

Semantic classification of phraseological units with the components of animals

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Annotation: *This article analyzes the semantic classification of phraseological units that express animal components. To understand the figurative and cultural knowledge of the particular language, studying phraseological units especially those including animal names plays a huge role in phraseology since phraseological units are those which manifest cultural knowledge layers. The article involves cognitive linguistics, cultural semantics and comparative phraseology to classify and investigate idiomatic expressions and word combinations that include animalistic imagery and symbolism. Moreover, it identifies various semantic fields of animal related phraseological units accompanied by human behavior, emotional state, intelligence, deceitful and physical characteristics of people described by the help of phraseological units with animal components. The research is based on qualitative analysis using corpora of English idioms and Kunin's English-Russian phraseological dictionary. Research findings disclose and analyze systematic use of metaphorical language and cultural concepts which help to grasp broader understanding of idiomatic language and its semantic structures.*

Key words: *phraseology, phraseological unit, zoonyms, animalistic imagery*

Семантическая классификация фразеологических единиц с компонентами ЖИВОТНЫХ

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Аннотация: *В данной статье анализируется семантическая классификация фразеологических единиц, выражающих зоонимические компоненты. Для понимания образного и культурного знания конкретного языка изучение фразеологических единиц, особенно содержащих названия животных, играет важную роль в фразеологии, поскольку именно фразеологизмы отражают культурные пласты знания. В статье используется подход когнитивной лингвистики, культурной семантики и сравнительной фразеологии для классификации и изучения идиоматических выражений и словосочетаний, содержащих зооморфные образы и символику. Кроме того, в работе определяются различные семантические поля фразеологических единиц, связанных с животными, которые описывают поведение человека, эмоциональное состояние, интеллект, обман и физические характеристики с помощью зоонимических фразеологизмов. Исследование основано на качественном анализе с использованием корпусов английских идиом и англо-русского фразеологического словаря Кунина. Результаты исследования раскрывают и анализируют систематическое использование метафорического языка и культурных концептов, что способствует более глубокому пониманию идиоматического языка и его семантических структур.*

Ключевые слова: *фразеология, фразеологическая единица, зоонимы, зооморфные образы*

Hayvon komponentlariga ega bo'lgan frazeologik birliklarning semantik tasnifi

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Annotatsiya: *Ushbu maqolada hayvon komponentlarini ifodalovchi frazeologik birliklarning semantik tasnifi tahlil qilinadi. Muayyan tilning obrazli va madaniy bilimlarini anglash uchun, ayniqsa hayvon nomlarini o'z ichiga olgan frazeologik birliklarni o'rganish frazeologiyada muhim ahamiyat kasb etadi, chunki aynan frazeologik birliklar madaniy bilim qatlamlarini aks ettiradi. Maqolada kognitiv lingvistika, madaniy semantika va qiyosiy frazeologiya asosida hayvon obrazlari va ramzlari bilan bog'liq idiomatik iboralar va so'z birikmalarini tasniflash va tahlil qilish ko'zda tutilgan. Bundan tashqari, maqola hayvonlarga oid frazeologik birliklar orqali inson xulqi, hissiy holati, aqliy darajasi, yolg'onchiligi va jismoniy xususiyatlarini ifodalovchi turli semantik maydonlarni aniqlaydi. Tadqiqot sifatli tahlilga asoslangan bo'lib, ingliz tilidagi idiomalar korpusi va Kuninning inglizcha-ruscha frazeologik lug'atidan foydalanilgan. Tadqiqot natijalari metaforik til va madaniy tushunchalarning tizimli qo'llanilishini ochib beradi va idiomatik til hamda uning semantik tuzilmasini chuqurroq anglashga yordam beradi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *frazeologiya, frazeologik birlik, zoonimlar, hayvoniy obrazlar*

Introduction

Phraseology is the branch of linguistics which deals with fixed expressions or word combinations with figurative meanings. It is considered as a new science since it came into existence in the 1940s and 1950s by the help of works of V.V. Vinogradov and his school. It should be noted that Russian linguistics' contribution to the phraseology has acknowledged by many scholars thought the world (Skandera, 2007).

