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The Metaphor of the Animals’ Names (Wolf and Sheep) in Arabic and English Proverbs: A comparative Study

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Abstract:
This study investigated the meanings conveyed by wolf and sheep concepts in Arabic and English proverbs, as well as the similarities between both languages regarding these meanings. Data of the study comprised Arabic and English proverbs related to wolf and sheep. They have been gathered from two dictionaries of proverbs. Arabic proverbs have been collected from Majma’ Al-Amthal, while English proverbs have been gathered from The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs. The data analysis focused on the investigation of the meanings of wolf and sheep proverbs using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the Great Chain of Being (GCB). The analysis revealed that both animals are used to convey some meanings about human beings. Moreover, the results indicated that these meanings are common in the proverbs of both languages though they are related to two different cultures.

Keywords: animal metaphor, wolf proverbs, sheep proverbs, Arabic Culture, English culture.

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استعارة اسم الحيوان في الأمثال العربية والإنجليزية: دراسة مقارنة

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ملخص:
هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على المعاني المرتبطة بمصطلحي الذئب والخروف في الأمثال العربية والإنجليزية، وأوجه التشابه بين اللغتين فيما يخص تلك المعاني، وقد شملت بيانات الدراسة الأمثال العربية والإنجليزية التي تتضمن مصطلحي الذئب والخروف، وقد تم جمع هذه الأمثال من معجمين للأمثال، فقد تم جمع الأمثال العربية من معجم الأمثال، بينما جمعت الأمثال الإنجليزية من قاموس أكسفورد للأمثال الإنجليزية، وقد ركز تحليل البيانات على استقصاء المعاني المرتبطة ب胺ثال الذئب والخروف باستخدام نظرية استعارة المفاهيم (CMT) ونظرية سلسلة الوجود العظمى (GCB)، وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى أن كلاً من اللغتين تستخدمان مصطلحي الذئب والخروف في أمثالهما لإصال بعض المعاني عن البشر، فضلاً عن ذلك، فقد أشارت النتائج إلى أن هذه المعاني مشتركة بين أمثال اللغتين على الرغم من ارتباطهما بثقافتين مختلفتين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استعارة اسم الحيوان، أمثال الذئب، أمثال الخروف، الحضارة العربية، الحضارة الإنجليزية.

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1. Introduction

Proverbs are an important part of the language and culture of each country. Through language, each culture can express its customs, morals, thoughts, religious beliefs, as well as the life style of its people. In most cases, proverbs are used figuratively just as other types of figurative language like idioms (Saeed, 1997). In this vein, proverbs, like idioms, are expressions which have an idiosyncratic or a non-compositional meaning and therefore one has to go beyond the meaning of its individual component parts in order to get the intended meaning.

Different aspects of our life have been expressed via proverbs. Thus, most proverbs are said after an event to express a certain purpose. Mieder (2004: 3) defined a proverb as "a short generally known sentence of folk which contains wisdom, truth, moral and traditional views in a metaphorical and memorable form and which is handed from generation to generation".

Using animals to conceptualize human beings indicates that appearance traits, behaviors, and personality qualities of human beings are animal-like. What this means is that human's behaviors can be understood in terms of animals' behaviors, and this reveals that there is some similarity between humans and animals in some way. In order to find out these similarities and to understand the intended meaning of a proverb, we have to do mappings between the two domains, i.e. animals and humans. This is what Lakoff and Johnson (2003) pointed to in their definition of metaphor in their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Within this theory, Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 5) defined metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". Understanding one domain in terms of another domain depends on holding correspondences or mappings between the two domains where certain features that show similarity between the two domains are mapped into the target domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

Languages conceptualize animals differently as they are related to different cultures which are influenced by religion, ethnicity, customs, morals, beliefs, etc. These cultural aspects may influence the way people use their language to conceptualize different aspects of their life. This effect of culture was perceived by Lakoff and Turner (1989: 187) who argue that "proverbs are always understood relative to a background of assumptions and values, and with different backgrounds the same metaphor can lead to very different interpretations". Regarding this issue, it was necessary for linguists to study animal metaphor cross-culturally to understand how they are similar or different in their conceptualization of animals. Proverbs provide an important domain for linguists to do this since they are highly related to
culture. Therefore, the present study aimed to answer the following questions:
1. What are the underlying metaphorical meanings conveyed by wolf and sheep concepts in Arabic and English proverbs?
2. What are the potential similarities between both languages regarding meanings conveyed by their proverbs related to wolf and sheep concepts?

