

ZOONYM PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AS HATE SPEECH IN YOUTH VOCABULARY

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Abstract

Phrasemes with a zoonymic component represent a very significant segment in the phraseological fund of a language. The term zoonym is actually a general noun that is used to name an animal. However, zoonyms as lexical components have the ability to connect with another lexeme within the phraseme. When such linking takes place, the zoonym loses its basic lexical meaning. With that, the zoonym no longer denotes a specific animal, but acquires a new function. The zoonym becomes a metaphor, the breakdown of which leads to the discovery of certain character traits, mental characteristics, external characteristics, or emotional states that relate to man. Such properties of zoonyms speak of their high productivity in the formation of phraseological units. Zoonyms very easily become an integral part of young people's speech, especially in everyday colloquial communication. Following these, we detected several phraseological compositions in which a zoonym is used, with the aim of indicating some characteristic of the one to whom the phraseological unit is addressed. The use of zoonyms in phrasemes often initiates direct or indirect speech in which hate can be recognized. Being aware that hate speech is becoming a common occurrence in language communication (oral or written), we did research involving students. The research gave solid results that in the future can be an impetus for deeper research on this topic.

Keywords: *Zoonyms, phraseological units, young people, hate speech.*

1. Introduction

The human world and the animal world have always been in a direct and inextricable relationship. Animals are the first and closest neighbors of man since ancient times. Fearing them, man respected them and elevated them to the level of a cult. Ancient religions created lasting cults built on the images of animals, and remnants of them still exist today. In contemporary context, remnants of such cults remain and they function in their symbolic form. Man's closeness with animals left a mark in the language system, that is, in its lexical structure. Various historical, social, and cultural influences have contributed to the creation of lexical units in the language of a culture that are recognizable only for that culture, but also those that have a universal meaning. Due to different language images of the world and different literary sources, many zoonyms contain a certain element of meaning that is understandable only to the bearers of that particular language culture (Мирчевска-Бошева, 2021, p. 305) or that reason, the language structures that function within the framework of phraseological units carry cultural characteristics of the environment in which they were created and represent a kind of linguistic cultural heritage. As an example, we point to the phraseological unit *strong as a lion*, which essentially represents a universal phrase the meaning of which is the same in almost all languages, as opposed to the phraseological unit *boring as a louse/fly*, which is only known for certain language environments, such as Macedonian, for example.

Considering different definitions and interpretations of the term zoonym, we observe it exclusively as a general noun that names an animal regardless of which group it belongs to (reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, fish, birds, mammals and insects). The research of phraseological units with a zoonymic component in Macedonian, English and German showed that it is a question of expressions with a comparative component. Although we are talking about languages that do not belong to the same language family, as well as the fact that they are languages with incomparable spatial representation and continuity, still, in terms of the symbolic meaning of the zoonyms, they show great similarities. The creation of phraseological units with a zoonymic component is conditioned by the creation of associative links of the human-animal relationship. Namely, drawing parallels means a comparative approach to the behavior of man and his approach, compared to the behavior of animals, their appearance, and their natural predispositions.

Table 1.

	English	German	Macedonian
1.	fat as a pig	fressen wie ein Schwein	Дебел како свиња/Свиња
2.	fight like a lion	kämpfen wie ein Löwe	Се бори како лав/Лав
3.	bad as a bitch	/	Лоша како кучка/Кучка
4.	work like a horse	wie ein Pferd arbeiten	Работи како коњ/Коњ
5.	snake in the Grass	eine falsche Schlange	Лоша како змија/Змија
6.	repeat like a parrot	wie ein Papagei nachplappern	Повторува како папагал/Папагал
7.	sly as a fox	so schlau wie ein Fuchs	Итар како лисица/Лисица
8.	stubborn as a donkey	stur wie ein Esel	Тврдоглав како магаре/Магаре
9.	/	/	Здодевен како вошка/ Вошка

During the structural breakdown of phraseological units, it is noticed that the zoonym used within the framework of a given phraseme loses its primary meaning and becomes a symbol. The zoonymic component becomes a metaphor for that human characteristic that is associated with a certain animal: external appearance, way of moving, facial expression, sound expression, etc. Focusing on naming, we have actually come to the conclusion that in many phraseological units with a zoonymic component one can sense hate speech towards the person to whom the phrase is addressed. To insult the other, to humiliate or devalue means to choose a word that will actually be addressed to the other person. Considering animals as his rivals, man often uses them as symbols in speech communication with which he will cause negative feelings in the other person. *Fat as a pig/cow; Bad as a bitch; Legs like a giraffe/stork; Stubborn as a donkey/goat* are only some of the phrases with a zoonymic component used with a pejorative function. In fact, zonyms within phraseology show great potential for forming a linguistic structure with a tendency to be used as hate speech, depending on the context. The negative connotation in which the phraseological units with a zoonymic component are used brings everyday referential speech to the border of hate speech. The external appearance is the most frequently affected.

Table 2.

