

An Investigation into the Phenomenon of Morphological Conversion in Current Textbooks of English and Vietnamese Literature for High Schools

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22238>

Received: 13/01/2022

Revision: 06/06/2022

Accepted: 09/06/2022

Online: 18/06/2022

ABSTRACT

Conversion is a common phenomenon in both languages which are English and Vietnamese, especially in terms of morphology. The study investigates the phenomenon of morphological conversion in current English and Vietnamese Literature textbooks for High schools. Based on those survey results, the authors analyzed the similarities and differences of this phenomenon between the two disciplines to propose appropriate teaching methods when encountering it in the teaching process. The research used the inductive method to synthesize theories from available data about the phenomenon of conversion and the survey approach to analyze the conversion phenomenon density in the English and Vietnamese Literature books statistically at the high school level. Finally, the comparative method was used to point out the similarities and differences between the above phenomena in the textbooks of the two subjects. From the collected data, this study showed that the phenomenon of conversion in the textbooks of English and Literature has occurred. Through the research paper, the authors would like to give some notes and suggestions on appropriate teaching methods for high school teachers when encountering this phenomenon in the teaching process.

Keywords:

Conversion, teaching, English, Vietnamese Literature.

Introduction

Background of the study

Conversion is a new phenomenon that has been focused on since the second half of the 20th century. Due to the differences between morphological types of language, which are an analytic language like English and an isolating language such as Vietnamese, there are some differences in this phenomenon between these two languages. As Yule (2014) stated, the conversion process is very productive in modern English, while conversion is a typical and common phenomenon in isolated languages such as Vietnamese (Tran & Dang, 2014). Therefore, despite belonging

to different types of language, conversion is a common phenomenon in both languages, especially in terms of morphology.

Statement of the problem

The phenomenon of conversion is extremely productive in English. It has appeared in the high school English curriculum and caused many difficulties for Vietnamese students. Firstly, due to having the same signifier but different meanings and grammatical functions, the phenomenon has caused difficulties in recognizing and distinguishing the conversion words. Secondly, there are some dissimilarities between English and Vietnamese conversion words, committing the errors made by high school students. Besides, Diasti and Bram (2020) also stated that "most of the first-year students were not knowledgeable with conversion," which means that the morphological conversion was not focused on so much in high school's curriculum (p. 20). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the morphological conversion phenomenon in current English and Vietnamese literature textbooks for high schools.

Significance of the study

On the one hand, this study provides several contributions to the classification of morphological conversion phenomena. On the other hand, making use of the similarities and differences of this phenomenon between English and Vietnamese, the study covers some common errors of this phenomenon and gives suggested notes which help teachers in their teaching activities when they encounter this phenomenon of conversion. From that, the study supports the development process of non-native teaching speakers who are Vietnamese.

Literature review

What is conversion?

Recently, there have been two different opinions among researchers on conversion. The first opinion is that conversion was not a word-formation process as "conversion – at least in analytical languages like English – is the process by which lexical items change category without any concomitant change in form" (Štekauer & Lieber, 2005, p. 418), which can be understood that conversion is simply a category shift and could be more related to the grammatical category. The second view is stated by Plag (2003) that conversion can be defined as the derivation of a new word without any overt marking. This means conversion is not only considered to be a word-formation process but also another type of derivation. Moreover, as a word-formation process, "conversion is considered as an affix-less way of word-formation along with compounding, sound-imitation, shortening by some linguists," and some researchers conceive of it as "a form of derivation which could be presented by the formula 'base + zero-affix'" (Girunyan, 2009, p. 130). Besides, Lee (2009) stated that conversion is a kind of derivation by adding zero-morphemes. In addition to this view, Adams (1973) also had a separate chapter about *derivation by zero suffixes* in her published book *An introduction to modern English word-formation*. From that, it is clear that both views indicate that conversion is the phenomenon that can change the part of speech of a word without any change in form.

Besides these two major views, there are also other opinions on conversion. On the one hand, Al-Murib (2021) did write in her paper: “Conversion is a process which is applicable to both morphology and syntax. In terms of morphology it is a word-formation process and in terms of syntax it is a case where elements change their functions according to the clause type.” (p. 60). In other words, Al-Murib (2021) believed that the conversion phenomenon is related to both morphology and syntax, not just one of them. On the other hand, Gadimova (2021) claimed that “conversion operates at all linguistic levels: phonetic, derivational, morphological, lexical and syntactic”, implying that this phenomenon is related to all linguistic levels, not simply morphology and syntax.

Due to these different opinions, there are many other terms for conversion phenomenon with different research directions, such as conversion, zero-derivation, root-formation, transposition, functional change, etc. In this study, the authors mainly focus on the phenomenon of conversion in terms of morphology, addressing some related topics such as derivation, inflection, affixation, etc.

Types of morphological conversion

At the end of the 19th century, Sweet (1900) posed an interesting problem, and that was to distinguish between a total and partial type of conversion by beginning with a verb *walk* in *he walks*. “The test of conversion is that the converted word adopts all the formal characteristics (inflection, etc.) of the part of speech it has been made into” (Sweet, 1900, p. 39). To clarify the statement, Sweet (1900) made the verb *walk* into a noun “by simply giving it the same formal characteristics, as in *he took a walk, three different walks of life*” (p. 38). Indeed, the verb *walk* became a noun because “it takes the form-word *the* before it” and “can take a plural ending *-s*” (Sweet, 1900, p. 39). Therefore, it is clear to assume that the verb *walk* has been converted into the noun *walk*, which is Sweet’s example of total conversion. Additionally, Sweet (1900) stated that there were cases of partial conversion, in which a word partook of the formal peculiarities of two different parts of speech. For example, the adjective *good* in *the good is happy* is partially converted to a noun because it “takes the form-word *the* before it like a noun, and stands as the subject of a sentence like a noun, and yet in its want of plural inflection, it is an adjective, not a noun” (Sweet, 1900, p. 39). In that example, *good* means 'good persons', and when it is preceded by *the*, it becomes a noun. However, “*goods* in *goods and chattels*, on the other hand, shows complete conversion of an adjective into a noun” (Sweet, 1900, p. 39). Therefore, the pair *good - the good* could be seen as an example of partial conversion.

