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Zoo-Metaphorical Mapping in English and Arabic: A Comparative Semantic and Pragmatic Study of Animal Idiomatic Expressions

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الإسقاط الاستعاري للحيوان في الإنجليزية والعربية: دراسة دلالية تداولية مقارنة للتعابير الاصطلاحية

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Abstract:
This study explores "zoo-metaphorical mapping" in English and Arabic through a contrastive semantic and pragmatic lens. It specifically examines how geographical environments and cultural heritage shape animal metaphors in both languages. The research addresses communicative failures often caused by the literal translation of animal idiomatic expressions. These failures stem from radical differences in conceptual frameworks and environmental backgrounds between the two cultures. The theoretical framework draws on the "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" (CMT) established by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) and the "Great Chain Metaphor" by Lakoff and Turner (1989). Additionally, it incorporates Baker's (2018) concept of "Pragmatic Equivalence." The study analyzes a linguistic corpus of 50 idiomatic expressions, split evenly between 25 English and 25 Arabic idioms. Data sources include specialized dictionaries such as Spears (2005) and Ammer (2013) for English, and Fayid (2007) and the Damascus Academy of Arabic Language (2006) for Arabic. Classical Arabic rhetoric is also examined through the works of Al-Jahiz (1965) and Abu Hilal al-Askari (n.d.). Findings reveal that environmental factors, specifically desert versus temperate climates, play a decisive role in shaping the "Conceptual Map." Arabic discourse employs desert animals with notable frequency; for instance, the camel appears 5 times in the Arabic sample compared to zero in English. Other desert animals, such as the lizard and falcon, are used to encode concepts of patience, strength, and endurance. Conversely, English discourse heavily utilizes agricultural and domestic animals. The dog appears 7 times in English compared to just once in Arabic, alongside frequent references to horses, cows, and pigs. Furthermore, the study identifies acute "Cultural Dissonance" regarding specific animals. The owl, dog, and pig carry contradictory or diametrically opposed connotations between the two cultures. Based on Kövecses' (2010) theory of metaphor and cultural context, the study concludes that achieving "Pragmatic Equivalence" requires translators to transcend lexical meaning. Instead, they must evoke the corresponding "Cultural Schema" in the target language. Consequently, the paper proposes a translation model that ranges from complete cultural substitution to retention with explanation, or complete paraphrasing, to preserve the rhetorical and pragmatic effect.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, animal idiomatic expressions, contrastive linguistics, pragmatic equivalence, cultural mapping, environmental models, cultural dissonance.

الملخص:

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف "الإسقاط الاستعاري الحيواني" (Zoo-metaphorical mapping) في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية من منظور تقابلي دلالي وتداولي، مع التركيز على كيفية تشكيل البيئة الجغرافية والموروث الثقافي للاستعارات الحيوانية في كلتا اللغتين. تكمن مشكلة البحث في الفشل التواصلي الذي قد ينجم عن الترجمة الحرفية للتعابير الاصطلاحية الحيوانية نتيجة الاختلاف الجذري في الأطر المفاهيمية والخلفيات البيئية بين الثقافتين. بالاعتماد على "نظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية" (Conceptual Metaphor Theory - CMT) التي أرساها (Lakoff & Johnson, 1989) و نظرية السلسلة الكبرى للاستعارة "(The Great Chain Metaphor) ل (Lakoff & Turner, 2003)، بالإضافة إلى مفهوم "التكافؤ التداولي" (Pragmatic Equivalence) الذي طورته (Baker, 2018)، تحلل الدراسة مدونة لغوية (Corpus) مكونة من 50 تعبيراً اصطلاحياً (25 إنجليزي و25 عربي) مستخلصة من معاجم متخصصة مثل (Spears, 2005; Ammer, 2013) للإنجليز ية، ومعاجم (فايد،2007)، مجمع اللغة العربية بدمشق، 2006) للعربية، بالإضافة إلى التراث البلاغي العربي ممثلاً في كتابات الجاحظ (1965) وأبي هلال العسكري (بدون تاريخ). تكشف النتائج أن العوامل البيئية (الصحراء مقابل البيئة المعتدلة) تلعب دوراً حاسماً في تشكيل "الخريطة المفاهيمية" (Conceptual Map)؛ حيث يميل الخطاب العربي إلى توظيف حيوانات البيئة الصحراوية بكثافة ملحوظة (الجمل يظهر 5 مرات في العينة العربية مقابل صفر في الإنجليز ية؛ الضب، الصقر) لترميز مفاهيم الصبر والقوة والتحمل، بينما يميل الخطاب الإنجليزي لتوظيف حيوانات البيئة الزراعية والمنزلية بشكل مكثف (الكلب 7 مرات مقابل مرة واحدة في العربية؛ الحصان، البقرة، الخنزير). كما تُظهر الدراسة وجود "تنافر ثقافي" (Cultural Dissonance) حاد في استخدام حيوانات معينة مثل البومة والكلب والخنزير، حيث تحمل دلالات متضادة أو متناقضة تماماً بين الثقافتين. وخلصت الدراسة، استناداً إلى نظرية (Kövecses, 2010) حول الاستعارة والسياق الثقافي، إلى أن تحقيق "التكافؤ التداولي" يتطلب من المترجم تجاوز المعنى المعجمي نحو استحضار "النموذج الثقافي" (Cultural Schema) المقابل في اللغة الهدف، مقترحة نموذجاً ترجمياً يتراوح بين الاستبدال الثقافي الكامل، والإبقاء على الاستعارة مع الشرح، وإعادة الصياغة التامة للحفاظ على الأثر البلاغي والتداولي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستعارة المفاهيمية، التعابير الاصطلاحية الحيوانية، اللغويات التقابلية، التكافؤ التداولي، الإسقاط الثقافي، النماذج البيئية، التنافر الثقافي.

Introduction:

Animal idiomatic expressions (Animal Idioms) represent a profound and complex cognitive-linguistic phenomenon. They reveal how human societies borrow from the animal world to comprehend and interpret abstract and complex human behavior. Since the dawn of human civilization, humans have observed the distinctive instinctive characteristics and behaviors of animals. They then systematically and methodically project these traits onto abstract concepts and human qualities. This cognitive process makes complex meanings more accessible and comprehensible through direct, tangible sensory experience.

