

A Cognitive Analysis of Cross-linguistic Differences Between English and Persian Image Schemas

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Abstract

Meaning is formed in our mind on the basis of our physical experience in the world. We perceive the environment when we move our body, exert and experience force. Regarding these experiences, some primary conceptual structures are developed which help us understand abstract ideas. These conceptual structures appear differently in various languages. The purpose of the present study is to show what similarities or differences are between English and Persian conceptual structures. To this end, following the theoretical framework of image schema which is an important theory of cognitive semantics, we took advantage of Mark Johnson's proposal of schemas such as containment, path, and force. The data have been obtained from the novel "1984" written by George Orwell and its two translations by Saleh Hosseini and Hamid Reza Baluch. The results of the study indicate that there are some similarities in the use conceptual structures in English and Persian; however, there are some differences which will be discussed. Some pedagogical implications are also suggested.

Keywords: image schema, conceptual structure, containment, path, force

INTRODUCTION

Language is considered as a mental faculty in many approaches of linguistics. The study of semantics which is an important part of cognitive linguistics is essential to get a clear view of this human specific ability. This linguistic knowledge, according to cognitive linguistics is not separated from general thinking or cognition. In the general approach of cognitive linguistics, externally, linguistic knowledge is not independent of other mental processes of attention, memory, and reasoning, and, internally, it is not modular; that is, syntax can never be autonomous from semantics and pragmatics (Saeed, 2004, pp. 355-56). To break the hard shell of the notion of cognition, meaning should be scrutinized accurately. Meaning can be developed through the use of a number of conceptual structures and processes which are conventionalized. One of them is

metaphor. "Cognitivists argue that metaphor is ubiquitous in ordinary language" (Saeed, 2004, p. 360). One kind of metaphor identified in ordinary language is spatial metaphor. For instance, in the sentence "I am feeling up/down." "up" is used to denote happiness and "down" is used to denote sadness. (Saeed, 2004, p. 360).

In order to understand how the mind conceptualizes these conceptual structures we should learn about image schema. The term Image Schema was invented by Mark Johnson and George Lakoff in their 1987 books. Image schema has been used as an umbrella term for spatial primitives, image schema and schematic integration. These are three different kinds of cognitive structure in psychology and cognitive linguistics which have not been differentiated. Schematic integration uses image schema to build concept and spatial primitives are the conceptual building blocks of image schemas. They have a paramount role in understanding the construction of meaning in language (Mandler, 2014).

Image schemas were first identified through the analysis of the motion verb and spatial relations across languages (Hampe, 2005, p. 2). This is the reason why we have performed this contrastive study. One of the cross-linguistic studies of motion verbs has been performed by Aransaez (1999) who compared English and Spanish. Regarding the general cognitive principle of figure/ground segregation, Langacker, quoted by Aransaez (1999), explains that the relationship between the subject (syntactic figure or trajectory) and object (syntactic ground or landmark) is shown by the verb in a simple transitive clause. Talmy, quoted by Aranaez (1999), uses the notion 'event-frame' to analyze motion verb conceptually. Event-frame consists of a "set of conceptual element and relationships that are evoked together or co-evoked each other". There are six elements in a motion event: motion, figure (trajectory), ground (landmark), and path are obligatory and manner and cause (of movement) are optional ones. Talmy, quoted by Aranaez (1999, p.129), claims that universal cognitive components may not be expressed the same way in all languages. He explains that PATH is expressed through the verb in verb-framed languages while it is expressed by a particle in satellite-framed languages. Verb-framed languages are the Romance languages and the satellite-framed are the Indo-European languages. In a study, expecting to pave the way for a new hypothesis, Safavi (2004) has surveyed the main image schemas suggested by Johnson to reveal the weak points and strength of the theory. In his study, Rasekhmahand (2011) has also illustrated the containment and path schema by using spatial prepositions in Persian.

