# Speaking of Animals: A Conceptual analysis of Animal Metaphors in Yoruba

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## Abstract

Figurative expressions, particularly metaphors, play a pivotal role in shaping our interpretation and comprehension of human discourse within a cultural system. In Yoruba culture, the metaphoric use of animal forms an indispensable component of daily life, manifesting in diverse forms, including proverbs, music, oral literature etc. To this end, previous studies have primarily concentrated on the stylistic use of animal-related metaphors in Yoruba language. This paper diverges by using a conceptual/cognitive approach to explore how specific animal terms and their associated concepts are metaphorically employed to represent various facets of human experiences, behaviors, and attributes. Data collection involved a one-week purposive observation and audio-recording of random discussions among Yoruba speakers in Ibadan, consultation with Yoruba language teachers and elderly family members. Audio-recordings were subsequently transcribed to extract all animal-related metaphoric expressions. These metaphors were then analyzed, organized, and categorized according to Lakoff and Johnson's Idealized Cultural or Cognitive Metaphor (ICM) framework. The study demonstrates the existence of conceptual connections between animal attributes and human traits in Yoruba culture as conveyed in twenty metaphorical expressions analyzed. The study also reveals that through the conceptual process of "mapping" across domains, animals in the source domain are used to depict various human experiences, behaviors, both semantically positive and derogatory to humans in the target domain through metaphorical means. This paper concludes that both domestic and non-domestic animals are employed to communicate intricate concepts and ideas via succinct and vivid imagery based on the sociocultural values, beliefs, and general worldview of the Yoruba people.

# 1. Introduction

The Yorùbá have lived in urban civilizations that were structured according to their labor. During the pre-colonial period, the Yoruba people were engaged in farming and hunting as their primary occupations. Even in modern times, a considerable proportion of the Yoruba population still rely on farming and hunting, either as their main source of income or as a recreational activity. This is possible due to the geographical location of their habitat, which spans across the savannah and rain forests. Although rich soil is considered its farming purpose, these areas are also home to a diverse array of animals, both large and small. As a result, farmers and hunters who operate in these regions often encounter various animal species and develop an understanding of their behavior and distinguishing characteristics. These animals serve as both a sources of food and means of income, with some being captured alive and subsequently domesticated or tamed; those that are deemed incapable of being domesticated are either killed and consumed for sustenance or sold for profit. Despite this, it is worth noting that within the Yoruba culture, animals hold significance beyond their subsistence and economic value. In many cases, they are viewed as sources of entertainment and service. For example, domesticated animals such as cats, goats, and dogs are often kept as pets for relaxation, companionship, or for hunting and security purposes. Similarly, horses or donkeys may be kept as a mark of royalty, socioeconomic status, or for sports; while certain animals such as baboons, colobus monkeys, and foxes may serve as a source of entertainment:

> These days, one finds in some Yoruba major towns like Ibadan, a monkey or baboon being transported from one place to another and made to dance and perform acrobatic display for money. (Olateju, 2005, 369).

Hence, it is a surprise in the Yoruba culture that wild animals like lion, leopard and elephant are tamed and kept in zoological gardens in the modern day. This is due to the ancient belief that such animals are untamed. To buttress this, one of the popular proverbs reads that *Oba tó má a m*érin *so kò tí jẹ,* which literary means 'The king that will tame and domesticate the elephant is yet to reign.' (Olateju, 2005)

In our daily conversations, figurative expressions are often used without much attention given to them, as they have become a natural part of our discourse style. Metaphors, especially those relating to animals, are significant in

the interpretation and understanding of human discourse (Yakub, 2019). This stylistic use of language has become a routine in Yoruba culture due to the antecedent of their ancestors as hunters which has consequently provided them with a sound knowledge of the character traits of different domestic as well as wild animals. As a result of this knowledge and keen observation, the use of animal terms or metaphors forms an integral part of most Yoruba proverbs, music, and literature as seen in their familial praise poetry, hunter's poetry, oracle divination and panegyrics as well as other daily interactive discourse. In fact, Babalola (1996) cited in Olateju (2005:369) described the Yoruba language in the following manner:

> …Their tonal and metaphor-saturated language in its ordinary prose form is never far from music in the aural impression it gives, and which has produced an extensive variety of spoken art characteristic of the people (Babalola, 1966:85).

This conversational act, where language is drawn from the domain of animals to express ideas in another domain, is referred to as conceptual metaphor. The purpose of this paper is to conduct a semiotic investigation of animal-related metaphors in Yoruba language. In other words, this paper, using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), looks at the way certain animal and terminologies related to them are metaphorically used to depict various human experiences, behaviors, and attributions; based on the sociocultural values, beliefs, and general worldview of the Yoruba people.

