



Animal Metaphors in English and Kurdish

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Abstract

This study entitled "Animal Metaphors in English and Kurdish" focuses on animal metaphors. The researcher, here, brings a number of definitions of the word metaphor. The foremost objective of this research is to know the culture of the two societies as far as the understanding of different types of animals is concerned. The aim is to show what similarities and differences represent cultural connotations in both languages. The significance of the research lies in the fact that learners will be able to comprehend and give the translation of those sentences that contain animal metaphors. It is also important for those who have willingness in understanding the cultures of two different societies as far as animals are concerned. Kurdish students face some problems and difficulties in learning metaphors especially animal metaphors. So, this research could be of a great help for this purpose. The study makes a comparison between English and Kurdish languages as concerned with animal metaphors. Examples from both languages are given to reach the aim. The conclusion of the research shows that there is cultural correspondence between the two languages concerning some animals despite some differences. At the end, the researcher shows a list of references that are benefited in writing this research.

Keywords : Animal Metaphor ,conceptual ,culture

1. Definitions of Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly using like or as, a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating something is something else. Omer(2000)says that metaphor is a common linguistic phenomenon that is noticed in many linguistic shapes like ;every day speech and conversation ,religious speeches, philosophical writings ,novel and poems.

" A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken literally.

Metaphor consists of a source and a target domain such that the source is typically a more physical and the target a more abstract kind of domain." (Zoltan Kovecses,2015).

One of the Kurdish writers ,Aziz Gardy(1982), states that "metaphor is a word which is not used for its own original sense but is used for conveying another meaning or message that indicates another aim."

"A metaphor is a word or expression that is used to talk about an entity or quality other than that referred to by its core, or most basic meaning. This non-core use expresses a perceived relationship with the core meaning of the word, and in many cases between two semantic fields."

(Alice Deignan ,2005)

Thus it can be said that a metaphor is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two things that are not alike. So it is a literary device that makes implicit comparisons without the use of "like" or "as".



2. Metaphors and Similes

Another way to compare two distinct things is Simile. Here the main difference between simile and metaphor is that the former uses the words like as and like while the latter does not use them. So metaphor says x is y but simile says x is similar to y. For example if we say (His words are like carving over the stones) it means his words are similar to the carving over the stones but in metaphor we at once say that his words are the carving over the stones.

On the other hand, it can be said that metaphor is not a fact but it is a figure of speech.

3. Metaphor and Culture

Culture is defined as a way people look at life. So here particular group of people in a specific society practice certain ideas and habitual actions. "Culture is a collection of actions that are habitual, ideas, and values practiced by a society. In the anthropological sense, culture is defined as the way people live". (Vossoughi, 2000)

Culture, may be best defined by Wang (2013) who states that

" culture has a much broader meaning. It reflects the total pattern of beliefs, customs, institutions, objects, and techniques that characterize the life of a human community. It is an integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance. We can understand culture from the following aspects: First, culture is a social inheritance that was created through long-time hard work. Second, culture consists of not only non-material things such as beliefs, value concepts, custom knowledge, as well as material things. Third, culture is the guide of people's action and provides methods for us to solve the problems. Fourth, culture is not innate, it is learned. Lastly, different cultures can be distinguished by their core value concepts."

It is thus believed that dictating cultural differences makes the speakers of Kurdish and English languages perceive metaphor in different ways. Animal metaphors are common in many languages (Nadezda Silaski, 2013).

The researcher, thus, thinks that there are some specific animals mainly pigs and dogs and some others that are associated with specific cultural connotations. This makes English metaphor learning challenging for speakers of Kurdish language.

4. Kurdish Culture and Metaphor

Zoltan Covceses (2010) states that "The selection of the metaphors we use may also depend on who we are, that is, what our personal history is or what our long-lasting concerns or interests are. On the other hand, Sharifi and Karimipour (2012) state that" Animals are used by different cultures to express the figurative meaning of idioms based on the context and they can communicate different meanings depending on the cultural context.