2. Literature Review

In CMT, metaphors are part of everyday speech which affects the way people perceive, think and act in the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.453). It refers to the understanding of one idea or conceptual domain, in terms of another. In other words, it is a cross domain mapping from a source (or giver) domain of experience onto a target (or recipient) domain, and the target domain (which is more abstract) is understood in terms of the source domain which is more concrete (Lakoff, 1992). Metaphorical mappings are not arbitrary, but are grounded in our experiences.

One domain that is used as a source domain through which the characteristics, behaviors and morals of human beings are described is the animal domain. This is related to the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In this framework each kind of beings such as humans, animals, plants and intimate objects are ordered in a hierarchical manner. Humans occupy the highest level, then animals, plants and intimate objects come last. Moreover, each level has its own sublevels. For instance, big animals like elephant occupy a higher position on the animal level when compared to smaller ones like insects. Using the animal domain to describe the human beings domain is related to the fact that the form of beings that comes at the higher level has all the properties possessed by the forms of beings at the lower level, and not the opposite (Lakoff and Turner, 1989).

In CMT and GCB, it is believed that our cognitive ability to understand metaphors is acquired in two ways: either through our direct experience or through our culture. Lakoff and Turner (1989, p.66) believed that "cognitive models that are acquired via our culture are typically long-standing in the culture. Cultural models of this sort are often at variance with our scientific knowledge". According to this, researchers became interested in investigating this role of culture by conducting comparative studies on animal metaphor especially on proverbs since they are part of culture.

In a comparative study on animal metaphors in proverbs, Yusuf (1997) analyzed 46 proverbs in Yoruba and English. Within this study, the images of animals, plants and food were analyzed in order to show how women are conceptualized in the proverbs of both languages. Findings of the study
revealed that women were often likened to monkeys since women in state of affairs would be awkward and destructive as monkeys living in glass house. In both languages, women were also likened to dogs. That is, though both languages are related to two different cultures, they are similar in their use of some animals to conceptualize women.

Fontecha and Catalan (2003) conducted a contrastive-cognitive analysis of the metaphorical connotations of the animal word pairs 'fox-vixen' and 'bull-cow' in English and Spanish to explore if these animal names are conceptualized equally in both cultures. The results of the study revealed that the metaphorical meanings of the female animal terms connote worse qualities than those of male names.

Within another study interested in English culture, Estaji and Nakhavali (2011) conducted a comparative study on the meanings conveyed by the name of 'dog' in English and Persian proverbs. After analyzing 'dog' proverbs in both languages, it was found that there are some similarities between both languages in their use of the name of this animal in their proverbs despite the fact that the two languages belong to different cultures. The main connotations that the word 'dog' conveys are "worthless, bad-tempered, cruel, and violent" in both languages. In another study, Rashid, Hajimaming and Muhammad (2012) investigated animal metaphors of Malay and Arabic figurative expressions such as proverbs and idioms. The data used in this study were idioms and proverbs containing farm animals such as cow, donkey, horse and goat. In their study, the researchers focused on the meanings conveyed by those animals. Findings of the study showed some similarities in the meanings conveyed by the expressions of both languages.