# 2. Literature Review
## 2.1.  The Concept of Metaphor

The study of metaphor can be traced back to Ancient Greece, with Aristotle widely credited as one of, if not, the first philosopher to make an inquiry into the concept of metaphor. Aristotle as cited by Lan (2003:5) describes metaphor as "consisting in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, the transference being either from genus to species or from species to genus or on grounds of analogy." Here, a metaphor is regarded as a form of language use that involves the substitution of one word or phrase for another, based on some underlying similarity between the two. Simply put, a stylistic device that allows us to substitute one word for another with the aim of creating a poetic pleasing language. This explains why Nyanzu (1994:68) cited in Yakub (2015) described metaphor as a rhetoric device and a kind of decoration that is added to an ordinary plane language. Owurasah (2015:92) on the other hand, describes metaphor as a *stylistic* device which makes implicit comparison between persons, things, ideas, or concepts which seems not to

be directly related. ("The Wisdom of Our Forefathers: Animal Metaphors and Imagery in Nzema ...")

Based on the above definitions, it can be said that metaphors are simply a form of linguistic expression, and that their meaning can be analyzed in terms of their underlying literal meaning. For instance, the metaphor "she is a shining star" according to this approach would involve the substitution of the word "star" for the literal meaning of the woman being described, based on the similarity between the characteristics of a star and the characteristics of the woman. Here, the implication is that a metaphor's meaning is not inherent in the words themselves but depends on the context in which it is used. As noted by Lakloff (1992:1) in the traditional view, metaphor is viewed as a "poetic and novel expression in which a concept of a world is used beyond its lexical meaning to reveal the same concept." This means that metaphor is a culturally and contextually specific linguistic issue which does not consider the full complexity of metaphors. This is why scholars who regard metaphors as "cognitive mechanism" argue against that metaphors are not just linguistic expressions but are also cognitive and experiential phenomena that involve the use of imagination and the creation of new connections between ideas. As a result, they argue that a metaphor's meaning cannot be reduced to its underlying literal meaning.

This argument for metaphor is from a Cognitive Linguistic point of view. According to Cambridge Core, cognitive linguistics is "an approach to language study that aims to explore and understand the interactions between language, cognition, and their intersections." ("Cognitive Linguistics - Cambridge Core"). Ungerer and Schmid (1996) on the other hand viewed it as a language approach based on our experience of the world and the way we perceive and conceptualize it. Metaphor has been an important research area in cognitive linguistics for many years. This is due to the perception of metaphor by the cognitivist "as an important tool for understanding how language reflects and shapes human cognition." In fact, it is believed that if cognitive linguistics is the study of ways in which features of language reflect other aspects of human cognition, metaphors provide one of the clearest illustrations of this relationship (Grady, 2007:5). This is possible because of the nature of metaphors which allows us to map concepts from one domain of experience onto another, highlighting similarities and differences between them and helping us to create new meanings and understandings. Mapping as noted by Kövecses (2010:22), is a cognitive process that relates literal meaning to the extended meaning.

Drawing on the theoretical framework of metaphor as a "categorical assertion," metaphor can be understood as more than just a rhetorical device, but this process involves projecting the structures of two or more input mental

spaces onto a distinct "blended" space, which inherits partial structure from the inputs while also generating its own emergent structure (Fauconnier and Turner 2003:183). For instance, the expression "the professor is a snake" creates an imaginative space in which the meanings of "professor" and "snake" are no longer discrete, but instead interact and merge to form a new concept. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2003), it is only through the blend that the intended structure of the metaphor emerges.

## 2.2. Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The current paper is grounded in the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, also known as the Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT), introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their renowned work, "Metaphors We Live By". According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:5), "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." Thus, metaphors function by connecting two conceptual domains, the source domain, and the target domain. This means that a metaphor, as defined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:2), is a "conceptual mapping from one semantic source domain to a different semantic target domain". Metaphors allow us to link two concepts based on shared similarities. A conceptual metaphor is a type of metaphor used to clarify one concept in terms of another related concept, by mapping the structure and features of one domain of knowledge, known as the source domain, onto another domain, known as the target domain.

