

**A Stylistic Approach to Animal Metaphors in Charles Dickens's Novels:  
With Special Reference to the First-Person Narrative Perspectives**

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**1. Introduction**

In reading Dickens, one notices his successive use of figurative expressions such as simile and metaphor by which a large variety of people are described as animal species or artificial objects by means of *dehumanisation*.<sup>1</sup> His focus on these rhetorical devices is reflected by his so precise or minute observations of the distinctive personalities of characters or the attributes of artificial substances so that his linguistic style is constantly elaborate or rich in humour and vividness. Thus, most of his tropes include unique symbolical expressions, giving the readers colourful images of characters or objects described from every aspect. However, his main concern regarding his *dehumanisation* device presented by his figures of speech, is to not only give detailed descriptions of their physical appearances or natural attributes but also reflect that the author's/the hero's inner emotion or attitude towards the surroundings can largely influence their life and fortune. Above all, in *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and *Great Expectations* (1860-61), Dickens attempts to evoke an association between a human being and a non-human living being in the reader's mind by degrading people to animal-like state owing to their unique dispositions. This type of Dickens's technique is of great value to him in representing how closely the conceptual correlations between human beings and non-human living creatures are established in the author's narrative eyes. In this way, the chief concern of my paper is to investigate the linguistic mechanisms of various Dickensian animal metaphors by shedding light on their forms, techniques or mental processes underlying the conceptual relationship between two different things—human beings and non-human living creatures—that are compared in context, and also elucidate the roles and purposes of his figurative descriptions. Thus, I shall firstly look at Dickens's typical devices in terms of forms and techniques, and secondly explicate the mechanics of conceptual linkage between *topic* and *vehicle*<sup>2</sup> so as to discover the grounds of affinities between two referents by considering the author's/heroes' points of view and power of imagination. By so doing, I aim to exhibit the linguistic characteristics of Dickens's animal metaphors.

**2. Devices of Metaphor in Dickens**

It is widely recognised that Dickens makes good use of various types of linguistic styles involving passages of detailed description/narrative or high emotional

pitch/rhythms that draw the readers' interest or attention as they go on to later chapters. According to Brook (1970: 13), Dickens's language and narrative styles, aiming at a strong appeal to the emotions, were highly regarded in the nineteenth century and above all, metaphor is one of Dickens's powerful and unique stylistic features. Also, Alter (1996: 131) regards Dickens as a preeminent rhetorical performer by saying, 'Dickens is above all the great master of figurative language in English after Shakespeare, and what I want to concentrate on here is how I focus as a reader on Dickens's use of figurative language, and what it reveals to me about the world of his novels'. In the process of reading Dickens's prose, he also focuses on the visionary power of the author's narrative style and discovers that his precise and careful definition by metaphor of certain qualities of things leads the reader to visualise the scene in his/her mind's eye.

In addition, other scholars also refer to Dickens's effective use of dehumanising devices. As Fawcner (1977: 73) says, 'the reification of human beings was nearly always pejorative in Dickens', his *dehumanisation* device includes negative connotations in that the people in the novels tend to be de-animated and depreciated, as they usually seem dislikable or inhuman. Further, Meier (1982: 61) remarks on his device of *dehumanisation*: 'Dickens's metaphors and similes compare not only the animate to the inanimate, but also various species within the animate sphere. Although both animals and humans are living creatures, the barrier between them is generally considered strong enough to permit the creation of forceful and telling metaphors'. Thus, in the next section, I shall explicate the mechanism of Dickens's use of animal metaphor, firstly focusing on the grammatical forms.

## **2.1 Word Class and Metaphor**

Metaphor in general is a device of comparing two things without using terms as 'like' or 'as' used in similes. For this reason, the descriptive form 'A is B' is most frequent as in 'he is a lion in battle'. Despite its simple structure compared with a simile using 'like' or 'as', the metaphorical device plays a significant role for Dickens in delineating particular features of characters elaborately or fancifully. As for Dickens's metaphors, Alter (1996: 132, 134) mentions the author's fantastically witty representation of the scenes or persons as well as the fertility of his metaphorical imagination that leads us, the readers, to recognise his dense vision of the world that surrounds him. Thus, putting a focus on word classes, I will investigate various features of Dickens's technical use of animal metaphor.

### **2.1.1 Nouns**

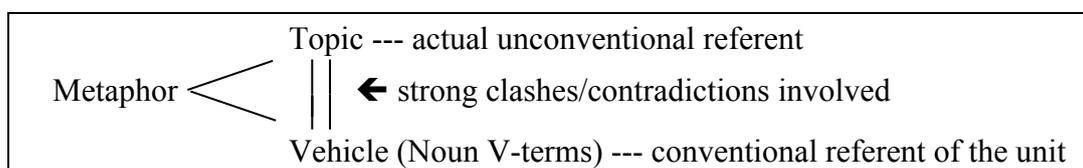
To begin with, Goatly (2011: 81) pays attention to word classes on metaphor and the

effective force of noun vehicle terms as phrases by saying, that they reveal very strongly the clashes between conventional and unconventional references, which causes noun phrases to be imaginable and recognisable by evoking vivid images of the things in question (=the things referred to by noun phrases) and enhancing memory:

Noun V-terms (=vehicle terms) are either more recognisable as metaphors (Steen 2007: 123), or yield richer interpretations than V-terms of other word classes. [ ... ] Because they are referring expressions, in the strictest sense, noun phrases reveal very strongly the clashes between conventional and unconventional reference; and as V-terms they can be equated with Topics by the copula, *to be*, creating a strong sense of contradiction.

In addition, the things referred to by noun phrases are imaginable, because they have spatial dimensions. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine at all without picturing ‘things’. Through the vividness of their images, and their ability to enhance memory (Honeck *et al.* 1975), noun V-terms are more easily recognized and their Vehicles less prone to oblivion than V-terms of other word classes. (Goatly, 2011: 81)

Figure 1 exhibits the strong clashes or contradictions of the two references, the *topic* and the *vehicle* involved in noun metaphor structures. Goatly (1997: 8) remarks that metaphor occurs when a unit of discourse is used to refer unconventionally to an object, process or concept, or colligates in an unconventional way. In Goatly’s view, metaphor consists of two units: ‘topic’ and ‘vehicle’, as shown in the figure. That is, the *topic* is the subject to which attributes are ascribed, while the *vehicle* is the subject from which the attributes are borrowed. Thus, in the case of noun metaphors, metaphorical expressions are established on the basis of the creation of a sense of contradictions between the *topic* and the *vehicle* by use of the copula ‘to be’.



