

Achilova, N. M. (2025). Linguistic and Cultural Features of Animalistic Phraseological Units in the German and Uzbek Languages. *The Delhi University Magazine. Series: The Humanities and the Social Sciences* 4: 129-137.

Linguistic and Cultural Features of Animalistic Phraseological Units in the German and Uzbek Languages

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ABSTRACT

The article explores current issues in phraseology as a complex and multidimensional interdisciplinary phenomenon that lies at the intersection of linguistics, cultural studies, and cognitive science. The study focuses on the comparative analysis of phraseological units containing an animalistic component in the German and Uzbek languages, aiming to identify both universal and culturally specific features of their formation and functioning. Zoonyms, as lexical elements denoting animals, are shown to occupy a central place in the linguistic picture of the world, reflecting the collective mentality, cultural traditions, and moral values of a given linguistic community. The research emphasizes that phraseological expressions with animal components serve not only as linguistic means of characterization but also as markers of cultural identity and value systems. Through a contrastive examination of semantic, connotative, and pragmatic aspects, the study demonstrates that, although the concept of “animal” is universal, its associative and emotional coloring varies significantly between German and Uzbek. These divergences arise from historical, environmental, and ethnocultural factors influencing each nation’s worldview. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how phraseological units encode national-specific perceptions of reality and enrich cross-linguistic studies of metaphor and symbolism in modern linguistics.

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Keywords: phraseological unit, animalism, zoonym, linguacultural studies, mental representation picture of the world, comparative analysis, German language, Uzbek language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Phraseology, one of the richest and most complex branches of linguistics, represents an inexhaustible treasure trove of folk wisdom (Kunin, 2005). Phraseological units not only enrich speech but also embody a concentrated understanding of the history, everyday life, and worldview of a people. In recent decades, particular attention has been paid to the study of phraseological units within the framework of linguacultural studies, where set phrases are considered units of mental representation (Teliya, 2010).

The relevance of this study stems from the need to conduct a contrastive analysis of zoonymous phraseology in the linguistically distant languages of German (Germanic group) and Uzbek (Turkic group). Animalistic phraseological units, reflecting centuries of human observation of the animal world, serve as visual material for identifying both universal and specific national traits.

The aim of the work is to conduct a comparative analysis of animalistic phraseological units in the German and Uzbek languages and to establish their linguocultural characteristics.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis was the methods of semantic and contextual analysis, as well as the comparative-typological method, which allows us to identify similarities and differences in the figurative basis of phraseological units.

Theoretical basis of the study: Animalism as a component of phraseological units. Animals have occupied a significant place in human life since ancient times, often acquiring sacred or symbolic meaning, which was adequately reflected in the linguistic

picture of the world (Makovsky, 1996). Animalistic phraseological units, being a product of such interaction, serve as a measure of many human qualities (Madumarova, 2022).

Research into phraseological sources demonstrates the high frequency of animal designations as structural components of phraseological units. For example, J. Sternkopf (1993) analyzed 76 different animal components in German phraseological units, among which the lexemes Hund, Pferd, and Katze were recognized as the most productive. The high productivity of these components is explained extralinguistically by their important role in the economic life of European peoples (Begasheva, 2022).

The classification of zoonymous phraseological units in the linguacultural aspect is often based on the zoological principle (classes: mammals, birds, reptiles, insects), and within classes on thematic-semantic principles (character, appearance, social status).

III. RESEARCH RESULTS

A comparative analysis showed that, although the concept of “animal” is universal, the denotative and connotative aspects of zoonymous phraseological units in the German and Uzbek languages have significant national specificity.

Der Hase / Quyon (The Hare). The image of the hare in animalistic phraseology vividly demonstrates the national and cultural uniqueness of linguistic worldviews. While in many cultures, including Russian and Uzbek, the image of the hare is traditionally associated with the concept of cowardice, in German it acquires a completely different, positive connotation, emphasizing experience and dexterity.

In German linguistic culture, where large numbers of hares and rabbits have lived since ancient times, the image of this animal is deeply rooted in folklore (receiving the nickname Meister Datre). The behavioral characteristics of hares – their elusiveness and ability to confuse their tracks (making enormous leaps to the sides and back), which makes catching an adult hare difficult even for experienced hunters – served as the basis for the formation of a number of phraseological units: “*wissen wie der Hase läuft*” (literally, “*to know how a hare runs*”) – to know a thing or two, to understand the situation; “*sehen wie der Hase läuft*” (lit. to watch a hare run) - to watch how things are

going, in what direction events are developing; “*ein alter Hase*” (lit. an old hare) – an experienced worker, a master of his craft.

