

# Kasem Metaphoric Extensions of *yi* ‘Eye’ and *yuu* ‘Head’ Expressions

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**Abstract:** This paper studies the metaphorical extensions of the human body parts of *yi* ‘eye’ and *yuu* ‘head’ among the Kasena. We examine how these expressions are used to conceptualise a broader view of the people and whether these metaphorical expressions have a specific style and structure. We also argue that *yi* ‘eye’ and *yuu* ‘head’ as in the expressions collected are polysemic in Kasem. Data for the study were collected from Kasem level 200 and 300 students of the College of Languages Education, Ajumako of the University of Education, Winneba and our native speaker intuition as well. The conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) is adopted for the study. The analysis clearly shows that these expressions are employed as instruments in the expressing of trait or character of individuals. In terms of structure, it is worth mentioning that these expressions have specific structure. The body part is obligatory and then followed by a verb or an adjective to make the structure grammatical. However, if the verb or adjective precedes the human body part the structure becomes not meaningful. It is further established that the two expressions, lexicalise expressions of emotion and perception.

**Keywords:** Kasena, *yi* ‘Eye’, *yuu* ‘Head’, Lexicalise, Polysemic

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## 1. Introduction: The Concept of Metaphor

All over the world, metaphoric concepts are important for the understanding of any type of discourse. These metaphors are grounded on physical and mental experiences. Metaphors are basically used for having communication; that is to aid in understanding during the communication process. Metaphorical expressions mostly occur as follows; speakers tell the ideas in the form of meaningful signs (words and sentences) and audiences receive and process these signs (words and sentences) beyond the meaning of the words and sentences expressed. This process of a proper analysis and understanding of metaphors and their meanings involves a closer look at the semantic, pragmatic and an overall knowledge of the language and culture of the society of study. [1]

There are live and dead metaphors [16]. The live metaphor is considered more expressive and imaginative than the dead metaphor. The live metaphor can easily be understood after

paying attention to the comparism, while in trying to understand the dead metaphor one does not need to think about the primary meaning of every word or its metaphorical element, it is worth noting that in understanding the dead metaphor one has to have the basic knowledge of the idiomatic constructions of the lexicon of the language. The dead metaphor is best understood without paying attention to the comparism; in this case the person listening does not think about the primary sense of the word but only needs to use the idiomatic and cultural knowledge to directly deduce the meaning. We consider the *yi* ‘eye’ and *yuu* ‘head’ expression among the Kasena as dead metaphors as the above argument by Na’imah is how the meaning of these metaphors are deduced in Kasem.

Metaphors are expressions that do not lend themselves to literal interpretations or meaning because they carry embedded residues of meanings [6]. Metaphorical meaning mostly express similarity, example:

1. Kaba        ye        nyeŋo    mo  
   Kaba        is        lion     PART.  
   ‘Kaba is a lion

This example uses *nyeɔ* 'lion' metaphorical because; if *nyeɔ* 'lion' is given a literal translation it will not only be impossible but also wrong in this instance, so the relationship between 'Kaba' (Name of a person) and *nyeɔ* 'lion' in the metaphor above only gives a perception of Kaba showing some traits of the lion (strength or calmness).

Metaphoric expressions are often derived from basic categories such as human body parts and are thus expressing emotion, perception and cognition (intellect) [1] & [18]. Metaphors cannot be understood properly when one does not know of the background of the metaphor [14]. This can be applied to the body part metaphoric expressions of Kasem as one will have to understand the cultural traits and experiences of the Kasena in order to make meaning out of these expressions. Most languages of the world, the body is an integral part of the symbolism used in the expression of affective experience by their speakers [8].

In the field of Ghanaian language studies, works on body parts expressions are sparse, I have had the privilege to study works such as: Metaphorical extensions of the body part *ano* 'mouth' and Akan metaphorical expressions based on *yam* 'Stomach', all these works were in Akan, this is the motivation for this study, as it remains an area of no research in the Kasem.

The concept of emotional and perception are expressed in Kasem using the body part expressions. In this paper, this will be demonstrated by expression of concepts involving the *yi* 'eye' and *yuu*. 'head'. These expressions are seen as dead metaphors in Kasem [16]. In the theory of embodiment concepts, the body forms the basis through which we perceive and socialize the world. Reason for this is posited by as unfamiliar concepts best understood through concrete concepts acquired through bodily experience [9] & [11]. Another reason advanced on metaphors are that metaphorical concepts of all types arise naturally from cultural and physical experiences [12]. Further, he claims that metaphorical concepts are based on complex experiential gestalt. These are multidimensional structures which arise naturally based on experience.