As Semino (2008:5) observed, conceptual metaphors are systematic sets of correspondences, or "mappings" across conceptual domains, whereby a "target" domain is partly structured in terms of a different "source" domain. Supporting this notion, Mouraz et al (2013:100) said that metaphors can create a conceptual relationship between a given source domain and a respective target domain, in which inferences are made from the properties of the source domain to understand the target through the removal of an explicitly comparative particle. One general characteristic of all these definitions is that the source domain includes a set of tangible and familiar concepts, such as objects, actions, and spatial relationships, that we have learned through our experiences and interactions with the physical world. In contrast, the target domain is typically abstract and intangible, such as emotions, ideas, or relationships.

The proponents of CMT argue that metaphor is an essential tool for understanding abstract concepts because concepts such as purpose, meaning, and identity are not directly perceptible through our senses. Therefore, we rely on metaphors to comprehend them. The metaphorical link between the source domain and the target domain creates a mapping between the two domains that enables us to understand and discuss abstract concepts in terms of concrete

and familiar ones. This technique allows for leveraging one notion to understand another by emphasizing their similarities. For example, "love is a journey" is a conceptual metaphor that maps the structure and characteristics of a physical journey onto the experience of falling in love. The source domain of "journey" is used to understand the target domain of "love" by highlighting the notion of progress, obstacles, and destinations (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

Kövecses (2002:23) describes a conceptual domain as "any coherent organization of experience". Here, he noted that some of the notable source domains that are used in mapping metaphorical concepts are: health and illness, the human body, games and sports, movement, and direction, light and darkness, animals etc., while the common target domains are: emotion, desire, morality, politics, economy, human characteristics etc. This follows Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) submission that metaphors are perversive in everyday life not just in language but also in thought and action and our ordinary conceptual system in terms of which we think and act.

Conceptual metaphors are employed in various areas of language, allowing for the expression of complex ideas in simple terms and drawing on our prior knowledge and experiences to create meaning. They are linguistic tools that aid in organizing our thoughts, evaluating our reasoning, and categorizing our experiences. By mapping ideas from one source domain to another target domain, conceptual metaphors create powerful and relatable metaphors that allow us to understand complex abstract topics in terms of more familiar concrete topics. This essay aims to illustrate the pivotal role played by animal metaphors in shaping our understanding of human characteristics and sociocultural phenomena in our daily lives. To achieve this objective, we propose the Conceptual Metaphor Theory as a suitable theoretical framework to underpin our study. We chose this theory based on its ability to capture the complex nature of metaphorical mappings between different domains of thought, particularly between the source domain of animals and the target domain of human experience.

## 2.3  Animal Metaphors

The use of animal metaphor is perversive and well documented in various languages, (Muhammed & Rashid, 2014); their cultural significance is specific to the context and varies across different linguistic and cultural domains. Metaphorical expressions draw upon the Idealized Cultural Model (ICM) of "people are animal" metaphors, which use our observations of animal behavior and traits to understand human behavior in analogous terms (Kövecses, 2010:22). In this section of the essay, a comprehensive analysis of previous studies that explore the use of animal metaphors will be done.

While there are varying definitions of animal metaphors, this study aligns with Palmatier's (1995) definition, which characterizes animal metaphors as words, phrases, or sentences that express a similarity or resemblance between an individual or object and a specific animal or animal class. Additionally, Rouhi and Mohand (2011) suggest that for a statement to be considered an animal metaphor, the animal's name or attributes must be used in the source domain, rather than the target domain. Wei (2010) categorizes animal metaphors based on the mapping of animal features onto human characteristics. This mapping can be based on an animal's behavior, actions, or appearance, which are then transferred logically or directly to humans in the target domain. Therefore, every animal metaphor involves a direct or logical transfer of animal characteristics from the source domain to humans in the target domain, leading to a system of metaphoric mapping (Ervitis, 2012).

Liu (2013) compared animal proverbs in Chinese and English, highlighting similarities and differences in how certain animals are depicted metaphorically. First, analysis of the data revealed that the following animals, namely, dragon, dog, cat, tiger, lion, cattle, and bee, were often cited in proverbs from both cultures and languages. The study found that dogs are viewed as inferior in Chinese culture as they are domesticated animal bred to consume waste. Consequently, they are employed metaphorically to symbolize individuals who cannot change their negative behavior. In contrast, cat metaphors as used in Chinese proverbs represent righteousness and leadership potential in Chinese proverbs as they do not allow mice to ruin anything. As a result, the cat is likened to strong leaders with potential. While cat metaphors in English proverbs on the other hand often portray them as malicious and lazy as seen in the metaphor "the cat will eat fish but would not wet its feet. Which mapped cats to individuals who are lazy and greedy (Liu, 2013: 1848).