Thus, in modern German, phraseological units with the Hase component emphasize experience, professionalism, and excellent knowledge of one’s business.

The contrast between an experienced and an inexperienced person is expressed through the opposition: “*ein alter Hase*” (experienced) vs. “*kein heuriger Hase mehr sein*” (literally, “no longer be this year’s hare”) – to become an adult, independent person. The concept of cowardice (which is dominant in Uzbek languages) is conveyed in German through a different combination: “*Hans Hasenfuß*” (literally, “Hans the Hare’s Foot”), which detaches the animal image from its negative characterization.

In the Uzbek linguistic worldview, the image of “Quyon” (Der Hase) completely coincides with its traditional Russian counterpart, symbolizing fear and weakness of will. For example: “*Quyon yurak*” (lit. “hare’s heart”) - a cowardly, timid person, “a hare’s soul”; “*Quyondek chopmoq*” (lit. “to run like a hare”) - to run away very quickly (from fear).

In this case, there is a complete discrepancy in the semantic dominant of the zoonym: if in German the emphasis is on positive experience (dexterity), in Uzbek it has a negative character (cowardice).

The symbolism of the hare in German is also associated with the hunting culture of Western Europe: For example, “*das Hasenpanier ergreifen*” - to take to flight, to run away (related to the escape of the hare from hunters); “*jemandem einen Hasen in die Küche jagen*” (lit. “to bring a hare from the hunt to the kitchen”) - to present someone with a fat piece”, play into the hands.

Thus, the image of the hare in German phraseology is a striking example of how extralinguistic factors (observation of the animal’s habits, its role in hunting) shape the

unique, nationally specific semantics of phraseological units, distinct from those of Eastern cultures.

Domestic animals, which played a key role in everyday life, retain dual connotations.

Kuh, Ochse / Sigir / Ho`kiz (Cow, Ox). In mythopoetic representations, the cow could be a symbol of deity, but in phraseology, ironic or negative meanings often prevail.

In German, the image of a bull is used to express absurdity or inappropriateness: *“daß paßt wie dem Ochsen ein Sattel”* (literally, *“it goes like a saddle to an ox”*), which is absolutely equivalent to the Uzbek *“eshakka egar tekkandek”*. The phraseological unit *“wie der Ochs am Berge stehen”* (a beech tree, standing like an ox before a mountain) symbolizes stupidity, which is similar to the Uzbek expression *“moldek tikilmoq”*. The German expression *“eine milchende (melkende) Kuh”* (milk cow), while meaning *“source of material wealth”* carries an additional negative connotation of exploitation for personal gain. The German phraseological unit *“dem kalbt der Ochse”* (literally, *“even the bull calves with him”*) is noteworthy, glorifying an intelligent and successful person.

Hund / It (Dog). The dog is the most ancient companion of humans, and its image is imbued with deep mythological and cultural semantics, dominated by duality. In most cultures, including German and Uzbek, negative connotations predominate. The influence of Biblical and Muslim beliefs, where dogs were often viewed as unclean, persecuted, and vile creatures, contributed to the dog's reputation as an unclean and greedy animal. In Central Asia, the custom of feeding dead dogs contributed to the dog's image as an unclean and greedy animal.

German: *“auf den Hund kommen”* (to live very badly); *“Hundeleben”* (a dog's life); *“Hundsfott”* (scoundrel, scoundrel).

Uzbek: *“itdek yashamoq”* (literally, *“turning yellow like a dog, suffering from poverty”*); *“itdek xor bo`lmoq”* (humiliating itself like a dog).

Despite its negative connotations, the zoonym retains its duality, serving as a symbol of devotion in stable expressions (dog's fidelity, itdek vafodorlik). This contradictory nature is even reflected in the origin of the word „cynic”, from the Greek “kuon” (dog).

Linguistic studies (M. M. Makovsky, B. A. Uspensky) demonstrate deep Indo-European roots linking the names for dogs (Dog, bitch) with concepts of death, illness, hell, and burning/ashes, which explains their low status and frequent exclusion from sacred places (keeping a dog in a church or hut is prohibited).

