

THE LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL VARIATIONS OF ZOONYMIC SIMILES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract. This thesis examines the linguistic and cultural features of zoonymic similes in English and Uzbek, with particular attention to how animal-based comparisons reflect national worldview, value systems, and communicative norms. Zoonymic similes are a productive part of phraseology in both languages and serve as a rich source for comparative linguocultural analysis. The study draws on established works in phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication to identify common semantic models and culture-specific meanings.

Keywords: zoonymic similes, comparative linguistics, linguocultural analysis, English phraseology, Uzbek phraseology, figurative language, intercultural communication, cognitive semantics.

Introduction. Phraseological units and similes occupy an important place in the linguistic representation of cultural knowledge. Among them, zoonymic similes—comparisons involving animal names—are especially significant because they preserve collective observations about nature, behavior, morality, and social relations. In both English and Uzbek, animal-based similes are widely used in everyday speech, literature, folklore, and media discourse. Such expressions not only describe human appearance, character, and actions, but also transmit culturally embedded stereotypes and values.

English zoonymic similes have been extensively documented in phraseological dictionaries and literary studies. Expressions such as “as sly as a fox,” “as busy as a bee,” and “as stubborn as a mule” show how specific animal traits become metaphorical standards in the language community. Uzbek also possesses a rich system of zoonymic similes, shaped by pastoral traditions, agrarian life, and oral folklore. Expressions such as “tulkidek ayyor” (cunning like a fox), “aridek mehnatkash” (hardworking like a bee), and “eshakdek qaysar” (stubborn like a donkey) demonstrate similar metaphorical mechanisms, but often with different pragmatic shades.

In Uzbek linguistic culture, zoonymic similes are closely linked to traditional rural life, pastoralism, and agricultural practices. Historically, the Uzbek people maintained strong connections with livestock, domestic animals, and natural landscapes. Animals were central not only to economic survival but also to social

identity, family life, and ethical norms. As a result, animal-based imagery in Uzbek phraseology often carries rich emotional and moral connotations.

For instance, the horse occupies an especially significant symbolic place in Uzbek culture. In traditional Central Asian societies, horses were associated with mobility, status, bravery, and loyalty. Therefore, similes involving horses may express not only speed or strength, but also dignity and nobility. Such cultural depth cannot always be directly reproduced in English because the symbolic status of the horse in modern English phraseology is more limited and often more context-dependent.

This strong connection between phraseology and traditional life patterns gives Uzbek zoonymic similes a higher degree of cultural density. In many cases, the simile reflects not just an observed trait but also a socially shared value judgment. Thus, figurative expressions in Uzbek often function as tools of moral instruction, interpersonal evaluation, and emotional emphasis.

By contrast, English zoonymic similes, while also culturally meaningful, have undergone a long process of lexical standardization and conventionalization. Many English similes have become fixed phraseological formulas that are widely recognized and used across different contexts. According to phraseological research, English idiomatic expressions often display structural stability and semantic predictability, which facilitate their transmission in written and spoken discourse.

This difference is important because it highlights the varying degrees of phraseological transparency in the two languages. In Uzbek, especially in oral speech and traditional discourse, zoonymic similes may retain stronger expressive force and contextual flexibility. In English, many such similes have become routinized to the point where their imagery may be processed automatically rather than reflectively.

Another significant aspect of the analysis concerns evaluative polarity. Animal-based similes in both languages can convey positive, negative, or ambivalent attitudes. However, the specific emotional coloring often differs according to cultural expectations and communicative norms.

Positive zoonymic similes typically emphasize desirable human qualities such as diligence, courage, beauty, loyalty, or gentleness. For example, bees symbolize hard work in both languages, and doves may symbolize peace or innocence. Such expressions perform an approving and descriptive function.

Negative similes are also widespread and often target traits such as cowardice, laziness, greed, aggression, or foolishness. In English, expressions like



“as greedy as a pig” or “as timid as a rabbit” assign moral evaluations through animal imagery. Uzbek similarly uses animal-based comparisons to criticize undesirable behavior. However, Uzbek similes may convey stronger emotional intensity because of the more direct role of figurative language in oral communicative traditions.

Conclusion. The comparative linguistic and cultural analysis of zoonymic similes in English and Uzbek demonstrates that animal-based comparisons are a significant component of phraseological systems in both languages. They reflect shared cognitive mechanisms of metaphorization while simultaneously encoding national-cultural specificity. The study established that both languages use similar metaphorical models for describing character and behavior and universal zoonymic images are based on observable animal traits. The results confirm that zoonymic similes are valuable material for contrastive linguistics, translation studies, and intercultural education. Further research may focus on corpus-based frequency analysis and diachronic development of animal-based figurative language in both linguistic traditions.

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