
Conceptualization of Animal Names in the Learning of Foreign Language by the Advanced Igbo and Yoruba Chinese Learners

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Abstract

The present study is set out to compare the conceptualization of animal names in the learning of Chinese as a Foreign Language (FL) by advanced Igbo and Yoruba speaking learners. The study will make use of Language Awareness (LA) theory by Hawkins (1984), in order to explore the importance of sociolinguistic competence in language learning. The notion is that possession of a huge quantity of vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical rules do not necessarily lead to the proficiency in a language, learners should be aware of the correct meaning of words in transferring intended meaning and use well-formed sentences along with society norms in order to avoid any misunderstanding, communication breakdown, or wrong judgements. The data contain a list of 60 animal names, presented in Chinese, Igbo, and Yoruba with their English gloss. The objective is to examine some of the communicative features of the animal names, investigate how the animal names are conceptualized for better understanding of Foreign Language learning, and also determine the level of similarities and differences between the language groups and cultures in using animal names in terms of meaning. The results of

the finding show that animal names can be helpful in vocabulary building; for derivation of noun, verbs and adjectives. They provide insights into how language determines the cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions of a specific linguistic community. The study proves that animal names can be regarded as one possible means to learn the cultures of different people, the results prove that the semantic connotations of animal imagery used to describe human beings and their characteristics is of wide if not universal use. Furthermore, the results show that some of the animal names in these languages have attained the status of national icon. This paper seeks to address the gap in the conceptualisation of animal names in the teaching/learning of Chinese as Foreign Language by the advanced Igbo and Yoruba speaking learners.

Keywords: foreign language, learning/teaching, conceptualization of animal names, Igbo, Yoruba, Chinese

1. Introduction

It has become increasingly evident that the awareness of the language structure may be necessary for students, but they need also the pragmatic awareness. Pragmatic awareness includes such aspects as the knowledge about language use in the target culture, semantics, sociolinguistics and social psychology. Thus, from the point of view of social interaction/sociolinguistics; language, interaction and culture are interrelated aspects that are central to language awareness activities for L₂ learners (Dufva, 1994). Conceptualization of animal names for communicative purpose in different languages and cultures require pragmatic reasoning in order to understand them. Bruner (1975:65) notes that “the primacy of syntax may be a valuable axiom for linguists, but the primacy of semantics is a better axiom for psychology”. This is more so as

animal names are used with certain communicative aim that surpasses their linguistic form and meaning. Animal names can be helpful in vocabulary building; for derivation of nouns, verbs and adjectives. They also provide insights into how language determines the cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions of a specific linguistic community. The current study is on the conceptualization of animal names in the learning of Chinese as Foreign Language by Igbo and Yoruba L₁ speakers. The study excludes the beginners and intermediate learners because conceptualization of animal names is better understood by the advanced learners of a FL. This is very timely as need for teaching/learning of Chinese increased through the introduction of Chinese studies at Nnamdi Azikiwe University by the establishment of Confucius Institute (CI) and the Department of Chinese Studies in 2006 and 2013/2014 academic sessions respectively.

Since Igbo, Yoruba and Chinese belong to different language families, scholars have tried to highlight those areas that constitute learning difficulties to L₁ Igbo and Yoruba Chinese learners. From the existing literature, it is obvious that few cross-linguistics studies were conducted between different languages such as the present study. Hence the study will contribute to filling the gap in the literature on conceptualization of animal names in Foreign Language learners on the one hand, and enriching the cross-linguistic studies between languages like Igbo, Yoruba and Chinese on the other hand.

Igbo is one of the three major indigenous languages of Nigeria. The Igbo live in the Southeast of Nigeria in the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, as well as in parts of Delta and Rivers states. Igbo is classified as a Niger-Congo language (Williamson and Bleach 2000). The term 'Igbo' refers to both the

people and the language. Igbo is a tone language and like any other language is very rich in animal words.

Yoruba language is also one of the three major languages spoken in the South-western Nigeria. Yoruba language ‘has very many dialects with varying degree of mutual intelligibility’ (Arokoyo 2010, Akinlabi and Adeniyi 2017). Yoruba is a tone language; it is also a member of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family. Most recent classification by Adeniyi (2010) classified Yoruba dialects into seven (Eastern Yoruba, North–Eastern Yoruba, Central Yoruba, South-Western Yoruba, Western Yoruba, South-Eastern Yoruba and North-West Yoruba). The Standard Yoruba is the form that every Yoruba can speak and it serves as a common heritage of the Yoruba people. Igbo and Yoruba were said to be related based on the fact that they are both tone languages and of the Niger-Congo language family. They are now different languages because they are no longer mutually intelligible and the original parent language, the proto-Yoruba/Igbo language no longer exists.