Analysis of phraseological units in semantic and functional approach was conducted by many scholars. For example, Ch. Bally, A.A. Potebnya, B.de Courtenay, A.A. Shakhmatov, N.M. Shanskiy, O. Jespersen made huge contributions to the analysis of phraseological units from different angles, which are semantic, structural and functional. Phraseological unit classification was the one theme which much attention was paid for. As is known there are quite range of phrases to denote these terms: set expressions, set phrase, fixed word group, word equivalent, phraseological unit and idiom. Although different approaches are represented, all scholar agree that "they are not introduced in speech, but they are added in communication ready-made" (Arnold, 1973, p.142). These expressions tend to be often idiomatic, metaphorical and culturally bound (Cowie.A. P,1998). The phraseological unit is multi-word expression which has a fixed expression, its meaning cannot be predicted from the individual meanings of its components, but rather it acts as a single unit of meaning, which is similar to a single word (e.g., *kick the bucket* meaning "to die") (Fernado. C, 1996). It is a fixed expression so that it cannot be changed or rearranged easily within a sentence or text. The whole meaning cannot be understood by separating the solid part into smaller units since its core meaning sometimes relate to the parts and sometimes not. Therefore, it often has more figurative or idiomatic meaning rather than literal ones.

There are four characteristics of phraseological units: stability, idiomaticity, reproducibility and structural integrity. Stability means components of phraseological unit cannot be easily changed. (Glaser. R, 1988). According to Moon (1998) the meaning is figurative rather than literal. Following characteristics is named reproducibility which means the ability of a phraseological unit to be used repeatedly in speech or writing by the speakers of the language in its fixed or semi-fixed form. To elaborate it more, it can be stated that phraseological units are memorized wholes rather than constructed anew each time. The reproducibility of phraseological unit makes them part of a speaker's linguistic competence and cultural knowledge. (Moon. R, 1998). Structural integrity means the

syntactic fixedness and lexical cohesion of a phraseological unit, which implies that its idiomatic meaning is remained (Glaser. R. (1998). In W. Meijis (Ed.), *Corpus Linguistics and Beyond*. Rodopi). Generally, phraseological units are non- substitutable and non- reorderable. Although minor grammatical changes occur, core structure of that unit keeps stability according to Naciscione (2010).

Phraseological units contain an essential component of any language, revealing its cognitive and cultural aspects. Fixed expressions including animal names (zoonyms) play an integral role to describe human qualities through metaphorical associations with animal traits. Zoonyms serve a rich source for metaphors, phraseological units, symbols, and narrative structures, all of which contribute to a culture's worldview. They reflect long-standing human observation of animal appearance and behavior, revealing attitudes towards animals, highlighting specific animal qualities, and evolving into symbols. Consequently, zoonyms become part of a language's cultural and informational foundation, shaping national identity. Animal names are a compelling area of study because they fulfill diverse functions, especially in representing human character traits.

Interpretation of phraseological units with animal components demands interdisciplinary approaches mixing cognitive linguistics, phraseology and cultural linguistics. According to the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is a cognitive mechanism that gives opportunity to individuals to contemplate abstract things by the help of more concrete and familiar experiences. Animals, being concrete entities help to negotiate the communication serving as ideals sources to describe complex human attributes. According to Dobrowolski and Piirainen (2005) and Naciscione (2010), idioms with animal names serve as culturally loaded symbols. Their studies suggest that although particular animal idioms tend to be universal, others are highly regarded as culture- specific units. This dual nature of idioms makes semantic classification more complex and fruitful.

The theoretical findings of this study are rooted in cognitive linguistics, especially the theory of conceptual metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). It defines that how human being's cognition centered on metaphors and how individuals comprehend and interpret abstract domains (such as patience, loyalty) by connecting them into more concrete domains (like the animal kingdom). This way of explanation has further developed into phraseological studies to define the commonness and often predictable use of particular animal metaphors in idioms.

Dobrowolski and Piirainen (2005) improved this way of modelling by including cultural linguistics since most idioms cannot be interpreted without cultural and historical background information. They explained the case of how the same particular animal can be culturally conceptualized in contrasting ways across different cultures. For example, while with the fox, deceitful and cunning characteristics are incorporated to describe human traits in western cultures, Japanese folklore connects spiritual and protective connotations with the fox.

