Fixed expressions and culture

The idiomatic MONKEY in common core and West African varieties of English

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This case study examines variation in idiomatic fixed expressions (FEs) in British and West African varieties of English. Using a corpus of newspapers containing FEs with the source domain MONKEY, I contrast those expressions shared by both varieties — the Common Core — with those found only in the African sources. In so doing, I seek to illuminate to what extent uniquely African cultural influences have affected idiomatic language use in these 'New Englishes' beyond the mere adoption of British expressions. The corpus contains 24 FEs, of which 8 belong to the Common Core and 16 classify as potentially new African ones. The analysis of the FEs reveals that West African speakers make use of a much broader spectrum of main meaning foci (Kövecses 2010) when instantiating the HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS MONKEY BEHAVIOR metaphor than do their British counterparts. This wider *system of associated commonplaces* (Black 1954) can be linked to the African natural environment on the one hand and to broader cultural influences on the other, including power and corruption issues as well as African models of community and kinship (Wolf & Polzenhagen 2009). On a more global level, this paper lends evidence to the importance of *cultural conceptualizations* (Sharifian 2011) as a further dimension of variation in the study of World Englishes.

Keywords: metaphor, Africa, fixed expressions, World Englishes, cognition, animal metaphors, proverbs, idioms

> *"Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten."*
> *Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (1958)*

1.   Introduction

There are few realms in which the intimate link between language and culture is more obvious than proverbs and idioms. They capture cultural knowledge in a condensed form and convey in a very straightforward, yet metaphorical way what speakers consider as cultural wisdom on what is right or wrong (Moon 1998, pp. 22, 257; Taylor 1931, p. 87). Hence they lend themselves particularly well to cross-cultural and cross-varietal investigations into the interface between language and culture. In 1994, René Dirven examined this interplay in a special context, presenting the first book-length study to take a cognitive linguistic perspective on the transfer of a language from one sociogeographical context to another. This was the case when, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dutch colonizers brought their language to South Africa, which gradually diverged from its European counterpart, yielding the closely related daughter language Afrikaans. Alongside a stock of metaphors shared by both languages, he identified a group of metaphors unique to Afrikaans. It was the latter group that he assumed to be indicative of new cultural and ideological factors influencing South African speakers since the split from the European variety.

Inspired by Dirven's approach, my research deals with a very similar phenomenon: since its introduction to Britain's former colonies, predominantly in the nineteenth century, the English language has seen the emergence of new second-language varieties, or *New Englishes* (Kachru 1992, p. 356), which have received increased scholarly attention within a *World Englishes* framework (see Wolf & Polzenhagen 2009). As a global language, English has been *contextualized* in many different cultures (see Kachru 1983) and serves as an ideal testing ground for the investigation of cultural influences on varieties of the same language. In the African context, for instance, it is widely spoken as a lingua franca, and speakers have left their mark on the language by expressing their distinct cultures through it. Just like Dirven observed for Afrikaans, it is to be expected that close examination of linguistic evidence from these new varieties reveals metaphoric and metonymic conceptualizations linked to genuinely African cultural elements that are absent in Western varieties.

In the present paper, I conduct a cross-cultural case study of the conceptual domain MONKEY in British and West African texts. In particular, I focus on figurative *fixed expressions* (FEs), contributing to the study of cultural aspects of phraseology in English (see Skandera 2007).[1] In line with Dirven's approach, I assume a

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1.   *Fixed expressions* is a widely used yet somewhat misleading term, also adopted by Rosamund Moon, who has rightly pointed out that 'lexicogrammatical fixedness' is not a sufficient criterion to determine idiomaticity since many FEs occur in considerable variation (see Moon 1998, p. 7).

common stock of idioms and proverbs that Africans have adopted from the British as well as a group of new expressions produced independently of British influence. In analyzing the conceptual basis of these expressions, I explore genuinely African evaluations of the MONKEY domain and their potential sources in the West African natural environment and culture.

2.   Culture and cognition

One of the basic characteristics that Archer Taylor, a pioneer in the field of proverb studies, attributes to this group of expressions is that they mean "far more than the sum of the words composing [them]" (Taylor 1931, p. 10). In other words, idiomatic FEs are inherently metaphoric in nature. In cognitive theories of metaphor and metonymy, both phenomena are seen as primarily conceptual, and conceptual variation across cultures is reflected in the linguistic metaphors used in a given culture (see Kövecses 2015, p. 2; Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 22). This conceptual organization of cultural knowledge can be linked to different *frames* that are salient in the respective communities (see Fillmore 1982; Kövecses 2015, p. 2).[2] In his work on the interface between language, culture, and cognition, Farzad Sharifian (2011, 2015) has developed a framework with which to investigate this kind of cultural knowledge systematically, and he proposes cultural metaphors as one of the analytical tools with which to lay bare the *cultural conceptualizations* underlying the language use of a given group. One of the early metaphor researchers, Harald Weinrich (1976, pp. 283, 287) establishes that individual metaphors do not usually present isolated cases but tend to be embedded into larger image fields (*Bildfelder*), such as FINANCE, which are more or less salient in a given culture; the respective cultural groups and the image fields distributed among its members make up an image field community (*Bildfeldgemeinschaft*).[3] Similarly, Max Black (1954) points out that the metaphorical transfer between a source and a target domain (or, in his terms, the *subsidiary* and *primary subjects*) is not so much based on the objective dictionary meaning of the source domain but rather on the *system of associated*

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2. This phenomenon has been studied under a variety of different terms that have been linked to Fillmore's notion of *frames* (see also Cienki 2007). These include *cultural script* (Shank & Abelson 1977), *cultural model* (Quinn & Holland 1987), *Idealized Cognitive Model* (Lakoff 1987), and *cultural schema* (Sharifian 2003).

3. This makeup of an image field community ties in with Sharifian's (2003, p. 192) notion of *distributed representation* of frames or *cultural schemas*: they are not equally present in each individual member but there is sufficient overlap to justify their allocation into the same cultural group.

commonplaces, i.e., that which is "readily and freely evoked" by a certain concept in a given culture (p. 287f).

A crucial observation in the FEs discussed below is the range of features mapped from the MONKEY domain onto the HUMAN one, which covers both humorous and very serious aspects. There appears to be a MONKEY scale ranging from light-hearted FOOLISHNESS to serious CORRUPT and dangerous PREDATORY BEHAVIOR. As will be seen below, however, the British and the African texts appear to focus on one end of the scale each: while the British MONKEY is mostly an entertainment attraction, the African one is taken seriously or even feared. Similarly, the British MONKEY is mostly singled out as an individual whereas the African one is portrayed as a social being within a wider community. In other words, this scale of MONKEY BEHAVIORS emerges only when viewed from a cross-cultural perspective, as each culture forms its own *image field community* with a specific set of *associated commonplaces* for the MONKEY domain.

