion. One of the most important theoretical consequences of this position is the distinction between major (central) conversion and borderline or non-central conversion. Central cases are those in which the converted item clearly functions as a new lexeme belonging to another word class and exhibits a sufficiently stable grammatical and semantic profile. In English geodetic terminology, the most common examples include Noun – Verb or Verb – Noun pairs such as to survey – survey, to scan – scan, to model – model, map – to map, where the relation between base and derivative is systematic, recurrent, and lexically entrenched (Bauer and Valera, 2026).

Majority of linguists, studying zero derivation in English have identified its two main types, namely: verbalization (formation of verbs) and substantivization (formation of nouns). In verbalization the main semantic relationships between the original and derived words include instrumental, agentive, locative, cause-effect/resultative and temporal. This is the most productive way of forming words using conversion. When substantivizing there also appear a lot of new nouns, and sometimes they can change their spelling, pronunciation and shifting stress. The most common conversion models are: Noun → Verb (N→V), Verb→Noun (V→N), Adjective → Verb (Adj →V), Adjective → Noun (Adj→N), Noun→Adjective (N→Adj). The most productive are Noun→Verb and Verb→Noun models. The least common are those models where one of the components is an adjective. This may be due to the peculiarities of the phonomorphological structure of the adjective (Azimbayeva, 2024).

Plag identifies four possible ways of determining the direction of conversion. The first involves studying the history of the language and determining

which word came first, the source word. Another important method is to examine the semantic complexity of the two words under consideration; generally, derived words are semantically more complex than their base forms, as affixes usually add additional meanings to the root. A parallel can be drawn in the case of conversion: the derived word (formed as a result of conversion) should be semantically more complex than the source word from which it is derived. Thus, if one component of a pair of words is semantically more complex, or dependent on the other component, this indicates that the dependent component is derived from the other. The next criterion is stress; in cases where there is a change or shift in stress, we can speak of a derived word in which this change occurs. The frequency of use of a particular word is also important; generally, there is a tendency for derived words to be used less frequently than their source words. According to the scholar – and as our study also demonstrates the main types of conversion are the conversion of a noun into a verb, a verb into a noun, an adjective into a verb, and an adjective into a noun; there are other types, but they are few in number (Plag, 2003).

Material and Methods. The material for this study comprises English geodetic terminological units formed through conversion (zero derivation). The corpus was compiled from contemporary English-language specialized dictionaries and glossaries of geodesy and surveying, technical standards, professional publications, and scientific literature in the fields of geodesy and digital surveying. The research covers a combination of descriptive, structural, semantic, functional, and comparative methods. The descriptive and structural methods were used to identify converted terms and classify them according to the principal conversion patterns (Verb → Noun, Noun → Verb, Noun → Adjective, Adjective → Noun, Verb → Adjective, and Adjective → Verb). Semantic and functional analyses were applied to examine the conceptual relationships between source and derived terms and to determine the role of conversion in the development of English geodetic terminology. Elements of quantitative analysis were also employed to determine the relative productivity of different conversion models and to identify the most frequent patterns of term formation.

Results and Discussion. Conversion, as one of the methods of word and term formation, plays a significant role in the process of developing terminological units in the field of geodesy.

As a result of our analysis, we have identified six types (models) of conversion in the structure of English geodetic terminological system, namely:

Verb → Noun: to survey – to measure an area of land to enable a scale map or plan to be produced

→ a survey – an examination of an area or land in order to make a map of it; to record – to write information down or to store in a computer or on film so that it can be looked at in future → a record – information about something that is written down or stored on computer, film etc. so that it can be looked at in future; to lay – to put someone or something down carefully into a flat position → lay – the appearance of an area of land, for example the way it slopes, etc.;

Noun → Verb: an aim – the action of directing something at an object → to aim – to point or direct at a particular object, to level; level – a device for determining whether a surface is horizontal → to level – to make (a surface) horizontal; scale – the ratio of two numbers *a* and *b*, where *b* is the length of a characteristic dimension of some object and *a* is the length of the corresponding dimension in a representation (model or map) of that object → to scale – to measure lengths, or distances between points on an object, etc.;

Noun → Adjective: light – the energy from the sun that allows you to see → light – full of light, well-lighted, illuminated; standard – level of quality, a fixed official rule for measuring weight, purity, value → standard – of the usual, regularized, medium, or accepted kind; surface – outside, top layer of a land → surface – situated near the surface, related to the surface, etc.;