In English, since Sweet posed that problem, many researchers have agreed that there are two major conversion types: complete conversion (or total conversion) and approximate conversion (or partial conversion). However, there are also many other opinions about some cases of partial conversion. According to Adams (1973), the partial conversion could be seen as “a syntactic matter” rather than a morphological matter. Besides that, with an example of partial conversion, which is *poor* in *the poor are always with us*, Adams (1973) posed a question, if this was a noun, an adjective acting as a noun or if it belonged to both two parts of speech? Having the same concern, Fernández (2001) believed that “there is no conversion but rather words simply assume

a function that is different to their prototypical one” in some typical cases of the partial conversion, such as Adjective > Noun (*the poor*), Noun > Adjective (*car* in *car maintenance*), and Adverb > Adjective (*then* in *the then secretary*) (p. 10). In the study, Fernández (2001) used the so-called partial conversion from an adjective to a noun such as *the rich* to give evidence that “partial conversion does not exist” (p. 11). He said that the word *rich* could not function as a noun because it cannot take a plural ending *-s* (*the richs*). The word *rich*, however, is clearly an adjective because “it is gradable, cf. *the richer*, *the richest* and it may be modified by an adverb, *very*: *the very rich*” (Fernández, 2001, p. 11). Therefore, in this case, conversion from adjective to noun may not exist, but “it may very well exist, but only in certain cases and it is total conversion. (e.g., compared with 22 per cent of blacks and 12 per cent of non-Hispanic whites)” (Fernández, 2001, p. 11).

Additionally, Quirk et al. (1972) and Kiparsky (1982) have other views on partial conversion which are shift of stress (e.g., *export_v* - *export*) and voicing of the final consonant (e.g., *hou[s]_ve_n* - *hou[z]_ve_v*). Vo (2013) also agreed with these views and stated that in approximate conversion, words are converted with the addition of affixes, or a change in stress, i.e., a slight phonological change. However, her view is a little different from the opinions of Quirk et al. (1972) and Kiparsky (1982). Therefore, while researching theories about the conversion phenomenon, the authors find out this problem: *If a complete conversion is a form of derivation (zero-derivation), is approximate conversion another form of derivation? (*)*

In Vietnamese, the conversion phenomenon is also subdivided into two types that are complete conversion and approximate conversion. According to Vo (2013), words are converted without changing spelling or pronunciation, which is the signifier in the complete conversion. For example, in complete conversion, about over 20 nouns can be converted to verbs such as *thuốc men*, *ruợu chè*, *cờ bạc*, etc. Regarding the approximate conversion, Vo (2013) stated that words are converted with the addition of “witness word” (Nguyen, 1973), “beginning word” (Nguyen, 1997), or “by-product” (Ho, 1976). For instance, the verb *cua* can be converted to a noun (*cua* in *cái cua*) by adding the word *cái*, which is called “witness word”, “beginning word”, or “by-product”. In addition, Hoang et al. (1998) do not deny the existence of approximate conversion but pay more attention to the role of semantics when considering the conversion phenomenon.

Characteristics of morphological conversion

In *English Lexicology (Theoretical Course)*, Girunyan (2009) stated that “the essential characteristic of conversion is that a new word is made by changing the category of part of speech, while the morphemic structure of the source word remains unchanged. Being transferred to a different class, the word acquires a new paradigm. Apart from functional changes, semantic changes occur too” (p. 130). To describe the change in semantics, Girunyan (2009) took the pair *hand_v* - *hand_n* as an example. He said that “the verb *to hand* denotes a process, whereas the noun *hand* expresses the meaning of ‘thingness’” (Girunyan, 2009, p. 130), showing that the meaning between conversion words changes a lot. However, Hoang et al. (1998) believed that although there are changes in semantics, meanings between the conversion words are still connected. Regarding the term semantics, Al-Murib (2021) strongly agreed that

meaning is also important to conversion because new words are formed with a new meaning which is related to their original words. In terms of morphemic structure, there is one problem (*) which has been mentioned above. However, we believe that an approximate conversion is also a form of derivation. First of all, derivation is the forming of new words by combining derivational affixes (including prefixes and suffixes) or bound bases with existing words, and “in many cases, but not all, derivational suffixes change the part of speech of the word to which it is added” (Andini & Pratiwi, 2013, p. 37) (1). For example, an adjective *active* is formed by adding the suffix *-ive* to the noun *act*. It is clear that the category of part of speech has changed, and there is still a connection between the meanings of conversion words, which may meet two out of three characteristics of conversion. After that, Akmajian et al. (2001) said that some derivational affixes, which are derivational prefixes, do not change category (2). For instance, although the prefix *re-* is added to the verb *charge* to make the word *recharge*, *recharge* is still a verb, so both *charge* and *recharge* are verbs. Thus, this case could not be called an approximate conversion. Therefore, we will use the below diagram to express that approximate conversion (Y) can be a form of derivation.