In the African context, Kobia (2016) conducted a purposive study of 27 Swahili proverbs related to chickens using the conceptual metaphor theory framework. The study which aimed to understand the underlying societal meanings conveyed using chicken metaphors found that the hen, cock, and chick in Swahili proverbs were metaphorically mapped onto women, men, and children, respectively. Through this mapping, chicken metaphors in Swahili proverbs conveyed positive attitudes such as caring, protective, motherly, gentle, creativity, honesty, and hard work. However, negative human characteristics such as cowardice, foolishness, ignorance, susceptibility to manipulation, and deceitful behaviors were also projected from the behaviors of chickens as concealed in Swahili proverbs. The study further noted that chicken metaphors in Swahili proverbs were deeply embedded in the culture and environment of the people and were used to convey societal meanings that depict all sorts of human behavior. The paper concluded that Swahili proverbs were used

metaphorically as a repository of traditional wisdom of the people and a vehicle to articulate and propagate their socio-cultural worldview.

Barasa and Opande (2017) investigated the use of animal metaphors in the portrayal of women in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. Utilizing ethnographic techniques, the researchers interviewed five participants from the Bukusu and Gusii communities, all aged between 60 and 70. The study analyzed 48 proverbs to assess how women are perceived within the two cultures, applying both the conceptual metaphor theory and the feminist critical discourse analysis theory. The authors revealed that women are often likened to birds, domestic animals, wild creatures, and lifeless objects in the proverbs of Bukusu and Gusii populations. Through metaphorical associations, women are depicted as frail, inferior, and vulnerable to male exploitation and rejection. The proverbs indicate that women are marginalized and disadvantaged in decision-making processes.

Gachugi et. al (2018) examined the use of domestic and wild animal metaphors in Gĩkũyũ with their focus on the construction and semiotic significance of metaphors relating to cows, goat, pig and squirrel. In the study, they discovered that metaphors with the four animals are the most used and they are often used in a derogatory manner. Here, they noted that there is a systematic mapping of animals in the source domain to give a derogatory remark in the target domain of human characteristics in a way that implies the ICM of those animal metaphors as negativity.

Olateju (2005) discovered in his stylistic analysis of animal metaphors that Yoruba animal metaphors are shrouded in anthropomorphism because animals are ascribed actions, behaviors, and attributes which are only proper for human beings. Here, he claimed that reasons for this anthropomorphic nature of metaphors in Yoruba is because of the parallel created between animals and human due to their quest for profound understanding of the nature and emotions of humans through animals. This further corroborates the claims by Abimbola (1976:195) that anthropomorphic metaphors are common to Negro African people. It is noteworthy to understand that unlike in many other languages, the source and use of animal metaphors in Yoruba are heavily based on cultural and psychological factors, such as naming culture, animal behavior and attributes, and Yoruba oral literature, which includes familial praise poetry, hunter's poetry, oracle divination, and panegyrics, among others. Furthermore, animal metaphors in Yoruba are often employed to offer homage and compliments when used deliberately, but when used in an unpleasant manner, they seek to ridicule, chastise, criticize, or describe undesirable aspects of a person's character.

Akinyemi (2015) conducted a study on the use of animal metaphors in Yoruba riddles. In the study, the author observed that Yoruba culture often

defines human characteristics by juxtaposing them with, and recognizing similarities to, animals in their natural surroundings. By analyzing 22 riddles containing animal metaphors, the study found a direct correlation between physical features, traits, vocalizations, and uncommon characteristics of animals and human entities. The animal metaphors prevalent in the riddles included domestic and wild animals such as chicken and rooster, dog, ant, wasp, snake, parrot, and elephant.

## 3.  Methods, Data Analysis, and Discussion

Previous studies on the use of animal metaphors in Yoruba language have focused on analyzing their use in oral literature such as riddles, proverbs, and hunters' poetry from a stylistic perspective. To this end, this section of the paper presents and analyzes the metaphorical use of animals in everyday discourse following the Idealized Cultural or Cognitive Metaphor (ICM) framework proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

### 3.1.  Methods

This study focused on animal metaphors in the everyday conversations of the Yoruba people in Nigeria. Data collection involved a one-week purposive observation of random discussions among Yoruba speakers in the suburbs of Ibadan, as well as consultations with Yoruba teachers and elderly family members. Conversations were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed to extract the metaphors. These metaphors were then analyzed, organized, and categorized according to the ICM framework.