This metaphorical mapping is neither random, arbitrary, nor superficial. Instead, it is a rigorous, deeply rooted cognitive system. It reflects the close, interactive relationship between humans and their surrounding natural environment. It profoundly reveals how the human mind organizes knowledge, classifies life experiences, and constructs abstract concepts based on concrete experience.

This phenomenon holds special and central importance within modern Cognitive Linguistics. Animal metaphors serve as "direct, illuminating windows" into the "Conceptual Schemas" and "Cognitive Models" that govern societies' thinking. They shape collective perceptions of the world and human nature. When an Arab speaker describes someone as "patient as a camel" (صبور كالجمل), they do not merely offer a superficial rhetorical or aesthetic description. Instead, they automatically and unconsciously evoke a complete, complex system of cultural values and accumulated historical experiences. These experiences are tied to the harsh desert environment, where the camel is not simply an animal but "the ship of the desert", a symbol of survival, endurance, and legendary patience against drought, heat, and vast distances.

Similarly, when an English speaker describes someone as "works like a horse," they automatically invoke a long, venerable history of European agricultural civilization. In that context, the horse was the backbone of rural work and agricultural production, a symbol of tireless power and relentless, unwavering labor.

More importantly, these animal metaphors are not limited to mere "linguistic decoration" or optional "rhetorical embellishment," as traditional classical rhetoric once viewed them. Rather, as Lakoff and Johnson (2003) demonstrated in their revolutionary "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" (CMT), they are fundamental and central cognitive mechanisms. We use them daily and unconsciously to construct

meaning and organize human experience. Metaphor is not a "poetic linguistic exception" but a "general cognitive rule" through which we think and understand abstract concepts such as courage, cunning, and patience. We do so by projecting them onto tangible, concrete domains such as the behavior of lions, foxes, and camels.

This explains why animal metaphors are found with enormous density across all human languages without exception—from Indo-European languages to Semitic languages, and from Chinese to African and Native American languages. This universality confirms that animal metaphor is a Human Universal phenomenon, rooted in the fundamental cognitive structure of the human mind itself.

This phenomenon is clearly manifest in the rich Arabic heritage. Al-Jahiz (1965) dedicated lengthy, methodical chapters in his remarkable encyclopedia "Kitab al-Hayawan" (كتاب الحيوان) to linking animal natures with human morals and temperaments. He associated courage with the lion, cunning with the fox, patience with the camel, speed with the gazelle, and dullness with the donkey. This linkage was not merely passing observation but the product of deep study of animal behavior and philosophical reflection on the relationship between the natural world and human nature. Likewise, Abu Hilal al-Askari (n.d.) in "Al-Furuq al-Lughawiyyah" (الفروق اللغوية) distinguished with great precision between the names of a single animal and their different semantic nuances. The lion, for example, has dozens of names, غضنفر, هزبر ليث, ضرغام,each with a specific context of use. This indicates early, advanced awareness of the depth of this cognitive mechanism and the conceptual richness carried by animal metaphors.

However, when conducting a precise, methodical comparison between English and Arabic, a fundamental, radical difference emerges in the animal metaphorical lexicon. This difference arises primarily from three interrelated factors: different geographical environments, divergent cultural heritage, and the influential religious framework. The temperate, rainy English agricultural environment produced expressions densely based on farm animals and domestic pets (horse, cow, pig, dog, cat, chicken). In contrast, the Arabic lexicon is dominated by animals from the harsh desert environment and wild predators (camel, falcon, lion, wolf, lizard, gazelle). This contrast is not merely a difference in lexical choice. Rather, it reflects a profound divergence in the "Conceptual Maps" that each linguistic community uses to organize its knowledge and experience of the world.

Talebinejad and Dastjerdi (2005) reached a decisive conclusion in their pioneering, influential study "When Owls are Not Wise." They found that the same animal may carry completely contradictory symbolic connotations between two different cultures. Indeed, an animal may be a positive, prestigious symbol in one culture and a negative, rejected symbol in another. The owl, a symbol of Greek and European wisdom deeply rooted in ancient mythology, is an omen of misfortune and ruin in Arab culture. This "acute cultural dissonance" imposes serious, complex translational challenges. It requires the professional translator to move beyond superficial literal translation toward what Baker (2018).

Calls "Pragmatic Equivalence." This means conveying the communicative effect and rhetorical function, not merely transferring words and rigid lexical meanings. Herein lies the scientific and practical value of this study, which seeks to build a methodical bridge between cognitive linguistic theory and realistic translation practice.

Research Problem and Knowledge Gap:

The problem lies in the "conceptual gap" and "cultural gap" that arise when transferring animal metaphors between English and Arabic. The dog, a symbol of loyalty in Western culture, is viewed as an unclean animal in the traditional Islamic context. The owl, a symbol of English wisdom ("wise as an owl"), is considered an omen of misfortune in Arab culture. The pig, forbidden in Islam, appears frequently in English expressions such as "greedy as a pig."

Despite the existence of scattered previous studies, the research gap lies in the absence of a comprehensive contrastive study that links: (1) modern cognitive theories (CMT, the Great Chain Metaphor), (2) Arabic classical rhetoric (Al-Jahiz, Abu Hilal), (3) pragmatic translation theories (Baker, Newmark), with (4) a practical translation model. Previous studies have also not paid sufficient attention to the role of environmental factors in shaping these metaphors.

Research Questions:

Based on the research problem and in light of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and Pragmatic Equivalence theory (Baker, 2018), this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the primary semantic and cognitive motivations behind the selection of specific animals to represent certain human traits in English and Arabic? Is there consistency between the choices, or radical divergence?
2. To what extent do environmental and geographical factors (desert environment versus temperate agricultural climate) influence the process of "zoo-metaphorical mapping" in both languages? How are these differences manifested in idiomatic expressions?

3. How do the two languages differ in assigning symbolic values to the same animal (such as the owl or dog)? What are the pragmatic implications of this difference at the level of translation and intercultural communication?
4. What are the most effective translation strategies (complete cultural substitution, retention with explanation, complete paraphrasing) for maintaining pragmatic equivalence when transferring these expressions? What is the optimal translation model that balances fidelity and clarity?