In general, there might be similarities or differences in the use of image schemas across languages. In this regard, several questions may be raised, one of which, that is an overarching question, is how do image schemas appear linguistically in English and Persian? Another question is what are the similarities and differences? Regarding these questions, the authors have hypothesized that it seems that Persian image schemas are not very much different than their English samples. To the best of our knowledge, it seems there is not any comprehensive English/Persian contrastive research performed in this area investigation.

The importance of this study is revealed when we consider preparing textbooks and test materials for the high number of interested Persian and English students who are keenly interested in acquiring knowledge. The results can also be beneficial for translation courses.

METHODOLOGY

Choosing the proper research method is important in any study because valuable results can be obtained. Kring quoted by Christensen (2011) has suggested a model of the basic methods applied in translation process research. His model consists of two types: online and offline methods. The online method consists of observation of behavior and verbal-report data. The offline method consists of product analysis and verbal-report data. The data are collected after the translation process in the offline method. Of these methods, the authors have chosen the product analysis due to the practicality of this method. Following Kring's method, we obtained the data from the novel "1984" written by George Orwell and its two translations by Saleh Hosseini and Baluch. The novel is one of the best English-language novels, and its translation is among the notable work of Saleh Hosseini. First, the samples are collected from the two translations and then they are compared with their English equivalents. In addition, Aryanpour dictionary and Cambridge and Oxford dictionary have also been consulted.

RESULTS

Special attention has been paid to image schemas by cognitive semanticists. Based on our ordinary daily life experiences, some conceptual structures are developed in our mind. Regarding the creativity of our language faculty, we would apply them in new setting in our everyday conversation as well as literary texts. This is, perhaps, why someone's speech is pleasant and more effective. Johnson and Lakoff, quoted by Geeraerts (2010), have suggested a core list of image schemas, of which we have studied only the followings: containment, path, force, in the book 1984 by George Orwell and its translation.

Containment Schema

Containment schema is developed during childhood when a child is put into a perambulator, or anything which has space. We apply our experience of concrete objects to abstract entities. The prepositions in, inside, into, out of can help us distinguish these generalizations. In the following examples collected from 1984, the containment schemas are marked.

1. The thought flitted **through** Winston's mind. (p.122)

[æz zehn-e Vinston gozæsht.] (از ذهن وینستون گذشت.. (حسینی، ص ۹۵)

[fekri æz xatere vinston gozæsht.] (فکری از خاطر وینستون گذشت. (بلوچ، ص ۱۰۳)

2. A twinge of fear went **through** him. (p. 118)

[tærs **dær** janæsh **foru pichid.**] (ترس در جانش فرو پیچید. (حسینی، ص ۹۳)

[tærs vojudæsh ra **fra gereft.**] (ترس وجودش را فراگرفت. (بلوچ، ص ۱۰۳)

3. The face of O'Brien had floated **into** his mind. (p.103)

[chehreje obrajan **dær zehnæsh shenavær shode bud.**]

چهره او بر این در دریای ذهنش شناور شده بود. (حسینی، ص ۸۲)

[chehreje obrajan be gonei naxaste **dær zehnæsh jan gereft.**]

چهره او بر این به گونه ای ناخواسته در ذهنش جان گرفت. (بلوچ، ص ۸۹)

4. The date had struck **in** Winston's memory. (p.100)

[in tarix **dær hafezeje vinston hæk shodeh bud.**]

این تاریخ در حافظه وینستون حک شده بود. (حسینی، ص ۸۰)

[tarix in ruz be xubi **dær xatere vinston mande bud.**]

تاریخ این روز به خوبی در خاطر وینستون مانده بود. (بلوچ، ص ۸۷)

5. It was O'Brien who had spoken to him **out of the dark.** (p. 32)

[obrajan bud ke **æz dærun tariki** ba u hærf zæde bud.]

او بر این بود که از درون تاریکی با او حرف زده بود. (حسینی، ص ۳۷)

[obrajan ke **dær xab** ba u hærf zæde bud.]