Adjective → Noun: constant – staying the same → a constant – a number or quantity that never changes; high – being a relatively great distance from top to bottom → height – distance above the ground; perpendicular – not leaning to one side or the other, but exactly vertical → perpendicular – an exactly vertical position or line, etc.;

Verb → Adjective: to close – to move the parts of something together so that there is no longer a space between them → close – not far from someone or something; to mediate – to be in a middle or intermediate position → mediate – intermediate; to decussate – to cross or cause to cross in the form of the letter X; to intersect in the form of the letter X; → decussate – crossed, intersected, etc.;

Adjective → Verb: direct – going straight from one place to another → to direct – to aim something in a particular direction; reverse – opposite or contrary in direction, position, order, nature, etc. → to reverse – to turn or set in an opposite direction, order, or position, etc.

The distribution of the identified conversion models demonstrates that they are not equally productive in English geodetic terminology. As shown in Figure 1, which presents the productivity of different conversion types in the analysed terminological system, Verbal → Nominal conversion (V → N) has proved to be the most productive type

in geodetic terminology and is used to form nouns denoting: process, act of measurement, result, dataset, document, etc. Terminological functions of $V \rightarrow N$ conversion are: naming the procedure (*to survey* $\rightarrow$ *survey*: cadastral survey, topographic survey), naming the result or product (*to scan* $\rightarrow$ *scan*: laser scan, mobile scan), naming a completed operation or positional determination (*to fix* $\rightarrow$ *fix*: GPS fix, position fix), naming a route-based measurement procedure (*to traverse* $\rightarrow$ *traverse*: alpine traverse, high-level traverse). Nominal $\rightarrow$ verbal conversion ($N \rightarrow V$) is also very productive in geodetic discourse. It is especially common when a noun denoting an instrument, object, representation, point, or reference system gives rise to a verb meaning “to use / apply / create / assign / process with X”. This type is highly significant for geodetic terminology, because it transforms a static technical object into a name of an operation. The remaining four models: Noun $\rightarrow$ Adjective, Adjective $\rightarrow$ Noun, Verb $\rightarrow$ Adjective, and Adjective $\rightarrow$ Verb occur considerably less frequently. This distribution indicates that conversion in English geodetic terminology is predominantly associated with the transition between verbal and nominal categories, reflecting the process-oriented and operational nature of geodetic professional discourse.

Typical of surveying terminology are converted nouns derived from verb phrases, for example: *to set back* $\rightarrow$ *setback* – the horizontal distance from the fiducial mark on the front end of a tape, or on the part of the tape that is in use at the time, back to the point on the mark or monument to which the particular measure is being made; *to set up* $\rightarrow$ *setup* – (1) in general, the adjustment of a surveying instrument so that it is in proper position

at a point from which observations are to be made. In particular; the actual physical placement of a leveling instrument over an instrument station, or the situation resulting from such placement; (2) the horizontal distance from the fiducial mark on the front end of a tape, or on the end of the tape which is in use at the time, measured forward to the point on the mark or monument to which the particular measure is being made; (3) the positions of those parts of a stereoscopic plotting instrument that are adjustable but remain fixed while the instrument is in use, etc.

Conversion is extremely productive in modern English, especially in response to social, technological, and cultural innovations. Digital communication platforms and social media facilitate the emergence of numerous neologisms through conversion (zero derivation), enabling speakers to create and adapt new lexical items rapidly without morphological modification while preserving communicative efficiency and stylistic brevity. We observe the same trend in modern English geodetic terminology, which contains neologisms formed as a result of zero derivation, mainly substantivization and verbalization:

Verb $\rightarrow$ Noun: *to scan* – to capture spatial data from an object, terrain, structure, or surface by means of terrestrial laser scanning, mobile laser scanning, or another remote-sensing technology $\rightarrow$ *scan* – a single scanning result, digital capture, or point-cloud acquisition. In contemporary geodetic discourse *scan* functions as a fully established technical term, which is also used as a part of terminological word combinations: *terrestrial scan*, *registered scan*, *scan alignment*, *scan registration*, etc.; *to buffer* – to create a buffer zone around a

