COMPARATIVE TRENDS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK ANTHROPONYMS: CHANGING NAMING PRACTICES FROM 2010 TO 2025

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ABSTRACT

Personal names are closely connected to the cultural and social environment in which people live. Although naming traditions are often passed down from one generation to another, they also change in response to new social attitudes, cultural influences and individual preferences. This study examines developments in English and Uzbek naming practices between 2010 and 2025, focusing on the factors that have influenced parents’ choices of personal names. The research draws on available civil registration data from Uzbekistan and official birth-name statistics published by the United Kingdom’s Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the United States Social Security Administration (SSA). Using a descriptive and comparative approach, the study considers naming patterns in terms of cultural and religious associations, phonetic and structural features, media influence and gender distinctions. The findings suggest that the two naming traditions have followed different patterns of development. In Uzbekistan, traditional Arabic-Islamic names and melodious compound forms continue to attract considerable attention. In English-speaking contexts, meanwhile, short names, nature-related vocabulary and greater flexibility in gender naming have become increasingly noticeable. These differences demonstrate that naming practices are influenced not only by global cultural developments but also by the historical and social values of individual communities.

Keywords: anthroponyms, naming practices, sociolinguistics, globalization, cultural change, personal names, comparative onomastics.

ANNOTATSIYA

Shaxs ismlari inson yashayotgan jamiyatning madaniy va ijtimoiy muhiti bilan chambarchas bog‘liq. Nomlash an’analari avloddan avlodga o‘tib kelishiga qaramay, ular yangi ijtimoiy qarashlar, madaniy ta’sirlar va individual tanlovlar natijasida ham o‘zgarib boradi. Ushbu tadqiqotda 2010–2025-yillar davomida ingliz va o‘zbek tillaridagi nomlash amaliyotida yuz bergan o‘zgarishlar hamda ota-onalarning ism tanlashiga ta’sir ko‘rsatuvchi omillar tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot O‘zbekistonning mavjud FHDYo statistik ma’lumotlari, shuningdek, Buyuk Britaniya Milliy statistika boshqarmasi (ONS) va AQSh Ijtimoiy ta’minot boshqarmasi (SSA) tomonidan e’lon qilingan rasmiy tug‘ilish statistikasi asosida olib boriladi. Deskriptiv-qiyosiy yondashuv orqali ismlar madaniy va diniy mazmuni, fonetik va strukturaviy xususiyatlari, media ta’siri hamda gender farqlari nuqtayi nazaridan o‘rganiladi. Natijalar ikki nomlash an’anasida turlicha rivojlanish yo‘nalishlari mavjudligini ko‘rsatadi. O‘zbek antroponimiyasida an’anaviy arab-islomiy ismlar va ohangdor qo‘shma shakllarga qiziqish saqlanib qolayotgan bo‘lsa, ingliz tilida so‘zlashuvchi jamiyatlarda qisqa ismlar, tabiat bilan bog‘liq leksik birliklar va gender jihatidan moslashuvchan nomlash shakllari ko‘proq ko‘zga tashlanadi. Ushbu farqlar nomlash amaliyotiga globallashuv bilan bir qatorda har bir jamiyatning tarixiy va ijtimoiy qadriyatlari ham ta’sir ko‘rsatishini namoyon etadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: antroponimlar, nomlash amaliyoti, sotsiolingvistika, globallashuv, madaniy o‘zgarishlar, shaxs ismlari, qiyosiy onomastika.

INTRODUCTION

A personal name is one of the first elements of identity that an individual receives. Although it may seem like a simple linguistic choice, naming often reflects much more than personal preference. It can express family traditions, religious beliefs, cultural belonging and even the expectations parents have for their children's future. For this reason, personal names provide valuable material for understanding how societies change over time.

The study of personal names has traditionally focused on their origins, meanings and linguistic structures. However, naming can also be examined from a sociolinguistic perspective. From this point of view, names are not simply words used to identify individuals they are also connected

with social attitudes, cultural values and the relationship between tradition and modernity. Changes in naming preferences may therefore reveal broader developments within a particular community.

