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## Bribe and Bribery Labeling in Kenyan Anti-Corruption Discourse: A Conceptual Metaphor Perspective

Aunga Solomon Onchoke\*, Okwako Eric  
Kaimosi Friends University College, Kenya  
\*Email: [aungasolo@yahoo.com](mailto:aungasolo@yahoo.com)

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### Abstract

Corruption in Kenya has been a particularly large problem since its independence from British rule in 1963. This paper explores the motivation behind a cultural specific metaphor of bribe and bribery labeling in Kenya as seen from the conceptual metaphor viewpoint. The study identifies and explains the different terms relating to a bribe and bribery, describes social-cultural values in Kenya, and accounts for the cognitive processes involved in their interpretation. The data includes a list of terms collected from traffic police officers, public transport workers and commuters from different parts of Kenya. These metaphors were identified by the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) created by Pragglejaz Group (2007) and analyzed using the Cognitive Metaphor Theory from Lakoff and Johnson (1987). The results reveal that language spoken by a society is an essential part of its culture, and the lexical distinctions drawn by each language reflect culturally important features of objects, foods, institutions, games, air we breathe and other activities in the society in which the language operates. We argue that conceptual metaphors are conduits of communication, and it is prudent to apply the cognitive linguistic approach for their better contextual appreciation. This paper concludes by suggesting further avenues for research into socio-cultural metaphors, and by calling for the government to innovate new ways of fighting corruption because the players have invented ingenious ways of communicating about it metaphorically beyond comprehension for a lay person.

**Keywords:** metaphor; culture; corruption; bribery; bribe; Kenya

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### INTRODUCTION

This article deals with language use. It examines the conceptualization of terms relating to bribes and bribery in Kenya using conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). The giving of bribes is a form of corruption which is a big problem in many countries where the rule of law has failed. Gbenga (2007) posits that corruption has affected many developing countries, especially in Africa, causing the continent to be the most corrupt in the world. Kenya, a country in East Africa, has always performed poorly in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) surveys conducted by Transparency International, an international organization set up to check on corruption levels in different countries and try to curb it. In the latest CPI 2017 survey, Kenya was listed at 145 out of 176 countries, making it one of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, 2018).

According to Shehu (2005: 70), “Corruption is offering or giving, to a public official or any other person, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage, for the official himself or herself or

another person or entity, in order the official to act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his or her official duties”. Corrupt practices are numerous, and ordinarily they range from minor corruption cases (whereby bribes are required before normal administrative procedures are accomplished) to mega corruption (involving considerable sums of money paid in return for special treatment or access) (Kempe, 2014). Many scholars have tried to distinguish between the terms ‘bribery’ and ‘a bribe’. Among them are Gbenga (2007) & Transparency International (2018) who view ‘bribery’ as the payment or acceptance (in money or kind) that is given or taken in a corrupt relationship, and define ‘a bribe’ as an inducement or a fixed sum, a certain percentage of a contract, or any other favor in money or kind, usually paid to a state official or any other person at an advantageous position who can make contracts on behalf of the state or otherwise distribute benefits to companies or individuals, businessmen and clients.

According to Odhiambo (2015), the culture of corruption has spread through the Kenyan nation at large, and has become pervasive. It is argued that establishments like the judiciary sys-

tem and the police, which were designed for the regulation of the relationships between citizens and the State, are being used instead for the individual improvement of public service workers (politicians and bureaucrats) and other corrupt private proxies (individuals, groups, and businesses). Notwithstanding the feeble efforts being put to fight corruption in Kenya, corruption practices still persist because there are people in authority and individuals who gain from these practices and the existing administrative establishments lack both the motivation and capacity to stop them from doing so (Akech, 2011). According to Mutula, et al. (2013), Kivuva (2011), Akech (2011), Kirui and Murkomen (2011), Amutabi (2009) and Kiai (2008), the problem of corruption in Kenya is linked to having very weak constitutional structures, deeply entrenched ethnocentrism, and ineffective laws.