Research Objectives:

Through a descriptive, analytical, comparative methodology grounded in cognitive linguistics theories (Kövecses, 2010) and contemporary translation studies (Baker, 2018, Newmark, 1988), this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify, document, and classify a linguistic corpus of animal idiomatic expressions in English and Arabic, extracted from reliable specialized dictionaries (Spears, 2005, Ammer, 2013, Fayid, 2007, Damascus Academy of Arabic Language, 2006). Classify them based on the targeted human traits (courage, stupidity, cunning, speed, etc.).
2. Analyze the cognitive, cultural, and environmental foundations that guide speakers in both languages to select different animal metaphors for the same communicative purpose. Draw upon classical Arabic rhetoric (Al-Jahiz, 1965; Abu Hilal al-Askari n.d.) and modern cognitive studies (Lakoff & Turner, 1989).
3. Conduct a precise comparison of the symbolic value of animals shared between the two cultures. Highlight areas of "semantic overlap" and "cultural dissonance," especially in critical cases such as the owl, dog, and pig.
4. Evaluate current translation practices for these expressions. Propose an integrated pragmatic framework that helps translators convey the "cultural flavor" of the source text while ensuring communicative clarity in the target language, based on the criteria of pragmatic equivalence (Baker, 2018) and functional equivalence (Newmark, 1988).

Significance and Rationale of the Study:

The significance of this research lies in its dual scientific contribution. Theoretically, it expands the application scope of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) to the Arabic context, thereby enriching contrastive studies between English and Arabic. Practically, it provides useful tools for translators and teachers in the field of language education.

The study fills a clear research gap noted by Talebinejad and Dastjerdi (2005), who emphasized the necessity of conducting extensive contrastive studies on animal metaphors between languages with divergent cultural backgrounds. In the Arabic context, this study is among the few that link authentic Arabic classical rhetoric (Al-Jahiz, 1965; Al-Samarrai, 2015) with modern cognitive linguistic theories within a rigorous methodological framework.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework:

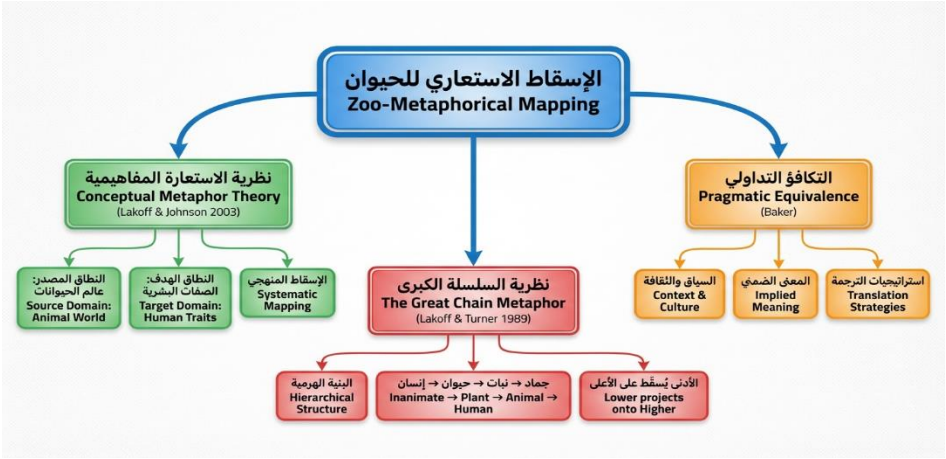


Figure (1): Theoretical Framework – Conceptual Map of Zoo-Metaphorical Mapping

Defining Core Theoretical Concepts:

This study rests on three foundational theoretical concepts:

1. **Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT):** Formulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003), CMT posits that metaphor is a fundamental cognitive mechanism, not merely rhetorical ornamentation. The abstract **"Target Domain"**, such as courage or cunning, is understood through **"Systematic Mapping"** from the concrete **"Source Domain."** In this study, the animal world serves as the Source Domain, while human traits constitute the Target Domain. For example, "brave as a lion"

(شجاع كالأسد) projects the lion's tangible physical strength onto abstract human bravery (Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010).

2. **The Great Chain Metaphor:** Developed by Lakoff and Turner (1989), this theory describes a hierarchical sequence: inanimate objects, plants, animals, and finally humans. Humans employ lower levels (animals) to comprehend higher levels (human behavior). Describing a person as an animal often creates a pejorative connotation, as it lowers them from their human rank. For instance, "cunning as a fox" (ماكر كالثعلب) foregrounds behavioral traits while downplaying human cognitive capacities. This concept has roots in Arabic heritage, particularly in Al-Jahiz's (1965) "Kitab al Hayawan" (كتاب الحيوان)**.**
3. **Pragmatic Equivalence:** Developed by Baker (2018), this principle aims to transfer the **"Communicative Effect"** and **"Illocutionary Force"** rather than the literal meaning. Animal idiomatic expressions carry a holistic, indivisible meaning; hence, literal translation fails. For example, "Raining cats and dogs" should not be translated literally but pragmatically as "تمطر بغزارة" (raining heavily). Strategies for achieving pragmatic equivalence include using a similar idiom, paraphrasing, cultural explanation, or omission when necessary (Newmark, 1988).

These concepts integrate to form the study's methodological framework. **CMT** explains why we borrow from the animal world. **The Great Chain Metaphor** clarifies how we organize metaphorical mapping. **Pragmatic Equivalence** determines how we transfer these metaphors effectively across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT):

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) developed Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which treats metaphor as a fundamental cognitive mechanism rather than mere rhetorical embellishment. Kövecses (2010) notes that culture and environment act as "cognitive filters." They determine which aspects of an animal receive emphasis. Arabs highlight the camel's patience because of its critical importance in the desert environment. Another culture might focus on entirely different animals to express the same concept.

This explains why animal metaphors differ between English (horse, cow, dog) and Arabic (camel, lion, falcon), even when targeting similar traits. The environmental context decisively shapes the available pool of source domains.

The Great Chain of Being Metaphor:

According to Lakoff and Turner (1989), humans arrange beings hierarchically: inanimate objects, plants, animals, humans. When we describe a person as an animal, "brave as a lion" (شجاع كالأسد)—we use lower-level characteristics to understand a higher-level human quality. We simultaneously disregard human cognitive attributes. This often produces a pejorative connotation.

