



ANTONYMY IN ANIMAL NAMES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Annotation. *Antonymy, a fundamental aspect of semantics, plays a crucial role in structuring lexical relations in the English language. This article explores the presence of antonymy in the domain of animal names, focusing on how these oppositional pairs reflect linguistic patterns and cultural perceptions. The study categorizes antonymic animal names based on different criteria: size, behavior, habitat, and symbolic meanings. Additionally, it highlights instances where antonymy in animal names carries metaphorical or idiomatic significance.*

Аннотация. *Антонимия, являясь фундаментальным аспектом семантики, играет важную роль в структурировании лексических отношений в английском языке. В данной статье рассматривается наличие антонимии в сфере названий животных, с акцентом на то, как эти оппозиционные пары отражают языковые закономерности и культурные представления. Исследование классифицирует антонимичные названия животных по различным критериям: размер, поведение, среда обитания и символическое значение. Кроме того, подчеркиваются случаи, когда антонимия в названиях животных приобретает метафорическое или идиоматическое значение.*

Annotatsiya. *Antonimiya, semantikaning asosiy jihatlaridan biri sifatida, ingliz tilida leksik munosabatlarni shakllantirishda muhim rol o'ynaydi. Ushbu maqolada hayvon nomlari sohasida antonimiya mavjudligi ko'rib chiqilib, ushbu qarama-qarshi juftliklarning til qonuniyatlari va madaniy tasavvurlarni qanday aks ettirishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot hayvon nomlarining antonim juftliklarini turli mezonlar asosida tasniflaydi: o'lcham, xulq-atvor, yashash muhiti va ramziy ma'nolari. Shuningdek, hayvon nomlarida antonimiya metaforik yoki idiomatik ma'no kasb etgan holatlarga e'tibor qaratiladi.*

Introduction. Antonymy, a fundamental concept in semantics, refers to the lexical relationship between words that express opposite or contrasting meanings. This phenomenon plays a crucial role in structuring vocabulary, aiding in linguistic categorization, and shaping cognitive perception. Antonyms are typically classified into several types, including gradable antonyms (“big” with “small”), complementary antonyms (“alive” with “dead”), and relational antonyms (“predator” with “prey”). While antonymy has been extensively studied in adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, its presence in nouns, particularly in the domain of animal names, has received significantly less attention from linguists. This study seeks to explore the manifestation of antonymy in animal nomenclature in English, analyzing how oppositional relationships emerge based on various linguistic and cultural factors. Animal names, unlike adjectives and verbs, often carry fixed semantic identities,



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making their antonymic pairs more complex and less conventional. The classification of antonymic animal names can be based on several criteria, including:

1. Size-based oppositions (“elephant” with “mouse”)
2. Behavioral contrasts (“hawk” with “dove” – aggression with peace)
3. Habitat distinctions (“land animals” with “marine animals”)
4. Symbolic and metaphorical meanings (“lion” with “lamb” – strength with meekness)

Beyond their literal meanings, antonymic pairs in animal names also play a crucial role in figurative language, idioms, and metaphors. For example, in English, the phrase “a lion in battle, a lamb in peace” metaphorically contrasts courage and gentleness, demonstrating how animal names acquire extended meanings beyond their zoological classification. Similarly, the opposition between “fox” and “sheep” is often used to contrast cunningness with innocence in literature and everyday speech. By examining these patterns, this study aims to highlight the semantic and cultural significance of antonymy in animal names, providing insights into how oppositional pairs function in both literal and figurative contexts.

Materials and methods. Many researchers have explored the concept of antonymy. Z.U.Abdualieva, explores the lexical-semantic relationships of animal names in Russian and Uzbek. Among the key findings, the author indicates that hyponymic-equonymic relationships have been observed in domestic animal names, including cows, horses, sheep, camels, dogs, and cats. It had been noted that words related to horses, for instance, were classified into distinct categories, such as мерин (gelding), жеребец (stallion), and кобыла (mare). It had been noted that lexical borrowings played a significant role, as Uzbek zoonyms were said to have incorporated words from Arabic, Persian, and Russian, whereas Russian had reportedly borrowed terms from Greek, Latin, and French. Furthermore, it had been suggested that semantic differences existed between the two languages, as certain zoonyms appeared to carry different connotations. An example was said to be the word Выдра (otter) in Russian, which was believed to imply an “ugly woman,” while in Uzbek, *qunduz* was claimed to refer to a “beautiful woman.”

