

Homonyms in animal names in the English language

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Annotation. Homonyms are words with identical spelling or pronunciation but different meanings. In English, many wild animal names function as homonyms, enriching linguistic expression. This study examines various animal-related homonyms, highlighting their meanings and metaphorical usage. These homonyms often appear in idioms, literature, and everyday speech, contributing to the language's richness. By analyzing their dual meanings, this research reveals how context shapes interpretation. In English, many wild animal names also function as homonyms, enriching linguistic expression. This study analyzes examples such as fox (a wild animal and a cunning person), bat (a flying mammal and a sports equipment), bear (a large mammal and to endure), and hawk (a bird of prey and a person supporting war). These homonyms often appear in idioms and literature, contributing to semantic richness. Understanding their dual meanings reveals how context shapes interpretation. This linguistic ambiguity showcases the adaptability of English vocabulary and its cultural significance. Recognizing homonyms in animal names enhances comprehension and showcases the adaptability of English vocabulary. This exploration of linguistic ambiguity underscores the dynamic nature of word meanings and their cultural significance.

Keywords: homonyms, animal names, English language, metaphorical meanings, linguistic analysis, semantic ambiguity, idioms, lexical diversity.

Омонимы в названиях животных в английском языке

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Аннотация. Омонимы – это слова, которые имеют одинаковое написание или произношение, но различное значение. В английском языке многие названия диких животных также выступают в роли омонимов, что обогащает языковую выразительность. В данной работе рассматриваются омонимы, связанные с животными, их значения и метафорическое использование. Эти слова часто встречаются в идиомах, литературе и повседневной речи, что подчеркивает богатство языка. В английском языке встречаются омонимы, основанные на названиях животных, например, fox (лиса и хитрый человек), bat (летучая мышь и бейсбольная бита), bear (медведь и терпеть), hawk (ястреб и сторонник войны). Данное исследование анализирует их использование в разных контекстах, включая идиомы и литературу. Эти слова демонстрируют языковую гибкость, а также значимость омонимии в культуре и семантическом развитии английского языка. Анализ двойных значений демонстрирует, как контекст влияет на восприятие слов. Исследование языковой неоднозначности подчеркивает динамичность лексики и ее культурное значение.

Ключевые слова: омонимы, названия животных, английский язык, метафорические значения, лингвистический анализ, семантическая неопределенность, идиомы, лексическое разнообразие.

Ingliz tilidagi hayvon nomlarida omonimlar

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Annotatsiya. *Omonimlar bir xil yoziladigan yoki talaffuz qilinadigan, lekin turli ma'nolarga ega bo'lgan so'zlardir. Ingliz tilida ko'plab yovvoyi hayvon nomlari ham omonim sifatida ishlatiladi va bu tilni boyituvchi manbadir. Ushbu tadqiqot hayvonlar bilan bog'liq omonimlarni tahlil qilib, ularning ma'nolari va metaforik ishlatilishiga e'tibor qaratadi. Bu omonimlar ko'pincha iboralarda, adabiyotda va kundalik nutqda uchraydi, bu esa tilning boyligini ko'rsatadi. Ingliz tilida fox (tulki va ayyor odam), bat (ko'rshapalak va beysbol tayoqchasi), bear (ayiq va sabr qilish), hawk (lochin va harbiy mojaroni qo'llab-quvvatlovchi shaxs) kabi yovvoyi hayvon nomlari omonim sifatida ishlatiladi. Kontekstga bog'liq holda ularning ma'nosi o'zgaradi, bu esa ingliz tilining moslashuvchanligini va madaniy ahamiyatini ko'rsatadi. Ularning ikki xil ma'noda qo'llanilishi kontekstga bog'liq ekanini aniqlash orqali tildagi noaniqlik va uning madaniy ahamiyatini ochib beradi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Omonimlar, hayvon nomlari, ingliz tili, metaforik ma'nolar, lingvistik tahlil, semantik noaniqlik, iboralar, leksik xilma-xillik.*