**Figure 1 The Two Units Forming the Metaphorical Structure**

Now, it is fundamental to examine how noun phrases (as vehicle terms) are employed and can be more easily recognised than vehicle terms of other word classes. Also, applying all the classifications of metaphorical forms presented by Ikeda (1992), Goatly (1997) and Sukagawa (1999) to Dickens’s metaphor, I find six types of noun forms, namely Types I to VI:

**Type I: (Det) + N<sup>3</sup>**

(1) *The red fox* made him say all this, I knew, to exhibit him to me in the light he had indicated on the night when he poisoned my rest. (DC, 503)<sup>4</sup>

(2) ‘Pooh!’ said he, sluicing his face, and speaking through the water-drops; ‘it’s nothing, Pip. I like *that Spider* though’. (GE, 214)<sup>5</sup>

**Type II: (Det) + N (Vocative)**

(3) ‘*Wolf!*’ said he, folding his arms again, ‘Old Orlick’s a going to tell you somethink. It was you as did for your shrew sister’. (GE, 421)

**Type III: N1 + Copula + N2**

(4) *I might have been an unfortunate little bull in a Spanish arena*, I got so smartingly touched up by these moral goads. (GE, 25)

**Type IV: N1 + N2 (Apposition)**

(5) ‘So, Pip! *Our friend the Spider*’, said Mr. Jaggers, ‘has played his cards. He has won the pool’. (GE, 385)

**Type V: N1 + of + N2 (Genitive)**

(6) ‘The miserable *vanity of these earth-worms!*’ she said, when she had so far controuled the angry heavings of her breast, that she could trust herself to speak. (DC, 700)

**Type VI: N1 + of + N2 (Apposition)**

(7) ‘Pleasure, indeed!’ replied my aunt. ‘A mighty pleasure for the poor baby to pin her simple faith upon *any other dog of a fellow*, certain to ill-use her in some way or other’. (DC, 192)

Firstly, Types I to VI denote the typical structures of Dickens’s noun metaphors most commonly used in the two novels. Type I, the ‘determiner + noun’ is the most frequent form of noun metaphor. Example (1) suggests a close affinity between two animate beings (i.e. Uriah Heep and *the red fox*) in that the expression ‘the red fox’ symbolises Uriah Heep’s cunning nature. Example (2) describes the way in which Mr. Jaggers regards Mr. Drummle as ‘a spider’, emphasising his cunning and villainous character. Next, Type II (i.e. the ‘determiner + noun’ form) denotes a vocative form of noun metaphor. Example (3) makes a close connection between Pip and ‘a wolf’, for the vocative form ‘wolf’ symbolically insinuates to the reader that its utterer, Mr. Orlick, shows his indignation or animosity towards Pip by attacking or expressing contempt for a villainous person like him. Type III is the form with a copula as in ‘A is B’. The copula in this case includes a verb such as ‘be’, ‘seem’, ‘appear’ and so on. As for (4), Pip regards himself as ‘a bull in a Spanish arena’. However, Dickens not only suggests a close resemblance between the child and the animal but also represents the situation of the narrator Pip, who is repressed and tortured by the established society, namely the world of adult human beings. Type IV is effective in linking two nouns together in apposition, although this form is comparatively rare. Example (5) describes the way

that Mr. Drummle is represented as a ‘spider’, a non-human living creature. Similarly, Type V is another way of linking two nouns together, using the preposition ‘of’. This is, however, different from Type IV in that it is rather similar to constructions such as ‘B of A’ or ‘B’s A’. Although this type is not so frequent as other types such as Type I and Type III, it is most effective in not only describing the appearance or behaviour of characters itself but also symbolising each character’s inner thought or emotion towards other characters who profoundly influence his/her life and fortune. Example (6) shows the way in which Rosa Dartle uses metaphorical phrases ‘the miserable vanity of these earth-worms’ so as to explain the appearances or behaviours of Little Em’ly and her surroundings. There is yet another type of ‘noun + of + noun’ form as in Type VI. This also functions as apposition linking two nouns together using the preposition ‘of’. Example (7) describes the way in which Mr. Murdstone is depicted as ‘a dog of a fellow’, as he is a clever and brutal man who flatters David’s mother Mrs. Copperfield. Thus, this expression is effective in developing the close connection between Mr. Murdstone and ‘a dog’.

### 2.1.2 Adjectives

Next, Type VII takes the form of ‘adjective + noun’ as in instances from (8) to (12). Although rare as compared with his noun forms of metaphor, this type of adjective metaphor is of great use in symbolically depicting human beings as if they were animals by means of *dehumanisation*. In Dickens’s metaphor, animal terms such as a *sheep*, *snake*, *fish* or *amphibian* tend to be denominalised into adjectives (i.e. *sheepish*, *snaky*, *fishy* and *amphibious*) with the suffixes *-ish*, *-y* and *-ous* as in the examples. As Goatly (2011: 87-88) indicates, adjective metaphor is likely to be inactive, and its meanings can be weakened in the sense of being less noticeable, and less likely to give rise to interactive interpretations.

#### Type VII: Adj + N

- (8) He was, now, a huge, strong fellow of six feet high, broad inproportion, and round-shouldered; but with a simpering boy’s face and curly light hair that gave him quite a ***sheepish*** look. (DC, 28)
- (9) ... to the ***snaky*** twisting of his throat and body (DC, 229)
- (10) A ***snaky*** undulation pervading his frame from his chin to his boots ... (DC, 368)
- (11) All this time he was squeezing my hand with *his damp fishy fingers*, while I made every effort I decently could to get it away. (DC, 557)
- (12) ... Drummle was rallied for coming up behind of a night in *that slow amphibious* way of his. (GE, 211)

Also as in instances (13) and (14), you can see another form of Dickens's adjective metaphor, which is rare in his novels. The adjectives 'foxy' and 'fledged' with suffixed forms are metaphorical, and lexicalised enough to be inactive, which denotes that the contradiction between the two dissimilar references (i.e. a human and an animal) is softened. Also, the denominal adjective like 'foxy' as in 'his appearance is foxy' associates with the meaning: 'his appearance is like a fox's'. Thus, this type of adjective metaphor can be replaced by another simile form with the term 'like'.

#### **Type VIII: N + Copula + Adj**

- (13) In whatever capacity you ask after my employer, I beg, without offence to you, to limit my reply to this—that whatever his state of health may be, *his appearance is foxy*: not to say diabolical. (*DC*, 687-8)
- (14) As to what I dare, I'm a old bird now, as has dared all manner of traps since *first he was fledged*, and I'm not afeerd to perch upon a scarecrow. If there's Death hid inside of it, there is, and let him come out, and I'll face him, and then I'll believe in him and not afore. (*GE*, 329)

#### **2.1.3 Adverbs**

Now, I will focus on another type of metaphor as in Type IX with the 'verb + adverb' form. Goatly (2011: 89) refers to the adverbial term with a suffix *-ly* and mentions 'sheepishly' as an example that derives originally from 'sheep' via 'sheepish'. In his view, the term 'sheepishly' can be interpreted 'in a manner similar to that of a sheep'. The reason for this is that this adverb type derived from the denominal adjective 'sheepish' has a considerably narrower range of meanings than, for example, its simile counterpart—i.e. 'like a sheep'.