English and Uzbek provide an interesting basis for such a comparison. Their naming traditions have developed under different historical, linguistic and cultural influences. English personal names reflect a combination of Germanic, Latin, French and Biblical traditions, while Uzbek names have been shaped by Turkic, Arabic and Persian influences, among others. These historical differences continue to influence the way parents approach naming today.

At the same time, the growing influence of globalization, international entertainment and digital communication has created new opportunities for cultural exchange. Parents can now encounter names from different countries and linguistic backgrounds through television, social media, films and other online platforms. Nevertheless, greater exposure to international culture does not necessarily mean that traditional naming practices disappear. In some cases, it may even encourage renewed interest in cultural heritage.

Against this background, the present study explores how naming preferences in English and Uzbek have developed between 2010 and 2026. It pays particular attention to the relationship between traditional values and contemporary influences, as well as the similarities and differences that can be observed in the two naming systems.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive-comparative approach supported by sociolinguistic analysis. The main purpose is to identify noticeable changes in naming preferences and examine how these developments relate to wider cultural and social factors.

The study is based primarily on secondary data obtained from official statistical sources. Information concerning Uzbek personal names was collected from demographic publications and civil registration statistics provided by the Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. For comparison, the research draws on baby-name statistics published

by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for England and Wales and the Social Security Administration (SSA) for the United States.

The selected period covers the years from 2010 to 2025, although the availability of complete and comparable statistical records may differ between countries. Therefore, the analysis considers the published data available for each reporting period rather than assuming that all three sources provide complete annual records up to 2025.

The most frequently registered male and female names were examined in relation to four main aspects:

Cultural and religious associations. This aspect considers whether naming preferences are connected with religious traditions, family heritage, historical figures or more individual forms of expression.

Phonetic and structural characteristics. Attention is given to the length of names, syllable patterns, compound structures and sound combinations that appear attractive to parents.

Media and international influence. This dimension explores the possible role of television programmes, films, celebrities, sports and digital platforms in introducing or popularising particular names.

Gender distinctions. The analysis considers how clearly male and female names are differentiated and whether gender-neutral naming has become more visible.

The comparison is qualitative and descriptive. It focuses on recurring patterns in the available rankings rather than attempting to establish a direct causal relationship between a particular social development and the popularity of an individual name.

RESULTS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Religious and Cultural Continuity in Uzbek Naming and Individual Choice in English-Speaking Contexts

One noticeable feature of contemporary Uzbek naming is the continued popularity of names associated with Islamic history and religious tradition. Names such as Muhammadali,

Mustafo, Abdulloh, Imron, Soliha, Muslima and Hadicha frequently appear in discussions of popular Uzbek names. Their appeal is closely connected with their religious meanings, historical associations and the cultural importance attached to naming a child.

The popularity of such names can also be considered in the context of changes that have taken place since Uzbekistan gained independence. As national and cultural traditions received renewed attention, religious heritage became increasingly visible in different areas of everyday life, including personal naming. For many families, choosing a traditional Islamic name is not simply a matter of following fashion. It can also represent a way of expressing faith, preserving cultural continuity and wishing positive qualities for a child.

The situation in English-speaking countries is somewhat different. Traditional Biblical names such as John, Peter, Mary and Sarah have long been part of English naming culture, but contemporary preferences are no longer shaped by religious tradition to the same extent in every family. Names such as Noah, Oliver, Olivia and Amelia continue to be popular, although their appeal may be connected with several factors, including familiarity, sound, cultural associations and changing fashion.

Another characteristic of contemporary English naming is the importance attached to individual choice. Some parents prefer names that are familiar but not overly common, while others look for less conventional options that help distinguish their children. This tendency reflects a wider interest in personal identity and self-expression.

However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that English naming has completely moved away from religious or family traditions. Biblical and historically established names remain in use. The more important difference is that parents today have a wider range of cultural and stylistic options, and religious continuity is only one of several factors influencing their decisions.