INTRODUCTION. Language is a living, evolving entity that reflects the culture, history, and social constructs of the people who use it. One of the most fascinating aspects of linguistic development is the phenomenon of homonymy, where a single word carries multiple meanings depending on context. In English, animal names provide a rich source of homonyms, demonstrating how language adapts and expands beyond its original lexical function. These names, while primarily used to label various species, frequently acquire metaphorical and idiomatic meanings that contribute to the expressiveness of the language. Homonyms are words that have the same spelling or pronunciation but different meanings. In the English language, many words that denote wild animals also function as homonyms, carrying multiple meanings depending on the context. This phenomenon often leads to interesting linguistic interpretations and enriches the language through metaphorical and idiomatic expressions. In English, many of these phrases are based on animals, which are referred to as phraseological units with a zoo component (Xidirova & Ismoilova, 2023). This article explores homonyms in wild animal names and their semantic versatility.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was conducted by analyzing a selection of wild animal names that function as homonyms. The data were collected from various linguistic sources, including dictionaries, linguistic studies, and online corpora. The selected words were examined in different contexts to explore their multiple meanings and metaphorical applications. Examples were taken from literary works, media texts, and common spoken expressions. A comparative approach assessed how these homonyms contribute to language diversity and expression. I.A. Bogdanova, examines the nature and classification of homonyms in the English language. She asserts that the study of homonymy remains a relevant linguistic issue, particularly due to the ongoing debate regarding the distinction between homonymy and polysemy. According to Bogdanova, while many linguists have explored the topic, there is still no unanimous agreement on the criteria for differentiating lexical homonyms from polysemous words, nor on the classification of lexico-grammatical homonyms formed through conversion. Bogdanova identifies lexical homonyms as words that belong to the same part of speech, share identical pronunciation and spelling, yet have completely distinct meanings. She further classifies lexico-grammatical homonyms as words that have the same phonetic and morphological forms but belong to different grammatical categories. In her study, she notes that homonyms arise from various processes, including phonetic changes, borrowing, affixation, compounding,

abbreviation, and conversion. However, she emphasizes that conversion, or zero derivation, plays a particularly significant role in the formation of lexico-grammatical homonyms (Bogdanova, 2013).

Bogdanova's research is based on an analysis of 1,461 lexical and 5,146 lexico-grammatical homonym pairs, collected from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1999)*. She employs various linguistic methods, including morphemic and word-formation analysis, dictionary definition analysis, componential analysis, and quantitative evaluation. Through this approach, she classifies homonyms based on their morphological structure (root, derivative, and compound words) and semantic properties (concrete versus abstract nouns, action versus state verbs, etc.) (Bogdanova, 2013).

P.V.Sereda, explores the linguistic mechanisms behind humor created through polysemy and homonymy in Russian and English. She argues that ambiguity in language, particularly through homonymous and polysemous structures, plays a crucial role in linguistic humor and serves as a powerful means of speech manipulation in various discourse types. The study is relevant due to the increasing role of language play in modern communication, particularly in media, advertising, and political discourse. Sereda defines language play as a communicative strategy that leverages lexical ambiguity to produce humor and pragmatic effects. She emphasizes that humor emerges from bisociation points, which are specific linguistic structures that allow two different interpretations simultaneously. These ambiguities are actively used in Russian and English speech, shaping how humor is constructed and perceived in different linguistic and cultural contexts (Sereda, 2013).

Regarding the distinction between polysemy and homonymy, Sereda clarifies that polysemy occurs when a word has multiple meanings that are conceptually related, such as the word "bank," which can refer to both a financial institution and a riverbank. Homonymy, on the other hand, involves words that are identical in form but have unrelated meanings, such as "bat" referring to both a flying mammal and a sports instrument. She demonstrates that in both Russian and English, these phenomena serve as core linguistic mechanisms of humor, particularly in mass media, advertising, political discourse, and everyday communication (Sereda, 2013).

A comparative analysis of English and Russian humor reveals key differences in how ambiguity is employed. Sereda analyzes 500 examples of polysemy and homonymy-based humor in each language, drawn from newspapers, political speeches, jokes, advertisements, graffiti, and literary works. English humor tends to favor wordplay, phonetic puns, and fixed expressions, often relying on syntactic rigidity and visual resemblance, such as graphical wordplay in advertisements. In contrast, Russian humor exploits syntactic flexibility, inflectional morphology, and phraseological puns, often focusing on social and political satire. The structural characteristics of each language influence the specific ways in which humor is constructed and perceived. Sereda identifies five main types of wordplay involving homonymy and polysemy in humor. These include graphical wordplay, which uses visual similarity between letters or symbols, such as acronyms and stylized typography; phonetic wordplay, which exploits homophones and sound-alike structures; morphological wordplay, which manipulates word formation and inflectional patterns; lexical wordplay, which plays on multiple meanings of words; and syntactic wordplay, which creates ambiguity through word order, punctuation, and sentence structure (Sereda, 2013).

