Connotations of Animal Metaphors in the Jordanian Context

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. This paper examines the connotations of the most common ten animal metaphors in the Jordanian context as perceived by Jordanian Arabic speakers.

Methods. The data were collected in three stages. First, the principal researcher shared a post on his Facebook account in which he asked his Jordanian-Arabic speaking virtual friends to report in a comment the most common animal metaphors they use. The researchers compiled 115 comments/responses with 1106 animal metaphor tokens. Second, the received tokens were used to identify the most common animal metaphors. Third, in order to identify the set of connotations of each animal metaphor, the researchers distributed a questionnaire to 137 (43 males and 94 females) students at The University of Jordan in which the respondents were asked to report when each of them tends to use each animal metaphor and for what connotations. Based on the received responses, a preliminary list of connotations was prepared. Finally, the proposed connotations were subjected to a validation process by two Jordanian-Arabic speaking linguists from the Department of English at the University of Jordan. Most of their judgments were compatible with those of the researchers and when there was an overlap, amendments were made to amalgamate the connotations together.

Results. The findings show that the ten most common animal metaphors in the Jordanian context are (1) X IS A MONKEY, (2) X IS A DONKEY, (3) X IS A COW, (4) X IS A SNAKE, (5) X IS A DOG, (6) X IS A PIG, (7) X IS A BEAR, (8) X IS A DUCK, (9) X IS AN OWL, and (10) X IS A DEER. They have a total of 39 connotations. X IS A MONKEY is used to convey five connotations, the most common of which is hyperactivity. As for X IS A DONKEY, it has four connotations with stupidity being its most common connotation. X IS A COW has six connotations and it is mainly associated with obesity, especially when referring to females. X IS A SNAKE connotes being toxic and deceitful. With regard to X IS A DOG, it is associated mostly with ill-mannerisms. X IS A PIG has three connotations and it is mostly linked with being deceitful. As for X IS A BEAR, it has four connotations with its most frequent connotation being fat. X IS A DUCK has three connotations and it is associated mostly with being pretty with a beautiful body. X IS AN OWL has three connotations and it is linked mostly with being pessimistic. Finally, X IS A DEER has three connotations with being characterized by beauty as its most common connotation.

Conclusions. The study concludes that animal metaphors are culturally loaded and that the environment we live in shapes the way we view animals and the way we use them metaphorically.

Key words: Animal metaphors, Arabic, cognitive linguistics, culture, metaphor, semantics.
Introduction

Ever since the beginning of the universe, human beings and animals co-existed and shared this one planet called earth. Accordingly, humans came into contact with animals and used them as (1) pets, e.g., cats and dogs, (2) guards, e.g., certain types of dogs like German Shephard, (3) entertainers in circuses, e.g., monkeys, dolphins, and bears, (4) laboratory experiment subjects, e.g., mice and rabbits, and (5) a source of food, among others. This coexistence led people to refer to and address each other in communications using animal names and/or traits for different goals and intentions whether complimentarily or non-complimentarily (Leach, 1964). In the words of Kövecses (2002: 124), “much of human behavior seems to be metaphorically understood in terms of animal behavior”. Eventually, this has led to the rise of the conceptual metaphors ‘HUMANS ARE ANIMALS’ and ‘HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR’. The use of animal-based conceptual metaphors is universal and thus understanding them is essential for human beings to realize who they are and what kind of a world they live in (Kövecses, 2002). However, particular animals may be perceived differently by different people. Thus, many such metaphors and their related linguistic expressions or realizations may vary from one culture to another. For instance, while an ‘owl’ in English symbolizes wisdom, it symbolizes pessimism in Arabic and is generally regarded as a sign of bad omen. In this context, it is in the interest of translators, teachers and learners of second and foreign languages if studies are conducted to explore the connotations and metaphorical uses of animals in different languages and cultures. This is believed to contribute to fostering communication and avoiding subsequent misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. In light of this, the purpose of this paper is to promote understanding of animal metaphors in the Arab culture, particularly in the Jordanian context, by answering the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the ten most commonly used animal metaphors in the Jordanian context among university students?

RQ 2: What are the connotations of each usage?

For a learner of a certain language to effectively communicate with native speakers of that language, he/she does not just need to master
the formal and grammatical rules of that language, but to also develop competence of the speaking norms and conventions of language use that are used and accepted in it. An obstacle that learners of another language often experience is the transfer of norms of their native language because of not being fully acquainted with the rules of the language they are learning. The communication is more likely to proceed smoothly when the norms of both L1 and L2 are similar, but if there are differences, serious communication breakdowns may result. Consequently, and in an attempt to foster communication and minimize communication breakdowns, several studies examined, for example, the realizations of speech acts to see whether they are universal or language-specific (e.g. Rabab’ah & Al-Hawamdeh, 2020; Hamdan & Mahadin, 2021; Hamdan & Sayyed, 2022). Other studies focused on the communicative and pragmatic functions of discourse markers and idiomatic expressions (Jarrah, Alghazo & Al Salem, 2019; Hamdan & Abu Rumman, 2020; Hamdan, 2021; Hamdan, 2022; Hamdan & Hammouri, 2022, among others). One area that still awaits more research is metaphors, especially animal metaphors. Consequently, the study reported here aims to fill this gap by examining animal metaphors in JA.

In light of the aforementioned, studying animal metaphors and unveiling their cognitive basis is now due. In fact, a comprehensive review of metaphor development literature indicates that there is ample evidence suggesting that young children develop early conceptual associations and produce what is likely to be referred to as metaphorical expressions. For instance, Gentner (1988: 516) reported about “a two-year old boy who said that a crescent moon was bent like a banana”. While examining Hamdan and Hamdan’s (2020) paper and the data upon which it was based, we found similar evidence of early production of metaphors in Jordanian Arabic-speaking children. For instance, on one occasion, a child named Juje while interacting with his uncle, called him ‘he-goat’ to express his anger. This was produced at the age of 2;2,10. On another occasion, while talking to his grandma, Juje told her that he wanted to eat her. When she asked for the reason, he responded, “I can do what I want because I am a lion”. This was produced at the age 1;2,11. It seems that Juje’s use of ‘he-goat’ as a swear word implies his knowledge that this animal connotes lack of understanding. In the same vein, it seems that his use of lion implies his understanding that the king of the jungle is strong and brave.
In addition to having a cognitive basis, metaphors are also culturally motivated. Such metaphors reflect, in a sense, the attitudes and beliefs held by a particular community towards certain animal species, which consequently could lead them to vary across cultures, times and spaces (Rodriguez, 2009: 94). “This cultural dimension of animal metaphors makes them suitable vehicles for the transmission and perpetuation of social beliefs for the benefit of a particular speech community” (ibid: 94).

