

Seeing through the Eyes of the Mind: A Cognitive Metaphorical Analysis of Vision-Related Expressions in Igbo

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60787/jolan.vol6no1.475>

Abstract

This research investigates the use of visual metaphors in the Igbo language, focusing on expressions that portray “Seeing through the eyes of the mind”. The objective is to identify and analyze how the Igbo conceptualize thought, knowledge, and understanding through sight-related terms, particularly /anya/ “eyes”. Guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), the study treats vision as the source domain and thought, knowledge, and perception as target domains. Data for this research were gotten from interviews. The findings show that Igbo speakers metaphorically link seeing with knowing, clarity of vision with clarity of thought and eye-opening with enlightenment. This paper concludes that visual metaphors are not ornamental but central to Igbo Cognition, shaping how meaning, truth, and awareness are expressed.

Keywords: *Igbo, Visual Metaphor, Eyes, Cognition, Conceptual Metaphor Theory*

1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication as well as a tool for conceptualizing and interpreting human experiences. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is regarded as a fundamental mechanism through which individuals comprehend abstract concepts by relating them to more concrete experiences. Lakoff and Johnson (1980:242) famously proposed the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which emphasizes that metaphor is primarily a matter of thought rather than merely a feature of language. Consequently, metaphor functions as a cognitive strategy that maps meaning from a source domain (concrete experience) to a target domain (abstract concepts).

Visual metaphor, a focused branch of metaphor studies, extends conceptual mapping into the sphere of mental imagery and imaginative cognition, allowing abstract meanings to be conveyed through expressions that evoke “seeing with the mind’s eye.” In Igbo, like many languages, metaphorical expressions are not only

linguistic but also conceptual and visual, often rooted in our bodily experiences. For instance, the phrase “anya uche” (the eye of thought/mind) embodies how the sense organ of sight is metaphorically aligned with cognitive operations such as reasoning, perception, and understanding.

Although much work has been carried out on metaphor in Igbo, most of the studies have focused on proverbs, idioms, or general figurative language. There is limited research specifically on visual metaphor particularly in Igbo and how the “eye” as a source domain shapes conceptualizations of thought and perception. Previous studies in cognitive linguistics have emphasized English and Western languages, with Igbo often underrepresented. Consequently, there is a gap in exploring how Igbo people cognitively use visual metaphor to represent abstract mental processes. This research aims to address this problem by analyzing some conceptual mappings involved in Igbo visual metaphors, especially those that depict the “eye” as central to cognition, thereby providing insight into the Igbo worldview and cultural construction of knowledge.

The phrase “seeing through the eyes of the mind” is central to understanding visual metaphor in Igbo. It demonstrates that cognition, reasoning, and imagination are conceptualized in visual terms. By analyzing such expressions from a cognitive linguistic perspective, this study aims to uncover how the Igbo language and culture structure abstract thinking through visual metaphors.

2. Literature Review

This section describes concepts that are relevant to this study such as, metaphor and visual metaphor within Cognitive Linguistics.

2.1 Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:4) define metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” This definition highlights the cognitive and conceptual nature of metaphor, showing that it is not merely a decorative feature of language but a fundamental tool for human thought and experience. Their work on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) demonstrates that metaphors go beyond linguistic expressions and are essential to human cognition. According to them, metaphors provide a framework for grasping abstract ideas by linking them to more familiar, concrete experiences. This is achieved through a mapping process between two domains: the source domain, which is concrete and familiar, and the target domain, which is abstract and less familiar. For instance, in the

metaphor time is money, the abstract idea of time is understood through the tangible concept of money. Just as money can be saved, wasted, or spent, people conceptualize time in similar terms, treating it as a valuable resource. Expressions such as “wasting time” or “saving time” reflect this conceptual mapping, illustrating how deeply metaphors shape thought, language, and behavior.

Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors not only describe reality but also shape it by influencing human perception and action. The time is money metaphor, for example, not only makes the concept of time more comprehensible but also encourages people to manage it as a limited resource. This demonstrates how metaphors both structure abstract thought and guide behavior. Their theory also emphasizes the cultural dimension of metaphors: while the underlying cognitive mechanisms are universal, the specific metaphors used vary across cultures. For example, the notion of time as a resource appears in many languages but is expressed differently depending on the cultural and economic context. Thus, metaphors are both products of individual cognition and reflections of social and cultural environments.

