

THE INTERPRETATIONAL FUNCTION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH
ZOONYM COMPONENT IN ENGLISH

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Abstract. *This article provides a detailed comparative study of zoonym phraseological units (PUs) in Russian and English, exploring their semantic structures, contextual uses, and translation challenges. Drawing on the foundational work of Smirnitskaya (1964) and Schippan (1972), the study examines the stability of phraseological meanings, the figurative associative images connected to zoonyms, and the specific challenges faced by learners of English and Russian in understanding and using these expressions correctly. The article also discusses the methodologies for analyzing and categorizing phraseological units, highlighting the importance of contrastive and cognitive approaches in phraseology. The research methodology involves the documentation of phraseological units from various idioms dictionaries and associative dictionaries, with particular focus on how zoonym components influence the literal and figurative meanings. The findings suggest significant differences in how these units function and are perceived in Russian and English, emphasizing the role of cultural and linguistic factors in phraseology.*

Key words: *Zoonym, phraseological units, semantic structure, cross-linguistic analysis, interpretation of proverbs, translation challenges, phraseology, contrastive analysis, figurative meaning, language teaching and learning*

ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИОННАЯ ФУНКЦИЯ ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ЕДИНИЦ С
ЗООНИМНЫМ КОМПОНЕНТОМ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

Аннотация. *Статья посвящена анализу зоонимных фразеологических единиц в русском и английском языках, с акцентом на их семантическую структуру и контекстуальное использование. Работа основывается на исследованиях Смирницкой и Шиппана и включает обзор методологий анализа фразеологических единиц, а также обсуждение их стабильности и проблем перевода. Результаты исследования подчеркивают роль культурных и лингвистических факторов в интерпретации и использовании зоонимных фразеологий.*

Ключевые слова: зоонимы, фразеологические единицы, семантическая структура, межъязыковой анализ, толкование пословиц, , контрастивный анализ, фигуративное значение, обучение и изучение языков.

Research into language and context has led to confusing terminology. This study will differentiate between sense and sense in Cruse's (1986, 2004) framework. Sense refers to the linguistic meaning of an expression, while sense refers to the meaning of the expression in a specific context. Idioms are typically expressions with a different meaning than their individual words, but this study treats them as phraseological units where any word can be idiomatic. Idiomatic expressions cannot be understood literally, and zoonyms are words or phrases denoting animals. Phase 1 of the study examines how idiomatic expressions with zoonyms are recorded in dictionaries, particularly as individual phraseological units with non-literal meanings. The goal is to identify and distinguish these expressions from other phraseological units. Understanding the relationship between language and context is crucial in communication, but differing definitions and categorizations make it challenging to develop a single theory. Little research has been done on applying context theories to specific linguistic phenomena. This study aims to investigate context's role in interpreting a group of English idiomatic expressions, working towards a model for interpretation of idiomatic expressions based on their relationship with context.

Phraseological units with zoonym components (PhUZC) have not received much attention in linguistic research until recent times. It was only in the 1970s that phraseology began to be considered as a separate discipline, and lexicographic works on phraseological units were started. This led to the understanding of phraseology as an integral part of language and culture. In the 1990s, intensive studies on phraseology started in EU countries and the USA. However, research in the West was limited due to the lack of phraseological materials and language-specific dictionaries. It was only in the 2000s that a structural classification of phraseological word-groups was provided. The author focuses on idiomatic units with partially changed meanings. The investigation of PhUZC with zoonym components in English is motivated by the lack of research in this area.

