

## THE EYE AS SOURCE OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN IGBO

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### Abstract

*This study examines how the eye (ányá) body part in Igbo is variously conceptualized and used metaphorically to express abstract concepts. Existing works on body part metaphors in Igbo were based on the traditionalist perspectives which sees metaphor as a rhetoric or figurative device with little attention from the conceptual metaphor perspective which sees metaphor as a systematic cognitive device used in the understanding of abstract concepts through the application of concrete ones. Data for this study were collected from 20 native speakers of Igbo through oral interview and observations and subjected to semantic analysis. It was discovered that the eye (ányá) body part is a source domain or concrete concept used in mapping out or expressing abstract concepts in Igbo such as intelligence, love, hope, time/distance, greed, among others. It was further discovered that metaphor is a powerful cognitive tool that help in expressing the Igbo worldviews which comprises of their culture, belief system, core values, and morals, among others. The study therefore concluded that the Igbo language is rich in the use of metaphors in everyday conversation and in expressing and understanding the worldviews of native speakers of the language.*

Keywords: Metaphor, Ányá (eye), Conceptual Metaphor, Igbo, Cognitive Linguistics

### 1.0 Introduction

The concept “metaphor” has been variously defined and conceived by scholars. According to Lodge (1981, p10) metaphor is a figure of substitution based on similarity. It is based on similarity or comparison of two things that are otherwise dissimilar or separate. Emezue (2015, p119) states that a construction is defined as metaphorical when an implied comparison is made between two unlike things. Onwukwe (2020, p108) further states that a simple way of defining metaphor is to say that it is a way of using language to make a comparison so that people are caused to understand something in relation to something else. In other words, metaphor according to these scholars is the use of language in a very special or unique form which requires the reader or listener to device some strategies in interpreting the intended meaning of the expression of the speaker or writer. According to Emenanjo (2015, p591), metaphor is the extension of the standard or literal meaning to another level and concept on the basis of some resemblance. There are, however, different approaches to the study of metaphor and they include the traditionalist and the modern approaches. According to Saeed (2016, p370), the traditionalist approach can be traced back to Aristotle’s writings on metaphor which views metaphor as a rhetoric device used at certain time for the purpose of achieving certain effect. It is, therefore, seen as the figurative use of language as mostly seen in poetic writings. The classical approach further sees metaphors as a kind of decorative addition to ordinary plain language which requires special forms of interpretation from listeners or readers. Thus, the sentence “Anosike is a tortoise” can be regarded as metaphor or metaphorical expression as it involves the use of figurative device and a comparison of two unlike things whose meaning is not intended to be understood literally. Thus, we regard Lodge’s (1981), Emezue’s (2015) and Onwukwe’s (2020) definitions of metaphor as being within the purview of the traditionalist or classical perception of the concept of metaphor.

On the other hand, the modern school of thought on the study of the concept of metaphor views metaphor as a cognitive aspect of language. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p15), it is a systematic cognitive device used in the understanding of certain abstract concepts through the application of concrete ones. In other words, it is a way where speakers or users of a language relate

what they know or what is in their environment to express what is abstract or less familiar in the environment. Saeed (2016, p370) describes the modern approach to the study of metaphor as the Romantic view. According to the modern approach, metaphor therefore helps in the conceptualization and imagination of abstract concepts. Metaphor is viewed to be cognitive because it involves some kind of mental reasoning which enables language users to make use of the right concept or analogy for understanding and expressing abstract or less delineated concepts. A typical example is the use of body-parts, animals and physical objects to express abstract phenomenon or concepts such as hatred, love, anger, wickedness etc. According to Yu (2002, p9), conceptual metaphors emerge from the interaction between body and culture. In other words, metaphors can be grounded in bodily experience but shaped by cultural understanding. For instance, the Igbo expression *óbi ójọ̀* where the word *óbi* means “heart” and *ọ̀jọ̀* which means “bad” is used to express the abstract noun “wickedness.” Kovecses (2010) therefore states that metaphor underlie every aspect of human life. From the foregoing, it is deducible that the study of metaphor is important in the study of language.

