Animal Metaphors in Indonesian and English

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Abstract

This paper is a contrastive semantic analysis exploring the concept of animal metaphors in Indonesian and English by means of three contrastive elements, i.e., the universality of form and meaning, the universality of meaning albeit different forms, and the element of distinctiveness or idiosyncrasy of each language. All data were obtained from Indonesian Idioms and Expressions, Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, Indonesian Proverbs Dictionary, and Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. The data were classified and analysed based on the three contrastive elements. Subsequently, each element was scrutinised in terms of the rationality embedded therein. The results of careful analysis show that the universality of the form and meaning of animal metaphors in both languages (i.e., Indonesian and English) reflects the common thread of harmonisation of language expressions—although in some other points, the perception is completely of difference between Indonesian speakers and English ones and hence creates contrasting forms of linguistic expression. The distinctive element of metaphors in each language illustrates that other extra-linguistic elements, e.g., history, values, norms, customs, and to name a few, contribute greatly to the process of constructing language expressions.

Introduction

The relationship between language and culture is inseparable from one another, wherein the former is a form of expression of the latter that is passed down from generation to generation. In this perspective, language can be said to be a means of cultural transmission, whether it expresses, reflects, or symbolizes culture (Kramsch & Widdowson, 1998; Yule, 2020). Culture in this definition may refer to a very broad meaning, ranging from habitual values, beliefs, mindsets to social identity, politics, and others. In relation to mindset, language can be placed in two asymmetrical positions; firstly, as something superior to mindset as believed by the linguistic relativism group—referring to the hypotheses of Sapir (1929, p. 210) and Whorf (1940); secondly, as something inferior to mindset—indicating the discursive counterpart of the former[1]. Either way, the proposition that language and mindset or perception are mutually influential cannot be denied.

In cognitive linguistic theory, the relationship between language and conceptual thinking can be seen clearly in metaphors. The concept of metaphor is a human effort in associating and shaping abstract concepts (M. J. Landau, 2016, 2018; M. J. Landau et al., 2010), experiences, images, moderation (Seering et al., 2022), and even other concepts into a form of expression or linguistic expression. Historically, the concept of metaphor has actually been widely used in ancient Greek as a linguistic expression resulting from the reflection of the nature and human activity—this is closely related to *myth* and *logos* (Berendt, 2008, p. 2). However, at that time metaphors were only used in conjunction with metonymy. It was only after the encounter with western culture (in this case,

European culture in general) that metaphors began to be associated with other concepts, such as allegory, simile, irony, and even proverbs. However, one thing that is certain about the concept of metaphor is that it cannot be separated from the cultural space surrounding therewith.

One of the cultural manifestations (i.e., elements of meaning outside the language) that can be considered significantly influencing the construction of metaphors in a language is the human perception of animals. The construction of animal perception in each culture can be broadly diverse. In fact, through one type of animal with the same characteristics, the metaphorical construction can be distinctly different, depending on the perspective of the community. As in the contrastive research conducted by Miri et al. (2015), the use of animal metaphors in English and Persian has some similarities and differences. There are several animal metaphors that are similar in form and meaning from both languages. For example, in the *Cat and Dog* metaphor which has the same meaning as *Sag o Gorbeh* (cat and dog) that cannot be reconciled, the two are always against each other; or in the *Crocodile tears* metaphor which means the same as *ashke temsah* (crocodile tears) which refers to false tears (something fake sadness or empathy). However, in addition to similarities, the concept of animal metaphors in these two languages also has differences although the form of expression is not different. For example, English tends to use the metaphor of *a little bird* while Persian uses the metaphor of *kalaqe* (crow) in expressing a rumour. And finally, there are some animal metaphors found in English but not found in Persian.

Another study conducted by Ningsih (2018) also illustrates how animal metaphors in English and Indonesian have elements of similarity and difference. She further concludes that cultural differences in the two languages can influence the meaning of metaphors, both in terms of semantics and sociolinguistics. The contrast of the metaphorical concept building of the two languages shows that indeed the perception of a group of language speakers contributes dominantly to determining the meaning of a metaphor.

