



GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF PROPER NOUNS

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Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the grammatical nature of proper nouns from morphological, lexico-grammatical, and syntactic perspectives. It examines the word-formation models of proper nouns, orthographic norms related to capitalization, and their grammatical differentiation as personal names, place names, and institutional names. Particular attention is paid to the interaction of proper nouns with the categories of number, case, and possession. At the syntactic level, the study analyzes the functions of proper nouns as sentence constituents, their use in attributive constructions, and the emergence of generalized meanings. On this basis, the systemic integrity and functional significance of proper nouns within the language system are substantiated.

Keywords: Proper noun, morphology, lexico-grammatical category, syntax, anthroponym, toponym, attributive construction.

Introduction

Proper nouns occupy a distinct grammatical status within the nominative system of language as units that precisely identify a person, place, object, or institution. Unlike common nouns, proper nouns do not classify denotata into types but rather refer to individual entities. For this reason, their morphological formation, grammatical potential, and syntactic functions carry a specific functional load within the linguistic system. This article aims to provide a theoretically grounded analysis of the interrelationship between the morphological nature of proper



nouns, their interaction with grammatical categories, and their role in syntactic structures.

The formation of proper nouns constitutes a fundamental stage that determines the scope of their subsequent grammatical usage. Proper nouns may appear as simple forms (e.g., Ali, Khiva, Zarafshan) or as complex constructions (Republic of Uzbekistan, Alisher Navoi National Library). In compound proper nouns, all components semantically refer to a single entity; therefore, they function as a unified nominative unit.

One of the most significant morphological features of proper nouns is capitalization. This orthographic norm applies to personal names, place names, geographical entities, institutions, and historical events (e.g., Abu Ali ibn Sina, Kashkadarya, Fergana Valley, Independence Day). Capitalization serves not only an orthographic function but also reinforces the grammatical distinctiveness of proper nouns. Structurally, personal names (anthroponyms), place names (toponyms), and institutional names differ from one another. For instance, personal names demonstrate greater phonetic adaptability, whereas geographical names tend to combine more readily with locative case markers (to Samarkand, from Khorezm, of Termez).

The interaction of proper nouns with grammatical categories is primarily determined by their morphological structure. Since the core function of proper nouns is to identify a specific denotatum—whether a person, place, object, or institution—their ability to undergo grammatical variation is relatively restricted compared to common nouns. Accordingly, their relationship with the categories of number, case, and possession is governed by distinct grammatical norms.

Proper nouns generally do not occur in the plural form, as they denote unique entities. Forms such as “Samarkands” or “Zulfiyas” are not typically used in neutral contexts, a restriction that stems from the semantic nature of proper nouns. Nevertheless, certain exceptions exist in actual language use, motivated by stylistic or semantic considerations. For example, plural forms like the Karimovs or the Akbarovs denote family groups; in such cases, the surname approaches the function of a class noun. In expressions such as the era of the Temurids or the lineage of the Navois, proper nouns undergo metaphorical generalization and come to represent a historical or cultural period.



Here, the acceptance of the plural category reflects semantic expansion and symbolic usage rather than literal multiplicity.

Although proper nouns can take all case endings, their usage depends on phonetic adaptation and semantic clarity. Examples include to Navoi, of Navoi, Navoi (accusative), from Beruni, of Andijan, to Andijan. Case markers determine the syntactic role of proper nouns within the sentence, enabling them to function as subjects, objects, or modifiers. Through case inflection, proper nouns express spatial, temporal, causal, and possessive relations, as in an event dedicated to Navoi (direction), an idea inherited from Beruni (source), or the climate of Andijan (possessive relation). Thus, case forms serve not only grammatical but also semantic and syntactic functions.

The combination of proper nouns with possessive markers gives rise to two primary semantic layers: (a) personal possession and (b) symbolic or conceptual possession. In personal possession, the proper noun denotes concrete ownership (Ali's book, Ziyoda's notebook, I saw Rustam's house). Here, the possessive form reflects an actual ownership relationship and plays a crucial role in identifying social and communicative relations. Symbolic or conceptual possession, by contrast, involves semantic extension and typically conveys abstract, historical, or cultural meanings (Uzbekistan's independence, Navoi's legacy, Babur's spiritual world). In such cases, possession does not indicate material ownership but conceptual affiliation. For instance, Navoi's legacy refers not to personal property but to cultural and literary heritage. Consequently, the possessive category enriches the semantic load of proper nouns and reinforces their central role within the grammatical system.

The syntactic characteristics of proper nouns stem from their nominative function within the language system. As units that individually designate persons, places, or objects, proper nouns often constitute the semantic core of a sentence. Therefore, they are actively employed in various syntactic roles and play a key role in shaping sentence structure.

As sentence constituents, proper nouns most frequently function as subjects, predicates, and attributes. In the subject position, they typically serve as the semantic center of the sentence, clearly identifying the entity under discussion (Babur ruled in India. Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur recorded extensive historical



information in his “Baburnama”). In these examples, the proper noun identifies the primary participant of the event. Within the predicate, proper nouns may function as nominal predicates, specifying identity (Her name is Dilafruz. This city is ancient Bukhara). Here, the naming function of the proper noun is reinforced, emphasizing authentic identification. When used attributively, proper nouns express affiliation, location, origin, or cultural association (the center of Tashkent city, Navoi’s works, Samarkand bread), enhancing semantic precision and internal syntactic cohesion.

Through these syntactic functions, proper nouns become central elements of sentence organization. They identify the topic of discourse, strengthen semantic structure, enrich meaning through attributive relations, and encode cultural, historical, and symbolic meanings in grammatical form. As a result, proper nouns emerge not merely as grammatical elements but as complex units integrating semantic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions of discourse.

The interaction of proper nouns with the categories of number, case, and possession is rooted in their morphological structure and semantic nature. These categories define the functional capacity of proper nouns within the language system and transform them into essential components of syntactic constructions. The limited application of number reinforces their individual referential character; the case system integrates them into syntactic relations; and the possessive category broadens their semantic scope.

Consequently, proper nouns function as multilayered units occupying a central position in the nominative, semantic, and syntactic organization of language.

The morphological and syntactic properties of proper nouns are intrinsically interconnected. Morphological formation determines their interaction with grammatical categories, while grammatical categories shape their syntactic functions. The identificational nature of proper nouns renders them among the most active nominative units of the language. For this reason, proper nouns play a significant role in the development of structural, semantic, and pragmatic layers of the linguistic system.



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