

Chicken Imagery in Igbo Proverbs: An Ethno-Pragmatics Analysis

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Abstract

Proverbs are important aspects of verbal discourse within the socio-cultural contexts in which knowledge, ideas and emotions are communicated. They reflect people's perspectives and system of the society, as well as people's social and cultural orientations, philosophy, and worldviews. They also reflect the psychological and literary make-ups that generally depict the experience of life. In other words, proverbs are used as vehicle to unravel the culture, morals, philosophy, education and religion of the people in an aesthetic manner through contextual setting. This study investigates the imagery exhibited in some selected Igbo proverbs with focus on chicken. Chicken imagery in proverbs has been widely used among the Igbo to portray certain behavioural traits related to human beings. The paper looks at the way chicken is used in Igbo proverbs to depict various human experiences, behaviours and attributions; based on the socio-traditional values, beliefs system and general worldview of the Igbo people. Chicken proverbs are assessed to understand the underlying societal meaning since it is used symbolically to represent humans in all contexts. The study adopts the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which demonstrates the metaphorical 'mapping' across conceptual domains; where the animals represent the source domain through which other human experiences are conceptualised as target domain. The data for the study were collected from both primary (interviews, non-participant observations and focus group discussions) and secondary (published materials) sources. The paper finds out that, chicken is used to express figuratively the parent-child relationship among the Igbo. The proverbs are used symbolically to direct people towards positive behaviours; such as tolerance, love, care, forgiveness, unity, patience, cooperation, obedience, kindness, faithfulness and hard-work.

Keywords: Igbo, chicken, proverbs, communication, culture, society, conceptual metaphor.

Introduction

Proverbs are believed to be a collective wisdom of a people and are characterised by metaphoric and pragmatic elements; carrying various contextual interpretations (Yakub, Ollennu & Delalorm, 2021). Proverbs are used to reflect on established norms, and also used as means of preserving a community's memory of the past events; as is true of many cultural groups in Africa. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2013) defines proverb as, "a well-known phrase or sentence that gives advice or says something that is generally true." Proverbs have been used since the world began. It is possible to make this assertion, considering that the history of man is mostly signed by the history of oral cultures. We also bear in mind that every society had its wise men who summarised the people's beliefs and customs in short sententious sayings (Fortes, 2014). Fortes states further that proverbs, as a sample of African oral traditions, constitute a literary resource and a literary potential that carry values, beliefs, customs; in a nutshell, the worldview of African cultures. Metaphor, wisdom, sarcasm, happiness, schooling, humor, tenderness, ethics, disappointment, praise, etiquette, friendship, enmity, religion,

human ways of communication and war are among other matters which are conveyed through African proverbs.

Obiechina (1967) defines proverbs as the kernel which contains the wisdom of the people. It is the experience and wisdom of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression. For Achebe (1958), "it is the palm oil with which words are eaten." It is a short popular saying of an unknown authorship expressing some general truth or superstition. Igbo speeches are garnished with them and a good Igbo speaker is one who can use many proverbs appropriately and aptly in his speech. Proverbs of any given community are closely related to their history, culture and environment. An understanding of triangulation of history, culture and environment is crucial to interpretation of Igbo proverbs.

A number of Igbo proverbs are as a result of historical facts and happenings among the people. Some Igbo proverbs refer to historical characters that made a significant contribution to the existence and being of the Igbo community. Some of the characters mentioned in the proverbs are used metaphorically to represent the human race. Such characters include rat, lion, bat, tortoise, lizard, grasshopper, partridge, and chicken. Chicken among the Igbo is reared for food and its waste used as manure. Chicken also performs other purposes such as crowing (the cock) for telling time and in performing traditional rituals. Because of its central role in the economic and cultural life of the people, there are many proverbs associated with chicken, exhibiting different meanings depending on the contextual applicability of specific proverbs.

In the rural areas, the rearing of the chicken is mostly done by extensive system under which the domestic birds are allowed to roam about in search of food and water. There are traditionally no proper housing, care, and feeding for these chickens. Every family has theirs and often some of the chickens are found to go to bed in other people's homes, often on trees or on top of thatch houses. One can sell the eggs, chick, young bird (to be brought up by another), the full grown chicken, or the chicken waste. Chicken are used as metaphors in Igbo proverbs as well as their traits as a representation of behaviours exhibited by human beings.