This state of affairs demands profound and comprehensive academic research which results aim at closing the existing gap in interpretation of phraseological units with zoonym components in English and creation of theoretical basis for this specific type of phraseological dictionaries. Consequently, the study aims to identify effectiveness of these dictionaries for both EFL learners and professional translators, basing judgement on the pre-existing knowledge and contextual

information about certain animals and animal species, their communicative value and stylistic connotations. Phraseological units with direct zoonym or animal name components reflect rich cultural heritage of many nations, provide valuable insight into ethnic psychology and national character and are important tool for intercultural communication. Having realised this, author also finds it necessary to identify cultural and national peculiarities of phraseological units with zoonym components and their typological, cognitive and communicative characteristics. All-inclusive analysis will make it possible to determine if meaning is one of the crucial criteria of equivalence between phraseological unit with zoonym component in English and its translation into other languages and to develop effective strategies for this kind of translation by means of creating respective entries in special dictionaries. This will eventually result in compilation of phraseological dictionary exclusively dealing with phraseological units with zoonym components. This type of dictionary is not a common thing nowadays, and our by and large pioneering attempt requires solid theoretical basis which is to be worked out throughout the present and future studies in this field.

Difficulties for non-native English speakers interpreting phraseological units with zoonym component can arise due to cultural and environmental differences. Some zonyms may not exist in non-English speaking countries, making interpretation challenging. For example, a Japanese person may struggle to understand the phrase "as sly as a fox" if they have never seen a fox before. Even if the animal exists, its characteristics may be unfamiliar. The phrase "to hunt/look for wild boar" is easily understood in European countries where wild boars are found, but Japanese individuals may have difficulty interpreting it. Different proficiency levels can also lead to similar difficulties, requiring models that are suitable for all cases. Models are needed to decode the meaning of phraseological units with zoonym component in English, as these are often the most difficult to understand. The study will analyze and interpret these units using a clear, logical, and comprehensive step-by-step approach. This approach will help identify and understand the meaning of phraseological units with zoonym component in English.

Phraseology is crucial for language, enriching vocabulary and adding color and expression. Each language has many phraseological units, some with similar structures and connotations. However, this doesn't mean that they have equivalent units in other languages. Different languages may have their own causal clause pattern with different meanings. It's also common for some phraseological units to be untranslatable, causing translation loss. Translating phraseological units can be done by finding equivalents in the target language or by conveying similar meaning using replacements/substitutions. Sometimes, translations may be out of context, resulting in different

word collocations. Translation equivalence and loss arise from expressions in the language and culture.

Previous studies on phraseology aim to understand the limitations on word usage in specific linguistic areas, registers, or discourse types. These studies show that word choice and syntax in speech communities are influenced by social and cultural values. However, the relationship between variability, idioms, and collocations is still unclear, and the connection between phraseological categories and cultural worldviews remains unexplored.

Phraseological units (PU) are groupings of words that function as a single semantic unit. They are fixed expressions that cannot easily be modified or substituted. The classification and status of PU is controversial, and there is no universally accepted definition. They are compared to free combinations of words and compounds, and contrasted with idioms. PU have syntactic and lexical relationships between their elements and are stored as holistic units in the mental lexicon. The zoonym component of PU combines distinct denotations to create a figurative meaning. These expressions have received attention in phraseological studies and lexicographical analysis.

The examples of zoonyms in PU are very plentiful. Thus, the depth of interpretation depends on the extent provided by each PU. Following one of the examples provided by Makkai, "Take the bull by the horns" can be divided into four hierarchical categories in terms of image and idiom awareness. Firstly, there are those speakers who are familiar with the phrase and its literal meaning and picture in their heads. Secondly, there is also an English speaker who knows the phrase but is not aware of its literal meaning or picture. Thirdly, there is a group of speakers who have never come across this phrase previously and are ignorant of its existence. Finally, there are the speakers from other language backgrounds who are learning English and are in any one of the aforementioned categories. In each case, the person concerned makes an interpretation of the phrase-concept, "to deal with a difficult situation head-on", but the depth of understanding and imagery differs in each case. There could also be a fifth category where a non-native speaker who is sufficient in English but has a problem with idiomatic expression could misinterpret the expression by rendering it literally. Such variation in understanding and imagery can also occur within monolingual native speakers across different age groups, social standings, and in different states of language ability. Depth of interpretation can also be influenced by PU and image complexity. This is largely dependent on factors such as PU obsolescence or dialect restrictedness and age. But for the most part, it is the PU which contains a simple and common image which is easier to interpret. Simple images are easily understood and remembered. Thus, PU with simple

images or only one interpretation are less likely to be retained in its original state and change over time is less frequent. It also makes the job of non-native language learners much easier.