Although there are many studies investigating animal metaphor in English proverbs and comparing and contrasting them with other languages, a little has been found on this with Arabic language. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, studies on animal metaphors in English and Arabic proverbs were very limited. The only study that investigated animal metaphors in Arabic and English proverbs was conducted by Sameer (2016). Within this study, the researcher analyzed two animal names, dog and horse, in the proverbs and idiomatic expressions of both languages. The analysis showed that dogs and horses have the same connotations or meanings in both languages. Dog proverbs convey the meaning of something bad and scruffy. Unlike dogs, horses are mostly used in proverbs to indicate something good and noble.
3. Method and Procedures

3.1. Data Collection and Procedures

Data of this study were Arabic and English proverbs related to wolves and sheep. Thus, any proverbs related to wolves and sheep were selected for analysis. However, proverbs having simile-like structure in both languages were excluded from this study as they make direct comparison when using comparative markers such as "like" and "as". Proverbs of both languages were collected from two dictionaries: Arabic proverbs were collected from Majmac Al-Amthal, whereas English proverbs were gathered from Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs. The initial search of the data generated a total of 79 wolf proverbs: 41 Arabic proverbs and 38 English proverbs. However, after considering those having salient meanings in both languages, only 15 Arabic proverbs, and 12 English proverbs related to wolf were chosen for the analysis. Within most of these proverbs, wolf and sheep are mentioned together. That is, within 5 of Arabic wolf and 6 of English wolf proverbs, sheep is included. Only one Arabic and one English sheep proverbs do not include wolf name. This means that the total number of Arabic sheep proverbs is 6 whereas English sheep proverbs are 7 in total.

3.2. Data Analysis

This study is qualitative in nature. The data were analyzed using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and the Great Chain of Being (GCB) (Lakoff and Turner, 1989). The analysis focused on the mapping across the two domains: animals and human beings, and the conveyed meanings of the wolf and sheep proverbs.

Extracting those meanings is dependent on the explanation provided along with each animal proverb. To validate the meanings that are conveyed by English animal proverbs, a DCT containing a list of the collected English wolf and sheep proverbs was distributed to a sample of three English native speakers. Each individual within the sample has to provide the meaning conveyed with each animal name and the use of each proverb.

Analysis began with discussing and analyzing Arabic and English wolf proverbs, and then those containing sheep name. This was necessary to extract the underlying metaphorical meanings conveyed by each animal. Along with each Arabic proverb, its transcription and literal translation are provided. Also, the discussion of each English proverb is supported with one response provided by the native speakers who are used as a sample of this study. Then similarities between both languages regarding these meanings are also discussed.
4. Results and discussions

4.1. PEOPLE ARE WOLVES metaphor

Both languages use wolf in their proverbs to convey meanings about human beings. These meanings and proverbs are discussed in this section.

1. Wolves are oppressive/corrupts

In the Gospel of John, wolves are used to conceptualize people who often destroy God's plans for believers' lives. They often employ evil tactics to corrupt the lives of innocent people. Believers are not often equipped with evil tactics to protect them against the corruption of wolves, and so they leave it to God to fight their battle. This connotation of wolves is manifested in the following English proverbs:

- *Death of the wolves is the safety of the sheep.* (Oxford Dictionary)
- *Life of wolves is death to the lambs.* (Oxford Dictionary)

Both proverbs imply the same meaning. The death of oppressive and corrupt people is a protection of oppressed people, and similarly, their liberty is a death for weak and oppressed. Thus, if oppressive, tyrant or corrupts are allowed to do evil actions freely, innocent and weak people will suffer a lot. This explanation is also implied in the responses of the sample as follows:

- **R2:** "If the bad behaviors of oppressive and tyrant people are not restricted by more powerful authoritative people, weak people will be hurt". This response supports what have been mentioned about the danger of oppressors' bad actions. It demonstrates that weak people will suffer a lot if those people are not punished.

The predatory nature of wolves that is adopted by some people is also quoted in other English proverbs as the one below:

- *Man is to man a god; man is to man a wolf.* (Oxford Dictionary)

This is an ancient Latin proverb that explains the animosity nature that people exert against each other. There are two kinds of relationship between people as the proverb suggests: either an individual is good for another one, or he is a devil and oppressive one who acts inhumanly to others. Being good for others, people are described as gods, but being cruel, they are wolves in nature. This meaning is also assured by the following response provided by a native speaker respondent:

- **R1:** "People to each others are either good or devils".