### 3.2.  Discussion

Drawing from the different animal metaphors analyzed in this study, the schematic illustration presented below facilitates the concise classification and synthesis of the ICM that we have discovered for animal metaphors in Yoruba culture:
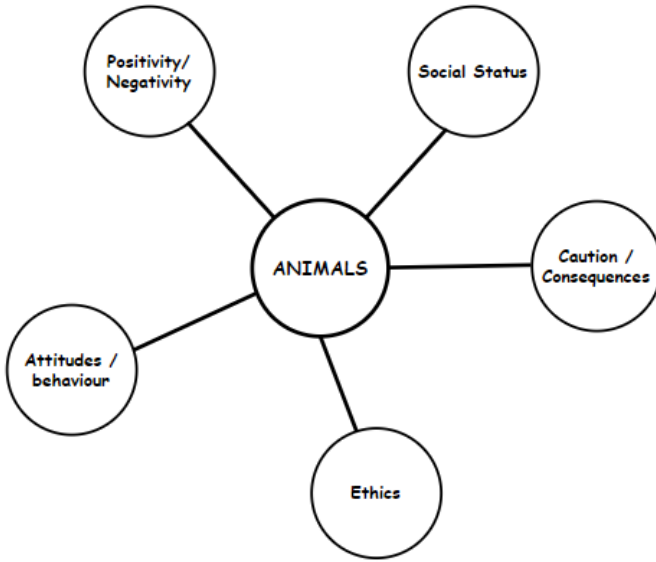
**Fig 1:** ICM of animal metaphors in Yoruba

For deeper understanding of this ICM, we have provided a profound explanation of each target domain of the ICM cluster in the discussion below:

## A.    Metaphors related to ethics and norms.

This classification pertains to the use of animal metaphors within the thematic or target domains of corruption, commitment, theft, and exploitation as noted in our data.

1.   **Animal :** Àwòdì (Hawk)

Àwòdì *jẹun èpè sanra*
'Àwòdì eat curse get fat.'
The hawk gets fat by eating cursed food."
**One who sustains themself by exploiting or stealing from others.**

This is one of the deepest and most used Yoruba animal metaphors because it is deeply rooted in the cultural notion that a hawk feed fast by stealing chicks off the back of their mother. Here, the source domain of the hawk feeding habit (stealing) is mapped into the target domain of exploitation or cheating others. This is often used to describe someone well known to exploit others when they are in a partnership and to describe someone who steals from others.

2.   **Animal :** Ẹyẹlé (pigeon)

ìfẹ́ *ẹyẹle ni mo ní sí e*
'love pigeon is I have for you.'
**"**My love for you is here to stay."
**Commitment and loyalty.**

The given saying is among the most powerful metaphorical expressions in Yoruba culture. This is due to the animal used in the metaphor, which is widely recognized as the most devoted and persevering companion in the Yoruba cultural milieu. It may be noted that the love of a pigeon is considered equivalent to that of a mother or agape love, as it is commonly held that "come rain or shine, a pigeon never deserts its owner," with death being the only exception. In this regard, the source domain of a pigeon's loyalty trait is mapped onto the target domain of commitment, to convey the level of loyalty and love that an individual can give to their partner. This may be regarded as a sincere pledge of commitment to an individual.

3.   **Animal:** Àgùntàn (sheep)

Àgùntàn tó bá bájá rìn yóò jẹgbẹ́
'Sheep with dog walk will eat feaces'
"The sheep that befriend a dogs will surely eat dirt."
**Corruption or contamination**

This metaphorical construct draws upon the behavioral traits and feeding patterns shown by sheep. According to the cultural beliefs of the Yoruba people, sheep are characterized as being docile and amiable in contrast to dogs, which are often considered to be a source of public disturbance owing to their tendency to bark at night. Moreover, dogs are perceived as indiscriminate feeders, while sheep are recognized for their circumspect consumption patterns and propensity to avoid overindulgence. In this metaphor, the source

domain of a sheep is mapped onto the target domain of corruption, to demonstrate the consequences that arise when a sheep coalesces with dogs.

## B.   Metaphors related to caution and consequences.

This classification pertains to the use of animal metaphors within the thematic or target domains of warning, caution, troubles, and consequences as noted in our data.

4.   **Animal :** Ẹ̀lúlùú (coucal)

*Sóra ko máà ba di Ẹ̀lúlùú*
'careful be not turn to coucal.'
"Be careful not to invite problems for yourself."
**Caution and consequences**

The metaphorical statement stems from the cultural belief that attributes the ability to invoke rainfall solely to the coucal bird. It is worth noting, however, that this attribution is accompanied by a sense of irony, as the bird in question invariably becomes drenched by the very rain it summons. This metaphorical trope serves as a cautionary device, warning individuals of the potential repercussions of their conduct. Here, the source domain of the Coucal, which beckons rain upon itself, is mapped onto the target domain of consequences pertaining to our actions.