However, the research conducted by Ningsih (2018) only includes two contrastive elements, namely the similarity of form and meaning completely; and the difference in meaning even though the form of expression is the same. In fact, there are two other elements that are no less important in seeing the metaphorical building of these two languages, namely the element of universality of meaning despite different forms; and the uniqueness of metaphors that exist in each language that cannot be found in other languages. Therefore, a full contrastive study involving these two additional elements is necessary and important to do.

The Concept of Metaphor: Between Source Domain and Target Domain

The concept of metaphor can vary greatly from one language to another; even within one language, the concept of metaphor can vary depending on the surrounding culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 22). According to Lakoff & Johnson (2003) in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, this metaphorical framework can be recognized through a conceptual triangle, namely the Conceptual Image (idea or topic), linguistic expression (vehicle), and the way of communicating. Indeed, this conceptual triangle tends to be dilemmatic considering that some scholars, such as Goatly (1997, p. 8) explain that the concept of metaphor only has two elements: topic and vehicle where the former is the idea or conceptual framework to be conveyed while the latter is the means or vehicle that leads to the idea. However, the main discussion around the concept of metaphor is always related to two main poles which are often called the source domain (concrete) and the target domain (abstract) (Chung et al., 2005).

The source domain is the metaphorical expression expressed in linguistic form while the target domain is an abstract conceptualization that is conveyed or intended. For example, in the conceptual metaphor that *argumentation is warfare* (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 4), sentences such as *he attacks every weak point of my argument*, *I never win an argument with him* are automatically built from the main conceptual framework, namely *argumentation is warfare*. Ergo, it is not surprising as elements

of warfare are always attached or associated in the construction of argumentation discourse, such as the expressions of *attack*, *weak points*, *win*, and *debate*.

In the meaning stage, metaphors can only be obtained if the source domain has elements of similarity with the target domain. Therefore, departing from this opinion, metaphors that use animal terms are generally an analogy of comparison between animals on the one hand and humans on the other. The comparison in this context can be obtained from the physical characteristics and behaviour or character of both. For more details, let us look at the following example:

(1) *Jangan sekali-kali kamu berani dengan Toni. Dia itu kriminal **kelas kakap**.*
(Don't you ever dare with Toni. He's a **high-profile** criminal.)
(2) *Jika dibandingkan dengan Toni, Adi hanya **ikan teri** yang tak berarti.*
(Compared to Toni, Adi was just an insignificant **anchovy**.)

In sentences (1) and (2), the conceptual metaphor constructed is in the level of quality of a person. In the Indonesian cultural context, this level of ability is expressed through an analogy of fish size, the bigger the fish used as an analogy, the higher the level of quality intended. For example, in sentence (1) *kriminal kelas kakap* (a high-profile criminal) means a number one criminal as compared to others; while in sentence (2) the metaphor of *ikan teri* (anchovy) is used to imply that Adi is not a significant opponent for Toni. However, this kind of conceptual scheme is not necessarily the same and can be found in other languages, considering that the way of thinking and perception of one group of people can be different from another group. In addition, the environment, social activities, norms, and cultural values also have a big role in shaping conceptual metaphors in a language (Wijana, 2015, p. 12).

By using the conceptual framework offered by Lakoff & Johnson (2003, p. 10) related to the *concept of imagery* and *linguistic expression* (source domain-target domain) or in Goatly's terms (1997, p. 8) *topic* and *vehicle*, this study aims to contrast animal metaphors in Indonesian and English through three contrastive elements, namely: full universality (form-meaning), universality of meaning albeit different forms, and idiosyncrasy that exists in each language. The findings of this study are expected to be able to provide a contrastive picture related to the concept of animal metaphors in Indonesian and English and thus bringing a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and cognitive perception—that the peculiarities of mindset or perception can contribute significantly to shaping or constructing the concept of metaphor.