Al-Jahiz (1965) anticipated this concept in "Kitab al-Hayawan" (كتاب الحيوان). He systematically linked animal natures to human morals and temperaments. He recognized that animal metaphor is not rhetorical decoration but a cognitive tool for understanding human nature.

Cultural Linguistics and Animal Stereotypes:

Talebinejad and Dastjerdi (2005) demonstrated that animal stereotypes are not arbitrary. They emerge from environmental, religious, and folkloric interactions. The camel occupies a central position in Arabic because of its association with survival in the desert. It is entirely absent from English idiomatic expressions.

Kövecses (2010) confirms that the physical environment determines source domains. Desert societies draw metaphors from (camel, lion, falcon). Agricultural societies draw from (horse, cow, pig). The religious dimension is equally decisive. The dog is "man's best friend" in the West but considered unclean in some Islamic interpretations. This creates "cultural-semantic dissonance" that translators must carefully navigate (Newmark, 1988).

Pragmatic Equivalence and Idiomatic Translation:

In contemporary translation studies, the concept of "Equivalence" is among the most problematic and contested notions. Various theories and approaches have emerged to define its nature and levels. Baker (2018) provides a comprehensive, rigorous classification of equivalence levels in her seminal work "In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation." Her taxonomy includes: (1) Word-Level Equivalence, (2) Grammatical Equivalence, (3) Textual Equivalence, and (4) most crucially for this study,**"Pragmatic Equivalence."**

Pragmatic Equivalence focuses on transferring the "Communicative Effect" and "Illocutionary Force" of the source text to the target audience. It does not merely transfer the lexical or literal meaning of words (Baker, 2018). This distinction is critical when dealing with idiomatic expressions.

Fernando (1996) emphasizes in her pioneering work "Idioms and Idiomaticity" that idiomatic expressions pose the greatest challenge for translators. They carry a **"Holistic Meaning"** or **"Non-compositional Meaning"** that cannot be inferred from the sum of their individual word meanings. For example, "Raining cats and dogs" does not literally mean that cats and dogs are falling from the sky.

Instead, it means "very heavy rain." Attempting to translate it literally into Arabic as "تمطر قططًا وكلابًا" would constitute a catastrophic communicative failure. It would provoke confusion or even ridicule among Arabic recipients. Instead, the translator must seek a cultural-pragmatic equivalent that achieves the same communicative effect, such as "تشتي ِقرب" or "مطر غزير جدًا" (Fernando, 1996).

Newmark (1988) offers diverse practical strategies for handling idiomatic expressions in "A Textbook of Translation." These include: (1) using a similar idiom in the target language, (2) using a different idiom with the same meaning, (3) translation by paraphrase, (4) literal translation with added explanation, and (5) complete omission if the expression is culturally untranslatable. Newmark stresses that selecting the appropriate strategy depends heavily on the degree of "Cultural Compatibility" between the two languages and the importance of the idiomatic expression in the source text (Newmark, 1988).

In the Arabic context, Yunus Ali (2007) addresses the problematic nature of translating idiomatic expressions in his work "Madkhal ila 'Ilm al-Dalalah wa Tatawwur al-Ma'na" (مدخل إلى علم الدلالة وتطور المعنى). He underscores the necessity of understanding the "Cultural Context" and "Semantic System" to which an expression belongs before attempting to find an equivalent in the target language. This requires the translator to possess encyclopedic cultural knowledge and a profound understanding of both cultures, not merely superficial lexical linguistic knowledge (Yunus, 2007).

Arabic Classical Rhetoric and Animal Metaphors:

The Arabic rhetorical and linguistic heritage possesses an immense, remarkable wealth of studies concerning metaphor, simile, and figurative language, particularly regarding animals, their natures, and their employment in language and literature. Al-Jahiz stands among the earliest scholars to address the relationship between the animal world and human behavior in a systematic, scientific manner. His masterpiece "Kitab al-Hayawan" (1965 ,كتاب الحيوان) goes beyond describing animals' physiological and behavioral characteristics. He analyzes how poets, orators, and common people borrow from animal traits to describe humans, citing hundreds of examples from pre-Islamic and Islamic poetry and popular proverbs.

For instance, Al-Jahiz links courage with the lion, cunning with the fox, patience with the camel, speed with the gazelle, and dullness with the donkey. This analysis anticipates by centuries the modern Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), albeit without the same technical terminology (Al-Jahiz, 1965).

Likewise, Abu Hilal al-Askari (n.d.) addresses highly precise distinctions between different names of a single animal in his unique linguistic work "Al-Furuq al-Lughawiyyah" (الفروق اللغوية). For example, the lion has dozens of Arabic names—ليث, ضرغام, غضنفر, هزبر, قسورة أسد,—and each name carries a specific nuance related to a particular state, distinctive trait, or age. This immense lexical richness reflects the principle of "Cultural Focus"—the idea that language develops a more detailed and varied lexicon in semantic domains that hold major cultural, economic, or social importance in the linguistic community's life. The abundance of names for the lion, camel, and sword in Arabic reflects their central importance in ancient Arab life (Abu Hilal al-Askari, n.d.).

In contemporary rhetorical criticism, Fadl (1992) emphasizes in his pivotal work "Balaghat al-Khitab wa 'Ilm al-Nass" (بلاغة الخطاب وعلم النص) that metaphor is not merely a formal linguistic deviation or optional rhetorical embellishment. Rather, it is a profound manifestation of an intellectual, cognitive, and cultural structure. It reflects society's way of thinking, its worldview, and its classification of beings. Fadl bridges traditional Arabic rhetoric and modern linguistic theories (structuralism, transformational-generative grammar, pragmatics). He affirms the possibility of reading Arabic rhetorical heritage through contemporary eyes without falling into the trap of "arbitrary imposition" of Western terminology onto Arabic concepts (Fadl, 1992).

In the field of contemporary specialized dictionaries, Fayid (2007) provides a highly valuable contribution in "Mu'jam al-Ta'abir al-Istilahiyyah fi al-'Arabiyyah al-Mu'asirah" (معجم التعابير الاصطلاحية في العربية المعاصرة). This dictionary documents and explains modern idiomatic expressions, including those related to animals. It is distinguished by covering actual contemporary usage in journalism, media, and modern literature, not merely ancient traditional proverbs. Additionally, the Damascus Academy of Arabic Language (2006) published a comprehensive dictionary of idiomatic phrases reflecting contemporary usage across various Arab regions. These dictionaries are essential, indispensable sources for any researcher in the field of contemporary Arabic animal metaphors (Fayid, 2007; Damascus Academy of Arabic Language, 2006).