Naciscione (2010) investigated how phraseological units in discourse are used stylistically, stated that how much using idioms in speech contributes to expressive power of the language. Her studies placed a great emphasis on how idioms, especially with ones including animal components are utilized in communication creatively and appropriately to serve functions out of their denotative (dictionary) meanings.

Angelika Glaser (1998) classified phraseological units based on semantic and functional criteria. Phraseological units are divided into four categories according to her typology.

They are followings:

1. Nominal phraseological units- they serve as nouns and generally name objects, persons, or concepts.

- a. A dark horse means someone with hidden and unknown talents
- b. A cash cow means a reliable source of income
- c. A guinea pig means someone who is tested on or experimented with

These types of phraseological units often possess metaphorical meanings, being used to describe people and things through animal imagery.

2. Adjectival phraseological units- they function as adjectives to provide with descriptive or evaluative quality.

- a. As sly as a fox- very cunning or clever
- b. As blind as a bat- lacking awareness
- c. As stubborn as a mule- extremely obstinate

These expressions draw comparisons between human traits and perceived animal behaviors by highlighting qualities or characteristics.

3. Adverbial phraseological units- they acting as adverbs provide information about the manner, time or extent of an action.

- a. Like a bat out of hell-very fast
- b. In the doghouse- in trouble or out of favor
- c. Like a fish out of water- feeling uncomfortable

These units express vivid imagery to demonstrate how particular action is done.

4. Verbal phraseological units- they are considered as verb- based idioms, often consisting of a verb plus one or more secondary elements such as prepositions, objects and others.

- a. Pig out- eat greedily
- b. Chicken out – to withdraw due to fear
- c. Bark up the wrong tree- follow a misguided course

They are regarded highly idiomatic, typically non- transparent. To analyze and interpret them, contextual and cultural understanding is required.

There are additional functional categories according to Glaser. She highlighted communicative functions of phraseological units and divided them into descriptive, evaluative, emotive and stylistic.

1. Descriptive- stating observations (as busy as a bee, as free as a bird).
2. Evaluative- expressing judgments (a snake in the grass)
3. Emotive- expressing emotions (mad as a hornet)
4. Stylistic- enriching the style of a text (the lion's share)

In studying phraseological units, employing comparative phraseology is prolific to understand the cross- linguistics variations and presence of animal idioms. Works by Fernando (1996) and Moon (1998) have studied the universal nature of metaphorical thinking while taking not all idioms have one-to-one equivalence across languages into account. These findings suggest that although idioms are often metaphorically motivated, their specific meanings and uses in communication are deeply embedded in cultural contexts.

Methods

The study is based on qualitative and descriptive analysis. The research encompassed collecting a corpus of 100 English idioms having the features of animal components from dictionaries (e.g Kunin's English- Russian phraseological dictionary), online corpora and phraseology database (e.g., Oxford Idioms Dictionary, Collins COBUILD, and Spears, 2005).

Each idiom was analyzed for its literal meaning, figurative interpretation, and the semantic domain it expresses. Based on their core meaning or function, each idiom was categorized into thematic groups. Classification of them was rooted in prior taxonomies created by Glaser (1998), Naciscione (2010), but further adapted to observed data.

Moreover, other languages including Russian and Uzbek were also incorporated to analyze and explore cross-linguistic and cultural differences. These comparisons were chosen to show universal and culture-specific metaphorical patterns of phraseological units with the components of animals.

Results

The analysis showed six dominant semantic categories based on animal- based phraseological units, including animal based phraseological units depicting human behavior, emotional state, intelligence and wisdom, deception and trickery, cowardice and fear, strength and aggression,

Human behavior

This category encompasses idioms that describe personality characteristics, social behaviors and habitual actions of human beings. These idioms employ metaphor used with zoonyms to portray specific behavioral tendencies in humans: “monkey around” means to behave playfully or irresponsibly; “horse around” means to engage in rough play; “pig out” means to eat greedily or excessively

Here in examples, different components of particular animals are depicted. These idioms typically reflect judgments of human behavior and actions. As monkeys are notorious for their playful nature, people metaphorically connect those animals to describe someone who is playful and irresponsible. Another example is with a pig, the animal which eats excessively, so people associate this animal for greedy and gluttony nature.