Existing Igbo studies on body part metaphors such as Okeogu (2015), Okeogu and Chukwu (2016), and Onwukwe (2020). Okeogu (2015) and Onwukwe (2020) have examined body parts as sources of metaphorical expressions from the traditionalist perspective where metaphor is understood as a rhetoric or figurative device in language use. However, only little attention has been paid to the study of body part metaphors from the perspective of conceptual metaphor as conceived in Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This study, therefore, examines the eye as source of metaphor in Igbo from the conceptual metaphor perspective which holds that metaphors are all pervasive in language. Hence, this study, aims at examining the body part ‘eye’ as sources of conceptual metaphors in Igbo. The specific objectives are to examine how the eye body parts are conceptualized and used to express abstract concepts and phenomena in Igbo. Also, it is important to note that body parts as source of metaphor in Igbo have been studied from different perspective, especially the traditionalist perspective to the study of metaphor.

Lakoff and John’s (1980) conceptual metaphor was adopted as the theoretical framework while ethnographic design was used. Data were collected through observation and oral interview which was conducted with twenty native speakers. The data were subjected to semantic analysis.

## 2.0 Literature Review

This sub-section reviews related concepts such as conceptual and linguistic metaphors as well as previous empirical studies.

### 2.1 Conceptual and Linguistic Metaphors

It is germane to distinguish between conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor as they are quite related. Conceptual metaphor involves how one understands a particular concept with a more concrete concept. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p16), conceptual metaphors are overarching across domain mappings that influence our thinking. On the other hand, linguistic metaphors are the linguistic realizations of those conceptual metaphors. Put differently, while the idea of conceptual metaphor is associated with the human mind where the structuring of relationship between concepts takes place, linguistic metaphors can best be described as the phrase or sentence which systematically represents the metaphorical concepts. For instance, the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR gives rise to linguistic metaphors such as “he can’t defend his claim” or “he won the argument.”

According to Koki (2017, p28), in line with this, linguistic metaphor like “*I make bold to say fellow compatriots that government is a serious business*” are the manifestation of the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS BUSINESS. This is because it involves the mapping between two cognitive domains: from the conceptual source domain of *business* to the abstract target domain of *politics*.

### 2.2 Body-Parts as Sources of Conceptual Metaphors

The human body part plays a crucial role in the conceptualization, expression, and understanding of an abstract concept or domain. According to Kovecses (2002, p326), the human body is the best candidate for the source domain as it is clearly defined and easily understood. The body parts such as the head,

face, legs, hands, back, heart, bones, and shoulders, among others, are usually employed in metaphorical and metonymical conception or conceptualization and thus, the experiential basis of conceptual metaphor is both bodily and cultural. In this regard, Gibbs (1994) states that our body plays a crucial role in our creation of meaning and its understanding, and our embodiment in and with the physical and cultural world sets out the contours of what is meaningful to us and determines the ways of our understanding (see also Yu, 2002, p250). In Igbo for instance, the body parts such as *anya* (eye), *aka* (hand), *ihu* (face), among others can be used in expressing and understanding abstract categories in Igbo such as *anya ukwu* (envy), *aka azu* (bribery), *ihu oma* (good fortune), etc. This shows that our body, with its experiences and functions, is a potentially universal source domain for metaphorical mappings onto more abstract domain. The human body parts used in the conceptualization of abstract concepts or domains can be classified into two main groups namely the internal and external parts. The internal body parts consist of the heart, liver, mind, blood, and nerves, among others. On the other hand, the external body parts consist of the eyes, nose, mouth, hand, head, and legs, and so on. However, this study focuses mainly on the eye body parts in Igbo.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study anchors on the Lakoff and Johnson (1980) conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). According to Saeed (2016, p370), Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory can be seen as an extension of the romantic view of what metaphor entails. CMT was popularized by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their book, *Metaphors We Live By* which was revised in 2003. This is to say that their theory builds on centuries of scholarship that takes metaphor not simply as an ornamental device of language but as a conceptual tool for structuring, restructuring, and even creating realities. In CMT, a conceptual metaphor involves two conceptual domains, a source domain and a target domain, where the target domain is understood in terms of the source domain. While the source domains capture more familiar, concrete, and clearly delineated domains of experience, target domains represent less familiar, less clearly delineated, and more abstract conceptual domains.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their theory contend that metaphor can be understood as the mapping from a source domain to a target domain. That is, they hold that metaphor involves the understanding of a particular concept, idea, among others with the use of another concept or idea. Also, the source domain is the conceptual domain from which metaphorical expressions are drawn to understand another conceptual domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. In line with this postulation, Kövecses (2010, p79) asserts that conceptual metaphors employ a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical domain as their source and as such, metaphorical utterances are drawn from the concrete source domain to understand and express the abstract target domain. This can be seen in Lakoff (1993, p110) example, "LOVE IS A JOURNEY." In this case, the concept "journey" is the source domain which is mapped onto the target domain "love." i.e., which is used in the understanding of the target domain "love." The concept "journey" therefore invokes certain concrete ideas such as travelling, traveler, destination, etc. which enables someone to understand the target domain or the sentence in which the conceptual metaphor is applied. The process of understanding one concept in terms of another is known as mapping. A modified version of the theory further states that a source domain can be used not only to express abstract concepts but also to express concrete concepts or domains.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p10) equally hold that metaphor is not exclusively the property of language but also a product of our mental or cognitive ability. Mey (2001, p. 305) therefore describes metaphors as ways of conceptualizing and understanding one's surroundings; as such, they make up a mental model of our world. According to Evans and Green (2006, p118), even though target domains tend to be higher-order concepts and relate to more complex and experiential knowledge, they tend to be grounded in more basic embodied experiences. Kövecses (2002, p45) identifies typical source domains as relating to the human body, food, animals, plants and physical forces while target domains typically relate to domains of emotion, morality, thought, human relationships, etc. For instance, in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) example "LOVE IS A JOURNEY," the concrete domain "Journey" creates or invokes a mental picture of our experience (image schema) of the concept which is then mapped into the abstract domain or concept "Love" for us to understand the metaphorical expression. Thus, the metaphorical