5.   **Animal:** Ìrẹ̀ (cricket)

*Ìrẹ̀ ń rùn*
'The cricket is smelling.'
"A gossiper is near / A snitch is nearby."
**To be cautious of people around.**

This metaphor is based on the olfactory observation of the characteristics of the crickets. As known among the Yoruba, the crickets have some offensive smell that is easily dispersed into the atmosphere. As a result, the source domain of the smelly nature of the cricket, which is often unpleasant, is mapped into the target domain of caution based on the offensive and intolerable nature of a gossiper. This metaphor is often used to provide warning and caution about the presence of a snitch so that other interlocuters would be cautious of the information they divulge.

**6.   Animal:** Agbọ́n (wasp)

*Ọmọ naa ti forí fọ́lé agbọ́n*
'Child the has use head break nest wasp.'
"The boy has used his head to break a wasp nest."
**To commit an offence / To be in trouble.**

This is another extremely popular metaphoric statement in Yoruba. Although the action here is carried out on the wasp's nest, the focus is on the retributive action of the wasp. In Yoruba, the wasp is feared for the pain and irritation caused so they try to avoid its nest as much as they can. Hence, to break a wasp's nest with one's head is to invite trouble as it is often said that "a wasp does not discriminate, it stings both mother and offspring at the same time." In this metaphor, the source domain of a wasp is mapped onto the target domain of caution. This metaphor is often used to caution an individual about the repercussion of his activities or actions.

**7.   Animal:** Kẹ́tẹ́kẹ́tẹ́ (Camel)

*a.   Máà dẹ́rù pamí, n kìí se kẹ́tẹ́kẹ́tẹ́*
'Don't put load on me, not I am a camel.'
**Do not overload me with your issues**.

*b.   Má somí di kẹ́tẹ́kẹ́tẹ́*
'do not me turn a camel'
"Don't turn me to camel."
**Do not over stress me, I might break down.**

This metaphorical saying is used by the Yoruba people to avoid unnecessary involvement or to create boundaries when it comes to helping others with their issues. The source domain of the camel as a cart used in carrying load is directly compared to a human subject helping or getting involved in other people's case. In addition, the source domain of the camel's ability to do stressful duties is also mapped into the target domain of caution and warnings about an individual's capabilities depending on the contextual significance as seen in (7b). In general, the source domain of the camel as a helper is mapped into the source domain of warning to caution people about how much they can get involved in other people's affairs or about how much they can take.

8.  **Animal:** Ẹkùn (Tiger)

   *Yíyọ́ ẹkùn, tojo kọ́*
   'Slowing tiger afraid is not.'
   "The slowness of a tiger is not due to fear."
   **To be cautious**

This metaphor is based on the 'catwalk' movement of large cats in the jungle. As noted amongst Yoruba hunters, a tiger is said to move slower than normal and be as silent as possible when it is about to attack its pray. The source domain of the tiger being ferocious and yet tactical predator, in terms of moving slowly in order not to alert its prey in the jungle, is mapped into the target domain of caution. This metaphorical statement is often used to tell people to be cautious of others around them and not to try to undermine people who hardly talk nor reveal their plans.

## C.  Metaphors related to attitudes and behaviors.

This classification pertains to the use of animal metaphors within the thematic or target domains of individual character traits such as humility, intimidation, ignorance, promiscuity, among others.

9.  **Animal:** Ẹyẹ Ìbáákà - Senegal canary

   *Aládé ni Ẹyẹ ìbáákà láàrìn àwọn ọ̀rẹ́ rẹ̀*
   'Aládé is bird Senegal canary among them friend is'.
   "Aládé is the Senegal canary amongst his group of friends."
   **Aládé is the most talkative amongst his friends.**

In this metaphor, the source domain of the ever noisy or talking nature of the canary bird is mapped into the source domain of the conversational characteristics of Alade (noun) amongst his friends. Here, it is worthy of note that the Yoruba believes that no specie of bird makes noise nor talks like the Senegal canary does. As a result, they would often make a direct comparison between a person who talks a lot and the canary bird. This comparison is often done in a derogatory manner because the Senegal canary is known to be annoying with its ever-present noise.