The adverbial *-ly* suffix can, as with most derivational markers, be interpreted as a signal that metaphorical meaning is involved, and therefore a softener of the incorporated metaphor. [ ... ] Adverbs will often derive from denominal adjectives, e.g. *sheepishly* derives originally from *sheep* via *sheepish*. Because of the history of derivation and the Lexicalization at two stages in the derivational process, these adverbs have a considerably narrower range of meanings than, for example, their simile counterparts (i.e. *like a sheep*). (Goatly, 2011: 89)

Instances (15) and (16) are collocational styles of manner adverbs modifying verbs figuratively, both of which include the author's particular device of *dehumanisation*. As for the function of adverbial metaphors, Goatly's theory is that the adverb with the *-ly* suffix is less likely to be recognised as metaphorical, or produce rich interpretations compared with a noun, verb or adjective. Moreover, Dickens's use of this type of

adverbial collocation is comparatively rare: the adverb *sheepishly* as in (15) appears only once in *David Copperfield* and twice in *Dombey and Son*, while the term *fishily* as in (16) can be found only once in *Great Expectations* and never occurs in his other novels.

**Type IX: V + Adv**

(15) I expressed my thanks; and Mr. Peggotty, after looking at Ham, *who stood smiling **sheepishly** over the shell-fish*, without making any attempt to help him, said: ... (DC, 98)

(16) I went on with my breakfast, and Mr. Pumblechook continued to stand over me, *staring **fishily*** and breathing noisily, as he always did. (GE, 469)

**2.1.4 Verbs**

Moreover, we can see another type of form with verbs, as in X. Examples (17) and (18) include both intransitive and transitive verb forms of metaphor:

**Type X: Vi or Vt (i = intransitive / t = transitive)**

(17) I found myself in the condition of a schoolmaster, a trap, a pitfall; of *always **playing spider** to Dora's fly*, and *always **pouncing** out of my hole to her infinite disturbance*. (DC, 675-6)

(18) *The Spider*, as Mr. Jaggers had called him, was used to *lying in wait*, however, and *had* the patience of his tribe. [ ... ] So, *the Spider*, *doggedly watching Estella*, *outwatched many brighter insects*, and would often *uncoil* himself and *drop* at the right nick of time. (GE, 305-6)

Instance (17) shows the contrast of dispositions between the two characters, namely the narrator David and his admirer Dora Spenlow. David himself describes the way in which he is on the lookout for her by regarding the two as *spider* and *fly* respectively. Thus, it follows that in Dickens's metaphors the author tends to dehumanise and contrast two characters in order to explain their strong and weak dispositions, particularly in the context of love. In addition, what is notable is that the first-person narrator David considers himself *a spider*, a man who is in love with Dora, whereas in *Great Expectations* the hero Pip describes the third person Mr. Drummle as the same animal in order to show contempt for him. There is an irony in that Dickens describes both characters as *spiders*, as their behaviour towards the ladies overlaps considerably. Instance (18) describes the way in which Mr. Drummle, a member of the Finches of the Grove, hovers round Estella, with whom Pip is also in love. Mr. Drummle is, as Mr. Jaggers the lawyer calls him, *a Spider*, as he speaks to the lawyer in his heavy reticent way, and similarly Pip describes him in this way out of hatred whenever he finds Mr. Drummle persistently approaching Estella. Also, in contrast to *the Spider*, the other

members of the Grove are described as *many brighter insects*, which implies their cleverness and harmlessness to the lady. Therefore, the word *Spider* symbolises Mr. Drummle's harmful and deceitful disposition, and what is more, we can recognise Estella's weak and vulnerable position. In this way, the hero aims to despise and attack the sulky and foolish creature using the device of *dehumanisation*.

Further, as in the instances (19) to (21), the verb terms such as 'lie in wait', 'hover' or 'hang' symbolically represent the behaviours of both David and Mr. Drummle, who make a habit of persistently creeping and approaching the ladies Dora and Estella, respectively. The use of these verbs in metaphor evokes image of *a spider* as a harmful and repulsive species to the ladies. However, in Dickens's animal metaphor, the use of verb terms is less frequent than that of noun terms that can be more easily recognisable and yield richer interpretations.

#### **David = the spider**

(19) I resolved to do what I could, in a quiet way, to improve our proceedings myself, but I foresaw that my utmost would be very little, or *I must degenerate into the spider again, and be for ever **lying** in wait.* (DC, 677)

#### **Mr. Drummle = the spider**

(20) "Indeed, that is the very question I want to ask you," said I. "For he has been *hovering about you* all night."

"Moths, and all sorts of ugly creatures," replied Estella, with a glance towards him, "*hover about a lighted candle*. Can the candle help it?" (GE, 306)

(21) ... this blundering Drummle *so hung about her*, and with so much toleration on her part, that I resolved to speak to her concerning him. (GE, 306)

## **2.2 Frequencies**

Now, as outlined in Table 1, I will examine the frequency of these ten patterns of metaphorical forms on Dickens's animalisation. First, the table indicates that the 'determiner + noun' form is the most frequent in both *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* (26 examples and 20 examples each), while the 'noun + copula + noun' form is the second most frequent (21 examples) in *David Copperfield*; however, this form is less frequent (7 examples) in *Great Expectations* but rather the verb forms are more frequent (11 examples). Besides, it is also noteworthy that Dickens has a remarkable tendency to make frequent use of noun metaphors in order to make each appearance of the characters more vivid and colourful. In other words, noun metaphors (the 'determiner + noun' form in particular) include an enormous number of descriptions of characters associated with animals by means of *dehumanisation*.

Types	<i>David Copperfield</i>	<i>Great Expectations</i>
(Det) + Noun	26	20
(Det) + Noun (Vocative)	3	8
N1 + Copula + N2	21	7
N1 + N2 (Apposition)	0	1
N1 + of + N2 (Genitive)	2	0
N1 + of + N2 (Apposition)	1	0
Adj + N	8	4
N + Copula + Adj	1	1
V + Adv	1	1
Vi or Vt	5	11
Total	68	53

### 2.3 Animal Terms in Dickens

Table 2 shows various types of animal terms classified based on word classes, namely noun, adjective and adverb. Firstly, regarding *David Copperfield*, noun metaphors include *mammal*, *fish*, *bird*, *insect* and *reptile*, and as can be seen from the table, mammals are the most frequent species of all the animals included in Dickens's animal metaphor. Noun terms such as *dog*, *brute*, *cat*, *beast* or *fox* are used metaphorically with negative connotations, while *lamb*, *sheep* or *elephant* tend to be used with positive nuances. Additionally, the other word classes such as adjective and adverb are rare in Dickens's animalisation.