realization of this conceptual metaphor will include expressions such as “where is our relationship heading to,” the relationship isn’t going anywhere,” etc. Also in Igbo, the metaphorical expression, Anosike bù mbè (Anosike is a tortoise), for instance, create a mental picture of the attributes of tortoise in our minds or cognitive process which helps in understanding the metaphorical expression. This mental picture of our experience has been variously referred to as the image schema. An image schema, simply put, is a recurring structure within our cognitive processes formed from bodily experience, which establishes patterns of understanding and reasoning. It is a pre-linguistic structure of experience that motivates conceptual metaphor mappings.

In terms of how metaphor come to be, or the basis of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p10) argue that the nature of our bodies, the interactions we have with or in our physical environment, the cultural ramification of these interactions, and our interactions with other people within our culture provide the basis for a large number of conceptual metaphors. Thus, they describe CMT as being pervasive. For instance, among the Igbo people, body parts, animals, physical objects, and their cultural experiences and realities provide a large and rich source of conceptual metaphor in Igbo. For example, *anya* (eye) are one of the body parts which serves as a rich source of conceptual metaphor in Igbo which this study will carefully examine. According to Okeogu (2015, p93), the use of body metaphors results from the fact that the Igbo attach central importance to their bodies which also reflects their thought pattern and world views. As stated earlier, the data for this study shall be analyzed in line with the conceptual metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as stated above.

#### 2.4 Previous Studies on Conceptual Metaphors in Igbo

A few studies have been carried on body-part metaphors in Igbo, these studies were reviewed in relation to this study.

Okeogu (2015) examined body part metaphors in Igbo. She posits that metaphor is a figure of substitution based on similarity. Hence, metaphorical expressions abound in languages around the world and body-parts symbolize phenomena as represented in different cultures. Based on the traditional approach, the study examines how the body parts *ihu* (face), *obi/afọ* (heart/belly), *ire* (tongue), and *ukwu* (feet) serve as source of metaphor in Igbo. Okeogu (2015, p93) argues that *ihu* (face) could be used metaphorically to depict shame, bad/good fortune, hypocrisy, and cheerfulness. If one behaves in a way that depicts that he/she is shameless, the person can metaphorically be described as *Onye ihere n’adighi n’ihu*. “one who has no shame.” In addition, the metaphorical expressions *ihu oma* and *ihu ojoo* are used metaphorically to express good and bad fortunes respectively. A hypocrite is metaphorically described as *onye ihu abuo* ‘one with two faces’ while a cheerful person is described as *Onye nwere ihu ocha* (one with white face). With regard to *obi/afọ* (heart/belly), she demonstrates that the two organs can be used interchangeably to represent emotions like kindness, contentment, wickedness and anger as in *obioma/afoma* (goodheart/belly = kindness), *obi ojoo/ afọ ojoo* (bad heart/bad belly = wickedness), etc. She, therefore, concludes that body-parts metaphors are used to describe a huge portion of our experience, of our physical, mental, and inner world, the Igbo world. This study differs from Okeogu (2015) because Okeogu (2015) deploys the traditional approach with focus on the face, heart, tongue, and leg body parts as sources of metaphors. But this study deploys the conceptual metaphor with focus on the eye as the source domain.