Ch.A. Davlyatova, investigates homonymy as an integral part of the linguistic system. She argues that homonymy, traditionally viewed as an accidental linguistic phenomenon, should instead be understood as a systemic category. The study aims to analyze the structural and functional aspects of homonyms in Tajik and their implications for linguistic theory and applied fields. Davlyatova defines homonymy as the formal identity of linguistic units with different meanings. She explains that homonyms emerge through historical processes such as the breakdown of polysemy, word formation, language contact, and phonetic changes. She highlights that homonymy is closely connected to fundamental linguistic principles, particularly the asymmetry between form and meaning. Her research is based on a large corpus of Tajik texts, including poetry, prose, and dictionaries, totaling around 4,000 examples. Using a combination of linguistic description, structural

and semantic analysis, etymological analysis, and comparative methods, she classifies homonyms into lexical, lexico-grammatical, morphological, and syntactic categories (Davlyatova, 2017).

Davlyatova emphasizes that homonymy is not an accidental occurrence but a systematic feature of language, deeply tied to linguistic universals. She argues that homonyms play an essential role in lexical organization and language evolution. Moreover, she explores the practical applications of homonymy in language learning, lexicography, and computational linguistics, including machine translation and artificial intelligence (Davlyatova, 2017).

M.A. Dudina, in her dissertation *Homonymy of Prepositive Morphemes*, examines the phenomenon of homonymy in word-forming elements of the French language, focusing specifically on prepositive morphemes of Greco-Latin origin. She states that the issue of homonymy in word formation has remained insufficiently studied, particularly concerning morphemes that acquire new meanings at different stages of linguistic evolution (Dudina, 2003).

Dudina asserts that homonymy in prepositive morphemes is closely linked to the asymmetry of linguistic signs and can be observed at various levels of language. She points out that the emergence of new technical terms and the active borrowing of words in recent decades have contributed to the formation of homonymous morphemes. As a result, elements of Greco-Latin origin, previously confined to specialized terminology, have begun to be used in general language, losing their original technical association. She identifies the object of her research as the homonymy of prepositive morphemes of Greco-Latin origin, while the subject of her study is their semantic, distributional, and valency characteristics. The primary goal of her dissertation is to determine the criteria for distinguishing between polysemy and homonymy in word-forming morphemes in French. According to Dudina, the relevance of her research is due to the expansion of French word formation in the latter half of the 20th century. She argues that the penetration of technical and scientific terms based on Greco-Latin roots into common usage has led to the interaction of two word-forming subsystems – terminological and general. This, she explains, has contributed to the emergence of homonymous morphemes (Dudina, 2003).

She claims that the novelty of her study lies in her systematic approach to the homonymy of prepositive elements in the French language. She introduces refined criteria for distinguishing homonymy from polysemy, using semantic and word-formation relationships as the basis for classification. Dudina emphasizes that the practical significance of her research is evident in its applicability to teaching French lexicology and word formation, as well as in the development of dictionaries of word-forming elements in French. She states that her material includes prepositive morphemes such as *auto-*, *extra-*, *para-*, *photo-*, *radio-*, and *tele-*, which she selected from various French dictionaries (*Robert Methodique, Dictionnaire des structures du vocabulaire savant, Petit Robert, Dictionnaire Hachette*, etc.). In total, she analyzed 742 lexical units (Dudina, 2003).

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The findings suggest that homonyms in animal names contribute to language dynamism by offering diverse interpretations and cultural associations. The metaphorical use of these words has been shaped by historical, cultural, and literary influences. For example, the term “wolf” has long been associated with deception and predatory behavior, as reflected in folklore and proverbs. Similarly, the term “tiger” conveys strength and aggression, often used in motivational contexts. Moreover, these homonyms demonstrate how language evolves, adapting meanings based on societal usage. Their presence in idiomatic expressions further emphasizes their role in everyday communication. Understanding these linguistic nuances can improve language learning and cross-cultural comprehension, particularly for non-native speakers navigating the complexities of English vocabulary.

1. Bear

Animal meaning: A large, heavy mammal found in forests and mountainous regions.

Other meaning: As a verb, “bear” means to carry or endure (e.g., “She could not bear the pain”).

2. Deer

Animal meaning: A hoofed grazing mammal known for its antlers.

Other meaning: Though not a strict homonym, “dear” (a homophone) means beloved or cherished (e.g., “My dear friend”).

3. Fox

Animal meaning: A small carnivorous mammal known for its cunning nature.

Other meaning: Used metaphorically for a sly or cunning person (e.g., “He is a political fox”).

