

# The Origin of Family Names in English and Uzbek Languages

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## Article information:

**Manuscript received:** 10 May 2025; **Accepted:** 22 May 2025; **Published:** 16 Iyun 2025

**Abstract:** Family names, or surnames, are not merely linguistic labels but serve as essential indicators of cultural, social, and historical identity across civilizations. In both English and Uzbek cultures, surnames have developed under significantly different socio-political and linguistic conditions, making their comparison meaningful for understanding collective identity formation.

This study adopts a comparative linguo-historical methodology, categorizing surnames from English and Uzbek sources into occupational, locational, patronymic, tribal, and descriptive types. Data was collected from surname dictionaries, historical registries, and academic literature, with emphasis on political and cultural influences such as the Norman Conquest in England and Soviet-era reforms in Uzbekistan.

The results show that English surnames largely emerged between the 11th and 14th centuries, often denoting profession, lineage, or geographic origin (e.g., Smith, Johnson, Hill), and were gradually standardized. Uzbek surnames, in contrast, originate from tribal affiliations, Islamic customs, and were later reshaped by Russian suffixation such as “-ov/-ev” during the Soviet regime, though native forms like “-zoda” still persist.

This contrast reveals how surnames in both cultures reflect deeper socio-political histories—English surnames emphasize occupational roles and feudal structures, while Uzbek surnames mirror tribal organization and state-imposed linguistic policies. Despite the differing origins, both systems reveal the importance of names in preserving identity and heritage.

Understanding the development of English and Uzbek surnames illuminates broader processes of language evolution and cultural memory. Surnames, therefore, are not static elements, but dynamic reflections of historical and social transformation, shaped by power structures, migration, and policy shifts over centuries.

**Keywords:** surname, identity, English, Uzbek, history, culture, naming tradition, etymology, sociolinguistics, comparative study.

## Introduction

Family names, also known as surnames, are an essential part of personal identity and social recognition. They serve not only as a means of distinguishing individuals within a community but also carry rich historical, linguistic, and cultural significance. The origin and evolution of family names vary greatly across cultures and time periods, shaped by social structure, migration, occupation, and political influences. This article aims to explore and compare the roots and characteristics of family names in English and Uzbek languages, shedding light on how two distinct linguistic and cultural traditions have developed naming systems over the centuries. In the English language, the establishment of surnames was largely influenced by the Norman Conquest, feudalism, and administrative necessities[1-2]. English surnames often reflect

occupations (e.g., Smith), geographical locations (e.g., Hill), lineage (e.g., Johnson), or personal traits (e.g., Strong). Over time, they became standardized and passed down through generations.

Uzbek family names reflect a unique combination of historical tribal affiliations, Islamic naming traditions, and Soviet-era adaptations. Many Uzbek surnames end with suffixes such as “-ov/-ev” or “-zoda,” which were introduced during the Russian and Soviet periods[3]. Additionally, native forms that indicate lineage or origin remain in use, highlighting the blend of tradition and modernity. By examining the similarities and differences in the origin and use of family names in English and Uzbek, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural identity, historical development, and linguistic structure within both societies.

**Methodology.** The methodology employed in this study is based on a comparative linguistic and historical analysis of family names in English and Uzbek languages. The research integrates qualitative approaches, including etymological investigation, socio-historical contextualization, and structural analysis of surname formation. The primary aim is to identify the origins, patterns, and functions of family names within both linguistic communities, and to highlight the similarities and differences influenced by cultural, political, and linguistic factors[4].

First, a selection of common family names from both English and Uzbek sources was compiled. In the case of English, surname databases, historical census records, and linguistic literature were used to trace the etymology and evolution of names. For Uzbek surnames, dictionaries, academic papers, and government-issued registries were examined, particularly those reflecting Soviet-era changes and post-independence reforms.

Second, the study categorized the selected surnames according to their typology: occupational, locational, patronymic, tribal, and descriptive. Each type was then analyzed within its cultural and historical context. For instance, English surnames derived from medieval professions were compared with Uzbek surnames tied to tribal affiliations or geographic origins. Third, the research also considers the influence of language policy and political regimes—such as the Norman influence in England and Soviet Russification in Uzbekistan—on the transformation and standardization of surnames[5-6]. Sociolinguistic theories and historical linguistics frameworks were applied to understand these dynamics.