Among the Igbo, the expectation is that adults are familiar with the use and the interpretations of the proverbs. In other words, Igbo people believe that one who uses the proverbs should not interpret it to the other, leading to this proverb, *Onye a tūrọ ilu kọwara, mara na ego e jiri lūr nne ya lara n'iyi* (If a person is given the explanation of a proverb thrown to him, the bride price paid on the mother is termed useless). Also, we have this, *Ofeke amaghị mgbe e kere nkū ūkwa* (a rascal does not know when the firewood of the ūkwa is shared). These proverbs express the importance of proverbs and expectations that one needs to understand the meaning and interpretations of proverbs.

The Igbo proverbs have received elaborate attention, spanning through its use in literary works and simple print documentation to sociolinguistic, pragmatic and linguistic analyses. The imagery in Igbo proverbs are numerous and portray the intention of the speaker. According to Cuddon (1977), imagery is used to represent objects, actions, feelings, ideas, state of mind and all sensory experiences (cited in Bayor (2016: 30). Agyekum (2013), opines that imagery is a way by which oral and written literatures employ words to paint mental pictures which appeal to our feelings and understanding. Agyekum further reports on imagery that, "it is basically based on comparison of items/entities by lining up their features to see areas of similarities and differences". Taking insights from the above notions about imagery, we can observe the close relationship between the concept of 'metaphor' and 'imagery'; considering the fact that both

concepts concern the human mental faculty. In my view, therefore, both metaphor and imagery may deal with figurative features of language use and the transfer of attributions. In each case, a basic idea is needed to be understood beyond its literal sense; where cognitive conceptualisation is paramount.

Proverb is an oral genre which forms part of the cultural heritage of any society. It portrays everyday happenings among people of a society, and reflects all features of cultural group; concerning their traditions, beliefs, habits, democracy, and gender among others. When a proverb is cited in an interaction, further explanations and interpretations may be made out of it (Yakub, 2019).

This paper analyses animal metaphorical proverbs among the Igbo people with specific reference to chicken metaphor. In this study, chicken metaphors in Igbo proverbs are analyzed metaphorically to understand the underlying societal meaning since animals are used symbolically to represent human beings. According to Lakoff (1989) proverbs are metaphoric in nature. This means one thing is understood in terms of the other. At the literal level, the important thing is to visualize the picture being projected in the proverb, and to understand the meanings of the words used. The Igbo people use animals to project this picture. The literal level of interpretation represents the cultural and historical experience of the people.

Previous Studies

Animal metaphors have been one of the subject matters examined by many scholars with interest in the field of cognitive semantics. In this study, chicken is used to convey specific meanings to human beings which are compared to animals. Some of the studies on this topic includes; Muhammad and Rashid (2014); Kobia (2016); Fu (2008); Eme, Mbagwu, & Mmadike (2016), Rodriguez (2009), and Min and Thida (2020) among others.

Animal metaphors have been studied from different perspectives. Some of the studies focused on the source domain, particularly on the manifestation of the concept of animal in reference to human behaviour. Many researchers have studied animal metaphors across culture, as well as comparing data from two languages. Examples of such studies include the use of animal metaphors in Bukusu and Gusii (Barasa & Opande, 2017), the similarities and differences in Malay and English proverbs associated with the cat metaphors (Muhammad & Rashid, 2014). Other works are Yoruba and English proverbs that compared women with plants, animals, food, property and trouble (Yusuf, 1997), and animal metaphors for women in English and Spanish (Rodriguez, 2009). The studies also have farm animals' metaphor in figurative expressions in both Malay and Arabic, which was conducted by Sabariah, Pabiyah, Nurul & Nadia (2012).

Muhammad and Rashid (2014) examined the similarities and differences in the meanings associated with the cat metaphors in Malay and English proverbs. The data for their study were selected from Malay and English books and online databases of proverbs. The study revealed that the meanings associated with cat in Malay and English proverbs do not conform to the common proposition of Lakoff and Turner (1989). The paper concluded that various differences in meanings are associated with the metaphorical schemas of the English and Malay proverbs, which are attributed to cultural differences of the two languages in question.