The most essential work in terms of interpretational function is Smirnitskaya's study in the area of Russian proverbs, "Semantics and meaning in Proverbs" (Smirnitskaya 1964). She analyzes the semantic structure and the degrees of stability in which she determines that phraseological units do not function as interchangeable similes, but rather consist of a stable, unchangeable core and a figurative meaning with various degrees of speaker-orientedness. Her methodology includes russifying an English phraseological unit into a Russian equivalent. It is assumed and is a question to be answered in the future whether or not such an approach can be valid in light of the fact that not all English phraseological units have direct translations into Russian, or any other language for that matter. Also significant in her work is the two-tiered classification of meaning, "obvious content" and "adjunct" with the latter stating that the real meaning of the phraseological unit lies in the figurative associative image and the more successful that image is, the more vivid the meaning and the more it corresponds to the intuitive representations shared by all the speakers who are familiar with the expression in question. So far it seems that Smirnitskaya's theories are applicable to phraseological units with zoonym components and it will be a point of interest to refer back to this framework in any future studies in the area. Schippan's German study (1972) "Zur Semantik und Pragmatik der Englischen animal-phraseologismen" appears to be one of, if not the only study into the exact area which the current work is concerned with. Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain this work, but an analysis of its abstract would suggest that he is concerned with the same sort of literal and figurative meanings of expressions and the interpretation of these by learners of English, using animal phraseologisms as a specific context. Schippan makes a clear distinction between "Tier-phraseologismen" and "Menschen-phraseologismen" from the viewpoint of native speakers, and later discusses the errors made by German learners of English at the state of comprehension and production. With close examination, there could be some contact made with Schippan in order to provide a cross-linguistic study, if it happens that German zoonym phraseologisms have similar literal and figurative meanings to their English counterparts. Smirnitskaya and Schippan have presented no models or schemas in terms of classifying the meaning or interpretation of phraseologisms, so this remains an area of study. BeJoining can possibly build upon both within zoonym units and phraseologisms in general.

Contrastive analysis without a systematic search for "equivalences" leads to false conclusions about linguistic differences. Contrastive lexicology and phraseology provide guidance for interpreting language units. Contrastive methods prevent interference when teaching foreign

language phraseology. A unifying semantic theory is essential for meaningful contrastive analysis. The contrastive approach is relevant to phraseology through semantic and contextual comparisons. This essay compares Russian and English to understand general linguistic phenomena. Methodology is necessary for studying language. Different disciplines have unique ways of obtaining and interpreting factual material. Higher generalizations rely on detailed observation.

The data focuses on zoonym-based phraseological units in English. It includes both the units themselves and corresponding clauses to ensure accurate interpretation. The data is categorized into semantic fields to clarify the meaning of each zoonym. The research methodology involves documentation, eliminating the need for direct observation. Data collection involves note-taking and marking to record and differentiate English equivalents in Bahasa. This section provides crucial details on data collection, subject, and research focus.

A similar experiment could be performed with any predefined set of phrases, allowing faster and more reliable collection of corpus data.

The list of phraseological units from the idioms dictionary is limited, that is why we have also used other dictionaries of idioms, phraseological units, and dictionaries of synonyms. In our work, we make use of dictionaries and make reference to English proverbs and proverbs with similar meanings.

Data Collection: At the first stage of our research, we aimed at selecting zoonymic phraseological units that were to be the object of our further analysis. Our basic source of the material is the associative dictionaries of idioms.