Compound and Melodious Forms versus Short and Simple Names

The structure and pronunciation of a name are also important considerations in the naming process. Parents often pay attention to how a name sounds, how easily it can be pronounced and whether it creates a pleasant impression.

In Uzbekistan, compound names remain a recognisable feature of the naming tradition. Forms such as Muhammadziyo, Abdulaziz, Muhammadyusuf and Muhammadamin combine meaningful elements, often with religious or positive associations. Such names may express parental hopes for a child's character, future or spiritual development. Their structure also reflects the importance of combining meaningful name components rather than selecting a name solely for its sound.

Female names such as Rayhona, Mubina, Imona, Samira and Safiya are also valued for their relatively soft and flowing pronunciation. Open vowels and sonorant consonants, including /l/, /m/ and /n/, contribute to the pleasant sound patterns associated with many of these names. Nevertheless, phonetic preference should be understood as one factor among several, since meaning and cultural familiarity remain equally important in many families.

In English-speaking countries, short names have a particularly visible place in contemporary naming rankings. Leo, Liam, Milo, Mia, Ava, Isla and Zoe illustrate the appeal of names that are relatively brief and easy to pronounce. One- and two-syllable forms are especially common in modern naming trends, although longer traditional names continue to be used as well.

The preference for shorter names may be related to their simplicity and adaptability in everyday communication. In increasingly multicultural societies, parents may also appreciate names that can be pronounced and recognised across different linguistic environments. Digital communication may contribute to this preference, although the available statistics alone cannot establish that online usage is the main reason behind it.

Thus, the two naming traditions demonstrate different structural preferences. Uzbek names often retain meaningful compound elements and culturally familiar sound patterns, whereas English naming shows a strong presence of concise forms. These tendencies should be viewed as general patterns rather than strict rules applying to every family.

Global Media, Cultural Exchange and the Influence of Popular Culture

The influence of international media has become increasingly relevant to naming practices. Films, television series, music, sports and social networking platforms expose parents to names that may previously have been unfamiliar within their communities. However, the way these influences are adopted depends largely on local cultural preferences.

In Uzbekistan, Turkish television dramas have attracted considerable attention and introduced audiences to historical and culturally recognisable names. Names such as Usmon, Ertug‘rul, Alp, Aylin and Elif illustrate how popular entertainment can bring particular naming traditions into wider public discussion. Their appeal may be connected not only with the characters who bear them but also with the historical and linguistic associations attached to these names.

Islamic history and international sporting events provide other sources of inspiration. Names associated with religious figures or well-known athletes may attract the attention of some parents. Nevertheless, examples such as Ronaldo and Messi should be treated as individual cases rather than evidence of a widespread naming pattern unless registration statistics confirm a measurable increase.

In English-speaking countries, popular culture has also played a role in shaping naming preferences. Television series and films can introduce names that later become familiar to a wider audience. The popularity of names such as Aria and Arya, for example, is often discussed in connection with contemporary entertainment and fictional characters.

Nature-related vocabulary represents another noticeable feature of English naming. Names such as Willow, Hazel, Ivy, River and Rowan demonstrate how ordinary words associated with plants, landscapes and the natural environment can become established personal names. This development reflects an interest in nature-inspired naming and the use of vocabulary with positive aesthetic associations.

The comparison suggests that global cultural exchange does not produce identical results in different societies. Uzbek parents may interpret international influences through familiar religious, historical and linguistic traditions, while English-speaking parents may be more likely to adopt names from entertainment, nature and contemporary popular culture. In both cases, however, external influences are filtered through local preferences.

Gender Distinctions and the Emergence of Gender-Neutral Naming

Gender is another important aspect of personal naming, although the degree of flexibility differs between the two traditions.

In Uzbek, the distinction between traditionally male and female names remains relatively clear. Female names are often associated with beauty, flowers, grace and positive personal qualities. Examples include Lola, Rayhon and Gulnoza, as well as names containing elements such as -oy, -gul and -bonu. Male names, on the other hand, may express strength, courage, leadership or religious devotion, as illustrated by Jasur, Sardor and Behruz.