3.   Methodology and data

The present dataset consists of contextualized monkey FEs in authentic text passages taken from British and West African online newspapers. It is divided up into two subsets, one containing FEs found in both the African and British data, which I refer to as the *Common Core* (CC), and one made up of FEs found exclusively in the African sources. Idiom and proverb dictionaries, which are scarce for African varieties and typically "out-of-date at the moment of their publication" (Doyle 2007, p. 194), were used for reference but did not contribute to the corpus itself.

Initially, a purely formal criterion in terms of syntactic structure was used to allocate a given expression to the CC. This does not exclude potential differences in conceptualizations underlying these structures, which are discussed below. In compiling both subsets of my corpus, I used the following three exclusion criteria to decide whether a given FE should be adopted. First, it had to contain the lexeme MONKEY as the search term in the manual selection process.[4] Second, duplicates, i.e., tokens that occurred in reproduced passages across various publications, were counted only once. Third, two tokens were taken as the minimum criterion for the classification of an FE as *fixed*, i.e., at least potentially conventionalized within the

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4. For practical reasons, FEs whose connection to monkeys is entirely based on metonymy, such as *to go bananas* ("to go crazy": BANANA FOR MONKEY) (Palmatier 1995, p. 167) do not feature in my corpus.

speech community.[5] The detailed token numbers of each FE are given in Tables A and B of the appendix.

It should be noted from the outset that a number of FEs classified as 'new African' might be loan translations from indigenous languages, such as Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba. In some cases, it is not clear in which language a given FE first appeared or, indeed, whether the speakers themselves have this kind of knowledge. What all FEs discussed here have in common, however, is the fact that they are all used in Standard English newspaper texts, mostly without any indication of what might have been the original rendering of the FE.[6] Given the usage-based orientation of this paper, I see no need to exclude loan translations from a study of features of African varieties of English.[7]

The above approach has yielded 24 FEs, 8 in the CC and 16 potentially new African ones, with a total of 387 tokens. Given that my data is not drawn from standardized corpora, I take a primarily qualitative rather than quantitative approach in analyzing each FE for its underlying conceptualizations and cultural implications.[8] A list of newspapers quoted and a key to abbreviations is given in the References section.

4. Analysis of the linguistic data

Proverbs typically specify a source domain, such as NATURE, ANIMALS, or OBJECTS, without any mention of the target domain; nevertheless, we intuitively know that

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5. It could be argued that two tokens do not make a strong argument in favor of conventionalization. However, they were included because they follow the pattern of FEs with a much higher frequency, which form the majority of the corpus (see Tables A and B in the appendix). The argument made in this paper is supported by, but does rest upon, the low-frequency items. Indeed, all FEs discussed in detail throughout this paper have yielded a minimum of three tokens. Ultimately, the status of the low-frequency FEs has to be tested with a corpus much larger than the present one.

6. In all but one of those cases in which it seemed possible that a given FE may have first occurred in a different language, I was, unfortunately, unable to retrieve its original form. I elaborate on the exception below.

7. In fact, Schmied (1991, p. 92f) discusses loan translations of proverbs as a typical feature of African varieties of English at the discourse level, and Skandera (2003) includes loan translations of idioms — including figurative FEs and lexicogrammatical collocations — in his survey of Kenyan English.

8. I cannot, of course, entirely rule out the possibility that some of the 'new African' FEs do actually occur in other varieties, including British English. The classification of an FE as 'uniquely African' means that it did not occur in the particular set of British sources underlying my corpus.

the implied target is the HUMAN domain (Lakoff & Turner 1989, p. 205). The reason why this is so easily retrieved is that people share an idea about the structure of the universe that places all kinds of objects and beings into a hierarchical order known as the *Great Chain of Being*, in which humans occupy a key position in connecting the earthly and spiritual realms (see Lovejoy 1936 and Tillyard 1963 for a history of the idea). Based on this ideology, George Lakoff and Mark Turner have proposed the GREAT CHAIN METAPHOR as being at the heart of proverb comprehension: one level of the Great Chain, usually the HUMAN one, is understood in terms of another (Lakoff & Turner 1989, pp. 170–173).

Transferred to the present dataset, all FEs are, on the surface, about MONKEYS as the source domain. Since it is a feature of proverbs to have HUMANS as their target, I take it for granted that all FEs analyzed in the following draw on HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS MONKEY BEHAVIOR, an instantiation of the more general HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR conceptual metaphor. This holds equally true for all idioms.[9] Therefore, my analysis is guided by what Zoltán Kövecses (2010, p. 137f) has termed the *main meaning focus* of conceptual metaphors, i.e., that aspect of the source domain which constitutes the most salient mapping in a given metaphor.[10]

In the following sections, the CC and new African FEs are dealt with separately. First, the FEs of the respective group are presented in table form (Tables 1 and 2) with a paraphrase of each FE's meaning and the associated main meaning focus of the HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS MONKEY BEHAVIOR conceptual metaphor. The right-most column in both tables indicates additional metaphors or metonymies, where present. Second, selected FEs are analyzed in more detail with appropriate text samples from the corpus.[11]

4.1   Common Core fixed expressions

Although the FEs listed in Table 1 are shared by both varieties, some interesting differences in usage can be observed. While the African data generally incorporates the FEs into the stream of running text, the British samples frequently

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9. The formal criterion here is that proverbs are syntactically independent while idioms need to be incorporated into a larger syntactic structure (see Norrick 1985, p. 31f).

10. It is important to note that the character traits associated with monkeys say nothing about monkeys as such but only about the way they are perceived by speakers. We are dealing with a twofold GREAT CHAIN metaphor: HUMAN characteristics are mapped onto the ANIMAL, which are then mapped back onto HUMANS.

11. Since most FEs occur in considerable variation, I have chosen one citation form for each that I use throughout my paper. Each text sample is left as found in the original; ungrammatical structures are only designated as such where they obscure the intended meaning.

employ them as a catchy headline, particularly when the overall content of the article is factually related to monkeys in some way. Moreover, a large proportion of the British sources use monkey FEs purely to achieve humorous effects while hardly drawing on the FEs' original meanings at all. African texts, by contrast, almost exclusively use them detached from any monkey-related content and with the full deontic load traditionally associated with the FE, especially in denunciating serious issues such as political corruption or criminal behavior.