It is pertinent to mention the fact that body parts expressions make use of cultural based conceptual frames which are mostly not studied but are naturally used by native speakers; these may differ between different cultures [1].

### 1.1. The Kasena

The Kasena speak Kasem, a (Mabia) Gur-Language of the Grusi sub-branch belonging to the Oti-Volta branch of the Niger Congo group of languages. There are about 80 languages belonging to this group. They are spoken in Burkina Faso, southern Mali, north-eastern Côte d'Ivoire, northern Ghana, northern Togo, north-western Benin, and south-western Niger. The Oti-Volta languages form a subgroup of the Gur- Languages, comprising of about 30 languages of northern Ghana, Benin, and Burkina Faso spoken by around twelve million (12,000 000) people [3]. These languages are to some extent largely mutually intelligible. The family is named from the Oti and Volta

rivers. Kasem is one of the Gur- Languages of the Grusi sub-branch belonging to the Oti-Volta branch of Niger Congo group of languages. The word Kasena refers to the people while 'Kasem' refers to their language.

The Kasena have as their neighbours, the Frafra (*Gurenɛ*)-speaking people whose territories lie to the east and south, the Builsa are found to the south-west and then the Sisaala to the west and the Fera-Kasena, who speaks a dialect of Kasem, sandwiched between Sisaala and Kasena. The territories of the Fera-Kasena extend beyond the international boundary into Burkina Faso. To the north are Kasena related people like the Nuna and Lyele speakers of Burkina Faso, as well as the Moshie and Kaparsi whose languages differ from Kasem [3].

In Ghana, Kasem is widely spoken in the Kasena-Nankana Districts in the Upper East Region by some 109,944 people according to the 2010 population and housing census in Ghana. It is also spoken in some parts of Tumu District in the Upper West Region as well as the northern part of the Builsa District. Navrongo, Paga, Chiana, Nakɔɔ, Kayɔɔ, Katiu, Pindaa, Kasana, Kwapun, Navare, Nitolo, Pina, and Yasia are some of the places predominantly dominated by Kasem speakers in Ghana. Kasem is one of the few languages that receive official educational sponsorship by the Government of Ghana.

These speakers of Kasem in Ghana share both linguistic and cultural similarities as these manifests in the teaching and learning of the language across all the above mentioned areas [3]. The Kasena like most Gur people is a patrilineal society where inheritance is through one's father's line.

The religion of the Kasena traditionally is, like all other traditional religions oriented towards ancestors "*Chira*" and divinities "*tangwana*". They believe that, the ancestors are to ensure that the living enjoy prosperity and well-being since they are believed to be closer to the divinities which are in communion with the earth and God.

### 1.2. The Concept of *yi* 'Eye' and *Yuu* 'Head' Among the Kasena

This part looks at the concept of *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head' and how they relate to the nose, mouth ears. The *yi* 'eye' among the Kasena is considered delicate and important without which the human being cannot be fully functional. According to the Kasena oral tradition what the eye sees is processed by the brain which is contained in the head to emanate in to thoughts, reactions and sometime articulation. The Kasena use *yi* 'eye' is to express ideas, characters, emotions, beliefs and intellects. It is worth noting that, among the Kasena the eye is seen to be in direct relationship with the brain as what is seen is processed by the brain as afore mentioned.

The Kasena like most other people see the *yuu* 'head' as the processor of every human thought as it contains *yi* 'eye', *ni* 'mouth' *momwa* 'nose', *zwa* 'ears' and *yuu punnu* 'brains'. These afore mentioned parts on the head are the drivers of sense such as; taste, smell, sound and sight which results in to stimuli. There is therefore a conceptual relationship

between the head, eye, mouth, nose and ears out of which some emotions (actions) prevail [2].

Some of the metaphors in this paper are cross linguistically shared with other Gur Languages in Ghana but are necessarily conceptualise as having the same meaning in these languages. These metaphors do not only describe the eye and head but assign some impossible attributes to them.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is adopted for this study, 'conceptual metaphor are a set of correspondence, or 'mappings', across conceptual domains, where a 'target' domain is partly structured in terms of a different 'source' domain'[17]. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is grounded on human experience, this implies that human languages are based on perception, the world view of the people and human body parts, because our bodies and culture play vital roles in our understanding of the world [13] & [18].

Conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept as targets and a more concrete or physical concept as their source [11]. This accession is undoubtedly true with Kasem body part metaphoric expressions because of the cognitive nature and conceptual behaviour of speakers and their cultural world view and language philosophy.

The meaning of language is rooted in human cognitive experience. Human body parts, perception and world view constitute the basis of human languages. This notion is explicitly clear in the Kasem expression based on 'yi' eye and 'yuu' head. The human body within the physical and culture influences the meaning and sets out the contours of the ways of our understanding [19]. These relationships constitute the human conceptual structure and general principle of the organisation of our linguistic cognitive.

This paper clearly shows that Kasem is interwoven with the culture, world view and other sectors of the Kasena society as there is a correlation between our external and internal emotional experiences. As a result these conceptual

metaphors are from the attribution of the human body parts and are in some cases extended to inanimate objects and description of activities and experiences [5].

Word meaning are from the encyclopaedic knowledge of people, this is sourced from various aspects of their social and cultural life [10]. Unfamiliar and new concepts can only be understood by means of familiar concepts that we understand better than the unfamiliar ones. [7] & [17].

## 3. Data Collection Methods

The data were primarily collected through interviews from Kasem level 200 and 300 students of the College of Languages, Ajumako. In all 22 students were involved in the data collection process: 15 level 200 student (entire class) and 7 level 300 (entire class), in total 18 males and 4 females were involved in the data collection process. I gave them 15 minutes to write as many expressions as they could use *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head'. The results of this task formed part of the data for this paper. Other sources of data are from Kasem folktales and proverbs.

The data collected from the above sources were cross checked with native speakers of Kasem; well known for their fluency in the language and with Kasem lecturers at the College of Languages Education, Ajumako. The *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head' metaphors have been restructured to investigate whether they have a specific style or structure or not and whether they convey the same meaning if restructured.

## 4. Data on *yi* 'Eye' and *yuu* 'Head' Expressions

A table of *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head' expressions, their literal translation and conceptualise metaphorical sense is provided in this section. Some of the expressions in Table 1 below were from the students; some were form folktales and proverbs and our own native intuition.

*Table 1. Metaphoric Expression of Yi 'eye' and Yuu 'head'.*

Number	Kasem	Literal translation	Meaning
1.	Yi bwona/bwoma	Eye soft / weak	Soberness/calmness
2.	Yi deere / damma	Eye strong/hard	Stubborn/obduracy of the eye
3.	Yi koga	Eye dry	Stubborn /obduracy of the eye
4.	Yineere	Eye sees	Witchcraft
5.	Yi puri	Eye open	Wise
6.	Yi waare/poore	Eye learn from past mistake	Wise
7.	Yuu choge	Head spoil	Disgrace/insane
8.	Yuu damma /dana	Head strong/hard	Stingy person/stubbornness
9.	Yuu lamma / laao	Head good	Lucky
10.	Yuu loᵑo	Head bad/wicked	Unlucky
11.	Yuu toᵑa	Head work	Intelligent
12.	Yuu ywomm/ywona	Head sweet /nice	Lucky

## 5. Data Analysis

The main focus of this analysis is on the human body part of *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head'. The analysis looks at whether

these metaphorical expressions have a specific style and a grammatical structure. The *yi* 'eye' metaphorical expression are analysed first followed by the *yuu* 'head' metaphorical expression.

### 5.1. Analysis of *yi* 'Eye' Expressions

In all the *yi* 'eye' expressions in the table above, there is an interface between the literal words /translation and their extended metaphors. This is exemplified below:

- 1) a. Aloah yi bwona/bwomma  
N body part (N) + Adj.  
Aloah eye soft  
'Aloah is a calm person'
- b. \*Aloah bwoma yi  
Aloah Adj. +body part (N)  
Aloah soft eye  
'Not meaningful'

The Kasena use the verb *bwona* in many instances to refer to soft, weak and lack of energy, as in *yi bwona* as in a above to mean humble or a gentle person, while in b where the adjective comes before the body part '*yi*' eye is not meaning in the language as will be exemplified throughout the analysis.