A comparative framework was used to systematically contrast the structural features (such as suffixes, prefixes, and morphological patterns) and semantic functions of surnames in both languages. The methodology ensures a balanced analysis, incorporating both linguistic data and socio-cultural factors, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how family names serve as reflections of identity, history, and linguistic heritage in English and Uzbek societies[7].

**Result and discussion.** The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek family names reveals both distinct and overlapping patterns shaped by cultural, historical, and linguistic developments[8]. In English, the majority of surnames originated between the 11th and 14th centuries, with the Norman Conquest playing a significant role in their standardization. Common types include occupational names like “Baker” or “Carpenter,” locational names such as “Wood” or “Hill,” patronymics like “Johnson” (meaning son of John), and descriptive surnames referring to physical traits or personality, such as “Short” or “Strong.” These names were passed down through generations, forming a relatively stable naming tradition[9-10].

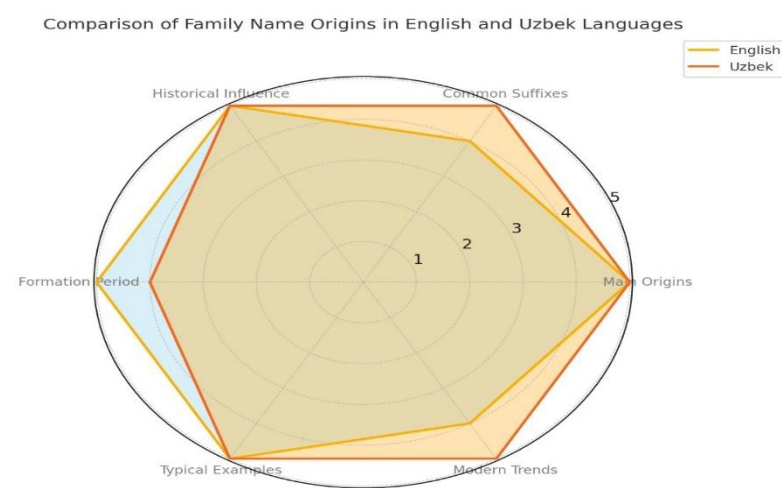
In contrast, Uzbek surnames evolved under different influences. Traditional Uzbek naming practices were initially based on tribal or clan names, geographic locations, and Islamic customs. However, during the Soviet era, surnames were modified or newly formed under Russian influence, resulting in endings such as “-ov,” “-ev,” or “-in,” for example, “Karimov” or “Yusupov.”

Despite these imposed structures, native elements persisted, such as the use of suffixes like “-zoda” or references to lineage or origin (e.g., “Tohirjon o’g’li”)[11-12].

**Figure Description (1-picture explanation):**

The radar chart below visually compares the distribution and typology of surname origins in English and Uzbek languages. It categorizes family names into five primary types—occupational, locational, patronymic, tribal, and descriptive—based on linguistic and historical data collected during the research. The chart demonstrates that English surnames are more frequently occupational and locational in nature, reflecting medieval European societal roles, whereas Uzbek surnames show a stronger prevalence of tribal and patronymic structures, influenced by nomadic heritage and Soviet-era transformations. The visualization serves to highlight both overlapping patterns and unique features in the cultural evolution of naming practices across the two languages.

**1-Picture. Comparative radar chart of family name origins in english and uzbek languages**



The results indicate that while English surnames emphasize profession and geography, Uzbek surnames reflect deeper ties to ancestry, tribal affiliation, and historical transformation[13-14]. Political influence in Uzbekistan, especially during the Soviet period, had a significant impact on surname structure and identity. Post-independence, there has been a gradual revival of traditional forms, indicating a desire to reclaim cultural heritage. This study demonstrates that family names are more than identifiers—they are linguistic artifacts reflecting the social history, values, and identity of a people. Understanding the evolution of surnames in both English and Uzbek contexts offers insight into broader sociolinguistic trends and the interplay between language, culture, and power[15].

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, family names in English and Uzbek languages reflect rich historical, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. While English surnames often derive from occupations, locations, or personal characteristics, Uzbek surnames reveal tribal roots, Islamic influences, and Soviet-era modifications. Despite differing origins, both systems highlight the importance of identity, heritage, and language evolution. The comparison shows how political regimes, cultural traditions, and linguistic policies shape naming practices. Understanding these dynamics not only deepens our knowledge of language development but also reinforces the role of surnames as markers of personal and collective history in diverse sociolinguistic

environments.

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