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The metaphorical naming of selected dreaded diseases and medical conditions in Igbo language and thought

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Abstract

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which forms the theoretical anchor of this study, expresses the role of language and cognition in construing and communicating human experiences. CMT posits that metaphor in discourse is shaped by the ideological orientation and cultural worldview of the speaker or group. Previous studies on Igbo language and culture have used insights from linguistics, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, religious studies among others to show how the group expresses its social and cultural experiences, but none, to the best of the present researcher's knowledge, has used the CMT approach to study the group's construal of dreaded diseases and medical conditions in its environment. Working within the tenets of CMT therefore, this study shows how the group uses metaphors to express ideation and tenor in relation to some dreaded diseases and conditions. The study reveals that the Igbo use different conceptual metaphors such as container, journey, leaf, natural/physical force, heavy burden, etc. to frame their understanding of some dreaded diseases and conditions. The diseases and conditions are named/classified according to the narratives around them; the effects of the disease on the skin of the sufferer; the visual impression of the disease on the distant other; the effects of the disease on the mind/brain of the sufferer; the physical effects of the disease on the body of the sufferer; and the assumed causes/sources of the disease. Descriptive and analytical approaches are used in the discussion of primary data. The language the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria use to express their understanding of their natural world and social relations is chiefly metaphorical, and the names they ascribe to diseases and medical conditions emanate from their understanding of their cultural and social orientations, bodily actions and experiences.

Key words

Igbo, dreaded diseases and medical conditions, metaphor, naming, language and thought

1. Introduction

The Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria, like most other groups in Africa, use the resources of language to express their knowledge or consciousness of their physical and social worlds. The ideational metafunction of language enables language users to express their knowledge of the physical environment in which they live and the cultural orientations that shape their daily experiences, while the interpersonal metafunction of language enables language users to express their social relations with others. According to Mey:

Wording is the process through which humans become aware of their world, and realize this awareness in the form of language. However, words are not just labels we stick to things: the process of wording is based on interaction with our environment [...] The world is, furthermore, a world of people: we can

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only become language users through the social use of language. Once language is created in this social environment, once the world has been worded, our wording creates a shared world-picture. Without words, the world remains a black box, an unread picture-book. (2001, pp. 301-302)

Mey further contends that one of the most effective ways of seeing the world in this way is through the use of analogies: understanding one thing by way of another (p.302). Metaphor is chiefly cognitive and demonstrates how humans try to understand difficult, abstract or less delineated concepts in terms of familiar ideas (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Cognition is concerned with conscious intellectual activity such as thinking, reasoning or remembering. It has to do with conscious mental processes such as thinking and reasoning. This implicates that metaphor as a cognitive process involves some form of mental reasoning or thinking. Metaphoricity is central to how the Igbo and other humans conceptualize or try to understand their natural and social worlds. Metaphor scholars also argue that metaphor is at the heart of human cognitive use of language. Kövecses (2010) argues that conceptual metaphor underlies every aspect of human life. Thus, Gibbs Jr (2017, p.1) posits that:

Metaphor scholars are often fanatical in their pursuit of metaphoricity in language and life. They closely study language and other human actions/artifacts for clues on people's metaphoric conceptions about their lives and experiences of the world around them.

The Igbo draw on their cognitive and cultural abilities to express their knowledge of abstract and complex phenomena such as life, death, God, the gods and the supernatural (Kamalu & Ngwoke, 2017). They rely on the same abilities to give meaning to new or complex phenomena in their society. This represents the interconnectedness between cognition and context (situational and cultural) in the formation and interpretation of situations and events. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.22) also aver that the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture; hence such values are deeply embedded in our culture. Thus, the cognitive domain is automatically activated in the process of one trying to figure out or express a new phenomenon, experience or concept within one's cultural environment.

The name and attribute the Igbo ascribe to some persons, entities, notions and events are cognitively and culturally motivated. Ubahakwe (1981) opines that the names and attributes the Igbo and other African societies ascribe to persons, things and places are informed by situations and experiences that occur within some historical and social contexts. Izevbaye (1981, p. 164) thus argues that "names in reality exist in a context that gives them form and meaning. Taken out of this context of social reality names remain in atomistic state." This shows that situational and cultural contexts shape how people construe their experiences and other realities around them. Thus, the name and attribution the Igbo ascribe to a disease or medical condition also emanate from the intercourse between cognition and cultural experiences.

Metaphor, a property of language and thought, is shaped by the ideological orientation and worldview of the speaker or group. The way the Igbo construe their knowledge of a phenomenon such as disease and other encumbrances that may result in impairment or fatality is inspired by their worldview. Sackey (2013, p. 151) understands the notion of worldview to mean:

[...] the way a particular people or society understands or perceives the world in which it finds itself. It embodies ideas and beliefs which human beings have about the origins of the universe, their relations with and obligations to other human beings, as well as the natural elements or ecology and cosmological phenomena.

Thus, Mey (2001, p.304) posits that "only the total context of situation that we want to characterize metaphorically can determine the pragmatic usefulness of a particular metaphor". This implies the crucial importance of contexts of situation and culture in constructing and deconstructing metaphors in language and discourse.