All the English proverbs discussed above exert that, within any society, there are two types of people: oppressive (corrupts) and oppressed people. This is also exerted by the Arabic proverb which conceptualizes a society as a barn that has sheep and wolves. This proverb is cited as follows:
A barn, within it, wolves and lambs.

According to the explanation provided by the dictionary, in a barn (a society), there will often be oppress (corruption) and weakness. In other words, there will be oppressors and oppressed people, and often, there will be no protection of weak and oppressed people against corrupts whose cruelty is stemmed from the power they have or command. So, when authoritative and powerful people are themselves tyrants and corrupts, there will be no justice.

Another Arabic proverb that emphasizes the cruelty and corruption of powerful people is cited in the same dictionary as follows:

Corrupted them as a wolf corrupted the sheep when mingled with.

This proverb is used when talking about a corrupt person who corrupts the life of weaker people. This behavior is captured in the image of wolves slipping down into the sheepfold to frighten and kill the sheep. The same image of frightening and killing the sheep is used in the following English proverb:

Wolves rend sheep when the shepherd fails. (Oxford Dictionary)

The corruption that the wolf exercises on the sheep is represented in the word rend which is used here to exaggerate the way in which they frighten and kill the sheep. When their power is not eliminated by more powerful and authoritative people, the harm that tyrants will cause to others will be more than expected. This meaning is also assured by a respondent in such a way:

R1: "If not punished, corrupts will cause a lot of harm for others".

Again, this response delivers the same meaning. The actions of corrupts need to be eliminated by more powerful and authoritative people in order for weak to live peacefully.

Some people may have an unexpected reaction to the oppression exercised on them by their oppressors. Arabic culture assures the possibility of this reaction in the following proverb:

The dog got revenge on the wolf.

Within this proverb, there are two parties exemplified by two different animals. The first party is the oppressor exemplified in the wolf, and the
second is the oppressed connoted by the dog name. According to the explanation provided by the dictionary, when the second party (i.e. the dog) is oppressed, he may become more courageous and aggressive than expected to revenge for himself.

Within all Arabic and English proverbs discussed above, the semantic feature oppressive/ corrupt is mapped from the source domain wolf to the target domain human beings.

2. Wolves are deceitful

The fox is not the only animal that is viewed in different cultures as a deceitful animal. Wolves are also used to convey the same meaning. They are used to describe people who pretend to be kind, but they are evil and bad ones in reality. This type of people is likened to wolves in the following English proverb:

*A wolf in sheep's clothing. (Oxford Dictionary)*

This proverb is an idiomatic expression of Biblical origin which is used to describe people who adopt a role that totally contradicts their real bad nature. In English, this proverb is sometimes considered a warning of false people who may appear in sheep's clothing (i.e. as being innocent), but they are actually evil, and deceive people by their fabricated kind behaviors. This connotation is also delivered by the responses of the sample as follows:

*R2:* "Deceitful people are dangerous. They outwardly look kind, but inwardly, evil and full of hate."

This response reflects what people think of a person who is described as a wolf. This reflection is expressed by R2 who thinks that people who are connoted as wolves are deceitful, and this means that their actions do not express their bad intentions.

The same meaning is also connoted by the wolf name in a similar Arabic proverb. This proverb is cited in Majma' Al-Amthal as follows:

ذئب في مسك سخلة. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription:* dhi?bunn fi miskisakhlatinn

*Literal translation:* a wolf in a lamb's skin.