Before proceeding with the presentation and for the readers’ convenience, an overview of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is due.

**Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth, CMT) is a pioneering framework that changed the way we understand language and perceive the world around us. In CMT, the linguistic behavior of speakers of a certain language is constrained by the way they experience and perceive the world around them and the way they conceptualize and construe such experiences in their minds (Hans-Jörg, 2011). In addition, CMT postulates that metaphors are not just ornamental stylistic devices that speakers and writers use to achieve an artistic effect, but also a conceptual tool that humans employ to structure, re-structure and create realities. Metaphors are not just an aspect of language as some might think but are also a fundamental part of our thoughts and actions as our “ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003: 4). Through using metaphors, we attempt to understand one concept or thing, usually more complex and harder to define, in terms of another concept that is more simplex by highlighting the shared similarities that exist between the two. In CMT theorizing, through using a metaphor we create an interaction between a source domain and a target domain. The former is usually more concrete while the latter is usually more abstract. Further, the ‘target domain’ is structured, at least in part, similarly to the ‘source domain’ through unidirectional systematic metaphorical mappings that are established between them automatically and unconsciously. A relevant example in our case is the concept ‘HUMANS’ and the conceptual metaphor ‘HUMANS ARE
ANIMALS’. In this case, the more complex target domain ‘HUMANS’ is viewed in terms of the simpler concept ‘ANIMALS’ to facilitate understanding through establishing a set of systematic correspondences between the two, i.e., metaphorical mappings.

**Literature Review**

Examining the connotations and metaphorical uses of animals has attracted scholarly attention over the years. This growing interest motivated scholars to examine animal metaphors in their respective languages with a view to comparing and contrasting them with those found in other languages (Halupka-Resˇetar & Radic, 2003; Al Jallad, 2012; Rashid, Pabiyah & Nurul, 2012; Sommer & Sommer, 2015).

In the words of Kellert (1997):

> Animals seem to play a dominant role in the symbolic value of nature. This tendency may stem from our habit of imputing humanlike feelings and thoughts to these creatures. As Elizabeth Lawrence suggests: “The human need for metaphoric expression finds its greatest fulfillment through reference to the animal kingdom. No other realm offers such vivid expression of symbolic concepts. It is remarkable to contemplate the paucity of other categories for conceptual reference, so preeminent, widespread and enduring is the habit of symbolizing in terms of animals”.

In one of the earliest studies on animal metaphors, Halupka-Resˇetar and Radic (2003) investigated the metaphorical/vocative uses of animal names to address people in Serbian, both abusively and affectionately as this can be an indicator that helps speakers thereby to express their attitudes towards their addressees. They collected their data through a survey that was completed by some 100 university students of linguistics. In their survey, the students were given a questionnaire containing 40 animal names and were asked (1) to decide if they would use a given animal name to address a male or a female person, or both, (2) to determine if they would use the name abusively or affectionately, (3) to say how frequently they would use the name, (4) to give the morphosyntactic structure in which they would use the name, and (5) to describe a concrete situation in which they would use the name. The findings of their study (ibid: 1900) revealed that animal vocatives
are “usually used as human invectives, although a certain number of vocatives (mostly diminutives) are used to express affection”. Further, it was reported that animal names in Serbian were more frequently used as “terms of abuse than as terms of endearment. In invective usage, the motivation for the metaphoric transfer of meaning is in the size, eating habits, character and/or intelligence of the addressee”.

In another interesting study, Al Jallad (2012) provided a thorough description of animal symbolism in the Mu’allaqah of Antarah. The researcher pointed out that in pre-Islamic life, animals played a key role because they “fulfilled a wide variety of functions that made them simply indispensable”. Rodrigues (cited in Al Jallad 2012: 70) noted that “pre-Islamic Arabs [even] named their children after animals as protective talismans to protect them against magical spills or misfortunes caused by the evil eye”. For example, some were named kalb ‘dog’, hirrah ‘kitten’ and so on. In addition, Al Jallad (2012) posited that some animals such as horses, lions, and camels along with others were essentially symbols reflecting pre-Islamic values, beliefs, norms and traditions:

*The lion, for instance, was a symbol of strength, bravery, courage, and force, while the falcon stood for nobility, pride, and faithfulness. The wolf symbolized astuteness and resourcefulness* (Al Jallad, 2012: 71).

Sommor and Sommor (2015) examined the use of nonhuman animals as metaphors for human personality characteristics. The study relied on the results of three earlier studies by the same researchers. In the first of the three, 51 students rated gender, age, and favorableness of 36 mammal names when applied metaphorically to a person. In the second, the researchers searched about 14 dictionaries of colloquial English and three dictionaries of animal phrases to pinpoint the “zoomorphic” use of the examined 36 animal species. Zoomorphism is assigning animal characteristics to humans. An example of Zoomorphism is: My neighbor eats like a horse. In the third study, 28 students rated the “zoomorphic use of non-mammalian species. According to the researchers, most of the animal metaphors that are used to describe humans are negative and uncomplimentary and that this reflects the elevated image or position that human beings set to themselves. The researchers also reported the lack of zoomorphs for personality qualities like neuroticism and cruelty.
While examining metaphors, especially those related to body parts and emotions, received great scholarly attention in the Arab world and in Jordan in particular (see Zibin & Hamdan, 2019; Zibin, 2021; Zibin, Altakhaineh & Hamdan, 2022 among others), more emphasis needs to be dedicated to animal metaphors.

In a very relevant and recent study, Al Ghoweri, Yasin, and Al-Saudi (2021), examined the connotations of 11 animal names in JA, namely, donkey, bird, rabbit, dove, sheep, duck, dog, horse, cat, parrot and goat with a view to finding the positive and negative connotations that they may have. They also examined if the connotations of these animals are similar to those reported in ʔal wašiːt Dictionary and ʔal dʒaːmiʕ Dictionary. To this end, they distributed an open-ended questionnaire that consisted of 11 sentences written in JA with each sentence including one of the 11 animal names. The researchers asked 20 Jordanian BA English majors to mention the connotations of these animals and to state whether they are positive or negative. They compared the connotations reported by the subjects with those found in the two consulted dictionaries. The findings revealed that some of the connotations of pet expressions in JA are similar to those cited in the two dictionaries such as parrot which connotes repeating the words of others (ibid: 617). Further, the researchers reported that bird in the two dictionaries connotes light things and melodious sounds, which is also the case in JA (ibid: 617). The researchers, however, posited that “the connotations of some pet expressions used in JA differ from those in the dictionaries. For example, the word donkey in ʔal wašiːt Dictionary connotes men with bad reputation or loud voices. In contrast, donkey in JA is used to connote stupidity (ibid: 617).