2. Literature review and theoretical foundation

This study relies on insights from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in its investigation of metaphorical conceptualization of some dreaded diseases and medical

conditions by the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria. The term “conceptual” attributively refers to ideas and concepts formed in the human mind. It is concerned with something that has to do with the mind or mental concepts or imaginary ideas. Conceptual Metaphor Theory proceeds from the assumption that metaphor is conceptual and part of everyday thought and language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were not the first linguists to theorize on the notion of “Conceptual Metaphor”. Lakoff (1993) pays homage to Michael Reddy’s (1979, 1993) now classic essay: “The Conduit Metaphor” as the first contemporary theory of metaphor that shows that metaphor is “primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language” (203). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) obviously grew out of Reddy’s postulation that ordinary everyday English language is largely metaphorical, thus, dispelling the traditional view that “metaphor is primarily in the realm of poetic or figurative language” (Lakoff, 1993, p.204). Lakoff (1993, p. 204) claims that “Reddy was the first to demonstrate them by rigorous linguistic analysis, stating generalizations over voluminous examples”. Ortony (1993) gives credit to Max Black, Donald Schon and Michael Reddy for their pioneering roles in establishing a fertile ground for academic inquiries into the cognitive functions of metaphor in contemporary language and discourse. However, contemporary scholarship on metaphor studies generally associate the growth and development of CMT with Lakoff rather than Reddy or Schon. The reason could be because, according to Ortony (1993, p.7), Schon and Reddy’s thoughts and claims found their “most thorough and explicit treatment in Lakoff’s”. Ortony further maintains that Lakoff also “presents a detailed account of a theory of mental representation firmly rooted in the idea that metaphor plays a central role in the ways in which we think and talk about the world” (7). It must however be stated that most of the major arguments in Lakoff (1993) were drawn from Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This explains why Kövecses (2010, p. x) posits that a “new view of metaphor that challenged all aspects of powerful traditional theory in a coherent and systematic way was first developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980 in their seminal study: *Metaphors We Live By*.”

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 6) posit that metaphor is essentially a property of language and thought. In their book, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), they argue, “We have found...that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (3). They opine that the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined. Thus, Gibbs Jr (2017, p.4) observes that:

Lakoff and Johnson forged a new path for the “metaphor and thought” thesis by providing extensive, systematic linguistic evidence showing that metaphors were both ubiquitous in language and thought and had a major role in the creation and continued structuring of abstract concepts.

The metaphor and thought argument therefore proceeds from the assumption that metaphor is not exclusively the property of language because humans rely on their linguistic as well as their cognitive abilities to understand abstract concepts. Drawing from Lakoff and Johnson (1980) Kövecses perceives metaphor as understanding one domain in terms of another. To him, “we have a conceptual metaphor when we construe a more abstract domain (or concept) through a more physical domain (or concept) ... either by means of long-term memory or as a result of a historical-cultural process ...” (Kövecses, 2010, p.8). Similarly, Gibbs Jr (2017, p.4) states that conceptual metaphors arise whenever we try to understand difficult, complex, abstract or less delineated concepts, such as arguments, in terms of familiar ideas, such as wars. Thus, we have conceptual metaphors such as ARGUMENT IS WAR; LOVE IS A JOURNEY; POLITICAL DEBATES ARE BOXING MATCHES, etc. In metaphorical expressions we try to use our knowledge and understanding of familiar or concrete ideas such as war, journey and boxing matches to understand more abstract concepts such as argument, love and political debates. Hence, Mey (2001, p. 305) describes metaphors as ways of conceptualizing and understanding one’s surroundings; as such, they make up a mental model of our world. He thus concludes that metaphors are of prime importance in securing the continuity, and continued understanding, of our language and culture.

In more technical terms, Lakoff and Johnson contend that metaphor can be understood as the mapping from a source domain to a target domain. The source domain is the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. The process of understanding

one concept in terms of another is known as mapping. Kövecses (2010, p.12) observes that mappings are only partial. Only a part of B (source domain) is mapped onto a part of A (target domain). Thus, in CMT, we need to ask which parts of the source are mapped onto which parts of the target. Fauconnier (1997, p.1) claims that “mappings between domains are at the heart of the unique human cognitive faculty of producing, transferring, and processing meaning.” This implicates that humans, consciously and unconsciously, try to use their knowledge of one domain (source) to understand another domain (target).

Kövecses (2010, p.63) argues that if metaphors are primarily conceptual, then they must manifest themselves in other than linguistic ways. According to him, if the conceptual system that governs how we experience the world, how we think and how we act is partly metaphorical, then (conceptual) metaphors must be realized not only in language but also in many other areas of human experience. The nonlinguistic realizations of conceptual metaphors identified by Kövecses include movies and acting; cartoon, drawings, sculptures and buildings; advertisements; symbols; myths; dream interpretation; interpretation of history; politics and foreign policy; morality; social institutions, social practices; literature; and gestures and multimodal metaphors. Gibbs Jr (2017, p.4) includes categorization and social justice; bodily gestures; mathematics; music; art; dance; and material culture as other forms of nonlinguistic manifestations of conceptual metaphors. And the fields that have conducted conceptual metaphor analyses include linguistics, philosophy, computer science/Artificial Intelligence (AI), anthropology, education, neuroscience, communications, literature/literary studies, political science, mathematics, business/organizational studies/marketing, sociology, economics, law/legal studies, classics, architecture, nursing science, geography, history, theatre arts, music, art/art history, dance, biology, physics, chemistry, religious studies, film and media studies, and Egyptology (Gibbs Jr 2017, p.4). The list shows that the academic fields that have conducted conceptual metaphor analyses are quite numerous and diverse.