Min and Thida (2020) assessed the metaphorical role of animals in Myanmar proverbs and Myanmar society. The study investigated the most common animals used in Myanmar

proverbs and the role these animals play in everyday life of the people. The findings reveal that there are 291 metaphors used for 40 animals in 251 proverbs. These animals include domestic animals, wild animals, insects and also mythical creatures such as Dragon and Garuda. The most common animals are birds, fish, elephant, cattle, tiger, dog, chicken, cat, mouse and buffalo. The examples of these ten most common animals are presented and interpreted under the Contemporary Metaphor Theory and it is found out that the animal metaphors describe a lot about the conceptual mind of Myanmar people and Myanmar historical, geographical, cultural, social, economic and religious conditions.

Barasa and Opande (2017), assessed the use of animal metaphors in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs that sought to ascertain whether the common proposition proposed by Lakoff and Turner is applicable to the data of their study. The study further examined the similarities and differences in the meanings and representations associated with the animal metaphors in both Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. It also investigated the main attributions that are attached to women and men in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. The findings in this study suggest that there is no difference in the proposition and metaphorical schemas in the semantics of animal proverbs and it is related to the social and cultural beliefs upheld by the Bukusu and Gusii community. The metaphors reinforce the gender ideologies as a belief system in Bukusu and Gusii culture. Thus, the metaphors portray women as inferior, worthless and weak. The implication drawn from these attribution is that women are marginalized, discriminated in issues of decision making, participation, resource distribution, policy formulation and in politics because of the prejudices. Also, women are portrayed as objects which are to be used for beauty and can be used and thrown away.

Fortune (1975) assessed the structural forms of Shona proverbs and considered ways these structural forms aid the expressive power of proverbs by deftly positioning the lexical items in relation to one another. Kobia (2016) conducted a metaphorical analysis of domestic animals in selected Swahili proverbs with a focus on chicken metaphor, based on their source domains. This study examined the socio-cultural and economic background that shapes the Swahili proverbs and their underlining meanings inherent in them. The paper reveals that the Swahili proverbs are used metaphorically as a repository of traditional wisdom of the Swahili people and a vehicle to articulate their worldview.

Olateju (2005) examined the animal metaphors in the Yoruba language with a view to highlighting the stylistic and communicative potentials of these metaphors. The study discusses the sources of animal metaphors, which are said to be located in three areas, namely: Yoruba naming culture, animal characteristic habits and behaviour, and Yoruba poetry. In the first, the semantic features of animals involved in metaphors are decomposed into semantic markers that are of two types. The first is the High Priority Semantic Markers (HPSM), which determines the cognitive/conceptual meaning of the metaphors, and the second is the Low Priority Semantic Markers (LPSM), which determines the secondary metaphorical interpretation. Animal metaphors involve transference of meanings, and whatever meanings or interpretations are assigned to a particular animal metaphor, are culture and context dependent. The paper concludes with stylistic and communicative functions of animal metaphors, with the submission that stylistically animal metaphors contribute to aesthetics and poetic elegance of literary texts through their lexical tones, which can be stylistically manipulated. They are also being used as a new or additional mode of expression in both literary and routine communication. Studies

(such as Olateju, 2005) have revealed that animals have been used metaphorically to refer to people.

Yusuf (1997) examined how forty-six (46) proverbs in Yoruba and English compared women with plants, animals, food, property and trouble. In the study, women in state affairs were likened to monkeys; in that women in state affairs would look awkward and be destructive as monkeys living in glass house. In the study, both English and Yoruba proverbs compared women with dogs. Here, a man kicking his dog (pet) is likened to beating his wife. Women, through the analysis, were also seen as 'vessels' who are capable of conveying troubles and inconveniences to their husbands. According to the findings, women in their matrimonial homes are considered as 'meat', since men enjoy women through sexual intercourse. The study explicated that any man who marries a beautiful woman marries problems, since she claims to be related to everybody. Notwithstanding these negative images painted about the behaviours of women, the study interestingly revealed a bit of the positive attitudes and significance of women in the lives of men in particular. Here, women are seen as 'property'; as they are considered as 'filled houses' and 'tilled fields'. This implies that, if a man has a good wife, he has a well-furnished house and a ploughed land which is fertile and rich for crop cultivation.