This study analyzes terms relating to bribe and bribery in Kenya from a cognitive linguistic viewpoint using the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) was developed by cognitive linguists who argued that metaphors are a property of language, thought and linguistic phenomena, and that they involve perceiving one experience in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1994; Grady, 1997; Langacker, 1999; Kövecses, 2002, 2005; Evans & Green, 2006 and Jakel, 2002). Thus, metaphors involve two notions or conceptual domains: the Y and the X. According to CMT, we use the imagination to map and understand experiences by either using metaphors or metonymies through the use of image schemas through shared attributes (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 35-40; Lakoff & Turner, 1989: 103-104; Gunter Radden & Zoltan Kövecses, 1999).

According to Ortony (1975, pp. 45), metaphors are necessary and function as a cognitive instruments for observing the world and creating new senses like in this case terms relating to a bribe and bribery. Furthermore, Moser (2000) argued that metaphor analysis is useful for accessing tacit knowledge and exploring "social and cultural processes of understanding". Since language is fundamentally metaphorical, people's conceptual system, which governs their everyday talk, thought and even actions, is also fundamentally metaphorical. Consequently, a metaphor is regarded as a way of thinking about or conceptualizing the world, and understanding a bribe and bribery in different ways is metaphorical, in this case. In this study, terms relating to bribes and bribery in Kenya are analyzed within the Social-cultural metaphor model. This argues that there

exists a type of resemblance metaphor where the source and target are social-culturally related (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Grady, 1999, 2005; Moon, 2006; Gibbs, 1994; Langacker, 1999; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1993; Kövecses 2005; Ritchie, 2013 & Takada, et al., 2006).

## METHODS

Qualitative research was used for this study because it does not produce discrete numerical data (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003; Zielinski, 2008; Creswell, 2012), and the researcher relies on the views of participants and analyses words to find themes (Patton, 2002). The qualitative aspect was useful because the data in this study of conceptual mappings, vital relations and image schemas was largely not numerical. In order to explain the use of the conceptualization of terms relating to bribe and bribery in Kenya, a thorough examination of the various linguistic expressions surrounding corruption was undertaken. The data sample for the study consisted of the *Kenyan languages' speakers*, drawn from sectors perceived as most corrupt and included linguistic expressions that are used in bribe and bribery discourse.

The respondents were sampled from traffic police, public transport workers and commuters who all belong to the Ministry of Internal Security and public transport because the two were labeled the second and third most corrupt ministries in Kenya, respectively (Transparency International, 2017 & Mamdooh, 2016). Moreover, transport operators are known to bribe police officers to get away with serious traffic offenses ranging from over speeding, operating overloaded or faulty transport vehicles, driving without valid licenses and driving under the influence of alcohol (Gitau, 2010; The Kenya Constitution, 2010). The respondents were required to give the linguistic expressions drawn from the area of bribe and bribery, but these expressions were not examined in context / were not recorded as part of 'natural' speech. The study employed purposive sampling techniques whereby the researcher was assisted by the assistant to pick the respondents with appropriate characteristics like picking security officers working with Traffic Police, drivers, bus conductors and touts working with the public transport sector and commuters (Tongco, 2007).

There were 200 respondents in total: 50 public transport drivers (45 males and 5 females), 50 touts (all males), 50 commuters (25 males and 25 females) and 50 traffic police officers (40 males and 10 females). The gender balance was not achieved (there were 160 males and 40 females)

because the jobs of driving public transport vehicles, being touts and working as law enforcers are considered largely as masculine jobs in Kenya. The study utilized an interview schedule and a tape recorder, where the respondents were subjected to the same open-ended questions which permitted detailed responses, which in turn gave an insight into the feelings, background, hidden motivations, intuitions, interests, and decisions of the respondents (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

The researcher asked the respondents to name words and phrases relating to bribes or bribery, and what the words meant. In addition, the researcher asked them to describe the surface and deeper meanings that some of these processes elicited. Subsequently, they were asked, using their intuition and memory, to name the values considered and the contexts in which these alternative terms were used and the reasons for their use. The data obtained were examined critically in order to get detailed information about how the terms relating to bribes and bribery are perceived.

The conceptual metaphors were identified by the researcher using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) created by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). MIP is a method used for identifying metaphorically used words in spoken and written discourses. The data were then scrutinized and split into themes with related properties which acted as the source domain. The researcher collected 60 words which were in different Kenyan languages. This small sample was chosen in order to allow for in-depth investigation and analysis of the data (Trudgill, 1973).