Insights from metaphor theories have been used by analysts to engage issues such as disease (Chiang and Duann, 2007; Kobia, 2008). Chiang and Duann use the theory of critical metaphor analysis (CMA) to study SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) chiefly as DISEASE IS WAR metaphor in the construction of Self and Other. Kobia uses conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) to study HIV/AIDS discourses among the Oluluyia speakers in Western Kenya. The study reveals that these people conceptualize AIDS as an accident, a calamity and a journey. Metaphor theories have also been used in the domain of education (Cameron, 2003; Jensen, 2006; Botha, 2009; and Kamalu, 2013). Chilwa (2007) uses a metaphorical approach in his study of power and corruption in Nigerian media discourse, just as Charteris-Black (2006) employs methods of CMA in his explorations of the metaphorical representation of Britain as a container by right-wing newspapers during the 2005 United Kingdom general election campaign. Kamalu and Iniworikabo (2016) use insights from CMT to study dominant metaphors in the speeches of Nigerian democratic presidents, while Kamalu (2014) draws from the tenets of CMA in his analysis of political myths in a literary text. Kamalu and Ngwoke (2017) study the metaphorical conceptualization of God, the gods and the supernatural by the Igbo using the methods of conceptual metaphor theory.

The present study ties in with the ones reviewed in this part of the work in their common use of knowledge and insights from metaphor theories to engage the diverse social and political existentialities of human society. However, the present study differs significantly from others in the sense that it uses the CMT approach to show how the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria use language and cognition to express ideation and tenor in relation to some dreaded diseases and medical conditions. This study is a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the domain of metaphor and the Igbo worldview.

3. Research data and methodology

This study is a metaphorical examination of how the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria conceptualize some dreaded diseases and medical conditions. The data consist of sixteen (16) diseases and medical conditions that the Igbo perceive as serious because of the assumptions and narratives the group construct in their attempt to understand the strange or complex nature of the diseases/conditions. Contextually, the locution ‘diseases’ and the phrase ‘medical conditions’ are not mutually exclusive. They both refer to disorders that prevent humans from enjoying a healthy life. The Igbo name for four (4) of the diseases or conditions (AIDS, cancer, dementia and depression) were drawn from the *English-Igbo Glossary of HIV, AIDS and Ebola-Related Terms* (2017) while the other twelve (12) diseases and

conditions were drawn from commonplace discourses the Igbo use to express their experiences about the conditions. The study did not involve the use of respondents in data collection. The researcher is also familiar with the terms because he is a native speaker of the language. The orthographic and semantic realizations of the terms (as used in the discourses of Igbo native speakers and also in the context of this study) were further confirmed and validated by three Igbo linguists from three different Nigerian universities (Prof Boniface Mbah of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Dr Gerald Nweya of the University of Ibadan; and Dr Stephen Anurudu of the University of Port Harcourt). The purposively selected data show that the Igbo use their knowledge of certain source domain to enhance their understanding of the target domain, the diseases/medical conditions. The study uses descriptive and analytical approaches in the discussion of the selected data

4. Data presentation and interpretation

The chief concern of this study is to show that the names the Igbo give to some diseases and medical conditions are metaphorically motivated. The table below shows the English-Igbo names or terms for the diseases or conditions, their target domain and interpretation. Hence, the table represents a metaphorical conceptualization of the diseases and conditions by the Igbo in their language and thought.

Table 1: Name of disease in English-Igbo, its target domain and interpretation

English	Language Igbo	Target Domain Interpretation
Leprosy	Èkpèntá/ Òrià-òchá	Disease is fingers and toes cutter/ Disease is a skin whitener
AIDS	Ìmìnwú (a term used mainly by Nigerian scholars)/Òbìrínájóchá (a term used by the majority of local Igbo folk including some members of the elite)	Disease is a body shrinker/ Disease shrinks to death Disease is an irredeemable journey/ a journey to the grave
Elephantiasis	Òrià-òzìzà (also Ídígrĩ-pō in some dialects)	Disease is a mountainous/heavy burden
STDs	Ìsị-nwáanyị	Poison of woman/woman is source/carrier of poison
Dementia	Òkpónùbùrù	Disease is drier in the brain
Tuberculosis	Ìkwárá-ńtá	Disease is a small cough
Parkinson Disease	Òrià-ómájìjì (also Ònò nàni ághò égbē in some dialects)	Disease is a shivering/shaking force
Influenza/flu	Òtínámkpú	Disease is a killer in wailing
Psychosis	Ìshí-ímébi	Disease is a spoilt mind/head
Epilepsy	Àkwúkwù	Disease/condition is a violent physical force
Pox	Kítíkpa	Disease is a container
Depression	Ìdàm-mbà	Disease/condition is spirits dampness/dampening of spirits
Cancer	Ìzì	Disease is repulsion
Diabetes	Òrià-shúgà	Disease of sugar
Stroke	Ánwú-ímúò/mbà ímúò	Disease/condition is a killer of spirits/challenge of spirits
Paralysis	Mkpónwú áhū	Disease is a drier of the body

4.1 Identification, classification and analysis of metaphoricity in dreaded diseases/medical conditions

The naming of diseases by the Igbo does not often follow the descriptive and onomastic traditions of Western epistemology. This study shows that six (6) factors are chiefly responsible for the naming of the sixteen (16) diseases or medical conditions under study. The diseases/conditions are named according to narratives about their fatality; the assumed causes/sources of the disease; the effects of the disease on the skin of the sufferer; the impression of the disease in the sight of a distant other/non-sufferer; the effects of the disease on the mind/brain of the sufferer; and the effects of the disease/condition on the physical body of the sufferer or how the body responds to attacks from the disease or condition.

Lakoff and Johnson's CMT (1980), which forms the major theoretical base for this study, identifies structural, ontological and orientational metaphors as the three main types of metaphor. However, in identifying some of the words or phrases that convey metaphorical meaning in the texts under consideration, we shall draw insights, where appropriate, from the metaphor identification scheme developed by the Pragglejaz Group (Kövecses, 2010; Gibbs Jr, 2017) known as the "metaphor identification procedure" (MIP). The Pragglejaz Group postulates that the scheme will help in resolving the difficulties that people have in deciding whether or not any word or phrase conveys metaphorical meaning in context (Gibbs Jr, 2017, p.58). Gibbs Jr believes it helps metaphor analysts in identifying metaphorical meanings in language and thought since CMT does not presently advance a specific procedure for identifying metaphor in language other than its major argument that metaphor involves cross-domain mappings between a discourse topic and the source domain used to speak of that idea.