Building on this foundation, Kövecses (2002:6) categorizes metaphors into three main types: structural, orientational, and ontological. Structural metaphors involve detailed mappings between two domains, such as argument is war, illustrated by expressions like “She defended her position” or “He attacked my claims.” Orientational metaphors organize concepts according to spatial orientation, for example, happiness is up, expressed in phrases like “I’m feeling up today.” Ontological metaphors treat abstract concepts as objects or entities, as in mind as a container: “He is full of ideas.” Kövecses further stresses that metaphors are shaped by bodily experience, culture, and the physical environment, which makes them simultaneously universal and culturally specific.

Evans and Green (2006:157) expand on this perspective by examining the central role of metaphor in structuring abstract domains such as emotions, morality, and perception. They assert that metaphors help bridge the gap between the abstract and the concrete, making intangible concepts more understandable. They allow us to conceptualize time (“time is money”), life’s challenges (“overcoming obstacles”), or relationships (“building bridges”) through familiar physical experiences. Their work underscores that metaphor is foundational to human cognition and meaning-making, rather than being a stylistic embellishment of language. It is important to note that metaphors are not fixed or static but dynamic and context-dependent as they are likely

to adapt to changes in culture, society, and individual experience. Other types of metaphors include the conceptual metaphor, implied metaphors and visual metaphors.

2.2. Visual Metaphor

A visual metaphor is a symbolic representation that conveys an idea or concept through imagery. It transforms one idea into another by drawing parallels between seemingly unrelated subjects, allowing viewers to understand complex concepts in a more intuitive way.

Gal (2022) posits that visual metaphors are deeply tied to their form, structure, and aesthetic qualities. In her view, meaning in visual metaphors is not only derived from the transfer of concepts between domains but also from the way images are arranged and experienced aesthetically. Elements such as composition, proportion, contrast, and visual flow contribute significantly to how metaphors are understood and felt. This means that visual metaphors function as both cognitive and aesthetic tools, enabling viewers to experience metaphors directly through perception rather than only through linguistic reasoning. For instance, when an artwork portrays time as a road, it does more than illustrate a linguistic metaphor; its visual arrangement through depth, perspective, and movement makes the metaphor come alive as an aesthetic experience. Thus, Gal expands metaphor theory by showing that visual metaphors are not only vehicles for conceptual understanding but also powerful aesthetic devices that shape how people emotionally and perceptually engage with ideas.

Furthermore, Feng (2013), argues that visual metaphors should be understood not merely as reliant on cultural or contextual interpretation but as structured and cued within the visual design itself. Feng further breaks down how visual metaphors operate across three metafunctional dimensions: representational, interactive, and compositional. Within the representational dimension, unexpected or anomalous juxtapositions of visual elements (what Feng terms “colligational anomaly”) create novel, metaphorical meanings. In the interactive and compositional dimensions, aspects such as camera angles, spatial layout, and composition actively contribute metaphorical significance by tapping into our embodied, cultural understanding. Illustrating this with examples from advertising, Feng demonstrates that such visual resources are not passive, they carry persuasive, cognitively grounded messages. He concludes that a social semiotic framework offers a powerful, systematic means of accounting for how visual images themselves, through their internal structure and design, instantiate conceptual metaphors, including how elements like camera position and composition become meaningful in metaphorical interpretation.

2.3. *Seeing Through the Eyes of the Mind as a Cognitive Metaphor*

The expression “seeing through the eyes of the mind” represents one of the most powerful illustrations of how humans rely on embodied experiences to conceptualize abstract processes. Within cognitive linguistics, sensory-based metaphors, especially those involving vision, are considered vital for shaping knowledge. Lakoff and Johnson (1980:58) explain that the metaphor “knowing is seeing” is widespread across languages, as demonstrated by the English phrase “I see what you mean.” This link between sight and understanding reflects the human reliance on bodily metaphors to express abstract experiences. In the Igbo expression *ihu anya uche* (“seeing with the eyes of the mind”), the concept of vision is similarly extended to represent intellectual processes such as perception, insight, and comprehension.

