



PRAGMATIC POSSIBILITIES OF ZONYMIC UNITS IN FORMATION OF PROVERBS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract

This article examines the pragmatic functions and semantic features of zoonymic units in the formation of proverbs in English and Uzbek. Proverbs represent an important component of linguistic and cultural heritage, reflecting the worldview, social experience, and ethical values of a nation. Animal names (zonyms) frequently occur in proverbs and serve as expressive linguistic tools that convey metaphorical meanings, evaluative attitudes, and cultural stereotypes. The purpose of this research is to analyze the pragmatic potential of zoonymic lexemes in English and Uzbek proverbs and to identify similarities and differences in their semantic and stylistic functions. The study employs comparative, structural-semantic, and contextual analysis to investigate the role of zonyms in proverbial constructions. The results show that zoonymic units function as powerful metaphorical devices that help convey moral evaluation, social behavior patterns, and pragmatic meanings in communication. While many zoonymic metaphors share universal semantic features, certain proverbs reflect culturally specific associations with animals in each linguistic tradition. The research contributes to paremiological and linguistic studies by demonstrating how zoonymic imagery enhances the pragmatic effectiveness of proverbial expressions.

Keywords: Zoonymic units, proverbs, paremiology, pragmatics, metaphor, cultural linguistics, comparative linguistics, English language, Uzbek language.



Introduction

Proverbs represent a significant component of linguistic and cultural heritage. They serve as concise expressions of collective wisdom, moral guidance, and social norms that are transmitted from generation to generation. Proverbs are not only linguistic units but also cultural texts that reflect the worldview and value system of a particular society [4]. One of the most productive lexical sources in proverbial language is the use of animal names, known as zoonymic units. Zoonyms frequently appear in proverbs because animals have long been associated with particular behavioral characteristics in human perception. Through metaphorical associations, animals are used to describe human qualities such as courage, laziness, cunning, loyalty, or foolishness. In both English and Uzbek languages, proverbs containing zoonymic elements occupy a significant place in folk wisdom. These proverbs often serve pragmatic functions in communication by expressing evaluation, advice, warning, or criticism. Their meaning is typically indirect and relies on metaphorical interpretation.

The study of zoonymic units in proverbs is closely related to the fields of paremiology, pragmatics, and cultural linguistics. Scholars have noted that animal imagery in proverbs reflects cultural stereotypes and social experience accumulated over centuries [5].

The aim of this article is to analyze the pragmatic possibilities of zoonymic units in the formation of proverbs in English and Uzbek. The research focuses on identifying the semantic features, communicative functions, and cultural meanings associated with animal names in proverbial expressions.

Literature Review

The study of proverbs has been an important area of linguistic research within the discipline of paremiology. According to Mieder, proverbs represent traditional statements that express general truths, moral lessons, or practical advice in a concise and metaphorical form [4]. Many scholars have emphasized the cultural significance of proverbs as reflections of collective knowledge and social norms. Proverbs often preserve historical experience and cultural values, functioning as a form of linguistic memory within a community.



Animal imagery has attracted particular attention in paremiological studies. Researchers note that animals serve as convenient metaphorical models for describing human behavior because they embody recognizable traits within cultural perception. For example, the fox is commonly associated with cunning, the lion with courage, and the donkey with stubbornness or foolishness. In English proverb studies, scholars have examined the metaphorical structure and pragmatic functions of animal imagery in proverbial expressions. According to Norrick, animal metaphors in proverbs often convey implicit evaluations of human actions and social relationships [5]. In Uzbek linguistic research, scholars have also explored the role of zoonyms in phraseological units and proverbs. Uzbek proverbs frequently employ animal names to express moral values, social criticism, and practical wisdom. The symbolic meaning of animals in Uzbek culture may differ from those found in Western traditions.

Despite extensive research on proverbs and animal metaphors, comparative studies focusing on the pragmatic functions of zoonymic units in English and Uzbek remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the comparative analysis of proverbial language by examining the communicative and cultural functions of animal imagery.

Methodology

This research employs qualitative linguistic methods to analyze the pragmatic functions of zoonymic units in proverbs. First, the comparative method is used to examine similarities and differences between English and Uzbek proverbs containing animal names. This method allows researchers to identify universal and culturally specific features in proverbial expressions. Second, structural-semantic analysis is applied to examine the lexical and semantic components of proverbs. Through this approach, the metaphorical meaning of zoonymic units and their role in the overall structure of the proverb are investigated. Third, contextual and pragmatic analysis is used to determine how proverbs function in communication. Proverbs often serve pragmatic purposes such as expressing evaluation, giving advice, warning against undesirable behavior, or reinforcing social norms.



The research materials consist of proverbs collected from English and Uzbek paremiological dictionaries and linguistic studies.

Materials and Discussion

Zoonymic units refer to lexical items that denote animals and are used metaphorically to describe human characteristics or social situations. In proverbs, animal names frequently serve as symbolic representations of particular qualities. For example, in English proverbs animals often represent stereotypical behavioral traits: “*A wolf in sheep’s clothing*”, “*Let sleeping dogs lie*”, “*The early bird catches the worm*”.

Similarly, Uzbek proverbs also make extensive use of animal imagery: “*Bo ‘rining og ‘zi yesa ham qon, yemasa ham qon*”, “*It hurar, karvon o ‘tar*”, “*Ot – erkakning qanoti.*” These examples illustrate how animal names are used metaphorically to convey broader meanings related to human behavior and social relationships. Zoonymic proverbs perform several pragmatic functions in communication. Many proverbs express a positive or negative evaluation of human behavior. For example, calling someone a “fox” may imply cleverness or cunning, depending on the context.

Advice and Warning. Proverbs often function as indirect advice. The proverb “Let sleeping dogs lie” warns against interfering in situations that may lead to trouble. Similarly, Uzbek proverbs containing zoonymic imagery frequently convey moral lessons and social warnings.

Social Criticism. Zoonymic proverbs can also serve as a means of criticizing undesirable behavior. Because proverbs use metaphorical language, criticism can be expressed indirectly without causing direct offense.

Cultural Symbolism of Animals. Although many zoonymic metaphors are universal, cultural differences influence the symbolic meaning of animals in different languages. For example, the lion in English culture is associated with bravery and nobility, while in Uzbek culture animals such as the horse symbolize strength, loyalty, and dignity.

These cultural associations influence how animal imagery functions in proverbial language.



Results

The analysis demonstrates that zoonymic units play an important role in the formation and pragmatic functioning of proverbs in both English and Uzbek.

First, animal names serve as effective metaphorical tools that help express complex social and ethical ideas in a concise form.

Second, zoonymic imagery enhances the pragmatic impact of proverbs by making them vivid, memorable, and emotionally expressive.

Third, while many zoonymic metaphors reflect universal human experiences, cultural traditions shape the specific symbolic meanings associated with different animals.

These findings confirm that proverbs represent an important intersection of language, culture, and social communication.

Conclusion

The study of zoonymic units in English and Uzbek proverbs reveals the significant role of animal imagery in conveying pragmatic and cultural meanings. Proverbs containing animal names function not only as linguistic expressions but also as carriers of social experience and ethical values. Comparative analysis demonstrates that both languages employ zoonymic metaphors to describe human behavior, social relationships, and moral principles. However, cultural traditions influence the specific symbolic meanings associated with particular animals.

Understanding the pragmatic functions of zoonymic units contributes to broader research in paremiology, cultural linguistics, and comparative linguistics. Future studies may explore the cognitive mechanisms underlying animal metaphors in proverbs and their role in intercultural communication.

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