Research Method

This study used two main references as data sources for animal metaphors in Indonesian and English: 1) *Indonesian Idioms and Expressions: Colloquial Indonesian at Work* (Torchia, 2007) for animal metaphors in Indonesian; 2) *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (2ⁿᵈ ed.)* (Siefring, 2004) for animal metaphors in English. Other sources, such as *Dictionaries of Proverbs* (Pusposaputro, 2010), expressions, and *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Sugono et al., 2008), were used as the metaphors in the two primary sources were not found. The data were then classified into three contrastive elements, namely: full universality, universality of meaning despite different forms, and uniqueness (idiosyncrasy) that exists in each language. The data were presented descriptively based on the classification of the contrastive elements.

Results and Discussion
Full Universality (Form and Meaning)

Before getting into the first contrastive element, it is necessary to present the following overview table of the full universality (form and meaning) of Indonesian and English metaphors:

Table 1. Full Universality (Form and Meaning)

Indonesian	English
(3) **Anjing** menyalak tak kan menggigit	**A barking dog won't bite**
(4) Bagai **kucing** dan **anjing**	**Cat-and-dog life**
(5) **Kuda** hitam	**Dark horse**
(6) **Kuda** Troya	**Trojan Horse**

In sentence (3), the metaphor of *anjing menyalak tak kan menggigit* (a barking dog won't bite) in Indonesian turns out to have the same form and meaning in the English metaphor *a barking dog won't bite*. Both metaphors are built on the conceptualization of dog habits or characters, namely barking and biting. There are two propositions in this metaphor: *a barking dog* (source domain) implies *someone who always threatens* (target domain) and *won't bite* implies *someone who never does*. Therefore, the metaphor *dog barks won't bite* implies *someone who always threatens but never does* (deceitful bluff). Meanwhile, in phrase (4), *bagai kucing dan anjing* (like cats and dogs) is also identical to the phrase *cat-and-dog life*, which implies a negative connotation relationship between cats and dogs that cannot get along. This metaphor is built on the nature of the two types of animals that cannot coexist with each other. Therefore, the conceptual meaning of this metaphor is entities that cannot be united or reconciled.

In the next examples, phrases (5) and (6), the conceptual metaphor used is horse—in phrase (5), it is associated with the colour feature while in phrase (6), it is associated with the Ancient Greek myth of the Trojan horse. In phrase (5), the target domain to be implied is a situation where a person/group of people is able to win a competition unexpectedly. At the beginning of its use, this metaphor emerged from horse racing slang that was first used by Benjamin Disraeli as describing a dark horse that managed to win surprisingly (Ammer, 2013). In phrase (6), the target domain implied is someone who is tasked with destroying or subverting their enemy, just as the Trojan horse in Ancient Greek mythology used to trick and destroy the enemy (Siefring, 2004, p. 298). From the four examples above, it can be concluded that the formation of a conceptual metaphor from Indonesian and English has elements of universality of form and meaning. This shows that in some metaphor constructions, these two languages have the same basis in perceiving the form of animal expressions so that the meaning created tends to be the same.

Universality of Meaning - Different Forms

Before getting into the discussion of this second contrastive element, it is necessary to present the following overview table of the universality of meaning - different forms:

Table 2. Universality of Meaning - Different Forms

Meaning	Indonesian	English
Stunned	**(7) Bagai Ayam melihat musang**	**Like a deer frozen in a car's headlight**
Get two benefits at once	**(8) Sekali tepuk dua lalat**	**Kill two birds with a stone**
Uncertainty	**(9) Kucing dalam karung**	**Pig in a poke**
Dull-witted	**(10) Otak udang**	**Birdbrain**