Cognitive psychology and neuroscience provide support for this metaphor. Kosslyn’s (1980) study on mental scanning showed that people take longer to mentally traverse greater distances in imagined spaces, suggesting that the mind “looks” at mental images as though they were physically real. These findings underscore the cognitive reality of the metaphor, where imagining is experienced as a form of seeing. Also, Kosslyn et al. (2005) provide compelling neuroimaging evidence that mental imagery activates the visual cortex in patterns closely resembling actual perception. Research on vividness of mental imagery, such as Pearson et al. (2015), reveal that individuals with more vivid mental images are more likely to “see” their imagery when presented with ambiguous stimuli, confirming that subjective imagination influences perceptual processes. Functional imaging studies also demonstrate overlapping activation between visual cortex areas during actual sight and during mental imagery tasks (Pearson, 2019). This neurological evidence grounds the metaphor in biological reality, showing that the “eyes of the mind” are not merely figurative but involve real perceptual mechanisms repurposed for imagination.

The metaphor also plays a crucial role in understanding language and memory. Metaphors that rely on vision tend to strengthen encoding and retrieval of information. A study by Benedek et al. (2014) shows that metaphorical problem framings evoke stronger insight experiences than literal framings, engaging the hippocampus and other memory-related regions. This suggests that “seeing with the mind” facilitates deeper comprehension and lasting memory. Furthermore, embodied cognition research indicates that imagination extends beyond static images to include embodied simulations, supported by mirror neuron findings which reveal that imagining an action

activates motor regions of the brain just as observing it does (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005). Thus, the mind's eye encompasses both visual and sensorimotor aspects of cognition.

In support of this, abstract concepts such as knowledge and insight are often framed through concrete sensory experiences, with vision playing a central role. As Kövecses (2002:64) explains, vision provides the foundation for structuring abstract domains like cognition. In Igbo, the verb *ihụ* 'to see' goes beyond its literal meaning of physical sight to express comprehension. Evans and Green (2006:132) also highlight that metaphors are not merely linguistic expressions but embodied phenomena rooted in sensory experience, shaping how people structure abstract thought. This perspective clarifies why Igbo speakers use vision as a metaphor for intellectual clarity through the expression *ihụ anya uche*.

Building on this view, the connection between perception and knowledge is regarded as universal in human languages. Sweetser (1990:37) demonstrates that visual terms often extend to meanings of comprehension. For instance, in English, 'to see' can signify both physical vision and intellectual understanding. The same holds true in Igbo, where *ihụ* is also extended to represent insight, intuition, and understanding. This supports Sweetser's (1990:40) view that the link between seeing and knowing is deeply embedded in human conceptual structures and underscores vision as a powerful metaphor for cognition in Igbo thought.

The metaphor "seeing through the eyes of the mind" is not a mere linguistic flourish but a cognitive reality supported by philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. It explains how humans use perceptual experience, particularly vision, to structure abstract thought. From Cicero's *mentis oculi* to modern cognitive science, the metaphor illustrates the continuity between perception and cognition, revealing that when we 'see' in the mind, we are actively engaging the same neural and conceptual mechanisms that enable us to see the physical world. This metaphor captures the intimate link between language, thought, and embodiment, making it one of the most enduring and scientifically grounded conceptual metaphors in human cognition.

The metaphor "seeing through the eyes of the mind" reflects the deep connection between cognition and perception, where vision serves as a conceptual pathway for understanding abstract realities. Vision, as one of the most dominant human senses, becomes a natural source domain for structuring concepts such as knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The Igbo expression *ihụ n'anya* (to see with the eyes) extends beyond physical sight to signify comprehension and insight, which aligns with the conceptual metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING discussed in cognitive linguistic studies (Sweetser, 1990; Kövecses, 2010).

From a cultural perspective, the Igbo language and worldview situate the act of “seeing” not only in the physical but also in the spiritual and intellectual realm. In Igbo culture, to say *anya m hụrụ ihe a* (my eyes have seen this) means one has gained experiential knowledge or wisdom from lived reality. This reflects what Ibekwe (2019) calls the “cognitive-cultural layering of meaning,” where metaphors are shaped by the lived practices of a speech community. Kövecses’ (2005) assertion that while many metaphors such as KNOWING IS SEEING are cross-cultural, their specific instantiations are shaped by cultural practices and belief systems. In the Igbo case, the metaphor “seeing through the eyes of the mind” reflects not only a cognitive model of understanding but also a cultural worldview that values vision as both a mental and spiritual activity.