This proverb describes people who are evil but pretends to be kind and good ones for a specific agenda. This meaning is also implied in a similar Arabic proverb cited in the same dictionary as follows:

ذئب استنعم. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription:* dhi?bunn?istan?aja

*Literal translation:* a wolf became a lamb.
The word istan'a'ja (i.e. becomes a lamb) means that a person hides himself in a lamb’s skin. Similarly, deceitful people hide their bad intentions in their kind appearance through which they deceive others. These are not the only Arabic proverbs that use the wolf name to describe deceitful people. The following Arabic proverb also has the same meaning:

تحت جلد الضأن قلب الأذؤب. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription*: tahtajildiada’niqalbubi’i adh?ubi.

*Literal translation*: under the lamb’s skin is the heart of a wolf.

This proverb is spoken to those who deceive others. So, in their good appearance, they hide their evil and bad intentions. Another Arabic proverb that warns us not to be deceived by the good appearance and sayings of deceitful people is the following one:

الذئب يكنى أبا جعدة. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription*: adhi?bujukana aba ji’dah.

*Literal translation*: the wolf is called the father of the lamb.

In Arabic culture, people are often given certain address terms, one type of these address terms is to call someone " Abu….: father of….". One may be called by the name of his eldest son, his job, or sometimes certain attributes that he/she is known about. In the past, the Arabs used to call the wolf as "the father of the lamb", because he looks after it. The wolf is known by this agnomen despite the fact that he kills lambs. This proverb indicates that even the wolf has a peaceful nickname "father of the lamb", he still a wolf that preys the lamb. It is said to describe someone who looks nice and veracious but with malicious intent, and warns us not to be deceived by their appearance.

Deceitful people will always pretend that they are good and innocent till they reach their goals, and once they are able to get them, they will show their bad reality. This meaning is implied in the following Arabic proverb cited as:

كالذئب, اذا طلب هرب واذا تمكن وثب. (مجمع الأمثال)


*Literal translation*: as the wolf, if he is asked, he will escape, but if he is enabled, he will jump.

According to the dictionary, the wolf is a deceitful animal, if he is attacked, he will escape, and if he is given the chance to get what he wants, he will attack his prey. This situational behavior of wolf is used to connote deceitful people who will escape when their intentions are uncovered by others. But if they were able to deceive others by their good appearance, they will do their best to harm others and achieve their goals.
Within the English and Arabic proverbs discussed above, two versions of a deceitful person are involved. The first is his real bad personality which is exemplified by the use of the wolf name, and the false version, where he pretends to be innocent and kind, and which is implied in the use of the sheep and lamb names.

Other proverbs warn us to be aware and careful when dealing with wolves (i.e. deceitful people) in order not to be overtaken by their tricky actions. This warning is implied in the following English proverb:

*Who has a wolf for his mate, needs a dog for his man.* (Oxford Dictionary)

What this proverb connotes is that it is necessary for us to be careful when we deal with deceitful people or to be their friend; we have to be always ready by having more deceitful reactions for their actions. This meaning is adopted by the responses of the sample as follows:

**R1:** "Company with a cunning person needs you to be equipped with tricky actions to face his cunning".

R1’s response verifies the cunning feature of people connoted as wolves. It suggests the same meaning of being more cunning when dealing with cunning people.

The need for being aware and ready when dealing with deceitful or treacherous people is also confirmed in Arabic culture. This is implicitly pointed to in the following Arabic proverbs:

إذا ذكرت الذئب فأعد له العصا. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Literal translation:* if you call the wolf, prepare a stick for him.

إذا ذكرت الذئب فالتفت. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Literal translation:* if you call the wolf, turn around.

من خشي الذئب اعد كلبا. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription:* man khashiyaadhi?ba’?addakallbann.
*Literal translation:* who fears a wolf, sets a dog.

