

Article

Semantic and Linguistic-Cultural Characteristics of Zoonym-Component Phraseological Units in Korean

Azizova Sitora Baxtiyorovna*¹

1. International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage "Silk Road"

*Correspondence: azizovasitora06@gmail.com

Abstract: This article presents a comparative analysis of the semantic and linguocultural features of phraseological units containing zoonymic components in the Uzbek and Korean languages. The study reveals the role of zoomorphic expressions in reflecting national mentality and identifies their common and distinctive characteristics. Based on semantic comparison, the similarities and differences of these units, as well as their relationship with cultural factors, are demonstrated. It is also substantiated that certain difficulties arise in the perception and interpretation of such expressions across different languages.

Keywords: Zoonymic phraseological units, , phraseology, linguacultural, semantic analysis, zoomorphic expressions, cultural connotation, idioms, animal symbolism.

Introduction

National-cultural characteristics and universal laws find their expression in languages, and they are especially clearly manifested in the lexical-phraseological fund[1]. The content of phraseological units reflects the people's everyday life, worldview, beliefs, values, and perceptions of nature and society. For this reason, phraseological units are recognized as one of the most important language units that express national-cultural characteristics in a language [2]. The study of the lexicon used in phraseological units, however, provides information about the psychological characteristics of a nation. One of the remarkable phenomena in the language's lexicon is zoonyms, which are the names of animals that are similar in appearance; These names contain imagery that traces back to ancient mythology and the customs and traditions of the language's speakers. Phraseological units are a valuable linguistic resource that reflects the essence, depth, and diversity of an entire language. Like the various tongues of the world, Uzbek and Korean languages contain numerous idiomatic expressions with zoonymic components, which lend great dynamism to the languages and create imagery[3]. These two languages have numerous semantic differences and similarities. In this regard, since the 20th century, idioms have become a subject of modern interdisciplinary research.

Zoonym phraseology is the phraseological units that use animals' names or refer to them in speech. Zoonims typically evoke a specific concept or image in the language and express these ideas through phrasal units. In zoonym phraseologisms, animal names are often used in their literal or figurative senses[4]. Zoonymic phraseologisms in Uzbek language hold significant importance, and their study is of great value in linguistics, cultural studies, and psychology. These phraseologisms reflect the cultural heritage of the Uzbek people, their worldview, customs, and attitude toward nature. Their importance and the necessity of studying them stem from the following aspects. Zoonymic

Citation: Baxtiyorovna A. Z. Semantic and Linguistic-Cultural Characteristics of Zoonym-Component Phraseological Units in Korean. International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics 2026, 5(3), 43-46.

Received: 10th Feb 2026

Revised: 11th Mar 2026

Accepted: 14th Apr 2026

Published: 18th May 2026



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

phraseologisms express the historical experiences and culture of the Uzbek people[5]. They reflect the people's attitude toward nature, their customs related to animals, and their ancient beliefs. By studying these phraseologisms, one can preserve the people's cultural heritage and pass it on to future generations.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design based on principles of linguistics, phraseology, and linguocultural analysis. The methodological framework integrates semantic analysis, comparative analysis, and contextual interpretation to examine zoonymic phraseological units in Uzbek and Korean languages[6].

The research material consists of phraseological units containing zoonymic components collected from multiple sources, including phraseological dictionaries, linguistic studies, literary texts, and spoken language examples. The selection process was conducted through purposive sampling, focusing on expressions that contain animal-related lexical elements and are actively used in communication[7].

Semantic analysis was applied to identify the denotative and connotative meanings of the selected phraseological units. This method allowed for determining how animal imagery is used metaphorically to represent human characteristics[8].

Comparative analysis was used to examine similarities and differences between Uzbek and Korean zoonymic expressions. This approach enabled the identification of universal and culture-specific features in phraseological systems[9].

Additionally, a linguocultural approach was employed to analyze how cultural values, beliefs, and traditions are reflected in zoonymic phraseology. Contextual analysis further supported the interpretation of these units in real communicative situations[10].

The reliability of the study is ensured through the use of multiple sources and cross-verification of data. The applied methodology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the semantic and cultural functions of zoonymic phraseological units[11].

Result and Discussion

The phraseological lexicon of the Korean language is extremely diverse. According to the linguistic research of Korean linguists, nearly 40 percent of idioms in Korean include elements related to animals[12]. This reflects the important role fauna played in traditional Korean worldview. Therefore, zoonym is one of the most widespread components in Korean phraseology, vividly reflecting the nation's history, culture, and traditions[13]. In its narrow sense, the term "zoonim" covers only those units that express animal names in their direct (literal) meaning. In a broader sense, it also includes animal nicknames, names of animal body parts, words derived from animal names, as well as objects and concepts related to animals [14].