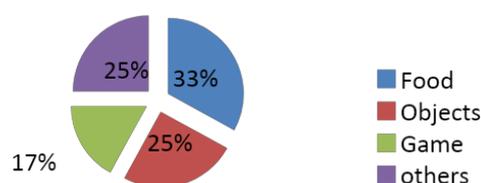
Consequently, the data were presented in different languages and a gloss translation in English provided. The recorded data were transcribed and translated. Field remarks written during the sessions were used to supplement the recorded data, especially in cases where references to particular items were unclear. This was thereafter followed by transcription and translation of the copies of the different languages into English.

The analysis of the data was discursive; the researcher identified, delimited and sorted the relevant information. The relevant words and phrases were sorted and classified into different themes by looking at related values. A list of these categories was then compiled into groups. In addition, explanations of how the images, words, and phrases are understood in the Kenyan context were provided. The common themes identified based on the social-cultural values were then mapped from the source domain to the target domain using the Cognitive Metaphor Theory, and then the cognitive processes were explained.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to demystify the terms relating to bribes and bribery labeling in Kenyan corruption discourse, the data collected from the respondents were identified as metaphors by the use of Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by taking into account of the social-cultural values. Tables and pie charts were used to aid the presentation of the responses obtained. The figure that follows gives a summary of terms relating to bribes and bribery in Kenya as collected from the respondents.

Percentage of terms relating to a bribe and bribery in Kenya



**Figure 1.** Summary of terms relating to bribes and bribery in Kenya

Figure 1 shows that a total of 60 terms relating to bribes and bribery in Kenya were collected from the respondents. Based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), the words were classified into food, objects, game and others (miscellaneous group containing different ways of conceptualizing bribes and bribery) by the researcher. These main groups or themes also act as source domains in the mapping process. There were 20 names for food, 15 for objects, 10 for games and 15 others, representing 33%, 25%, 17% and 25% respectively.

The research used a *social-cultural metaphor model* in which socio-cultural interpretations of the source and target concepts play a crucial role in the mapping: the source and target concepts are associated with socially defined properties (Grady 1999: Takada 2006). This model fits in this study because specific qualities of the source (foods, objects, games and other themes) as understood and perceived by Kenyans are mapped onto the target (bribes or bribery). This was also emphasized by Mittelberg (2007:34) when he posited that Metaphors transport the images, feelings, values, thought patterns and general life experiences entrenched in our cultures. Si-

imilarly, Kövecses (2005) also accepted this view when he said that a metaphor is not only based on similarity; but it is also based on cross-domain correlations in our experience, which gives rise to the perceived similarities between the two domains within the metaphor. Not all properties are mapped in the mapping process from the source domain to the target domain. The metaphor can only make sense if we know those culturally accepted features of the source domain because metaphors are selective, highlighting particular aspects of the source and the target while hiding others (Lakoff, 1993& Jakel, 2002).

Next, some conceptual metaphors relating to bribes and bribery in Kenya are analyzed showing the ontological correspondences in the mapping process and how language reflects the culturally important features of objects, institutions, and activities in the society in which the language (Lyons, 1968:432).

### **Bribe is An Object**

Ontological Correspondence:

Source Domain > Target Domain

An object > a bribe

People use machines and tools or objects to work, play, fight, and for pleasure; these things and the activities related to them show up as metaphorical expressions (Kövecses, 2010). A bribe is conceptualized as an object, thus, A BRIBE IS AN OBJECT is the basic level conceptual metaphor. This metaphor also has several other lower levels or layers of schematic mapping depending on the particular object. For instance, we have the conceptual metaphor, A BRIBE IS SOAP (detergent). This metaphor means that a bribe is something good; therefore, it is likened to a soap which cleans or makes one pure. A bribe is also conceptualized as “something small”. The most populous tribe in Kenya, the Kikuyu, refers to it as *kanyamukanini*; the Abagusii refer to it as *gentogeke*; the Luo refer to it as *gimoromatini*; and in Swahili the form is *kitukidogo*. All these terms refer to a bribe as “something small”. It means that for whatever one has collected, you offer a small fraction to the victim being bribed in the form of a bribe to buy your way, and you are left with a bigger portion. A BRIBE IS A BLANKET is another metaphor that the respondents mentioned. A blanket gives a picture of what is given to a traffic officer to make him “sleep’ (not to be vigilant or assume any offences), and not to look at the faults of the driver, conductor, passengers, vehicle and other inadequacies. The bribe is therefore meant to induce artificial sleep in the traffic officer or the receiver of the bribe in the hope that