The study reported here is different from Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021) in that our choice of animal metaphors is not random, but based on introspection since the principal researcher asked his virtual Facebook friends to report to him the ten most commonly animal names they are likely to use in their casual conversations when they refer to human beings, while the choice or selection of animal names in Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021) is based on the personal observation of the lead researcher as native speakers of JA (ibid: 614). Second, the study at hand employs CMT and it examines the connotations of some animal metaphors that were not examined in Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021). The animal metaphors that are absent in Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021) are
A HUMAN IS A MONKEY, HUMAN IS COW, HUMAN IS A SNAKE, HUMAN IS A PIG, HUMAN IS A BEAR, HUMAN IS AN OWL and HUMAN IS A DEER. Finally, the current study reports the findings of a large scale case study whose data are provided by 115 university students compared with 20 in Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021).

Data Collection and Methodology

The data were collected in three stages. For the reader’s convenience, each stage is introduced under a separate subheading.

Stage one
To identify the most common animal metaphors used by speakers of JA, the principal researcher first shared a post on his Facebook account in which he asked his Jordanian Arabic-speaking virtual friends to report in a comment the ten most common animal names they often use when interacting with their friends whether face-to-face or online. Put differently, the researcher indirectly asked them to report the ten most used animal metaphors. Since when a person calls another by the name of an animal, here, this speaker is metaphorically likening the interlocutor to the animal and thus using the conceptual metaphor HUMAN IS ANIMAL. Instead of repeating the word human, the researchers will from now on replace it with X. In actuality, 115 virtual friends (henceforth respondents) reported the animal metaphors they often use in their daily life. 98 of the respondents reported ten animal names each, while six reported nine each and finally nine reported eight each. If these comments are translated into numbers, one can easily report that a total of 1106 animal metaphor tokens were received (98*10+6*9+9*8).

Based on the compiled comments/responses, the researchers were able to identify the most common animal names, actually metaphors (e.g. I call x a donkey) by dividing the number of occurrences of each animal name metaphor by the total number of tokens, i.e., 1106. Consequently, the top ten metaphors that were introspectively identified by the 115 respondents were as follows:

1. [X IS A MONKEY] (n=825)
2. [X IS A DONKEY] (n=790)
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3. [X IS A COW] (n=737)
4. [X IS A SNAKE] (n=719)
5. [X IS A DOG] (n=685)
6. [X IS A PIG] (n=643)
7. [X IS A BEAR] (n=610)
8. [X IS A DUCK] (n=596)
9. [X IS AN OWL] (n=570)
10. [X IS A DEER] (n=552)

Further details on the quantification of the targeted animal metaphors are provided in table 1 in the next section.

Stage 2
To identify the set of connotations of each of the ten commonly used animal metaphors (henceforth, data set (2)), the researchers once again resorted to introspection. In particular, the researchers distributed a questionnaire to students at the University of Jordan (UoJ) in which they were asked to write down the connotations of each one of the metaphors along with illustrative examples. By connotations, we mean the use of a word to mean different associations other than its literal meaning. Thus, for instance, when it is said that X is a monkey, this may not mean that X is the literal animal, but may instead mean, metaphorically speaking, that X shares some qualities with monkeys such as being hyperactive. Thus, the subjects were asked to report when they use each metaphor and to connote what. The number of students who took part in this task was 137 (43 males and 94 females). Males are underrepresented since they are a minority in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at UoJ, and, thus, gender differences are not examined in this study.

Stage 3
The researchers analyzed the subjects’ answers thoroughly and were then able to develop a preliminary set of connotation categories related to each animal metaphor with a total of 42 for the ten animals’ metaphors under examination. The proposed set of connotations was then subjected to a validation process by a panel consisting of two linguists from the Department of English at the University of Jordan whose native language is Jordanian Arabic. They were asked to review each connotation as reported by the respondents and recognized
by the researchers with a view to determining the validity of the proposed connotations that each animal name conveys. Most of their judgments were compatible with those of the researchers. However, they noted that some functions were overlapping suggesting more appropriate replacements. For example, instead of having the three separate connotations for X IS A SNAKE in the proposed set which were namely (1) double faced, (2) untrustworthy, and (3) deceitful, the panel suggested amalgamating them all into one connotation, i.e., untrustworthy. A similar comment applied to two of the connotations for X IS A MONKEY. The first one was hyperactive while the second was naughty and playful. The panel suggested that they be treated as one, hyperactive. After taking the comments of the panel into account, the total number of connotations for the selected animal metaphors dropped to 39.

Further details on the number and percentage of occurrence of the 10 most commonly used animal metaphors along with the overall number of connotation tokens associated with each are available in table 1.

Results and Discussion
The results of this study are presented and discussed in correspondence with the research questions they pertain to.

The Most Common Animal Names and Metaphors in the Jordanian Context
The findings presented in table 1 below show that the ten most commonly used animal metaphors in the Jordanian context based on data set 1 are: (1) X IS A MONKEY, (2) X IS A DONKEY, (3) X IS A COW, (4) X IS A SNAKE, (5) X IS A DOG, (6) X IS A PIG, (7) X IS A BEAR, (8) X IS A DUCK, (9) X IS AN OWL, and (10) X IS A DEER.

A glance at table 1 shows that monkey is the most commonly used source domain of all animal metaphors, where humans, as a target domain, are compared with animals, as a source domain, based on a characteristic or multiple characteristics that they both have. It is not exactly clear why monkeys topped the list (n=825). The researchers
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posit that it could be the case that monkeys are the closest to human beings in terms of physical structure and appearance.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Animal Metaphors</th>
<th>No. and % of occurrences of animal metaphor tokens</th>
<th>No. of connotations associated with each animal metaphor</th>
<th>Total No. of occurrences of tokens subsumed under each connotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>X IS A MONKEY</td>
<td>825 75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>X IS A DONKEY</td>
<td>790 71</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>X IS A COW</td>
<td>737 67</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>X IS A SNAKE</td>
<td>719 65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>X IS A DOG</td>
<td>685 62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>X IS A PIG</td>
<td>643 58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>X IS A BEAR</td>
<td>610 55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>X IS A DUCK</td>
<td>596 54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>X IS AN OWL</td>
<td>570 52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>X IS A DEER</td>
<td>552 50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Connotations of the Most common 10 Animal Metaphors and the Contexts in Which They are Used

This section provides a detailed account of each animal metaphor in table 1 along with its connotations. For the readers’ convenience, each animal metaphor is addressed thoroughly under a separate subheading.

**X IS A MONKEY**

Analysis of the data shows that this animal metaphor has five connotations, an overview of each along with illustrative examples will follow in separate subheadings. For the readers’ convenience, illustrative examples are presented at two levels: (1) Arabic script and (2) English glossing. Table 2 shows the connotations of this metaphor along with the number and percentage of their related tokens.