Table 1. Overview of Common Core monkey FEs

FE	Paraphrase	Main meaning focus HUMAN IS MONKEY	Further conceptualizations
making a monkey out of s.o.	making s.o. look silly or foolish	FOOLISHNESS	-
monkeying around/about	behaving, or manipulating sth., foolishly	FOOLISHNESS	ACTION FOR ACTOR
Monkey see, monkey do.	s.o. doing a task they do not understand	INCOMPETENCE	-
If you pay peanuts, you'll get monkeys.	You only get what you pay for.	INCOMPETENCE	MONEY IS FOOD PEANUT FOR MONKEY
monkey business	foolish or fraudulent behavior	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	-
monkey tricks	fraudulent behavior	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	-
having/getting a monkey on/off one's back	having/resolving a persistent problem	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	PROBLEMS ARE MONKEYS ON ONE'S BACK
not giving a monkey's	having utter disregard for s.o./sth.	INDIFFERENCE	-

For instance, Example 1 employs the idiomatic compound *monkey business* in a newspaper headline; the first sentence of the article introduces a second monkey FE, *monkeying around*:

> (1)　Southend: Monkey business — but all for charity [headline]
> A Southend woman will be monkeying around this weekend when she takes part in a sponsored run — dressed as a gorilla. (BR, UK)

As indicated in Table 1, the FEs in question are usually associated with MISCHIEVOUSNESS and FOOLISHNESS respectively. Here, however, both expressions are used without any such reproachful connotations against the woman. Instead, they function as contextually triggered puns, given the gorilla costume she was planning to wear during her charity run; the original meanings of the FEs are barely

activated. Similarly, the use of the FE *making a monkey out of someone* in Example 2 is prompted by an incident involving an actual monkey.

(2) RSPCA officers thought someone was making a monkey out of them after a group of children said they saw a primate up a tree in a Tottenham garden. (RTT, UK)

Although it can be assumed that the staff did feel quite 'foolish' in this situation, it is clearly not meant as a serious accusation. In both cases, the FE is motivated more by the context than the author's wish to draw on the deontic power of the particular expression, which is in line with Kövecses's (2015, p. 11) view of context as a driving force in guiding not only metaphor interpretation but also its choice on the part of the producer.

The situation is quite different in African usage, which frequently evokes the 'traditional' meanings of FEs reflected in idiom dictionaries. For instance, Spears (1997, p. 243) defines two meanings of *monkey business* that form two points of a continuum ranging from playful, light-hearted, foolish behavior to mischievous, dishonest, and even unethical or illegal activity. Reflecting the cross-cultural MONKEY SCALE introduced above, the British humorous headline in (1) evokes the former sense, whereas Example 3 from the African corpus emphasizes the 'unethical' end of the *monkey business* spectrum:

(3) When leaders are bent on monkey business and not give a monkey's for our country needs, the people suffers and the nation bleeds. (NRS, Sierra Leone)

In this drastic account of the corrupt state of affairs in Sierra Leone, the compound, combined with the idiom *not giving a monkey's*, forms part of a strong denunciation of the political leaders, who are ascribed the role of the MISCHIEVOUS MONKEY that is entirely INDIFFERENT to the population's needs.

Similarly, the use of the idiom *making a monkey out of someone* in Example 4 is located much closer to the 'serious' end of the scale than the British usage of the same FE in (2):

(4) Sanusi went public and made a monkey of his credibility. (DP, Nigeria)

Rather than implying that Sanusi's behavior was silly or funny, as would be typical of British applications of the FE, a more deep-rooted and permanent damage to his image is predicted.

Overall, these examples show that although some of the FEs qualify as CC items in terms of their form, the cross-varietal differences in usage reveal variation in *cultural conceptualizations* (see Sharifian 2011) associated with the MONKEY domain in the respective communities.

4.2 New African English fixed expressions

The present section divides the stock of new African FEs into positive and negative main meaning foci before analyzing FEs that elaborate on versions of the HUNTING frame. Two further groups of FEs — those elaborating on the same foci as the CC, and those with no or neutral mappings in the HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS MONKEY BEHAVIOR metaphor — will be dealt with elsewhere. Table 2 offers an overview of the 8 new African FEs discussed here; a full overview of all 16 FEs is given in the appendix.[12]

Table 2. Overview of a selection of potentially new African English monkey FEs

FE	Paraphrase	Main meaning focus HUMAN IS MONKEY	Further conceptualizations
It is easier to give water to a monkey than to get the cup off his hands.	If s.o. is given sth. good, they may never give it back or may want more.	GREEDINESS	-
One day, monkey go go market e no go come back. ("One day the monkey will go to the market and not return.")	Persistent risky behavior may one day bear negative consequences.	THIEVERY/ BRASH IMPERTINENCE	-
Monkey nor de lef ihn black hand. ("A monkey cannot get rid of its black.")	People never change.	IMMORAL BEHAVIOR/ IMMUTABILITY	PHYSICAL IMMUTABILITY IS IMMUTABILITY IN CHARACTER BODY PART FOR MONKEY
Monkeys play by sizes.	People keep together with their equals.	CORRUPT BEHAVIOR/ LOYALTY	-
Monkey no fine but the mama like am. ("Although the monkey is ugly, his mother likes him.")	Support anyone who belongs to your group, regardless of their actions.	LOYALTY	COMMUNITY IS KIN
Monkey eat, baboon chop.	The privileged few live at the expense of the majority.	DILIGENCE	MONEY IS FOOD ENRICHMENT IS EATING

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12. Some of the FEs discussed are instances of Pidgin English. Since they occur in the stream of otherwise Standard English newspaper texts, I consider them perfectly suitable for detecting African cultural frames articulated through the medium of English. Rough translations of the expressions are given at the appropriate points in the analysis.

Table 2. (*continued*)

FE	Paraphrase	Main meaning focus HUMAN IS MONKEY	Further conceptualizations
To catch a monkey you must behave like a monkey.	To convince s.o., you must adjust to their behavior/needs.	PREY	CONVINCING S.O. IS HUNTING THEM DOWN
The monkey and baboon will be soaked in blood.	There will be fierce competition.	PREDATOR	(NON-PHYSICAL) COMPETITION IS (PHYSICAL) FIGHTING

4.2.1   *The bad monkey*

The FE *It is easier to give water to a monkey than to get the cup off his hands* conceptualizes the monkey as being GREEDY. It could be paraphrased as "if someone is granted something good (the *water*), they will demand even more than intended (the *cup*)."