<b>Noun Metaphor</b>	
Mammal	dog, brute, cat, lamb, animal, beast, mouse, porcupine, hedgehog, fox, sheep, elephant, porpoise, horse
Fish	shellfish, eel, fish
Bird	lark, bird, goose, eagle
Insect	dodman, catapillar, spider, fly, earth-worm, Bee(s)
Reptile	snake
<b>Adjective Metaphor</b>	
Mammal	foxy, sheepish
Fish	fish-, fishy
Bird	eagle-
<b>Adverb Metaphor</b>	
Mammal	sheepishly

Similarly in *Great Expectations*, mammals are much more frequent in noun metaphor, as compared with other species such as *fish*, *bird*, *insect* or *reptile* as in Table 3. In addition, it is noteworthy that *dog*, *beast*, *fox*, *sheep*, *bird*, *spider*, *snake* and *fish* are employed in both novels.

<b>Table 3 Word Class on Animal Metaphors in <i>Great Expectations</i></b>	
<b>Noun Metaphor</b>	
Mammal	dog, puppy, beast, fox, sheep, monkey, bull, hound, wolf, tiger, camel, donkey
Fish	shark
Bird	bird, fowl
Insect	spider, moth, varmint
Reptile	serpent
<b>Adjective Metaphor</b>	
Fish	fishy
Reptile	serpentine, snaky
Amphibian	amphibious
<b>Adverb Metaphor</b>	
Fish	fishly

Tables 4 and 5 show how the author makes use of verb forms of metaphor dehumanising some characters as *mammals*, *birds* or *insects* in the two novels. As for verb metaphor, it is comparatively rare in *David Copperfield*; however, it is worthy of attention that in Dickens's novels the author tends to animalise repulsive or cunning characters as *spiders* especially in the context of love, as in 'I must degenerate into the Spider again, and be for ever *lying* in wait' (*DC*, 677). This type of dehumanising metaphor is much more frequent in *Great Expectations* as in Table 5, where I can find various descriptions involving verbs such as *lie*, *watch*, *outwatch*, *uncoil*, *drop*, *hang* and *hover*, all of which symbolise Mr. Drummle's personality trait; for Mr. Drummle is frequently described as 'a spider' because he makes a habit of persistently creeping and approaching Estella under the narrator Pip's eye.

<b>Table 4 Word Class on Animal Metaphors in <i>David Copperfield</i></b>			
<b>Verb Metaphor</b>			
bite	Verb	Mammal	... the temptation of pretending that I was a dog, and patting and smoothing me lest I should <i>bite</i> , and saying, 'Lie down, sir!' and calling me Towzer.

pick up, peck	Verb	Bird	I cut and handed the sweet seed-cake—the little sisters had a bird-like fondness for <b><i>picking up</i></b> seeds and <b><i>pecking</i></b> at sugar; ...
pounce out, lie	Verb	Insect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I found myself in the condition of a schoolmaster, a trap, a pitfall; of always playing spider to Dora 's fly, and always <b><i>pouncing out</i></b> of my hole to her infinite disturbance.</li> <li>• I must degenerate into the Spider again, and be for ever <b><i>lying</i></b> in wait.</li> </ul>

**Table 5 Word Class on Animal Metaphors in *Great Expectations***

Verb Metaphor			
hatched, incubated	Verb	Bird	... the eggs from which young Insurers were <b><i>hatched</i></b> , were <b><i>incubated</i></b> in dust and heat, like the eggs of ostriches, judging from the places to which...
lie	Verb	Insect	The Spider, as Mr. Jaggers had called him, was used to <b><i>lying</i></b> in wait, however, and had the patience of his tribe.
watch, outwatch, uncoil, drop	Verb	Insect	So, the Spider, doggedly <b><i>watching</i></b> Estella, <b><i>out-watched</i></b> many brighter insects, and would often <b><i>uncoil</i></b> himself and <b><i>drop</i></b> at the right nick of time.
hung	Verb	Insect	... this blundering Drummle so <b><i>hung</i></b> about her, and with so much toleration on her part, that ...
hover	Verb	Insect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For he has been <b><i>hovering</i></b> about you all night.</li> <li>• ‘Moths, and all sorts of ugly creatures,’ replied Estella, with a glance towards him, ‘<b><i>hovering</i></b> about a lighted candle. Can the candle help it?’</li> </ul>
fledged, perch	Verb	Bird	I’m a old <b><i>bird</i></b> now, as has dared all manner of traps since first he was <b><i>fledged</i></b> , and I’m not afeerd to <b><i>perch</i></b> upon a scarecrow.

#### 2.4 Techniques

Next, I shall pay attention to Dickens’s technical device that involves transition from simile to metaphor. As in instance (22), the author at first uses a simile to describe the way in which Uriah Heep’s hand was cold as if that of *a fish* when David shook hands

with him. In the later chapter, Dickens uses another adjective metaphor with a ‘-like’ suffix to give a description of Uriah’s hand as in excerpt (24). In addition, he afterwards uses the device of adjective metaphor in order to give the reader an image of Uriah Heep’s damp fingers. However, the suffixed adjective form ‘fishy’ rarely occurs in *David Copperfield* and even though it has metaphorical meaning, the derivation from a noun ‘fish’ makes the recognition of metaphor less likely and gives rise to inactive interpretation (Goatly, 2011: 97-99). In other words, the expression ‘his damp fishy fingers’ as in (25) can be also replaced by the simile form: ‘his damp fingers are like those of fish’s’.