Kurdish culture is, therefore, largely influenced by the Islamic teachings of Holy Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which involve obedience, surrender, adherence, and acceptance of commands of Allah.

Horrie and Chippindale (2003) state that "Islam teaches a complete and different way of life that governs justice and punishment, modes of dressing, taxation, business ethics, care of animals, economics, sexual relations, marriage and inheritance, social behaviour, education, moral ethics, war and peace, politics, rules of greetings and hospitality among other elements of social life".

Northern part of Iraqi Kurdistan is a region of different sorts of people. It has diverse religious faiths and languages. Most of the people in Kurdistan are Muslims. But as concerned with



British and American people ,it is said that many of them are Christians or better Non-Muslims.

It is concluded that Kurdish people may have a negative impression on some particular animals. In spite of the fact that this can have a negative impact on learning too , it does not have anything to do with mastering structures of the syntax of the language.

Therefore, the culture of Kurdish people is quite different from that of English language native speakers. Hinging upon the cultural background ,thus ,it would be normal for both societies to have different views about animals and use them differently and metaphorically.

5. Animals from the Standpoints of Kurdish and English Cultures

Different cultures use animals to express the figurative meanings of metaphors .Communication of these different meanings results from specific cultural context. For example, Sharifi and Karimipour(2012) state that in Kurdish society, horses symbolize obstinacy and agility; turtles symbolize weakness, cat's uselessness, mice sabotage and uncleanness, and pigs' greed and uncleanness "

Although there is positive characteristic admired by English culture against certain animals, for example ,dogs attribute truthfulness and loyalty, in Kurdish culture, dogs symbolise dirtiness or better impurity. the connotations are likely to be different. Some studies have indicated that different societies use animals to symbolise something based on the frequency and the environment they operate in, which is seen in English and Kurdish idioms where the symbolism of an animal such as a pig, which includes greed, fatness, stupidity, and filth may not always have the exact equivalent meaning in Kurdish (Fraser, 2009).

So, it can be said that the same meaning for the same animal cannot be conveyed in the two languages Kurdish and English. This is ,no doubt ,due to the cultural differences between the two languages.

6.Types of Metaphor

There are some types of metaphor ,but in this study we would shed lights on those that have to do with the content of the study directly or indirectly.

6.1 Implied metaphor

In metaphors sometimes there is comparison between two things directly but sometimes this comparison is indirect. This means that there are diverse metaphors; some of them are not easy to comprehend. So these construct a type of metaphor known as implied metaphor.

For example in the sentence ' Leave this room ,Tom roared' . Here Tom by roaring has a meta message who indirectly wants to frighten the one he addressed and to make him leave the place soon.

6.2 Conceptual Metaphor

It is another type of metaphor that focuses much on the culture of a specific society. In this study this type of metaphor is also concentrated on . Kovecses(2010)states that "metaphorical conceptualization in natural situations occurs under two

simultaneous pressures: the pressure of embodiment and the pressure of context.

Context is determined by local culture. This dual pressure essentially amounts to

our effort to be coherent both with the body and culture – coherent both with

universal embodiment and the culture-specificity of local culture in the course of

metaphorical conceptualization". This tells us that metaphor is culture-bound which means it is related to a specific culture. It means that before choosing the metaphor the person should introduce himself who he is, what his interests and his beliefs are .



Consequently, Owl in the culture of some European countries is considered wise because they believe they sit high up trees to see his preys and to be protected from his enemies. But looking at the culture of another group of people, we will see something different. Kurdish people have a different view of that special animal. This will be explained in detail in the coming section.

6.3 Universal Metaphor

Based on the existence of different languages, metaphorical words and expressions would change. Although there are an abundant number of languages and intuitions of people ,it would not be abnormal to ask if there is universal metaphor or not. The answer is yes we have it .Universal metaphor is a linguistic metaphor that exists in many languages. So universal metaphor is the one found in almost all languages. Not all metaphors exist in all languages for we have intuitions of people. This type is not included in the present paper.

