

ANIMAL-RELATED PROVERBS AND IDIOMS AS REFLECTIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK**Khamidullayeva Diyora Avazbek qizi**Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Faculty of English Philology, Group 2303,
Tashkent, Uzbekistan.**Abstract**

This study provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of animal-related proverbs and idioms in English and Uzbek languages. Drawing on cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, and paremiology, the research investigates how zoonymic expressions encode national identity, worldview, and socio-cultural values. The findings reveal both universal metaphorical patterns and culture-specific conceptualizations shaped by historical lifestyle, environment, and collective cognition.

Keywords

zonyms, paremiology, phraseology, metaphor, cultural linguistics, national identity, English, Uzbek.

INTRODUCTION.

In contemporary linguistics, language is increasingly regarded not merely as a system of communication, but as a complex reflection of cultural identity, collective memory, and cognitive processes. Among various linguistic units, proverbs and idioms occupy a distinctive position due to their stability, figurative meaning, and ability to encapsulate long-standing social experience. These expressions often function as cultural codes through which a nation's worldview, ethical values, and social norms are transmitted across generations.

Within this framework, animal-related proverbs and idioms (zoonymic phraseological units) represent a particularly significant area of study. The use of animal imagery in language is not accidental; rather, it emerges from centuries of human interaction with the natural environment. Animals are assigned symbolic meanings that correspond to human characteristics, such as intelligence, strength, cunning, or loyalty. However, while some of these symbolic associations appear to be universal, many are shaped by specific cultural, historical, and ecological contexts.

The English and Uzbek languages provide an especially fruitful basis for comparative analysis in this regard. English, as a language that has developed within an industrial and urbanized society, tends to employ animal imagery in a more abstract and metaphorical manner. In contrast, Uzbek, with its strong historical ties to agrarian and pastoral traditions, reflects a closer and more experiential relationship with animals. As a result, zoonymic expressions in Uzbek often carry concrete, culturally embedded meanings linked to everyday life and traditional practices.

The relevance of this study lies in its attempt to bridge linguistic analysis with cultural interpretation. By examining animal-related proverbs and idioms in both languages, it becomes possible to uncover deeper layers of meaning that go beyond lexical definitions. Such analysis contributes not only to the field of comparative linguistics, but also to cultural studies, translation theory, and intercultural communication.

Furthermore, in the context of globalization, understanding the cultural specificity of phraseological units becomes increasingly important. Misinterpretation of idioms and proverbs can lead to significant communication barriers, especially when cultural connotations are not taken into account. Therefore, a systematic study of animal-related expressions in English and Uzbek is both theoretically relevant and practically valuable.

This research aims to analyze the semantic, cultural, and cognitive features of animal-related proverbs and idioms in English and Uzbek, with a particular focus on how these expressions reflect national identity. The study seeks to identify both shared patterns and distinctive features, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of language as a cultural phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

The study of animal-related proverbs and idioms has attracted increasing attention within the fields of phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and cultural studies. Scholars have emphasized that zoonymic expressions serve not only as linguistic units but also as carriers of cultural knowledge and social values.

One of the foundational contributions to proverb studies is provided by Mieder, who defines proverbs as traditional expressions reflecting collective wisdom and cultural norms[4; pp. 1–5].

Similarly, Norrick argues that proverbs function pragmatically in discourse and are used to reinforce shared beliefs and communicative intentions[5; 78–85].

In the domain of cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson establish that metaphor is central to human cognition, enabling abstract thinking through concrete imagery such as animals[1; pp. 3–7].

Expanding on this idea, Kövecses demonstrates that metaphorical expressions are shaped by both universal human experience and cultural variation [2; pp. 23–30].

Wierzbicka further emphasizes that meaning is culturally embedded, and linguistic expressions reflect specific cultural scripts that differ across societies [7; pp. 20–25].

From the perspective of cultural linguistics, Sharifian highlights that language encodes culturally constructed conceptualizations shared within a speech community[8; pp. 15–20]

In phraseological research, Moon notes that idioms and fixed expressions function as conventionalized units whose meanings are not fully predictable from their components[6; pp. 4–9]

Dobrovolskiy and Piirainen also argue that idioms reflect cultural models and symbolic meanings that are shared within a linguistic community [9; pp. 10–14].

Turning to comparative studies, G'aniyeva analyzes animal-related idioms in English and Uzbek and concludes that differences in meaning arise from cultural and environmental factors [10; pp. 640–643].