1. **Hyperactivity**

A glance at table 2 shows that the most cited connotation for X IS A MONKEY is being hyperactive and thus never rests in a particular place or position but for a short while. The subjects reported that this connotative use is generally employed when little children are described
as monkeys, a usage that is also common in English. However, it is also used to refer to adults, especially entrepreneurs and leaders, technophiles and hackers who are capable of doing unusual things. Below are illustrative examples:

1. اغلب الوقت لما الحدا يكون كتير حركة وما يتعب بحكيله قرد وبستخدمها أكثر لوصف الأطفال
   ‘I use it most of the time when someone is hyperactive, moving a lot without being tired; I also use it more often to describe children’.

2. بس أحكي لصاحباتي عن مدير قسم المبيعات بالشركة انه قرد بكون قصدي انه بخلق الشغل خلق من ولا شي
   ‘When I tell my coworkers that the head of our sales’ department is a monkey, I mean he always generates leads and sales from scratch’.

3. لما أطلب من حد شي من الإنترنت ويطلعه بسرعة بحكي عنه قرد يعني فظيع بتطليع المعلومات على الإنترنت
   ‘When I ask a person to find me something on the Internet and he/she succeed in finding it quickly, I call him/her ‘monkey’ to mean they are geeks of the Internet.

   In this context, a common metaphorical expression that people often use when they refer to a person showing negative hyperactivity is بتقردن ‘act like a monkey’. So, when someone wants another person to calm down or to stop moving around for no obvious purpose, he/she may say لا تتقردن (literally stop acting like a monkey) ‘stop it! You are driving me nuts.’

### Table 2
**Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS A MONKEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ugliness</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Hairiness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Endearment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Ugliness

While monkeys are viewed favorably by some as cute and adorable creatures, they are regarded by some as ugly. To account for
this use, one cannot help but refer back to folk tales, particularly to two interesting proverbs that are widely used in Jordan and probably in many Arab countries. The first one reads: 

القرد بعين أمه غزال

ʔilgird biʕeːn ʔimmu ʁazaːl ‘The monkey is a gazelle in the eyes of his mother’. In other words, a mother always sees her son flawless and handsome even if to others he/she looks ugly and full of flaws. The second one is directed to a spouse who marries an ugly partner for their wealth but to discover later that money has vanished and the ugly spouse has remained. The saying reads: 

يا ماخذ القرد على ماله بكرا بروح المال وبظل القرد على حاله

jaː maːχið ʔilgird ʕalaː maːlu bukra biruːh ʔilmaːl w biðal ʔilgird ʕalaː haːlu. As can be seen from the previous proverbs, a monkey in the Arab culture may represent ugliness, while a gazelle unequivocally represents beauty.

Below is an illustrative example from the data:

(4) القرد دليل على الفقاحة

‘Monkey represents ugliness’

3. Fitness

While it may seem strange at first, but in the Jordanian context, a monkey is also viewed as a sign of fitness and recovery as in:

(5) نستخدمها لنوصف حالتنا خاصة بعد مرض وخمول فبس حدا يتطمن علينا بنحكيله الحمدلله هيني زي ما إنتِ شايف قردة ما في شي

‘We use it to describe our health state after being sick and tired, so when someone checks on us, we say: Thanks God, apparently, I am as fit as a monkey; there is nothing wrong’.

Thus, in order to calm others or to assure them that someone has recovered from an illness, the speaker may describe the recoveree as ‘monkey’ to indicate that he/she is in good shape, back to normal and is able to move comfortably and energetically.

4. Hairiness

The fourth most common use of monkey when addressing humans is related to the fact that a monkey has a lot of hair on its body. A respondent says:

(6) نستخدم قرد أو غوريلا للشخص اللي كله شعر

‘I use monkey or gorilla for a hairy person’.
5. Endearment

While ‘monkey’ can be regarded as an obscene swear word especially when it is said to a stranger, it is totally tolerable with close friends and may in fact be used to show intimacy. It, in other words, shows that the interlocutors’ relationship is strong and intimate enough to enable them to use terms that may not be tolerable or acceptable with strangers as in:

(7) بستعملها للمزح والتحبب زي لما أحكي لصاحبيي بحبك يا قردة

‘I use it to show endearment as when I tell my female friend: I love you monkey’.

Before we conclude this subsection, it is worth noting that while more than half of the comments focused on hyperactivity as a dominant descriptor of a monkey, 28 percent highlighted ugliness and 11 percent fitness. The last two connotations, hairiness and endearment, were insignificant as each had the weight of two percent, and thus may be ignored.

**X IS A DONKEY**

Table 3 shows that this animal metaphor has 4 connotation categories, namely, stupidity, tirelessness, ugliness and endearment.

**Table 3**

*Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS A DONKEY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation category</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Stupidity</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tirelessness</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ugliness particularly in voice</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Endearment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the study at hand yield support to Al Ghoweri et al. (2021) suggestion that stupidity is the most common connotation for X IS A DONKEY. Further, while only five percent of participants in Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021) reported a positive connotation for donkey, 25 percent of the responses in our study suggested a positive trait for this animal with regard to labor and work.
Below is an overview of each connotation along with illustrative examples.

1. Stupidity

Around two thirds of the responses indicated that describing a person as a donkey mostly denotes stupidity and lack of intelligence.

Most of donkey’s connotations are negative and are usually used to refer to someone who lacks intelligence or who is slow in comprehension. For instance, when someone asks, say, X to do something and X does not do it as required, the speaker will impatiently say: Are you a donkey? You don’t understand? I have already told you how to do it’.

It is interesting to note here, that while in Arabic, donkey symbolizes stupidity and thus a stupid person may be described as a donkey-brain, in English, the term bird-brain rather than donkey-brain is used. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, a bird-brain “is someone who is silly or stupid”.

2. Tirelessness

While most of donkey’s connotations are negative, it is uncommon to hear people use donkey for a positive trait, particularly being able to do hard work without complaining or stopping. This usage is often associated with talking about work and it is in a sense close in meaning to workaholic though not identical. When a person wants to commend someone for his hard-work in front of others or recommend someone to others, he/she may describe him/her as حمار شغل ُحمار شغل ‘tireless worker’ as in:

While in Arabic, the word donkey is used in work context to mean hard-worker, in English, the term ‘workhorse’ is used. According to Cambridge Dictionary, a workhorse is “someone who works very hard or who works very long hours”.