Feelings

This category maps metaphorical links between animals and instinctive reactions to define animal idioms that communicate emotional states: the phrase "crocodile tears" is used when describing false sympathy, and comes from the observation that crocodiles seem to cry when swallowing, but in reality crocodiles are emotionless; "Like a deer in headlights" means to be paralyzed with fright; "Cat got your tongue?" is a phrase used when someone becomes suddenly or unexpectedly silent.

Such idioms figuratively depict sudden speechlessness (cat), deceitful alarm (wolf), or emotional paralysis (deer). By converting abstract interior sensations into vivid pictures, they aid in improving emotional comprehension and relatability.

Intelligence and wisdom

In this category, idioms that relate to mental acuity, cleverness, or foolishness are demonstrated. The animals used manifest cultural symbols of intelligence or its absence: “clever as a fox”- highly cunning or smart; “birdbrain”- foolish or unintelligent; “wise as an owl”- possessing deep knowledge or insight

In western cultures, the fox and owl have long been connected with intelligence while birds (excluding owl) often give description of lack of seriousness or flightiness.

Trickery and deceit

The phraseological units in this group represent acts of treachery, deceit, and deception through the use of animals: “a snake in the grass” is an opponent that is hidden; “a wolf in sheep’s clothes” is someone who presents a placid façade while harboring evil intent; “to rat on someone”- to betray someone; “as sly as a fox”- deceitful person and so on.

These idioms are strongly negative. They present dishonesty as instinctive and animalistic in addition to being immoral. Rats and snakes are used to emphasize their symbolic significance by appealing to a generalized cultural aversion and disgust while fox is main representation of deceitful and cunning nature.

Feeling of cowardice and weakness

Many idioms are associated with animals that are typically thought of as timid or weak to convey shyness or a lack of boldness: "chicken out" means to flee in terror; "a scaredy-cat" is someone who gets scared easily; "as quiet as a mouse"- person who is extremely quiet or docile. These idioms demonstrate the feelings of being coward and timid. They function to encourage people to be stronger and find confidence in oneself.

Aggression and Strength

Idioms that emphasize physical or emotional force and are associated with power, intensity, or lack of control fall under this category: "strong as an ox" means incredibly strong; "bull in a China shop" refers to someone who is awkward or clumsy; "go berserk" is to lose control violently; it is etymologically related to bear-skin-clad Norse warriors; "lion heart" means a person who is brave and determined
In these examples, physical strength and emotional dominance were expressed. Idioms manifest

animal characteristics to highlight the human action, either expressing praise (for strength) or condemnation (for recklessness).

This way of approaching into zoonyms denoting human characteristics, emotional states, aggression and cowardice and so on, demonstrates how much these expressions are semantically rich, but also, they are culturally potent. Idioms are organized in each category in accordance to their themes as well as how animal imagery is associated with judgments, social norms and conceptual metaphors. However, these metaphorical expressions are not only universal, but culture-specific, too, depicting the symbolic role in a particular tradition.

Discussion

As it has been noticed from the semantic categorization and analysis based on animal-named phraseological units, metaphorically mapping and association are systematically grounded in human cognition and cultural knowledge. From cognitive linguistic point of view, according to Kövecses (2002), idioms are not random but derives from metaphorical notions that structure thought. For example, the metaphor “HUMAN ARE ANIMALS” represents many of these expressions analyzed in this study, manifesting human behavior and feelings in terms of animal components and features.

The phraseological units with animal components classified into several categories ranging from human behavior to emotional states often serve as a mirror for fundamental aspects of human social life. Idioms have several functions. While some encourage people to behave in particular manner, like “snake in the grass” showing deceitful nature is not moral and need to be avoided, others can also be markers of identity and heritage. The negative connotations about some animals can be traced back to literary texts, religious roots and historical sources.

Although different types of animals occur with phraseological units, the most frequently used ones are associated with zoonyms like dogs, cats and horses. The phraseological units with “dog” can have both positive and negative connotations expressing loyalty, faithfulness, diligence as well as mistreatment, worthlessness, inferiority in various contexts.

For example, while “as faithful as a dog” and “as true as a dog” emphasize the characteristics of loyalty, “dog’s dinner”, “treat like a dog” evoke negative feelings like something unpleasant with pessimistic nature and mistreatment.