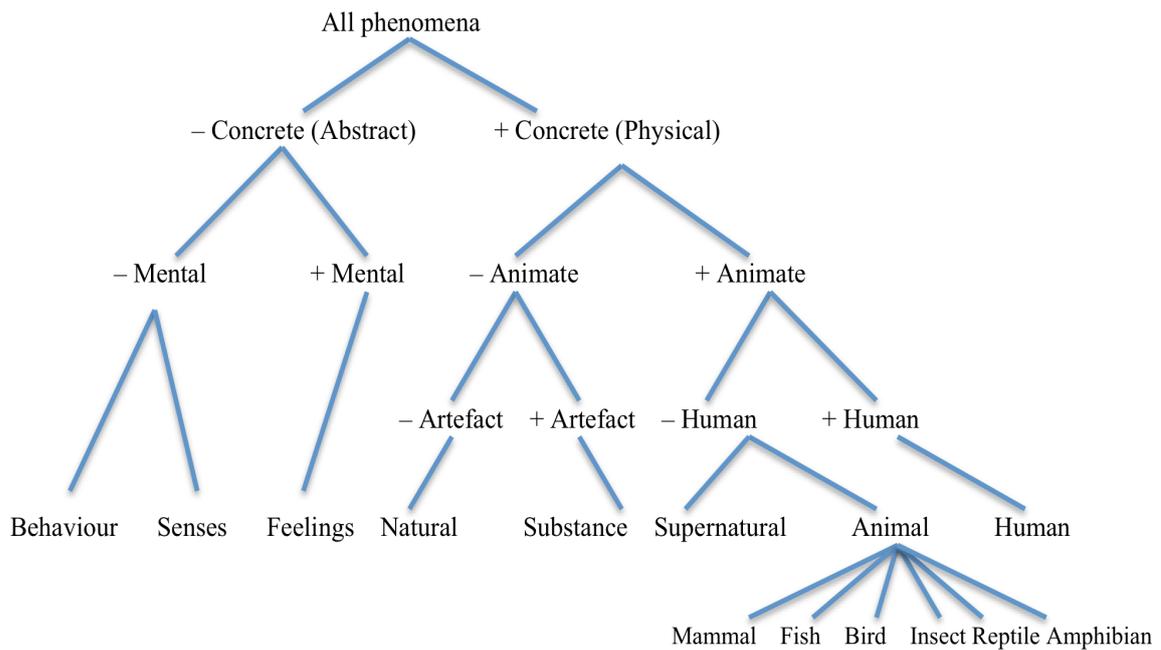
### **Uriah Heep = a fish**

- (22) After shaking hands with me—*his hand felt like a fish*, in the dark—he opened the door into the street a very little, and crept out, and shut it, leaving me to grope my way back in to the house: ... (DC, 230)
- (23) “Oh, how pleasant to be called Uriah, spontaneously!” he cried; and gave himself a jerk, *like a convulsive fish*. (DC, 371)
- (24) “... I don’t mind telling you,” *putting his fish-like hand on mine*, “I am not a lady’s man in general, sir, and I never was, with Mrs. Strong.” (DC, 591)
- (25) All this time he was squeezing my hand with *his damp fishy fingers*, while I made every effort I decently could to get it away. (DC, 557)

### **3. Conceptual Analysis**

In this section, I shall consider a conceptual relationship between two referents, namely *topic* and *vehicle*, involved in Dickens’s metaphorical statements. As mentioned above, Dickens is in the habit of animalising unique characters so that he can explain elaborately their behaviours and appearances and evoke clear image of what is described. I shall now focus on the way in which a number of characters are chiefly animalised on the basis of their personalities and examine how the readers can conceive these types of animal metaphors.

Referring to a semantic diagram put forward by Bickerton (1980), Way (1991) and Goatly (1997), who attempted to analyse the semantic components used in metaphor, one can elucidate the distance between two features (i.e. *topic* and *vehicle*) involved in Dickens’s figurative speech.



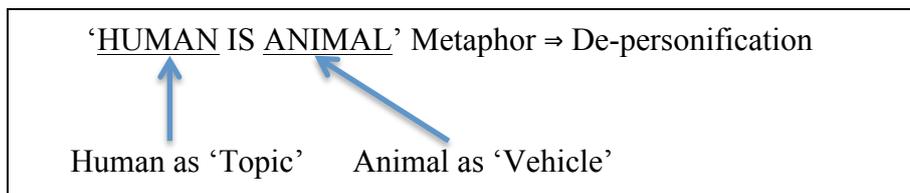
**Figure 2 Semantic Tree Diagram of Dickens’s Metaphors**

Figure 2 is a modified version of a tree diagram earlier put forward by these scholars, which will be a fundamental means to investigate the semantic mechanisms of his devices. The diagram shows how all phenomena in the world can be categorised into several components based on whether or not they are +concrete, –concrete, +animate, –animate, +human, –human and so on, branching off from the top of the tree. As to the diagram, I add the eight semantic components, namely *Behaviour*, *Senses*, *Feelings*, *Natural phenomena*, *Substance*, *Supernatural being*, *Animal*, and *Human* at the bottom of the tree as they are used often in the author’s metaphoric expressions. Each of these components is further categorised into various features branching out their nodes down into the bottom of the hierarchy, and therefore, *Animal* that I focus on, can be further categorised into *Mammal*, *Fish*, *Bird*, *Insect*, *Reptile* and *Amphibian*, all of which Dickens makes good use of in *dehumanisation*. Now, I shall here apply this tree diagram to Dickens’s metaphors, as this will be a crucial key in explicating the linguistic functions of his devices.

### 3.1 Conceptual Colligations in Metaphor

Moreover, this paper investigates how to conceive Dickens’s metaphorical expressions by shedding light on the reciprocal influence created by the presence of the *topic* and the *vehicle*. The method of analysing the conceptual system of Dickens’s metaphor deals with a metaphorical mapping between the two references (the *topic* and the *vehicle*), which, according to Kövecses (2010: 150), can be established and tightly

connected through a conceptual metaphor.



**Figure 3 The 'Human is Animal' Conceptual Metaphor**

As Kövecses says, metaphorical linguistic expressions suggest the existence of a number of conceptual metaphors in English, and a 'Human is Animal' metaphor makes it possible for us to understand the meaning of dehumanising metaphors such as 'David is a dog' or 'Little Em'ly is a bird' and so on. Figure 3 shows the way in which the 'Human is Animal' metaphor plays a vital part in the de-personification that involves an animal metaphor. Further, according to Kövecses, most animal-related metaphors capture the negative characteristics of human beings, and therefore, I will attempt to examine the conceptual meanings of Dickens's animal metaphors involving the mapping between the two things—human as *topic* and animal as *vehicle*.

### 3.2 Meanings of Animal Metaphors for Human Personality

Now, I shed light on the way people are animalised based on their personalities. According to *OED* and Goatly's definitions, all of these animal terms as in Table 6, generally include negative meanings. For example, a term *dog* used for human personality means 'a worthless, despicable, surly, or cowardly fellow', while a term *cat* denotes 'a spiteful or backbiting woman'. However, in *David Copperfield*, the conceptual meanings used for Dickens's animal metaphors are slightly different from the connotations in *OED*, since *birds* in his novels usually imply the 'timidity', 'amiability' or 'gentleness' of people. Also, *cats* in Dickens are used for both male and female characters.