Chinese on the other hand is the official language of the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan. It is one of the four official languages of Singapore and one of the six official languages of the United Nations. It belongs to the Sino–Tibetan language family. Chinese include varieties from eight main dialect groups; Putonghua (Mandarin), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan and Hakka. The Northern/Mandarin dialect covers three fourths of China’s territory and includes two thirds of its population. Standard Chinese is known as ‘Putonghua’ which literally means ‘common speech’. Putonghua uses the dialect of Beijing as the basis for its pronunciation. Chinese is now one of the most widely used living languages; with more than

a billion native speakers worldwide Yip and Don (2016), cited in Okoye (2021).

The significance of this study is to contribute to raising teacher and student's awareness in the cross-cultural differences in animal names between the three languages and cultures, improving the teaching/learning of Chinese as FL, Igbo and Yoruba. This will enable the teachers/learners to understand the conceptualization of these animal names in their own culture and in the culture of others. Also help in solving the misunderstanding caused by these differences and cope with metaphoric use of animal names in an easy way. Moreover, this study is hoped to be a modest contribution to fill the academic gap in the area of conceptualizations of animal names in culture and cognition.

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions will help in guiding the current study;

- What are some of the animal names in Igbo, Yorùbá and Chinese lexicons?
- How are these selected animal names conceptualized in these languages?
- What similar/different cultural/world-views exists in these languages through the animal names?

2. Literature Review

Recent studies show a great surge of interest in the conceptualization and social significance of animal names. There have also been investigation on connotative meanings and correlations between animal names/expressions and human attributes.

Olátejù (2005) undertakes a study of animal metaphors in the Yorùbá language with a view to highlighting the stylistic and

communicative potentials of these metaphors. Both the domestic and wild animals involved in metaphors and their individual distinctive characteristic features which motivate their metaphorical interpretations are highlighted. The study also discusses the sources of animal metaphors, which are said to be located in three areas, namely: the Yorùbá naming culture, animal characteristic habits and behaviour, and the Yorùbá poetry. A two-dimensional approach is adopted: stylistic and cultural. The study notes that stylistically animal metaphors contribute to aesthetics and poetic elegance of literary texts through their lexical tones, which can be stylistically manipulated. Further, animal metaphors are also used as a novel or additional mode of expression in both literary and routine communication. Although Olátejù's work is an examination of animal metaphors in Yorùbá, it informs the current study on the nexus between metaphor and culture. That is, metaphors are founded on culture and often serve as a good resource for the understanding of cultural beliefs.

In his comparative study of animal-related proverbs in English and Chinese, Jie (2008) notes that some conceptual metaphors are universal and the universality can be found at the generic level; animals have their own features and cultural connotations in different languages. He concludes that it is only when people are acquainted with the cultural conventions and long customs can they begin to understand the cultural differences in animal proverbs between the two languages. According to him, there are cases where a particular expression is in correspondence with meaning and culture as noted in the example below:

‘You may lead a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink’.

In Chinese, it also uses the same animal of “horse”. The proverb says, ‘you may be acting in the best interests of the horse by taking

him to the trough, but if he doesn't want to drink he is not going to'. This means that you can do your utmost to make a person share your views, yet there is a point beyond which he will not go. In this proverb, "a person who doesn't want to accept others' opinion" is understood in terms of "a horse that doesn't want to drink". The proverb applies to the conceptual metaphor of PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS.

METAPHOR

- SOURCE -----TARGET
- a horse ----- a person

The study concludes that the use of CIH in analysing animal proverbs can help in overcoming difficulties in experimental works on proverbs and studying proverbs as utterances.