Let's look at *yi dεere* 'stubborn':

- 2) a. Kade yi damma  
N body part (N) + Adj.  
Kade eye strong/hard  
'Kade is stubborn'
- b. \*Kade dεere yi  
N Adj. + body part (N)  
Kade strong/hard eye  
'Not meaningful'

In the above expression, the adjective *dεere* mostly refers to strong, hard and important, this is use in relation to the *yi* 'eye' to mean a stubborn person. This is conceptualised in Kasem as all native speaker will use this to refer to stubborn people.

- 3) a. Awea yi koga  
N body part (N) + Adj.  
Awea eye dry  
'Awea is stubborn'
- b.\* Awea koga yi  
Awea Adj.+ body part (N)  
Awea dry eye  
'Not meaningful'

Another expression that fall in this category is *yi koga* 'eye dry', the verb *koga* meaning dry or dig is use in relation to the eye to mean stubborn as exemplified above.

- 4) a. Anε jege yi nεεre  
N Poss body part (N) + V.  
Anε has eye sees  
'Anε is a witch'
- b.\* Anε nεεre yi  
Anε V. + body part (N)  
Anε sees eye  
'Not meaningful'

*Yinεεreas* in the structure above is conceptualised to mean witchcraft among the Kasena traditionally. It is clear that 4b is ungrammatical among the Kasena.

- 5) a. Kada yi puri  
N body part (N) + Adj.

Kada eye open  
'Kada is wise/knowledgeable'

- b.\* Kada puri yi  
N Adj. + body part (N)  
Kada open eye  
'Not meaningful'

The verb *puri* 'open' in expression (5) a used with *yi*, *yipuri* eye open' among the Kasena means wisdom or knowledgeable.

- 6) a. Ade yi waare  
N body part (N) + V.  
Ade eye learn from past mistake  
'Ade is wise/knowledgeable'
- b.\* Ade waare yi  
N V. body part (N)  
Ade learn from past mistake eye  
'Not meaningful'

*Waare* as in expression (6) a usually refers to learning from past mistakes which is used in relation with the eye to mean Wisdom or knowledgeable among the Kasena. It is pertinent to note that the '*yi*' as in the above metaphorical expressions is polysemic with its various related senses. However, it is very clear that from the analysis above these metaphorical expressions have a specific grammatical structure as in cases where the Adjectives, verbs and nouns occur before the human body part (noun) the structure does not only lose its metaphorical meaning but thus becomes ungrammatical in Kasem.

### 5.2. Analysis of '*yuu*' Head Expressions

The '*yuu*' head expressions in the data above are discussed below in a similar way in this section;

- 7) a. Kade yuu choge  
N body part (N) + V.  
Kade head spoil  
'Kade is insane /disgraced'
- b.\* Kade choge yuu  
N V. body part (N)  
Kade spoil head  
'Not meaningful'

*Choge* 'spoil' as used with *yuu* 'head' in expression (7) refers to instant behaviour of the part of an individual and in other instances refers to disgrace, depending on the context in which it is used.

- 8) a. Awe yuu damma/dana  
N body part (N) + Adj.  
Awe head strong/hard  
'Awe is stingy/stubborn/wicked'
- b.\* Awe damma/dana yuu  
N Adj. + body part (N)  
Awe strong/hard head  
'Not meaningful'

Expression (8) has the verb *damma*, 'strong or hard' it is used with the *yuu* 'head' to refer to a stingy or stubborn person depending on the context, while in expression (9) below the adjective *laao* good or nice is used with *yuu* 'head' to refer to a lucky person metaphorically. This expression is

dependent on the context because the head as in the above expression should be referent to the human head.

- 9) a. Ane Yuu lana/ lamma  
 N body part (N) + Adj.  
 Ane head good/nice  
 ‘Ane is a lucky person’  
 b.\*Ane lamma yuu  
 N Adj. + body part (N)  
 Ane good/nice head  
 ‘Not meaningful’

In expression (10) *yuu lɔŋɔ*, head bad/wicked has the Noun + Adjective which is used to refer to an unlucky person.

- 10) a. Alo yuu lɔŋɔ  
 N body part (N) + Adj.  
 Alo head bad/wicked  
 ‘Alo has bad luck’  
 b.\*Alo lɔŋɔ yuu  
 Alo bad /wicked head  
 ‘Not meaningful’

The noun *toŋa* in expression (11) as used with *yuu*, ‘head’ refers to an intelligent or normal person depending on the context it is used.