Alimi (2012) examined some proverbs used in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. He focused on the use of proverb as literary devices. According to Alimi, Achebe intentionally uses the proverbs, not merely to add touches of local colour, but to sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflicts and to focus on the values of the society he is portraying.

Eme, Mbagwu and Mmadike (2016) assessed the loss of metaphors in Igbo proverbs. They point out that contemporary realities such as globalization, current developments in science, technology and modernization have eroded some of the metaphors that capture the nuances of meaning of some of the proverbs. According to them, the proverbs that hinge on words with reference of objects, things and events that existed or were common in the Igbo traditional society would need some more explanations to help the modern Igbo generation understand them. They selected some proverbs illustrate this claim and the basic tenets of conceptual metaphor have been applied to the illustration. With recourse to this, the paper identifies documentation of the proverbs with annotation that incorporates specification of the metaphors. This, among other things, will serve to preserve the Igbo worldview as contained in the proverbs and could be a veritable tool for the revitalization of the use of the proverbs by the younger generation. According to Eme, Mbagwu and Mmadike (2016), contemporary realities such as globalization, current developments in science and technology and other factors like modernisation have eroded some of the metaphors that capture the nuances of meaning of some of the proverbs.

Oha (1998) examined the devaluation of women among the Igbo as portrayed in the proverbs. According to him, the representations of womanhood in Igbo proverbs are mainly negative: women are typically portrayed as being senseless, morally debased, devilish, childish, and weak. The fact that these stereotypes have been encoded in a form of communication usually respected and highly valued in Igbo culture suggests the degree to which rhetoric in the society has been masculinized. Studies in oral literature, especially in male-dominated cultures, need to pay attention to the role of male-oriented rhetoric in Igbo proverbs that signifies

prejudice and hostility towards women in social discourse. The study shows that the proverbs of womanhood in Igboland reveal an attempt at denigrating and disempowering women.

Methodology

The data for this study were collected from Awgbu (a rural community), situated in Orumba North local government of Anambra State, with estimated population of about 120,000 thousand (Online). The study made use of primary and secondary sources. For the primary source, the elders of the community (Awgbu) who are the custodians of the culture of the people and competent indigenous Igbo speakers from rural and urban areas were interviewed. Most of the respondents (81%) were interviewed face-to-face, while 19% were by telephone calls. Interviews were largely focused on proverbs associated with animals in general but proverbs associated with chicken were extracted from the main work for this study. The respondents were between the ages of 57 and 88 years old, who were chosen by means of random sampling. Sixty eight respondents (29 males and 39 females) were formally interviewed, while 40 people were involved in focus group discussion. For non-participant observations, the researcher attended 8 different village meetings (2 in Benin, while 6 in the town of Awgbu) where the Igbo is sole means of communication. At the meetings, proverbs were recorded. Some proverbs were also gathered from personal informal interactions with different Igbo people in varied contexts.

For focus group discussion, a total of five group interviews were organised. Each group had between five and seven participants. The time for each group discussion lasted between thirty minutes to one hour, forty five minutes. The group discussions were used to gather more data on animal proverbs and the significance of each animal among the people. The bulk of the data were collected between September 2022 and April 2023 (the period the researcher travelled to Awgbu, though in three different times: September, December and April). The proverbs collected were written down on the field notes.

Additional data were also extracted from published sources such as Oha (2009), "Ụkwa Ruo Oge Ya, Ọ Daa" by Ubesie, T.U (1977), different Online websites, and a compilation of Igbo proverbs from personal "class course notes". In total, a corpus of 24 proverbs associated with chicken gathered, presented and Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were employed for the analysis. One lecturer assisted with the translation of the proverbs from Igbo to English.

Theoretical Overview

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which was proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In their work, they contend that "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". Conceptual metaphors (see Kövecses, 2002; Semino, 2008) typically make use of more abstract concepts as target and a more concrete/physical concept as source, through which we are able to understand unfamiliar concepts better. According to Semino (2008: 5), conceptual metaphors are systematic sets of correspondence, or 'mappings' across conceptual domains, where by a 'target' domain is partly structured in terms of a different 'source' domain. These orders of thought imply that metaphorical expressions are better understood by building a mental

imagery and relationship of similarity between the entities being compared (see also Owurasah, 2015: 92).