© Hamdan J. Hady, Al-Madanat Hanan, & Hamdan J. Wael
3. **Ugliness particularly in voice**

The third most common connotation for donkey is to denote ugliness in voice. Unlike monkeys that denote just physical appearance ugliness, a donkey’s sound, also known as bray, is considered ugly in the Arab and Islamic culture. In the holy book of Qur’an, God Almighty says:

وَٱقۡصِدۡ فِي مَشۡيِكَ وَٱغۡضُضۡ مِن صَوۡتِكَۚ إِنَّ أَنكَرَ ٱلأَۡصۡوَٰتِ لَصَوۡتُ ٱلۡحَمِيرِ

‘And be moderate in your walk, and lower your voice. Surely, the ugliest of voices is the voice of the donkeys’.

Thus, when a person is described as donkey, it could be either physical appearance ugliness or voice ugliness or both as in:

ممكن شخص صوته عالي وأسلوب كلامه قبيح يُشبه بالحمار وهالتشبيه موجود بالقرآن (10)

‘If someone’s voice is too loud or his way of talking is disgusting, we can compare him to a donkey. This connotation is present in Quran’.

وصف الإنسان بالحمار دلالة على القبح (11)

‘Describing a human as a donkey denotes ugliness’.

While the animals that symbolize ugliness in Arabic are mainly ‘monkeys’ and ‘donkeys’, in English, a frog, particularly a ‘toad’ is used to denote ugliness or unattractiveness when it comes to men, and fish, particularly a ‘trout’ is used to denote ugliness when it comes to women. According to Cambridge dictionary, a toad is “an extremely unpleasant man, especially one who is not very physically attractive”. As for trout, it is defined in Cambridge Dictionary as “an old person, especially a woman, who is unpleasant or not attractive”.

4. **Endearment**

Walking in the streets at university or in hallways where students gather and mingle, it is not uncommon to see best friends addressing each other by using the word ‘donkey’ when they greet each other, for instance. While this may seem offensive at first, it is not so when it is used between best friends as the use of a word like donkey shows that they are intimate enough to tolerate a term that can be insulting if it is said to strangers.

بس أشوف صاحبي وأحكيله إيش يا حمار كيفك، بتكون من باب المزح. إنه إلنا على بعض (12)

‘When I see my friend and address him saying ‘hey donkey, what’s up?’ Here it is used jokingly to show intimacy.’
**X IS A COW**

Analysis of the data shows that this animal metaphor has six connotations. It is important to note here that the list comprises the connotations of بقرة ‘cow’ and θοːr ‘bull’ (male cow). For the readers’ convenience, table 4 presents the numbers and percentages for each connotation.

### Table 4
**Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS A COW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation category</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Obesity (usually with female addressees)</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Obstinacy</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Stupidity and clumsiness</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Heavy built</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Laziness</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>303</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is an overview of each connotation along with illustrative examples.

**1. Obesity**

When it comes to being overweight, particularly, ‘fat’ the most common animal to refer to, especially when the referent is a female is a cow. It seems this creature is perceived as always eating which causes it to gain weight and be fat. It is a very obscene word in this context and it is insulting as in:

(13) بقرة بالعادة تستخدم للانثى فقط للتعبير عن الوزن مثل: صايرة بقرة بمعنى نصحانة وهي كلمة كثير سلبية

‘Cow is usually said to a female referent only to mean overweight. When saying you are becoming a cow, this means you are adding weight and this word is very negative’.

**2. Aggression**

The second most common connotation for X IS A COW is being aggressive in terms of attitude; someone who gets enraged easily, breaks things and acts violently. While it applies to both a cow and a bull,
being aggressive is more associated with a bull according to the data of
the study. Below is an illustrative example:

A bull is used also to refer to someone who is quick or short tempered or
someone who lets things get down on his nerves. For instance, we can say
Oh God how difficult it is to rear a bull as our son, getting enraged easily
for silly reasons’.

While in Arabic, reference to a bull is made to refer to someone
who is irritable, in English, a reference is made to rat, particularly
‘ratty’. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English,
ratty is used in British English to mean “becoming annoyed quickly
or easily.”

3. Obstinacy
The third most common connotation has to do with being
obstinate, sticking to one’s guns without making any changes in opinion
or taking words of advice by others into account as in:

‘We use bull for a person who is obstinate, not willing to listen to others
or make any changes’.
In English, reference is made to pigs when discussing such a quality as
in pig-headed.

4. Stupidity and clumsiness
A person who accidently breaks things while walking is also
described as a bull. In fact, this usage is also common in English as
in ‘a bull in China shop’ which means a very clumsy person. Below is
an illustrative example:

‘It is used to describe those who are clumsy while walking paying no
attention to their surroundings while they are next to other people. They
often bump into objects or others due to that. In such situations, I notice
people around me saying to those who act like that ‘what’s wrong with
you; you are like a bull bumping into everything around you’.

© Хамдан Дж. Хаді, Аль-Маданат Ханан, & Хамдан Дж. Ваель
5. Heavy built

The fifth most common connotation has to do with having large broad wide shoulders and a strong big body. This is different from being obese because here the reference is not overweight of fat, but is instead strong and big. Below is an illustrative example:

بنحنك ثور للجهم الضخم (17)  
‘We use it for a big person.’

6. Laziness

Here, cow is used to refer to someone who does literally nothing other than sleeping or sitting at home. It is usually used in this context to criticize the act of laziness. Below is an illustrative example:

بقرة قد تستخدم للدلالة على قلة النشاط والهمة والمرمونة والحركة، عندما يقال لأحد ولك أنت بقرة، ما بتساعد ولا بتعمل اشي مفيد. طول اليوم أكل ومرعى وقلة صنعة يكون القصد أنه كسول (18)  
‘Cow could be used to indicate laziness, lack of activity and movement. When a person says to another ‘you are a cow, not doing anything useful, acting like a couch potato all day’, the purpose of this is to criticize his/her laziness’.

While in Arabic, ‘A HUMAN IS A COW’ connotes laziness in one of its several uses, in English, the animal metaphor that is used to express the same quality is A HUMAN IS A SLUG. According to Cambridge Dictionary, “If you say that someone is a slug, you mean that the person would rather do very little or nothing at all”.

X IS A SNAKE

Analysis of the data shows that when humans are likened to a snake, this means they are toxic, poisonous and deceitful in the sense that they are double faced, untrustworthy and poisonous. This connotation has occurred 137 times in the data.