MIP states that an analyst may determine whether a word is metaphorically used in context by following a series of steps:

- I. Read the entire text (i.e. written text or spoken transcript) to establish a general understanding of the discourse.
- II. Determine the lexical units in the text
- III. For each lexical unit in the text, check metaphorical use: establish the meaning of the lexical unit in context (how it applies to an entity), and the relation in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). You should take into account what words are before and after the lexical unit. Determine if the lexical unit has a more basic current/contemporary meaning than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be more concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell and taste; related to bodily action; more precise (as opposed to vague); and historically older. Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meaning of the lexical unit.
- IV. If the lexical unit has a more basic current/contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning can be understood by comparison or contrast with the basic meaning. If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical (Gibbs Jr, 2017, pp.69-70).

It is pertinent to state from the outset that insights from MIP and the cross-domain mappings that underlie the CMT approach will be integrated in the analysis of the data under study. We chose to draw our analytical approach from both the MIP and the cross-domain mappings of CMT, where appropriate, because of the peculiar nature of our primary data. The data are not drawn from any large stretch of discourse used in specific contexts by specific speakers. Rather, they are mainly commonplace discourses and expressions used by Igbo native speakers in their daily interactions with one another. Thus, metaphorical meanings are shaped by contextual factors such as identity/status of speakers, subject-matter, setting, personal attitude and intentions of speakers, etc.

4.2 Name according to narratives about fatality of disease

(1) *M̀m̀inwù* (AIDS): Disease is a body shrinker. Most Igbo scholars call the dreaded acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) *M̀m̀inwù* based on their perception that the disease can shrink the body of the sufferer up to the point of death. The metaphorical force of the expression is located in the word shrinker. Its basic meaning is the act of reducing or contracting in size. At the surface level of signification, it implies that AIDS is a person or substance that reduces the body size of an entity.

However, at the deeper level of signification, the frame is motivated by the conceptual metaphor, DISEASE IS A SUBSTANCE with the entailment HUMAN BODY IS A CONTAINER metaphor. This metaphorizes the human body as a container in which AIDS is one of the properties contained in the body. The disease is construed as a harmful property that shrinks the size of the container. The shrunk or affected parts of the container are the vital organs and immune system of the body which the HIV virus attacks and destroys, and the possibility of depleting the container over time as a result of the effects of the substance implies the fatality that may occur as a result of the infection if unchecked. Stopping the act of shrinking or depleting the size of the container implies taking steps to check the spread of the virus in the body system of the carrier by boosting the immune system.

However, most Igbo speakers call the disease *òbirinájóchá* (disease is an irredeemable journey/ disease is a journey to the grave). The expression that AIDS is a fatal journey or journey to death is motivated by the conceptual metaphor SICKNESS/ILLNESS IS A JOURNEY. The metaphor entails that sickness/illness could be a journey to recovery or a journey to death. The metaphor explicitly represents HIV/AIDS as an inevitable journey to death. Igbo speakers who perceive the disease (AIDS) as an inevitable journey to death/the grave assume that any carrier of AIDS or the HIV virus (*nje òbirinájóchá*) is bound to die. Death is thus metaphorized and euphemized as *ájóchá* (red/white soil dug out from grave). The assumption that HIV/AIDS is *òbirinájóchá* came into being in the 1980s and early 1990s when there appeared to be no effective treatment for HIV/AIDS related illnesses in most countries of the world, particularly in the third world. Most speakers of Igbo who use the *òbirinájóchá* metaphor do not discriminate between the virus (HIV) and the full-blown disease (AIDS) and thus assume that the carrier of the HIV virus or AIDS is already on a slow but sure journey to *ájóchá* (death). Thus, the popular narrative about HIV/AIDS until recently was that every carrier of the virus or disease must inevitably die.

(2) *Òtínámkpú* (Influenza/flu): Disease is a killer in wailing. The expression is commonly used by Oru-Igbo speakers to frame any dangerous flu epidemic that can claim multiple lives. The flu or influenza (as some generation of Igbo speakers will prefer to call it) is named *Òtínámkpú* because it claimed many lives when it first broke out in some Igbo communities in the middle of last century. *Mkpú* in the Igbo language means to wail or lament, so the disease derives its name from the assumption that it is unsympathetic and keeps killing even when the bereaved is wailing for the several deaths already recorded in the family. The basic meaning of the lexical word ‘oti’ in Igbo is the act of beat/beatings or flog/flogging or an entity that performs the said act, but its contextual meaning in relation to the disease is kill/killing hence the disease is construed as a killer (disease).