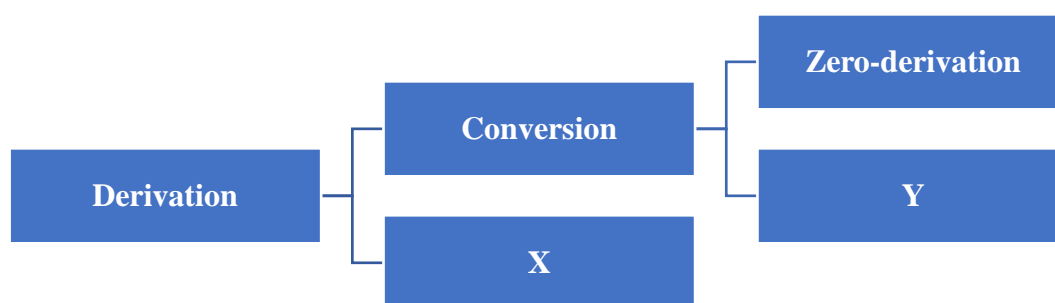


Diagram 1. Forms of derivation

In the diagram, derivation contains zero-derivation (complete conversion), Y standing for the case (1), and X standing for the case (2). Thus, there would be three characteristics of morphological conversion. Firstly, it is clear that the category of part of speech will change. Secondly, the morphemic structure of the source word can change or not. Thirdly, there will be semantic changes, but the meanings of the conversion words are still connected.

The classification of parts of speech

According to Vo (2013), in an analytic language like English, parts of speech are classified by semantics, syntax, and morphology. For example, in the sentence *we are students*, the word *student* is a word for a person (semantics), functions as a subject complement (syntax), and shows the plural form by adding *-s* (morphology), all of which are characteristics of a noun. There are eight main parts of speech in English, divided into two major groups, which are content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) and function words (pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections). In Vietnamese, which is an isolating language, the classification of parts of speech is based on semantics, combinability, and syntactic functions (Vo, 2013). There are some diverging views on dividing parts of speech based on

these characteristics into content words and function words. The three parts of speech, which are nouns, verbs, and adjectives, are absolutely content parts of speech. However, for pronouns and numerals, some researchers considered them as content parts of speech (Nguyen 1963, Le and Phan 1983), but others put them in the group of function parts of speech (Dao 1998, Diep 1998).

The problem of directionality

The problem of directionality occurs when it is difficult to identify which word is derived from the other one. Plag (2003) mentioned some ways to solve this problem. The first method to deal with the problem is to look at the history of the language by using the Oxford English Dictionary. The second way is considering the semantics, which means the derived word should be semantically more complex than the base word from which it is derived. The next is to consider the base and derived form and the stress. The final way is to check the frequency of occurrence of the derived word. Nevertheless, there are no criteria discussed above, leading to a clear result. Therefore, Plag (2003) stated that the directionality problem could be solved by combining historical, semantic, formal, and frequential evidence. However, Fernández (2001) believed that “the problem of directionality can be easily solved, in most cases, by resorting to etymological information” (p. 10). “The Oxford English Dictionary (henceforth, OED) has proven to be a useful tool to corroborate the existence of conversion processes. It has helped both to determine and decide whether or not there is a conversion by providing information not only on the etymology of words but also on their meanings (and uses)” (Fernández, 2001, p. 12). In this study, we did combine two ways mentioned by Plag (2003), which were using the Oxford English Dictionary to decide which word was derived from the other and checking the frequency of occurrence of the derived word. The result was the same as the statement of Plag. Therefore, the directionality of conversion in this study is relative.

Research Gap

It is a fact that a large number of researches with different views have been conducted to argue about conversion and problems related to this phenomenon. However, there are still many gaps that have not been filled yet. The first obvious matter is that although many studies have shown statistics on the quantity and density of conversion phenomenon, there is little research on conversion phenomenon in terms of morphology in the high school curriculum of Vietnam. Another crucial gap is that there is still little research related to the teaching process helping teachers when they encounter this phenomenon.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the quantity and density of morphological conversion phenomenon in current textbooks of English 12 and Vietnamese Literature 12?
2. What are the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese morphological conversion phenomena?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Using the induction method to research theories about the morphological conversion phenomenon, this study was conducted to investigate this phenomenon in the high school curriculum in Vietnam. Observing that the phenomenon is common in word formation and transformation exercises appearing in textbooks of English for High schools, the authors decided to survey these books. Besides, there are many mistakes when students do these types of exercises due to the similarities and dissimilarities of the phenomenon between English and Vietnamese. Therefore, the authors also investigated this conversion phenomenon in Vietnamese. Showing the similarities and dissimilarities of the phenomenon, this study suggested some notes to help teachers notice common mistakes when encountering this phenomenon in their teaching activities.

Sampling Method

Parts of speech are divided into two major groups, which are content words and function words. However, in this study, the authors just focused on the morphological conversion phenomenon of content words in English and Vietnamese. In English, there are four content parts of speech which are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. In Vietnamese, the four content parts of speech are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and pronouns.

In terms of research samples, the current textbooks of English and Vietnamese Literature in grade 12 were the samples chosen to conduct a survey. Although there are many Vietnamese textbooks for High schools, such as textbooks in History, Chemistry, Geography, the textbooks of Vietnamese Literature were used to investigate the phenomenon and compare with the ones in English textbooks. The reason for using those books is that Vietnamese Literature textbooks are the most suitable ones because they are not too academic and have a variety of text genres, such as poetry, declaration, journal. Because of the different types of genres in the Vietnamese textbook, while conducting the survey, the authors found that the number of morphological conversion phenomena in the poetry genre is less than in other genres because the poems are quite short, and the poets usually use conversion words on purpose. Besides, the essays seem to have more conversion words than others. The samples of the English 12 textbook included audio scripts, instructions, sentences, and passages. For the textbooks of Vietnamese Literature 12, the survey was conducted in both two volumes and texts learned in the program.

