

# Cognitive Metaphors Based on Zoomorphism in the Uzbek and French Languages

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**Abstract:** When analyzing the linguistic richness of a particular language, various ornamental stylistic devices are usually examined, as they contribute to the imagery and expressiveness of speech. These devices largely reflect the worldview of a people, the characteristics of the social structure of society, as well as the religious beliefs inherent in a given culture. Metaphor, being one of the most important mechanisms for expressing figurative meaning in language, has attracted the attention of prominent thinkers and philosophers since ancient times, which is reflected in the large number of works devoted to it. Metaphor is a trope or linguistic mechanism derived from the Greek word “μεταφορά” (transfer of meaning), which consists in expressing one object through the designation of another based on their shared characteristics.

This article discusses zoonym-based metaphors that possess both figurative and cognitive potential in expressing perceptions of the world. Zoometaphors are examined as a type of metaphor closely connected with the cultural experience, values, historical background, and social context of a nation, encompassing not only linguistic but also psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. Zoometaphors establish associations between animal behavior, nature, and their relationships with humans. They also reflect differences between social groups, as well as attitudes toward values, labor, and social relations. Both Uzbek and French languages contain metaphorical expressions corresponding to the conceptual metaphor HUMAN – ANIMAL, in which the literal and figurative meanings coincide and display zoomorphic characteristics. This phenomenon demonstrates similarities in the cognitive patterns of speakers of these cultures, particularly in their observation of the surrounding environment and their common perceptions of animal behavior.

**Keywords:** Conceptual Metaphor, Concept, Linguistic Phenomenon, Zoonym-based Cognitive Metaphors, National and Cultural Characteristics.

**Introduction:** It is well known that the human mind is inherently dynamic and creative. Every moment, various processes and mechanisms occur within it that generate comparisons, analogies, and associations which may sometimes appear unexpected, yet are often predictable. The name of a particular object or phenomenon can rapidly acquire the meaning of another object that resembles or evokes the first in some way. In linguistics, this mechanism is referred to as semantic transfer, which may also be described as metaphor (Drujinin, 2016).

As the authors note, the phraseological resources and metaphors of each language reflect the socio-historical events, moral and spiritual-cultural norms, mental and

psychological conditions, religious ideas, national traditions, and customs of the people (Abdi, M., Umarova, S., Aliqulova, D., Hamida, J., & Bekmuradova, Z., 2021).

Metaphor is a multifaceted linguistic phenomenon that reflects the national-cultural characteristics, traditions, customs, and worldview of every people. For this reason, interest in studying metaphor from a linguocognitive and linguocultural perspective—both within a single language and in comparative analysis across different languages—is steadily increasing today. This, in turn, contributes to the development of socio-cultural relations between Uzbek-speaking communities and the peoples of the compared

languages, as well as to identifying similarities and differences in their associative thinking.

Any designation is initially formed in accordance with the methods of feature selection established within a particular linguistic community, and most of these methods are comparative in nature and are also accepted across other language families. Metaphorical nomination refers to the naming of an object based on similarities in shape, color, size, and other characteristics. Human evaluation of animals and plants is reflected not only in their naming but also in the figurative use of these names. Zoonym-based metaphors are conceptual or figurative expressions that convey ideas related to human life and relationships through animals and their characteristics. Animals are often associated with human behavior, emotional states, social roles, or inherent qualities.

According to N.Solnseva, who investigated the semantic and functional characteristics of zoonyms in Russian, French, and German, zoomorphic metaphors are primarily based on direct or indirect visual similarity. In many cases, such similarities are represented in exaggerated forms. For example, although a pig is not always dirty, it is generally interpreted as an unclean animal. Nevertheless, in almost all European languages, the metaphorical designation “pig” functions as a standard expression for describing a dirty or untidy person, as well as an immoral individual (Solnseva, 2004). In her study of the metaphorical meanings of the Russian word “копоба,” the French “vache,” and the German “Kuh,” the scholar emphasizes that, in French, the metaphor is based on characteristics related to a person’s moral qualities; in Russian, on external physical features; and in German, on intellectual characteristics.