The basic meanings of ‘killer’ range from someone (e.g. killer herdsmen in Nigeria) or something (e.g. killer cold in Australia) that kills or causes death, to a more figurative usage that communicates a positive evaluation such as skillful performance, story or entertainment (e.g. a killer performance etc.). Killer also means a situation or condition that is extremely difficult to handle. These basic meanings of the word are not metaphorically forceful enough, in isolation, to express how the Igbo conceptualize the disease. The next lexical item that attracts attention is ‘wailing’. Wailing describes a mournful cry, usually high-pitched or clear-sounding by someone who is in grief, sad or in pain. The basic/contemporary meanings of the two words in isolation cannot effectively communicate the metaphoricity in the expression: DISEASE IS A KILLER IN WAILING metaphor without the preposition *in* (na in Igbo language). The preposition (*in*) indicates the location of someone or something within a space. Studies (see Gibbs Jr, 2017, p.71) show that prepositions were determined to be the most metaphorical (43%), followed by verbs (29%), and then adjectives (18%). Thus, it is the presence of the preposition “in” that makes the expression an ontological metaphor. Ontological metaphors are means by which we conceive of our experiences in terms of objects, substances and containers, in general without specifying exactly what kind of object, substance or container is meant (Kövecses, 2010). Ontological metaphors give ontological status to general categories of abstract concepts. The locution ‘wailing’ is an abstract concept. *Òtínámkpú* is a CONTAINER metaphor that expresses the location of the implied agent (the disease) that performs the act or action of killing within the container – wailing. Wailing, an abstract concept is metaphorically conceptualized as a container, hence, the expression (*Òtínámkpú*) evokes the entailment; DISEASE IS A KILLER IN A CONTAINER.

It is also important to mention that personification is generally conceived of as a form of ontological metaphor. Kövecses (2010) contends that personification makes use of one of the best source domains

we have – ourselves. Thus, a flu epidemic is personified in discourse as a human killer who is indifferent to the plight of its victims and relatives. The name *Òtínámkpú* also metaphorically frames the helplessness of the people in arresting the epidemic or an implicit admittance that the disease is extremely difficult to contain or handle.

(3). *Úkwárā-ńtā* (Tuberculosis): Disease is a small cough. *Úkwárā* means cough while *ńtā* means small in Igbo language. The name thus suggests that tuberculosis is a small/mild cough. Tuberculosis is regarded by traditional Igbo society as the most dreaded type of cough that any human could suffer from. It is therefore ironical that the Igbo could use such a euphemistic attribution to conceptualize it. A cognitive view of the attribute shows it is metaphorical in context.

The DISEASE IS A SMALL COUGH metaphor used to conceptualize *Úkwárā-ńtā* (tuberculosis) is orientational. The term orientational or coherence metaphor derives from the fact most metaphors that serve this function have to do with basic human spatial orientations, such as up-down, centre-periphery, big-small, etc. The notion of coherence implies that certain target domains tend to be conceptualized in a uniform manner (Kövecses, 2010). Coherence metaphors enable us to characterize concepts in binary opposition in which upward orientation tends to go together with positive evaluation while downward orientation goes with negative ones. Thus, characterizing tuberculosis as A SMALL COUGH is a negative evaluation while any other form of cough can be evaluated positively as A BIG COUGH. This implies that SMALL IS DOWN while BIG IS UP and BIG is better than SMALL. Thus, the negative evaluation of tuberculosis as *Úkwárā-ńtā* (small cough) is a form of using the resources of metaphor to communicate the attitude of Igbo speakers to the disease because of the superstitious assumptions about its cause and fatality.

4.3 Name according to assumed causes/sources of disease

(4) *Ñsị-nwáānyị* (STDs): Poison of woman/woman is carrier/source of poison. *Ñsị* is poison in Igbo while *nwáānyị* is woman thus *nsị-nwáānyị* freely translates as poison that originates from women. The metaphorical meaning of the expression is derived from the contextual uses of the word ‘poison’ and the preposition ‘of’. The lexical meaning of the word poison includes “a substance that can make people or animals ill or kill them if they eat or drink it” and “a substance that can injure or impair the health of someone or something when consumed”. The preposition of (which is implied or ellipted in *nsị-nwáānyị*) is used to show possession, belonging, origin, derivation, cause, motive, reason, or something occurring in, etc. It is also used to indicate component material, parts, elements or contents. The basic meaning of poison as a substance that can kill or impair health when consumed does not tie with the name the Igbo give to STDs – poison. Firstly, STDs are sexually transmitted and not contracted through oral consumption of foods and drinks. Again, STDs cannot be considered substances, particularly chemical, as generally associated with a chemical poison. The contextual use of poison in relation to STDs therefore implies that the Igbo use their knowledge frame of poison and its harmful effects on humans and animals as a source domain to understand the harmful nature of STDs as a target domain. This entails that, contextually, the Igbo conceptualize sexual intercourse as food or drink; having sexual intercourse is eating or drinking a substance; contracting an STD is eating or drinking a poisoned substance; sexual satisfaction derived from a woman is similar to satisfaction derived from food and drink, etc.

The base meaning of the preposition “of” is used to show origin, derivation or as a component part of an entity. It collocates with the implied meaning of poison in the discourse context. Contextually considered, it implies that STD is a poison that originates from women as its primary sources. Against this background, the underlying metaphor used by the Igbo to conceptualize STDs is BODY IS A CONTAINER OF POISON or specifically, THE FEMALE BODY IS A CONTAINER OF POISON. The metaphor frames women as carriers and sources of poison (diseases). Men are seen as (innocent) victims of the poison that wayward/immoral women spread. *Ñsị-nwáānyị* is an expression of how the traditional patriarchal Igbo society stereotyped the female gender. The traditional Igbo society scapegoated the female gender as the source and peddler of sexually transmitted diseases. The society never envisaged that some STDs could originate from men folk. The Igbo however use expressions such as *obutere nsị-nwáānyị* (he has contracted STD) to ridicule a randy and reckless man who may have contracted a sexually transmitted infection from a woman. Thus, in whatever form *nsị-nwáānyị* is used in the daily discourse of the Igbo, it still associates women as the primary sources of STDs. *Ñsị-nwáānyị*

is therefore a name that explicitly expresses gender bias, asymmetry and dominance in the social relations between both genders.