Design of the Study

In addition to the deskwork method, the study employed a mixed-method research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, to strengthen the study's result and conclusion. The qualitative method was primarily adopted during the survey process to identify the quantity and density of conversion phenomenon in the textbooks. In the meantime, the authors used the quantitative method to gather data in numerical forms.

Data collection & analysis

The survey approach was used to survey the quantity and density of this phenomenon. First of all, the authors read these books and identify parts of speech of words by using several online dictionaries, such as Cambridge Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary, TraTu Soha Dictionary, TraTu Vietgle Dictionary, and Vietnamese Dictionary (<https://vtudien.com>). Then we entered them into Excel. After entering all data, which were in the shortest form of the word, the software in Excel was used to find the same words with different parts of speech. The next step was to do statistics to classify the types of morphological conversion. The data collected after statistics were shown in percentages and tables. After the survey, the authors used the comparative method to compare the density and quantity of the conversion phenomenon in the two textbooks. Then some sentences containing the conversion phenomenon in the textbooks were chosen as examples for illustration. After that, the contrastive analysis method was adapted to compare and contrast the conversion phenomenon in English and Vietnamese in order to present the similarities and differences between these two phenomena. Finally, from those similarities and differences, the authors suggested some notes for teachers' teaching process when encountering the conversion phenomenon.

Results/Findings and discussion

Research question 1: What are the quantity and density of morphological conversion phenomenon in current textbooks of English 12 and Vietnamese Literature 12?

The textbook English 12

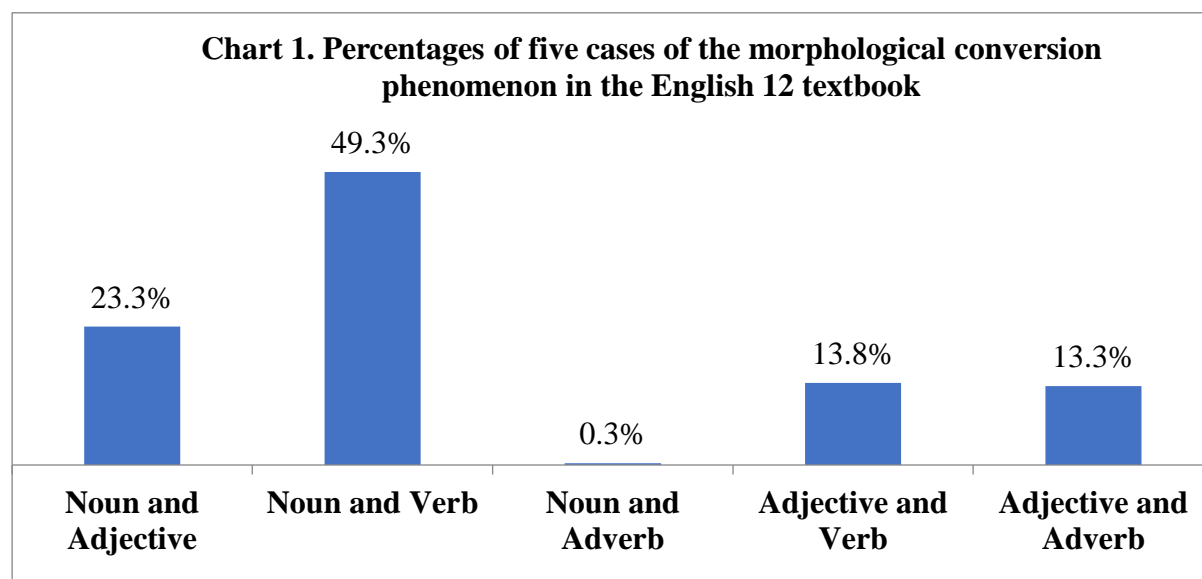
Table 1 presents the density of the morphological conversion phenomenon among four content parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs).

Table 1. The density of the morphological conversion phenomenon among four content parts of speech in the English 12 textbook

	Complete Conversion	Approximate Conversion
Noun and Adjective	14	72
Noun and Verb	69	113
Noun and Adverb	1	0
Adjective and Verb	7	44
Adjective and Adverb	7	42
	98	271

Based on the data obtained from the investigation, there were 98 cases of complete conversion and 271 cases of approximate conversion, showing that approximate conversion had more cases than complete conversion. Looking at the table, it was obvious that there were five cases of conversion phenomenon among four content parts of speech, and there was no case of

approximate conversion between nouns and adverbs in the English textbook 12. Below are the percentages of these five cases of conversion phenomenon among four content parts of speech in Chart 1.



Among 271 cases of approximation conversion, we found that there were also three cases of stress shift and one case of vowel shift in the textbook. The cases of stress shift appeared in 113 cases of conversion between nouns and verbs (2.7% of the total). Besides, the vowel shift case was in 44 cases of conversion between adjectives and verbs (2.3% of the total).

From the above data, there were five cases of morphological conversion phenomenon among four content parts of speech, such as 182 cases between nouns and verbs (49.3%), 86 cases between nouns and adjectives (23.3%), 51 cases between adjectives and verbs (13.8%), 49 cases between adjectives and adverbs (13.3%), and 1 case between nouns and adverbs (0.3%). Below, these five cases are illustrated by showing several examples.