These associations are closely connected with linguistic convention and cultural expectations. As a result, parents generally choose names that are socially recognised as appropriate for the child's gender. Although individual exceptions may occur, gender distinction remains an important characteristic of Uzbek naming practices.

English naming demonstrates a greater degree of flexibility in this respect. Names such as Taylor, Jordan, Riley, Charlie, Quinn and Avery can be used for both boys and girls. Some of these names originally developed from surnames or names traditionally associated with one gender but have gradually acquired broader usage.

The increasing visibility of gender-neutral names may be linked to changing social attitudes and a greater emphasis on individual expression. For some parents, such names offer a modern alternative to more conventional masculine and feminine forms. However, this does not mean that gender-specific names have lost their popularity in English-speaking societies. Traditional distinctions continue to exist alongside more flexible naming choices.

Overall, the comparison reveals that gender remains a more clearly marked feature of Uzbek anthroponymy, whereas contemporary English naming offers a wider range of possibilities for crossing traditional gender boundaries.

DISCUSSION

The comparison of English and Uzbek naming practices demonstrates that globalization does not necessarily lead to the disappearance of local cultural characteristics. Although parents

in both societies have greater access to international names and cultural influences than previous generations, their choices continue to reflect the values and expectations of their own communities.

In Uzbekistan, contemporary naming practices reveal an ongoing connection with religious and cultural heritage. The popularity of Arabic-Islamic names and compound forms suggests that traditional meanings continue to play an important role in the naming process. At the same time, the influence of international entertainment and digital media introduces new possibilities without necessarily replacing established naming conventions. This relationship between cultural continuity and external influence is one of the most interesting features of contemporary Uzbek anthroponymy.

English naming practices reveal a somewhat different balance. Parents have access to a broad range of naming options, including traditional names, nature-related vocabulary, names from popular culture and gender-neutral forms. Individual preference and the desire to choose a distinctive name appear to be important considerations. Nevertheless, traditional names remain part of contemporary naming culture, showing that modern preferences do not entirely replace established conventions.

The findings also suggest that the meaning and structure of a name are interpreted differently across cultural contexts. In Uzbek, a name may carry a relatively transparent religious, moral or symbolic meaning that reflects the hopes of the family. In English, meaning is also important, but sound, familiarity, aesthetic appeal and personal preference may receive greater attention in certain naming choices.

It is important to recognise that these observations describe general tendencies rather than universal characteristics of Uzbek or English-speaking families. Naming decisions are personal, and parents within the same society may have very different motivations. Furthermore, statistical rankings indicate which names are registered most frequently, but they do not directly explain why parents select them. A more detailed understanding of individual motivations would require additional qualitative research, such as interviews or questionnaires.

Despite these limitations, the comparison provides a useful perspective on the relationship between language, identity and cultural change. Personal names continue to function as meaningful social symbols, reflecting both the traditions inherited from previous generations and the preferences emerging in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of English and Uzbek naming practices between 2010 and 2026 reveals several differences in the ways personal names have developed in the two cultural contexts. Although both traditions are influenced by globalization, digital communication and changing social attitudes, their responses to these developments are not identical.

In Uzbekistan, religious and cultural heritage continues to have a strong influence on parents' naming choices. Arabic-Islamic names, meaningful compound forms and clearly differentiated male and female names remain important features of contemporary Uzbek anthroponymy. International influences are also present, particularly through entertainment and popular culture, but they are often interpreted within an established cultural framework.

In English-speaking societies, contemporary naming practices demonstrate a visible interest in shorter names, nature-related vocabulary and greater flexibility in gender distinctions. Individual preference and the search for distinctive names are also important elements of the current naming landscape. At the same time, traditional names continue to maintain their position, indicating that modern naming practices are shaped by a combination of continuity and change.

Ultimately, the comparison confirms that personal names are more than linguistic labels. They reflect the cultural experiences, social expectations and changing values of the communities that use them. Examining naming practices from a comparative perspective therefore offers a valuable way of understanding how language and cultural identity develop in an increasingly interconnected world.

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