The study of Rashidi and Ghaedi (2013) is on contrastive discourse analysis of Persian and English animal proverbs. They aim at the analysis of the discursual features of Persian and English proverbs relating to cat, dog, and donkey and the thematic classes they belong to. They adopt Busman's (1995) model of Prototype alongside Schmitz's (1983) Isomorphism to full or lack of isomorphism between Persian and English proverbs relating to animals. The findings reveal among other things that animal proverbs in English show that society, economy, politics, prototypes are much more dominant than law, belief or religion prototypes as found in an Iranian context or themes on culture in general. Also the social prototype falls into thematic categories of behaviour, working, experience, performance and way of life. Furthermore, both cultures have a common working prototype collectively; in conclusion, the study observes that proverbs in both societies are treasures of wisdom. Also, as it concerns similarities (full isomorphism), has to do with linguistic universals. Since metaphor

is universal, and a lot of concepts are similar in both languages, the similarities in animal proverbs can be explained away by this fact. Also, differences or lack of isomorphism are traced to differences in culture, beliefs and values of Persian and English speakers. Hence, translators have to be bicultural to understand and translate properly the heavy semantic load that is culture specific in some proverbs.

Liu's (2013) work is a comparative study of English and Chinese Animal Proverbs from the perspective of Metaphors. The study is carried out from three (3) main aspects: the same animal produce the same association and metaphorical meaning; the same animal produce different emotions and associations; different animal produce the same association and metaphorical meaning. His findings show that animal proverbs are an important part of language, an indispensable element of culture. The comparison of the 3 types of animal proverbs shows the similarities and differences in living environment, language styles, religious beliefs, values, thinking mode and aesthetics of the two cultures. The researcher concludes that research has deepened the understanding of people in different cultures who exhibit similarities or differences of different cultures by employing similar or different proverbs. Understanding this phenomenon is helpful for us to promote communications and overcome language exchange barriers.

Sameer's (2016) study is a comparison of English and Arabic proverbs on dogs and horses. The study uses elected model gathering approach of Lakoff & Turner (1989), and Hsieh's (2006) approach of semantic molecules. The focus is on a cognitive, social and pragmatic view in order to establish that metaphoric and metonymic –mappings are cognitive mechanism which yield sets of explicature and form the origin of implicature. The findings reveal that in both languages, the proverbs have the same functions and refer to the same intended meaning; thereby implying the same

mental mechanism, for metaphor and metonymy. Hence, it can be said that both dogs and horses have nearly the same semantic molecules in both languages. They indicate the same contents, that is, dogs' proverbs usually indicate something bad and scruffy while those containing horse expressions indicate something good and noble.

Okoye's (2021) study is on 'a domain-based comparative analysis of Igbo and Chinese animal-related Proverbs. The study employs both the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Cultural Conceptual Theory (CCT) to investigate the cognitive mechanisms that are employed in the comprehension and the use of animal proverbs in Igbo and Chinese based on their metaphoric and socio-cultural environments. The study concludes that it is only when people are acquainted with the cultural conventions and long customs can they begin to understand the cultural specificities in animal proverbs between the two languages. The present study is the conceptualization of animal names in the learning of Chinese as a Foreign Language (FL) by Igbo and Yoruba speaking learners. The study will make use of the Language Awareness (LA) approach by Hawkins (1984).

3. Research Approach

The research framework/approach adopted is **Language Awareness** (by Hawkins 1984). It originated in the United Kingdom. Language Awareness is neither a methodology nor a theory of learning. Rather, it may be understood as a cover term for a wide range of approaches towards language learning and teaching that has been increasingly discussed and applied both within the L₁ and L₂ context during the past few years.

The study will make use of Language Awareness (LA) approach by Hawkins (1984), in order to explore the importance of

sociolinguistic competence in language learning. The notion is that possession of a huge quantity of vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical rules do not necessarily lead to the proficiency in a language, learners should be aware of the correct meaning of words in transferring intended meaning and use well-formed sentences along with society norms in order to avoid any misunderstanding, communication breakdown, or wrong judgements.

Conceptualization of animal names for communicative purpose in different languages and cultures require pragmatic reasoning in order to understand them. This is so, as they show how different connotative meanings of animal names and correlations between them and human traits are culturally bounded. Thus through language awareness approach, students in a foreign language classroom may be encouraged to think about the similarities and differences between languages. In this study, the conceptualization of animal names by Foreign Language learners reveals that it has become increasingly evident that learning of languages is not a matter of language only. Matters of interaction and culture are integral elements of language learning/teaching. Through this practical application of Language Awareness the level of language proficiency also increases.