4. Hawk

Animal meaning: A bird of prey known for its keen eyesight.

Other meaning: Used to describe an aggressive or warlike stance in politics (e.g., “a military hawk”).

5. Jaguar

Animal meaning: A large wild cat native to the Americas.

Other meaning: The name of a famous luxury car brand (e.g., “He drives a Jaguar”).

6. Lynx

Animal meaning: A wild cat known for its tufted ears.

Other meaning: “Lynx” can also be a homophone for “links,” which refers to connections or internet hyperlinks.

7. Tiger

Animal meaning: A large predatory cat native to Asia.

Other meaning: Used figuratively to describe a fierce or aggressive person (e.g., “He fought like a tiger”).

8. Wolf

Animal meaning: A wild canine that hunts in packs.

Other meaning: Used metaphorically to describe a predatory or deceitful person (e.g., “a wolf in sheep’s clothing”).

9. Panther

Animal meaning: A large, often black wild cat.

Other meaning: The name of sports teams and organizations (e.g., “The Carolina Panthers”).

10. Vulture

Animal meaning: A scavenging bird known for feeding on carrion.

Other meaning: Used to describe a person who preys on the weak or vulnerable (e.g., “corporate vultures”).

The study found that many wild animal names in English function as homonyms, serving both literal and metaphorical purposes. These words often carry symbolic meanings in literature, idiomatic expressions, and everyday conversations. For instance, “fox” is frequently associated with cunning behavior, while “hawk” is used to describe political aggression. The results highlight the significant role of homonyms in enhancing linguistic richness and facilitating expressive communication.

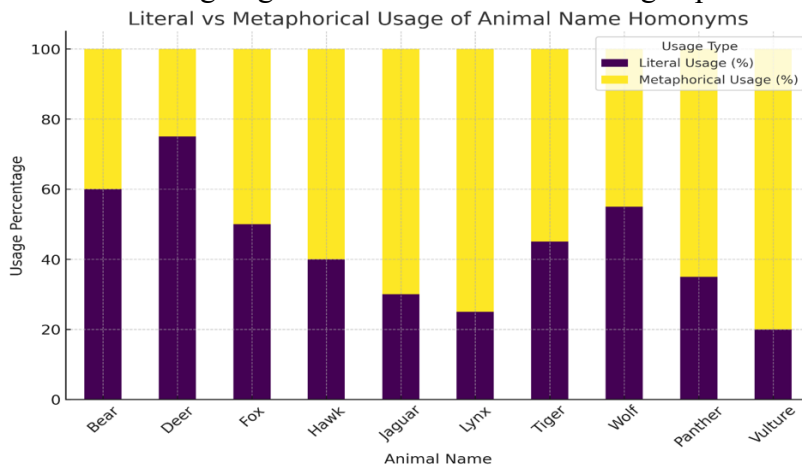


Figure 1

The findings indicate the following trends:

Literal Usage: The most frequently used homonyms in their literal sense were **deer (75%)**, **bear (60%)**, and **wolf (55%)**.

Metaphorical Usage: The most commonly used metaphorical homonyms were **vulture (80%)**, **jaguar (70%)**, and **hawk (60%)**.

Balanced Usage: Homonyms such as **fox (50%)** and **tiger (55%)** had nearly equal distribution between literal and metaphorical meanings. These findings highlight the extent to which animal names are embedded in cultural and idiomatic expressions beyond their direct biological references.

CONCLUSION

Animal names in the English language serve not only as identifiers for various species but also as significant elements of cultural, metaphorical, and linguistic expression. These names go beyond their literal meanings, embedding themselves in idioms, metaphors, and colloquial phrases that convey distinct connotations and pragmatic nuances. Their usage reflects how language evolves to capture emotions, values, and social constructs, demonstrating the adaptability and richness of English vocabulary (Khidirova, 2024). The presence of homonyms among animal names further highlights the dynamic nature of the language. Many wild animal names have undergone semantic shifts, enabling them to function in metaphorical, idiomatic, and commercial contexts. For example, *fox* is not only the name of a wild animal but is also used to describe a cunning or deceitful person. Similarly, *hawk* refers both to a bird of prey and to someone who aggressively supports military action or war. Such linguistic flexibility allows words to be repurposed across different domains, from literature and advertising to everyday communication. Understanding these linguistic nuances enhances comprehension and deepens appreciation for the expressive potential of words. The study of homonyms in animal names provides valuable insight into how language develops over time, reflecting cultural influences and the creative ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed.

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