2.4. Studies on Metaphor

Several authors have described the concept of body-parts, using Cognitive linguistics principles and tools. Such studies include:

Ejinwa and Nweya (2024) pursued an empirical inquiry into how the Igbo body part *anya* (“eye”) functions cognitively as a source domain for metaphorical expression. The paper demonstrated that in Igbo, visual perception embodied by the eye serves as a fundamental conceptual mapping to abstract domains such as intelligence, love, hope, time/distance, and greed. Collecting data through oral interviews and participant observations involving 20 native Igbo speakers, and applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) for semantic analysis, the study revealed how pervasive and culturally significant visual metaphor is in daily Igbo discourse. The researchers conclude that *anya* is not merely a rhetorical flourish but a powerful cognitive mechanism through which Igbo speakers make sense of abstract concepts and express their worldview.

Okeogu (2024) conducted a wide-ranging exploration of how various body parts, not just the eye, are leveraged as metaphorical sources in Igbo language and cognition. The study’s aim is to map the usage patterns of body-part metaphors in Igbo, situating them within broader linguistic and cultural contexts. Although specifics of the methodological approach are not detailed, it is implied that the researcher conducted textual and possibly oral data analysis across idiomatic expressions. The study provides a comprehensive backdrop for understanding ‘anya-centered’ visual metaphor by embedding it within a larger system of body-part figurative language in Igbo.

Amaechi and Nwosu (2023) examined the grammar of body-part terms in Igbo (Benue-Congo) with the aim of describing their grammatical construction and how they

are employed in expressions. By compiling a comprehensive inventory of body-part terms, they show that Igbo has a large number of complex nominal expressions for body parts, many of which involve associative constructions. Beyond this common pattern, the study identifies six other distinct syntactic constructions that body-part terms take, particularly in relation to spatial relations and fixed idioms. Although their focus is not primarily metaphorical, their findings shed important light on how body-part terms such as *anya* (eye) which frequently occurs in metaphorical expressions are structurally embedded in Igbo. This provides valuable support for both morphological and syntactic understanding in subsequent metaphorical and cognitive analyses.

Yu's (2004) study, "The Eyes for Sight and Mind", investigates the metonymic and metaphoric use of body-part terms for the eye in Chinese, with comparative reference to English expressions. The study aims to explore the conceptual mappings underlying these expressions and to examine similarities and differences across the two languages. Using a cognitive-linguistic framework, Yu identifies several key mappings, including perceptual organ stands for perception, seeing is touching, and thinking, knowing, or understanding is seeing, illustrating how visual perception is extended metaphorically to cognitive processes. The study further highlights three types of cross-linguistic patterns: similar expressions with similar meanings, similar expressions with different meanings, and different expressions with similar meanings. Yu concludes that, although these metaphoric and metonymic expressions involve imagination, they are grounded in bodily experience and shaped by cultural interaction, demonstrating how language reflects both embodied cognition and cultural context.

Despite the fact that these studies have focused on body parts, some even the eye particularly, describing them metaphorically, there is still the need to describe how the eye as a metaphor is used to denote cognition, perception, understanding and awareness. This is the crux of this study.

3. Methodology

The data for this research involves both primary data (obtained from interviews and corpus) and secondary data (obtained from existing literature). The data were analyzed using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Each metaphorical expression is broken down into: the source domain (eye/vision), the target domain (thought, knowledge, emotion, or spirituality) and the conceptual mapping between source and target.

4. Data Presentation and Discussion

This section presents and analyses Igbo expressions that use the eye and vision as metaphors. The eye, beyond its physical role, serves as a source domain through which abstract concepts such as thought, knowledge, emotion, and spirituality are expressed. Each expression is examined to show the mapping between the source domain of vision and the target domains of understanding, awareness, agreement, or insight. The data is organized according to the conceptual metaphors they instantiate.

CLEAR EYE SIGHT IS CLARITY

1. Ọ mepere anya ma ụ eziokwu banyere ọnọdu ahụ
 3SG open-PST eye and see truth about situation that
 ‘She opened her eyes to the truth about the situation.’