+ *conversion between nouns and verbs*

According to Chart 1, the morphological conversion phenomenon between nouns and verbs was the most popular case in the textbook, accounting for 49.3% of the total (182 cases). In complete conversion, we found that there are many cases of conversion from nouns to verbs because the frequency of occurrence of nouns was more than verbs. For example, we have some converted verbs such as *to list*, *to name*, *to mushroom*, *to score*, etc. However, there were also some cases in which the nouns were converted to verbs. These converted nouns were usually used to express emotions (e.g., *love*, *experience*, etc.) or to show actions (e.g., *smile*, *walk*, *jump*, etc.). For instance, we can see that *jump* is a noun in (1) and a verb in (2).

(1) *Amri, the Malaysian, won the Men's Long Jump.*

(2) *He jumped 7.76 meters.*

Regarding the approximate conversion, the phenomenon of conversion between nouns and

verbs contained 110 cases of conversion by adding noun suffixes (e.g., *-ion*, *-ee*, *-er*, etc.) or verb suffixes (e.g., *-size*, *-en*, *-ise*, etc.) and three cases of stress shift. For example, let us illustrate some cases of them.

- (1) Conversion from verbs to nouns by adding *-er* to the verb *teach*: *In class to get my teacher's attention, I usually raise my hand.*
- (2) Conversion from nouns to verbs by adding *-en* to the noun *threat*: *The security of the earth will be threatened by terrorism as terrorist groups will become more powerful and more dangerous.*
- (3) Three cases of stress shift: *ex'port_v → 'export_n*, *in'crease_v → 'increase_n*, and *'record_n → re'cord_v*.

Conversion between nouns and adjectives

In complete conversion, four nationality words in the textbook, such as *American*, *Vietnamese*, *Indian*, *Chinese*, and *English*, could have a conversion phenomenon between nouns and adjectives. Besides, the word *young* was also a case of this conversion. Below is another example of conversion between an adjective (1) to a noun (2).

- (1) *That's also fun.*
- (2) *We're a big family — there are six of us - children - so it's always a lot of fun.*

In an approximate conversion, nouns were mainly converted to adjectives by adding adjective suffixes, such as *-able*, *-al*, *-y*, *-ful*, etc. Here are some examples: *peace* - *peaceful*, *value* - *valuable*, *person* - *personal*, etc. Additionally, nouns could be converted from adjectives by adding noun suffixes, such as *-y*, *-ity*, *-ness*, *-ion*, etc. For example, we have *aware* - *awareness*, *difficult* - *difficulty*, *extinct* - *extinction*, etc.

Conversion between adjectives and verbs

In complete conversion, adjectives were usually converted to verbs, and these verbs would carry the meaning 'become + adjective' or 'make something (more) adjective'. In the English 12 textbook, there are some converted verbs such as *better*, *clean*, *warm*, and *free*.

In an approximate conversion, we found that verbs were mainly converted to adjectives by adding these suffixes: *-ed*, *-ing*, *-ive*, *-y*. For example, we have *limit* - *limited*, *grow* - *growing*, *attract* - *attractive*, *rain* - *rainy*. There was also one case of vowel shift which was *separate* /sep.ə.r.ət/ - *separate* /sep.ə.r.eɪt/.

Conversion between adjectives and adverbs

In complete conversion, there were seven words in the textbook which could be converted between adjectives and adverbs, such as *early*, *fast*, *hard*, *late*, *near*, *upstairs*, and *worldwide*. In the below example, the word *upstairs* is an adjective in (1) and an adverb in (2).

(1) *It's upstairs.*

(2) *The suitcase seemed to get heavier and heavier as I carried it upstairs.*

In an approximate conversion, adjectives were converted to adverbs by adding the suffix *-ly*. Here are some examples: *close - closely, active - actively, main - mainly*, etc.

Conversion between nouns and adverbs

As can be seen from Chart 1, the morphological conversion phenomenon between nouns and adverbs accounted for 0.3% of the total (1 case), having the least number of cases in the English 12 textbook. For example, the case below shows that an adverb could be completely converted to a noun.

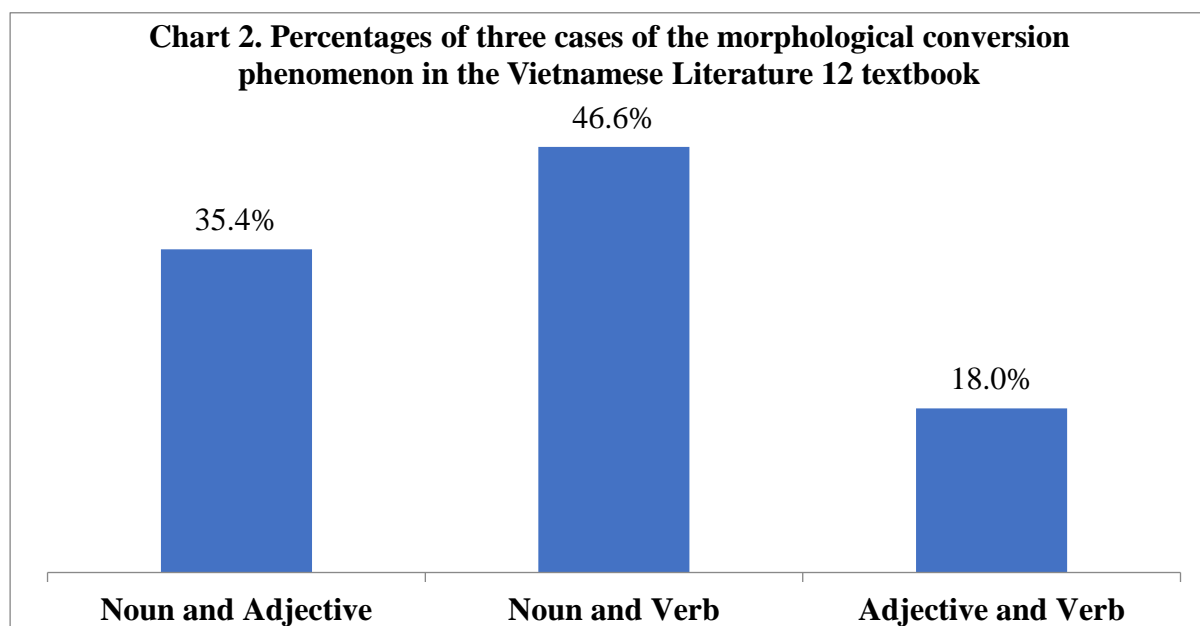
(1) *I wish I could do half as well as you. In the first half, our team played pretty well.*