10. **Animal:** Àparò (Quail)
   *Àparò kan ọ́ ga jù kan, à fi èyi tó bá gun orí ebè*
   'quail one not tall than other, except one climb that the ridge'
   "We are more alike than we are different."
   **Humility**

This metaphor is based on the physical appearance of quails believed to be equal in height. In the Yoruba cultural settings, quails are known to be identical in size and height to the point that they are often identified by farmers based on whatever items they are perched on. As a result, the source domain of a quail having same height with its counterparts is mapped into the target domain of humility to tell people that no one is created better than the other. This statement is mostly used when someone is being power drunk or trying to use his/her status at the detriment of others. In other words, the metaphor is used to remind people of their humble background and the need to be humble.

11.  **Animal:** Òròmọdìẹ (chick) & àwòdì (hawk)

*Òròmọdìẹ ò màwòdì, ìyá ẹ̀ ló màṣá*
'chick don't know hawk, mother the know it.'
"The chick doesn't know the hawk, only the mother does".
**To be ignorant or to be lackadaisical**

This is one of the rare metaphorical statements in Yoruba that combines two or more animals. In this statement, the focus is on *òròmọdìẹ* (the chick) and not *àwòdì* (the hawk). This metaphor banks on the fact that hawks steal chicks that wonder off the sight of their mother hen. In this metaphor, the source domain of a chick is mapped into the target domain of ignorance or lackadaisical. This is statement is logically possible because chicks, who often roam around with their mother hen, are not aware of the danger posed by preying hawks that hover over them in the sky.

12.  **Animal :** Ajá (dog)

*Akọ ajá àbìrìn àrè ni Solape*
'male dog that around walk is Solape'
"Solape is a stray dog."
**To be promiscuous or wayward**

This metaphor portrays the notion of Yoruba people about the domestication of dogs as well as the sexual orientation of dogs. It is believed dogs are one of the easiest animals to domesticate due to their attentiveness and quick sense of recognition which makes it easy for them to relate with their owners and find their houses. However, dogs are known to lack sexual discipline because they can travel miles to mate during their heat period. This metaphor is an attestation to such observation and general convention on the sexual characteristics of dogs among the Yoruba. Here, the source domain of a dog lacking sexual disciple is mapped into the target domain of promiscuity and

sometimes shamelessness on the part of an individual. In addition, this metaphor rode on the fact that most dogs go astray when they are on heat to drive home the fact that a promiscuous being does not think straight when horny hence, they throw away their dignity for that instant satisfaction.

## D.  Metaphors related to positivity or negativity

This classification pertains to the use of animal metaphors within the thematic or target domains of giving negative or positive reports and/or comments about people, events, situations and so on.

**13.  Animals:** Eja (fish) & Akàn (crab)

*Ẹja nbákàn? (Ẹja ni àbí akàn?)*
'Fish is it or crab, is it?'
"Is the situation favorable or not."
**Positivity/negativity**

This is another metaphor that combines two or more animals to derive its significance. This metaphor is often used to ask or give situational reports on the binaries of good/bad and positive/negative. Here, the physical characteristics of both animals' exoskeletons are mapped into the target domain of positivity (fish) and negativity (crab). Like the connotative binary of the metaphor's target domain, a logical comparison is made between the soft and succulent exoskeleton of fishes and the hard and jointed appendages of the exoskeleton of crabs in the source domain.

**14.  Animal:** Àgùnfọn (crowned crane)

*Ọrùn Àgùnfọn ni Tolúlopé ní*
'neck crowned crane has Tolulope'
"Tolulope has a long neck."
**Abuse and derogatory comment**

In this metaphor, the source domain of the long neck of a crowned crane is mapped into the target domain of a human subject's physical appearance. Here, a direct association is made between the physical characteristics of animals, length of a crowned crane's neck as in this example, and that of the human subject, Tolulope, in an abusive manner. As noted in the metaphor, the source domain of a crowned crane's long neck is mapped onto the target domain of abuse to show how unattractive the human subject's appearance is. In addition, this statement could be used in a derogatory manner to show characteristics such as poke nosing, gossiping, lack of fashion sense etc.

**15. Animal:** Ẹdun (colobus monkey)

> *Ẹdun arinlẹ̀*
> 'Colobus monkey walk ground'
> "The colobus monkey that tread the bare ground."
> **To become unfortunate or poor.**

This is another well used metaphorical statement that draws upon the behavior of animals. In this example, the focus is on the colobus monkey or monkeys in general, which are known for their ability to jump from one tree to another. The Yoruba belief is that when a colobus monkey is forced to walk on the ground instead of its natural habitat in the treetops, it is a sign that misfortune has befallen the animal. This metaphoric construction involves a mapping of the source domain of a colobus monkey walking on the ground into the target domain of misfortune. The metaphorical statement is often employed as a warning or admonition to individuals, cautioning them against actions that may lead to misfortune or harm to themselves or their community. Alternatively, the metaphor may be used in a derogatory manner to describe a person's sudden and undesired reversal of fortune.