(5) *Ọrịà-shúgà* (Diabetes): Disease of Sugar. Disease/illness is *orịà* in Igbo thus the name *orịà-shúgà* refers to a disease or condition the Igbo believe must have been caused by sugar. The Igbo *shúgà* is derived from the English word *sugar*. An MIP analysis of “disease of sugar” shows that the preposition “of” (which is implied or ellipted in *orịà-shúgà*) is key to the understanding of the expression. Its basic/contemporary meaning in context implies the disease originates from sugar. Generally, conceptual metaphors provide a basis for understanding a wide range of abstract concepts (target domains) using our knowledge of more familiar or concrete phenomena (source domains). Diabetes, an abstract concept, is the target domain. Sugar, a concrete and familiar concept, is the source domain. Thus, the Igbo use their knowledge of a more concrete or familiar concept/idea, sugar, to understand a difficult and abstract concept, diabetes. The Igbo in their discourse map their knowledge of sugar (a concrete and familiar concept) on diabetes (an abstract concept). Sugar is therefore the source domain while the disease (diabetes), the abstract concept they are trying to understand or express, is the target domain. The “disease of sugar” expression is also metonymic. Metonymy uses one well understood or easily perceived aspect of something to represent or stand for the thing as a whole. Gibbs Jr (2017, p.43) argues that metonymy is domain highlighting while metaphor is domain mapping but both are figures of thought as well as figures of speech and have different experiential motivations. The Igbo speaker uses the word *Ọrịà-shúgà* to represent whatever diabetes may stand for in the life of humans.

4.4 Name according to the effects of disease on the skin of the sufferer

(6) *Èkpèntá / Ọrịà-óchá* (leprosy): Disease is fingers and toes cutter/disease is a skin whitener. The disease of leprosy is named after what the Igbo perceive to be its effects on the skin, toes and fingers of the sufferer. Some dialects of the Igbo language call it *orịà-óchá* because of the assumption that the disease bleaches, blanches and mutilates the skin colour of the sufferer. *Ọrịà-óchá* freely translates as ‘the disease of white skin’ which implies that the disease distorts the skin colour of the sufferer. The DISEASE IS A SKIN WHITENER metaphor is motivated by the contextual understanding of the word ‘whitener’. The dictionary and basic meaning of whitener ranges from an agent such as bleach used to make something white or whiter, to a person or thing that whitens. The second meaning of the word, which implies that a person or thing that whitens is also a whitener, is important to our understanding of the metaphorical expression. The metaphoricity in the expression emanates from our understanding that leprosy is neither a bleaching/blanching agent nor a person who whitens an object or entity. So, the mapping from a source domain (bleaching agent or a person who whitens) onto a target domain (leprosy) enables the Igbo native speaker to use their knowledge of what a whitener does to an object to understand what leprosy does to the skin colour of a sufferer of the disease. More importantly, the DISEASE IS A SKIN WHITENER metaphor conceptualizes leprosy as a human being who performs the task of whitening the skin of another with an agent. The metaphorical notion of whitening implies blanching the skin, making it look pale. Thus, the Igbo perception of the disease as a bleaching agent entails the DISEASE IS A BLEACHING/BLANCHING AGENT metaphor.

Èkpèntá is a more general label for leprosy among the various dialects of the Igbo language speakers but its contextual meanings differ from one dialect to another. The Oru-Igbo speakers perceive the disease as an entity that can mutilate or amputate the fingers and toes of the sufferer. The DISEASE IS A CUTTER metaphor construes leprosy as a tool or an instrument that is used for cutting off the fingers and toes of the sufferer. A cutter is a machine, tool or an instrument used to cut something off, apart or through. One of the basic meanings of cutter includes a person who cuts or reduces something in size. The underlying metaphor implies that leprosy cuts off the fingers and toes of a sufferer as a cutter does to an object. Here, cutter is the source domain while leprosy is the target domain. The DISEASE IS A CUTTER metaphor also carries the entailment DISEASE IS AN AMPUTATION metaphor. What is actually metaphorized in the locution ‘cutter’ is the notion that the disease mutilates or amputates the fingers and toes of its victims.

(7) *Kítíkṗā* (pox): Disease is a container. The onomatopoeic name for pox, *kítíkṗā*, in the Igbo language is derived from the effects of the disease on the skin of the victim or sufferer of the disease. The Igbo conceptualize pox as a CONTAINER and the victim as an OBJECT within or inside the container. When

the entire body of an infected person is covered by pox, the victim becomes encircled inside a container, and getting out of (recovering or overcoming) the condition (illness/disease) is equivalent to getting out of the container. *Kítíkṗā* is a taboo expression among speakers of the language. The DISEASE IS A CONTAINER metaphor of pox is realized in curses such as: *Kítíkṗā rachaa gi anya!* (May *kítíkṗā* cover/seal up your eyes!). The image-schema that is activated in the expression is that we experience ourselves as containers with other objects in them and outside of them. Again, when ontologically viewed, pox as a container metaphor, personifies the disease as human. The curse above also entails that DISEASE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE. This too is image-schematic in orientation.