Implied meaning: ‘She became enlightened and finally realized the truth about that situation.’

The source domain is opening the eye. The target domain is awareness/knowledge. The mapping is that open eyes correspond to becoming aware of the truth.

2. Ugbu a ahụla m ya n’ozuzu oke
 Now see 1SG it in total whole
 ‘I now see the bigger picture.’

Implied meaning: ‘I now fully understand the situation in its entirety.’

The source domain is panoramic sight. The target domain is holistic understanding. The mapping is that seeing the whole picture represents comprehending broadly.

3. Ndụmọdu ya mepere m anya
 Advice PRO open-PST PRO eye
 ‘His advice was an eye-opener for me.’

Implied meaning: ‘His advice enlightened me.’

The source domain is eye opening. The target domain is new awareness and the mapping is that opened eyes equals enlightened understanding.

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4. Ndidi ka eji ahụ ihe n'ụdị doro anya
Patience that to-use see thing in manner clear eye
'With patience, you will see things more clearly.'

Implied meaning: 'Through patience, one gains clearer understanding about a thing'.

Here, the source domain is clear eyesight obtained through patience, the target domain is clarity of thought and judgment, and the mapping is that patient seeing corresponds to mental clarity that comes through reflection and calmness.

5. Eziokwu ahụ doro anya mana nne m ahughị ya
Truth that clear PST eye but mother me see-NEG 3SG
'The truth was in plain sight, yet my mother didn't see it.'

Implied meaning: 'The truth was obvious, but my mother failed to realize or acknowledge it.'

In this case, the source domain is truth that is visible to the eye, the target domain is truth or knowledge that should be obvious, and the mapping is that a fact that is clear to vision equals a fact that is self-evident in knowledge, though sometimes ignored or unnoticed.

SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING

6. A hụ m ihe ị na-ekwu
1SG see 3SG thing INF AUX-say
'I see what you are saying.'

Implied meaning: 'I understand what you're saying.'

The source domain is vision (hụ = see). The target domain is understanding. The mapping is that to see something means to understand it.

7. Ọ lebara **anya** n'ime ihe mgbagwoju anya ahụ ma ghọta ihe mere
3SG look eye inside thing confusion eye that and understand-PST thing cause
'He looked into the confusion and grasped the real issue.'

Implied meaning: 'He/she examined the matter carefully, perceived the confusion, and understood the real cause of the problem.'

The source domain is looking with the eyes. The target domain is examining thought while the mapping is that to look intently means to analyze and comprehend.

8. A hụrụ m n'okwu dị ya
 PRO see-PST 3SG that 'word is in PRO
 'I see that there is a point in it', 'From my view, it makes sense.'
 Implied meaning: 'From my perspective, makes sense.'

The source domain is sight/view. The target domain is perspective in thought. The mapping is that seeing equals having a point of view.

SHARP EYESIGHT IS WISDOM/ PERCEPTION

9. N'agbanyeghi na m ekwetaghi, ahurū m ebe I si a bia
 Although that I agree-NEG, see-PST 1SG place You follow to come
 Although I do not agree, I see where you are coming from.
 'I see your point of view even if I don't fully agree.'
 Implied meaning: 'I understand your reasoning or point of view, even though I may not agree with it.'

The source domain is seeing point. The target domain is understanding perspective. The mapping is that to see is to acknowledge reasoning.

10. Banyere nkata a, anyi ahughi ihu n'ihu
 Concerning discussion that, we see-NEG face in-face
 'Concerning that discussion, we did not see eye to eye.'
 Implied meaning: 'We didn't agree on this discussion.'

The source domain is eye-to-eye vision. The target domain is agreement in thought. The mapping is that seeing the same with eyes equals agreement; not seeing equals disagreement.

11. Ka m na-ege ya nti, ahurū m nke oma ihe gbanariri m
 Let me AUX-hear 3SG ear, see-PST 3SG the good thing escape-PST 3SG
 "Listening to him helped me see clearly what I missed."
 Implied meaning: "By paying attention, I realized clearly what I had overlooked."

The source domain is clear sight. The target domain is mental clarity. The mapping is that seeing clearly equals understanding fully.

12. Dịka ì kòwachara, ahụrụ m ma ghọta ihe ì na-ekwu
As you explain-full-PST, see-PST 3SG and understand thing 2SG AUX say
'After your explanation, I see the point you are making.'
Implied meaning: "Your explanation has made me realize and fully understand the point you are making."

