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SEMANTICS AND STYLISTICS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ARABIC LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This article examines the semantic and stylistic characteristics of Arabic phraseological units with particular emphasis on zoonymic phraseology. Phraseological units are regarded as an essential component of linguistic and cultural heritage, reflecting the worldview, traditions, customs, and historical experience of Arabic-speaking communities. The study analyzes the semantic transformation and figurative meanings of phraseological expressions derived from animal names and demonstrates their stylistic functions in literary and everyday discourse. Special attention is devoted to the symbolic meanings of zoonyms in Arabic culture, their occurrence in classical Arabic literature, the Holy Qur'an, and traditional proverbs. The paper also investigates comparative phraseological constructions and explores the similarities and differences between Arabic and Uzbek zoonymic expressions. The findings reveal that Arabic phraseological units preserve national-cultural values while simultaneously demonstrating universal cognitive mechanisms shared across languages through metaphorical conceptualization and symbolic representation.

Keywords: Arabic phraseology, semantics, stylistics, zoonymic phraseological units, metaphor, semantic transformation, comparative phraseology, Arabic culture, symbolism, linguistic worldview.

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Introduction

Phraseology constitutes one of the most expressive and culturally significant layers of every language, preserving the historical memory, traditions, and collective worldview of its speakers. As fixed lexical combinations with figurative meanings, phraseological units not only enrich linguistic expression but also reflect the cognitive and cultural identity of a nation. Their semantic complexity and stylistic richness make them an important subject of linguistic research, particularly within the fields of semantics, stylistics, and cognitive linguistics.

The Arabic language possesses a remarkably rich phraseological system that has developed through centuries of literary tradition, religious discourse, and oral folklore. Many Arabic phraseological units are deeply rooted in Bedouin life, natural surroundings, and historical experiences, which explains the frequent occurrence of animal imagery in Arabic idiomatic expressions. These zoonymic phraseological units preserve symbolic meanings associated with particular animals and reveal the interaction between language, culture, and social perception.

From a semantic perspective, phraseological units emerge through processes of semantic transformation, metaphorization, and lexical reinterpretation, where the literal meanings of their components become secondary to their figurative meanings. Stylistically, they serve as powerful expressive devices that enhance the emotional and aesthetic value of literary, journalistic, and spoken texts. The investigation of Arabic zoonymic phraseology therefore contributes not only to phraseological studies but also to intercultural linguistics and comparative language research.

The present study aims to analyze the semantic and stylistic features of Arabic phraseological units involving animal names, identify their symbolic functions in Arabic linguistic culture, and compare their semantic equivalents with those found in Uzbek phraseology. Such an approach provides a broader understanding

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of universal and culture-specific mechanisms underlying phraseological meaning formation.

Phraseological units are inextricably linked with the spiritual culture, customs, profession, living conditions, aspirations, and attitude to reality of the people who speak the language. Phraseological units are important means of creating imagery and expressiveness, and they also play a key role in the expressive effectiveness (stylistics) of literary, political, and journalistic texts. [4, 4]

Russian linguist Yu.A. Gvozdev in his research, [1, 59-73] examines phraseological units formed on the basis of certain words as a separate chapter and refers to active lexemes. Active lexemes take a special place not only in the structural determination of phraseologisms, but also in their semantic formation. Therefore, it should be noted that it is appropriate to use terms such as "semantic base component" [5, 91-102] and "semantic non-base component" in phraseological research. So, the dialectic of unity of form and content is characteristic of phraseologisms. [2, 38]

The semantic features of phraseological units are the main feature that distinguishes them from other language units. The meanings of phraseologisms arise on the basis of semantic reshaping. It is during the study of this issue that transposition occurs. Transposition refers to the use of language elements in a non-specific function and meaning. [2, 39]

It is advisable to study phraseological units in the Arabic language by dividing them into several thematic groups. In particular, they can be divided into zoonymic (related to the names of animals) phraseological units, somatic (based on the analogy with human body parts), expressions related to color, phraseological units involving the names of historical figures, phraseological units related to agriculture and animal husbandry, and so on.