The paper demonstrates that imagery in Igbo proverbs provides essential source domain through which human characteristics and day-to-day occurrences in our socio-cultural setting could be conceptualised. Hence, the adoption of the (CMT) as a theoretical backing for this study is deemed quite appropriate. The major tenet of CMT is that an idea is best understood in terms of another. In other words, the different ideas are juxtaposed for the explication of one another. While one of the ideas occupies the source domain, the other occupies the target domain. CM recognizes the fact that the idea of the source domain is usually concrete while the idea of the target domain is abstract (Eme, Mbagwu, & Mmadike (2016). According to Fu (2008), humans are defined by rational thought, animals by instinct, plant by certain biological properties, and so on. Some common propositions that occur in schemas for animals are as follows: Pigs are dirty, messy, and rude. Lions are courageous and noble. Dogs are loyal, dependable and dependent. Cats are fickle and independent. Wolves are cruel and murderous. Gorillas are aggressive and violent.”

In this study, qualitative techniques basically textual analysis, are employed to show the chicken metaphors as used in proverbs associated with chickens. The interpretations presented in this paper are based on Igbo peoples’ worldview and the contextual use, meaning and understanding of specific proverb. The elements we identify as belonging to the source domain are evidently the key elements in the proverbs. That is, their meaning is the locus for the interpretation of the proverbs. Of course, they qualify in the source domain because they have the reference of concreteness. It is the concreteness that positions them as the locus for interpretation (Eme et al. 2016).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Animals are often used metaphorically to express figuratively the parent-child relations. Some proverbs associated with chicken are used to express figuratively the parent-child relationship. In some Igbo proverbs, this relationship includes provision, protection, hardwork, discipline and caring.

The hen represents a caring and protective mother in Igbo community which is exemplified in this proverb, *Ọkụkọ hapụ kwom, ọ ga-iji gị n'j wee zụọ ụmụ?* (if chicken leaves *kwom*¹ what will it use to train its chicks?). The interpretation is that when one leaves, abandons or neglects the source of one’s income, how can one survive? This can be compared to constant talk by a mother with child (children). If she keeps quiet, things spoil, as one of the respondents stated, “as a mother, I never stop talking except when my children are not around or when they are sleeping, there is always reason for you to talk”. This proverb expresses the role of mothers in the family among the Igbo. They are always expected to be there for the children, take care of them, correct their mistakes, teach and encourage them on what to do at any given time and make sure they do exactly that. All these require a lot of talking. Also, *Ọkụkọ chiri ụmụ, ọ chiri ekwurekwu* (chicken with chicks never stops talking) portrays the same meaning as the one above. This proverb expresses the untiring duty of mothers (in giving instruction, advice, correction, reprimand, etc.) towards their children. Mothers take care of

¹ This is a continuous sound chicken makes as a form of communication.

their children, and they never stop talking, correcting, directing, advising and teaching as well as scolding the young ones.

A hen representing mother cannot be harmful to her children as shown in this proverb, *Ọkpa Ọkụkọ zọrọ ụmụ ya anaghi egbu ya* (when mother hen steps on its chicks, the stepping will not kill them). The proverb emphasises the caring and friendship as important virtues that a person should have, and exhibit. The imagery of a hen protecting its chicks with its feathers is shown in the proverb. The hen represents a caring mother among the Igbo, and can unintentionally hurt the chicks while it is trying to provide and protect them. Mothers are supposed to take care of their children. A mother cannot harm their children (intentionally) even when they discipline them (though with caution). According to Kobia (2016), it is not easy for a person to harm his/her people, love ones or friends. In the Igbo society, children are greatly treasured and cared for. They are not neglected or abandoned. Members of the society are ever ready to do anything, including taking risks for the wellbeing of not only their children but that of their neighbours. For example, the proverb, *Onye hụrụ ọkụkọ ebe ọ na-abọ nsị chụpụ ya n'ihị na amaghị onye ga-ata ụkwụ ya* (Anyone that sees a chicken using its leg to scatter faeces should pursue it because nobody knows who will eat the leg) expresses the collective responsibility or communal ideology of Igbo people or community in raising children. Igbo people believe that children belong to the mother only when the child is still in the womb. But once such child is born, it is the responsibility of the whole community to raise him to be responsible. Whatever the child turns out in future affects the community either positive or otherwise. One cannot see any child doing something bad and look the other way. In other words, one treats every child as if it is yours. One of the reasons is that the child might be your daughter-in-law or son-in-law. The implication of this is that it is important for people to always take responsibilities in the society. Every member of the society is responsible for something/somebody or is responsible to somebody. When each person in the society carries out his/her duty responsibly, everything will move smoothly, the society will thrive and it will be better for it.