## D. Metaphors related to social relationship and status

**16. Animal**: Ẹyẹ (bird)

> *Mọ ẹyẹ tó ṣu èèyàn*
> 'know bird that excreted someone.'
> "To know someone's background or Ancestral knowledge."

**Familiarity and acknowledgement**

This metaphor is based on the fact that each bird species has some striking resemblances that makes it difficult to tell members of such species apart, the migratory freedom and the fact that there is no known name system amongst the bird which makes them naturally without identity. As a result of this, the Yoruba believe that to know the bird that excreted someone is tantamount to having a deep background knowledge of such person. In this metaphor, the source domain of the absence or lack of proper names amongst the birds is mapped into the source domain of familiarity or ancestral knowledge. This metaphor is often used to give attestation or confirm someone when in doubt about their credibility.

17. **Animal:** àgbọ̀nrín (Antelope)

*Jẹ àgbọ̀nrín èṣí lóbẹ̀*
'To eat last year's antelope as stew.'
**To bring up outdated issues or to be irrelevant.**

The connotative effect of this metaphor is derived not from the actual act of consumption but rather from the animal being consumed. Among the Yoruba people, there is a cultural belief that antelopes are seasonal animals that are best enjoyed during their 'proper' season. Consequently, they refrain from eating antelopes beyond their season. In this sense, this metaphor draws a mapping between the source domain of consuming an antelope at the wrong time and the target domain of irrelevancy. Here, the logic is based on the notion that the taste of last season's antelope is diminished over time just like an outdated information would lose its relevance over time.

18. **Animal:** *Erin (Elephant)*

*Àkànji, Erin kọ gbígbé*
'Akanji, elephant refuse carrying.'
"Akanji, the elephant that can't be ignored nor pushed away."

## Height or social status

This metaphorical expression alludes to the giant social and traditional status of a person by drawing on the cultural belief that elephants are impossible to ignore in the jungle due to their weight and height. In addition, the elephant is a prized asset in that is often seen as a sign of royalty and wealth in Yoruba culture. In this metaphorical statement, there is a direct comparison of an elephant's height and its economic value to an individual's social status. In other words, the source domain of an elephant is mapped into the target domain of wealth or/and royalty as the case may demand.

19. **Animal:** Ẹ̀ṣin (stallion/horse)

*Ẹ̀ṣin inú ìwé ni ọkùnrin náà*
'horse inside book is man the.'
"The man is a horse inside a book."
**To be useless or impotent.**

As the metaphor above suggests, a horse in a book is useless since it cannot perform that which its kind is known for (run with agility). In the Yoruba culture, a docile horse is not reckoned with especially in the noble families and amongst those whose family business is to trade and train horses. This metaphor is a logical one because it maps the source domain of 'a static horse" as seen in books to the target domain of uselessness. In addition, this metaphor rode on the direct comparison between the uselessness of 'a stallion in a book' which has lost its natural ability to run in the source domain to an impotent man who is biologically incapable of producing offspring in the target domain.

**20. Animal :** Paramólẹ̀ (cobra)

> *Àkànní, paramọ́lẹ̀ wọ̀lú*
> 'Àkànní, the cobra enter town'
> "Àkànní, the hypocrite is in the building."
> **Hypocrisy and deceit**

This figurative expression references the deceptive and insincere conduct of an individual within society, using the cultural understanding and adherence to the physical characteristics and actions of cobras in comparison to other species of snakes. Specifically, the Yoruba belief is that cobras pose the greatest threat due to their diminutive size which allows them to blend in with their surroundings, as well as their quick movements and the rapid spread of their venom. Consequently, the source domain of a viper is mapped onto the target domain of deceit to illustrate an individual's ability to swiftly conceal or misrepresent the truth for personal gain.

# Conclusion

The primary aim of this research is to conduct a semiotic investigation into the animal metaphors used in the Yoruba language. The study uses the Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) as its theoretical framework and highlights the conceptual metaphorical connections that exist between animal attributes and human traits, as conveyed in twenty metaphorical expressions analyzed. The research showed the use of the conceptual process of "mapping" across domains, whereby animals are used as the source domain to conceptualize other human experiences as the target domain through metaphorical means. The findings of the study reveal that both domestic and non-domestic animals prevalent in Yoruba culture are employed to communicate intricate concepts and ideas via succinct and vivid imagery.

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