

SEMANTIC AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH THE COMPONENTS OF ANIMALS

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Annotation: This article investigates the semantic and structural dimensions of phraseological units placing much emphasis on those containing animal components specially. Analyzing both their internal structure and conveyed meaning provides much insights into how language decodes cultural knowledge, metaphor and idiomatic expression.

Key words: the zoonym component, animals, phraseological unit, phraseology, animalistic phraseology.

The phraseological unit is multi-word expression which has a fixed expression, its meaning cannot be predicted from the individual meanings of its components, but rather it acts as a single unit of meaning, which is similar to a single word. It is a fixed expression so that it cannot be changed or rearranged easily within a sentence or text. The whole meaning cannot be understood by separating the solid part into smaller units since its core meaning sometimes relate to the parts and sometimes not. Therefore, it often has more figurative or idiomatic meaning rather than literal ones.

One area of linguistics that focuses on the study of phraseological units and fixed expressions with a certain level of stability is phraseology. This field looks at the grammatical structure, meaning, construction, and contextual usage of phraseological units.

Different linguists have offered varying perspectives to give definition for phraseological units. One of them is Akhmanova (1966) who stated that phraseological units are phrases which place more importance on the overall meaning of the words that they contain than the individual ones. This "semantic solidity" makes them act as a single naming unit, similar to a single word. According to Vinogradov (1977), the meaning of a phraseological unit cannot be deduced from constituent elements since the unit has got a unique, combined meaning which is semantically integral.

Shcherba, one of the most prominent Russian and Soviet linguists, claimed that phraseological units can act as potential substitutes for single words, highlighting their expressive power and vivid attributes compared to ordinary words or free word combinations. Kunin (1996) defines a phraseological unit as a stable group of words whose meaning has been either completely or partially reinterpreted beyond the literal meanings of the individual words. He further specifies that these units are structurally and semantically fixed, not formed on the fly, and consist of at least two words. However, Smirnitsky considers phraseological units to be stylistically neutral phrases, lacking metaphorical meaning or having lost any

original metaphorical force. He includes everyday phrases like "get up" or "fall in love" in this category.

According to the definitions given by different linguistics, a phraseological unit is a fixed combination of words characterized by its stability in both meaning and structure. These set expressions, which include idioms, proverbs, sayings, and common speech clichés, are found in all languages and originate from diverse sources.

Animalistic phraseology is a sub-field of phraseology which deals with the phraseological units which consist of animal names or references. Phraseological units with animal names (zoonyms) form a significant and common part of language. Since humans and animals have been living together as neighbors from the ancient times, people have a tendency to understand and perceive the world by comparing different attributes and qualities of human beings to the animal kingdom. By drawing these parallels, people can better grasp their surroundings and their own position and identity within them. Inspiring both fear and reverence, sometimes to the point of worship, vestiges of these ancient animal cults persist even today, often in symbolic forms. Cultural, social, and historical factors have shaped the words we use also in terms of zoonyms, creating some terms unique to specific cultures and others that are universally understood. However, because languages and literary traditions differ, many animal-related terms (zoonyms) carry specific cultural meanings that are only fully grasped by speakers of that language (Мирчевска-Бошева, 2021, p. 305). Several researchers have explored the use of animal-related vocabulary in language and culture. F.N. Guketlova coined the term "zoomorphic code" to describe how animal vocabulary reflects the ethno-cultural characteristics of a people when used to describe humans. She compared animalistic vocabulary in French and Kabardino-Circassian languages. E.F. Arsentieva focused on the metaphorical aspects of zoonyms, examining their lexical-semantic variations and connotations. S.O. Kochnova investigated the linguoculturological implications of animalistic phraseology in the context of teaching Russian as a foreign language. T. Kuang.Kiong studied the systematic and structural organization of Russian zoomorphisms.

The material was accumulated by the following groups of research methods: synthesis, classification, quantitative method and semantic interpretation. Utilization of these methods contributes to better understanding and interpreting phraseological units with the zoonym components.