3.1 Methodology

For the purpose of this study, sixty (60) animal names in Igbo, Yorùbá and Chinese are collected and analyzed. The intention is to choose the most frequent animal names referred to in daily speech; this comprise of four-legged animals, birds, insects and amphibians. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design in the collection of both primary and secondary data. Few adult native Igbo, Yorùbá and Chinese speakers are used to generate primary data; also information was gotten from internet and libraries. Since,

the researchers are L₁ speakers of Igbo and Yorùbá languages; this enables us to employ our intuition/knowledge in generating primary data. The comparison was to give a detailed account of to what extent the Igbo, Yorùbá and Chinese animal names share an underlying conceptualization and reflect different cultural beliefs. Furthermore, the cross-cultural analysis was to highlight the different world views in the languages under study through animal names.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

In the data in table 1 below, we present 60 animal names. Some of these are selected for analysis.

Table 1: Animal names in Igbo, Yoruba and Chinese

S/ N	IGBO	YORUB A	CHINESE	ENGLIS H GLOSS
1	Ewu	Ewúré	羊 yáng	Goat
2	Ọ̀kukò	Adie	鸡 jī	Fowl
3	Mgbàdà	Egbín	羚 líng	Antelope
4	Efi	Abo Malu	牛 niú	Cow
5	Ìnyìnyà	Eṣ in	马 mǎ	Horse
6	Ele	Àgbònrín	鹿 lù	Deer
7	Nkìtā	Ajá	狗 gǒu	Dog
8	Nkìtā ọ̀hì ọ̀ā	Ìkokò	鬣狗 liè gǒu	Hyena
9	Nwonogbō/Bùusù/N wamba	Ológbò	猫 māo	Cat
10	Aturụ ọ̀	Àgùtàn	羊 yáng	Sheep

11	Èbùnè/Èbùlè	Àgbò	公羊gōng yang	Ram
12	Ezì	Èlédè	猪zhū	Pig
13	Agwọ	Ejò	蛇shé	Snake
14	Agụ □ òwùrù	Amòtẹkùn	豹bào	Leopard
15	Ñgwèlè/Ñgwèrè	Alangba	sijiǎoshé四 脚蛇	Lizard
16	Ejù/Ejùnè/Ejùlà	Ìgbín	螺luó	Snail
17	Ọdụm	Kìnìún	狮子shīzi	Lion
18	Enyi	Erin/Àjàn àkú	大象dā xiāng	Elephant
19	Àdakā	Elegbede	黑猩猩 hēixīngxīn g	Chimpan zee
20	Ọzọdim □ gbā	Inaki, Inoki	大猩猩 dà xīng xing	Gorilla
21	Ènwè	Òbọ	猴子hóuzi	Monkey
22	Eke	Erè, Ọjòlá	巨蟒 jùmǎng	Python
23	Tòlotòlo/Tòrotòro	Tòlótóló	火鸡huǒjī	Turkey
24	Ọbọgwù	Pepèiyẹ	鸭yā	Duck
25	Enyi Nnùnù	Ọgòngò	鸵鸟tuó niǎo	Ostrich
26	Ndùrù/Ndùli	Eyélé	鸽子gēzi	Pigeon
27	Ọsa	Ọkẹrẹ	松鼠 sōngshǔ	Squirrel

28	Mbè	Ìjapá	龟guī	Tortoise
29	Aguiyī	Ọni	鱷	Crocodile
30	Awọ	Opoḷo	鼋mǐn	Toad
31	Mbàla/Mbàra	Àkèré	蛤há	Frog
32	Ùdènè/Ùdèlè	Gunugu	鸢jiù niǎo	Vulture
33	Aruru	Ikan, Ikamudu	白蚁báiyǐ	White Ant
34	Ùgò	Idì	鹰yīng	Eagle
35	Agbisi	Tanpepe, Kokoro dudu	蚂蚁mǎyǐ	Black Ant
36	Ùkpàná	Èlẹtẹ	螞měng	Grasshopper
37	Anwuntà	Èfọn	蚊子wén zi	Mosquito
38	Nkwọ	Àwòdì, Àş á	鸢yuān	Kite
39	Ididè	Ekolo	蚯蚓qiūyǐn	Earth Worm
40	Òkoṅ gònò	Dakodako	螳táng	Praying Mantis
41	Ùdudō	Alántakùn	蜘蛛zhīzhū	Spider
42	Akpì	Àkeke	蝎子xiēzi	Scorpion
43	Ìlòkòlòìbùbā	Labalábá	蝴蝶húdié	Butterfly
44	Chìnchì	Ìdun	臭虫chòu chóng	Bed Bug
45	Anū	Oyin	蜂fēng	Bee