6.4 Nature Metaphor

It is another type of metaphor which has those words that are related to nature. Our example is 'The lightning was fireworks in the sky'. Here lightening is a word related to nature. There are various examples about this type but the research is about the coming type therefore much focus will be on animal metaphor with different examples.

6.5 Animal Metaphor

One example is 'The thunder was a mighty Lion' . This research is about this type of metaphor which also depends on conceptual metaphor because animal metaphor changes due to a specific culture of a special group of people. So this type relies on what a group of people believe about animals. Dwyer(1979) in this respect states that "all people extend the referents of some named animal categories in metaphoric ways. They analogize properties of animal categories to those of social existence. Again there is variation between cultures. Magic and myth, totemic labelling or cultural identity may all be aided by animal metaphors."

Animal metaphors not only have a cognitive basis, but are also culturally motivated, that is , they reflect the attitudes and beliefs held by a particular community towards certain animal species, and, therefore, may vary from culture to culture, in time and space.

(Lopez Rodriguez 2009)

Animal names are used to describe people, to assign them various desirable or undesirable animal properties , to address them with either abuse or affection, etc., thus demonstrating how

patterns are mapped onto human beings. Such animal metaphors are certain aspects of animals and their instinctual attributes and behavior metonymy-based, i.e. typical properties of an animal stand for that animal.

(Nadezda ,2013)

Fernandez (1972:41)pointed out concerning animal metaphor, "Men can be and are ,through the diverse powers of culture ,many things .Their choices are manifold .If they can look around and find some lesson in Cows ,Calves ,Bears and Rats ,their choices are made easier."

From what is mentioned above ,we can conclude that animal metaphor is distinct from culture to culture . A specific animal may be thought about derogatively by a special group ,but it may be thought about otherwise by another special group of people due to their belief and their way of looking at animals. Sometimes the context the animal metaphor is used has a vital role and effective. So, depending on the idea of metaphor ,we may comprehend the behavior of human in terms of animal behavior.

7. Examples of animal metaphor in both Kurdish and English Languages

In this section examples of animal metaphor in English language are provided with their explanation .Examples of Kurdish language would also be provided afterwards. Mapping of



animal characteristics on to humans will appear on these examples. So ,here , animals are attributed human characteristics by humans or in another word ,animals are personified. Consider these examples:

1. "The bird that lays the golden egg". (Talebinejad & Dastjerdi ,2005)

Images of goose in English differ from Kurdish language . Goose is a featureless bird with no specific characteristics to become an image, whereas in Kurdish , it has several metaphorical representations as in the example "Awa dyara waku bleyi gosht qazy xwardbet" (It seemed as if he ate Goose meat)which means that the goose's meat is delicious and rare to the degree that makes him speak loudly or speak a lot. But in "bradarechy qazy haya "(He has a friend similar to a Goose),here it means that the person is naïve and not a disciplined one .

2. Lara is as wise as an Owl

In (2) above in English language Owls are thought about positively because they sit high up in trees, they seem to be wise. With their strong eyesight they are able to see their prey. Everything around them is observed by the Owls in a good way. Thus, this type of animal , in English language ,is used metaphorically to refer to those people who are wise . While in Kurdish it is thought about negatively as for example

"Malt xra naby dawaz bina dareyi kundy daxweny" (It means"stop speaking much about this, kund is Owl which is used negatively and referred to some one whose speech about something is not promising)

3. Be dang ba rewy ,atu qsa maka. (Be quiet you Fox should not speak.)

In fact in Kurdish society ,Fox is looked at as opportunist and deceitful . This is the same in English society as in(You Fox ,do not be cunning).

4.Today a man, tomorrow a mouse. (Wang ,2013)

Here mouse is looked at as something inactive ,so when today the man is active tomorrow he becomes quiet and a lazy-like person .In Kurdish ,it is used similarly or somehow in a different way as in (Xo mshk ni lam shwena danishtwyi) (You are not a mouse to sit in this place) .Here, it means why the person is belittling his personality to sit like that and in this place.