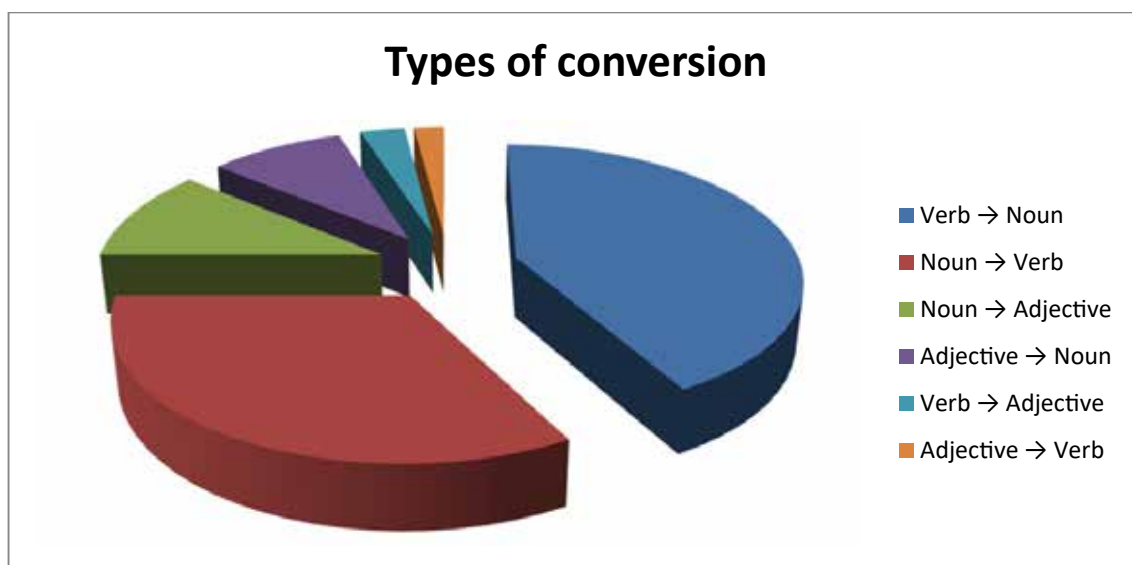


Fig. 1. Productivity of different conversion types in English geodetic terminology

geographic feature → *a buffer* – *the buffer zone produced by that operation*. The noun **buffer** is a converted (zero-derived) term denoting the result of the GIS buffering operation, which is also a component of word combinations: *variable-distance buffer*, *circular buffer*, *linear buffer*, etc.

Noun → Verb: *profile* – *a longitudinal or cross-sectional representation of terrain, a road, a riverbed, a pipeline route, etc.* → *to profile* – *to produce or measure such a profile*. The noun *profile* is actively used in digital terrain analysis, road design, hydrographic surveying, and corridor mapping. The verbal use *to profile* is especially characteristic of technical documentation and data-processing contexts: *terrain profile*, *river profile*, *to profile the embankment*, *to profile the alignment*, etc.; *drone* – an unmanned aerial vehicle used in geodesy and surveying as a platform for aerial data acquisition, mapping, photogrammetry, remote sensing, and spatial monitoring → *to drone a site* – to survey or inspect a site using a drone/UAV. In modern English geodetic terminology, the terminological unit *drone* forms a productive set of terminological collocations associated with surveying, photogrammetry, remote sensing, and geospatial data processing: *drone-based survey*, *drone mapping*, *drone LiDAR survey*, *drone imagery*, *drone point cloud*, *drone georeferencing*, and *drone ground control points*, etc.

Conclusions. Conversion, as a process of creating terminological units, therefore plays a significant role in expanding the vocabulary of English geodetic terminology, as zero derivation is not just a formal linguistic process, it also reflects how knowledge is organized in the field, links operation and conceptual product, facilitates the naming of workflows in digital geodesy, supports terminological compression, which increases informational density, typical of scientific and engineering communication. Zero derivation is quite beneficial in geodetic terminology as it provides: economy (no overt affix is needed), productivity (the same root can generate multiple related terms), semantic transparency (specialists can infer the relation between action and result because the forms are identical and conceptually linked), systemic cohesion (converted terms form tightly connected lexical networks, which is valuable for scientific classification and technical documentation). The two most productive types of conversion in the terminological system under study are: substantivisation (the transition of words, mainly verbs, from other parts of speech to the class of nouns) and verbalisation (the transition of other parts of speech, in most cases nouns, to

the class of verbs). The first conversion pattern is characterised by the derivation conveying the result of the action expressed by the verb stem, whilst the second is characterised by the presence of agentive or instrumental relations between the original and derived stems. Conversion in English geodetic terminology promotes brevity, systematicity, and semantic coherence in professional communication, technical documentation, and scientific discourse within the field of geodesy and surveying. The perspectives of future research are exploring the role and functioning of converted terms in professional communication and specialized linguistic corpora.

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