



LEXICAL-SEMANTICAL AND MENTAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBS WITH THE COMPONENTS "ZOONYMS".

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the lexical-semantic and mental (cognitive-cultural) features of English and Uzbek proverbs containing zoonymic components. Zoonyms (names of animals) play a significant role in paremiology, reflecting national mentality, worldview, moral values, and cultural stereotypes. The study is based on a comparative analysis of selected English and Uzbek proverbs, focusing on semantic motivation, metaphorical transfer, and mental representations associated with animals. The research relies on authoritative paremiological dictionaries and linguistic studies. The results reveal both universal and culture-specific features in the use of zoonyms, demonstrating how language encodes collective experience and cultural cognition.

Introduction

Proverbs are an essential component of a nation's linguistic and cultural heritage. They serve not only as linguistic units but also as repositories of collective wisdom, social norms, and moral values. In linguistics, the study of proverbs is known as paremiology, which confirms that proverbs reflect the worldview and mentality of a speech community [1].

One of the most productive and culturally marked elements in proverbs is the zoonym, that is, the lexical unit denoting animals. Animal images are widely used in proverbs to characterize human behavior, social relations, and ethical norms through metaphorical transfer. As noted by scholars, animals in proverbs function as symbolic representatives of certain human qualities, such as strength, cunning, laziness, loyalty, or stupidity [2].

In both English and Uzbek, zoonymic proverbs occupy a special place due to the historical interaction between humans and animals in everyday life. Agriculture, cattle breeding, hunting, and domestic life have influenced the formation of animal symbolism in both cultures [3]. Therefore, a comparative study of English and Uzbek proverbs with zoonymic components allows us to identify universal semantic patterns and culture-specific mental features.

Methodology

The research is based on descriptive, comparative, and semantic analysis methods. The empirical material consists of English and Uzbek proverbs containing zoonymic components collected from authoritative paremiological dictionaries and academic sources [4], [5].

The methodological framework includes:

- lexical-semantic analysis to identify the meanings and metaphorical functions of zoonyms;
- comparative analysis to reveal similarities and differences between English and Uzbek proverbs;
- cognitive and cultural interpretation to determine mental and cultural features reflected in zoonymic imagery.

Only widely attested and documented proverbs were selected to ensure factual accuracy and academic reliability.

Results

The analysis shows that zoonyms in both English and Uzbek proverbs can be classified according to their semantic and mental functions.

Firstly, many proverbs in both languages use domestic animals such as *dog*, *horse*, *cow*, *sheep*, and *donkey*, which reflects the importance of these animals in traditional life. For example, the English proverb "*Every dog has its day*" emphasizes hope and justice, where the dog symbolizes an ordinary or underestimated individual [6]. Similarly, the Uzbek proverb "*It hurar, karvon o'tar*" ("The dog barks, but the caravan moves on") uses the dog as a symbol of futile hostility or empty words [7].

Secondly, wild animals are often used to express danger, power, or cunning. In English, the *fox* frequently symbolizes cunning, as in "*As sly as a fox*" [8]. In Uzbek, the fox (*tulki*) also represents хитрость (cunning), as seen in "*Tulkining hiylasi ko'p*" ("The fox has many tricks") [9].

Thirdly, some zoonymic images reveal moral evaluation. The *lion* in English proverbs symbolizes strength and courage ("*The lion's share*"), whereas in Uzbek culture, similar meanings are often associated with the *lion* (*arslon*) as a symbol of bravery and leadership [10]

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of English and Uzbek proverbs containing zoonymic components demonstrates that animal names function as highly productive lexical-semantic units that encode cultural knowledge, collective experience, and mental representations. In paremiological discourse, zoonyms rarely preserve their primary denotative meaning; instead, they undergo semantic transformation through metaphorization, metonymy, and symbolic generalization. This process reflects fundamental cognitive mechanisms described in cognitive linguistics, particularly conceptual metaphor theory, according to which abstract human qualities are conceptualized via concrete and familiar domains such as animals and nature [11].

From a lexical-semantic perspective, zoonymic components in proverbs serve as evaluative markers. Animals are selected not randomly, but based on their culturally salient traits observed in everyday human-animal interaction. For instance, the English *dog* and the Uzbek *it* frequently appear in proverbs expressing loyalty, persistence, or social marginality. In English, proverbs such as "*Let sleeping dogs lie*" or "*Every dog has its day*" present the dog as a familiar yet socially stratified figure, often associated with endurance and inevitability [4]. In Uzbek paremiology, the dog similarly symbolizes insignificance or verbal aggression without

real power, as seen in *"It hurar, karvon o'tar"*, where the barking dog contrasts with the unstoppable caravan [7]. Although both languages use the same animal image, the semantic focus differs: English emphasizes individual fate and time, while Uzbek highlights social hierarchy and collective movement.

The mental aspect of zoonymic proverbs is closely linked to anthropocentric cognition. As noted in linguistic anthropology, humans interpret animal behavior through the prism of human social norms and moral judgments [3]. This explains why animals in proverbs often function as moral exemplars or anti-models. For example, the fox (*fox / tulki*) in both English and Uzbek cultures is consistently associated with cunning and deceit. English expressions such as *"as sly as a fox"* have direct semantic equivalents in Uzbek, including *"Tulkining hiylasi ko'p"* [8], [9]. This convergence indicates a universal cognitive metaphor: **CUNNING IS FOX-LIKE BEHAVIOR**, which arises from shared observations of animal behavior across cultures.