Methodology:

This study employs a Descriptive-Analytical-Contrastive Approach rooted in the traditions of Contrastive Linguistics and Cognitive Linguistics. The methodology aims to provide a detailed, precise

description of the linguistic phenomenon, animal metaphors, in both English and Arabic. Subsequently, it analyzes the phenomenon in depth through the lens of cognitive theories (CMT, the Great Chain Metaphor) and pragmatic frameworks (Pragmatic Equivalence). Finally, it conducts a systematic, organized comparison between the two languages to identify areas of similarity, difference, and cultural dissonance (Kövecses, 2010; Baker, 2018).

The Linguistic Corpus:

A Linguistic Corpus consisting of 50 animal idiomatic expressions (Animal Idioms) was compiled. The corpus is evenly distributed between the two languages: 25 English expressions and 25 Arabic expressions. These idioms were selected according to strict, well-defined criteria. The criteria include: (1) frequency and recurrence of use in contemporary linguistic discourse, (2) explicit or implicit inclusion of an animal name in the expression, (3) metaphorical use of the animal to describe a human trait or behavior, and (4) the possibility of finding an equivalent (or its absence) in the other language.

Arabic examples were extracted from reliable classical sources such as "Majma' al-Amthal" (مجمع الأمثال) by al-Maydani, as well as contemporary specialized dictionaries including "Mu'jam al-Ta'abir al-Istilahiyyah fi al-'Arabiyyah al-Mu'asirah" (معجم التعابير الاصطلاحية في العربية المعاصرة) by Fayid (2007) and the dictionary of idiomatic phrases published by the Damascus Academy of Arabic Language (2006). English examples were drawn from authoritative international dictionaries such as "McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs" (Spears, 2005) and "The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms" (Ammer, 2013).

Data Classification:

The collected data were classified according to Target Semantic Domains. Ten major domains cover fundamental aspects of human behavior and traits: (1) courage and strength, (2) stupidity and ignorance, (3) cunning and deception, (4) speed and slowness, (5) greed and stinginess, (6) laziness and activity, (7) social traits (pride, meekness, talkativeness, etc.), (8) fear and cowardice, (9) wisdom and foolishness, and (10) natural phenomena and general conditions. For each semantic domain, five expressions were selected whenever possible. This approach enables a systematic, organized comparison between the two languages within each domain individually.

Analytical Procedures:

The analytical procedures followed several sequential steps:

1. **Identifying the Source Domain:** Determine which animal is used in each expression.
2. **Identifying the Target Domain:** Determine the human trait being targeted.
3. **Analyzing the Metaphorical Mapping:** Identify which characteristics of the animal are highlighted and transferred to the human domain.
4. **Cross-Linguistic Comparison:** Do both languages use the same animal? The same mapping? Or is there a radical difference?
5. **Explaining Differences:** Interpret differences in light of environmental, cultural, and religious factors.
6. **Evaluating Translation Strategies:** Assess possible translation strategies and identify the most suitable ones for achieving pragmatic equivalence (Baker, 2018; Newmark, 1988).

Data Analysis and Discussion:

The contrastive analysis reveals a clear divergence in metaphorical mapping mechanisms, driven primarily by environmental factors. The following tables illustrate the most prominent of these differences.

Research Sample: The Fifty Idiomatic Expressions:

Below is the complete corpus of idiomatic expressions used in the study, classified according to semantic domains:

Group One: Courage and Strength:

1. **Brave as a lion** – شجاع كالأسد / جريء كالليث (universal correspondence).
2. **Strong as an ox** – قوي كالثور / قوي كالجمل (environmental difference: plow ox vs. pack camel).
3. **Work like a horse** – يعمل كالبعير / حمّال كالجمل (European horse vs. desert camel).
4. **Fight like a tiger** – يقاتل كالنمر / ينقضّ كالصقر (Arabic adds falcon as a symbol of speed).
5. **Bold as a hawk** – جسور كالصقر / شجاع كالعقاب (partial match in birds of prey).

Group Two: Stupidity and Ignorance:

6. **Dumb as a donkey** – أغبى من حمار / جاهل كالبهيمة (complete correspondence).
7. **Bird-brained** – أحمق / فارغ الرأس كالعصفور (small brain size).
8. **Silly goose** – أبله / ساذج كالإوّزة (goose as symbol of naivety in the West).
9. **Blockhead / Mule-headed** – عنيد كالبغل / رأسه كرأس البغل (correspondence).
10. **Like sheep** – كالأغنام / كالقطيع (blind obedience).

Group Three: Cunning and Deception:

11. **Sly as a fox** – أمكر من ثعلب / أروغ من ثعلب (universal correspondence).

12. **Cunning as a weasel** – ماكر كابن عرس / خبيث كالذئب (Arabic prefers wolf due to its danger).
13. **Snake in the grass** – حية رقطاء / أفعى تحت التراب (correspondence).
14. **Wolf in sheep's clothing** – ذئب في ثياب حَمَل (Christian religious origin).
15. **Crocodile tears** – دموع التمساح (correspondence).

Group Four: Speed and Slowness:

16. **Fast as a cheetah** – سريع كالفهد / كالبرق (scientific correspondence).
17. **Quick as a hare** – سريع كالأرنب / مراوغ كالأرنب (correspondence).
18. **Slow as a snail** – بطيء كالحلزون / كالسلحفاة (correspondence).
19. **At a snail's pace** – يمشي مشية السلحفاة (expression of slowness).
20. **Like greased lightning** – كالصاعقة / كالسهم (Arabic uses natural tools).

Group Five: Greed and Stinginess:

21. **Greedy as a pig** – جشع كالكلب / نَهِم / شِره (religious dissonance: pig is forbidden).
22. **Loan shark** – قرش المال / مُرابٍ / حوت المال (predatory sea animals).
23. **Fat cat** – ثري مترف / سمين / قط (difference in cat symbolism).
24. **Cash cow** – مصدر دخل دائم / بقرة حلوب (continuous financial resource).
25. **Vulture** – نسر جائع / غراب البين (predatory, lurking birds).