In Example 5, it is politicians and their parties that are conceptualized as GREEDY MONKEYS. Throughout the article the author discusses, and condemns, an appeal made by the People's Democratic Party's representative Baraje to the Nigerian National Assembly, which included demands for presidential candidate Goodluck Jonathan to withdraw from the 2015 elections. The incident is linked to a paraphrase of the FE:

> (5)   As the saying goes, it is not helping a monkey with a cup of water that
>   matters but retrieving the cup afterwards is really where the burden lies.
>   In like manner, it may not actually matter for now that Alhaji Abubakar
>   Kawu Baraje and his gang of disgruntled elements had gone to the National
>   Assembly … to unburden their opposition to Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's
>   rumoured 2015 Presidential ambition, yet it will someday become an issue of
>   grave concern when other political parties' factional groups would storm the
>   National Assembly complex seeking to be granted same audience in respect
>   of their demands (DP, Nigeria)

In this case, Baraje registering grievances at the National Assembly relates to the monkey having the cup of water: in and of itself, the situation is considered to be relatively harmless; however, giving the monkey — or, in this case, Nigerian politicians — this much power may lead to further demands in the future and to loss of control.

The aspect of GREED is stressed further in Example 6, in which it is argued that the winner of the then-upcoming 2015 presidential elections of Nigeria should not be a member of one of the 'Big Three' ethnic groups (i.e., Igbo, Yoruba, and

Hausa) but someone from a minority group. Addressing the potential concerns of the majorities, the author comments:

(6)   Of course there are risks. The Igbo expression is that the challenge is usually not in giving a cup of water to the monkey but in retrieving the cup after the monkey has had his drink. But politicians do remember their benefactors. The Big Three can take some comfort in this political reality. The minority front would realize quickly that he could not rule without the support of his erstwhile God Father. (NL, Nigeria)

The politicians from the minority are understood in MONKEY terms: once they receive political power (conceptualized as WATER), so the 'Big Three' perhaps fear, they will never give that power back, or worse, they will expand it (i.e., keep the cup).[13] Here, however, the author explicitly denies the applicability of the FE, emphasizing that these politicians should *not* be seen as the proverbial GREEDY MONKEY.

The Pidgin English FE *One day, monkey go go market e no go come back* ("One day the monkey will go to the market and not return") is — in Example 7 — juxtaposed with another proverb, namely *Every day is for the thief, but one day is for the owner*. Both FEs have similar meanings expressed at different levels of specificity: in the latter, a generic thief, usually successful in his stealing, might one day end up being caught. In the former version, it is specifically the *monkey* that routinely steals from a market until one day its luck runs out:

(7)   [E]veryday for the thief, one day for the owner. Or if you prefer this: one day the monkey will go to the market and will not return. … everyday he snatches stuff from stalls and sallies up the tree but one day, for just a small nut, he is circumscribed and bedraggled. (TN, Nigeria)

The monkey, then, is conceptualized as a THIEF. More generally, however, the proverb serves as an exhortation to anyone who habitually behaves in an objectionable or risky way, as though to say: no matter how many times things have gone well, there is always the chance that next time they will not.

(8)   Because the PDP has survived many near catastrophic moments and seasons, it seems to have forgotten that there is always that day when monkey go go market, he no go return. (Sun, Nigeria)

Here, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the leading political party of Nigeria at the time, is criticized for being thoughtless: having successfully stretched its

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13. It is hardly surprising that political power is talked about in terms of a consumable substance given the prevalence of EATING and DRINKING metaphors that commonly structure West African power discourse (see Wolf & Polzenhagen 2009).

limits so many times, it pushes aside the possibility that one day it might not be so lucky. Instead, it maintains its unfavorable behavior rather than changing its ways. The proverbial MONKEY is, therefore, not only a THIEF, but a reckless one at that.

Similarly, the FE *Monkey nor de lef ihn black hand* or *A monkey cannot get rid of its black hand* can be used with a "once a thief, always a thief" reasoning. Its meaning may be paraphrased as "a person being unable to hide from, or conceal, their true nature" (see Sheppard 2012, p. 178). In the source domain, there is the MONKEY with its naturally black hand, which metonymically stands for its entire being: BODY PART FOR MONKEY. This is mapped onto HUMANS who are seen as equally, and naturally, incapable of changing. This not only applies to their physical properties, but, more importantly, to the resistance to change of their character: IMMUTABILITY IN PHYSICAL APPEARANCE IS IMMUTABILITY IN CHARACTER.

(9)   We worry for you because some of them have case histories of dubious deeds, and we all know that "monkey noh dey lef im black han". (Awo, Sierra Leone)

Theoretically, the FE could be applied to any human characteristic seen as stable, yet in the present dataset it consistently refers to immoral or illegal behavior. This can be linked to the FE's emphasis on the color black, which is commonly associated with negative or criminal aspects.

The Ghanaian adage *Monkeys play by sizes* is based on the social hierarchy observed in many monkey groups, which is structured by a pecking order in which individuals of similar ranks (*sizes*) tend to keep together (see Awiapo 2009). Users of this proverb assume that the social behavior of humans is quite similar, suggesting that individuals are most likely to befriend people with whom they have something in common, such as class membership or personal interests. Conversely, people tend to keep away from others belonging to a different, especially lower, rank:

(10)   I have already told you that monkeys play by sizes; so when NPP national executive like the General Secretary, Chairman and flag-bearer speaks, call me. Don't engage me and these young boys. I don't think they understand the issue. (MJO, Ghana)

The General Secretary of Ghana's ruling party NDC, quoted here, employs the FE to suggest that the "young boys" of the opposing NPP party are, given their lower position, not competent enough to engage in conversation with him. Instead, he insists on someone closer to his own rank with whom to discuss matters at hand.

Such in-group bonds may come with certain obligations, for instance when prestigious positions are to be filled:

(11) In the judicial system, he noted, monkeys move by sizes, so Mrs. Lithur's mates in law school would be at the High Courts and Appeal Court. (MJO, Ghana)

The implication is one of in-group loyalty: powerful people distribute high offices in ways that suit them and their associates best, with personal ties potentially outweighing actual competence in the selection process. Given this kind of spoils system, the monkey's LOYALTY expressed here is evaluated rather negatively and is overshadowed by its CORRUPT BEHAVIOR.