Okeogu and Chukwu (2016) examined the heart body-part metaphor in Igbo within the framework of conceptual metaphor based on CMT. Their study focuses exclusively on mappings from the heart as source domain to human emotions, character, and attributes target domains with a view to contributing evidence from Igbo by accumulating linguistic evidence on the conceptual foundation of metaphor and its pervasiveness in everyday language. They describe the heart as the seat of emotions and sundry human attributes and states that metaphors arising from the mappings of the heart body-part yields myriads of metaphorical expressions as exemplified below.

- (1) (a) *Okonkwo nwèrè óbì*  
Okonkwo has heart = ‘Okonkwo is courageous’

- (b) *Ághúghò júpùtàrà yá óbì*  
His heart is full of cunning = ‘He is full of cunning’
- (c) *Ndí úwé ójì bù ndì óbì ójòò*  
The police are people with bad hearts = Police personnels are wicked  
(Okeogu and Chukwu 2016, p267).

Okeogu and Chukwu (2016) conclude that the heart body-part source domain is particularly a rich source of metaphorical expressions in Igbo. It is important to note that while Okeogu and Chukwu (2016) dwell on heart body part metaphors, this study focus mainly on the eye body parts as source of conceptual metaphors in Igbo.

More so, Onwukwe (2020) executes an anthropolinguistic analysis of Igbo metaphorical expressions focusing on the linguistic features and implied cultural values. The study argues that metaphor as a figure of speech does not only relate one entity to another by associating features but also are vital expressions of traditional thoughts, beliefs, and worldview of the Igbo people. The Igbo use metaphors by associating features of an entity (animate and inanimate) to a person, situations, among others. It points out that *ihu* ‘face’, *obi/afò* ‘heart/belly’ *ire* ‘tongue’ and *ukwu* ‘leg’ are used metaphorically in everyday conversation among the Igbo people. However, the study is also based on the traditional and anthropological approach. For instance, the use of tongue (*ire*) as a referent of Igbo metaphors is borne out of the fact that the tongue is significant in Igbo culture and often associated with negative and deceptive tendencies in conduct and behavior. He further gave the examples below:

- (2) (a) *íré ùtò* – sweet tongue (deceptive)
- (b) *íré ñkò* – sharp tongue (dangerous/snipper)
- (c) *íré ùgbá*- oil bean tongue (filippant/talkative) (Onwukwe 2020, p109).

Based on examples like (2), the study argues that metaphorical expressions project and reinforce the Igbo core values and contexts.

From the foregoing, it is deducible that not much work has been done on the eye body part metaphor in Igbo from the perspective of conceptual metaphor which sees metaphor as the cognitive use of language. This study shall therefore fill this gap in the body of knowledge.

### 3.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

This sub-section examines the ‘eye’ as source of body part metaphors in Igbo. It identifies different conceptualizations of the ‘eye’ and its associations.

#### 3.1 Conceptualization of the Eye (ányá) as Body Part Metaphor in Igbo

The eye is the organ of sight. It is one of the important organs of the human body. Without the organ of sight (eye), it is impossible for one to see. The Igbo sees the eye as an important instrument that guides human activities and illuminates the earth. According to Emezue (2021, p61), *anya* expressions are culturally specific and the lexical item, *anya*, plays very important role in the Igbo intra-cultural oral communication. This can, therefore, be seen in the various ways in which it is conceptualized and used metaphorically to express various concepts and ideas in the Igbo cultural life such as intelligence love, time (period)/distance, waywardness, carefulness, etc. Thus, in this section, this study presents the various ways the eye body part (*anya*) is conceptualized and its linguistic realization in line with the Lakoff and Johnson (1980) conceptual metaphor theory.