The textbooks of Vietnamese Literature 12

Table 2. The density of the morphological conversion phenomenon among three content parts of speech in the Vietnamese Literature 12 textbook

	Complete Conversion	Approximate Conversion
Noun and Adjective	20	43
Noun and Verb	29	54
Adjective and Verb	32	0
	81	97

Table 2 presents the density of the morphological conversion phenomenon among three content parts of speech (nouns, verbs, and adjectives). Based on the data obtained from the investigation, there were 178 cases of conversion, including 81 cases of complete conversion and 97 cases of approximate conversion. This showed that approximate conversion had more cases than complete conversion, which was similar to the cases in the English 12 textbook. Looking at the table, there were three cases of the conversion phenomenon among three content parts of speech. Below are the percentages of these three cases of conversion phenomenon among three content parts of speech in the Vietnamese Literature 12 textbook in Chart 2.



From the above data, it was obvious that there were three cases of morphological conversion phenomenon among three content parts of speech in the Vietnamese Literature 12 textbook, which are 63 cases between nouns and adjectives (35.4%), 83 cases between verbs and nouns (46.6%), and 32 cases between adjectives and verbs (18%). In the next part, we showed these three cases through several sentences, including the morphological conversion phenomenon.

Conversion between nouns and adjectives

To begin with, from Chart 2, the morphological conversion phenomenon between nouns and adjectives was ranked in second place with 35.4% of the total. First, in complete conversion, we found that 20 cases converted between nouns and adjectives. For example, the sentence below shows that there is a complete conversion between a noun and an adjective.

(1) *Và ở đây, một lần nữa, sông Hương quả thực là Kiều, rất Kiều, trong cái nhìn thẩm thiết tình người của tác giả Từ ấy.*

Besides, there were also 43 cases that converted approximately between nouns and adjectives. The case below, for instance, will show an approximate conversion between a noun and an adjective.

(1) *Sự giân dữ càng thẳng làm nó khi chạy qua không nhìn thấy tôi. → Ông cụ đặt chén cơm xuống, giân dữ.*

Conversion between nouns and verbs

Next, the data from Chart 2 showed that the morphological conversion phenomenon between nouns and verbs was ranked in the first place, accounting for 46.6% of the total. In terms of complete conversion, there were 29 cases that converted completely between nouns and verbs. This case will be illustrated by the below example.

(1) *Giữa các dân tộc, chúng ta không thể tự hào là nền văn hoá của ta đồ sộ, có những*

cống hiến lớn lao cho nhân loại. Lịch sử Đảng đã ghi bằng nét son tên của thành phố Huế, thành phố tuy nhỏ nhưng đã *cống hiến* rất xứng đáng cho Tổ quốc.

Additionally, there were 54 cases of approximate conversion between nouns and verbs. Take the case below as an example, we will see an approximate conversion between nouns and verbs.

(1) Sau gần một tuần lễ suy nghĩ, *tìm kiếm*, Phùng quyết định thu vào tờ lịch tháng bảy năm sau cảnh thuyền đánh cá thu lưới vào lúc bình minh. Như một *cuộc tìm kiếm* có ý thức để đi tới nơi gặp thành phố tương lai của nó.

Conversion between adjectives and verbs

Finally, Chart 2 illustrated 32 cases of the morphological conversion phenomenon between adjectives and verbs, accounted for 18% of the total, and ranked last in three groups of morphological conversion in Vietnamese Literature 12. To be specific, all 32 cases were converted completely. For example, the below case shows the complete conversion between an adjective and a verb.

(1) Anh rất *gắn bó* với đơn vị. → Em ơi em Đất nước là máu xương của mình – Phải biết *gắn bó* và san sẻ.

The purpose of the paper's first research question was to measure the quantity and density of morphological conversion phenomenon in current textbooks of English 12 and Vietnamese Literature 12. Below is the quantity and density of the morphological conversion phenomenon shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The quantity and density of the morphological conversion phenomenon

	Complete Conversion		Approximate Conversion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
English 12	98	26.6%	271	73.4%
Vietnamese Literature 12	81	45.5%	97	54.5%

As can be seen from Table 3, it was clear that both English 12 and Vietnamese Literature 12 textbooks had more cases of approximate conversion than complete conversion. Besides, although there were more cases of complete conversion in the English 12 than in the Vietnamese Literature 12 (98 cases > 81 cases), the complete conversion phenomenon was more popular in Vietnamese Literature 12 textbooks than in the English 12 textbook (45.5% > 26.6%). Additionally, in the approximate conversion phenomenon, the number and percentage of the approximate conversion cases in the English 12 were both higher than in the Vietnamese Literature 12 (271 cases > 97 cases and 73.4% > 54.5%). Therefore, we could say that the complete conversion phenomenon was more popular in Vietnamese while the approximate conversion was more popular in English.