On the contrary, *Ọkụkọ ajọ agwa na-ebi n'elu osisi* (A hen with bad character lives on the tree). This is to say that there are still irresponsible people in the society; who are careless about themselves, other people and the things going on in the society. With different unacceptable characters, the person with such questionable behaviour often isolates himself or gives distance because he knows that he will be scolded, and his character, rejected. In other words, people do not like to associate with bad people so that they will not be labeled bad, or get corrupted.

Ọkụkọ n'ụrụ mmiri, o lerie anya elu n'ihị na ihe na-egbu ya na esikarị n'elu (When a chicken drinks, he looks up because his killer comes from above): In the context of this Igbo proverb, a chicken represents a person who has faced life-threatening problems coming mostly from one direction. He is always ready to face the challenge. Although he is worried, alert and in fear, he is not a coward, but always on the alert. Though he might be terrified, he is ever prepared for any danger or challenge in life. In other words, the proverb expresses need for us to be proactive rather than reactive.

Chicken represent human in general, and as human, we should appreciation people and be thankful for any favour received. This proverb, *Ọkụkọ anaghị echefu onye horo ya odudu*

n'udummiri (Chicken does not forget a person that removes feather from its tail during rainy season) expresses appreciation for what someone did at the time of great need.

Okukọ chj ụmụ anaghị arahụ n'elu osisi (Chicken with chicks does not sleep on the tree). This proverb expresses the responsibility of a mother to care and protect the children and no substitution for her presence. Here, chicken stands as a mother with kids who is expected not to sleep out or stay far away from the reach of her children.

Okukọ ntjike na-anụ ihe n'ite ofe (A deaf chicken hears in the pot of soup). *Okukọ* here represents stubborn person who does not take advice from people, such person ends in trouble or difficulties which pot of soup symbolizes. The proverb calls for the need for people to heed advice and obey orders from elders and authorities. *Okukọ* is likened to not a child alone, but all categories of persons disobeying instructions, and there is always a consequence for any single act of disobedience. Therefore, the proverb advocates the necessities of obedience.

Ọchụ ọkukọ nwe ada, ọkukọ nwere mwe mwe ọsọ (he who chases a chicken will fall and the chicken will get away: evil befalls the wicked or he who oppresses another will surely fail and the oppressed would go free). This proverb depicts the Igbo ideology that an innocent person is being protected by the gods. That is, you cannot harm an innocent person without hurting yourself, because *ehi enweghi ọdụdụ, chi ya na-achụrụ ijiji* (God drives flies away from the tailless cow). In other words, divine intervention or help comes to a helpless person while evil befalls the wicked.

Okukọ ga-abụ oke na ebido n'uju (A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches). This proverb points to the destiny of a person. It implies that being responsible can be spotted early in one's life.

Ikuku kuo, a hụ ike ọkukọ (Unless the wind blows, we do not see the fowl's rump). Literally, chicken's rump is well covered with feathers and can be revealing when wind blows. The interpretation of this proverb is that during crises, the secret or the thought of others are being revealed. Bad deeds/thought are hidden. Revealing of a secret is often done when the person least expected and there must be something that led to the exposure. In other words, no secret is hidden forever.

Okukọ nwa ogbenye, bụ ehi ya (A poor person's chicken is her own cow). When one is not contented with what he has, it can lead to varied vices such as stealing, lying, covetousness. Contentment is a virtue, the proverb depicts inequality in the society, and need for us to accept our status.

Ihe ọkukọ bu mmiri achụ dji ya mkpa (What the chicken is pursuing in the rain is very important to it). This proverb depicts the need for hard-work, consistency, perseverance, that break barriers.