5. "An animal that lives well. He was happy as a pig in shit". (Stefanowitsch,2006)

This means that pig is looked upon in a good way by English people. In another example "Jamal was a pig at dinner" it is shown that in English language ,one more meaning for pig is being a big eater. So here ,it means Jamal eats too much at dinner.

Bartsch(2003)in his book states that Sometimes in English some body tells some one else who makes himself dirty "What a pig you are", meaning what a dirty person you are .

But in Kurdish language the case is not similar but it is cultural specific as in(Am mrova baraza dam bastrawa cheya?) (Who is this pig like-tongue tied person?).Here the speaker means that the person is like a dumb who does not speak even if the world is going to be destroyed.

6. "As consumers squirrel away huge sums for the down payment on a home." (Alice Deignan,2005) or Squirrelly kids (in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English)

Here squirrel is seen as restless ;moving from one place to another .But in Kurdish perhaps it is very rarely or even not used metaphorically .

7. Richard is a gorilla. (Ortony,1993)

Here it refers to a person who is very large and is expected to become violent. In Kurdish language ,it is again rarely used .When it is used it has the same English language connotation. In fact I could not find a Kurdish example for this purpose.



8. Some lawyers are sharks. (Leezenberg, 2001)

In English Sharks are seen as violent and detrimental animals. So here it means some lawyers, with much respect to many others, are iniquitous that they deceive innocent people. The same thing happens or it changes slightly among Kurdish people. It is although rarely used, it seems to have an English-like connotation. Example in Kurdish about sharks is very rare. In (Brwa kurechy basha balam brakay ba masy qrsh dachet chunka ka det harchy haya ray damaly), the Kurdish use of Sharks refers to some one who eats or takes everything without considering the surrounding.

So here there is something called cultural correspondence as Ghazala (2012) stated, which means we have in different cultures similar connotation for the same animal but in different languages.

9. His friend is a wolf, no one likes to keep company with him.

Wolves are often ferocious in English They never lose their nature. They are among the strong animals. However, people magnify wolves' ferocious towards their enemy and their greedy. It has become the typical cognition to wolf. (Liu, 2013)

Barstch (2003) states another example: John is a wolf

In Kurdish " gu:rgæ læ pi:stj mærdä "(he is a wolf in sheep's clothing) is quite ubiquitous. Perhaps both English and Kurdish have similar cultural connotation in this respect. It refers to some one whose evil intentions are hidden. This is because in Kurdish we have "Gurga la pesty mary"(A wolf under the cover of Sheep) which means he is a terrible and bad person but does not show it.

10. Wow, I do not know if he is a bee or not.

Bee often represents busy and hard-working.; Bee works in summer and eats honey all the winter, people express their favorable impressions towards bees. Despite bees' behavior as instinct reaction, humans elevate it as moral force, thus bees and their spirits make up a complete cognition process.

In Kurdish, we have the same figurative meaning of bees for human beings but perhaps it is not repeated that much as it is in English language. Sometimes bees are metaphorically used in Kurdish language referring to some people who do not let a person to go unless he tries to do the thing they want from him as in(ba Xway wa bazanm amjara darbazy naby chunka hamu wak shanay hang dawrayan dawa).

11. The kids were monkeys on the jungle gym.

You know on the jungle, monkeys usually go up to trees, so here Monkeys are seen active to the degree that they dislike to sit and stay in one place. In Kurdish, there is a sentence example "Atu maimuny ba sar aw daray dakawy ? " (Are you a monkey that you climb this tree). So here monkeys are looked at derogatively that the person is always moving till at the end, it results in a ruin.

12. "To have butterflies in one's stomach is a feeling of anxiety". Here it means in his stomach there is a butterfly that annoys him, while in Kurdish it usually grants virtual attributes to human being for example simplicity, purity and innocence ...like" Ama papulaya, xo wak brayakany nya" (This person is a butterfly unlike his brothers), which means he is not like his brothers to be rude and ridiculous but he is a kind-hearted one.