Research published by Sayyora Nishonova further confirms that Uzbek zoonymic expressions are closely connected to everyday life and reflect moral and social values [11; pp. 45–48].

A study available on B.E. Togaev and F.B. Pulatovas analyzes highlights that animal-based idioms in English tend to be more abstract, whereas Uzbek expressions retain stronger links to real-life experience[12; pp. 2–5].

Similarly, research from Safarova Dilnavozs demonstrates that animal metaphors encode national worldview and cultural mentality[13; pp. 110–113].

A comparative study published on Fayzieva N.N. and Muhammadiyeva G.A. shows that zoonymic imagery reflects both universal cognitive patterns and culturally specific interpretations[14; pp. 5–9].

Additionally, Gibbs argues that metaphorical language is grounded in embodied experience, which explains why animal imagery is widely used across languages[15; pp. 35–40].

Finally, Kramsch emphasizes that language and culture are inseparable, and linguistic expressions must be interpreted within their cultural context [16; pp. 3–7].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

The present study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, and paremiology. These approaches

collectively provide a comprehensive basis for analyzing animal-related proverbs and idioms as culturally embedded linguistic units.

First, the study draws upon Cognitive Metaphor Theory, which posits that metaphor is not merely a stylistic feature of language but a fundamental mechanism of human thought. According to this theory, abstract concepts are understood through more concrete domains, such as the animal world. In this regard, animal-related expressions function as conceptual tools that allow speakers to interpret human behavior through familiar biological characteristics. This perspective was systematically developed by Lakoff and Johnson, who argue that everyday language is structured by underlying metaphorical patterns[1; pp.3-6].

Further development of this theory emphasizes that while metaphorical thinking is universal, its linguistic realization varies across cultures. Kövecses highlights that metaphorical expressions are shaped by both shared human experience and culture-specific factors, including environment, traditions, and social practices[2; pp. 23-25].

Second, the study incorporates principles of Cultural Linguistics, which examines how language encodes culturally constructed conceptualizations. From this perspective, phraseological units are not neutral linguistic forms but carriers of shared cultural knowledge. Sharifian argues that language reflects culturally grounded schemas and categories that are collectively maintained within a speech community[3; pp. 15-18].

This approach is particularly relevant for analyzing zoonymic expressions, as animal symbolism often emerges from culturally specific interactions with the natural environment. Therefore, the meaning of animal-related idioms cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural context in which they are used.

Third, the research is informed by Paremiology, the study of proverbs as a form of traditional knowledge. Proverbs are regarded as condensed expressions of collective wisdom, reflecting social norms, ethical values, and behavioral expectations. Mieder defines proverbs as “short, generally known sentences of the folk that contain wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views”[4; pp. 1-3].

In addition, Norrick emphasizes that proverbs function not only as linguistic units but also as pragmatic tools used in specific communicative contexts to reinforce cultural norms[5; pp. 78-82].

Another important dimension of the theoretical framework is the role of semantic and pragmatic analysis in phraseology. Idioms and proverbs often exhibit non-compositional meaning, meaning that their interpretation cannot be derived solely from the literal meanings of their components. As noted by Moon, fixed expressions operate as conventionalized units whose meanings are established through repeated usage within a speech community[6; pp. 4-7].

Furthermore, Wierzbicka’s work on cultural semantics highlights that language-specific meanings are deeply rooted in cultural scripts, which influence how speakers interpret metaphorical expressions[7; pp. 20-24.].

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide a solid foundation for analyzing animal-related proverbs and idioms in English and Uzbek. Cognitive linguistics explains the conceptual mechanisms underlying metaphor, cultural linguistics accounts for the role of shared cultural knowledge, and paremiology situates proverbs within the broader context of traditional wisdom and social norms. This integrated framework allows for a nuanced interpretation of how zoonymic expressions reflect national identity and cultural worldview.

METHODOLOGY.

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design aimed at analyzing animal-related proverbs and idioms in English and Uzbek languages. The methodology is grounded in cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, and phraseological analysis, which together allow for a multidimensional interpretation of zoonymic expressions.

The research follows a comparative-descriptive approach, which is widely used in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies. This approach enables the identification of both similarities

and differences in linguistic units across languages. As noted by Kramersch, comparative analysis is essential for understanding how language reflects cultural meaning.

