



CONCEPTUAL DERIVATION OF ZOONYMIC UNITS IN PAREMIOLOGY (ENGLISH-UZBEK PERSPECTIVE)

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Abstract

This article investigates the phenomenon of conceptual derivation in zoonymic units within paremiology from cognitive, linguocultural, and pragmalinguistic perspectives. The study focuses on how animal-based lexical elements (zoonyms) develop figurative meanings through metaphorical and metonymic processes in English and Uzbek proverbs. Employing qualitative, comparative, and cognitive-semantic methods, the research analyzes a corpus of proverbs to identify universal and culture-specific patterns of conceptualization. The findings reveal that zoonymic units function as conceptual metaphors encoding human traits, social norms, and evaluative meanings. Conceptual derivation is shown to be a key mechanism underlying semantic extension and pragmatic impact in paremiological discourse. The study contributes to cognitive linguistics, paremiology, and translation studies by highlighting the interaction between language, culture, and cognition.

Keywords: paremiology, zoonymic units, conceptual derivation, metaphor, metonymy, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, pragmatics, English, Uzbek

Introduction

Paremiology, the study of proverbs, occupies a central position in modern linguistics as it bridges language, culture, and cognition. Proverbs are not merely fixed expressions but condensed representations of collective experience, moral norms, and cultural values. Among the most productive components of proverbs



are zoonymic units—lexical items denoting animals—which serve as powerful cognitive and symbolic tools.

In recent decades, cognitive linguistics has emphasized that meaning is not inherent in words but constructed through conceptual processes. Within this framework, conceptual derivation refers to the emergence of new meanings based on existing conceptual structures. Zoonymic units provide an ideal domain for examining this phenomenon, as animal imagery is widely used to conceptualize human behavior.

The aim of this study is to analyze the mechanisms of conceptual derivation in zoonymic units within English and Uzbek proverbs, focusing on their semantic, cognitive, and pragmatic dimensions.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is a fundamental mechanism of thought rather than merely a stylistic device. Conceptual metaphors allow abstract domains (e.g., human behavior) to be understood in terms of concrete domains (e.g., animals). Scholars such as Mieder (2004) and Norrick (1985) define proverbs as culturally marked, fixed expressions with didactic functions. Proverbs often rely on metaphorical imagery, including zoonymic elements. Linguoculturological approaches emphasize the role of language in reflecting cultural identity. Zoonymic units encode culturally specific knowledge about animals and their symbolic meanings. Conceptual derivation involves semantic extension through cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy, and abstraction. It explains how literal meanings evolve into figurative interpretations. Despite extensive research on metaphor and proverbs, the specific interaction between zoonymic units and conceptual derivation in a comparative (English–Uzbek) framework remains underexplored.

Zoonymic units function as conceptual models representing human characteristics: Animal → Human mapping

fox / tulki → *cunning*; *lion / sher* → *bravery*; *dog / it* → *loyalty / insult*.

These mappings are based on culturally shared knowledge about animals.

From the point of symbolic categorization animals are categorized according to: *strength (lion, wolf)*, *weakness (sheep)*, *intelligence (fox)*.

This categorization forms the basis for conceptual derivation.

Zoonymic meanings arise through metaphorical mapping: HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL. Examples:



“A fox is not taken twice” → intelligence; “Bo‘ri och bo‘lsa ham qo‘yga o‘xshamaydi” → nature cannot change.

Metonymy traits associated with animals are transferred: *dog* → *loyalty*, *wolf* → *danger*.

Concrete animal images become abstract concepts: *sheep* → *obedience*, *wolf* → *threat*.

Comparative Analysis (English vs Uzbek)

Universal patterns. Many zoonymic concepts are shared: *fox* → *cunning*, *lion* → *bravery*.

Culture-specific differences: *dog* (English: positive; Uzbek: often negative), *donkey* (English: stupidity; Uzbek: also stubbornness).

Pragmatic variation. The same animal may carry different evaluative meanings depending on context.

From the point of linguopragmatic Functions zoonymic units perform several functions:

1. Evaluative function

positive: *lion* (bravery), negative: *fox* (deception).

2. Didactic function

Proverbs teach moral lessons: “*Let sleeping dogs lie*”.

3. Expressive function

They increase emotional impact and memorability.

The findings confirm that conceptual derivation is a dynamic cognitive process linking language and culture. Zoonymic units are not arbitrary but structured according to conceptual patterns.

The comparative analysis shows: universality of basic metaphors; variability due to cultural context.

Thus, conceptual derivation reflects both shared human cognition and cultural specificity, revealing the dual nature of meaning formation in language. On the one hand, human beings across different linguistic communities tend to conceptualize the world in similar ways due to common cognitive mechanisms. These include processes such as categorization, metaphorical mapping, and associative thinking, which are grounded in universal human experience. As a result, many zoonymic images demonstrate striking similarities across languages. For instance, animals like the fox are widely associated with cunning, the lion



with bravery, and the sheep with obedience. Such parallels suggest that certain conceptual patterns are rooted in collective human cognition and arise from shared observations of the natural world.

On the other hand, conceptual derivation is deeply influenced by cultural context, which shapes how these universal cognitive patterns are interpreted and linguistically encoded. Each linguistic community develops its own system of values, beliefs, and symbolic associations, which in turn affect the semantic evolution of lexical units. Consequently, even when the same animal is used as a conceptual source, its evaluative meaning and pragmatic function may differ significantly from one culture to another. For example, while the dog is commonly associated with loyalty and companionship in English-speaking cultures, in Uzbek linguistic and cultural contexts it may carry negative or pejorative connotations depending on usage. This divergence highlights the role of cultural specificity in shaping conceptual meanings.

Furthermore, cultural practices, historical experiences, and environmental factors contribute to the formation of unique metaphorical models. In agrarian societies, for instance, animals that play a central role in everyday life are more likely to become prominent in figurative language. Uzbek proverbs frequently incorporate animals such as sheep, horses, and wolves, reflecting traditional modes of life and social organization. In contrast, English paremiology may emphasize different animal symbols based on distinct cultural and historical backgrounds. These differences demonstrate that conceptual derivation is not merely a cognitive process but also a cultural one, mediated by collective experience and social knowledge. In addition, the pragmatic dimension of language further reinforces the interplay between universality and specificity. The use of zoonymic units in discourse is often guided by culturally determined norms of evaluation, politeness, and expressiveness. Speakers select particular images not only to convey meaning but also to achieve specific communicative effects, such as persuasion, criticism, or humor. Therefore, the interpretation of conceptually derived meanings depends not only on shared cognitive schemas but also on the cultural competence of the interlocutors.

In conclusion, conceptual derivation serves as a bridge between universal cognitive processes and culturally specific patterns of meaning. It demonstrates how language simultaneously reflects common human ways of thinking and the



unique worldview of each linguistic community. This duality underscores the importance of integrating cognitive and cultural perspectives in the study of language, particularly in fields such as paremiology, translation studies, and linguoculturology. This study demonstrates that conceptual derivation plays a crucial role in the formation of zoonymic meanings in paremiology. Through metaphor, metonymy, and abstraction, animal names acquire complex semantic and pragmatic functions.

The English–Uzbek comparison reveals both universal conceptual patterns and culture-specific interpretations, highlighting the interaction between language, cognition, and culture. Future research may include corpus-based analysis and broader multilingual comparisons.

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