(Renton, 1990)



13. He is a chicken-hearted person .

This is found in English language which means that he is a person that has a little courage . In Kurdish language ,it does not seem to have an example of such type of animal. If we have it,it refers to the one who becomes angry soon.

14. " To shed crocodile tears to be a hypocrite", here it means a deceitful sort of crying ,so Crocodile is looked at as a deceptive animal in this respect by English people . (Renton ,1990)

In Kurdish language ,the same example is available like (Frmeschy Timsah marezha ,kas pet bawar nakat)(Do not cry similar to crying of Crocodile ,as no one believes you)

15. "Donkey's years" (Renton ,1990)

Another animal metaphor in English is about Donkey. If we put "Donkey's years" in a sentence like (I have not seen them for Donkey's years) .It means that I have not seen them for a long time. It is not thought that Donkey in Kurdish has this meaning.

Fraser(2009) also examined animal terms used for insults in English, such as donkeys for stupidity . In Kurdish the example (dælej kærj dezeya) is used .In Kurdish too it has the meaning of being stupid and stubborn.

16." to have an eagle eye" .

This example of animal metaphor about eagle has the same cultural connotation in both English and Kurdish. In Kurdish for example it is said "Ama mrovechy chaw baza "which means he is the one who can see those that are distant from him .So we call this cultural correspondence. It is normally directed to a person to be able to notice small mistakes .

17. "a lamb led to slaughter".

This is another example for animal metaphor but this time about lamb. Here the word Lamb refers to a naive person that is allowed to be exploited. In Kurdish the same cultural connotation is used ,for example (Xot wak barxoka nishan mada agina datxon)(Do not show yourself as a lamb so that you are not to be exploited by others)

18. This time there is another animal mentioned by Renton (1990) which is "the lion's share" Perhaps Kurdish language has taken this cultural connotation from English language .So in Kurdish too we use 'lion's share' meaning 'the greatest part'. This is indicated in the example " Lo hamu kat daby Twana pshchy sherry barkawet ? " (Why has Twana got the biggest portion all the time ?).

19. " a snake in the grass"

English people concerning the meaning of Snake in this example refer it to a person who has a low character .In Kurdish example it is almost the same especially in this example "sifaty am kasa awaya ka wak Mar pewa dadat"(He stings as if it was a snake). It means he is a false friend to do every thing against his friend or others in a hidden way .

20. "Jane is in the center of the spider's web"

In the above-mentioned example ,the metaphor of spider denotes controlling an operation .But in Kurdish because the majority are Muslims ,so they are affected by what is written in the holy Quran concerning spiders. In the holy Quran , spiders are symbols for annihilation. God almighty talks about a destructive or a very delicate house of spiders. So among Kurdish Muslims this example is said " martan xra naby dareyi qawmi jaljalokana "(Wow ,You are similar to the tribe of spiders). This Kurdish sentence means that you always want self-destruction as you, among yourselves, hate each other .

21. " She is considered to be a bookworm"

Renton(1990) keeps on giving examples, this time he mentions worm in the example, meaning a person who likes reading and study too much. The metaphorical meaning in Kurdish language may be used negatively. For example (Dar krmy la xoy naby tamany hazar



sal daby). It means (If trees have not got infected by worms ,the tree would live longer). So ,here worm is used as a destructive means for the life of human being.

22. Garratty(2017) states

"If someone is called a scapegoat, this means they are taking the blame (when not guilty). The word comes from the Bible. In the olden days, communities were much more superstitious than today, and animals often bore the brunt of our ancestors' fears".

In order to remove all badness from a village, the villagers sent a goat into the wilderness that carried everyone's sins with it. In Kurdish, goat is considered to be innocent too as indicated in this example "handa be dasalata shaxy bznechy pe nabre."(He is innocent enough that he cannot cut horns of goat). This means that horns of goat are too thin that can easily be cut by even a weak person ,but that person is so weak that cannot even cut these horns .

