



EXPLORING ZOONYMIC ELEMENTS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

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Annotation: This article presents a comparative linguistic analysis of phraseological units containing zoonymic components (animal names) in the Uzbek and English languages. The study explores the semantic, structural, and cultural features of these idioms, focusing on how animals are metaphorically used to represent human traits, behaviors, and social roles. Drawing on examples from dictionaries, literary texts, and folk expressions, the research identifies common conceptual metaphors shared between the two languages as well as culturally specific idioms unique to each. Findings reveal that while both languages exhibit universal tendencies in the symbolic use of animals, cultural, religious, and environmental factors significantly influence idiomatic meaning and usage. The study underscores the importance of cultural competence in interpreting and translating zoonymic idioms, and highlights their value in language learning, intercultural communication, and contrastive linguistics.

Keywords: phraseological units, zoonym, idioms, Uzbek, English, cultural linguistics, metaphor, comparative analysis

Phraseological units, often referred to as idioms, proverbs, or fixed expressions, are integral to the richness and expressiveness of any language. Among these, those containing zoonyms—words denoting animals—hold particular linguistic and cultural significance. Zoonymic phraseological units not only reflect the values, beliefs, and worldviews of their respective speech communities but also reveal the metaphorical use of animals to express human behaviors, characteristics, and relationships.

This study explores phraseological units with zoonymic components in Uzbek and English, two languages from different linguistic families and cultural traditions. While English belongs to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family, Uzbek is a Turkic language, characterized by agglutinative morphology and rich oral folklore traditions. Despite these differences, both languages make extensive use of animal imagery in their idiomatic expressions.

By examining these units from semantic, structural, and cultural perspectives, the study aims to identify universal trends and language-specific features in the use of zoonyms. Special attention is given to the symbolic meanings of animals, the syntactic structures of phraseological units, and the cultural contexts in which they are used. The comparison of English and Uzbek idioms also provides insights into cross-cultural conceptualizations of animals and contributes to the broader field of contrastive linguistics and phraseology.

The study of phraseological units with zoonymic components has attracted the attention of both foreign and Uzbek scholars, reflecting a growing interest in how animal imagery is used metaphorically across different cultures and languages. These units are not only linguistically rich but also culturally embedded, making them a valuable subject for contrastive and cognitive linguistic analysis.

A.V. Kunin, one of the most prominent Russian linguists in the field of phraseology, emphasized the importance of cultural context in understanding idiomatic expressions. In his works, such as *“English Idioms”* (1970), he analyzed English idioms with zoonymic elements, noting that animals often symbolize specific human traits. For instance,

"To cry wolf" – means to raise a false alarm. It originates from Aesop's fable and shows the metaphorical use of the animal to symbolize deception and distrust.

"A dark horse" – refers to someone who keeps their skills or plans hidden, drawing on the metaphorical association of a mysterious or underestimated animal.

Wolfgang Mieder, an American paremiologist, has also extensively studied proverbs and idioms involving animals. He points out that many such expressions are rooted in folklore and cultural stereotypes. For example, *"Let sleeping dogs lie"* – suggests avoiding unnecessary conflict, using the image of a dog as a potential source of danger if disturbed. These examples illustrate how animals are anthropomorphized to represent moral lessons or personality traits.

Fernando (1996) – In "Idioms and Idiomaticity", he analyzed animal-based idioms in English, noting that zoonymic PUs often reflect cultural stereotypes (e.g., "sly as a fox," "stubborn as a mule"). He emphasized that these expressions are deeply rooted in folk beliefs and historical contexts. **Dobrovolskij & Piirainen** (2005) – In "Figurative Language: Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Perspectives", they compared zoonymic idioms in European languages, finding that similar animals may carry different connotations (e.g., a "dog" is negative in English—"sick as a dog"—but positive in some Slavic cultures). **Wierzbicka** (1997) – In "Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words", she explored how animal metaphors encode cultural values, showing that English favors "wolf" ("lone wolf") for independence, while other languages may use different animals. **Moon** (1998) – In "Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English" she analyzed large corpora, finding that zoonymic idioms are highly conventionalized (e.g., "let the cat out of the bag," "hold your horses"*). She noted that many originate from historical practices (hunting, farming).

In Uzbekistan, researchers have also contributed significantly to the study of phraseological units, particularly from the perspective of national language identity and cultural reflection. **Olimjon Ghoziyev** and **Nargiza Yusupova** have conducted comparative research on idioms in Uzbek and English, highlighting both shared cognitive metaphors and culturally unique features. Uzbek zoonyms often reflect the nomadic and agrarian lifestyle of the people, where animals like horses, sheep, and dogs play a central role. Examples include:

- *"It itdan qo'rqgan echkini quvadi"* – literally "The one who is afraid of the dog chases the goat," meaning someone misdirects their aggression or fear. The use of local animals gives insight into the cultural and social background of the idiom.
- *"Otning kallasiday"*, meaning "as big as a horse's head," is a humorous exaggeration, showing how the horse serves as a standard of size and strength in Uzbek culture.