Linguacultural differences are also evident in other animalisms: The idiom “*sich benehmen wie ein Elefant im Porzellanladen*” (to behave like an elephant in a china shop) is used in German (and broadly in the West) to describe a clumsy, destructive, or tactless person. This contrasts with the Indian association of the elephant with grace. The equivalent notion of clumsiness in Uzbek can be expressed as: “Fildek odam” (an elephant-like person) or often simply “qo'pol” (clumsy/rough), but more vividly, similar actions are sometimes described using other animals or states, such as “qo'lidagi hamma narsani to'kib-sochuvchi” (one who spills/overturns everything in their hands).

In German culture, the owl (**Eule**) is frequently a figure of ridicule or represents futility. Examples include “*die Eule unter Krähen*” (the owl among crows) and “*jemanden zur Eule machen*” (to make someone an owl – to ridicule someone). Furthermore, expressions like “*da hat eine Eule gesessen*” (an owl sat there) signifies that a plan failed, while “*Eulen nach Athen tragen*” (to carry owls to Athens) is the equivalent of the English “*to carry coals to Newcastle*” meaning doing something unnecessary or redundant. The Uzbek equivalent for this redundancy is “*Keraksiz narsani olib borish*” or often the expression “*Ko'pning ustiga ko'p qo'shish*” (adding a lot on top of a lot).

Regarding intoxication, German distinctly uses the monkey (**Affe**). The phrases “*einen Affen (sitzen) haben*” (to have a monkey – to be drunk) and “*sich einen Affen kaufen*” (to buy oneself a monkey - to get drunk) draw a parallel between the drunken

person's behavior and the monkey's antics. In Uzbek, a drunken person is often described using different animal imagery or states, such as “*eshshakday mast*” (drunk like a donkey/ass) or simply “*mast-alast*” (completely drunk).

Finally, the German idiom “*einen Affen an jemandem gefressen haben*” (literally: to have eaten a monkey on someone) meaning “to be head over heels in love with someone or infatuated”, is a colorful expression that has no direct, animal-based parallel in Uzbek. The Uzbek expression for being deeply in love is typically “*biror kimga oshiq bo'lish*” (to become a lover to someone) or “*jondan sevib qolish*” (to fall in love with someone from the soul).

Bär/Ayiq. In German, Bär retains associations with robust health „*gesund wie ein Bär*” - healthy as a bull), which is not present in the Uzbek equivalents. The general meaning is clumsiness “*plump wie ein Bär*”.

Schwein/ Чўчка. In German culture, “Schwein” symbolizes wealth and good fortune (cf. “*Schwein haben*” – lucky, as well as *Sparschwein* piggy bank), while in Uzbek culture, negative connotations associated with uncleanness and gluttony predominate.

VI. CONCLUSION

A comparative analysis of animalistic phraseological units in the German and Uzbek languages allows us to draw several linguistically and culturally significant conclusions. Phraseology, as a system of fixed expressions, serves as a vivid reflection of the national linguistic mentality, encapsulating culturally shaped models of perception, evaluation, and categorization of reality. The observed differences in figurative bases – for example, the German *Hase* (‘hare’) associated with timidity through experience, and the Uzbek *quyon* (‘rabbit’) conveying cowardice – clearly demonstrate divergences in cognitive processing and the underlying cultural traditions that influence semantic motivation.

The analysis confirms that differing worldviews lead to the formation of a **linguacultural barrier**, complicating direct interlingual equivalence. Phraseological units with animal components that lack full lexical or semantic equivalents – especially

within the German-Uzbek pair – are frequently rendered through descriptive or approximate translation. This tendency indicates the presence of culturally significant information embedded in such expressions, revealing their function as carriers of national-specific connotations and symbolic meanings.

Furthermore, the same zoonym may exhibit a **semantic ambivalence** that depends on the sociocultural context. For instance, the German *Hund* ('dog') often conveys universally negative associations – such as baseness, contempt, or moral degradation – yet in certain contexts may also embody positive traits like loyalty and devotion. This duality underscores the complex interaction between universal cognitive models and culture-specific value systems in phraseological semantics.

Future research in this area should be directed toward a more detailed and systematic analysis of phraseological units incorporating the names of less frequent biological classes – such as insects, reptiles, and amphibians – in order to achieve a more comprehensive reconstruction of the national linguistic picture of the world. Expanding the corpus of analyzed data will not only deepen the understanding of metaphorical and symbolic processes in German and Uzbek but also contribute to the broader field of contrastive phraseology and cognitive linguistics by elucidating the universal and particular mechanisms of conceptualization in different linguistic cultures.

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