23. It is indicated that Dogs can symbolise loyalty and truthfulness and are thus admired in English culture. They are also attributed positive characteristics since they are valued as companions and admired among that society . In spite of this fact , in Kurdish culture ,because of our adherence to the holy Quran, dogs symbolise impurity and they are attributed negative characteristics , therefore ,they are somewhat different. On the other hand, Renton(1990) in his book *Metaphorically Speaking*, brings this example "to let sleeping dogs lie"

In English language ,dogs by themselves are aggressive though very protected by English people.

A Kurdish animal metaphor example is "Sarbneyitawa ba jwana margy bashtra la sad zhiny sag margy". (Better to die at your early age than letting yourself spend a dog life). www.rozhy.kurd.net

In this example Kurdish people mean to live or spend a glorious life is better than living a dog life .Here, dog in dog life(for Sag mergi) in the Kurdish example has a derogative meaning, that is a bad life.

8. Conclusions

At the end of the research, the researcher concludes that the difference of animal metaphor between English and Kurdish languages is culture-specific . This culture specificity mainly results from the religious heritage .The religious heritage affects the way Kurdish people look at animals . For example, some Kurdish animal metaphors show dogs as a symbol of impurity and pigs as greedy and unclean

. But dogs are considered a symbol of faithfulness in English language and pigs are not looked at in the same derogative way as they are in Kurdish language. But rather they are looked at positively.

It is also concluded that there is cultural correspondence between the two languages concerning some animals .It has been indicated that favourable and unfavourable human attributes are expressed in the form of animal metaphors. It is seen that relations among human beings are expressed using animal metaphors .

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دلوفان سيف الدين سعدی

کولیزی به روه رده - به شی ئنکلیزی/ زانکوی سه لاهه ددین-هه ولیر

پوخته

ئه مر توپزینه وه په ناویشانه که ی "خوازه ی ئازه ل له زمانی کوردی و ئنکلیزی". مه به ستی سه ره کی ده رخستنی جیاوازی و لیکجونه له هه ردوو زمانی کوردی و ئنکلیزی سه باره ت به خوازه ی ئازه ل. توپزینه وه که کرنکه بو ئه و که سانه ی که ده یانه ویت زانباریان هه بیت له سه ر که لتوری کوردی و ئنکلیزی له رووی ئازه له وه. کرفتئ ئه مر توپزینه وه یه له وه سه رجاوه ی کرتوه که وا هه ندی که س زه حمه تی ده بینن له دوزینه وه ی جیاوازی و لیکجون سه باره ت به خوازه ی ئازه ل . توپزه رله ده ره نجامدا بوی ده رکه وت که له ماوه ی هینانه وه ی هه ندی له نمونه کان ده ریخستوه که ته نسیقی که لتوری هه یه له نیوان هه ردو زماندا سه باره ت به خوازه ی ئازه ل.

ملخص

في هذا البحث سلط الباحث الضوء على المجاز الحيوان في اللغتين الكوردية والانكليزية. هدف الرئيس الباحث في هذا البحث هو بيان اختلاف والتشابه للمجاز الحيوان كنوع من المجاز في كلتا اللغتين الكوردية والانكليزية. من خلال التشابه يريد الباحث ان يبين بان هناك موافقه حضارية بين اللغتين في بعض نماذج او الامثله على بعض الحيوان . والبحث هو من احد اهم البحوث لمن يريد ان يتعلم كلا الحضارتين بالنسبة مجاز الحيوان. مشكلة البحث هو بأن بعض الاشخاص يجدون صعوبة لبيان اختلاف و تشابه مجاز الحيوان بين اللغتين. استنتج الباحث في الاخير بان هناك تطابق حضارية بين كل من اللغتين كوردية والانكليزية من خلال بعض من الحيوانات التي بينت خلال الامثال الذي ركزت الباحث عنهما .