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Zoonymic (animal-related) phraseology

The animal world and the relationship with it, which was considered an important element of the life of the Arab people living in the Bedouin environment in ancient times, is of great importance. In particular, the rich literature on the animal world, which has a long history, is an attractive and interesting topic, attracting the attention of readers. The classic works written about zoonyms are based on various sources and reflect the relationship of the Bedouin Arabs with the animal world, their understanding and views on them.

One of these sources, or rather the first, is the qasid, a specific type of Arabic poetry of the Jahiliyyah period. For example, in his "Mu'allaqat" by Imrul Qays (d. 540), one of the poets of that period, it is noteworthy that he used the obvious qualities of other animals to describe his fox.

لَهُ أَيُّطَلَا ظَبْيِي وَسَاقًا نَعَامَةً وَإِرْحَاءَ سِرْحَانٍ وَتَقْرِيْبٌ تَنْقُلُ

He (the horse) is as thick as a gazelle and has thighs like the thighs of an ostrich. He may run like a wolf, and jump with his fore and hind legs like a fox cub.

Another aspect that shows the place of zoonyms in the Arabic language and culture is that during the Pre-Islamic period, Arab peoples widely used them to name tribes and individuals. The most common of these are the lion and the following names related to it:

حَمْرَةَ، حَيْدَرٌ، أَسَدٌ، أُسَامَةُ، سِرْحَانٌ، شَيْلٌ، صَعْبٌ، عَبَّاسٌ، عَوْفٌ، فَارِسٌ، لَبُوءَةٌ، هَمَامٌ، هَيْصَمٌ، حَفْصٌ، لَيْثٌ

In addition, many other animal names were used to name people and tribes. These include تَعْلَبٌ (fox), مُعَاوِيَةُ (fox cub), جَحْشٌ (goat), هَيْيَمٌ (eagle cub), نُوْرَسٌ (seagull, fishing bird), مُصْنَعِبٌ (camel), نَمْرٌ (tiger), فَهْدٌ (leopard), عِكْرَمَةُ (female spider), أَرْقَمٌ (male snake), أُوَيْسٌ (wolf cub), and like this.

The Holy Quran, one of the Arabic sources, also contains many animal names. It is noteworthy that some of them even have independent surah names. For example, the surahs بقرة (cow), أنعام (domestic animals such as sheep, goats, camels, and cows), نحل (bees), نمل (ants), عنكبوت (spider), and فيل (elephant) are

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among them. Some animal names are included in different surahs. Among them are نقة (sheep), عيبل, جمال (camel), نعجة (sheep), عيبل (calf), حوت (whale), كلب (dog), ذئب (wolf), قراد (monkeys), خيما (donkey), خنزير (pig), حياثة (snake), توغان (bird), hudhud. (hudhud), ghurab (crow), jarad (locust), ba'ūda (fly), dhubāb (fly), qumāl (plant weed, insects), Ḥafādi' (frog) are among them.

The diverse fauna of a country naturally reflects and influences the spoken language of the people living there. Because each language is formed and shaped by the environment, material and cultural conditions surrounding it. In the examples given below, we can see that the Arab Bedouins, who lived in the harsh desert region, used biodiversity to their advantage in shaping their language and culture. It seems that there is no desert animal whose name is not mentioned in the proverbs, sayings and expressions of the Arab people.

Just as the animal world is diverse, so are the phraseological units associated with it. They can be divided into groups such as wild animals, marine animals, domestic animals, reptiles, birds, insects, and so on. There are many expressions related to these in dictionaries and Arabic sources. Including:

كَبِشُ الْفِدَاءِ (الْفِدَى) – the man responsible for all sins (literally: sacrificial ram);

كَبِشُ الْقَوْمِ – elder in the congregation (literally: ram of the people);

هُمَا كَفَرَسِي رِهَانٍ – none of them are more or less than the other (literally: they are as equal as two horses going side by side);

سَمَكَةُ أْبْرِيْلِ – April Fool's Day (literally: April's fish);

هُوَ يَبْكِي بَدْمَوْعِ التَّمَّاسِحِ – to cry falsely (literally: he is crying crocodile tears).