they will turn a blind eye to the infractions. Bribes are also conceptualized as envelopes, A BRIBE IS AN ENVELOPE. An envelope in normal cases carries letters, but, in this case an envelope carries concealed money (a bribe) which is meant for the officers concerned, thus producing the metonymy, CONTAINER FOR THE CONTENTS (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). An envelope here is conceptualized as a gift to whoever is receiving it; thus, it is a favor or something good. Lastly, another object associated with this metaphor is dust, hence, A BRIBE IS DUST. Dust appears during the dry period, especially on roads that are not tarmacked, of which there are many in Kenya. Dust is meant to blind the policeman in order to avoid seeing the traffic offences allegedly being committed by the many vehicles cruising in the Kenyan dusty roads.

A bribe is also conceptualized as a sweet thing, A BRIBE IS A SWEET THING. Thus such ethnic groups refer to it as a sweet or chocolate. The Abagusii ethnic group calls it, *egetamutamu*, The Swahili call it, *peremende* and such like related names from other communities. The sweetness of chocolate is mapped to the irresistible nature of bribes. Those who have taken bribes argue that it is an addition of what somebody earns, and because of the harsh economic conditions, it is very hard to reject just like something sweet despite the hidden long term hazards of leading to diseases like diabetes. The same way, those taking bribes might face consequences if caught, but the benefits are also far greater than the consequences. This has made the fight against this form of corruption almost impossible to eradicate.

### **Bribe is Food**

Ontological Correspondence:

Source Domain > Target Domain

Food > A bribe

Eating > Taking/accepting a bribe

Drinking > Taking/ accepting a bribe

Tasting food > taking/accepting a bribe for the first time

According to Lopez (2014), food is a basic need, and its color, texture, smell, state and taste is always pervasively used as a source domain mapping to different things. Different delicacies in Kenya have been historically associated with different tribes, as the country depends on agriculture. According to the Republic of Kenyan Ministry of Water and Irrigation (2009), Kenya is a leading producer of tea and coffee, as well as the third-leading exporter of fresh produce, such as cabbages, onions and mangoes. Small farms

grow most of the corn, and also produce milk and other animal products (like meat, chicken, mutton and pork) as well as potatoes, bananas, beans and peas. Conceptualizing a bribe as food is common, as witnessed from the many responses. There is also plenty of fish because of the Indian Ocean, lakes like Victoria, Nakuru, Turkana and Naivasha, and the presence of many rivers and fish-ponds used by small-scale farmers. Three conceptual metaphors relating to food were apparent in the data: A BRIBE IS FOOD, TAKING A BRIBE IS EATING FOOD (like meat, chicken, pork, mutton, <sup>1</sup>*ugali* etc.) and TAKING A BRIBE IS DRINKING A LIQUID (like water, beer, porridge, tea and coffee). According to Transparency International (2017), the Kenyan police force - especially traffic police - are the most corrupt compared to other departments and notorious in taking bribes. The respondents, especially the commuters, explained that when approaching a road block manned by traffic police officers, the touts or drivers could be seen alighting quickly, run to the officers and talk to them behind the vehicle or bus. After the officers take the bribe, they could pretend to be inspecting the vehicles, and then they flag it to proceed with the journey as the bribe givers board the vehicle. The touts and the drivers then could be heard asking each other after bribing the traffic officers with passengers listening using linguistic expressions such as, “*Has the soldier eaten ugali or chicken or meat or fish? Or just, has he eaten? Or has he drunk tea, or any other drink? Or just, has he drunk?* All these expressions mean that the traffic officer has been compromised by being given a bribe.