<b>Table 6 Conceptual Meanings on HUMAN IS ANIMAL Metaphors</b>		
<b>Animals</b>		<b>Meaning in <i>OED</i> et al.<sup>6</sup></b>
Mammal	dog	in reproach, abuse, or contempt: a worthless, despicable, surly, or cowardly fellow
	wolf	a person or being having the character of a wolf; one of a cruel, ferocious, or rapacious disposition
	cat	a spiteful or backbiting woman
Fish	fish	unceremonious, stupid

Bird	bird	stupid
Insect	lark	mischievous activity done for fun or amusement
	goose	a foolish person, a simpleton
	spider	applied to persons as an opprobrious or vituperative term
Reptile	fly	bothersome, unimportant
	snake	applied to persons, esp. with contemptuous or opprobrious force
Amphibian	serpent	a treacherous, deceitful, or malicious person
	amphibian	of doubtful nature

### 3.3 Data and Analysis of Frequency

It is important to point out Dickens employs a variety of animal terms for *dehumanisation*. Table 7 indicates how each character as a *topic* is transformed into an animal as a *vehicle* by metaphor in *David Copperfield*. Kincaid (1971: 168) remarks that the main purpose of Dickens's *dehumanisation* of various people is to appraise them warmly or coldly so that the author may speak of good people as harmless domestic animals and evil people as dangerous predatory beasts.

<b>Table 7 Animalisation Based on the Main Characters in <i>David Copperfield</i></b>			
<b>Male Characters</b>	<b>Animals</b>	<b>Female Characters</b>	<b>Animals</b>
David	dog (-), porcupine (-), hedgehog (-), goose (-), spider(-)	Little Em'ly	earth-worm (-)
Mr. Peggotty	sheep (+), shellfish (-), dodman (-)	Miss Murdstone	lark (-)
Mr. Creakle	brute (-)	Mrs. Micawber	eagle (-)
Mr. Heep	dog (-), read-headed animal (-), fox (-), eel (-), fish (-), snake (-)	Dora Spenlow	mouse (-), goose (-), fly (-)
Doctor Strong	magnificent animal (+), sheep (+), horse (+)	Minnie	elephant (+)
Red Whisker	beast (-)	Miss Lavinia	bird (+)
Mr. Traddles	porcupine (-), fish (-), bird of prey (-)	Miss Clarissa	bird (+)
Mr. Omer	porpoise (+)	Miss Crewler	Bee(s) (-)
Littimer	snake (-)		

By looking at the table, I can see that each objectionable male character like Mr. Heep or Mr. Creakle is often associated with a mammal such as a *dog*, *brute*, *beast* or *fox*, while a repulsive, cunning or perverse character like Mr. Heep or Littimer is likely to be regarded as a lower animal such as a *fish*, *eel* or *snake*, which is one of the author's typical means of *animalisation*. In Dickens's metaphor, the analogy between human beings and animals is apt to suggest a variety of particular appearances or behaviours of certain characters in his novels. As for female characters, Little Em'ly, Miss Murdstone, Mrs. Micawber or Dora Spenlow tend to be regarded as insects or birds in negative contexts, while a female like Miss Lavinia or Miss Clarissa is praised by the author as if a *bird*. Although almost all of the animal-related metaphors include negative connotations in terms of human qualities, some domestic or harmless animals such as bird species are used for good or loving people, for especially children or women who are naturally human, warm-hearted, pure or harmless to those around them. This is one of the remarkable characteristics in Dickens's novels. Thus, Dickens enriches his world through animal-like people, either of good or bad quality, as he is exceedingly aware of the animal qualities in mankind and attempts to give a colourful and humorous delineation of each character.

<b>Table 8 Animalisation Based on the Main Characters in <i>Great Expectations</i></b>	
<b>Male Characters</b>	<b>Animals</b>
Pip	beast (-), monkey (-), bull (-), hound (-), wolf (-)
Mr. Magwitch	dog (-), beast (-), sheep (-), bird (-), varmint (-)
A clerk	puppy (-)
Joe Gargery	beast (-)
Mr. Orlick	tiger (-)
Mr. Pumblechook	donkey (-), fish (-)
Old Barley	shark (-)
Trabb's Boy	fowl, serpent (-)
Mr. Drumdle	spider (-), amphibian (-)
<b>Female Characters</b>	<b>Animals</b>
Miss Skiffins	beast (-)
Mrs. Camilla	camel (-)
Mrs. Coiler	snake (-), serpent (-)

In *Great Expectations*, all of the main characters in Table 8 are negatively described; Among all the animals in the table which assume human features, predatory beasts or lower animals appear with exceeding frequency so that the author can not only treat the villains or evil people coldly but also show us how they are humiliated by society and

degraded to an animal-like state. From the table, I can infer that Pip the narrator is frequently dehumanised by other characters as if he were a predatory animal, whilst almost all of the characters are dehumanised by the narrator. By means of animalisation, the first-person narrator Pip attempts to develop his vision of the adult world so that he can imply their inhuman nature and lifeless society to the readers.

Next, Table 9 illustrates the frequencies of each animal species employed in *David Copperfield*. Firstly, of all the 68 examples of animal metaphor, ‘bird’ is the most frequent animal species with 8 examples, whilst ‘elephant’ ranks second with 6 examples, both of which include positive nuances in his metaphor. This novel treats a large number of human characters whose personalities or appearances are so unique that Dickens aims to create his own views on his surroundings by dehumanising or degrading them into animal-like state and evoke imagery of those characteristics.

	<b>Species</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>		<b>Species</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>
1	bird	8	7	lark	1
2	elephant	6		dodman	1
3	snake	5		porpoise	1
4	fish	4		lamb	1
	dog	4		shellfish	1
	spider	4		beast	1
	sheep	4		eel	1
5	cat	3		caterpillar	1
	animal	3		fly	1
	goose	3		hedgehog	1
	fox	3		earth-worm	1
6	brute	2		eagle	1
	mouse	2		horse	1
	porcupine	2			
	bee	2			
				<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

In *Great Expectations*, ‘spider’, on the other hand, is the most frequent animal as Dickens successively animalises Mr. Drummle as a ‘spider’ fifteen times. This repetition is effective in emphasising his dangerous and unpleasant character in Pip’s eye. As for the second frequent animal ‘wolf’, the hero Pip receives a sharp reproach from the villain Orlick for his assault on his sister by being regarded as *a wolf*. Because of this, it can be said that he is also criminal and villainous in Orlick’s eye. In addition, Dickens dehumanises various characters into *beasts, hounds, birds, serpents* and more.

As almost all of the animalisation by metaphor is done from Pip’s point of view, the readers can impressionistically recognise the depiction of the child Pip’s mind and his vision of the world.