Linguistic metaphorical expressions related to the eye (*anya*) body parts were collected from the respondents through oral interviews. These linguistic metaphorical expressions are the linguistic realizations of conceptual metaphors. They serve as a proof as to why speakers of a particular language

S/ N	Eye body part metaphorical expressions in Igbo	Gloss
1	Ọ mà ányá étú é sì àrúzí úgbómírí	He/she knows how to repair boat
2	Ọ nwèrè ányá é jì àmùtá íhé	He/she has the ability to learn something
3	Ọ gwí yá ányá, ọ mǎrálá étú é sì èmé yá	Once he/she looks at it, he/she will know how to do it.
4	Íhé gbàsárá ákwúkwō dòrò yá ányá ọfúma	He/she understands things concerning academics very well
5	Ókwú à dòrò m ányá	This issue is well known to me
6	Ébé à dòrò m ányá	This place is well known to me
7	Ọ mà ányá etu e si ere ákwà	He/she has idea of how to sell cloth
8	Énwéré m òlilé ányá	I am hopeful
9	Obi nà-àtú ányá yá	Obi is expecting him/her
10	Ányí nà-èlè ányá mà hà gà-àbịá échí	We are hoping that they will come tomorrow
11	Lékwàsị Chínèkè ányá	Look unto God
12	Ọ hùrù m n'ányá	He/she loves me
13	Ọ nwèrè íhúnàányá ébé ányí nò	He has love towards us
14	Íhúnàányá yá dì úkwù n'ébé ányí nò	His/her love towards us is excess
15	Chínèkè ányí hùrù ùwá à n'ányá	Our God loves this world
16	Ọ téelè ányá	It's been long
17	Ébé à tère/dị ányá	This place is far
18	Mgbè n'ádíghí ányá ọ gà-àbịá	Very soon, he/she will come
19	Élúígwè dì ányá	Heaven is far
20	Ókwú à ètèlè ányá	This matter has lingered
21	Há sì ébé dí ányá bịa	They came from a far place
22	Lèzié anya	be careful
23	Lébará ókwú áhù ányá ọfúma	Look at that matter very well
24	Lèrúò ányá àlà	Be careful
25	Ányá úkwú	Greediness
26	Ónyé ányá úkwú	A greedy person

27	Ányá ùfù	Jealousy
28	Ónyé ányá ùfù	A jealous person
29	Àdá nà-ènwéré Ùjú ányá ùfù	Ada is jealous because Uju is more beautiful than her
30	Méghàrì ányá	Distraction
31	Ó méghàrìrì m ányá	He/she distracted me

conceptualize abstract concepts or phenomena the way they do. The table below contains thirty-one (31) examples of the eye body part metaphorical expressions collected from respondents through oral interview and observation.

**Table 1**

This study examines the various ways the eye (ányá) is conceptualized in Igbo as presented above. From the table, it is observed that the eye (ányá) body part in Igbo is conceptualized and used to express abstract concepts such as intelligence, hope, love, time (period)/distance, carefulness, greediness, jealousy/envy, and distraction.

**3.1.1 Conceptualization of the Eye (ányá) as Intelligence in Igbo**

Intelligence may refer to the mental quality that consists of the abilities to learn from experience, adapt to new situations, understand and handle abstract concepts, and use knowledge to manipulate one’s environment. It can also be seen as the ability to learn, understand and make judgments or have opinions that are based on reason. The Igbo equates intelligence with the eye and thus conceptualize the eye as intelligence as exemplified below.

- (3) (a) Ó mà ányá étú é sì àrúzí úgbómmírí  
3sg know eye how Pron follow repair boat  
“He/she knows how to repair a boat”
- b Ó nwèrè ányá é jì ámùtá íhé  
3Sg has eye Pron use learn something  
“He/she has the ability to learn.”
- c. Ó gwí yá ányá, ó mǎrálá étú é sì èmé yá  
it 3Sg looks 3Sg eye Sg known how Pron follow do  
“Once he/she looks at it, he/she has learnt how to do it.”
- d. Íhé gbàsára ákwúkwō dòrò yá ányá òfúmá  
thing concernbook Be 3Sg eye well  
“He/she understands things concerning academics very well”
- e. Ókwú à dòrò m ányá  
Talk this Be me eye  
“This issue is clear to me”