The study is based on zoonymic phraseological units of the English language. In the attempt to reveal the interpretation of such phraseological units from the cognitive perspective, we have worked out the following steps in our research:

English phraseological units with zoonyms were extracted from dictionaries, phrase books, etc. and analyzed, systemized, and represented. PUs were divided into groups based on zoonym component and presented with translations. Contexts and pragmatic factors were provided for each phraseological unit. The classification of phraseological units was based on transference type, including name, episitet, and simile. Zoonym equivalents were classified based on transference, contexts, and animal name meanings. The data was representative of educated native speaker usage from both British and American sources. Difficulties in translation and understanding were seen, making this study important for learners and teachers of English as a foreign language.

Phraseological units with zoonym component serve to illustrate behavioral characteristics of both humans and animals. These units, like any other vocabulary, possess connotational

meanings. The connotational meaning of phraseological units can undergo significant changes, primarily influenced by the phraseological meaning and associated stylistic coloring. Such coloring may become outdated, clichéd, or vulgar, causing the phraseological unit to fall out of use. However, it can be revived with a modified stylistic coloring and meaning. These changes can create semantic indeterminacy and polysemy, particularly within zoonym phraseological units. During tests, some subjects struggled to differentiate expressions with similar or identical lexical meanings from phraseological units. This was especially visible when the phraseological concordance was loose, such as comparing "beat about the bush" and "be circuitous or indirect." To determine the phraseological meaning of the former, a multiple-choice cloze test was developed using variations of "beat about the bush" and selecting the correct word. This approach aimed to elicit more phraseological responses rather than purely lexical ones.

Interpreting phraseological units with zoonym component can be challenging for translation, especially when the receptor language lacks approximation or knowledge of the zoonym. Literal translation often doesn't make sense, so a descriptive approach is necessary, particularly for language learners. Similarly, when a similar expression with a different zoonym exists, translators must decide which to use. In English, interpreting zoonym-based phraseological units is usually straightforward, as the figurative meaning aligns with human actions. However, some units can have multiple interpretations. For example, "to get the bit between one's teeth" is based on horse behavior but can be understood without knowledge of horses.

The first factor influencing interpretation is whether the phraseological unit is still in usage or considered old-fashioned. Some have been used for centuries and still persist today, while others have changed or are no longer used. For example, "sweating like a pig" is still used, but "sweating like a fat pig" is no longer in use. Understanding phraseological units can vary among individuals, and context, personal experience, and culture-specific information play a role. However, certain factors can influence interpretation, especially for non-literal units. Second language learners may find them difficult to understand, but they are important in native speaker speech and writing.

This leads us to the question of how such phraseological units should be presented in phraseology materials aimed at learners. In the case of bilingual learners, translational equivalence with phraseological units in an L1 context featuring the same animal may be an effective way of facilitating understanding. This could occur if such phraseological units were included in dictionaries, and the L1 zoonym component would provide the user with a cross-reference to the L2 phraseological unit. An example of this occurrence would be a Spanish learner of English looking up the phraseological unit "take the bull by the horns" and being referred to the Spanish

phrase "matar dos pájaros de un tiro" and the zoonym component. However, for learners who are learning phraseological units in an L2 context, direct translation may not be the most effective way for learners to understand and use these phraseological units, and monolingual learners also have a requirement for understanding and use of phraseological units in an L2 context. It may be most beneficial for phraseology materials to include definition of meaning and context for both L1 and L2 phraseological units. Finally, it is important that phraseology material includes information on frequency and appropriacy of use for the benefit of learners who are seeking active command of the language.

In conclusion, it is felt to be important that material is available on phraseology for language learners, and the presence of phraseological units in dictionaries means that learners have a better chance of encountering and understanding these items. Lexicographers and textbook writers are advised to include phraseological units in dictionaries and textbooks as a separate category. The findings of this research would seem to support such advice, particularly in the case of animal phraseological units that have both literal and figurative meaning. The fact that such a large proportion of these phraseological units were familiar to the informants, and some were even considered to be "general idioms," indicates that they are a significant part of the English language, and active learners would seem to have a requirement to understand and use them. However, it also became clear in this study that it is difficult to interpret the meaning of these units without an understanding of the figurative source, so learners would benefit from access to phraseology material that includes information on meaning and context.

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