In the Jordanian context, snake is often used to describe someone who is sadistic and manipulative, constantly causing and inflicting harm through spreading lies in the same way that a snake spreads its venomous poison. Since all the subjects reported in the questionnaire that a snake is solely used to refer to a female addressee as can be seen in 19 below, the researchers wanted to know which animal metaphors are used with male addressees to mean toxic and deceitful.
In order to know the animal metaphor that is used to describe a male who possesses those same qualities, the researchers resorted to introspection in collecting answers. The principle author wrote on his Facebook account a question in which he asked his virtual friends to report to him the animal metaphor that they use to mean toxic, poisonous and deceitful when a male is involved not a female. The researcher received 46 comments each making a reference to only one animal name, thus, one animal metaphor. The findings revealed that A HUMAN IS A SCORPION is the most commonly used animal metaphor to mean that a male is toxic, poisonous and poisonous. Table 5 shows the number and percentage of tokens associated with animal metaphors that described a male as toxic, poisonous and deceitful.

Table 5
Number and Percentage of Tokens Associated with Animal Metaphors that Refer to a Toxic, Poisonous and Deceitful Male

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Animal name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No. out of total number of tokens (46)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Scorpion</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Crab-eating macaque</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>pig</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>fox</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X IS A DOG**

Analysis of the data revealed that X IS A DOG has six connotations, namely: (1) ill mannered, (2) bootlicker, (3) contemptable, (4) a nickname for endearment, (5) materialistic, and (6) mercurial, changeable in an unpredictable manner. These are in line with those identified in Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021) who reported that a dog connotes humiliation, curse, dirt and bad manners. While bad manners and curse are regarded as two separate connotations of dog in Al-Ghoweri et al. (2021), curse was not regarded as a connotation here since when you call someone contemptible, or bootlicker or ill-mannered or materialistic or mercurial, you are actually cursing him/her as well.
Table 6 below shows the numbers and percentages for each connotation.

Table 6
Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS A DOG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation category</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ill-mannered</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bootlicker</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Nickname for endearment</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Contemptable</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Materialistic</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mercurial</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is an overview of each connotation along with illustrative examples.

1. **Ill-mannered**
   When someone misbehaves, disrespects others and acts rudely, he/she is described as a dog in the Jordanian context. It is as if his/her parents did not know how to breed and raise him/her which resulted in him/her growing impolite, wild and inconsiderate of others. Below is an illustrative example.

   (20) لا يحكى كلمة كلب للشخص الحقير قليل الأدب زي لما أحكى شوف الكلب مرق من جنبي ولا حكالي مرحباً.

   ‘I use the word dog to describe someone who is despicable and ill-bred. For instance, I might say: look at that dog; he passed by without even saying hello to me’.

2. **Bootlicker**
   When someone is willing to do anything even if it is against his/her principles in order to please someone else, usually someone of a higher status or position, he/she is described in the Jordanian context as a dog as in:

   بس نحكى بالشغل كلب المدير يكون قصدنا عن هزيز الذنب اللي بيطيل للمدير على كل شيء.

   ‘When we say at work that someone is the manager’s dog, we mean that this person is a bootlicker, praising everything that the boss says’.
3. Nickname for endearment

Just like other curse words mentioned above (see monkey, donkey) friends while addressing each other may sometimes use the word dog as a nickname or as a title of address just for fun and for showing intimacy and endearment, not for offending each other.

كثير مرات بحكي لصاحبي يا كلب من باب المزح (22).

‘I joke with my friend when I call him ‘dog’.

4. Contemptible

When someone is worthless or is of no value, he/she is described as a dog. Below is an illustrative example:

لما الشخص ما يكونله قيمة. مثلاً إذا كنا عتبانين عناس عشيء عملوه وكان واحد منهم ما إله (23).

‘It is used when someone is of no value. For instance, if we reproach and blame people for something wrong that they did and one of them is of no value, we can say leave that dog, don’t even talk to him or blame him because he is worthless’.

It is interesting to note that in English, a similar connotation for dog is found, particularly when a person is described as a cur.

5. Materialistic

When a person is money-grubbing, doing everything possible and seeking greedily to have much of it, he/she is described as a dog, particularly as كلب المال kalb ʔilmaːl (literally money dog) ‘money grubber or slave of money’ as in:

بنحكي عن الشخص اللي بركض ورا الفلوس كلب المال (24).

‘We call someone who is always running after money greedily money dog’.

6. Mercurial

Someone who changes unexpectedly, particularly showing negative reverse changes in opinion, may be described as a dog. In fact, an adjective is derived of the word dog to refer to this attitude which is مستكلب mustaklib ‘acting as a dog’ as in:

بنتحكي لما شخص بتغيير فجأة وبصير سيء فيقول مالك مستكلب (25).

‘It is used when someone suddenly changes and becomes mean, so one may ask with dismay: Why are you acting like a dog’.
Before proceeding with the next metaphorical expression, an interesting historical and Arab culture specific digression may contribute to highlighting how the environment we live in shapes the way we view animals and how we use them in our metaphors. A good example to make this point clear can be cited from Arab history. One day, there was an eloquent, Bedouin poet called Ali ibn al-Jahm, who was told that the Caliph, al-Mutwakkil, who was well known of his power, authority and awe, likes poetry and that he who goes to his palace, praises him with a poem that pleases him shall be bestowed with honor and money. At the Caliph’s palace, al-Jahm was excited to see poets reciting their poems of praise of the Caliph and returning with gifts. The poet was allowed to proceed. To the shock of the caliph and everyone in the palace, in his attempt to praise the Caliph, the poet likened the Caliph to a dog in terms of loyalty, and a he-goat in terms of facing obstacles. At first, the Caliph was enraged and the soldiers unsheathed their swords to strike off his neck, but then the Caliph realized that ibn al-Jahm is a Bedouin who spends most of his time in the desert and thus for him a dog, and a he-goat are symbols that are parts of his surroundings and thus they are not less important than sun, moon and mountains which are used by other poets living in the city when they recite their poems of praise. For instance, since he deals with dogs and livestock, he views a dog as a source of loyalty, and, thus, thinks that it is a good source domain for praising. Long story short, the Caliph ordered him a beautiful house on the banks of the Tigris near an orchard and close to the bridge where he spent around six months in order to acquaint him with city life. During that period, ibn al-Jahm enjoyed the new environment, met with other eloquent poets and tasted the pleasures of this new life. Then, one day while the Caliph was sitting in one of his nightly gatherings, he remembered ‘Ali bin al-Jahm, so he sent for him. When the poet finally came in, the Caliph asked him to recite some poems. The poet then recited a beautiful poem full of soft and kind words in which he talked about the beauty of the oryx eyes and how they spark and restore to him a love he did not know. Then he moved on to liken the Caliph to the sun, the stars and the sword. The Caliph was surprised and yet pleased by the change that took place and gave the poet the reward he deserves.
X IS A PIG

Analysis of the data shows that this animal metaphor has three connotations, namely: (1) deceit, (2) dishonor, and (3) ugliness. Table 7 below shows the numbers and percentages for each connotation.