Research question 2: What are the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese Morphological conversion phenomena?

Below is Table 4, which summarizes the main findings in research question 1. To solve research question 2, the authors used analyzed data in Table 4 to point out the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese morphological conversion phenomena.

Table 4. The result summary of the morphological conversion phenomenon in the textbooks of English 12 and Vietnamese Literature 12

	Types of conversion	Textbook of English 12	Notes	Textbook of Vietnamese Literature 12	Notes
Complete conversion	Noun and Verb	69 cases		29 cases	
	Noun and Adjective	14 cases		20 cases	
	Adjective and Verb	7 cases		32 cases	
	Adjective and Adverb	7 cases			
	Noun and Adverb	1 case			
Total		98 cases		81 cases	
Approximate conversion	Noun and Verb	113 cases	3 cases of stress shift	54 cases	
	Noun and Adjective	72 cases		43 cases	
	Adjective and Verb	44 cases	1 case of vowel shift		
	Adjective and Adverb	42 cases			
	Noun and Adverb				
Total		271 cases		97 cases	

After investigating these two textbooks, we found several similarities in the morphological conversion phenomenon between the two languages. Firstly, the semantic criteria played an important role in determining whether a word was converted or not. This is because if there is no semantic connection between two words, it easily causes confusion between homonymy and conversion. Take the pair 'watch n - watch v' as an example. It was clear that 'watch' as a noun had a meaning of thingness while 'watch' as a verb showed an action. Therefore, despite having different parts of speech, these two words could not be a case of conversion phenomenon because there was no semantic connection between them. Secondly, according to Table 4, the morphological conversion of content words occurred in both complete type (98 cases in English

textbook 12 and 81 cases in Vietnamese Literature textbook 12) and approximate type (271 cases in English textbook 12 and 97 cases in Vietnamese Literature textbook 12). Thirdly, based on the quantity and density of conversion in the textbooks of English 12 and Vietnamese Literature 12, it could be said that the approximate conversion phenomenon had more cases than the complete conversion in both textbooks of English 12 (271 cases in approximate conversion > 98 cases in complete conversion) and Vietnamese Literature 12 (97 cases in approximate conversion > 81 cases in complete conversion). Finally, we found that the conversion between nouns and verbs was the most popular phenomenon in both English (69 cases in complete conversion and 113 cases in approximate conversion) and Vietnamese (29 cases in complete conversion and 54 cases in approximate conversion).

Besides, let us show some differences in this phenomenon between English and Vietnamese. First of all, in English, there were five cases of conversion between content parts of speech (nouns - verbs, nouns - adjectives, adjectives - verbs, adjectives - adverbs, and nouns - adverbs) while there were just three cases in Vietnamese (nouns - verbs, nouns - adjectives, and adjectives - verbs). Next, in terms of approximate conversion, from 271 cases in Table 4, we found that words were converted by directly adding derivational suffixes to the source word. For instance, there are some popular suffixes in the investigation: noun suffixes (e.g., -ion, -ness, -ity, -y, -er, -or, etc.), verb suffixes (e.g., -en, -ize, -ise, etc.), adjective suffixes (e.g., -ive, -y, -ed, -ing, -able, -al, etc.), and an adverb suffix -ly. In contrast, in Vietnamese, from 97 cases in Table 4, it was clearly to claim that converted words were formed by adding “beginning words”, such as sự, cuộc, cái, nỗi, niềm, etc., or by adding quantifiers before the source word (e.g., những, các, mấy, etc.). Another dissimilarity was that there was no case of stress shift or vowel shift in the Vietnamese Literature 12 textbook but English 12 textbook (3 cases of stress shift and 1 case of vowel shift).

Discussion

This research attempted to investigate the phenomenon of morphological conversion in current textbooks of English and Vietnamese Literature for high schools. The authors first assumed that the morphological conversion phenomenon would cause many difficulties for Vietnamese students when they studied English because the phenomenon caused difficulties in recognizing and distinguishing the conversion words and had some dissimilarities between English and Vietnamese conversion words.

Although the results of the survey on the two textbooks were varied, the findings still lend support to the hypothesis. To begin with, it is interesting to note that in the textbook English 12, there are 369 cases of conversion, including 98 cases of complete conversion (24.5%) and 217 cases of approximate conversion (73.5%). Furthermore, there are five cases of conversion between content parts of speech, which are converted words between nouns - adjectives, nouns - verbs, nouns - adverbs, adjectives - verbs, and adjectives - adverbs. These findings are quite similar to the results of Vo (2013), but it is found in our survey that adjectives and adverbs can also be converted with each other. Meanwhile, in the textbook Vietnamese Literature 12, there are 178 cases of conversion including 81 cases of complete conversion (45.5%) and 97 cases

of approximate conversion (54.4%). Specifically, there are three cases of conversion between content parts of speech, which are converted words between nouns - adjectives, nouns - verbs, and adjectives - nouns. These findings are also in line with Hoang et al. (1998), who found three cases of converted words like these above.