**Table 10** Frequencies of HUMAN IS ANIMAL Metaphors in *Great Expectations*

	Species	Frequencies		Species	Frequencies
1	spider	15		fox	1
2	wolf	6		moth	1
3	beast	4		dog	1
4	hound	3		varmint	1
	bird	3		sheep	1
5	serpent	2		shark	1
	amphibian	2		tiger	1
	fish	2		camel	1
	ostrich	2		donkey	1
6	monkey	1		fowl	1
	bull	1		snake	1
	puppy	1		<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

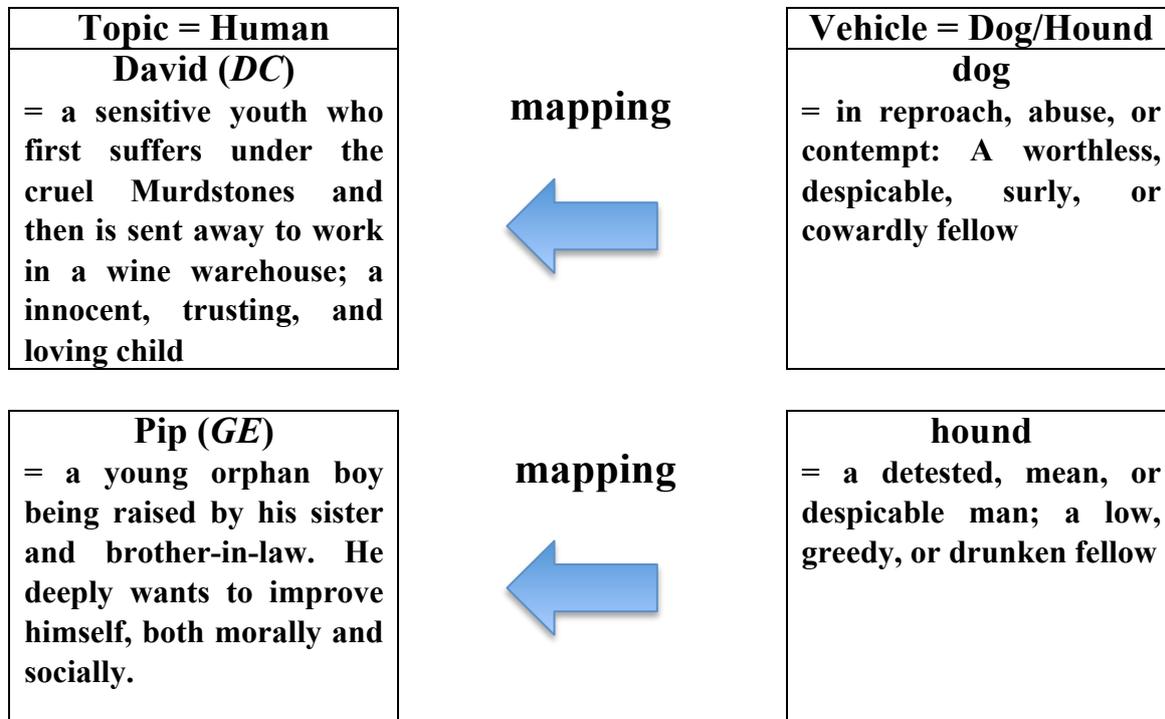
### 3.4 Cognitive Interpretation of Animal Metaphor

#### 3.4.1 Criminality

Further, this paper examines how to interpret Dickens’s metaphor. In *David Copperfield*, as David is badly treated and severely educated by Mr. and Miss Murdstone in his childhood, he gradually comes to be obsessed with his own guilt and conceives of himself as a prisoner. For he gives a symbolical representation of Miss Murdstone by metaphor as a *metallic lady* and of her purse as a very *jail* of a bag, and furthermore associates Mr. Murdstone’s character with criminality. Mr. Murdstone ironically treats the child by metaphor as a *dog* by forcing on him a placard that says: ‘Take care of him. He bites’, and under the influence of this, he orders and obeys Mr. Murdstone as if he were a *dog*.

Moreover, in *Great Expectations*, criminality is also one of the themes of great importance, for Pip, at the very beginning, encounters in a churchyard an escaped convict called Abel Magwitch who threatened him and asked him to bring a file and victuals. After giving the convict the foods stolen from his sister’s kitchen, the narrator is overtaken by penitence and starts to describe himself as a *hound*. In these contexts, the existence of a conceptual metaphor ‘Human is Animal’ of great use for us to conceive the mapping between human (topic) and animal (vehicle), namely the relationships between David and a *dog* and of Pip and a *hound*. As in Figure 4, the

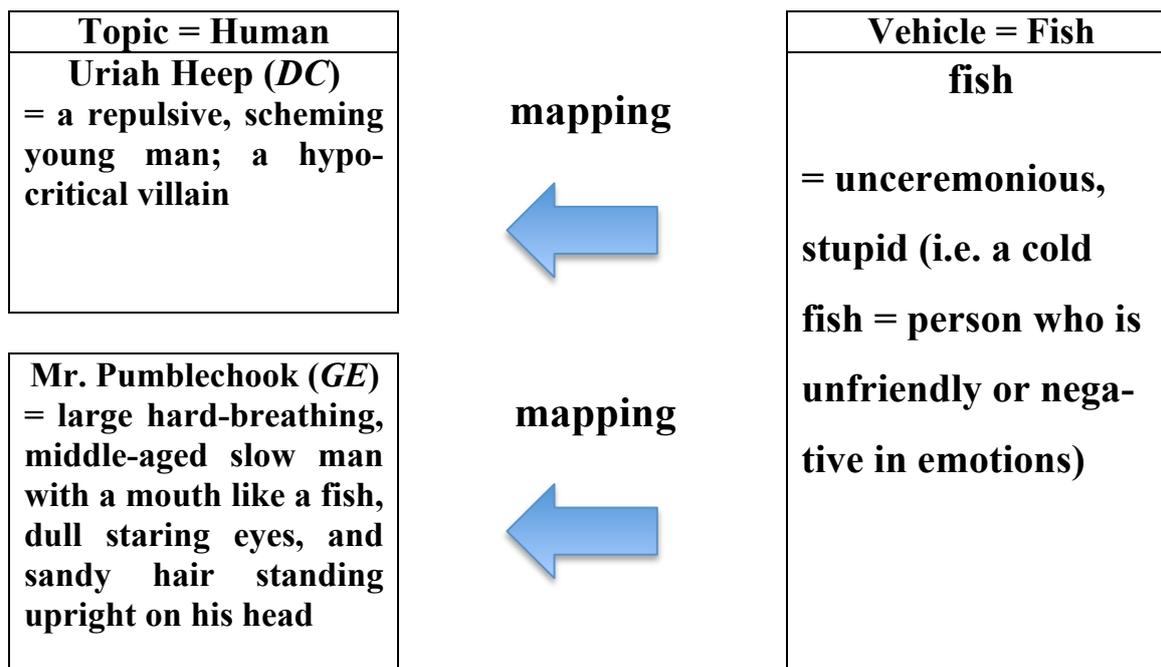
figurative meaning of the vehicle domain a *dog*, for instance, has some aspects of worthlessness, despicableness, surliness, or cowardliness, which can be mapped onto the topic domain David for our understanding of the characteristics of the hero.