Table 7
Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS A PIG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Deceitful</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Honorless</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ugly</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Deceitful

Just over half of the responses indicated that describing a person as a pig mostly connotes deceit coupled with bad manners:

الخنزير تستخدم لشخص الخبيث واللذي صفاته سيئة ومنبوذة مثل النفاق ونكران المعروف (26)

‘Pig is said to someone who is deceitful and known for his/her bad manners, e.g., hypocrisy and unfaithfulness’.

2. Honourless

Around just over a third of the responses indicated that when X is described as a pig, especially if a male, this means that this person is dishonorable, showing no concerns at all for his honor and reputation in the society. A case in point is a husband who does not feel jealous about his wife and does not care if she is not faithful to him.

الخنزير هو الديوث الذي لا يغار على عرضه (27)

‘A pig is a cuckold who never feels jealous and does not care about the honor of women in the family’.

3. Ugly (body and soul)

Due to the bad reputation that they hold in Jordan as filthy and dirty animals, pigs are associated with ugliness. Thus, when someone is called a pig, it is not uncommon to mean that he is ugly (body and soul) as is the case in the following example:
Connotations of Animal Metaphors in the Jordanian Context

شوف هالخنزير ما أشعه بكبرته (28)
‘Look at this pig (man) and how ugly he is as he aged’.

**X IS A BEAR**

The findings of the study show that this animal metaphor has four connotations, viz., (1) being fat, (2) being stupid and clumsy, (3) a nickname for endearment and (4) being lazy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Being fat</td>
<td>105 46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Being stupid and clumsy</td>
<td>58 25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Nickname for endearment</td>
<td>53 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Being lazy</td>
<td>11 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An overview of each connotation along with illustrative examples is presented below.

**1. Being fat**

About half of the responses indicated that there is a resemblance between a bear and a fat person. Thus, when someone is called a bear, it could be the case that there is an allusion to him/her being fat as illustrated in (28) below. Several reasons can be suggested for this attribution. One reason is the physical structure of bears as they are huge putting on a lot of body fat. Another reason for this attribution may be the portrayal of bears on TV, particularly in movies and cartoons, as creatures that are overweight due to their excessive eating habits. It is interesting to note here that while Jordanians regard bears as creatures that eat too much, in English, the source domain for such an attribute is a pig. According to Cambridge dictionary, a pig is a person who eats too much.

تستخدم كلمة دب للمؤمنت والمذكر والمعنى الاغلب الها هو انه الشخص وزنه زائد بشكل مفرط (29)
‘The word bear is used to refer to both male and female addressees and it generally means that a person is obese or is eating excessively’.
2. Being stupid and clumsy
A glance at table 8 shows that the second connotation has to do with one being stupid and clumsy whether in the way they talk, the way they move or the way they behave in general as in:

‘Did you see how stupid he was? He was a bear in the way he talks and the way he behaves. He really embarrassed us’.

‘She bumped into me like a bear without realizing that she did so’.

3. A nickname for endearment
In spite of the negative traits associated with bears, just under a third of the responses indicated that bears can be used as terms of endearment especially between family members, close friends, lovers and married couples, among others.

‘I use it as a term of endearment with my younger brother especially after a quarrel to soften the situation, so I tell him: O bear I am not mad at you anymore’.

4. Being lazy
An association has been formed between these stocky laidback creatures and dullness and laziness probably due to how they are depicted in the media and popular culture as lazy creatures, spending most of their time sleeping or laying on their backs. A case in point is Baloo in the Jungle Book movie. As an illustration, see the following example:

‘During Tawjihi [examination] days when my sister used to sit in front of the TV [instead of studying], my mom used to tell her: O bear! You have been sitting in front of the TV for hours. Go and study’.

X IS A DUCK
A thorough examination of the data revealed that X IS A DUCK has three connotations, namely: (1) pretty with a beautiful body, (2) chubby and slightly overweight, and (3) endearment. Table 9 below shows the numbers and percentages for each connotation.
Table 9
Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS A DUCK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Pretty with a beautiful body</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Chubby and slightly overweight</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Endearment</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Pretty with a beautiful body
About half of the responses indicated that X IS A DUCK is used mainly to express good looks especially in terms of physique and it is associated with females rather than with males. Below is an illustrative example:

(34) بطة بتنقال للبنت الجميلة يللي جسمها جميل
‘A duck is said to a pretty girl who has a beautiful body’.

2. Chubby and slightly overweight
Just under a third of the responses indicated that duck is a euphemistic expression that is used to connote being slightly overweight.

(35) بطة بتنحكى للبنت المربربة
‘It is said to a chubby girl’.

3. Endearment
It is not uncommon especially among females in Jordan to address other female addressees whom they do not know and get to see and talk to for the first time in places like the market, the street, or any other public place with the term duck. While it may seem strange to non-Jordanians and probably to non-Arabs, here, duck acts as a euphemistic endearment term of address between female interlocutors who do not know each other well. Below is an illustrative example:

(36) بس اتعرف عبنت وما أكون عارفة اسمها بحليلها تشرفت بمعركتك يا بطة
‘When I get to know a girl whom I didn’t know before, I tell her I am pleased to meet you, duck’.
X IS AN OWL

The findings of the study show that this animal metaphor has four connotations, namely, (1) looking unfriendly, (2) being pessimistic, (3) being an evening person, and (4) being a sign of bad omen. For an overview of the numbers and percentages for each connotation, see table 10 below:

Table 10
Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS AN OWL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Being pessimistic</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Being a grouch and looking unfriendly</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bringing bad luck</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Being an evening person</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>241</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Being pessimistic**

Just around 44 percent of the responses indicated that the metaphorical expression X IS AN OWL connotes pessimism and being full of negative thoughts as is the case in the following example:

(37) يستخدمها للشخص المتشائم اللي بظل يتوقع الأسوأ مثلًا إذا بدنا نطلع رحلة بظل يحكي رح نتأخر ورح تلغى الرحلة فيحكيلي بس يا بوم. ‘I use it to refer to a pessimist who always expects the worse to happen. For instance, if we are planning to go on a picnic, such a person would say we will be delayed or something will cause it to be cancelled, so I tell this person, ‘stop it, owl’.

2. **Being a grouch and looking unfriendly**

Just under a third of the responses associated describing a person as an owl with being bad tempered, being habitually irritable and looking unfriendly and unpleasant as in:

(38) بحكيها للي دايم مبوِّز وما بضحك على شي ‘I use this metaphor to describe a person who always puts a frown on his face and never smiles’.

3. **Bringing bad luck**

Just over a fifth of responses indicated that this metaphorical expression is used when the person involved brings bad luck to others or when he/she is like a bad omen.
4. Being an evening person

Similar to English, an Owl in the Jordanian context, is sometimes used to describe a person who stays up all night as in:

الشخص السهير ينحكي عنه يوم

‘We call those who stay up for late hours night owls’.