Moreover, some proverbs of both cultures emphasize that it is not enough for us to be aware when dealing with this type of people, but we also need to be more deceitful and treacherous than them. This is what the following English proverb intends to convey:

*Who keeps company with the wolf, will learn to howl.* (Oxford Dictionary)
This proverb simply means that we must adapt to the deceitful behaviors and customs of people we are dealing with. So, when they are deceitful like wolves, we have to be more deceitful than them. This meaning is also provided within the responses of the sample. This proverb is explained similarly by R1 as:

**R1:** "If people around you are all cunning and evil, you must be like them".

Even if we like or dislike it, we have to deceive others before they deceive us. So, we have to be merciless and selfish in order not to be overtaken by others. This meaning is also adopted by a similar Arabic proverb cited as:

من لم يكن ذئبا أكلته الذئاب. (مجمع الأمثال)

**Transcription:** man lam yakundhi?bannakalathuathi?abu.

**Literal translation:** who is not a wolf will be eaten by wolves.

This proverb means that being merciless and deceitful will protect us against those who are really deceitful and evil. Oppositely, those who are innocent and gentle will be injured by deceitful people. This is shown in the following English proverb:

*He that makes himself a sheep shall be eaten by the wolf.* (Oxford Dictionary)

Evil and cunning people will devour those who are good and innocent. If we are like a sheep in its innocence and kindness, we will be hurt by the crafty actions of others. To conclude, all Arabic and English proverbs discussed above use *wolf* as a source domain from which they map the semantics feature *deceitful* to the target domain *human beings*.

### 3. Wolves are unreliable

Being a corrupt, evil and deceitful animal, the wolf is not trusted by other animals. In the animal world, wolves cannot be used to guard sheep. Since they are interested in these animals, they will always be interested in how they can get them not how they can protect them. Similar to animals, some people cannot be set for some tasks. This type of people is conceptualized in the following English proverbs through the use of the wolf name:

To set the wolf to keep the sheep. (Oxford Dictionary)

*It's a foolish sheep that makes the wolf his confessor.* (Oxford Dictionary)

What the proverbs point to is that it is silly to set an unreliable person to a task by which they will get an advantage. Even when he is an experienced and skillful person, you will always feel uncomfortable of his actions. This meaning is also verified by the sample of the study as follows:
R2: "Unreliable people should not be set for a task where they can exploit sources under their command".

What this response suggests is that some people are unreliable to the extent that they should not be set for tasks where they have a benefit. So, we have to be more cautious if we need to use such people.

Setting unreliable people for a specific task needs you to watch them carefully since they will always exploit every chance for their benefit. Careless makes thieves, and this warning is introduced to those who use unreliable people in the following English proverb:

*Ill herds make fat wolves.* (Oxford Dictionary)

This proverb signifies that careless authoritative people give unreliable employees occasion to steal. This is also verified by the responses of the sample as follows:

R2: "Careless encourage robbery, especially when the person in charge is unreliable".

Unreliable people are wolves metaphor is also manifested in Arabic culture. This metaphor is used in Arabic proverbs as in the one below:

من استرعى الذئب ظلم. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription:* man istarēaadhiʔbaTHalam

*Literal translation:* who sets a wolf to herd sheep, oppresses.

Literally speaking, the proverb means that it is not a good idea to set a wolf to guard your sheep since you will oppress the sheep and the wolf. You will oppress the sheep since they will be eaten by the deceitful wolf, and you will also oppress the wolf when you assign him to a task that he is not suitable for. Figuratively speaking, this proverb is spoken to those who entrust unreliable people.

Within these proverbs, the semantic feature *unreliable* is mapped from the source domain *wolf* to the target domain *humans*.

4. Wolves are bad companions

Some animals are used to connote bad companions; among these are fox and wolf. This is highlighted in the following proverb:

*The wolf and fox are both of one counsel.* (Oxford Dictionary)

This proverb is often used to companions who have the same evil deeds and thoughts. This is what R2 suggests in his response. R2 illustrates the use of wolf and fox in this proverb as referring to bad friends or companions who share the same ill features and morals as follows:

R2: "Bad friends often have the same bad morals and deeds, so they are of the same counsel".
Bad companions are wolves metaphor is also manifested in Arabic culture. This can be found in the following Arabic proverb:

الذئب للضبع. (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription:* adhi?bulidab'i.

