

Nominative and Symbolic Features of Ornithonyms in English and Uzbek: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary linguistics, ornithonyms (bird names) are regarded as linguoculturally marked lexical units reflecting not only biological classification but also symbolic thinking, mythological imagination, and national worldview. This article presents a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek ornithonyms with a focus on their nominative principles and symbolic meanings. The study examines phonetic, morphological, and semantic mechanisms of nomination, as well as metaphorical, cultural, and connotative interpretations of bird names in folklore, religious discourse, and phraseology. The analysis demonstrates that while nominative strategies show universal tendencies based on perceptual features, symbolic meanings are culturally specific and shaped by historical, religious, and cognitive factors. The research contributes to comparative linguistics, linguoculturology, and translation studies.

Keywords: Ornithonyms, nomination, symbolism, linguoculture, metaphor, English, Uzbek, mythology, comparative study

I. INTRODUCTION

The interrelation between language and culture occupies a central place in modern linguistic research. Lexical units naming elements of the natural world function as repositories of cultural memory and collective experience. Among them, ornithonyms

represent a particularly rich linguocultural layer, since birds have traditionally been perceived as mediators between the earthly and the divine worlds [1]. In many cultures, birds symbolize freedom, soul, wisdom, love, and transcendence, which explains their frequent appearance in mythology, folklore, religious texts, and literary works [2]. In English and Uzbek, ornithonyms demonstrate a dual nature: they serve as nominative units denoting concrete species and as symbolic signs expressing abstract concepts and emotional evaluations. Comparative study of these units allows us to identify universal cognitive mechanisms of nomination as well as culture-specific symbolic models shaped by national traditions and belief systems [3].

2. NOMINATIVE FEATURES OF ORNITHONYMS

Nomination is understood as the linguistic process of assigning names to objects based on their salient features. In both English and Uzbek, ornithonyms are formed according to several dominant principles. One of the most productive mechanisms is onomatopoeic nomination, where bird names imitate natural sounds. For instance, English “cuckoo” and Uzbek *kakku* reflect the acoustic perception of the bird’s call, illustrating a universal phonosemantic strategy [4]. Morphological nomination is based on external appearance or function. The English compound “kingfisher” refers to the bird’s feeding behavior, while the Uzbek *zarg’aldoq* derives from its golden coloration. Such examples demonstrate how visual and functional features motivate lexical naming [5]. In addition, habitat-based and behavioral characteristics also play an important role in ornithonym formation in both languages [6].

3. SYMBOLIC AND CONNOTATIVE MEANINGS OF ORNITHONYMS

Beyond their literal meanings, ornithonyms acquire symbolic and connotative values through cultural interpretation. In English culture, the owl traditionally symbolizes wisdom and rational knowledge, a concept rooted in classical mythology and later

reinforced by Western educational traditions [7]. In contrast, Uzbek folklore often associates the owl with solitude or misfortune, reflecting different mythological perceptions and environmental experiences [8]. Birds such as the nightingale (bulbul) occupy a central symbolic position in both cultures. In Uzbek classical poetry, the bulbul represents passionate love and spiritual longing, while in English literature the nightingale symbolizes lyrical beauty and melancholic reflection [9]. These symbolic differences highlight the role of cultural context in shaping semantic extensions of ornithonyms.

4. ORNITHONYMS IN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

Phraseological units containing ornithonyms reveal stable metaphorical models and national specificity. Expressions such as “as proud as a peacock” in English and *tovusdek mag‘rur* in Uzbek demonstrate parallel evaluative metaphors based on shared visual associations [10]. At the same time, idioms like “a bird in a cage” and *qafasdagi qush* convey universal concepts of restricted freedom and emotional confinement [11]. However, some phraseological uses are culture-specific and cannot be translated literally, which poses challenges for translation studies and intercultural communication [12]. In English phraseological and metaphorical usage, the “heron” is commonly associated with patience, solitude, and quiet observation. This symbolism is motivated by the bird’s characteristic still posture and slow, deliberate movements while hunting. Metaphorically, the heron may describe a calm, reserved individual who prefers observation to active involvement. Such associations reflect a broader cultural tendency to interpret stillness and silence as signs of wisdom and self-control [13]. In Uzbek linguacultural, however, the “heron” does not function as a stable symbolic or phraseological unit. Similar meanings are usually conveyed through descriptive expressions referring to composure or restraint rather than through ornithonym-based imagery, which highlights the culture-specific nature of this metaphor. The “rook” occupies a distinctive position in English phraseology due to its metaphorical association with deception and exploitation.

The verb “to rook” means to cheat or swindle someone, demonstrating how ornithonyms can develop metaphorical meanings shaped by social experience and historical usage rather than by physical appearance alone [14]. This negative evaluative meaning has no direct ornithonym-based equivalent in Uzbek, where ideas of deception are typically expressed through verbs and idioms unrelated to bird imagery. This asymmetry illustrates the challenges posed by culture-bound ornithonym metaphors in translation. The *cuckoo* is one of the most semantically productive ornithonyms in English figurative language. It is widely used to denote irrationality, eccentricity, or mental instability, as seen in expressions such as “to be cuckoo.” This metaphor originates from the bird’s distinctive call and its unusual nesting behavior, particularly brood parasitism, which has long attracted attention in folklore and cultural narratives [15]. In Uzbek linguoculture, although the bird itself is known, it does not function as a conventional metaphor for madness or eccentricity. Instead, such meanings are conveyed through human-centered evaluative language, further emphasizing the culturally conditioned character of ornithonym-based symbolism.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek ornithonyms confirms that bird names function as complex linguistic signs integrating nominative, symbolic, and cultural dimensions. While nominative mechanisms in both languages are largely universal and grounded in perceptual observation of the natural world, the symbolic meanings attached to ornithonyms are culturally conditioned and reflect distinct historical, religious, and cognitive models. The findings demonstrate that English linguoculture tends to develop metaphorical meanings through observable behavioral features of birds, resulting in a broader and more flexible system of ornithonym-based metaphors. In contrast, Uzbek linguoculture reveals a more selective and tradition-oriented symbolic framework, where stable metaphorical meanings are primarily associated with culturally significant birds rooted in folklore, literary heritage, and ethical values. This

difference highlights the role of cultural continuity and collective memory in shaping symbolic interpretation. The study further underscores the importance of ornithonyms as a valuable source for understanding linguistic worldview and intercultural semantics. By examining how bird names encode moral values, emotional states, and social attitudes, the research reveals deeper connections between language, culture, and cognition. Awareness of these culturally embedded meanings is particularly significant for comparative linguistics and translation studies, as it helps prevent semantic distortion and promotes more accurate intercultural communication. Overall, the analysis confirms that ornithonyms are not merely lexical designations of fauna but culturally saturated linguistic units that reflect how different societies conceptualize the world around them. Future research may expand this perspective by applying corpus-based or diachronic approaches to further explore the dynamic interaction between language, culture, and symbolic thought.

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