Egbe laa ije, uriom ọkukọ emegharja ahụ (When kite or hawk leaves, chicken gets freedom). *Egbe* here represents anything that stands as a threat or danger to human person while *okukọ* represents human. *Egbe* here symbolises the powerful, oppressor, a threat, and the likes. In other words, this proverb calls for free society where there is no threat (to life and

properties), intimidation, and oppression of any kind, leading to the saying and belief on, *Egbe bere ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebene nku kwaa ya* (live and let live).

Akwa Ọkụkọ tiwaa akị, ihere emebe nkume (If an egg breaks a palm kernel fruit, there would be shame for stone). There are always shared responsibilities among the people either in the family, community, or elsewhere. There is ability and capability of each human person, and there are expectations attached to everyone, and sometimes we live below expectations, it might bring disappointment, shame, or even disgrace.

Ebo m ohi uriom Ọkụkọ, e zuru nne ya (If I am accused of stealing a young chicken, I will steal the mother). It is often very difficult to accept false accusations. The proverb admonishes false accusation no matter how little the offence are, because it can lead the accused to commit grave offences and wait for the consequence.

Ọkụkọ nyuọ ahuru, ala achuba ya ọsọ (When the chicken farts, the ground becomes a nuisance). When someone does something wrong, he feels guilty and uncomfortable and goes into hiding without somebody saying or doing anything to him.

Nwa Ọkụkọ na-ere aka na-ere Ọkpa, ọsịna ya na-agbaputa mmanụ (If a chicken's hands and legs are burning, it says that it is bringing out oil: the proverb depicts foolishness). *Nwa Ọkụkọ* here represents a foolish person who does not know when bad things that will consume him are coming his way. It is a call for wisdom.

Nwa Ọkụkọ sị, Kama mụ agaghị atuta mkpuruakwu, ọghịgha dị n'isi akwu rụkpọọ m anya (The chicken said that the torns from the palm head should get him blind instead of him not to get palm seed: steadfast), the proverb expresses desperate and determination/steadfast. Here, the person is determined to achieve his aim no matter what the circumstances are, the challenges on the way, or consequences of his actions.

Ọkụkọ eghechaara ma ọ fọdurụ n'olu (The chicken has been well cooked except the neck). The proverb depicts incompleteness, or what is remaining from the maturity of something is very little, one being very close to success.

Ọkụkọ nọ na ngige nọ n'egwu, ngige nọ n'egwu (A Chicken that stands on rope is dancing and the rope too is dancing). This proverb expresses a situation where someone who is fighting another and the person he is fighting are not resting or where the two are hurt at the same time.

Ọkụkọ hapuru mma gburu ya, gaa tugoro elu ite (The chicken frowns at the cooking pot, ignoring the knife that killed it: shifting of blame). It means when someone left what is fighting him and started blaming someone else who is not the main problem.

Conclusion

This study has brought to fore the conceptual metaphorical correlations between animal behaviours and human attributions as conveyed in selected Igbo proverbs associated with chicken. The paper demonstrated the metaphorical 'mapping' across conceptual domains; where the animals represented the source domain through which other human experiences were conceptualised as target domain. The paper showed that chicken is prevalent in Igbo

proverbs to advise people against undesirable attitudes like recalcitrance, procrastination, greed, selfishness and all sort of social vices. Chickens are also used through the proverbs to direct people towards positive behaviours; such as tolerance, forgiveness, patience, cooperation, obedience, kindness, faithfulness and hard work among others.

Some of the selected Igbo proverbs have lost their original interpretation especially among the younger generations. The reason being that the present realities obtainable among the Igbo differ from what is obtainable in the past; it needs a lot of explanations for some of the younger people to make sense of the proverb. According to Eme et al. (2016), “the irregular relation is occasioned or marked by ‘loss of metaphors’.

This study has brought the correlations between chicken behaviours and human attributions as conveyed in the selected proverbs presented. The paper demonstrated the metaphorical ‘mapping’ across conceptual domains; where the chicken represents the source domain through which other human experiences were conceptualised as target domain. The proverbs are also used symbolically to direct people towards positive behaviours: contentment, appreciation, care, unity, cooperation, patience, obedience, and hard-work among others; and to eschew disobedience, false accusation, disgrace and oppression.

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