Zoonym-component phrasal units in the Korean language are divided into the following thematic groups: domestic animals; wild animals; mythological animals; aquatic animals; birds; insects; separate parts of the animal body. The "Household Pets" thematic group includes phraseological units featuring the names of animals that have been domesticated by humans and are considered their constant companions and labor assistants. This group consists of the following zoonym components: 개-it, 고양이-mushuk, 소-sigir, 말-ot, 닭-tovuq, 돼지- pigs can be used as an example [15].

In Korean folklore and culture, certain character traits are attributed to animals, and these traits are often reflected in idioms.

Animals	Symbolic meaning	Phrasebook example
개-It	Loyalty, but also baseness, lowliness, and unworthy behavior.	개가 똥을 먹다 - He's eating dog poop. (Used about a person doing

	When the dog image is applied to a person, it conveys negative connotations.	something inappropriate) or (about a person who is demeaning himself). 술 먹은 개 - Literally: a dog that has drunk vodka until it loses consciousness; used to refer to a person who is drunk.
고양이- Cat	It symbolizes cunning, independence, agility, stealth, and ferocity. In idioms, it is often encountered alongside the imagery of a dog or a mouse. It generally carries negative connotations.	고양이 목에 방울 달기- To hang a bell on a cat's neck (i.e., a very difficult, almost impossible task) is used.
소 – Cow	It expresses determination, loyalty, diligence, honesty, simplicity, patience, as well as stubbornness. Since ancient times in Korea, cows or bulls have symbolized wealth and labor, as they were considered indispensable helpers in agriculture. It is often used in positive connotations.	개천에 (도랑에) 든 소- A cow that has wandered into a ditch / a cow that has gotten stuck between the furrows – signifies a person who is wealthy and living in abundance. 소 귀에 경 읽기- Reading sacred texts into a cow's ear is a phrase used for a stubborn person.
말 – Horse	It symbolizes speed, agility, determination, willpower, and freedom, and is regarded as a good omen. Traditionally, horses were used as a means of transportation and were widely employed in wars. The image of the horse carries positive connotations.	말 타고 강 건너듯 - Crossing a river on horseback (about overcoming difficulties with ease) 고삐 없는 말 - A runaway horse signifies freedom without limits and unchecked liberty.
닭 Chicken	- It denotes irritability, a combative spirit, mediocrity, and foolishness. It often appears in idioms when compared to other birds. It generally carries negative connotations.	닭대가리-(chicken head) – Chicken brain - used for a stupid person with a poor memory. 꼬지 빠진 장닭 같다 - (like a cock with its tail down) – Used to describe a shabby, tattered, wretched, and unseemly person.

Conclusion

The active and multifaceted use of zoonymic components in the Korean language's phraseological system reveals the language's national-cultural distinctiveness in a deep and multilayered way. Through animal imagery, human social behavior, moral norms, emotional states, and psychological portraits are conveyed using figurative and expressive means. This not only strengthens the nominative functions of phraseological units but also their evaluative and expressive functions. In particular, the idioms related to domestic animals have been formed in an integral connection with the historical lifestyle, economic activities, and daily life of the Korean people, and their semantic structure harmonizes positive and negative connotations. Through these units, the moral standards, social stereotypes, and value systems established in society are expressed. In this regard, phraseological units with a zoonym component are recognized as an important linguocultural tool that preserves national consciousness and the cultural code. Therefore, the systematic and comparative study of zoonim-component phraseological units in the Korean language holds significant scientific importance not only for theoretical linguistics

but also for the fields of linguoculturology, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication. Research in this area contributes to the identification of similar and different cultural models in the languages of various peoples, as well as to establishing effective intercultural communication.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. V. Kunin, *English Phraseology*, Moscow, Russia: Vysshaya Shkola, 1986.
- [2] O. G. Yablonskaya, "Zoonymic phraseological units analysis," *Vestnik Pedagogical University*, 2015.
- [3] Y. P. Kogay, *Korean Phraseology*, Moscow, Russia, 2014.
- [4] W. Eun-Myung and L. Kyung-Ah, *Learning Korean Idioms*, Seoul, South Korea: Cham Publishing, 2017.
- [5] M. Ok Kim and C. Sik Kim, *Korean Dictionary*, Seoul, 2009.
- [6] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- [7] Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- [8] D. Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, Cambridge, UK, 2003.
- [9] N. Sharifian, *Cultural Linguistics*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2017.
- [10] E. Semino, *Metaphor in Discourse*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- [11] J. Charteris-Black, *Corpus Approaches to Metaphor*, London: Palgrave, 2004.
- [12] R. W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- [13] A. Wierzbicka, *Semantics: Primes and Universals*, Oxford, 1996.
- [14] G. Steen, "Metaphor theory," *Cambridge Handbook*, 2008.
- [15] A. Barcelona, *Metaphor and Metonymy*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003.