Group Six: Laziness and Activity:

26. **Busy as a bee** – نشيط كالنحلة (correspondence).
27. **Eager beaver** – مُجِدّ نشيط / كالنملة (beaver not known in Arabic).
28. **Industrious as an ant** – نشيط كالنملة (Quranic correspondence).
29. **Lazy as a sloth** – خامل كالكسلان / كسول كالدب (sloth not known in Arabic).
30. **Couch potato** – خامل / كسول لا يتحرك (modern plant metaphor).

Group Seven: Social Traits:

31. **Proud as a peacock** – متكبر كالطاووس / منتفخ كالديك (vanity).
32. **Gentle as a lamb** – وديع كالحَمل / هادئ كالنعجة (religious correspondence).
33. **Stubborn as a mule** – عنيد كالبغل / كالجمل الأعصم (stubbornness).
34. **Quiet as a mouse** – صامت كالسمك / هادئ كالفأر (Arabic uses fish for silence).
35. **Chatty as a magpie** – ثرثار كالعقعق / كالببغاء (talking birds).

Group Eight: Fear and Cowardice:

36. **Chicken / Chicken-hearted** – جبان كالدجاجة (correspondence).
37. **Scaredy-cat** – جبان / خوّاف كالقط (correspondence).
38. **Timid as a rabbit** – خائف كالأرنب (correspondence).
39. **Like a frightened deer** – مذعور كالظبي / كالغزالة (correspondence).
40. **Yellow-bellied** – جبان / أصفر البطن (color metaphor, uncommon in Arabic).

Group Nine: Wisdom and Foolishness:

41. **Wise as an owl** – حكيم كـ [untranslatable] / حكيم كلقمان (acute dissonance: owl is ominous in Arabic).
42. **Memory like an elephant** – ذاكرة كالفيل (scientific correspondence).
43. **Eagle-eyed** – حاد البصر كالعقاب / عين الصقر (correspondence).
44. **Blind as a bat** – أعمى كالخفاش (common scientific error).
45. **One-track mind** – لا يرى إلا ما أمامه (inspired by horse blinders).

Group Ten: Natural Phenomena and General Conditions:

46. **Raining cats and dogs** – تمطر كأفواه القِرب (acute environmental dissonance).
47. **A dog's life** – حياة شقاء / حياة بائسة (stray dog).
48. **Every dog has its day** – لكل زمان دولة / لكل أجل كتاب (avoids positive dog reference).
49. **Let sleeping dogs lie** – لا توقظ الفتنة / دع ما دام ساكناً.
50. **The early bird catches the worm** – من جَدّ وجد / من سبق لبق.

Deep Environmental Analysis: Climate, Geography, and the Natural Environment Shaping the 'Conceptual Metaphor Map' of Each Language:

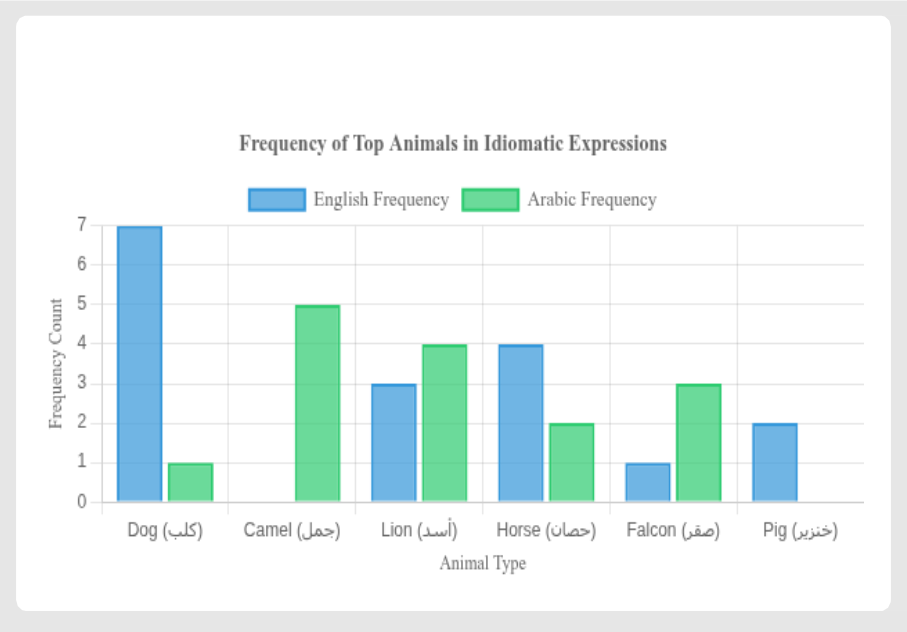
The 'Moderate Environmental Determinism Hypothesis' is clearly evident. Environment is not mere backdrop; it is a decisive factor in determining 'source domains.'

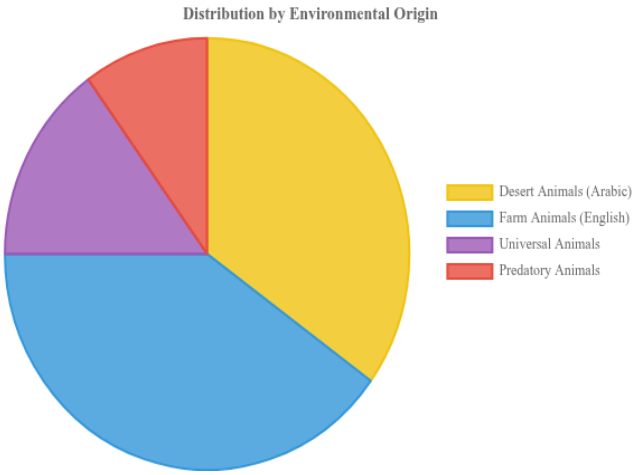
The English Environment: A temperate, fertile agricultural environment produced an overwhelming presence of farm animals (horse, cow, pig, dog). The horse appears 4 times and the dog 7 times, reflecting their central roles in transport and guarding.

The Arabic Environment: A harsh desert environment dominated by the camel, the "ship of the desert", which appears 5 times in the Arabic sample versus zero in English. Predatory animals (lion, wolf) and birds of prey (falcon) also feature prominently as symbols of nobility and courage in the face of nature.