### **Bribery is A Game**

Ontological Correspondence:

Source Domain > Target Domain

A game > bribery

Playing > the process of bribing

A game > a bribe

A ball > a bribe

Referee > another person/senior officer

Being scored > accepting/taking a bribe

Being caught > being caught bribing

Being unable to score/ball blocked > a bribe rejected

Scoring > being bribed

Many scholars have conceptualized games such as football in terms of something else.

<sup>1</sup>Ugali is an African dish made of cornmeal porridge. It is the most common staple starch featured in the local cuisines of most Africans and it has different names depending with the tribe and region (*kimnyet, sima, sembe, obokima, kaunga, dona, obusuma, ngima, "kwon", arega or posho*)

Lakoff (1991) observed that soccer, like war, is a competitive sport where there is normally a clear winner and loser, strategic thinking, team work, preparedness, spectator behavior, the glory of winning and the shame of defeat. Consequently, Gunnar Bergh (2011) investigated war-inspired terminology in live football commentary using the FOOTBALL IS WAR conceptual metaphor.

Many similarities exist between the source domain (a game) and the target domain (bribery). Just as the purpose of a game is to beat an opponent, the aim of bribery is for one person to bribe another; the person who bribes the other gains an advantage or victory so that they go around doing their work uninterrupted. On the basis of the knowledge above, bribery can be conceptualized as a game among rivals. Most activities that take place during a game of football can be mapped to a bribery event or process. Therefore, the following conceptual metaphors exist: BRIBERY IS A GAME, A BRIBE IS A BALL, PLAYING A GAME IS A PROCESS OF BRIBING SOMEBODY, SUCCESSFULLY BRIBING SOMEBODY IS SCORING A GOAL, ACCEPTING A BRIBE IS BEING SCORED, BEING CAUGHT BY ANOTHER THIRD PERSON SUPERIOR IN THE PROCESS OF RECEIVING/ GIVING A BRIBE IS BEING CAUGHT OFFSIDE, and NOT GETTING A CHANCE TO BRIBE THE OFFICER OR THE PERSON REJECTING A BRIBE IS BEING UNABLE TO SCORE. Here bribery is visualized as playing a game. Soccer is a game that is a popular sport throughout the world; by likening bribery to a game of football, the sweetness of bribery is highlighted, despite its illegality. Respondents interviewed narrated how the drivers, conductors and touts could be heard asking one another after a bribing a traffic police officer, *Have you played him a game? Have you scored? How was the game? Were you caught offside by the referees around?* Thus, asking if any bribery occurred. The use of this language makes the bribe and bribery discourse fascinating and harder for people outside the sector to grasp what is being referred to.

### **Other Mixed Metaphors**

A bribe is conceptualized as some form of greetings: A BRIBE IS GREETING or BRIBING SOMEBODY IS GREETING THE PERSON. Greetings normally are meant to show that people are friends because human beings are social animals. In most cases, when a driver or bus conductor sees a traffic officer, he will alight very fast with something in his palm; he greets the officer leaving the money normally folded into

something tiny in the officer's hand. It is very hard for a stranger to detect the action because it happens swiftly, but keen observers know that the officer has taken a bribe. Then you will overhear one saying, *I have greeted him or he has accepted my greetings*, meaning that the person being referred to has taken a bribe. So, according to the respondents, greetings, apart from establishing a relationship, are also used metaphorically.

Another conceptual metaphor that was common is reference to 'light'; examples include, BRIBING SOMEBODY IS SHINNING LIGHT ON THE PERSON, A BRIBE IS LIGHT and BRIBING IS LIGHTING/ ILLUMINATING. A Kiswahili word, *mulika*, was used which means to illuminate. This word has two metaphorical meanings from the analysis. One, it means to bribe; secondly, it also means for a police officer to arrest a person. *Mulikwa* in *Kiswahili* which means to 'illuminate light metaphorically', means 'to be arrested' or 'to take a bribe'. The word comes from the word, *mulika*. The respondents explained that the word originates from the process when a vehicle lights the headlamps. When a particular vehicle had given a bribe on a return trip or when the driver meets the same Traffic police officers who had already taken a bribe, they could flash lights as an indicator/sign that they had paid. Upon seeing the lights, the officers allow the vehicle to pass without giving a bribe again.