4.2.2 *The good monkey*

A more positive, genuine version of LOYALTY is expressed in the Pidgin English proverb *Monkey no fine but the mama like am* ("Although the monkey is ugly, his mother likes him"). The FE depicts a highly personified image of monkeys in terms of a mother's unconditional love for her child. Figuratively, this FE is a guideline for people to be loyal and helpful towards their kin. Such family obligations are evoked in much broader terms than is common in Western cultures. As Frank Polzenhagen and Hans-Georg Wolf (2007, p. 131f) suggest, African cultures understand kinship not only in terms of blood ties but of the community as a whole, yielding the conceptualizations COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE KIN, KINSHIP FOR COMMUNITY, and COMMUNITY FOR KIN. This is made manifest linguistically in productive extensions of kinship terms by, for instance, referring to members of one's village as *brothers* and *sisters*. The moral obligations associated with kin relations are similarly extended to the entire community, which becomes apparent in the following comment on Goodluck Jonathan's qualities as then-president of Nigeria:

(12) The situation has come to *monkey no fine but the mama like am.* You cannot ask me now to access [sic] Jonathan's government based on performance. We have passed that stage because the day we decided to be fair, the Northerners are not ready to be fair. And you cannot sell your brother. So, all of us have staked all that we have; all that we have laboured for all these years because we believe that the collective interest of our people is greater than our individual interest. (DI, Nigeria; original italics)

Juxtaposed with this FE is the explicit designation of Jonathan as *brother* of everyone from the Nigerian south. The reasoning is the following: as Jonathan is essentially kin to everyone, there is the moral obligation to support him regardless of his actual performance in office. In other words, no matter how badly he does (*monkey no fine*), people must continue to appreciate him because he is one of them (*the mama like am*). The author further stresses this obligation by hinting at

the greater cause of the *collective interest* of the people, which rests on the afore-mentioned conceptualization COMMUNITY IS KIN.

The proverb *Monkey (dey) work, baboon (dey) chop* translates into Standard English as "while the monkey does all the work, the baboon eats," with *chop* being Pidgin English for "to eat." A good paraphrase of this extremely popular FE is "someone benefitting from the work of another person" (Kouega 2007, p. 189), which emphasizes the fact that those who do work do not benefit in the least:

(13)   The Nigerian aphorism, "monkey dey work, baboon dey chop", rings true about the Nigerian scheme of things. An individual works, but never receives pay. (DP, Nigeria)

The monkey-baboon dichotomy in this FE yields a twofold metaphorical mapping onto the HUMAN domain: on the one hand, there is the MONKEY representing the upstanding, hard-working and DILIGENT COMMON MAN. The BABOON, on the other hand, is metaphorically understood as referring to the LAZY, PRIVILEGED FEW at the top of the hierarchy, such as government officials and corrupt employers. Unsurprisingly, this proverb is especially frequent in newspaper articles dealing with politics, in particular those denouncing issues of corruption and injustice:

(14)   It is the 'Monkey dey work, Baboon dey chop' syndrome! It is the uneven distribution of national wealth and resources! It is the reign of unequal opportunities! From all indications, this country belongs to specific people, rather than all! The communal spirit has long been lost! (MG, Ghana)

This example illustrates the dichotomy between the *specific people* (BABOON) and the majority referred to as *all* (MONKEY), i.e., the Ghanaian populace as a whole. This distinction underlines the allocation of those designated as BABOON into a small out-group and not a viable part of the nation or, as the author puts it, the *communal spirit*.

It is worth emphasizing that the act of benefiting from the work of others is specifically described as the baboon *eating* those benefits, which yields the conceptual metaphor MONEY/MATERIAL RESOURCES ARE FOOD and ENRICHMENT IS EATING. In their work on conceptualizations of corruption in African English varieties, Polzenhagen and Wolf (2007, p. 137) outline the existence of an entire network of EATING metaphors structuring the domain of (POLITICAL) LEADERSHIP in which powerful individuals are perceived as being big or fat (IMPORTANT IS BIG) as a result of eating and self-enrichment. This is important in the context of corruption because, although being powerful may in itself be considered a good thing, the methods by which certain individuals achieve this power are often frowned upon since "corruption in the form of individual accumulation of wealth by pub-

lic officials falls outside the moral order" (Polzenhagen & Wolf 2007, p. 149). The instantiation of the FE in Example 15 illustrates this nicely:

(15)   While we have received wide support from our colleagues for challenging a status quo in which monkey is working relentlessly and baboon is feeding fat, there are those in the industry who are vexed and murmuring (DI, Nigeria)

Here, the baboon's eating is specified as its *feeding fat*, highlighting the ENRICH-MENT IS EATING and IMPORTANT IS BIG conceptualizations associated with corrupt officials.

4.2.3   *Predator and prey*

The FE *To catch a monkey you must behave like a monkey* (or …*be a monkey*) can be defined as "[t]o succeed against an adversary, or with a person one desires, one must suit one's approach to the other's ways" (Owomoyela 2005, p. 119). In general terms, this proverb is about how to achieve a purpose whose success is dependent on someone else, be it an enemy or simply someone who needs to be convinced of a certain cause.

The HUNTING frame is triggered by the word *catch* and has the following components: first, the HUNTER addressed as *you*; second, the PREY, i.e., the *monkey*; and third, the activity of HUNTING itself, which focuses on its successful endpoint, namely, the *catching* of the prey. The means by which the hunting process is assumed to succeed is by studying the prey and adjusting to its behavior. Each of these hunting-related aspects is metaphorically transferred onto spheres that people are more likely to deal with in their everyday lives. Example 16 is concerned with getting more young people interested in farming jobs:

(16)   I am one of those who believe that to catch a monkey, you have to behave like a monkey. We need to speak the language of the youth, who are wired for employment from the university. … We have to make farming appealing to the youth. (DI, Nigeria)

Here, the MONKEY, or PREY, is the youth; they are the party to be convinced by those charged with recruiting new people: the metaphorical HUNTERS. The means by which young people should be won for the farming sector (*catch a monkey*) is to "speak the[ir] language" (*behave like a monkey*). The FE thus draws on a metaphor that could be paraphrased as CONVINCING SOMEONE IS HUNTING THEM DOWN (and in the event of success, CATCHING THEM).

In the Hausa-based proverb *The monkey and baboon will be soaked in blood*, both animals are PREDATOR and PREY at the same time. The FE describes an intense and violent encounter in the animal kingdom, in which MONKEYS and BABOONS

fight over some territory or food source. Neither party seems to benefit from this clash, though, since they are both severely wounded, if not killed — hence the reference to *blood*. When transferred to the domain of HUMANS, the fight between groups of MONKEYS and BABOONS serves as a basis on which to conceptualize fierce COMPETITIONS between two parties, especially in areas where they tend to be particularly ambitious, such as sports or politics (see Bello 2012), yielding (NON-PHYSICAL) COMPETITION IS (PHYSICAL) FIGHTING. Like in the scenario with the bleeding monkeys and baboons, the outcome of the competition is uncertain and may be disadvantageous to both participants in terms of, for example, financial losses conceptualized as BLOODSHED.