- 11) a. Wedam yuu toŋa

- N body part (N) + N.  
 Wedam head work  
 ‘Wedam is intelligent/normal’  
 b.\* Wedam toŋa yuu  
 N. + N.+ body part (N)  
 Wedam work head  
 ‘Not meaningful’

However, in expression (12) *yuu ywoma* head sweet/nice is a metaphorical expression that refers to a lucky person among the Kasena.

- 12) a. Wɛbu yuu ywomma  
 N.+ body part (N) + Adj.  
 Wɛbu head sweet/nice  
 ‘Wɛbu is lucky’  
 b.\* Wɛbu ywomma yuu  
 N.+ Adj. + body part (N)  
 Wɛbu sweet/nice head  
 ‘Not meaningful’

It is quite clear and pertinent to re-echo the fact that the human body part *yuu* ‘head’ as used in the above expressions is polysemic and in cases where the adjectives, verbs and nouns occur before the human body part (noun) the structure does not only lose its metaphorical meaning but thus becomes ungrammatical in Kasem.

## 6. Advantages and Disadvantages in Using These Metaphors

Table 2. Presents the advantages and disadvantages of each expression.

Number	Kasem	Literal translation	Meaning	Advantage	Disadvantage
	Yi bwona/bwoma	Eye soft / weak	Soberness/calmness	A good orientation device	Breaks basic semantic rule in the language
	Yi deere / damma	Eye strong/hard	Stubborn/ obduracy of the eye	Combines familiar concepts with extended concepts	Users will have to spend time in learning the extended concepts
	Yi koga	Eye dry	Stubborn /obduracy of the eye	Combines familiar concepts with extended concepts	Users will have to spend time in learning the extended concepts
	Yinɛere	Eye sees	Witchcraft	Combines familiar concepts with extended concepts	Too constraining for non-native speakers to use and understand
	Yi puri	Eye open	Wise	A good orientation device	Looks like the physical entity use in constructing the expression
	Yi waare/poore	Eye learn from past mistake	Wise	Combines familiar concepts with extended concepts	Users will have to spend time in learning the extended concepts
	Yuu chɔge	Head spoil	Disgrace/ insane	Combines familiar concepts with extended concepts	Users will have to spend time in learning the extended concepts
	Yuu damma /dana	Head strong/hard	Stingy person/stubbornness	Combines familiar concepts with extended concepts	Breaks basic semantic rule
	Yuu lamma / laao	Head good	Lucky	A good orientation device	Users will have to spend time in learning the extended concepts
	Yuu lɔŋɔ	Head bad/wicked	Unlucky	A good orientation device	Users will have to spend time in learning the extended concepts
	Yuu toŋa	Head work	Intelligent	A good orientation device	Looks like the physical entity use in constructing the expression
	Yuu ywomm/ywona	Head sweet /nice	Lucky	A good orientation device	Users will have to spend time in learning the extended concepts of head in Kasem.

## 7. Conclusion

Metaphors as imaginative, poetic and effective tools for communication should be flexible. We discussed

metaphorical expressions of the Kasem body part of *yi* ‘eye’ and *yuu* ‘head’ which are used to express emotion, attributes and traits. As part of the Kasena philosophy they have metaphors about emotion and intellect that relate to the *yi*

'eye' and *yuu* 'head'.

It was clearly demonstrated that these expressions are employed as instruments in the expressing of attribute, trait and character of individuals. It is worth mentioning the fact that the *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head' as in the expressions collected are polysemic in Kasem.

In terms of structures it is worth noting that these expressions have specific grammatical structures as can be seen in the analysis above. We also saw that the Kasem *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head' expressions as collected and analysed are made up of adjectival, verbal and noun phrases. The body part is obligatory and then followed by a verb or an adjective to make the metaphor grammatical. However, with the *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head' constructions if the form is changed the structure becomes ungrammatical because Kasem is an SVO (subject, verb and object) language as shown in the analysis above.

This paper also agrees with the view that "there are live and dead metaphors" [16]. But we considered our data as dead metaphors since meaning of these structures forms part of the idiomatic construction of the lexicon of Kasem. These are understood without necessarily paying attention to the comparison or words used for the construction.

The theoretical implication of this study on these expressive metaphors is that the *yi* 'eye' and *yuu* 'head' serve as the main channel of expression attributes, traits and even feelings in Kasem.

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