Rasulov (2005) – In "Uzbek Tilida Frazologik Birliklar" (Phraseological Units in Uzbek), he categorized zoonymic PUs, noting that domestic animals (horse, dog, sheep) dominate Uzbek idioms due to pastoral traditions (e.g., "itning oldida suyak silkitmoq" – "to tease a dog with a bone" meaning to provoke). **Karimov** (2012) – In "Zoonimlarning Frazologik Qo'llanilishi" (The Phraseological Use of Zoonyms), he compared Uzbek and Russian zoonymic PUs, finding that horses and birds are more frequent in Uzbek (e.g., "otga minib, qushga uchmoq" – "to ride a horse and fly like a bird", meaning to be extremely happy). **Khodjaeva** (2018) – In "Uzbek-English Comparative Phraseology", she analyzed cultural mismatches, showing that while English uses "lion" for bravery ("brave as a lion"), Uzbek prefers "arslon" (lion) in heroic epics but more commonly uses "qo'y" (sheep) for gentleness. **Nurmanov** (2020) – Conducted a corpus study on proverbs with zoonyms, finding that "bug'u" (deer) symbolizes beauty in Uzbek folklore, unlike in English, where deer are less symbolically loaded.

Comparative studies show that both English and Uzbek languages use animals to symbolize traits such as **cunning (fox)**, **stubbornness (donkey)**, or **loyalty (dog)**, but cultural differences influence the emotional tone and frequency of their usage. For instance:

- In English, *"as sly as a fox"* is negative, whereas in Uzbek, the equivalent expression *"tulki kabi ayyor"* may be used more admiringly to describe cleverness.
- The English phrase *"black sheep"* implies social exclusion, while in Uzbek culture, the color symbolism may differ and not carry the same negative weight.

- Some Uzbek zoonymic PUs lack direct equivalents in English (e.g., "tuya qo'shilgan chumoli" – "an ant joined to a camel", meaning an insignificant helper).

These studies confirm that zoonymic phraseological units are culturally embedded, varying significantly between languages. While Western research emphasizes cognitive and metaphorical mappings, Uzbek studies focus more on ethnolinguistic and structural aspects. A contrastive analysis of Uzbek and English zoonymic PUs can reveal deeper insights into cultural cognition and linguistic expression. The study revealed that both English and Uzbek use animals metaphorically to represent human traits. The following animal metaphors were frequently found in both languages:

- **Fox** – represents cunning or intelligence
 - English: *as sly as a fox*
 - Uzbek: *tulki kabi ayyor*
- **Donkey** – symbolizes foolishness or stubbornness
 - English: *stubborn as a mule*
 - Uzbek: *eshamga gap o'tmaydi* ("words don't reach a donkey")
- **Dog** – dual symbolic meaning
 - English: loyalty (*a man's best friend*) and insult (*a dirty dog*)
 - Uzbek: generally negative (e.g., *itday haqoratlash* – "to insult like a dog")

The most frequently used animals in idiomatic expressions were:

Language	Common Animals	Number of Expressions Found
English	Dog, Cat, Fox, Pig	~150 idioms
Uzbek	Donkey, Fox, Horse, Wolf	~130 idioms

This shows that while both languages rely heavily on zoonymic expressions, the animal choices reflect cultural salience. The symbolic meaning of some animals varies significantly due to cultural or religious backgrounds:

- In **Uzbek**, *dog* and *pig* are often negative due to Islamic beliefs (e.g., impurity).
- In **English**, *dog* can have both positive and negative meanings, and *pig* often implies greed or messiness.

Many idioms in one language had **no direct equivalent** in the other:

- Uzbek: *quyon yurakli* ("rabbit-hearted") – fearful (not commonly used in English)
- English: *the cat's out of the bag* – revealing a secret (no direct Uzbek counterpart)

These non-equivalents highlight the importance of cultural background knowledge in idiomatic interpretation and translation.

- English phraseological units often use fixed similes and metaphors, e.g., *as brave as a lion*.
- Uzbek phraseological units more often appear in proverbial or poetic forms, often with moral or didactic functions.

These results confirm that phraseological units with zoonymic components are not only rich linguistic resources but also reflect deep-seated cultural values, perceptions, and conceptualizations in both English and Uzbek.

The comparative linguistic analysis of phraseological units with zoonymic components in **Uzbek** and **English** has demonstrated that while such expressions often share universal cognitive foundations, they also reveal deep-rooted cultural and linguistic differences.

Both languages frequently use animal metaphors to reflect human behaviors, emotions, and social roles. Animals like **fox**, **dog**, **donkey**, and **horse** appear commonly in idiomatic expressions, serving as metaphorical tools to describe characteristics such as cunning, loyalty, foolishness, or strength. This indicates a shared human tendency to conceptualize abstract traits through animal symbolism.

However, the **cultural significance of these animals differs**, influenced by historical, religious, and environmental contexts. For example, while the dog may symbolize loyalty in English, it often has negative connotations in Uzbek due to Islamic perceptions. Similarly, English idioms

are often grounded in Western literature and everyday experiences, whereas Uzbek phraseology is deeply tied to oral traditions, proverbs, and rural life.

Structurally, English idioms tend to follow formulaic similes and metaphors, while Uzbek phraseological units are more flexible and frequently carry moral or social commentary in a proverb-like format. These differences underscore the importance of cultural literacy in language learning, teaching, and translation.

In conclusion, zoonymic phraseological units serve not only as linguistic phenomena but also as windows into the worldview of a culture. Their study enhances our understanding of intercultural communication, phraseological equivalence, and the rich expressive capacity of language.

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