Additionally, the study adopts a cognitive-semantic framework, which focuses on how meaning is constructed through conceptual structures. According to Kövecses, semantic analysis of metaphorical expressions reveals underlying conceptual mappings between domains.

The data for this research consist of animal-related proverbs and idioms selected from the following sources:

- English phraseological dictionaries
- Uzbek folklore collections
- Academic publications

The selection criteria included:

- presence of animal components (zoonyms)
- figurative meaning
- frequency of usage

Phraseological units were collected based on their conventionality and cultural relevance, as suggested by Moon, who emphasizes that idioms must be recognized as fixed expressions within a speech community.

The collected data were analyzed using the following methods:

Each proverb and idiom was examined to determine its figurative meaning and semantic structure. This method is essential because idiomatic meaning often cannot be derived directly from literal components.

A cross-linguistic comparison was conducted to identify similarities and differences between English and Uzbek expressions. This method allows for the identification of universal and culture-specific features in language.

The study applies conceptual metaphor theory to identify mappings between animal characteristics and human traits. Lakoff and Johnson argue that such mappings are fundamental to human cognition.

The cultural significance of each expression was examined in relation to historical lifestyle, traditions, and social values. Sharifian notes that cultural conceptualizations play a key role in shaping linguistic meaning.

The analyzed expressions were categorized based on:

- Type of animal (e.g., domestic, wild)
- Semantic function (e.g., character traits, behavior)
- Cultural significance

Dobrovolskij and Piirainen emphasize that idioms reflect culturally shared models and should be analyzed within their symbolic systems.

To ensure reliability, data were collected from multiple authoritative sources, including dictionaries and peer-reviewed publications. Validity was maintained through consistent application of analytical criteria across both languages.

As noted in linguistic methodology, triangulation of data sources enhances the credibility of qualitative research.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.

This section presents a comparative analysis of animal-related proverbs and idioms in English and Uzbek, focusing on their semantic, cognitive, and cultural features. The results reveal both universal metaphorical patterns and culturally specific conceptualizations.

Animal-related expressions in both languages primarily function as metaphorical representations of human traits. These meanings are often non-literal and require cultural and contextual interpretation.

For example, English: “A wolf in sheep’s clothing” → a deceptive person

Uzbek: “Ichidan pichoq uradi” → yashirin xiyonat qiluvchi

English: “Kill two birds with one stone” → achieve two goals at once

Uzbek: “Bir o‘q bilan ikki quyonni urmoq”

English: “A leopard cannot change its spots”

Uzbek: “Bo‘ri bo‘riligini qiladi”

English: “Dog does not eat dog”

Uzbek: “Qarg‘a qarg‘aning ko‘zini cho‘qimaydi”

English: “As sly as a fox”

Uzbek: “Tulki ayyor”

English: “As busy as a bee”

Uzbek: “Asaldek mehnatkash” / “Asalari kabi tinimsiz”

English: “Chicken-hearted”

Uzbek: “Yuragi tovuqdek”

English: “Old fox” → experienced, cunning person

Uzbek: “Qari tulki”

Such meanings confirm that idioms operate as non-compositional units whose interpretation cannot be derived directly from individual words[15. pp. 41–44]

From a cognitive perspective, animal-related idioms are based on conceptual metaphor mappings, where animal characteristics are projected onto human behavior.

For instance:

FOX → CUNNING

WOLF → DANGER

These mappings support the idea that metaphor is a fundamental cognitive mechanism used to structure human thought[1; pp. 25–29]

Kövecses further explains that such mappings are shaped by both universal experience and cultural variation[2; pp. 37–40]

Despite some universal patterns, significant cultural differences can be observed.

English Context

English idioms tend to:

- be abstract and metaphorical
- reflect individualism and pragmatism

Uzbek Context

Uzbek proverbs:

- are closely tied to real-life experience
- reflect collectivism and moral values

For example, the horse plays a minor symbolic role in English but holds central importance in Uzbek culture:

“Ot — erkakning qanoti” → symbolizes strength and status

This supports the idea that language encodes culturally specific conceptualizations[3; pp. 25–28]

The analyzed expressions were grouped into categories:

Animal	English Meaning	Uzbek Meaning	Type
Fox	Cunning	Cunning	Universal
Wolf	Danger	Danger	Universal
Dog	Loyalty	Mixed (positive/negative)	Partial
Horse	Limited symbolism	Cultural symbol	Culture-specific

This classification aligns with research showing that idioms reflect both shared human cognition and cultural specificity [9; pp. 16–18].