**X IS A DEER**

Analysis of the data shows that this animal metaphor has three connotations, namely, (1) being characterized by beauty, (2) wellness and being in good health, and (3) being slender and agile. Table 11 shows the numbers and percentages for each connotation.

**Table 11**

*Number and Percentage of Each Connotation and Related Tokens of X IS A DEER*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>No. and % of connotation tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Being characterized by beauty</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Being slender and agile</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Wellness and being in good health</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>201</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Being characterized by beauty**

Appreciation of beauty is something deeply rooted in the Arab culture and for expressing it, Arabs, since ancient times, have used several source domains such as moon, flower, sunset, among others. One source domain though which appeared extensively in literary romantic works among Arab poets is deer, also known as gazelle, antelope, oryx, among others. Be it for its eyes or its body, the deer is a symbol of beauty among Arabs. In one of the most delicate and beautiful poems, Ali ibn al-Jahm wrote of the oryx’s eyes in a famous work sometimes titled *عيون المها* (Eyes of the Oryx) the following soft and sweet words:

The eyes of the oryx between Rusafa and Jisr
Spark desire from a place I know – and a place I don’t;
They restore old love to me, even though I did not forget,  
Yet they fuel my fire with more fire.

In a similar vein, just over half of the respondents indicate that  
when a person, especially a girl, is described as a deer, this means she  
is remarkably beautiful as is demonstrated by the following example:

‘Deer is used when flirting especially with beautiful girls’.  
Because of their attachment to its beauty, many Arabs name their  
daughters after the animal name deer and its synonyms such as Reem,  
Shadin, Rasha, Khawla, among others.

2. Being slender and agile

Arabs in general and Bedouins in particular have long attributed  
to deer qualities of agility, speed and flexibility, due to its ability to  
maneuver and escape from predators in deserts and this legacy is  
ar ticulated in early Arabic poetry whether by pre-Islamic or early  
Islamic poets. Similarly, about a third of the responses indicated such  
a resemblance between a person described as a deer and those qualities.  
Below is an illustrative example:

‘It used when describing someone as slender’.

3. Wellness and being in good health

In an attempt to motivate and compliment a person who is sick or  
recovering from being sick, reference to deer is often made to indicate  
wellness and looking good as is seen in the following example:

‘When I pay a sick person a visit, I use it to mean that the evil is gone’.

Conclusion

The findings show that the ten most common animal metaphors in  
the Jordanian context are (1) X IS A MONKEY, (2) X IS A DONKEY,  
(3) X IS A COW, (4) X IS A SNAKE, (5) X IS A DOG, (6) X IS  
A PIG, (7) X IS A BEAR, (8) X IS A DUCK, (9) X IS AN OWL,  
and (10) X IS A DEER. They have 39 connotations. To begin with
X IS A MONKEY it is used to convey five connotations, the most common of which is hyperactivity. As for X IS A DONKEY, it has four connotations with stupidity being its most common connotation. X IS A COW has six connotations and it is associated the most with obesity, especially when referring to females. X IS A SNAKE connotes being toxic and deceitful. With regard to X IS A DOG, it is associated mostly with ill-mannerisms. In regard to X IS A PIG, it has three connotations and its mostly linked with being deceitful. As for X IS A BEAR, it has four connotations with its most frequent connotation being fat. X IS A DUCK has three connotations and it is associated mostly with being pretty with a beautiful body. X IS AN OWL has three connotations and it is linked mostly with being pessimistic. Finally, X IS A DEER has three connotations with being characterized by beauty as its most common connotation.

The environment we live in plays an important role in how we view the world around us and how we see animals and use them metaphorically in our conversations. For a Bedouin poet a dog was an ideal source domain for heaping praise since it is associated with loyalty, but for the Caliph al-Mutwakkil, who was well known of his power, authority and awe, it was regarded as very insulting. When the same Bedouin poet moved to the city, his views of the world changed and he started using source domains other than those that he was familiar with in the desert.

ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ethics Declaration. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national committee (Institutional Review Board/Deanship of Academic Research/University of Jordan. Ref.no 74-2022 and with the Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. This article does not contain any studies with animals performed.

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Conflict of Interest. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement. The data can be accessed in Mendeley Data: https://doi.org/10.17632/tv7zjecjx36.1 The data are also available on request from the corresponding author.

Author Contributions. Hady Jihad Hamdan, Hanan Majed Al-Madanat, and Wael Jihad Hamdan contributed to the study conception and design. Hanan Al-Madanat contributed to the selection of relevant sources for the literature review. Hady Jihad
Hamdan wrote the first draft of the manuscript and both Hanan Majed Al-Madanat and Wael Jihad Hamdan reviewed the draft and provided feedback. Wael Hamdan enriched the literature review with relevant material from first language acquisition. Hady Jihad Hamdan re-examined the manuscript in light of the given feedback and produced the final proofread edited and refined version. All authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript and all authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

**Informed Consent Statement.** Informed consent was obtained from the participants.

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**References**


Connotations of Animal Metaphors in the Jordanian Context


АНОТАЦІЯ
Мета. У статті висвітлено конотації десяти найпоширеніших метафор про тварин у йорданському контексті, як їх сприймають йорданські арабомовні громадяни.
Методи. Дані були зібрані в три етапи. Спочатку головний дослідник опублікував на своїй сторінці у Facebook пост, у якому попросив своїх ўгорсько-арбімових віртуальних друзів повідомити в коментарях про найпоширеніші метафори про тварин, які вони використовують. Дослідники зібрали 115 коментаріїв/відповідей з 1106 токенами метафор тварин. По-друге, отримані лексеми були використані для виявлення найпоширеніших метафор про тварин. По-третє, для того, щоб визначити набір конотацій кожній метафорі тварини, дослідники розповсюдили анкету серед 137 (43 чоловіків і 94 жінок) студентів Йорданського університету, в який респондентів попросили повідомити, коли кожен з них схильний використовувати кожну метафору тварини і з якими конотаціями. На основі отриманих відповідей було підготовлено попередній список конотацій. Нарешті, запропоновані конотації були перевірени двома йордансько-арбімовими лінгвістами з факультету англійської мови Йорданського університету. Більшість їхніх суджень збігалися з думками дослідників, а в тих випадках, коли вони збігалися, вносилися поправки, щоб об’єднати конотації разом.


Висновки. Дослідження показало, що метафори тварин є культурно навантаженими і що середовище, в якому ми живемо, формує те, як ми сприймаємо тварин і як ми їх метафорично використовуємо.

Ключові слова: арабська мова, метафори про тварин, когнітивна лінгвістика, культура, метафора, семантика.