4.5 Name according to impression of disease in the sight of a distant other

(8) *Ìzì* (cancer): Disease is repulsion/disease is repulsive to sight. The base/contemporary meaning of repulsion includes a strong feeling of disliking someone or something that is so unpleasant that you feel slightly ill when you see them or think about them. Another is a feeling you want to avoid something or move away from it, because it is extremely unpleasant. The metaphorical force of the first is weak because it simply communicates the feelings of the entity that feels. It is just the injured feelings of the SENSER that are communicated in the expression. It does not communicate the tenor between the SENSER and the entity being sensed in context. The words avoid and move away from in the second expression are richer in metaphorical meaning. They evoke the image-schema of motion: avoid/move away from. This entails a DISEASE IS A MOTION metaphor in the context. The motion schema also shows the tenor relations between the SENSER and the PHENOMENON. It implies that the disease makes the Other move away from the sufferer because its sight (the affected part of the body) is disgusting/unpleasant. The technical meaning of repulsion also provides some rich metaphorical meaning in context. Technically (physics), repulsion is an electrical or magnetic force by which one object pushes another away. This entails that DISEASE IS A FORCE. Here, cancer (one of the objects in the container) is being conceptualized as a force that pushes people (another set of objects in the container) away. The disease is a force metaphor relies on the force image-schema to show the repulsive nature of the disease/condition. The technical sense of the word validates Gibbs Jr's (2017, p.71) argument that academic discourse exhibits the most metaphorically used words.

4.6 Name according to effects of disease/condition on the emotions or mind/brain of the sufferer

(9) *Ndàm-m̀bà* (Depression): Disease/condition is spirits dampness/dampening of spirits. The metaphor implies that the condition dampens the spirits or mood of the sufferer. The conceptual metaphor SADNESS IS DOWN motivated this metaphorical use of language. The Igbo conceptualize depression as a condition that dampens (downward orientation) the spirits of humans and denies them the courage (upward orientation) to overcome life challenges. *Ndàm-m̀bà* implies a downward slide in the mood/emotion of an individual. The metaphor "spirits dampness/dampening of spirits" connotes sadness (downward orientation) in the emotions of the sufferer. Orientational metaphors present the positive side of humans as UP and the negative as DOWN. *Ndàm-m̀bà* is an orientational metaphor because it represents SADNESS as DOWN and its opposite, HAPPINESS as UP. Again, the image schema of a damp material is evoked and mapped on the target domain, the spirits. Thus, we can use our knowledge of the texture of a damp material to understand the texture of spirits/mood/emotion that is damp (DOWN).

(10) *Òkpónùbúrù* (Dementia): Disease is a drier in the brain. The drier in the brain metaphoricity is motivated by an image-schema metaphor. An image-schema metaphor is not essentially motivated by the cross-domain mapping associated with structural metaphors. Image-schema metaphors map relatively little from source to target. As the name implies, image-schema metaphors have source domains that have skeletal image-schemas. The image-schema metaphor conceptualizes dementia as an object that exists inside a container, the brain. The brain is a container and the object (disease) exists within the container, the brain. It is this object that dries out (or up) the brain and incapacitates it. Kövecses (2010) contends that, out, as in "to be out of something" indexes events and states such as losing consciousness, lack of attention, something breaking down, death, or absence of something. Each

of them indicates a negative state of affairs. Thus, *Òkpónùbúrù* entails DISEASE DRIES OUT (or UP) THE BRAIN metaphor. The brain as container also ties in with ontological metaphors.

Dementia being framed as an object implies the disease is something that develops inside the brain (a container) and dries it up in the process. This presupposes that the brain used to be a full and functional container before the object (drier – the disease) comes to reduce its functionality. Dementia, metaphorically, dries up the brain and leaves it empty. It is the dryness or emptiness of the brain that results in the signs and symptoms associated with the disease such as loss of memory or consciousness. The Igbo consider the brain an important organ that motivates human actions such as memory, thought, vision, etc. They believe that dryness or emptiness of the brain results in a malfunctioned being and the inability of the sufferer to carry out their normal functions.

(11) *Ìshì-ìmmebí* (Psychosis): Disease/condition is a spoilt head/mind. *Ìshì-ìmmebí* in Igbo refers to any other form of mental disorderliness outside outright madness (*ara*). The expression, *ishì-ìmmebí*, is an ontological metaphor that conceptualizes the human mind (head) as a physical object. A fragile object such as a clay pot is the source domain from which inferences are made to understand the shape, structure and functionality of the head (mind). Clay pots are fragile objects used for preservation of goods or water. A clay pot that is in good condition can store and preserve goods while a spoilt/damaged clay pot will achieve the opposite of the intended purpose. Similarly, the clay pot of the head (*oku-ishì* in Oru-Igbo dialect) can be in sound condition or in bad condition. Thus, a spoilt/damaged mind (head) like a spoilt or damaged clay pot cannot effectively preserve goods nor function optimally, where preservation implies being normal or working optimally. This evokes the metaphorical entailment; HEAD/MIND IS A FRAGILE OBJECT.

(12) *Ánwú-ímúṛ/mbà ímúṛ* (Stroke): Disease is a killer of spirits/challenge of spirits. While the first (*Ánwú-ímúṛ*) is commonly used by Oru-Igbo speakers, the latter (*mbà ímúṛ*) could be heard among other speakers of the Igbo language. Even though stroke is a condition that affects the physical body of the victim the Igbo perceive it as a condition that kills the spirits (*ímúṛ*) of the sufferer. The DISEASE IS A KILLER OF SPIRITS metaphor is orientational because it is concerned with the basic human spatial orientations. There is an implied juxtaposition of opposites in the expression: dead vs alive; active body vs inactive body. ALIVE IS UP; DEAD IS DOWN; HEALTHY IS UP; SICK IS DOWN; ACTIVE IS UP; INACTIVE IS DOWN. An active body is alive (UP); An inactive body is dead (DOWN). There is also the implied meaning that suggests that to die in the spirits is to render the physical force/being inactive. Here, death metaphorically frames being physically incapacitated or lacking the motivation and spiritual stamina to function as normal and healthy humans.