The source domain is seeing. The target domain is grasping meaning. The mapping is that seeing something equals understanding an explanation.

13. Anya n'ebu ụzọ ahụ tupu ọnụ e kwupụta
Eye AUX-carry way see before mouth PRO speak-out
'The eye sees something before the mouth tells it.'
Implied meaning: "Perception and understanding come before expression." Or one must first know before speaking."

The source domain is priority of sight. The target domain is knowledge preceding expression. The mapping is that seeing first equals to knowing before speaking.

SEEING IS AWARENESS OR ENLIGHTENESS

14. Ọ hụrụ ebe a na-emetaghị ya ozugbo
3SG see-PST place this that-touch-NEG 3SG immediately
'He spotted the mistake immediately.'
Implied meaning: "He immediately detected the mistake."

The source domain is spotting with the eye. The target domain is detecting error in reasoning. The mapping is that visual spotting corresponds to intellectual detection.

15. Ugbu a ahụla m ihe kpataara ì jì mee ya
Now see-PERF PRO thing reason INF use do. it
'Now I see why you did that.'
Implied meaning: 'I now understand the reason behind your action.'

The source domain here is seeing cause. The target domain is understanding reason while the mapping is that seeing why equals grasping motivation.

LOOKING CAREFULLY IS PAYING ATTENTION

16. A hụrụ m ihe a n'ụdị dị iche mgbe i kọwara ya
 1SG see-PST 3SG thing DET in type be different when you explain-PST it
 'I see things differently after hearing your explanation.'
 Implied meaning: 'After your explanation, I understand differently about it.'

The source domain is seeing differently. The target domain is new perspective in thought. The mapping is that to see differently equals to think differently.

17. Lee ya anya n'ụzọ ọzọ
 Look it eye in-way another
 'Look at it in another light.'
 Implied meaning: 'Think about it from another perspective.'

The source domain is looking/light. The target domain is alternate reasoning. The mapping is that looking differently equals understanding from another angle.

18. Lezie anya ka i ghọta ihe mere nu
 Look eye so that you understand thing happen-PST
 'Look well so you can understand what actually happened.'
 Implied meaning: 'Pay close attention if you want to truly understand what happened.'

In this expression, the source domain is looking carefully with the eyes, the target domain is understanding through reasoning, and the mapping is that to look attentively is to examine deeply in order to gain understanding.

These sentences demonstrate how in Igbo, the use of the physical eye serves as a source domain for conceptualizing thought, perception and clarity. This is to say that to an average Igbo speaker to 'see' is to understand, to 'see' is to perceive and examine. It is therefore safe to say that one 'sees' through his mind.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that in Igbo, vision serves as a strong metaphorical basis for understanding abstract experiences. First, seeing is equated with knowing, such that to *hụ* ‘see’ something also implies to comprehend or understand it. Secondly, clarity of sight is associated with clarity of thought, as seen in expressions like *doro anya* (be clear to the eyes), which highlights the connection between visual clearness and mental transparency. In addition, opening the eyes symbolizes awareness or enlightenment, since eye-opening is metaphorically linked to the reception of truth or new knowledge. Finally, shared vision represents agreement, whereby to “see eye to eye” indicates harmony in thought, while the inability to see alike reflects disagreement or conflict.

Thus, this paper shows that Igbo speakers conceptualize mental and emotional experiences largely in terms of visual perception, reflecting the deep cultural and cognitive connection between the eye and the mind. It concludes that the eye /*anya*/ in Igbo functions not only as a sensory organ but also as a cognitive and cultural metaphor for knowledge, perception, and truth. The metaphor of “seeing through the eyes of the mind” emphasizes that true understanding in Igbo thought is conceived as an act of inner vision.

The research also affirms that Igbo visual metaphors are part of a universal conceptual pattern (SEEING IS KNOWING) while retaining culturally distinctive forms and meanings. Through this metaphor, Igbo speakers bridge the gap between the physical act of sight and the abstract processes of reasoning, awareness, and emotional insight. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that metaphor in Igbo is not just decorative language but a fundamental cognitive strategy that reflects how reality is perceived and organized in the culture.

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