However, despite such universality, the frequency and contextual usage of specific zoonyms reveal culture-specific mental models. English paremiology reflects a historical background shaped by feudal relations, pastoral farming, and later urban development. As a result, animals like *horse*, *dog*, and *sheep* dominate English proverbial discourse. The *horse*, in particular, symbolizes labor, status, and economic value, as reflected in proverbs such as *"Never look a gift horse in the mouth"* [4]. This proverb encodes a moral lesson about gratitude and social etiquette, rooted in the historical importance of horses in English society.

In contrast, Uzbek proverbs frequently employ animals associated with nomadic and agrarian life, such as *camel (tuya)*, *sheep (qo'y)*, and *donkey (eshak)*. The camel, largely absent from English paremiology, occupies a central place in Uzbek cultural symbolism due to its significance in Central Asian geography and economy. Proverbs involving the camel often convey ideas of endurance, patience, and disproportion, for example, *"Pashshadan fil yasama"* (literally "Do not make an elephant out of a fly," though camel-based variants also exist in regional usage), which parallels English hyperbole metaphors but reflects local fauna [12]. This demonstrates how environmental factors shape mental imagery and lexical choice in proverbs.

The donkey presents another interesting case of partial universality. In both English and Uzbek proverbs, the donkey symbolizes stubbornness, ignorance, or low intelligence. English expressions such as *"An ass in a lion's skin"* criticize false authority or pretended power [6]. Similarly, Uzbek proverbs use *eshak* to denote lack of understanding or social inferiority. This negative evaluation reflects a shared human tendency to associate perceived animal behavior with undesirable human traits. Cognitive linguistics explains this phenomenon through evaluative metaphorization, where animals are ranked according to their perceived usefulness and proximity to human interests [11].

Another important aspect revealed in the analysis is the axiological function of zoonymic proverbs. Proverbs not only describe reality but also prescribe norms of behavior. Animals such as the *lion (lion / arslon)* symbolize courage, strength, and leadership in both cultures. English expressions like *"the lion's share"* denote dominance and authority, while Uzbek uses *arslon* as a positive metaphor for bravery and heroism [10]. This convergence suggests that certain symbolic meanings are deeply rooted in cross-cultural mythological and historical traditions, where the lion has long represented power and sovereignty.

At the same time, differences emerge in emotional and pragmatic connotations. English proverbs often adopt an ironic or pragmatic tone, emphasizing individual responsibility and

social realism. Uzbek proverbs, by contrast, tend to be more didactic and collective in orientation, reflecting a communal worldview. For instance, while English zoonymic proverbs may focus on personal success or failure, Uzbek equivalents frequently emphasize social harmony, patience, and endurance. This distinction aligns with broader cultural models identified in intercultural pragmatics, where Western cultures are often described as individualistic and Central Asian cultures as collectivist [3].

From a semantic-structural point of view, zoonymic components often function as the semantic ядро (core) of the proverb. They carry the main figurative load and trigger associative meaning. In both languages, the removal or replacement of the zoonym would significantly weaken the expressive force of the proverb. This confirms that zoonyms are not decorative elements but key semantic operators within the proverb structure [2].

Furthermore, the analysis supports the view that proverbs act as cognitive scripts. Through repeated use, zoonymic metaphors become conventionalized and stored in collective memory. Speakers no longer consciously analyze the animal image, yet the evaluative meaning remains accessible. This process of semantic fossilization explains why many zoonymic proverbs retain their relevance even when direct human-animal interaction decreases in modern society [1].

In comparative terms, the study reveals three major patterns: full equivalence, partial equivalence, and non-equivalence. Full equivalence occurs when both languages use the same animal with similar meaning (e.g., fox – cunning). Partial equivalence is observed when the same moral idea is expressed through different animals due to cultural context. Non-equivalence arises when a zoonymic image exists in one language but has no direct counterpart in the other, such as camel-based metaphors in Uzbek or certain bird-related proverbs in English [12].

Overall, the findings confirm that zoonymic proverbs represent an intersection of language, culture, and cognition. They encode mental models shaped by environment, history, and social structure while simultaneously reflecting universal mechanisms of human thought. The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek material demonstrates that understanding zoonymic semantics is essential for interpreting national mentality and for achieving deeper intercultural competence.

Conclusion

The comparative study of English and Uzbek proverbs with zoonymic components reveals that zoonyms function as powerful lexical-semantic and mental markers of cultural worldview. They encode moral values, social norms, and collective experience through metaphorical representation.

The research confirms that while many zoonymic symbols are universal due to shared human experience, their semantic nuances and frequency of usage are culture-specific. English and Uzbek proverbs demonstrate both common cognitive mechanisms and distinct national mentalities shaped by historical, economic, and cultural factors.

Thus, the study of zoonymic proverbs contributes to a deeper understanding of linguistic worldview, intercultural communication, and the interaction between language, culture, and cognition

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