**Figure 4 The Set of Mappings between Two Domains: Human and Dog/Hound**

### 3.4.2 Dulness

Next, in regard to dull and repulsive characters, Dickens often treats such people as *fish* or other slimy creatures so that the readers can recognise their dull qualities and increase terror towards them. Uriah Heep, a cruel and villainous character in *David Copperfield*, is associated with a *fish*, and similarly in *Great Expectations* Mr. Pumblechook's mouth and his dull staring eyes are portrayed as resembling those of a *fish*. By means of the 'Human is Animal' metaphor, it is worth noting, some aspects of the concept of the water creature 'fish' such as coldness, unfriendliness or repulsiveness are used in understanding the topics—Mr. Heep and Mr. Pumblechook.

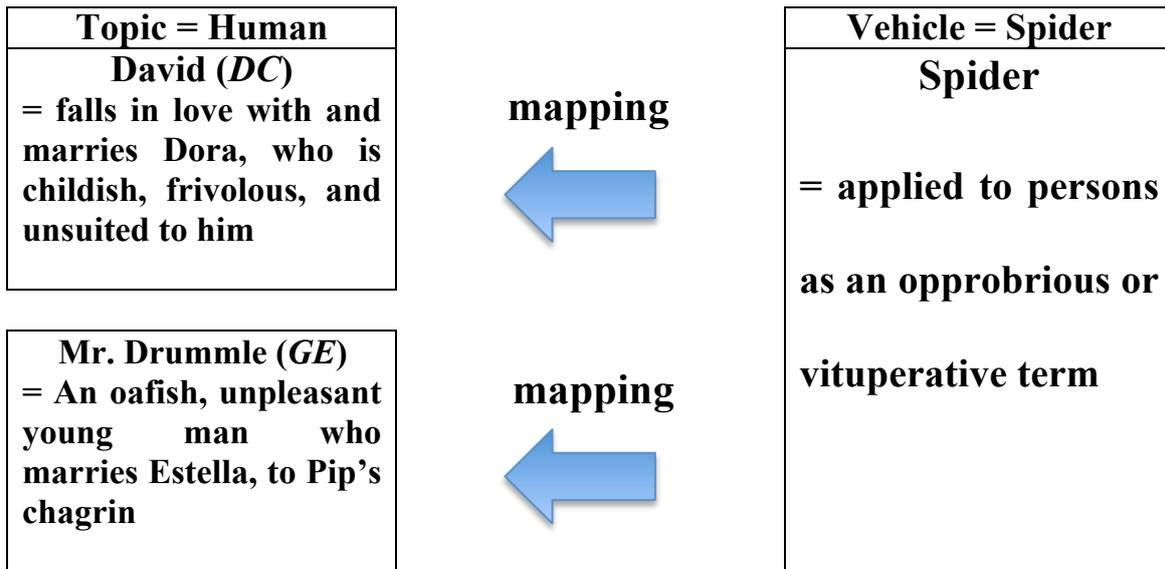


**Figure 5 The Set of Mappings between Two Domains: Human and Fish**

### 3.4.3 Cunning

In *David Copperfield*, David behaves like a *spider* towards Dora, in that he is on the lookout for her, which is evident from considering the *spider*. Similarly, Mr. Drummle in *Great Expectations* hovers around Estella persistently as if he were a *spider*. These two animal metaphors include the conceptual metaphor ‘Human is Animal’, as I can say that their behaviour as the *topic* domain is metaphorically understood in terms of spider behaviour as the *vehicle* domain. In this way, these spider metaphors capture the negative characteristics of these human beings. According to Kövecses (2010: 153), the conceptual metaphor has to do with the notion of ‘objectionability’ or ‘undesirability’, and thus this mental structure inherent in our mind, plays a part in creating the concrete, specific image of the characteristics of these perverse or cunning male characters by the metaphorical mapping of concepts of the *vehicle* onto the *topic* domain (See Figure 6).

By means of *dehumanisation*, the author gives humorous portrayals of various characters on the basis of their personalities for the purpose of not only appraising them coldly but also insinuating his vision of the mechanised, inhuman society that surrounded him. In Dickens’s novels, almost all of the instances of *dehumanisation* include negative, rather than positive, nuances, since he has a remarkable tendency of animalising naturally unpleasant and villainous characters.



**Figure 6 The Set of Mappings between Two Domains: Human and Fish**

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined Dickens's animal metaphors by which various characters are vividly or symbolically described. Above all, the author makes abundant use of noun forms, especially the 'determiner + noun' form, which can easily evoke specific images of those people and enhancing our memory. As his metaphors provide various structures and conceptual meanings to each animal term, I can conclude that his delineations are continuously rich in humour and vividness; for the two heroes David and Pip as the first-person narrators retrospect each of their childhood, by degrading various adult characters into animal-like state, so that they can attack or despise them and create their visions of the inhuman society that surrounds them.

Moreover, as the 'Human is Animal' metaphor is a fundamental conceptual metaphor applicable to Dickens's metaphors involving the comprehension of different properties of different human beings in terms of the concept of animal being. It is also worthy of remark that most of his animal metaphors for human personality are negative and pejorative, for his imagery of animals can be projected onto the author's or the narrative's view towards a variety of dislikeable or despicable people. Thus, Dickens's *dehumanisation* is effective in clearly enunciating his vision of the life-denying society in the novels. Further, it is also striking that Dickens's animalisation appears with exceedingly frequency so that he can enrich his expression of his worldview through his unique metaphorical devices. In this way, his imagination and sense of humour are reflected in his sophisticated use of metaphors.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to Meier (1982: 9), this type of device is also called ‘mechanisation’, and Dickens is fond of using it in order to deanimate particular dislikeable human beings into inanimate objects in his novels. In my paper, however, I prefer to use the term ‘dehumanisation’ instead of ‘mechanisation’ to refer to his method of dehumanising people, whether good or bad, into either animals or objects, for the author tends to characterise various types of characters in comparison with non-human living creatures or artificial objects.

<sup>2</sup> According to I.A. Richards in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), metaphor consists of two parts: the *tenor* and *vehicle*, whilst other scholars employ the general terms *ground* and *figure* to denote what Richards identifies as the *tenor* and *vehicle*. In my paper, I adopt the terms the *topic* and the *vehicle* that Goatly (2011) makes use of, substituting the word *topic* for *tenor*.

<sup>3</sup> I use some abbreviations in this paper: Det. for determiner, N for noun, Adj. for adjective, and V for verb.

<sup>4</sup> The text used in this paper is the World’s Classics edition of *David Copperfield*, edited by Nina Burgis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. The letter and number in round brackets after each example refer to the work and its page number respectively. Bold italics in each quotation are mine to emphasise areas in question.

<sup>5</sup> The letter *GE* stands of *Great Expectations*, the World’s Classics edition of *Great Expectations*, edited by Margaret Cardwell, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> I also refer to Goatly’s definitions of animal species employed for derogatory metaphors. See Goatly (2007: 150) for detail.

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