In the expressions above, the lexical item “anya” literally means eyes. That is, a sense organ of sight but metaphorically and within the context of the expressions, anya (eye) in the examples above, means ideas, understanding, among others which point to or equate to intelligence. For instance, in example (3a), “anya” metaphorically can be interpreted as “knowing or having knowledge of something” which is also part of what constitutes intelligence. Data (3b) shows that the eyes is a tool or an organ that facilitates learning and understanding. Thus, within the tenets of conceptual metaphor, and based on the

data elicited by the informants of this study, *anya* (eye) is a source domain which is used in expressing abstract concepts such as intelligence and understanding.

### 3.1.2 Conceptualization of the Eye (*ányá*) as Hope in Igbo

Hope may be referred to as the feelings of expectation and desire for a particular thing. Put differently, hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation." It is anticipation for a positive outcome. In Igbo, the eye is conceptualized as hope. The following examples of linguistic metaphorical expression collected from the respondents of this study points to that fact as shown below:

- (4) a. *Énwéré m òlilé ányá*  
Pre-have 1Sg looking eye  
"I am hopeful."
- b. *Obi nà àtú ányá yá*  
Obi is throw eye 3Sg  
"Obi is expecting him/her."
- c. *Ányí nà èlé ányá mà hà gà àbjà échí*  
3PI are looking eye if 3PI Fut come tomorrow  
"We are hoping that they will come tomorrow."
- d. *Lékwàsí Chínékè ányá*  
Look unto God eye  
"Look unto God."

In the linguistic metaphorical expression in example (4a) for instance, the phrase *òlilé ányá* is one of the concepts used for expressing 'hope' in Igbo. *Òlilé* means "seeing," while *ányá* means "eye." Thus, the literal meaning of the word *òlilé ányá* in Igbo is "seeing with the eye" while the metaphorical meaning is to hope or anticipate. In examples (4c) and (4d), the lexical items in the metaphorical expressions *nà-èlé* and *lékwàsí* has to do with 'looking' and they collocate with the lexical item *ányá* (eye). Metaphorically and within the context of the expression, *nà-èlé ányá* and *lékwàsí ányá* are used to express the abstract concept hope in Igbo. The same applies to *ítù ányá* in example (4b). With the frame work of the conceptual metaphor theory, the eye is also conceptualized as hope. Thus, eye is the source domain used in expressing the target and abstract domain "hope" in Igbo.

### 3.1.3 Conceptualization of Eye (*ányá*) as Love in Igbo

In the Igbo cultural setting, love is a function of the sight. It is inspired by what we see with our eyes and it is equally maintained by what we see with our eyes. Thus, the proverbial expression in Igbo "*Ìhùnáanyá nà-ègósí ònwé yá n'òlú* (love expresses itself at work) shows that love among the Igbo people is expressed in concrete terms. The good virtue and character trait we see in a person can inspire love for that person. In other words, when we see the attributes, virtues, qualities, among others which we crave for in a person or thing, love for that person develops, thus, the conceptualization of eye as love among the Igbo. According to Ogugua (2015), the biblical story of the Good Samaritan is akin to the Igbo concept of love and not the abstract connotation of the Western world. The linguistic expression for love in Igbo *ifùnányá* which consist of *ìhū/ìfū* (to see) and *n'ányá* (with eyes) is one of the linguistic metaphor realizations of how eye is conceptualized as love in Igbo. The examples below further show how the eye body part in Igbo is conceptualized as love.



In example (6a), literally, in the expression *ó tèléle ányā* ‘it’s been a long time,’ the phrase *tèléle ányā* literally means “be eyes” but metaphorically it means “it’s been a long time. Same with example (6c). In example (6b), the expression *ébé à tèrè ányá* “this place is too far,” the phrase *tèrè ányá* literally means “be eyes” but metaphorically and within the context of the sentence in which it appears, it is used to express distance. Same with examples (6d-e). These examples show that *ányá* (eye) could be used to express abstract concepts such as time and distance in Igbo based on the conceptualization of eye as time in line with the Lakoff and Johnson conceptual metaphor theory.