46	Ijījī	Eṣ inṣ in	蠅子yíngzi	House Fly
47	Mbuzù	Ìre	蟋蟀xīshuài	Cricket
48	Òkpò	Aràn	蚯gān	Worm
49	Ụchìchā/òchìchā	Áyán	蟑螂zhāngláng	Cockroach
50	Ụsụ	Àdán	蝙蝠biānfú	Bat
51	Òtù kpokpo	Akoko	啄木鳥zhuómùniǎo	Wood Pecker
52	Azù	Eja	魚yú	Fish
53	Nyanwūrudedè	kọlọkọlọ	狐狸húlí	Fox
54	Ugwùmagàrà	Agemon, ògà	避疫bìyì	Chameleon
55	Ìkwìkwī	Òwìwí	猫头鹰māotóuyīng	Owl
56	Ewii/ òke bèkeè	Ehoro	兔子tùzi	Rabbit
57	Ọgbakùlù	Tanisanko	蜈蚣wúgōng	Centipede
58	Esu	Okun	千足虫qiānzúchóng	Millipede
59	Ndùrù/Ndùli	Eyélé	鸽子gēzi	Pigeon
60	Agù Ówùlù	Ìkookò	狼láng	Wolf

4.1. Data Analysis

4.1.1 Semantic Connotation of some Selected Animal Names/Expressions

Animal names/expressions explore the semantic interaction in the cultural backgrounds within different societies. There is an interconnection between semantic molecules and these animal names as they serve as semantic contributors in cultural domains, e.g. ‘cat’ for women in German (Hsieh 2006). Also, various acts of speech in the form of animal names/expressions reveal people’s thoughts. This, in essence demonstrates different mentalities as well as the Igbo and Yorùbá speakers’ group-centric and Chinese speakers’ individualistic modes of thought.

In Igbo, Yorùbá and Chinese, the semantic connotation of the following animal names, such as; dog, goat, tiger and lion refers to a wide range of positive and negative associative meanings which most of the words inherently carry with them.

Igbo: Nkịta (dog) - in the Igbo culture, “dogs” are variously perceived as taboo, a dirty animal, meat to quench hunger or as item for rituals, experienced, happy, faithful, enduring, patience etc
Ewu (goat) - a stupid person, a lecherous man, a womanizer, seducer, adulterer, pervert, loser, fornicator, sensualist, wanton etc.
Ọdụm (Lion) - connotes strength, ruthless, fearless, and a bold person

Yorùbá: Aja (dog), just as in the Igbo language, dog is perceived as a promiscuous animal but in the hands of a hunter, just as in Igbo and other cultures, dogs are useful animal based on their alertness, sightedness when it comes to hunting.

Ewure (goat) = semantically depicts stubbornness, a person could be said to be a goat if such a one is stubborn

Èkùn (Tiger); courageous, bold as in “Ọmọ èkùn ni e” meaning a courageous person

Kìnìún (lion); is seen as the king of all animals, a very strong person.

Chinese:

狗gǒu (dog); From the socio-cultural point of view, the dog is useful for hunting, guarding the home; it is mainly kept outside the home, as it is considered to be a dirty animal.

The word ‘dog’ in the cultures is perceived as rude and insulting. Some of the positive connotations are, experienced, happy, faithful, enduring, patience etc.

羊yáng (goat); the Chinese worldview about the word羊 connotes positive traits such as peace, success and auspicious, co-operate better under leadership, modest, obedient among its negative meanings are; timid, docile, lack will-power, weak, shy, like to depend on others, irresponsible etc.

狮子shīzi (lion) - is perceived as powerful, courageous, and fierce.

4.2 Animal Names in Metaphor

Animal metaphors map different metaphoric expressions from the source to the target domain. They are used to describe inferior or undesirable human traits and habits. Kövecses (2002) notes that much of human behaviour seems to be metaphorically understood in terms of animal behaviour, that is, animals as metaphors for our fears, aspirations, and desires and our physical and emotional and spiritual connections with the animal’. This has implications in the PEOPLE ARE ANIMAL conceptual metaphor in which the source domain of animals is mapped into the target domain of humans. The linguistics expressions related to animals get their meaning when ‘...animals were personified first, and then, the ‘human basics

animal characteristics' were used to understand human behaviour'
Examples:

Igbo:

 Nkítā gbókátá ūjā, yá tàà àtà kà éwèè mārā nà ézē dī yá
n'ónū.