The zoonym refers to:	Phraseological units with zonyms*
External appearance of a person	<i>strong like a lion, strong like a horse, fat like a pig, fat like a cow, fat like a bear, walks like a mare, big like an elephant, tall like a giraffe, legs like a stork, black like a raven, beautiful like a swan, a short rooster, beautiful like a gazelle, donkey ears</i>
Mental characteristics	<i>calm as a lamb, stubborn as a donkey, stubborn as a goat, slow as a snail, boring as a louse, bad as a dragon, bad as a snake, faithful as a dog, sly as a fox, sly as a monkey.</i>
Behavior, habits, skills	<i>repeat like a parrot, mute like a fish, creeps like a leech, boring like a fly, grabs like an eagle, works like a horse, creeps like a tick</i>
Intellectual capacity	<i>birdbrain, chicken brain, magpie brain, buffalo nerves, ox hide.</i>

*The translation of these phraseological units to English is literal.

The basic characteristics of phrasemes are solid structure, reproducibility, formal organization, idiomatcity, imagery, expressiveness, and connotative meaning. The meaning of the phrase is indicated by an image in the semantic sediment, which can be concrete and complete, part of a story, a parable, but it can also be a person, trait, symbol, toponym, etc. The semantic sediment reveals a motivational signal, that is, a visual message that helps to determine phraseological meaningful units. (Vidović, 2007, p. 405). It is precisely that visual message in phraseological units with a zoonymic component that makes them amenable to analysis in terms of whether or not they emit hate speech.

2. Research methodology

Motivated by the knowledge that zoonyms open opportunities for associative connection with man, his appearance, traits, and behavior, we did this research. The aim of the research was, firstly, to detect from the given language corpus the phraseological units with a zoonymic component and to perceive their frequency, and secondly, to isolate the phraseological units used as hate speech and their representation in the speech of young people. The team of researchers includes a group of professors at the Faculty of Philology from the Departments of Macedonian, English, and German as well as students in the first (first, second, third and fourth year) and second cycle of studies. The research was done on three groups of students studying: Macedonian, English and German. Namely, the students had a specific task to answer a questionnaire on the recognition and use of zoonyms in colloquial speech; in the second questionnaire, the most frequently used phrases according to the results of the first questionnaire were indicated and they were to be detected as hate speech or not. At the end of the research, in the last phase, a register of zoonyms was made that the students use most often both in their mother tongue and in the foreign language they study. *Strong as a lion; works like a horse; fat as a pig; stubborn as a donkey; mute like a fish, repeat like a parrot*, are just some of the phraseological compositions that we detected in students' speech. However, not all of them are used with the intention of directing hate speech towards another person. The conducted research showed that only part of the phrasemes containing zoonyms are used with the intention of directing hate speech towards the other person. The rest are used unconsciously, that is, with an undertone of metaphorical and metonymic meaning.

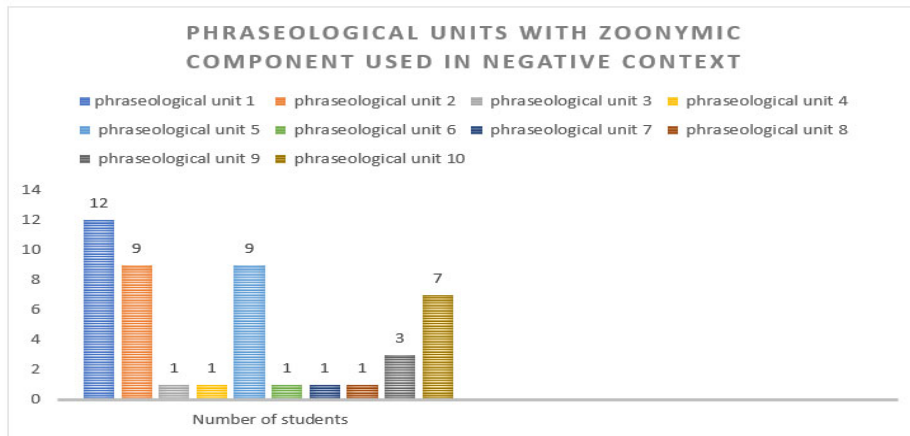
3. Results and interpretation

A total of 45 students from the first and second cycle of studies at the Departments of Macedonian language and literature, English language and literature and German language and literature were included in the research. From the corpus that was at our disposal, which contained texts where the referential function of the language is dominant, we singled out a total of 37 phraseological units with a zoonymic component (See Table no. 2). These are expressions that are most often used when giving a physical description of a person or an assessment of his/her psychological traits, habits, skills, or intellectual capacity. It should be noted that, in each of the mentioned languages (Macedonian, English and German), the phraseological units are with a different percentage of use, which of course depends on the cultural factors of the environment.

In the first phase of the research, the students had the task of answering a questionnaire about the recognition and use of zoonyms with a negative connotation that are represented in colloquial speech. From the results obtained, we prepared a register of phraseological units with a zoonymic component that are most often used in a negative context. The results showed that the largest number of students (12) recognized the phraseological unit *1. M. дебел како свиња, 1.E. fat like a pig, 1. D. fressen wie ein Schwein* as the most frequent in the given language, used in a negative context. (Макаријоска, Л., & Павлеска -Георгиевска Б. 2020, p.190). This phraseological unit, whose zoonymic component indicates the external appearance of a person, is used in Macedonian, German and English with the same meaning, to describe an overweight person.