### 3.1.5 Conceptualization of the Eye (ányá) as Carefulness in Igbo

Carefulness may be referred to as the characteristics of being cautious, thoughtful, or prudent. The examples below are the linguistic metaphorical expressions which shows how the lexical item *ányá* (eye) is conceptualize as carefulness in Igbo.

- (7) a. Lèzié anya  
 Look-well eye  
 “be careful”
- b. Lèrúò ányá àlà  
 look-reach eye down  
 “Be careful”
- c. Kpáchàpù ányā gí  
 remove eye 2SG  
 “Be careful”

In example (7a), *lèzié anya* literally means “look eye well”. Metaphorically, the sentence is used to express carefulness. It simply means “be careful”. Data (7b&c) literally means look eye reach down and remove eye respectively. However, they have the same metaphorical meaning as (7a). In all the examples, the body part “ányá” (eye) being the source domain is conceptualized as carefulness.

### 3.1.6 Conceptualization of the Eye (ányá) as Greediness in Igbo

Another way speakers of Igbo conceptualize the eye (*ányá*) is by equating it with greediness. Hence, the linguistic expression *ányá úkwū* (big eye) is used in the context as shown below.

- (8) a. Ányá úkwú  
 eye big  
 ‘Greediness’ (metaphorical meaning)
- b. Ónyé ányá úkwú  
 person eye big  
 A greedy person (metaphorical meaning)

In (8) above, *anya ukwu* ‘big eye’ is used to conceptualize greediness as an act of excessive and selfish desire for something, especially money or wealth. The eye (*anya*) is the source domain used in expressing the abstract domain or concept “greed” which is manifested in the linguistic metaphorical expression as *anya ukwu* ‘big eye.’

### 3.1.7 Conceptualization of the Eye (ányá) as Jealousy in Igbo

The concept “jealousy/envy” can be simply referred to as the feelings or state of bitterness, hostility towards someone because they have something that the other does not have. The conceptualization of the *ányá* (eye) as jealousy in Igbo stem from the fact that the eye is a function of sight and one starts becoming jealous or envious of something by first seeing or view such thing. The inability of the person who is jealous of the other person to acquire that thing therefore springs up emotional pains which degenerates into bitterness, anger, hatred and other negative attitude. Hence, this study posits that the

use of the linguistic metaphorical expression “*anya ufu*” is because the meaning of pain is mapped on the word ‘eye’ to express jealousy in Igbo as exemplified below.

- (9) a. *Ányá úfū*  
eye pain  
“jealousy”
- b. *Ónyé anyá úfū*  
person eye pain  
“A jealous person”

In terms of metaphorical mapping, “anya” (eye) is therefore the source domain which is used in expressing the target domain envy or jealousy in Igbo.

### 3.1.8 Conceptualization of the Eye (*ányá*) as Distraction in Igbo

The conceptualization of the eye as a distraction in Igbo or among Igbo speakers stems from the fact that when the eye is in a steady state without blinking, it enables one to fully concentrate on what he or she is viewing or observing. On the other hand, when the eye blinks repeatedly, maybe due to particles trying to enter one’s eye, the person may feel distracted or lose concentration in what he or she is viewing or observing. This is further exemplified below.

- (10) a. *méghàrì anyā*  
do-repeatedly eye  
“distraction”
- b. *Ó méghàrì m anyá.*  
3SG do-repeat-past 1SG eye  
“He/she distracted me”

In (10), the linguistic metaphor serve as an evidence of the use of the Igbo word *ányá* (eye) as the source domain or concrete domain to express the abstract concept ‘distraction’ which is metaphorically expressed as *méghàrì anyā* in Igbo, where *méghàrì* means ‘do-repeatedly’.

## 4.0 Summary and Conclusion

The study examined *ányá* (eye) as a source of metaphorical expression in Igbo from the conceptual metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The study identified how *ányá* (eye) as a concrete domain or source domain is used in the mapping out of some abstract concepts and ideas such as greed, intelligence, love, distraction, time/distance, hope, among others in Igbo.

This study reaffirms the views of the modern school of thought on the study of metaphor that metaphor underlies our cognitive process. That is, it is a powerful cognitive or mental tool that helps us in understanding and expressing our worldviews. This study therefore shows that the Igbo language is rich in the use of metaphors in everyday conversation and in expressing and understanding the worldviews of speakers of the language. Thus, some of their culture, believe, core values and morals are embedded or expressed metaphorically.

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