In this section, Indonesian and English metaphors show similarities in meaning or target domain even though their forms differ from one language to another. Phrase (7) *Bagai ayam melihat musang* (like a chicken seeing a civet) has an equivalent interpretation of meaning with the metaphor *like a deer frozen in a car's headlight*, which symbolizes a situation where someone is stunned and cannot

say anything at all (speechless). In Indonesian language, the metaphors used are *chicken* and *civets* leading to the characteristics of the chicken's condition that cannot move (stunned) as dealing with civets. The use of chicken and civet as metaphorical vehicles indicates that these two animals are close to the experience of Indonesian speakers, which may not be found in English speakers. English speakers may be more likely to use the deer's state when it is stunned to stare at the car lights.

In phrase (8) *sekali tepuk dua lalat* (one swats two flies), the implied target domain refers to the condition of getting two benefits in one action. In English, the same conceptual metaphor is found in the phrase *kill two birds with a stone*. If in the Indonesian language, a fly is used as it can be swatted with both palms, in English, the animal used is a bird—and the concept is not swatted but thrown with a stone. Despite the distinct form of expression (one is *a fly* and *palm* while the other is *a bird* and *a stone*), the target domain is the same. Phrase (9) *kucing dalam karung* (cat in a sack) and *pig in a poke* use two different animals as the conceptual construction. The Indonesian expression of cat is more acceptable than pig since this animal is always close to the life activities of Indonesian speakers—especially in real life, it is cats that are often put in sacks instead of other animals. It is certainly a different construction in English for English speakers are more likely to be familiar with pigs than cats. The target domain of both metaphors is uncertainty. If someone buys things like *buying a cat in a sack* or in English like *buying a pig in a poke*, then he has bought things that are still unknown in identity (or quality). The last is the metaphor in phrase (10) *otak udang* (shrimp's brain) and *birdbrain* symbolising the inadequate state of intelligence or reasoning capability of a person (dull-witted). The construction distinguishing the two metaphors in the two languages is the association of shrimp in Indonesian and bird in English notwithstanding that the conceptual basis of both is the same, which refers to the small size of the brains of the two animals.

Idiosyncrasy of each Language
Indonesian Metaphors
In this last element, it will be explained the uniqueness or idiosyncrasy of metaphors in each language. Idiosyncrasy here means that the conceptual metaphors presented are only found in one language. First, let us look at some examples of conceptual metaphors in Indonesian that cannot be found in English.

(11) ***Tikus** kantor, terkadang **tikus** berdasi atau **tikus** berjas*
     (Office **rat**, sometimes **a rat in a tie** or **a rat in a suit**)
     (Indonesian Idioms and Expression, p. 13)

The metaphor in phrase (11) *Tikus kantor, terkadang tikus berdasi atau tikus berjas* (office rat or sometimes also called rat with a tie or rat in a suit) is a typical Indonesian conceptual metaphor that has no equivalent in English. The association formed from this metaphor is that a rat as the source domain symbolizes a corrupt person as the target domain. This kind of association is acceptable in Indonesian-speaking communities given that the connotation of the meaning of a rat is something negative, destructive, and harmful to many parties; rats are also often considered pests that have no benefits at all. By attributing the rat metaphor to corruptors, this indirectly implies that corruptors and rats have similar characters. Meanwhile, other elements such as the expression of *office, tie,* or *suit* further clarify the character of a corruptor who always spends his daily life in the office, wearing a suit and tie.

(12) ***Kutu** loncat* (Jumping **fleas**)
(13) *Bajing loncat* (Jumping **squirrel**)
     (Ibid., p. 14-15)

Both phrases (12) and (13) are conceptual metaphors with negative connotations, where the former is associated with someone having an opportunistic character while the latter is associated with a robber daily blocking traveller's vehicle. The conceptual construction of the two is derived from the similarity of the character traits of the two animals (i.e., often and more likely to jump),

which is then compared to the bad character of a person. If someone is *kutu loncat* (a jumping flea), he then always changes roles depending on the interests. Meanwhile, the expression *bajing loncat* (jumping squirrel) is derived from the criminal phenomenon of robbers who like to intercept vehicles from the top of trees. Due to the specificity of the conceptual framework of these two metaphors—In addition to the social phenomena occurring in Indonesian communities—It is not surprising that they can only be found in Indonesian expressions and have no equivalent in English.