*Literal translation:* the wolf is for the hyena

This proverb is spoken to bad companions. Within it and all the proverbs discussed above, the wolf is used as a bad companion who has the same bad nature as other privateers. Thus, the semantic feature *bad company* is mapped from the source domain *wolf* to the target domain *human beings*.

4.2. PEOPLE ARE SHEEP metaphor

Like wolf, sheep is used by the proverbs of both languages to describe humans. These proverbs and the meanings they convey are analyzed below.

1. Sheep are innocent/ pure

When compared to animals that are described as deceitful such as wolves, sheep and lambs are visualized as innocent and pure. This is why when we describe a deceitful person who is bad and evil in reality we say that he seems as a sheep or lamb, that is, they tend to look kind and innocent. This visualization is obtained in the previously mentioned proverb by using these two animals:

*Wolf in sheep's clothing.* *(Oxford Dictionary)*

As illustrated earlier, this proverb describes a pretender who is described using two different animals: the wolf which expresses the real personality of this person as being deceitful and who pretends to look friendly, kind and innocent as a sheep. The same meaning is also connoted by the wolf name in the following Arabic proverbs discussed earlier.

*ذئب في مسك سخلة.* (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription:* dhi?buli?n fi miskisakhlatinn

*Literal translation:* a wolf in a lamb's skin.

*ذئب استنعت.* (مجمع الأمثال)

*Transcription:* dhi?buli?citan?aja

*Literal translation:* a wolf became a lamb.

*تحت جلد الضأن قلب الأذؤب.* (مجمع الأمثال)


*Literal translation:* under the lamb’s skin is the heart of a wolf.

These three proverbs mentioned earlier imply the same meaning and use the same animals to deliver this meanings. Wolf is a person who is actually
evil and bad but deceives other by trying to look innocent, pure and kind as a lamb.

Sheep/lamb are used in the above-mentioned Arabic and English proverbs to describe human beings as innocent/pure.

2. Sheep are weak and oppressed

When compared to other animals, sheep are described as weak animals that, due to their weakness, are oppressed by wild animals. This refers to the fact that wild animals are stronger than sheep as a domestic animal. This fact is also manifested in the proverbs of both languages under analysis such as the previously-mentioned English proverbs below:

Death of the wolves is the safety of the sheep. (Oxford Dictionary)
Life of wolves is death to the lambs. (Oxford Dictionary)

One of the wild animals that is often put in comparison with sheep as their oppressors is the wolf. This proverb uses both animals to connote oppressors and oppressed people. Both proverbs focus on two situations: the death of oppressive and corrupt people is a protection of oppressed people, and similarly, their liberty is the death of weak and oppressed.

These are not the only English proverbs that obtain the oppressor-oppressed relationship through wolf-sheep/lamb relation. This relationship is used in other proverbs mentioned previously in the analysis of wolf proverbs, among these is:

Wolves rend sheep when the shepherd fails. (Oxford Dictionary)

This proverb describes the suffering of weak and oppressed people who will never get rid of the cruelty of their oppressors, especially when those are powerful and authoritative ones who cannot be punished for their bad and evil actions.

This relationship is also focused upon in Arabic proverbs. When describing the cruelty of someone exercised on weak people, the following proverb discussed earlier is usually used:

عاث فيهم عيث الذئاب يلتبسن بالغنم. (مجمع الأمثال)

Transcription:‘athaḥifihim‘aithaadhiʔabiyaaltabisnabilghanami.
Literal translation: corrupted them as a wolf corrupted the sheep when mingled with.

As mentioned in the analysis of wolf proverbs, a society where oppressors and oppressed exist is described in the image of a barn where wolves and sheep exist. This society is described in the following Arabic proverb mentioned earlier:

وشيعة فيها ذئاب ونقد. (مجمع الأمثال)
Other proverbs warn us not to be weak or show our weakness to those people in order not to give them a chance to hurt us more. This meaning exists in the English proverb below:

*He that makes himself a sheep shall be eaten by the wolf.* (Oxford Dictionary)

In the proverbs of both languages, *sheep/lamb* are used to transmit the semantic features *weak and oppressed* to the target domain *human beings*.