Zoonyms serve a rich source for metaphors, phraseological units, symbols, and narrative structures, all of which contribute to a culture's worldview. They reflect long-standing human observation of animal appearance and behavior, revealing attitudes towards animals, highlighting specific animal qualities, and evolving them into symbols. Consequently, zoonyms have become part of a language's cultural and informational foundation, shaping national identity. Animal names are a compelling area of study because they fulfill diverse functions, especially in representing human character traits.

Analyzing phraseological units with zoonyms, one of the first steps requires to distinguish between the literal meaning of the individual words and the overall figurative meaning of the set expressions. For example, meaning of “to let the cat out of the bag” has nothing to do with the literal “cat” or “the bag”. Specifically, it means to unleash the secrets.

Although different types of animals occur with phraseological units, the most frequently used ones are associated with zoonyms like dogs, cats and horses. The phraseological units with “dog” can have both positive and negative connotations expressing loyalty, faithfulness, diligence as well as mistreatment, worthlessness, inferiority in various contexts.

For example, while “as faithful as a dog” and “as true as a dog” emphasize the characteristics of loyalty, “dog`s dinner”, “treat like a dog” evoke negative feelings like something unpleasant with pessimistic nature and mistreatment.

Phraseological units with cats often represent negative connotations such “as sly as a cat”- cunning and deceitful, “cat burglar”- a burglar who is skilled at entering buildings undetected, “copycat”- someone who imitates another person's actions or ideas, “catlike”- graceful, agile, and stealthy, like a cat, “curiosity killed the cat”- being too inquisitive can lead to trouble.

Another animal name which frequently used as a phraseological unit is horse. In many aspects, the phraseological units with the components of horse express positive connotations. For instance, “work like a horse” shows the hard work, “strong as a horse” and “horsepower” which is a unit of power convey the meaning of the strength and endurance. However, there are also some phraseological units which reflect negative connotations. In the example of “flogging a dead horse” which means wasting effort on things that are impossible to happen or “changing horses in the midstream” meaning “to make a major change in strategy while already in the process of carrying out a plan (often seen as risky)” depict the negative meanings used with the components of horse.

Other zoonyms also widely used in phraseology to describe human attributes, their characteristics, appearance, and other qualities metaphorically. In comparison with domestic animals, wild zoonyms appear less with phraseological units. For example, “wolf” represents different characteristics of human being in various culture. It means that in some cultures, it reflects “bravery”, “strength” and “endurance”, in others, it is the symbol of cunning, trickery and cruel nature. As an example, “a wolf in sheep`s clothing”, “to throw somebody to the wolves” can be the clear illustration of those connotative meanings.

Considering the analysis of phraseological units with zoonym components from their functional features, there are six structural types of PhU with zoonyms: verbal, substantival, adjectival, adverbial, interjectional, communicative phraseological units. Among above mentioned structural types, the most common occurred ones are verbal phraseological units which also consists of six models of structural types, including, “V+N”, “V+Prep+N”, “V+N+Prep+N”, “V+Adj+N”, “V+Comp+N”, “V+Comp+N+Prep+N”.

V+N structure can be exemplified by set expressions like “to skin a cat- to find a way to do something often in a difficult manner”, “to ride the tiger- to take a great risk”, “to butcher the goose that lays the golden eggs- to destroy something valuable for short-term gain”.

Construction of V+Prep+N structure in English stimulates idioms like “to go to the dogs”, “to call off one’s dogs”.

Animal names form a significant part of phraseological units. Being the companion of humans from ancient times, people have tendency and give preference to describe their qualities and characteristics easily by making use of animal names or references. In semantics, zoonyms represent different interpretations so that it is essential to consider to take cultural, social, and etymological factors into account when interpreting zoonyms withing phraseological units. As some animal names represent cultural specificities, native speakers may not find difficulties to understand core meaning of phraseological units. However, non-native speakers can misunderstand and in turn, misinterpret or decode them mistakenly which causes some problems in understanding. Thus, research methods of correct translation of phraseological units with the components of animals is on further research.

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