According to F.N. Guketlova, who studied the zoomorphic representation of culture in the linguistic worldview through the examples of French, Kabardian-Circassian, and Russian languages, the issue of the relationship between language and culture is largely connected with the universal and culture-specific aspects of world perception among speakers belonging to different linguocultural traditions (Guketlova, 2009).

### Materials and Methods

In the analysis of zoonym-based cognitive metaphors in the Uzbek and French languages, descriptive, comparative, componential, conceptual, and cognitive-semantic analysis methods were employed.

Zoo-based metaphors are figurative expressions that convey concepts related to human life and relationships through animals or their characteristics. Animals are often associated with people’s behavior, emotional state, social role, or natural qualities. Such

metaphors create vivid images in social and cultural thinking and serve as a rich, colorful, and imagination-enhancing tool of language. Zoo metaphors are closely connected with a people’s cultural experience, values, historical background, and social context. Therefore, they encompass not only linguistic aspects, but also psychological, social, and cultural dimensions (Juraqobilova, 2025).

According to A.V.Shukina, Russian and French contain zoomorphic metaphors whose literal and figurative meanings correspond to one another. Examples include donkey (âne, m) in both languages, symbolizing stubbornness and obstinacy; fox (renard, m), representing cunning; and pig (cochon, m), which is commonly used to describe an unpleasant or disgusting person (Shukina, 2015). This reflects the harmony in the formation of human thinking across different cultures, which is evident in the similarity of environmental observation and the consistency in evaluating animals’ character traits. A comparative analysis of linguistic material from unrelated languages and cultures makes it possible to conclude that zoomorphisms underlying zoomorphic metaphors possess both universal and culture-specific features. According to A.S. Mamontov and P.V. Moroslin, who studied Russian and Turkish zoometaphors in a comparative aspect as an important element in intercultural communication, universal concepts may acquire specific features in accordance with existing stereotypes in different cultures (Mamontov & Moroslin, 2016).

From the written sources that have come down to us, it is known that in the life and literary творчество (artistic creation) of Turkic peoples, zoonyms, due to their metaphorical usage, served not only as a means of expressing a person’s strength, power, courage, and bravery, but were also widely used as personal names and as elements indicating an individual’s social status and position within society (Odilova & Rahmanova, 2024).

Uzbek zoometaphors are closely linked to the behavior and nature of animals and their interactions with humans. They are deeply connected with the historical and cultural traditions of the Uzbek people. Each animal, based on its nature, behavior, or commonly accepted characteristics, conveys different meanings. In colloquial Uzbek, the cognitive metaphors such as lion (arslon, sher), lamb (qo’zichoq), calf (buzoqcha), foal (toychoq), and chick (jo’ja) are actively used as forms of address, especially in diminutive and affectionate expressions directed toward children. Such forms of address are not commonly observed in French. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that Turkic peoples, particularly the Uzbek people, have historically been engaged in hunting and animal

husbandry, which led to a deep understanding of animal characteristics. These zoomorphisms are based on the conceptual metaphor HUMAN – ANIMAL.

In Uzbek, zoonym-based metaphors are used to reflect differences between social groups, to describe the psychological states or emotional conditions of literary characters, and to express attitudes toward social values, labor, and interpersonal relations. These metaphors are formed on the basis of the conceptual metaphor HUMAN – ANIMAL. Below, we present some examples. They are used to reflect differences between social groups, as well as approaches to social values, labor, and interpersonal relations. The fox, in Uzbek culture as well as in many other cultures, including French culture, is depicted as a symbol of intelligent, cunning, secretive, and cautious individuals. This characterization is based on typical animal behavior, such as using trickery to achieve its goals. Through the complexity and adaptability of its behavior, the fox serves as an effective means of enriching and interpreting human character descriptions.