Since ancient times, our people, taking into account the gait and other movements of animals, have found a way to figuratively express these characteristics in speech. As a result, the names of the following animals have acquired metaphorical meanings: fox - "cunning and agility", wolf - "greed and predatory", pig - "greed and filth", snake - "cunning, cunning, meanness", monkey - "independence, imitation", lion - "strength, kindness, nobility", sheep -

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"gentleness and independence", ant - "industriousness", donkey - "stupidity", dog - "loyalty", etc. [2, 99]

The figurative images that play a fundamental role in the formation of certain phraseological units are characterized by their commonness in many languages. This is explained by the similarity of the signs of some animals, as well as their uniform perception by people. For example, the Uzbek phraseology "the dog is loyal, the woman is cruel" is embodied in the Russian language in the form of "vernyy kak pes" and in French in the form of "fidèle comme un chien". In Arabic, the phraseology أَشْكُرُ مِنْ كَلْبٍ - more grateful than a dog - is used to express this meaning.

A number of phraseological equivalents that are similar in meaning and methodological function differ in lexical composition by one, sometimes two components. This is mainly due to the fact that representatives of different peoples approach life and events in their own way, think within the framework of their own imagination, and many things and events acquire different content and symbolic meaning in their vocabulary. In addition, if one people uses one of a number of synonymous words that express the same concept in their life in the structure of their phraseology, the other may use another, as a result of which one component of the phraseological equivalents of two languages, which serve to express the same meaning and methodological function, will differ. For example, we observe that some expressions with zoonymic components in the Arabic language are given their equivalent in the Uzbek language with a different zoonymic:

يعمل كالرھوان – to work like a horse.

الفأرُ بدأ يلعب في عُيبِه – a dog is scratching his stomach (literally: a mouse started playing in his armpit).

Abul Fazl al-Maydani (d. 518/1124) is one of the scholars who enriched a large part of the Arab folk proverbs and sayings that have survived to his time (about 5,000) with very important explanations and made a great contribution to

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preserving the valuable oral treasury of the Arab people. His work "Majma'-ul-Amsal", a collection of proverbs and sayings, contains a lot of information about zoonyms. The work consists of thirty chapters, and twenty-eight chapters contain a series of proverbs and sayings that begin with the same letter. At the end of each chapter, comparative phraseological units that begin with adjectives with the form أفـل are separately distinguished. The twenty-ninth chapter is about "Ayyam-ul-Arab" and the names of Islamic days, and the thirtieth chapter contains wise sayings of our Prophet and his companions.

In scientific literature, stable word combinations that arise on the basis of artistic comparison are called comparative phraseological units. Such stable means in English are "as", "such as", "as if", "as though", "like", "seem". [3, 209] In Arabic, such stable units, such as كانّ ، and ك، are formed by means of the prepositions and often by means of the adjective in the form of أفـعل + the preposition من.

The figurative basis of stable associations that arise as a result of people comparing objects and events in nature and society with the animal world, the plant world, and natural phenomena in most cases acquire a symbolic content. In particular, when people recognize a certain animal or bird as a symbol of a particular trait, they are guided by the behavior, appearance, and behavior of that animal. In this way, a characteristic traditional quality, behavior, and state of a certain person or object and phenomenon are created. [3, 209]

Conclusion

Arabic phraseological units represent an invaluable linguistic and cultural phenomenon that reflects the historical experience, social values, and symbolic thinking of Arabic-speaking communities. Their semantic structure is based on metaphorical reinterpretation and semantic transformation, while their stylistic function contributes significantly to the expressiveness and imagery of discourse.

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The analysis of zoonymic phraseological units demonstrates that animal names occupy a prominent place in Arabic linguistic consciousness due to their close association with Bedouin life, religious texts, classical literature, and traditional folklore. The symbolic meanings attached to animals have become stable linguistic markers expressing various human characteristics such as courage, wisdom, loyalty, cunning, greed, or diligence.

Comparative analysis also shows that although many zoonymic phraseological units possess universal semantic features shared across different languages, their lexical realization often reflects national-cultural specificity. The differences observed between Arabic and Uzbek phraseological equivalents illustrate how cultural experience influences the selection of symbolic images while preserving similar conceptual meanings.

Overall, the study confirms that the semantic and stylistic investigation of Arabic phraseological units contributes to a deeper understanding of Arabic linguistic culture, enriches comparative phraseological research, and provides valuable material for translation studies, lexicography, and intercultural communication.

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