4.7 Name according to effects of disease on the physical body of the sufferer/disease as physical impediment

(13) *Órìā-ōzìzà* (Elephantiasis): Disease is a heavy burden. The DISEASE IS A MOUNTAINOUS BURDEN metaphor explains an attempt by the Igbo society to comprehend an abstract phenomenon using their knowledge of a source domain (mountain/heavy load). *Órìā-ōzìzà* (*Ídígírī-pō* in some dialects of Igbo) is the Igbo name for elephantiasis. Either name describes the disease as a condition that causes enlargement and hardening of limbs and other parts of the body such as the genitalia and breasts.

The adjective heavy and the nominal group burden are the carriers of the metaphorical meanings that underlie the expression that disease is a heavy burden on the sufferer as a result of the enlargement of affected parts of the body. Studies (Gibbs Jr, 2017, p.71) reveal that adjectives were determined as the third most metaphorical (18%) in English discourse. The metaphorical expression conceptualizes elephantiasis as a burden. The meanings of burden include “a heavy load that is difficult to carry”; “something difficult and unpleasant that one has to deal with or worry about”; “something oppressive or worrisome”, etc. The underlying metaphor therefore construes the disease as a heavy load that is difficult for the sufferer to carry. A heavy load represents the enlarged limbs and other body parts while the metaphor of being difficult to carry frames an impediment to movement. Our knowledge of our everyday lives shows that heavy loads impede quick or fast movement. This carries the entailment DISEASE IS A HEAVY LOAD metaphor. This agrees with our orientational knowledge of HEAVY IS DOWN (SLOW); LIGHT IS UP (FAST). Again, the EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor that

conceptualizes difficulties as impediments is evident in the expression. The notion of a heavy load communicates the ideology of something mountainous, very big, huge or massive. This implies that the disease is not just a heavy load in itself, it is also very big, huge or massive in size, thereby constituting an impediment to the movement of the sufferer. The source domains for understanding the target domain (elephantiasis) are mountain and heavy load.

(14) *Àkwúkwù* (Epilepsy): Disease/condition is a violent physical force. *Àkwúkwù*, essentially onomatopoeic in function and meaning, is derived from the effect of the disease on its victim or how the sufferer reacts while under attack. The Igbo use the expression or sound *kwù-kwù-kwù* (a rhythmic pattern) from which *àkwúkwù* derives, to construe a situation in which one is violently thrown on the floor/ground and convulses/shakes rhythmically in pain. EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor perceives CAUSES AS FORCES. The metaphorical source domain for the expression (DISEASE IS A VIOLENT PHYSICAL FORCE) is image-schematic. Image-schemas are dynamic analogue representations of spatial relations and movements in space. The metaphor draws from our knowledge that physical forces such as a violent push, pull, thrust, shove, etc. could unsettle the physical balance of the receiver of the action. The *Àkwúkwù* disease is therefore conceptualized as a violent natural force that knocks down its victim and makes them twist helplessly on the floor.

(15) *Órìā-ómájìjì* (Parkinson Disease): Disease is a shivering/shaking force. *Órìā-ómájìjì* (*Ònò nàní ághò égbē* in some dialects of Igbo) derives from the conceptual metaphor that DISEASE IS A NATURAL FORCE such as cold wind that can make one (the body) shake or shiver. *Órìā* is a sickness/disease while *jìjì* is a constant shaking of the body in Igbo. Thus, *Órìā-ómájìjì* freely translates as ‘disease or illness that makes the body to shake or shiver constantly or uncontrollably’. It should be noted that while other conditions such as malaria or fever and emotional states such as laughter, fear or crying can cause the body to shake or shiver, they are not carriers of the attribution *Órìā* (disease/illness) in Igbo language and thought. The DISEASE IS A NATURAL FORCE metaphor draws its source domain from bodily actions and experiences such as the physical condition of the body and natural occurrences to express an abstract entity (Parkinson disease), the target domain. The metaphorical expression enjoins speakers of the Igbo language to use their knowledge of a natural force such as a severely cold wind and its effect on an exposed human body to understand what the disease does to the body of the sufferer. The pattern of reasoning that enables the Igbo native speaker to map the source domain on the target domain is image-schematic. The underlying image-schematic structure ensures that the domains so mapped are structurally related in the context.

(16) *Mkpónwú áhū* (Paralysis): Disease/condition is a drier of the body. The Igbo conceptualize paralysis as something or a condition that dries up the body of the victim. The metaphor draws from nature and compares the human body with leaves. Leaves could be fresh or dry. Fresh leaves metaphorize a healthy body while dry leaves represent an unhealthy one. Leaves could be dried by sun, heat, fire or other elements and when dried, the leaf loses its freshness. Thus, paralysis does to the human body what heat, fire or any other harsh element does to a fresh leaf – dries it up. Paralysis is therefore a condition that withers or dries up the freshness of the human body. The Igbo language speakers consequently map the source domain (dry leaf) on the target domain (paralysed body) in their attempt to conceptualize and understand a dreaded phenomenon, paralysis.

5. Conclusion

The study shows how metaphor enables the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria to express their understanding of some dreaded diseases and medical conditions. The names the Igbo ascribe to diseases and conditions emanate from their understanding of their cultural and social orientations, bodily actions and experiences. Structural, ontological, orientational and image-schematic metaphors that represent the diseases/medical conditions as container, natural/physical force, journey, heavy burden, leaf, object, etc. are used as source domains by Igbo native speakers in attempts to understand or explain complex and abstract phenomena, the diseases and conditions, as target domains. The data presented and analysed in the study support the argument of CMT theorists that ordinary everyday discourse could be metaphorical. Thus, the various metaphorical frames used by the Igbo to conceptualize diseases and

conditions reveal that metaphorical meanings underlie most of the discourses (both serious and mundane) the group uses to express and communicate its social and cultural experiences in context.

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