BRIBING SOMEBODY IS TALKING WITH/TO THE PERSON or BRIBING A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER IS HAVING A TALK/DISCUSSION WITH HIM. Also, in this case, A BRIBE IS A TALK/ DISCUSSION: this was also a common metaphor from the respondents. Talking to a police officer meant giving him a bribe. You could hear the drivers, conductors and touts (players of the sector) gossiping and asking one another about the action, *'Have you talked/ discussed with him? Have you had a talk/ discussion with him?'* This clearly means compromising the officer to allow one to carry out illegal

activities that are against the law. Other conceptual metaphors related to term 'talk' are actions of hearing, visiting and seeing. The metaphors generated are: BRIBING SOMEBODY IS VISITING/SEEING/ HEARING THE PERSON. Consequently, A BRIBE IS A VISIT, BEING BRIBED IS BEING VISITED, and BEING BRIBED IS BEING HEARD/VISITED/SEEN. Another action associated with bribery is 'blinding' (making somebody blind). BRIBING SOMEBODY IS BLINDING THE PERSON. According to the respondents, the action of giving out a bribe is conceptualized as making the receiver blind so that they won't see the illegality being committed. It is like closing the eyes of the receiver of the bribe not to 'waste time' asking many questions. So, in Kenya, public transport operators make the traffic officers 'blind' by giving them bribes to allow them to break traffic rules as they wish because the officers are already compromised.

Finally, another action associated with bribery is 'grinding of maize into flour'. It is common knowledge that the majority of the Kenyan populace relies on maize as a staple food for their '*ugali*'. The maize seeds have to be ground into flour using a special grinding machine. One tribe (Kisii, a Bantu farming group from Southern Part of Kenya) call the grinding process '*goseera*'. Normally, the owner is paid a few shillings for a tin of maize seeds to be ground. The process is likened to giving of a bribe to somebody, thus, BRIBING SOMEBODY IS GRINDING MAIZE FOR THE PERSON. The whole process is conceptualized metaphorically, because law enforcement officers in Kenya are normally viewed negatively as poor, dishonest and always following petty things like the cents meant for grinding maize which is associated with poverty instead of protecting the citizens and enforcing the law.

Bribes and bribery are also conceptualized as air or oxygen: A BRIBE IS OXYGEN/AIR. The respondents explained how the players of the public transport sector were heard talking about

**Table 1.** Summary of some Linguistic Expressions and Corresponding Cognitive Metaphors

Linguistic expressions	Cognitive metaphors
I gave him a goat, a cow, sheep, hen etc meaning I bribed him	A bribe is an animal
I gave him something	A bribe is an object
I gave him food, he has eaten, I gave him ugali	A bribe is food
I greeted the officer well, the officer accepted the greetings	A bribe is some form of greetings
I gave him oxygen	A bribe is a basic necessity/part of life/ something we cannot do without

giving oxygen to a traffic officer or the officers asking another if a particular vehicle had given oxygen to them to be allowed to pass despite having an overloaded passenger vehicle. This is bribing them to be allowed to subvert the law. Oxygen is crucial for man's survival. Therefore, it goes without saying that a bribe is very important to the traffic officers and equally to the public transport operators because without giving it to the police, they can't be allowed to operate. In this way, bribery has been taken as a very vital part of life and eliminating it is not easy; people, especially the traffic police officer, might die because it is like oxygen. It is through such reasoning and mentality that the war against corruption has become very hard to be won.

## CONCLUSION

This study has established that bribes and bribery are conceptualized in concrete terms such as food, objects, games, the air we breathe and other things and activities we engage in different social settings, giving rise to following cognitive metaphors and their linguistic metaphors in the Kenyan context.

The results reveal that the language spoken by society is an essential part of its culture and the lexical distinctions drawn by each language tend to reflect the culturally important features of objects, foods, institutions, and other activities in the society in which the language operates. Also, metaphors are pervasive in Kenyan languages, and make our thoughts more vivid. Thus, conceptual metaphors are conduits of communication, and it is prudent to apply a cognitive linguistics approach for their better contextual appreciation. The research concludes by suggesting further research in socio-cultural metaphors as a method to innovate new ways of fighting corruption because the players have invented ingenious ways of communicating about it metaphorically.

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