Muhammadu Buhari, a candidate for the Nigerian presidential elections of 2015, was quoted using the proverb in 2012:

(17)   He [Buhari] said: "If what happened in 2011 should happen again in 2015, by the grace of Allah, the monkey and the baboon would be soaked in blood." (DI, Nigeria)

What happened in 2011 is that Buhari, a candidate from the North, lost the elections to Goodluck Jonathan from the South, about which many northerners were openly unhappy. Considering the above analysis of the FE, what Buhari should have meant by this statement is that his party and Jonathan's are the proverbial MONKEYS and BABOONS having a fierce but non-violent COMPETITION over who will win the elections in 2015, as they presumably did in 2011, too. Some journalists (see Bello 2012) claimed that this was exactly what he meant, explicitly denying widespread accusations of Buhari trying to rig the upcoming elections by spreading fear of violence and actual bloodshed in the population. I am certainly not in a position to judge which of these interpretations Buhari intended, but the outrage it caused in the media suggests that what the majority of people understood was the latter version. The immediate context of the statement combined with a *conceptual integration* or *blending* account may help explain why this was the case (see Fauconnier & Turner 2002 and Turner 2007 on conceptual integration).

As illustrated in Figure 1, Buhari draws up three mental spaces: one for the 2011 elections memory (input 1), one for the gory source domain image of the FE (input 2), and a hypothetical future space for the 2015 elections (blend), all three of which share a generic COMPETITION structure. The reference to 2011 contains not only the knowledge that Buhari (A_1) and Jonathan (B_1) were opponents in a POLITICAL POWER STRUGGLE (x_1) which Buhari lost, but it also evokes the painful shared memory of the subsequent riots (violent means y_1) and deaths (bloody outcome z_1) in the Nigerian populace. In the proverb, it is the monkey and the baboon (A_2 and B_2) engaging in a NATURAL STRUGGLE (x_2), though the proverb suggests that they both leave as losers. Applied to the then-upcoming elections of 2015,

Buhari is understood to make a number of threatening implications. First, blending the political struggle with a natural one between subspecies makes the 2015 competition very much about groups rather than individuals, namely, the ethnic groups of Nigeria located in the North and South as arch enemies. It is interesting, in this respect, that the original Hausa version of the proverb, *kare jini, biri jini*, actually refers to *dogs and monkeys* (literally, "dog blood, monkey blood"). It is unclear whether the alternative with *baboons* has been entrenched for some time or whether it is a novel application in this context. Either way, depicting the fighting parties as breeds of the same species makes the FE even more applicable to the tensions between ethnic groups belonging to the same country. Second, equating the conflict with a natural phenomenon implies that it is inevitable. Third, from
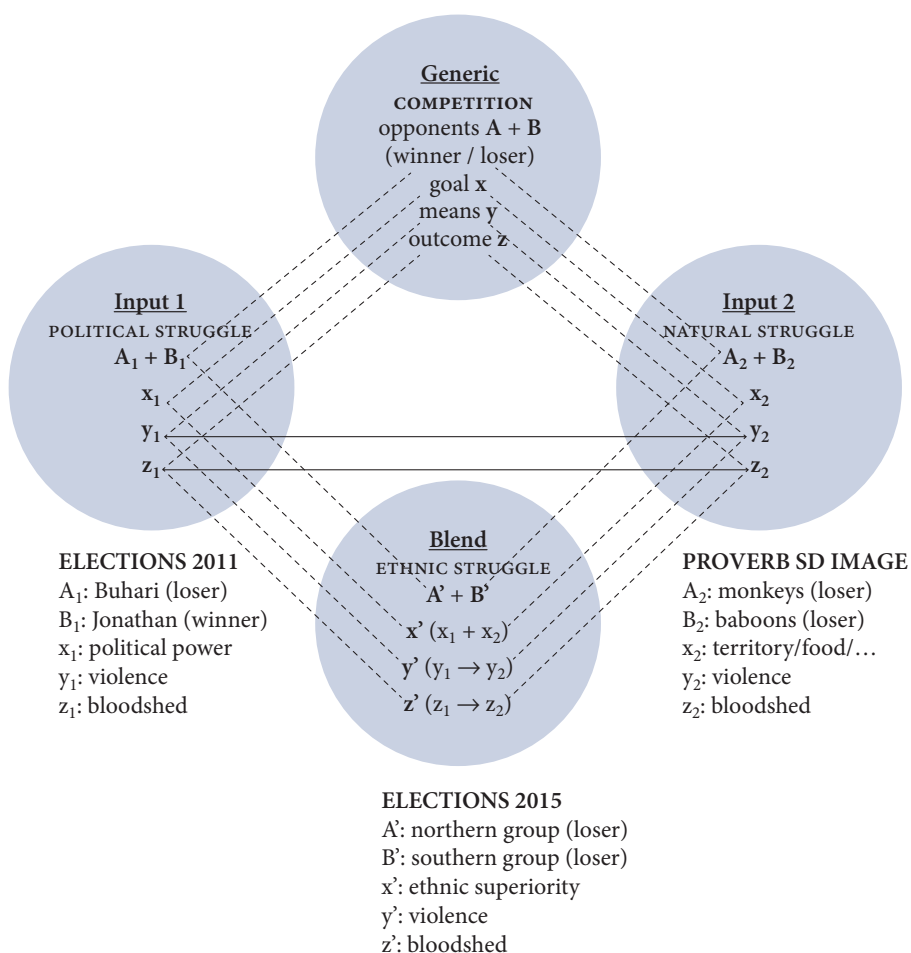

Figure 1. Reception of Buhari's quote (blending account)

the proverb source-domain image we know that there can be no winners; so even if Jonathan does win the elections, post-election consequences will ensure that no side can truly benefit. However, Buhari offers the electorate a way out by implying that these threats do not take effect if he becomes president.

In this particular use of the proverb, and in this particular context, the usual non-violent target domain image of the FE is effectively overridden. Example 18 further elaborates on Buhari's usage of the FE as an illegitimate, corrupt means of election competition, echoing its general reception in the population:

(18)   When Buhari, a retired general and former head of state, who saw war, unabashedly speaks of soaking the 'both monkey and the baboon in blood' in allusion to forthcoming elections, and Ezeife talks about having 'less bloodshed' if Jonathan is elected, the nation is intimidated and cornered into what psychologists call an 'avoidance — avoidance' situation, a cul de sac. (Sun, Nigeria)

Here, Buhari and a Jonathan supporter are accused of spreading fear amongst the population through their rhetoric, namely, by using the proverb in the sense outlined above.