3. Sheep are naïve/foolish

Sheep is used in English culture to describe people as naïve or foolish. This use is apparent in the following English proverb:

*It’s a foolish sheep that makes the wolf his confessor.* (Oxford Dictionary)

People are considered naïve and foolish when they are reliant on people that can never be reliable or entrusted. This situation is captured in the image of a foolish sheep that makes the wolf its confessor. Wolf can never be trusted when the matter is related to sheep, so the naïve sheep is the one which only entrust the wolf. The sample of the study uses this meaning in its responses as follows:

**R3**: “People will entrust an unreliable or untrustworthy person only if they are foolish”.

R3’s response emphasizes the same connotation. Deceitful people are wolves who can never be trusted, and if someone trusted them, he will be no more than a foolish person. Describing someone as foolish through using sheep is obtained in the following English proverb:

*To cast sheep’s eye at (upon).* (Oxford Dictionary)

This proverb is often used when we describe someone who looks at someone or something in a foolish way. This is what R1 suggests in his response below:

**R1**: “This expression is used when talking about those that give adoring and foolish look to someone or something”.

In Arabic culture, foolish people who follow others even if they were wrong are visualized as sheep in the following Arabic proverb:


**Literal translation:** Oh sheep, where are you going? It said: to be fleeced with the fleeced sheep.
This proverb refers to foolish people who follow others or their groups without knowing what they are doing and what will happen to them. This meaning is achieved by using the image of a sheep that goes with other sheep going to be fleeced.

The semantic feature naïve/foolish is mapped from the source domain sheep to the target domain humans by the above-mentioned proverbs.

5. Conclusion

The study explored the underlying metaphorical meanings conveyed with wolf and sheep concepts in Arabic and English proverbs. The results of this study go in line with the CMT (1980) theory. That is, it has been pointed out that PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor is verified in both languages by their use of some animal names in their proverbs. Wolf is used to convey the meanings oppressive/corrupt, deceitful, unreliable and bad companions in English proverbs (Dobrovolskij and Piirainen, 2005) as well as in Arabic proverbs. Sheep, on the other hand, is used to describe people as innocent/pure, weak and oppressed, and naïve/foolish in Arabic (Rashid et al., 2012) and English proverbs. This means that these two animals are used saliently in the proverbs of both languages though they are related to two different cultures. This finding goes in line with a number of comparative studies on animal metaphor, to mention but a few Yusuf (1997), Fontecha and Catalan (2003), Estaji and Nakhavali (2011), Rashid et al. (2012), Sameer (2016) and others.

The results of this study also go in line the GCB (1989) framework in two ways. First, humans, as put on a higher level on the chain, possess all the features that other creatures put at the lower levels have. This is assured by the use of some animals such as wolf and sheep to describe people. The relation between people is also generated by the relation between some animals that are put on different levels on the chain. For example, the relation oppressor-oppressed is generated by wolf-sheep. Since wolf is put at a higher level on the chain to sheep because it is stronger, it is often used to connote oppressors while sheep is used for oppressed and weak people.

In light of the results revealed by this study, it is recommended that more research and studies related to animal metaphor in Arabic and English proverbs should be conducted. Researchers can investigate the similarities and differences between Arabic and English regarding animals that have not been investigated yet. Also, other domains of language or culture can also be investigated. For example, future research on animal metaphor may compare Arabic and English use of animals in their poetry or other literary works such as plays or novels that use animals to describe people life. So, two literary
works of two Arab and English novelists or poets may be compared regarding their use of some animals to convey meanings about human beings. This type of research may familiarize learners of a foreign language with the elements of its culture such as the meanings of expressions that are used figuratively such as animal images in idiomatic expressions and proverbs. So, it is suggested that the findings of this type of research should be taken into consideration in curriculum and syllabus preparation.

References