Statistical Analysis of Animals Used:
Most Frequently Recurring Animals:

1. **Dog:** 7 times in English versus once (negative) in Arabic.
2. **Camel:** 5 times in Arabic versus zero in English.
3. **Lion:** 4 times in Arabic versus 3 in English.
4. **Falcon:** 3 times in Arabic versus once in English.
5. **Pig:** Twice in English versus zero (forbidden) in Arabic.





Rank	Animal (English)	الحيوان (عربي)	English Frequency	Arabic Frequency	Cultural Significance
1	Dog	كلب	**7**	1	Loyalty (EN) / Impurity (AR)
2	Camel	جمل	0	**5**	Desert survival symbol
3	Lion	أسد	3	**4**	Courage & nobility
4	Horse	حصان	**4**	2	Work & transport
5	Falcon	صقر	1	**3**	Hunting & nobility
6	Pig	خنزير	**2**	0	Forbidden in Islam
7	Fox	ثعلب	2	2	Cunning (universal)
8	Donkey	حمار	2	2	Stupidity (universal)
9	Owl	بومة	1	0	Wisdom (EN) / Omen (AR)
10	Wolf	ذئب	1	2	Danger & deception

Cultural Dissonance and Contradictory Symbols:

'Symbolic Dissonance' appears in critical cases such as:

- **The Owl:** A symbol of wisdom in the West ("wise as an owl"), while it is an omen of misfortune in Arabic.
- **The Dog:** A symbol of loyalty in the West, while associated with impurity or contempt in traditional Arabic contexts. This requires a 'cultural substitution' strategy during translation.

In-Depth Discussion: Cultural Schemas and Cognitive Models:

From Literal Translation to Cultural Negotiation:

The detailed findings of this study demonstrate that translating animal idiomatic expressions is not a mere mechanical transfer of words from one language to another. Rather, it is fundamentally a "complex negotiation between cultural schemas" and a "transformation between cognitive models."

When an English speaker describes a wealthy, influential person as a "fat cat," they are not offering a random visual description. Instead, they automatically invoke a complete and complex "cultural model": the domestic cat living a comfortable life without effort or struggle. It is fed the finest food, pampered, cared for, and sleeps all day in total comfort. This compound mental image conveys a sardonic, critical connotation of the affluent who live in luxury and ease at the expense of others' labor.

In the Arabic context, however, the cat, despite its presence in the Arab environment, does not carry the same cultural load or symbolic value. When Arabs wish to express enormous financial clout and excessive wealth, they may use the word "whale" (in modern dialects: "whale of money," "money whales"), a metaphor derived from the marine world where the whale is the largest, most dominant, and most predatory of creatures. Alternatively, they may resort to religious or historical heritage, using a proper name such as "Qarun," or a direct description such as "wealthy and extravagant" or "person of influence and wealth."

The Desert Paradigm versus the Agricultural Paradigm: Divergent Conceptual Maps:

There is a clear dominance of what can be called the "Desert Paradigm" in Arabic, as opposed to the "Agricultural-Pastoral Paradigm" in English.

The Desert Paradigm in Arabic: Characterized by exceptional lexical richness (the lion has dozens of names such as *layth*, *dirgham*, *ghadanfar*), the centrality of the camel as a survival symbol, and the strong presence of predatory animals.

The Agricultural-Pastoral Paradigm in English: Characterized by the centrality of domestic farm animals (horse, cow, pig) and the intensive presence of the dog as "man's best friend."

The Religious Dimension: Prohibition and Permission and Their Impact on the Metaphorical Map:

The religious dimension plays a pivotal role, especially in cases of cultural dissonance such as the pig and dog. The pig is acceptable in the West as a food source, but it is categorically forbidden in Islam. This makes its metaphorical use unacceptable in Arabic contexts.

The dog is a symbol of loyalty in the West, while it predominantly carries negative connotations or associations with impurity in traditional Arab culture. This prevents its use in positive contexts.

Recurring Metaphorical Patterns: The Deep Structure of Mapping:

Both languages share deep patterns such as:

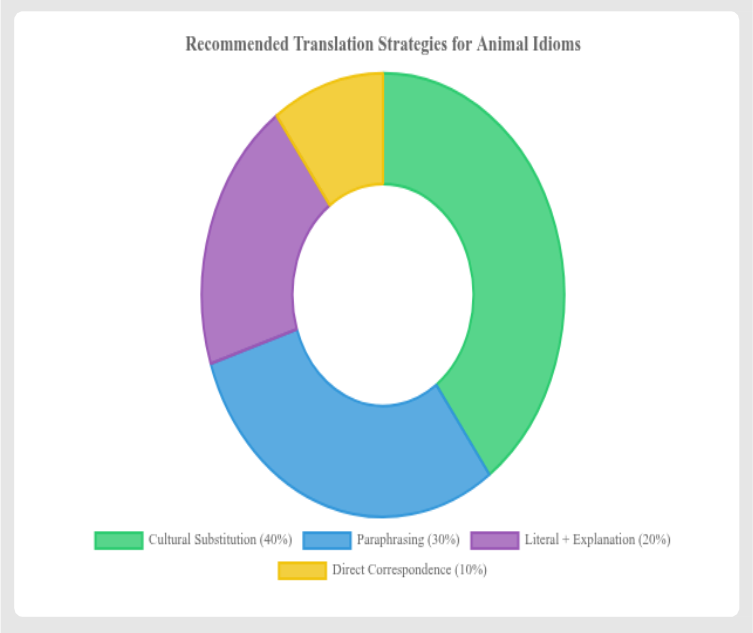
1. Physical strength ← Large animals (ox/camel).
2. Speed ← Fast animals (cheetah/gazelle).
3. Cunning ← Fox (complete correspondence).
4. Stupidity ← Donkey (complete correspondence).