5.   Discussion of the data

Considering the numerous additions to the stock of monkey FEs in the West African data — and the underlying conceptualizations that come with them — the obvious question to ask is what might have triggered them. Kövecses (2015, p. 100f) describes various major causes of cross-cultural variation in metaphor and metonymy, two of which I would like to discuss in more detail: the *natural and physical environment* in which the respective varieties are spoken, and the *broader cultural context*, i.e., "the governing principles and the key concepts in a given culture" (see also Kövecses 2010, p. 218).[14]

5.1 Natural and physical environment

Since many monkey breeds are native to the African continent, a relatively large proportion of the population has extensive knowledge of monkeys in their natural

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14. An interesting point that was hinted at above but cannot be dealt with in any more detail at this point is the special linguistic situation in many African countries, which are characterized by a degree of multilingualism unparalleled in Western societies and may have produced a number of FE loan translations.

habitat. For instance, monkeys are known to be dangerous predators with gory hunting practices, as captured in *The monkey and baboon will be soaked in blood*; or they can themselves be hunted for profit, as in *To catch a monkey, you must behave like one*. Such wildlife-related aspects are not represented in the CC for a very good reason: knowing monkeys primarily as harmless zoo attractions, people in the West simply do not have this kind of knowledge about them and hence do not feature them in a HUNTING frame. In fact, most would probably not associate this animal with violence and blood at all.

With a high proportion of the workforce employed in the farming sector, many Africans are more immediately dependent on their natural environment than people in the West, and this is illustrated in some FEs. An interesting case in point is the extremely negative evaluation of baboons, a subspecies of monkeys, as lazy and living at the expense of monkeys: *Monkey work, baboon chop*. Given that baboons are a type of monkey, the fact that they are singled out from the species in this pejorative fashion begs an explanation. One potential candidate for the origin of this proverb is the difficult co-existence between people and baboons:

> Baboons are frequently portrayed as cunning *thieves* by the Fulani.[15] Herders describe how baboons lay motionless in the short grass near grazing goats or sheep and wait patiently for the herd to approach before leaping on unsuspecting lambs. … Furthermore, the Fulani often comment on how mother baboons are too *greedy* to feed the young travelling on their backs. As pith eaters they chew the immature stems of maize plants causing extensive damage. … [The] axiom 'monkey dey work, baboon dey chop' … is frequently used in Nigeria to represent the desirable and hard-working 'us' (monkey) in opposition to the undesirable and scrounging 'others' (baboon). (Bennett and Ross 2011, p. 257; emphasis added)

Clearly, baboons are perceived as a threat to the very existence of African farmers, making a negative view of these animals entirely natural. In fact, the above comment on the Nigerian socioecology suggests that some of the negative evaluations of monkeys highlighted in various other West African FEs, such as THIEVERY and GREEDINESS, may be due to such experiences with baboons, even in those FEs that do not explicitly mention the subspecies, but perhaps metonymically refer to it by the broader term *monkey*. This cannot, of course, account for the positive evaluations attached to monkeys in some of the other FEs. Sources of these may be found when looking at the broader cultural context of African societies.

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15. The Fulani are an African ethnic group living in parts of West and Central Africa, predominantly in Nigeria.

5.2 Broader cultural context

The majority of new African FEs, 11 out of 16, are classified as proverbs rather than idioms, which holds true for only 2 out of the 8 CC ones. This reflects the general popularity of proverbs in the African discourse tradition: many countries on the continent struggle with political corruption, and proverbs are particularly suitable for addressing such issues for two reasons. First, many proverbs have evaluative content and are seen as expressing cultural and moral authority that cannot be argued with (Taylor 1931, p. 87). Since corrupt practices are morally wrong, proverbs serve as a powerful means for denouncing them in discourse. Second, proverbs are euphemistic in nature: providing no explicit mention of the target domain, they enable speakers to criticize delicate issues indirectly, especially in cases where open accusations may endanger the person making them. This may be a crucial driving force in producing FEs that are applied mostly to corruption issues, including *Monkeys play by sizes* and *Monkey work, baboon chop*. Interestingly, even many CC expressions, used mostly to achieve humorous effects in British newspapers, are employed differently to address African corruption matters, focusing almost exclusively on the negative, serious part of the MONKEY BEHAVIOR scale.

The African idiomatic monkey is not evaluated only negatively, though. While the CC ascribes negative features to monkeys across the board, African conceptualizations of the animal are much more varied, including negative, neutral, and very positive ones. In contrast to the monkey being INCOMPETENT or FOOLISH, *Monkey work, baboon chop* envisages a DILIGENT, hard-working individual, and LOYALTY, in the case of *Monkey no fine but the mama like am*, is perhaps the most favorable feature ascribed to the animal. The latter proverb draws on the kinship-based community model prevalent in African societies (see Polzenhagen & Wolf 2007, p. 131), which makes collective notions of LOYALTY particularly salient. Overall, the African MONKEY appears to be more readily conceptualized as a SOCIAL BEING that is part of a larger community than the British one. In comparison with the CC conceptualizations of the animal, African FEs also tend to personify monkeys more strongly. Combined with the factors arising from the natural environment, the result is a more elaborate *system of associated commonplaces* (Black 1954) for the MONKEY domain, and thus a more varied range of main meaning foci available to Africans when instantiating the HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS MONKEY BEHAVIOR metaphor. In this light, it would be interesting to investigate whether further ANIMAL domains behave similarly across British and West African cultures.

6. Implications for World Englishes

The global spread of English has undoubtedly changed the linguistic situation in the former British colonies: many, for lack of a single national language, have resolved to use English as a lingua franca, which is increasingly spreading into the educational and private spheres. This development has been viewed quite negatively by those concerned about the marginalization of indigenous languages. While certainly a legitimate issue, it has been somewhat obscured by the ideologically loaded rhetoric used by authors holding particularly extreme views of English as an inherently "imperialist" language (Phillipson 1992) or a "killer language" (Skutnabb-Kangas 2003). As pointed out by Peter Lucko (2003, p. 152), the conceptualization underlying these accusations is LANGUAGES ARE CREATURES: languages live and die, or are "murdered" by "killer languages" like English. I see no need to elaborate on why this provocative rhetoric is of little help in resolving the issue at hand. I do, however, want to address the claim that motivates such accusations, namely, that different languages represent different worldviews, a deterministic version of the *Linguistic Relativity Principle* (Foley 1997, p. 192; Lucko 2003, p. 155). If English represents Western culture, the adoption of the language entails the adoption of that culture — at the expense of the indigenous cultures contained in indigenous languages.

In light of my results, it can be safely attested that such extreme versions of the theory do not withstand empirical research into the matter. Undeniably, Africans express cultural elements related to MONKEYS that British people do not — and they do so through the medium of English, proving that the mere adoption of a new language does not entail the loss of one's culture. On the contrary, speakers shape the language through their cultural knowledge, adapting it to their own needs. Although language and culture certainly influence each other, they are by no means identical (Lucko 2003, p. 162), and it is this mutual influence that should be the subject of cognitive linguistic investigation.