Phraseological units with cats often represent negative connotations such “as sly as a cat”- cunning and deceitful, “cat burglar”- a burglar who is skilled at entering buildings undetected, “copycat”- someone who imitates another person’s actions or ideas, “catlike”- graceful, agile, and stealthy, like a cat, “curiosity killed the cat”- being too inquisitive can lead to trouble.

Another animal name which frequently used as a phraseological unit is horse. In many aspects, the phraseological units with the components of horse express positive connotations. For instance, “work like a horse” conveys the concept of hard work, “strong as a horse” and “horsepower” which is a unit of power express the meaning of the strength and endurance. However, there are also some phraseological units which reflect negative connotations. In the example of “flogging a dead horse” which means “wasting effort on things that are impossible to happen” or “changing horses in the midstream” meaning “to make a major change in strategy while already in the process of carrying out a plan (often seen as risky)” depict the negative meanings used with the components of horse.

Other zoonyms also widely used in phraseology to describe human attributes, their characteristics, appearance, and other qualities metaphorically. In comparison with domestic animals, wild zoonyms appear less with phraseological units. For example, “wolf” represents different characteristics of human being in various culture. It means that in some cultures, it reflects “bravery”, “strength” and “endurance”, in others, it is the symbol of cunning, trickery and cruel nature. As an example, “a wolf in sheep’s clothing”, “to throw somebody to the wolves” can be the clear illustration of those connotative meanings.

Culturally, the function of idioms is integral in the markers of cultural identity and heritage. The negative associations of particular animals can be signified by the help of religious, historical factors as well as literary sources. Many idioms were also derived from and associated with biblical

texts and fables created in English and western countries. Those idioms can be exemplified by serpents and wolves which manifest dangerous and evil nature, which, in turn reinforces metaphors in modern idiomatic usage (Dobrovolskiy and Piirainen, 2005).

Comparisons of phraseological units with the components of animals can vary from nations to cultures as each culture represent and view the world according to their cultural values and their way of interpretation of the world, world picture. Cross-linguistic comparisons can depict how different cultures interpret and understand the same animal symbol and imagery to verbalized distinct conceptual metaphors. While in many western countries like English and Russian, fox is representative of cunning and trickery nature, Uzbek idioms can use various animals like lion or bear to express dominance and courage. This shows even if some conceptual metaphors can be universal, their linguistics representation can be mediated accordingly (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

Additionally, the discussion shows that idioms with zoonyms can be both reflective and constitutive of cultural cognition. According to Naciscione (2010), idioms make a huge contribution to stylistic identity and discourse coherence, typically unleashing clear insights into collective worldviews. By calling or describing someone as a “rat” or a “snake”, in that act of communication, the speaker is reinforcing social norms, dishonesty and danger. Therefore, idioms can be seen as tools of socialization, providing speakers with the opportunity to verbalize complex judgments succinctly and memorably. Not only do these phraseological units depict reality, but also shape how reality is interpreted and communicated by adding linguistics creativity and stylistic variation.

The study also explored underexplored areas. Majority of modern idioms, particularly in slangs by teenagers and internet users, comprise animals to define certain act or emotions. However, they are less documented in traditional idiom dictionaries. Further research and study can be conducted in this field to explore how animal imagery and metaphors are utilized in digital communication, meme culture and environmental awareness.

To sum up, the semantic categorization of phraseological units with animal imagery and metaphors and components ensure takeaways into the correlation between language, thought and culture. By analyzing figurative frameworks that highlight these set units, this research makes a huge contribution to a deeper understanding and interpretation how to encode human experiences. It also pays great attention to cultural literacy to comprehend phraseological units and trigger future reaches into idioms as living, dynamic elements of language because they never stay steady, as language emerges, it also changes over an extended period of time.

Ultimately, the classification of phraseological units with the components of animals can be the step toward more comprehensive typology and taxonomy of idioms. It also serves as practical applications in teaching and learning language, translation, comparative stylistics and cognitive linguistics. Identifying the semantic roles and connotative meanings of animals in idioms helps to improve linguistic fluency and cultural competence, ensuring learners to navigate the rich figurative terrain of language.

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