*When the dog has barked for some time, it should try biting so that
people will know that it has teeth.*

METAPHOR

SOURCE -----TARGET

 Nkítā, a dog barking ----- a person's idle
threat

Barking is viewed as undesirable when it is not backed with attack
on the enemy. It is pointless to make idle threats. Hence, a person
who makes excessive threats is seen as a dog barking if he/she does
not attack.

 Íhé òkúkō bù ímírí àchú dī yá íkpà.

*That which the chicken is chasing under the rain is
important.*

METAPHOR

SOURCE -----TARGET

 òkúkō, chicken ----- committed person

The chicken is chasing that which is important under the
rain. This is similar to a person who is committed to an
important task, without minding the circumstances.

Yoruba:

- *Aja ti yoo sanu ki n gbo fere ode.*
- The dog that will be lost never hears the hunter's whistle.

METAPHOR

SOURCE -----TARGET

Aja, dog ----- a disobedient person

This metaphorically means that a disobedient child/person will never take to correction.

- Adie funfun ko mo ara re lagba.
- The white chicken does not realise its age.
- **METAPHOR**

SOURCE -----TARGET

Adie funfun, white chicken ----- an elderly person

This means that an older person is supposed to respect himself.

- Gbogbo alangba lo d'anu dele, a ko mo eyi t'inu nrun/ All lizards lie flat on their stomach, therefore it is difficult to determine which has a stomach ache.

- **METAPHOR**

SOURCE -----TARGET

Gbogbo alangba, all lizards ----- people with different problems

Meaning: Everyone looks the same on the outside but all have different problems they are dealing with that you do not know about.

- *Ekùn ọkọ Síjúwólá* meaning *Tiger, husband of Sijuwola.*

METAPHOR

SOURCE -----TARGET

Ekùn, Tiger ----- a strong, fierce, daring person

Metaphorically, Sijuwola is predicated as *ekun*, the tiger for possessing a strong, fierce, daring attribute.

Chinese:

受伤的山羊不是快乐的山羊. *Shòusha □ng de sha □nyáng bù shì kùàilè de shòusha □ng.* An injured goat is not a happy goat.

METAPHOR

SOURCE -----TARGET

受伤的~~上~~羊 an injured goat ----- a person
denied justice

Act of injustice is a very objectionable act. The same goes for a person who has been denied justice, he/she will not be happy because of the bad treatment.

有劳得奖。 yǒu láo de jiǎng. A good dog deserves a good bone.

METAPHOR

SOURCE -----TARGET

有劳得奖 a good dog ----- a good person

Being good is worth a reward. Being good is a dog behaviour that is as desirable as is a similar human behaviour because both are worth a reward.

4.2.1 Animal Names in Personal/Given Names

Some personal names are derived from animal names that traditionally convey symbol of strength, heroism, or greatness. Some are nicknames given by friends or well-wishers in form of compliment for their achievements. Examples;

Igbo:

- ogbuagū – the killer of leopard.
- Lion- odum- king of animals, totemic animal for strength, agility, boldness, and courage, used in metaphor, adages, similes, and proverbs to illustrate positive energy and abilities like omekagu. (see Okoye, Uguru & Okorji 2016)

Yoruba:

Unlike to the Igbo language, Yoruba does not have animal names in personal/given names, rather animal names in personal/given names

are metaphorically contextualized. Therefore, the contextual situation/condition under which animal metaphors are used is of paramount importance. The usage and understanding of an animal metaphor involves some perception of attitudes, experiences or dispositions of both the speaker and the addressee. Animal metaphors appear to be more difficult compared with ordinary metaphors. For example, when a child is called or referred to as ‘eranko’ (animal) the meaning that is immediately available to him is [- human], only to discover later when being told or prompted that other meanings are possible, e.g. [stubborn; deserving beating with stick].

- Amotekun
-

Chinese:

龟 guī tortoise is the 9th of the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac. Many parents try to give birth in a year of the monkey; they believe that this will make their babies clever. The saying, ‘your kid is like a monkey’, is perceived as praise’. It is considered as a symbol of wisdom, endurance, wealth and long life

望子成龙 hope a son/child will become a dragon, meaning ‘long for a child to succeed in life.