Summary Table of Main Findings:

Table (2): Key Findings of the Study

Category **الفئة**	**Finding** **النتيجة**	**English Example** **مثال إنجليزي**	**Arabic Example** **مثال عربي**	**Implication** **الدلالة**
Environmental Impact الأثر البيئي	Desert vs Agricultural environment determines source domains	Dog (7 times) Horse (4 times)	جمل (5 مرات) صقر (3 مرات)	Moderate Environmental Determinism confirmed
Cultural Dissonance التنافر الثقافي	Same animal = opposite connotations	Wise as an owl (Wisdom symbol)	البومة نذير شؤم (رمز الشؤم)	Requires cultural substitution in translation
Lexical Richness الثراء المعجمي	Cultural focus = more names	Lion (1 name)	أسد، ليث، ضرغام، غضنفر	Reflects central importance in Arab culture

Systematic Mapping الإسقاط المنهجي	Consistent trait-animal associations	Patience → Horse Work → Horse	الصبر ← الجمل العمل ← الجمل	CMT principles apply universally
Great Chain Metaphor السلسلة الكبرى	Lower (animal) projects onto higher (human)	Brave as a lion	شجاع كالأسد	Often creates pejorative connotation
Religious Dimension البُعد الديني	Religious prohibition blocks metaphorical use	Greedy as a pig (Common)	الخنزير محرّم) غائب تماماً)	Religion shapes conceptual map
Translation Strategies استراتيجيات الترجمة	Multiple strategies needed	Raining cats and dogs	مطر غزير Cultural) (substitution	Pragmatic equivalence over literal translation
Universal Patterns الأنماط العالمية	Some animals = universal symbolism	Cunning as a fox Dumb as a donkey	ماكر كالثعلب أغبى من حمار	Complete cross-cultural correspondence



Conclusion and Recommendations:

This study concludes, through in-depth, systematic contrastive analysis of a linguistic corpus of fifty animal idiomatic expressions evenly distributed between English and Arabic, that zoo-metaphorical mapping is a cognitive mechanism governed by environmental context, cultural heritage, and religious systems.

The findings confirm that the natural environment shapes the conceptual map. English is agricultural in orientation, while Arabic is desert-centered. Furthermore, the study revealed acute dissonance in the connotations of the owl, dog, and pig.

Conclusion:

1. **The Environment as a Cognitive Filter:** The "Moderate Environmental Determinism Hypothesis" is fully supported. The natural environment determines which animals serve as source domains. The camel—symbol of survival in the desert, appears 5 times in the Arabic sample versus zero in English. Conversely, the dog, central to European agricultural life, appears 7 times in English versus once (negatively) in Arabic.
2. **Acute Cultural Dissonance in Critical Cases:** The study documented cases of complete symbolic contradiction. The owl is a symbol of wisdom in Western mythology ("wise as an owl"), whereas it is an omen of misfortune in Arabic. Similarly, the dog is "man's best friend" in the West but carries associations of impurity in traditional Islamic interpretations. The pig, forbidden in Islam, appears frequently in English expressions ("greedy as a pig") but is entirely absent from Arabic idiomatic usage.
3. **Lexical Richness Reflects Cultural Focus:** The lion has several names in Arabic (layth, dirgham, ghadanfar, hazbr) versus a single name in English. This extraordinary lexical density reflects the

central importance of the lion as a symbol of courage, nobility, and power in ancient Arab culture and poetry.

4. **Systematic Cognitive Mapping:** Both languages follow the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and The Great Chain Metaphor (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). Physical strength is systematically mapped onto large animals (ox/camel), speed onto fast animals (cheetah/gazelle), and cunning onto the fox (universal correspondence).
5. **The Inadequacy of Literal Translation:** Literal translation of animal idiomatic expressions often results in communicative failure. "Raining cats and dogs" cannot be rendered literally in Arabic without provoking confusion or ridicule. Pragmatic Equivalence (Baker, 2018) requires evoking the corresponding cultural schema in the target language.

Recommendations for Translators:

1. **Avoid Literal Translation:** Animal idiomatic expressions must never be translated word-for-word. The translator should seek the communicative effect, not the lexical form.
2. **Adopt Pragmatic Equivalence:** The translator must ask: What is the rhetorical function of this expression? What emotional response does it evoke? Then find an equivalent expression in the target language that achieves the same effect.
3. **Sensitivity to Religiously Forbidden Animals:** Expressions involving pigs or dogs must be handled with extreme caution. Cultural substitution (e.g., replacing "fat cat" with "whale" in Arabic) is often necessary.
4. **Leverage Classical Arabic Rhetoric:** Translators into Arabic should draw upon the rich heritage of animal metaphors in classical poetry, proverbs, and the works of Al-Jahiz and Abu Hilal al-Askari.
5. **Provide Explanatory Footnotes When Necessary:** In academic or literary translations, retaining the source expression with an explanatory note may preserve the cultural flavor while ensuring comprehension.

Recommendations for Researchers:

1. **Expand Contrastive Studies:** Future research should extend this methodology to other language pairs (Arabic-French, Arabic-Chinese, Arabic-Spanish) to test the universality of environmental determinism in metaphorical mapping.
2. **Build Electronic Databases:** There is an urgent need for comprehensive, searchable electronic databases of animal idiomatic expressions in Arabic and English, with pragmatic annotations for translators.
3. **Investigate Modern Media Usage:** Future studies should examine how animal metaphors are used in contemporary digital media, social networks, advertising, and political discourse.
4. **Integrate Neurolinguistic Evidence:** Neurolinguistic studies using fMRI could reveal how the brain processes animal metaphors differently across cultures, providing empirical support for Conceptual Metaphor Theory.
5. **Develop Pedagogical Materials:** Language educators need specialized teaching materials that train students in the pragmatic, cultural, and cognitive dimensions of animal idiomatic expressions.

Study Limitations:

This study is limited by its relatively small corpus (50 expressions). A larger sample spanning multiple dialects and historical periods would yield more robust findings. Additionally, the study focused exclusively on written sources. Future research should incorporate oral folklore, children's literature, and proverbs to capture the full spectrum of animal metaphor usage.

Final Reflections:

This study demonstrates that animal idiomatic expressions are far more than colorful linguistic ornaments. They are windows into the conceptual schemas, environmental adaptations, cultural values, and religious frameworks that shape human cognition and communication. By bridging classical Arabic rhetoric (Al-Jahiz, Abu Hilal al-Askari) with modern cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, Johnson, Kövecses) and translation studies (Baker, Newmark), this research offers a holistic understanding of zoo-metaphorical mapping.

The camel and the dog, the owl and the falcon, the lion and the pig, these animals are not merely inhabitants of the natural world. They are cognitive tools through which we understand ourselves. And when we translate these metaphors, we do not merely transfer words. We negotiate between worlds.

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