While I have no desire to downplay the problem of marginalized languages, especially in cases where speakers do not have the choice of which one they are going to speak, one further implication can be drawn from my results that casts the role of English in West Africa in a more positive light. For a long time, L2 varieties of English were seen as 'faulty' offspring of L1 English and barely worth studying. However, even without an in-depth analysis of the FEs, the sheer number of idiomatic expressions African speakers have added to the language can be seen as "concrete evidence of a trend towards autonomy" in non-native varieties (Adegbija 2003, p. 56). Formulaic expressions are a special area of any language and good knowledge of them counts as an important criterion for native-like proficiency. While learners of English as a foreign language may imitate the idioms

of their target variety, many Africans have moved beyond imitation and have become idiomatically productive themselves. This is a "firm indication … that the language has come to stay and has gained deep-seated acceptance" (Adegbija 2003, p. 56) — a firm indication, indeed, that Africans no longer speak a derivative form of British English but viable African English varieties (Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, etc.) that are well on their way to developing their own standards. Indeed, Sharifian (2011, p. 73) suggests that variation at the level of cultural conceptualizations can be considered a defining feature of a dialect, on a par with syntactic and phonological variation. These *New Englishes*, then, "represent a new kind of linguistic diversity" (Lucko 2003, p. 163), and hence a new source of national identity expressed through them.

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Awo: *Awoko*, Sierra Leone
    [http://awoko.org/ accessed April 5, 2014]
BR: *Basildon Recorder*, United Kingdom
    [http://www.basildonrecorder.co.uk/ accessed April 15, 2014]
DI: *Daily Independent*, Nigeria
    [http://dailyindependentnig.com/ accessed March 4, 2014]
DP: *Daily Post*, Nigeria
    [http://dailypost.com.ng/ accessed March 5, 2014]
MG: *Modern Ghana*, Ghana
    [http://www.modernghana.com/ accessed April 5, 2014]
MJO: *My Joy Online*, Ghana
    [http://www.modernghana.com/ accessed April 5, 2014]
NL: *Naijaleaks*, Nigeria
    [http://www.naijaleaks.org/ accessed March 10, 2014]
NRS: *The New Rising Sun*, Sierra Leone
    [http://www.thenewrisingsun.net/ accessed April 5, 2014]
RTT: *Richmond & Twickenham Times*, United Kingdom
    [http://www.richmondandtwickenhamtimes.co.uk/ accessed April 15, 2014]
Sun: *The Sun*, Nigeria
    [http://sunnewsonline.com/new/ accessed March 21, 2014]
TN: *The Nation*, Nigeria
    [http://thenationonlineng.net/new/ accessed March 10, 2014]

Appendix

Table A. Overview of all eight Common Core Fixed Expressions, including token numbers

FE	Paraphrase	Main meaning focus HUMAN IS MONKEY	Further conceptualizations	Tokens
making a monkey out of s.o.	making s.o. look silly or foolish	FOOLISHNESS	-	8
monkeying around/ about	behaving, or manipulating sth., foolishly	FOOLISHNESS	ACTION FOR ACTOR	26
Monkey see, monkey do.	s.o. doing a task they do not understand	INCOMPETENCE	-	6
If you pay peanuts, you'll get monkeys.	You only get what you pay for.	INCOMPETENCE	MONEY IS FOOD PEANUT FOR MONKEY	16
monkey business	foolish or fraudulent behavior	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	-	69
monkey tricks	fraudulent behavior	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	-	10
having/getting a monkey on/off one's back	having/resolving a persistent problem	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	PROBLEMS ARE MONKEYS ON ONE'S BACK	50
not giving a monkey's	having utter disregard for s.o./sth.	INDIFFERENCE	-	28
Total				213

Table B. Overview of all 16 potentially new African Fixed Expressions, including token numbers

FE	Paraphrase	Main meaning focus HUMAN IS MONKEY	Further conceptualizations	Tokens
monkey play	foolish or fraudulent behavior	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	-	2
monkey game	foolish or fraudulent behavior	MISCHIEVOUSNESS	-	2
monkey style	incompetent execution of a task	INCOMPETENCE	-	2
selling a dog to buy a monkey	replacing one useless thing with another	INCOMPETENCE	-	2
It is easier to give water to a monkey than to get the cup off his hands.	If s.o. is given sth. good, they may never give it back or may want more.	GREEDINESS	-	3

Table B. (*continued*)

FE	Paraphrase	Main meaning focus HUMAN IS MONKEY	Further conceptualizations	Tokens
One day, monkey go go market e no go come back. ("One day the monkey will go to the market and not return.")	Persistent risky behavior may one day bear negative consequences.	THIEVERY/ BRASH IMPERTINENCE	-	6
Monkey nor de lef ihn black hand. ("A monkey cannot get rid of its black.")	People never change.	IMMORAL BEHAVIOR/ IMMUTABILITY	PHYSICAL IMMUTABILITY IS IMMUTABILITY IN CHARACTER BODY PART FOR MONKEY	13
Monkeys play by sizes.	People keep together with their equals.	CORRUPT BEHAVIOR/ LOYALTY	-	5
Monkey no fine but the mama like am. ("Although the monkey is ugly, his mother likes him.")	Support anyone who belongs to your group, regardless of their actions.	LOYALTY	COMMUNITY IS KIN	4
Monkey eat, baboon chop.	The privileged few live at the expense of the majority.	DILIGENCE	MONEY IS FOOD ENRICHMENT IS EATING	92
To catch a monkey you must behave like a monkey.	To convince s.o., you must adjust to their behavior/ needs.	PREY	CONVINCING S.O. IS HUNTING THEM DOWN	10
The monkey and baboon will be soaked in blood.	There will be fierce competition.	PREDATOR	(NON-PHYSICAL) COMPETITION IS (PHYSICAL) FIGHTING	20
Remove the monkey's hand/finger from the soup pot before it turns into a human hand/ finger.	Do not take risks.	ANATOMIC RESEMBLANCE	-	6

Table B. (*continued*)

FE	Paraphrase	Main meaning focus HUMAN IS MONKEY	Further con-ceptualizations	Tokens
Monkey remains monkey, and chimpanzee chim-panzee.	The same rules do not apply to seemingly similar parties.	IMMUTABILITY	-	2
You can take the monkey out of the bush, but you can't take the bush out of the monkey.	People cannot escape their true nature.	IMMUTABILITY	-	2
calling a dog a monkey	blatant lying	-	-	3
Total				174

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