



THE ORIGIN AND USAGE OF ZOONYMIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract. *Zoonymic phraseological units occupy a significant place in the English language as expressive linguistic means that reflect cultural, historical, and social experience. These units include animal names used metaphorically to describe human character, behavior, and social relations. The present thesis aims to analyze the origin of zoonymic phraseological units in English and illustrate their usage through commonly used examples. The study highlights the main sources of their formation, such as mythology, folklore, everyday life, and literary traditions. Understanding these phraseological units contributes to better intercultural communication and effective language learning.*

Key words: *zoonym, phraseological unit, metaphor, English language, origin, culture.*

Introduction. Phraseological units play an important role in enriching the expressive potential of the English language. Among them, zoonymic phraseological units, which contain animal names, are especially vivid and culturally marked. Such expressions are widely used in spoken and written English to convey figurative meanings rather than literal ones. The study of their origin helps reveal how human observations of animals have influenced linguistic imagery and metaphorical thinking.

The concept of zoonymic phraseological units. Zoonymic phraseological units are stable expressions that include animal names and possess a figurative meaning. In most cases, the meaning of the whole expression cannot be deduced from the meanings of its individual components. For example, the phrase “*as busy as a bee*” does not refer to an actual insect but describes a very hardworking person. These units function as important stylistic devices in English.

The main origins of zoonymic phraseological units in English

1. Folklore and Mythology. Many zoonymic phraseological units originate from myths, legends, and religious texts. Animals were often attributed human qualities in folklore, which later became fixed in language.

a wolf in sheep’s clothing – a dangerous person pretending to be kind

the lion’s share – the largest or best part

2. Everyday Life and Human Observation. Daily interaction with animals led people to associate certain animal behaviors with human traits.

as sly as a fox – very clever and cunning





TANQIDIY NAZAR, TAHLILY TAFAKKUR VA INNOVATSION G'OYALAR



as stubborn as a mule – extremely stubborn

3. Agricultural and Rural Experience. Since English-speaking societies historically depended on farming, many expressions are connected with domestic animals.

hold your horses – wait or slow down

straight from the horse's mouth – information from a reliable source

4. Literature and Historical Sources. Some zoonymic phraseological units entered the language through literary works and later became part of everyday speech.

cry wolf – to give a false alarm repeatedly

a black sheep – a disgraced or different member of a group

Phraseological Unit	Figurative Meaning
as brave as a lion	very courageous
let the cat out of the bag	reveal a secret
a snake in the grass	a hidden enemy
eagle-eyed	very observant
copycat	a person who imitates others

These examples demonstrate how animal imagery is used to describe various aspects of human personality and behavior.

Conclusion. Zoonymic phraseological units in English are the result of long-term cultural and linguistic development. Their origins lie in mythology, folklore, everyday observation, and literature. Such expressions not only enrich the language but also reflect the worldview and mentality of English-speaking people. Studying these units is essential for linguistics, translation studies, and effective communication, as they enhance cultural awareness and figurative competence in language learning.

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