Animal-related expressions perform several functions:

- Descriptive — characterize human behavior
- Evaluative — express moral judgment

- Didactic — convey social norms

Proverbs, in particular, function as tools of social regulation and moral instruction[4; pp. 7–10]. Norrick also emphasizes their role in discourse as pragmatic devices reinforcing shared beliefs [5; pp. 82–85].

The analysis reveals the following:

- a) Animal metaphors are cognitively universal but culturally shaped
- b) English idioms are more abstract and pragmatic
- c) Uzbek proverbs are more experience-based and moralistic
- d) Certain animals (e.g., horse) carry strong national identity markers

These findings support the view that language reflects both cognition and culture simultaneously[7; pp. 30–33].

DISCUSSION.

The findings of this study confirm that animal-related proverbs and idioms function as complex cognitive and cultural constructs that encode both universal human experience and culture-specific knowledge systems. The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek data demonstrates that while certain metaphorical patterns are shared across languages, their semantic and pragmatic realizations differ significantly due to socio-cultural factors.

From a cognitive perspective, the recurrence of similar animal metaphors (e.g., fox as cunning, wolf as danger) supports the claim that metaphor is grounded in embodied human experience. These shared patterns indicate that humans tend to conceptualize abstract traits through observable characteristics of animals[1; pp. 30–32].

However, the study also reveals that cultural context plays a decisive role in shaping meaning. For instance, while the fox is associated with cunning in both languages, the symbolic importance of the horse differs significantly. In Uzbek culture, the horse is not merely an animal but a cultural symbol linked to history, mobility, and identity. This supports the argument that metaphorical systems are influenced by cultural models and environmental factors[2; pp. 48–52]

Furthermore, the results align with the principles of cultural linguistics, which emphasize that language encodes shared cultural conceptualizations. Uzbek proverbs tend to reflect collectivist values, moral instruction, and harmony with nature, whereas English idioms often emphasize individualism, efficiency, and pragmatic reasoning[8; pp. 28–32]

Another important observation concerns the functional role of proverbs and idioms in discourse. Uzbek proverbs frequently serve didactic purposes, guiding behavior and reinforcing social norms. In contrast, English idioms are more commonly used for expressive and stylistic purposes in communication. This distinction supports the view that proverbs function as tools of social regulation and cultural transmission[4; pp. 10–12]

In addition, the findings highlight the importance of cultural semantics in interpreting phraseological units. As Wierzbicka argues, meaning is deeply embedded in cultural scripts, and failure to recognize these scripts may lead to misinterpretation in cross-cultural communication[7; pp. 33–36]

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that animal-related expressions are not merely linguistic ornaments but key elements of cultural cognition. Their analysis provides valuable insights into how language reflects national identity, worldview, and social values.

CONCLUSION.

This study has examined animal-related proverbs and idioms in English and Uzbek from a comparative cognitive and cultural perspective. The analysis has demonstrated that zoonymic expressions serve as important linguistic tools for encoding cultural knowledge, social norms, and national identity.

The findings reveal that while certain metaphorical patterns are universal—stemming from shared human experience—many meanings are culture-specific and shaped by historical, environmental, and social factors. English idioms tend to reflect abstract thinking, pragmatism,

and individualism, whereas Uzbek proverbs emphasize moral values, collectivism, and a close relationship with nature.

The research also confirms that animal imagery plays a significant role in conceptualizing human behavior. Through metaphorical mapping, animals become symbolic representations of human traits, allowing speakers to communicate complex ideas in a concise and culturally meaningful [15; pp. 45–48].

Moreover, the study contributes to the field of cultural linguistics by demonstrating how language encodes culturally specific conceptualizations. Understanding these differences is essential for effective intercultural communication, translation studies, and language teaching.

Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations. The analysis is based on a limited corpus of proverbs and idioms, and future research may expand the dataset to include additional languages or larger corpora. Furthermore, empirical methods such as corpus linguistics or experimental studies could provide deeper insights into the usage and perception of animal-related expressions.

In conclusion, animal-related proverbs and idioms represent a rich intersection of language, culture, and cognition. Their study not only enhances our understanding of linguistic structures but also provides a deeper appreciation of the cultural diversity embedded in human language.

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