4.2.2 Animal Names in traditional Folklore/Tales

In Igbo and Yoruba tales, tortoise is the trickster symbol which is always associated with cunning, wisdom, and fast thinking, intelligent, clever, an unreliable person, ingratitude. In Chinese, the monkey is prominent in folklores. According to Xin (2018), ‘this is because *Sun Wukong* (the Monkey King) of the novel ‘*The Journey to the West*’ was able to freely go to the Dragon Palace and suppress the Dragon King at his will, with fishermen praying to the wooden monkey figures-images of the Monkey King for safe voyages. The common saying is ‘Shihou (stone monkey) comes with blessings of

safety since ancient times. In the current age of internet, the monkey has become a popular icon in the internet of China, for example; *Youxi Monkeys* is ‘a hot comic figures on the internet used in QQ chatting pictures, comics, animated short films and computer games. Also in the screen art, the traditional monkey opera has been adapted to both big and small screens, in animation, paper –cutting art, and ink-wash painting, scientific and documentary films are also done about monkeys. Also visible in New Year paintings and also in the folk handicraft works used for blessings. Simply put, the monkey exists everywhere’.

4.2.3 Symbolic Animal Names

In Igbo and Yoruba cultural worldviews, Monkey known as ‘*enwe*’ and ‘*ijapa*’ is seen as the symbol of wisdom, longevity, cunning, clever, endurance, peace, patience, slow, steady, stable, security, orderliness. It does not react crazily or do anything on impulse. Olátúnji (1984: 51) defines metaphor as a linguistic situation in which “an object, action or situation is described in a terminology proper to another”. Among the Yorubas, *ijapa* (tortoise) is described as a cunning and clever animal. There is a saying: *Ijapa ologbon ewe* meaning tortoise is a crafty animal depicting tortoise as a *wise* animal. In Igbo land, *enwe* (tortoise) is one of the animals that many communities hold sacred, worship as well as forbid anybody from harming or killing. According to Nwokedi (2016); ‘the monkey is accompanied by a totemic belief, different communities in Igboland have their totems which they regard as sacred animals, as such, and they don’t kill them. They are oral tradition handed down from the ancient generation to the next generation’ In parts of some states (Lagwa in Abor Mbaise in Imo, Akpugoeze in Oji-River in Enugu State, Akwa Ibom and Awka in Anambra State), sclater’s monkey is not killed or eaten owing to social taboos... in Akpugoeze,

monkeys are not harmed because they are considered the property of two shrines/deities. In Lagwa monkeys are unharmed because they are said to protect the residents during the slave trade or war time, monkeys have totemic affiliation with the community, and for instance, the throne chair of the traditional ruler of Lagwa is carved with the images of monkeys’.

According to Chinese belief, ‘龟gui’ (tortoise) is an auspicious animal; it is a symbol of good luck’. The tortoise is one of the four sacred creatures in Chinese culture, others includes the Phoenix, the Dragon, and the Ky-Lin (Unicorn likeness). Chinese believe that the tortoise has the secrets of heaven and earth within its body. It is known to possess oracular powers; also the shell is believed to hold the mysteries of the future. That is why many consider it wise to wear a tortoise amulet for good luck. Tortoise shells were used in ceremonies to predict the future during Chinese’s Shang dynasty (1766-1122 BC). It has remained the same millions of years; it rarely dies from disease and can go without food for more than a year. Being one of the animals that has endured longest on earth, it is considered as a symbol of wisdom, endurance, wealth and long life.

Chinese People love monkeys for so many reasons; the monkey (with a big ‘M’) is the 9th of the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac. Many parents try to give birth in a year of the monkey; they believe that this will make their babies clever. The saying, ‘your kid is like a monkey’, is perceived as praise’.

Xin (2018) also affirms that ‘the monkey is regarded as an intelligent, smart, lively and brave animal. In traditional Chinese culture, the monkey is much adored and admired. There has been a kind of culture in China surrounding the monkey, which is an indispensable component of Chinese culture and is seen in various aspects, including literature, arts, history, folk customs, and daily

life'. In the Chinese zodiac, which is a very ancient part of Chinese culture, the monkey is the ninth sign of the zodiac, called '*shen hou*'.

'*shen*' belongs to the metal element in the history of *Wuxing* (meaning 'five elements', referring to wood, fire, earth, metal and water in traditional Chinese philosophy and medicine, hence the name '*jin hou*' as '*jin*' means 'metal' in classical Chinese Literature'.