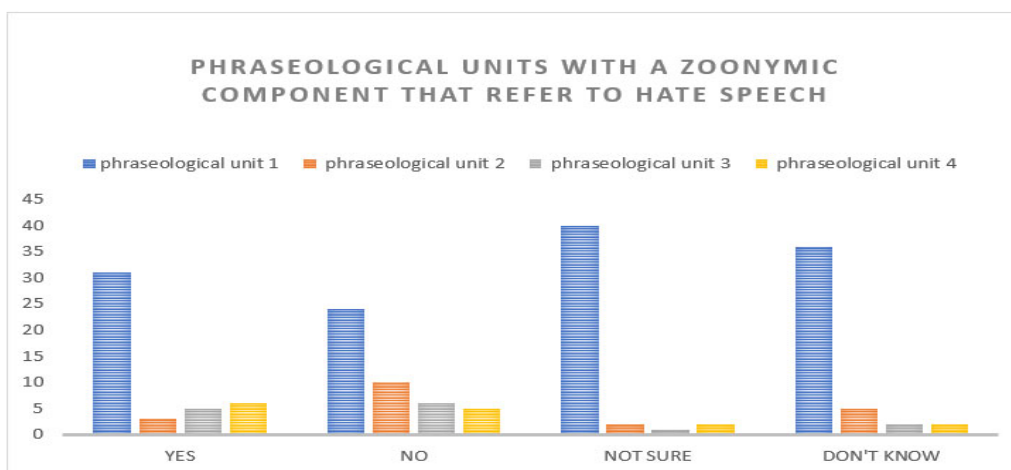
Phraseological units: 3. M. *лош како кучка*, (9 students, with the exception of German language students for whom this phraseological unit is unknown), 5. M. *лоша како змија/Змија*; 5. G. *eine falsche Schlange*; 5. E. *Snake in the grass* and 8. M. *тврдоглав како магаре* (7 students); 8. E. *stubborn as a mule*; 8. G. *stur wie ein Esel* refer to the psychological traits of man and his bad behavior.

Figure 1.



In the second part of the research, the students had the task of pointing out, from the phraseological units with a zoonymic component, those that, according to their conviction and experience, indicate hate speech. The results showed that from the extracted linguistic material, the phraseological units: *fat as a pig*, *stubborn as a donkey*, *bad as a bitch*, *snake in the grass* are those that mostly refer to hate speech directed at the interlocutor (regardless of whether it is a conversation face-to-face or with an intermediary). To the question: "Do these phraseological units indicate hate speech", we got the following results:

Figure 2.



According to the results of the research, out of the total number of students who were included in the research (45), 31 students answered that the zoonymic component in the phraseological unit 1. *fat as a pig* refers to the use of hate speech, 3 answered NO, 5 answered NOT SURE and 6 DON'T KNOW. As for the phraseological unit 2. *stubborn as a donkey*, 24 students recognized it as hate speech, 10 answered NO, 6 with NOT SURE, and 5 with DON'T KNOW. The phraseological unit 3. *snake in the grass*, was recognized as hate speech by 40 students, 2 answered NO, 1 was NOT SURE and 2 said DON'T KNOW, while 4. *bad as a bitch* for 36 respondents was hate speech, 5 answered NO, 2 with NOT SURE, and 2 with DON'T KNOW.

From the above, we can see that the phraseological units with the zoonym snake mostly refer to hate speech, especially directed towards the female gender. This is directly related to the snake as an archetype with high frequency in almost all cultures. Snake as a metaphor for the curse, evil, cunning, greed as a biblical symbol has an uninterrupted continuity in the literary-linguistic tradition of almost all nations. As per the claim that cultural fact is very influential when it comes to language structures and their resistance, the positioning of this zoonym is understandable.

4. Conclusion

From ancient times until today, animals are the closest companions of man. They are part of his environment. Man lived with them, observed them, tried to understand them and learn to live near them. That alone led to the emergence of a large number of similarities in human behavior, in the way humans behave, gesture, articulate, etc. Such similarities are reflected in the language, especially in its lexical layer. Phraseological units with a zoonymic component are strongly expressive, emotional, and deeply metaphorical structures that are very common in referential speech. Man's need to use a word or a phrase that will hurt, humiliate, or delegitimize the interlocutor, prompted the use of zoonyms as the strongest weapon for this. Hence the conclusion that phraseological units with zoonyms in their composition have a strong associative power, but also the potential to motivate hate speech. A person in an affective state, rage or anger very often refers to the linguistic constructions that exist in his language, which contain a zoonym, with the intention of causing negative emotions in the object to which the speech is addressed. The speech of young people is burdened with the use of zoonyms with a pejorative function. Such usage associates hate speech which is becoming more and more prevalent in oral and written communication, especially today in the era of social networks and easy access to space for expression.

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