Therefore, the symbol of the fox is often applied to people who use their intelligence to deceive or outsmart others. This can be illustrated in the following example: Mingboshining haligi so'ng savolida butun shu iztiroblarning mazmuni bor edi. "Epaqa" laqabini tashiydigan tulki u savolning ostida yotgan behuda tashvishlarni darhol payqadi / In the final question posed by the mingboshi (chief), the essence of all those anxieties was concealed. The fox bearing the nickname "Epaqa" immediately perceived the futile worries underlying that question (Chulpan, 2019).

In the sentence above, the author refers to the character as a "fox." In the phrase "the fox bearing the nickname 'Epaqa' immediately perceived the futile worries underlying that question," emphasis is placed on typically fox-like qualities such as caution and intelligence. In the French translation of the work, this metaphor is also rendered as "le renard," i.e., "the fox." This demonstrates the existence of universal metaphors with zoomorphic characteristics in both Uzbek and French, in which both the literal and figurative meanings correspond to each other.

The fox metaphor in Uzbek has undergone a process of semantic shift. In ancient Turkic language and Old Turkic sources, the fox metaphor served to express a positive (meliorative) attitude. In works such as *Devonu lug'otit turk* and *Qutadg'u bilig*, the fox conveyed a positive evaluative meaning. In *Qutadg'u bilig*, for instance, rulers are encouraged to be like a fox, drawing on qualities such as resourcefulness and intelligence.

In contemporary Uzbek and French, however, the fox generally carries a pejorative evaluative meaning. This

demonstrates that metaphorical expressions, while functioning as linguistic means of expression, also change over time, and that subjective evaluation and attitudes toward them evolve across different historical periods.

Zoonym-based metaphors have played an important role in French culture over centuries, reflecting the interaction between humanity and nature. The richness of such metaphors is manifested not only in their linguistic creativity, but also in their ability to incorporate characteristic traits and behaviors observed in animals.

Jean-Pierre Davoine notes that the French writer Émile Zola often used animal-like characteristics to better depict and describe his characters, and that these metaphors and similes served to characterize both the moral and physical traits of individuals (Jean-Pierre Davoine, 1968).

In French culture, people are compared to a "lion" to describe physical appearance (strong, fearless in the face of great danger) as well as character traits (having a high level of self-control, leadership ability, determination, and ambition). This can also be seen in the following example: The aforementioned dauphin was young, was handsome, was strong, and above all (a magnificent source of all royal virtues!) he was the son of the lion of France. (Victor Hugo, *Notre Dame de Paris*, 2016).

In Uzbek culture, zoonyms such as fox, camel, nightingale, bird, chick, and donkey are frequently used to describe both the inner world and external appearance of individuals, whereas in French, zoonyms such as lion, fox, cat, and bird are more commonly employed. This can be explained by the fact that zoomorphisms are closely connected with cultural and national standards and reflect the mentality specific to particular linguocultural contexts.

## Conclusion

The analysis of zoonym-component metaphors shows that zoometaphors are closely linked to the cultural experience, values, historical, and social contexts of Uzbek and French peoples, encompassing not only linguistic but also psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. From a linguocultural perspective, zoometaphors are a powerful means of reflecting the historical, social, cultural, and religious contexts of society.

Such metaphors can also be defined as a secondary naming mechanism based on animal names. Zoomorphisms are associated with cultural and national standards and, in the process of their use in speech, reflect the mentality characteristic of specific

linguocultural contexts.

Cognitive metaphors in Uzbek and French languages have various motivational bases connected with socio-cultural processes. Some zoomorphisms reflect common features in the associative thinking of Uzbek and French peoples. Certain metaphorical shifts demonstrate that changes occur in semantic structures over the course of historical development.

In sources from Old Turkic and earlier Turkic periods, some zoomorphisms expressed a positive (meliorative) evaluation, whereas in modern Uzbek and French these same or similar expressions often carry a pejorative meaning. This shows that metaphorical means of expression change over time, and that subjective evaluative attitudes and perceptions also differ across historical stages.

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