(14) *Terlepas dari mulut* **buaya**, *masuk ke mulut* **harimau**
(Out of the **crocodile's** mouth, into the **tiger's** mouth)
(Ibid., 16)

The last metaphor in Indonesian that has no equivalent form and meaning in English is in the expression (14) *terlepas dari mulut buaya, masuk ke mulut harimau* (out of the crocodile's mouth, into the tiger's mouth). This metaphor has two propositions, namely the mouth of a crocodile and the mouth of a tiger; both of which symbolize things equally dangerous. In Indonesian culture, these two animals are deadly predators; both are at the top of the food chain. It is unsurprisingly a common perception to consider that their mouths symbolize danger. So why are these two animals used as the representation instead of other animals? The answer lies in the habits and way of life of Indonesians who are close to these two animals. The target domain of this metaphor refers to a situation where a person has just escaped from a danger but entered another danger. In English, the metaphor that has the same target domain as this metaphor is *from frying pan into the fire*. But even so, the metaphors used are not similar in form; instead of using animal metaphors to express it, the English metaphor uses elements of cooking utensils such as *frying pan* and *fire*.

English Metaphors

In this section, the uniqueness or idiosyncrasy of English metaphors not found in Indonesian is presented in the following three expressions:

(15) **Butterfly** *in someone's stomach*
(16) *In a* **pig's** *eye*
(17) *A white* **elephant**

The three metaphorical expressions above cannot be found in Indonesian metaphors, such as in phrase (15) *butterfly in someone's stomach* symbolising the state of delightful or joyful, or in phrase (16) *in a pig's eye* symbolising impossibility (not possible to happen). Especially for phrase (17) *a white elephant*, this metaphor is not taken from the British tradition for the source domain used is a type of *white elephant* considered sacred by the Thai people. By borrowing this analogy of sacredness, the conceptual framework constructed in the target domain is a possession that is not very useful but costs a lot of money—furthermore, this element is found to be associated with the myth of the *white elephant* in Thai society.

Conclusion

Through the concept of metaphor, the idea of linguistic relativism which states that each language has a unique conceptual framework (idiosyncrasy) and differs from other languages becomes clearer and brighter—especially as entering the second phase of the meaning process of a linguistic element that is highly dependent on other elements outside the language. Just like the construction of colour metaphors that has elements of universal similarity and elements of distinctiveness that can only be found in one of the languages (Wijana, 2015; Zhang et al., 2022), animal metaphors in Indonesian and English also have three contrastive elements in them: elements of universality of form and meaning, elements of universality of meaning albeit distinct forms, and elements of distinctiveness that only exist in each language. The element of universality of form and meaning shows that despite being two different languages, the mindsets and perceptions of two different groups of language speakers still have a common thread to harmonise language

expressions—even though in some other points, the perceptions are completely different between speakers of one language and those of another language, thus creating different forms of linguistic expression. Finally, the distinctive element of metaphor in each language illustrates that other elements beyond language (extralinguistic elements), e.g., history, life values, norms, customs, to name a few, contribute greatly to the process of language expression.

End Note

The reversal discourse stating that it is the mindset that instead determines language has been proven (Heider, 1972; Kay & McDaniel, 1978). Heider (1972) proved that Whorf's statement regarding language determining colour perception is in fact not entirely true. He proved that although the Dani tribe only has two colour spectra, namely light and dark, in fact in an experiment they can still distinguish various other colour spectra. The colour limitation does not limit the Dani's ability to distinguish the colour spectrum. Furthermore, Kay & McDaniel (1978) concluded in their research that it is perception that determines language.

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