Fu (2018) notes that In Chinese literature 'monkey sounds like 'high official', in Chinese. the Chinese character '猴 hóu', 'monkey' is pronounced the same as '候hou', 'high official' and the association dates back hundreds of years into feudal times. Also in ancient Chinese painting, the imagery of monkey as mobility in animal painting was visible in the following;

A monkey hanging a seal on a maple tree symbolizes getting promoted to a very high position with an official seal. A monkey riding on the back of another monkey symbolizes retaining a high official standing from one generation on to another.

- A monkey riding a horse symbolizes getting promoted quickly.
- Furthermore, Fu notes that in traditional Chinese mythology, 'the mythical monkey as a protecting god is all pervading and all powerful, many traditional homes use the images of the monkey (god) as a talisman of protection.

4.2.4 Animal Names in Gender-biased language

Igbo, Yoruba and Chinese present the portrayal of women and men with negative meanings in gender- biased words/sentences such as; stupid, timid, docile, lacking will-power,, weak, shy, nagging, noisy like to depend on others, irresponsible etc. Examples of animal names in such gender-biased language are presented below:

Igbo:

na- akwa ka ọkụkọ - cackling like a hen. Meaning noisy and constantly complaining.

In Igbo expressions meaning of hen is normally associated with noise, hence, a woman is compared with a hen, in relation to behaviour, in that ‘hen’ constantly produce a sound similar to the one produced by several women talking.

Ọ na-eme ka ewu - behaviour like a goat. Meaning a stupid and foolish woman.

Agbọ ka nkịta – barking like a dog, meaning a nagging woman.

Alaru ụla ka edi – to sleep like a sloth, meaning lazy and idle woman,

Arị ka éjùlà – to crawl like a snail, used to refer to a sluggish.

Yorùbá:

In Yoruba language, the following animal names are gender-biased:

Aja (Dog) - promiscuity for a male

Ekun (Tiger) – strong, fierce, daring male

‘elédè’ (Pig) –used for a dirty male

Chinese:

她性格温顺善良尽享一只小绵羊 ta xingné wēnshùn shànliáng, jùxiàng, yìzhī xiǎo miányáng – she is as gentle as a sheep
牝鸡司晨 pìn jī sī chén’ has the meaning, ‘a hen heralding the break of day’ that is, a woman ruling the house. Also, women meddling in politics.

The hen stands for the wife/women especially the inquisitive or talkative woman and a usurper, whereas the cock refers to the husband/men.

一馬不被兩鞍 a horse doesn’t have two saddles, meaning ‘a widow does not remarry’

嫁雞隨雞， 嫁狗隨狗; when a woman is married to a rooster, she has to stick with a rooster; when she is married to a dog, she has to stick with a dog
河東獅吼 lioness roar, meaning ‘having a shrewish wife’.

5. Summary of findings and conclusion

The study examined the conceptualization of animal names in the learning of FL by the advanced Igbo and Yoruba Chinese Learners. Having done this, it establishes the semantic connotations of some selected animal names, animal names in metaphoric expressions, animal names in personal/given names, animal names in traditional folklores/tales, symbolic animal names and animal names in gender-biased expressions in Igbo and Yorùbá Vis a Vis Chinese (FL). The comparison was to give a detailed account of to what extent the Igbo, Yorùbá and Chinese animal names share an underlying conceptualization and reflect different cultural beliefs. Furthermore, the cross-cultural analysis was to highlight the different world views in the languages under study through animal names.

In conclusion, the study has been able to achieve the objectives of the study by answering the research questions. In answer to the first question, animal names have been established in the lexicons of Igbo, Yorùbá and Chinese (see table 1 above). Also for the second and third research questions, the conceptualization of animal names by Igbo and Yorùbá Chinese learners have been highlighted; animal names are used semantically to connote both negative and positive attributes of humans. Animal names are also used in metaphoric expressions, folklores, gender – biased languages, usually intended to satirize or rebuke. Finally animal names reflect the different/similar cultural world-views and describe human characters. Language awareness approach to FL teaching has

drawn the attentions of the teachers/students to the fact that conceptualization of animal names for communicative purpose and proficiency in different languages and cultures require pragmatic reasoning in order to understand them. Finally, further research that involves broader based data across more languages is recommended in order to establish a more in- depth results. However, it is hoped that this modest study has contributed to the expanding of knowledge about the topic under study and has provided a body of data for future research in the area.

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