Another fundamental concept discussed in the dissertation was said to be hyponymy, which referred to the hierarchical relationship between general and specific terms. It was mentioned that a hyponym was a more specific term within a broader category (a hyperonym). For example, the hyperonym “cattle” (qoramol in Uzbek, крупный рогатый скот in Russian) included various hyponyms such as:

- Cow (sigir in Uzbek, корова in Russian)



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- Bull (buqa in Uzbek, бык in Russian)
- Calf (buzoq in Uzbek, телёнок in Russian)

Similarly, it had been noted that the hyperonym “dog” (it in Uzbek, собака in Russian) had hyponyms such as:

- Male dog (erkak it in Uzbek, кобель in Russian)
- Puppy (kuchuk in Uzbek, щенок in Russian)

Abdualieva Z. U. had pointed out that many zoonymic terms were difficult to translate due to semantic nuances and cultural differences between Russian and Uzbek. It was noted that certain animal names carried symbolic meanings in one language but not in the other. For instance:

- Fox (tulki in Uzbek, лиса in Russian) was metaphorically used to describe a cunning person in both languages.

- Wolf (bo‘ri in Uzbek, волк in Russian) symbolized strength and danger in Uzbek, while in Russian, it was more associated with hunger and wilderness.

Magomedova M.A. explores the lexical-semantic adaptation of Kumyk borrowings in the Dargin language, focusing on their integration into the linguistic system and their functional roles. It indicates that animal names (zoonyms) formed an essential thematic layer of vocabulary, which was particularly susceptible to cross-linguistic transfer and adaptation. The researcher was believed to have noted that zoonyms easily integrate into different languages, as they reflect common real-world referents that people need to name and describe. The study was said to have confirmed that the etymology of many examined zoonyms supported this claim, showing that borrowed animal names underwent phonetic, morphological, and semantic changes while becoming part of the Dargin lexicon. The researcher also pointed out that zoonyms contributed to the development of semantic microstructures, such as synonymy, homonymy, polysemy, and antonymy, which played a crucial role in the overall organization of the lexical system.

Additionally, it was mentioned that the functional-semantic microstructures of zoonyms demonstrated equonymic (parallel) and hyponymic (hierarchical) relationships. For instance, within the semantic field of camel terminology, the study had observed distinctions such as:

- “Ахта туя” (castrated camel)
- “Айри туя” (Bactrian camel)
- “Лук” (male dromedary camel)



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In Russian, it was said that the term “верблю́д” (camel) functioned as a hyperonym, while “верблю́дица” (female camel) and “верблю́жонок” (baby camel) were considered hyponyms.

Discussion and results. Several types of antonymy can be observed in English animal names:

1. **Size-based antonymy:** Some animal names form oppositional pairs based on size differences. For example:

- Elephant with mouse
- Whale with minnow

2. **Predator-prey antonymy:** Certain animals are lexically opposed due to their ecological roles, such as:

- Cat with mouse
- Hawk with rabbit

3. **Habitat-based antonymy:** Some pairs reflect contrasting living environments:

- Land with water: camel with dolphin
- Domestic with wild: dog with wolf

4. **Symbolic and cultural antonymy:** Some animal names hold symbolic meanings in literature, mythology, and idiomatic expressions:

- Lion (strength, bravery) with sheep (weakness, meekness)
- Fox (cunning) with bear (strength, clumsiness)

5. **Gender-based antonymy:** In some cases, antonymic pairs arise from gender distinctions in animals:

- Rooster with hen
- Bull with cow

Antonymy in animal names extends beyond literal meanings into idiomatic and metaphorical expressions in English. For instance:

- “To fight like cat and dog” (indicating conflict between opposites)
- “The lion and the lamb shall lie together” (symbolizing peace between adversaries)

Conclusion. Antonymy in animal names serves as a significant linguistic and cognitive phenomenon, reflecting natural, ecological, and cultural oppositions embedded in language. These oppositional pairs not only highlight contrasts in size, behavior, habitat, and symbolic meaning but also contribute to the broader semantic structure of English vocabulary. By analyzing such antonymic relationships, linguists gain deeper insights into how language categorizes the natural world and how human



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perception influences lexical choices. The study of antonymy in animal names enhances our understanding of lexical relationships and their role in meaning construction within the English language. As antonymic structures are found across various languages and cultures, future research may further explore how different linguistic traditions categorize animals in oppositional pairs. Such investigations could provide valuable insights into cross-linguistic semantic patterns, cognitive linguistics, and the influence of cultural perspectives on language development.

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