What is more, in the study, the authors found some similarities and dissimilarities between English and Vietnamese regards to the morphological conversion phenomenon. Relating to similarities, the most important finding is the role of semantics. In both languages, the semantic criteria played an important role in determining whether a word was converted or not. The reason could be due to the confusion between homonymy and conversion when there was no semantic connection between two conversion words. This finding is similar to Hoang et al. (1998), who suggested that in Vietnamese, semantic criteria is a vital one determining the substance of conversion. As well as that in English, Ginzburg et al. (2004) also indicated the important role of semantics because, in a pair of converted words, a word is derived semantically from the other. Furthermore, it is found that words are converted completely and approximately in both English and Vietnamese not only in our survey but also in the research of Vo (2013). Besides, the conversion between Nouns - Verbs is more popular than other pairs of words. This finding is in line with Ginzburg et al. (2004), who found that the conversion between nouns and verbs is the largest group of words related to conversion in English. Furthermore, in Vietnamese, Hoang et al. (1998) indicated that 1752 cases of conversion (approximately 50%) in their survey are words converted between nouns - verbs.

Furthermore, the differences also support the hypothesis, which is the ways that conversion words are formed in terms of morphology and phonology of both languages. Firstly, a word is converted approximately in English by adding suffixes or changing the stress or vowel sounds. However, in Vietnamese, a word is added "beginning word" or "witness word" to convert. This different way of forming conversion words could be explained by the differences between those two languages – Vietnamese (an isolated language) and English (an analytic language). This finding is also suggested by Vo (2013), who found the same way to convert a word in Vietnamese and English. Last but not least, there are some special cases of the converted words in English by changing the stress and the vowel sounds, which is also similar to Vo (2013).

Therefore, because of these different ways, it is possible to conclude that the morphological conversion phenomenon would cause many difficulties for Vietnamese students when learning English. As a result, teachers should predict what kinds of problems students have with this phenomenon and have some appropriate notes for their teaching process.

In terms of complete conversion, we suggested two notes for the teacher. First, teachers should help students focus on the syntax and semantics of the sentences to recognize the parts of speech of the word, which could vary within different contexts. Furthermore, the teachers might need to inform the students that the word was the conversion form of the previous word, which they studied in the past. The above actions might help the students to familiarize themselves with this phenomenon resulting in the ability to identify the parts of speech by analyzing the context, not remembering the words.

Besides that, due to the quantity of approximate conversion in the English 12 textbook, the students would also encounter this phenomenon, which had more problems for the teacher to notice while teaching English.

First and foremost, the most common way to produce an approximate conversion was to add derivational affixes, yet because of the arbitrary matter of language, students could not randomly add an affix but must follow the rule of the English language. So, the teachers should be aware of this situation and help the students to notice this problem. Take the suffix *-er* as an example, and it can change a verb into a noun, which means a person who does that action as their job, namely, *teacher*, *painter*, *worker*, and so on. However, other verbs must use other suffixes that have the same meaning as the suffix *-er*, for instance, *-or* in *actor*. And other suffixes sharing the same meaning must be noticed by the teacher in order to enhance students' knowledge about this phenomenon.

Second, the students might take advantage of the suffixes to identify the parts of the speech, yet there were a few suffixes that make a word into two different categories. So, the teacher should notice this situation to assist the students in avoiding this mistake. For instance, the suffix *-y* can make the word become a noun in *difficult* (adjective) and *difficulty* (noun), and make a word become an adjective in the *rain* (verb) and *rainy* (adjective).

Furthermore, in English approximate conversion, besides adding suffixes, a new word might be converted by changing the stress of the word, which we call stress shift. Additionally, there was also the phenomenon of vowel shift which could lead to some errors when students did exercises related to pronunciation. Hence, the teachers needed to show this phenomenon to students through theories and exercises to acknowledge this aspect of approximate conversion.

Last but not least, it was known that Vietnamese kept the original form of the word and added a beginning word, while English changed the form of the word by adding suffixes directly to the word in complete conversion. And the Vietnamese students were familiarizing themselves with their mother tongue, and they might forget to add a suffix to the word that needed to be converted approximately, resulting in their mistakes in some exercises in class.

Conclusion

In terms of morphology, the phenomenon of conversion could be considered to be one of the most productive ways to form new words in English. Besides, this phenomenon also became more and more popular in Vietnamese, helping enrich a large number of vocabulary in Vietnamese. In this study, the authors showed three characteristics of conversion: the changes in form, in the part of speech, and semantics - playing an important role in deciding if the phenomenon was conversion or not.

Additionally, the authors did solve three problems that they posed in the study. For the first research question, the authors found that the complete conversion phenomenon was more popular in Vietnamese while the approximate conversion was more popular in English. With the second question, the study also showed some similarities and dissimilarities in the

morphological conversion phenomenon between the two languages which were English and Vietnamese. Moreover, to solve the third one, several notes mentioned in the study could make a useful contribution to the teaching process when teachers encountered this phenomenon.

However, there were some limitations in the research. First of all, the research only worked on content words. Then the study was just conducted in the textbooks of grade 12 to investigate the conversion phenomenon. Hence, the scope of this research was not so wide. Additionally, the directionality of conversion in this research was still relative. Therefore, it would be necessary to conduct a study into the directionality of conversion to find new methods to solve this problem.

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Biodata

As Vietnamese juniors at the Department of Foreign Languages at Saigon University, Pham Thanh Hoai and Nguyen Xuan Minh Hai are students in an English teaching major who have won a championship in a contest “Pedagogy Expertise”. Under the guidance of their lecturer, Truong Van Anh, M.A., they found their interest in the phenomenon of morphological conversion and conducted a paper to investigate the phenomenon in current textbooks of English and Vietnamese Literature for High schools.