او بر این بود که در خواب با او حرف زده بود. (بلوچ، ص ۳۹)

A tremor had gone **through** his bowels. (p. 10)

لرزه ای بر اندرونه اش دویده بود. (حسینی، ص ۲۲)

A sense of complete helplessness had descended **upon** him. (p. 10)

حس زبونی کامل بر جانش فرو نشسته بود. (حسینی، ص ۲۲)

Regarding the examples collected, it seems that English and Persian Speakers imagine that mind, memory, darkness, soul, hysteria, wonder, dream, and cry contain spaces. This can be identified by the prepositions such as in, through, and out of.

Path Schema

According to Johnson (1987), our experience of movement and other entities as they pass by is reflected in path schema. Any movement starts from a point and end in

another. It takes times and passes a sequence of places in different directions. The following examples can be evidence of path schema.

6. The fabulous statistics continued to **pour out of** the telescreen. (p.75)

[amare æfsanei hæmchenan **az** teleskreen **birun mirixt.**]

آمار افسانه‌ای همچنان از تله اسکرین بیرون می ریخت. (ص ۶۵)

[sæfheje soxængu hæmchenan **dær** hale **shemordæne ærghame** bavær nækærdani bud.]

صفحه سخن گو همچنان در حال شمردن ارقام باورنکردنی بود. (بلوچ ص ۶۹)

7. He **looked round** the canteen **again**. (p.76)

[negahæsh ra **æz no** dowre resturan **gærdanid.**]

نگاهش را از نو دور رستوران گردانید. (ص ۶۶)

[baz negahi be ætraf ghæza xori **ændaxt.**]

بازنگاهی به اطراف غذاخوری انداخت. (بلوچ ص ۷۰)

8. But there was still that memory **moving round** the edges of his consciousness. (p.153-4)

[æma an xatere bar læbeje agahi u **michærxid.**]

اما آن خاطره بر لبه آگاهی او می چرخید. (ص ۱۱۹)

[ama hæmuz an xatereje ghædimi zehne u ra be xod **mæshghul kærde bud.**]

اما هنوز آن خاطره قدیمی ذهن او را به خود مشغول کرده بود. (بلوچ ص ۱۲۸)

9. And the thought struck him...(p.169)

[in ændishe **dær** zehnæsh **gozæst.**]

این اندیشه در ذهنش گذشت. (ص ۱۳۰)

[nagæhan be fekræsh **resid ke**]

ناگهان به فکرش رسید که (بلوچ ص ۱۴۰)

10. He has run 10km in that soccer match.

[u dær in mosabeghe dæh kilumetr dævideh æst.]

او در این مسابقه فوتبال ده کیلومتر دویده است.

11. "He had given a quick glance up and down the street. (p.9)

[negahi sari? be bala va pain andaxte..]

نگاهی سریع به بالا و پایین خیابان انداخته و.. (ص ۲۱)

[u negahi særiʔ be ætrafe xiyaban ændaxt.]

او نگاهی سریع به اطراف خیابان انداخت. (بلوچ ص ۲۲)

Regarding the example above, Persian and English speakers believe that the words thought, memory, and statistics have the feature of movement. In fact, the feature is identified when a movement is used.

Force Schema

According to Johnson (1987), there are seven common force structures that would represent force schemata: compulsion, blockage, counterforce, diversion, removal of restraint, enablement, and attraction. Compulsion refers to a force which one cannot resist and should move along the way he is force to move. Blockage refers to obstacles which prevent our movement. The obstacles may be persons or objects. Counterforce refers to two equal forces which collide and their collision stops their movement. Diversion refers to the condition in which the two colliding forces change the direction of their movement. Removal of restraint is the condition in which the barrier or obstacle cannot prevent our movement. Enablement refers to our awareness of our potential to move or not to move the obstacles. Attraction refers to the force that causes a person or object to move toward it. Of these categories only compulsion and removal of restrain have been exemplified as follows:

Compulsion

12. he could not **follow** the train of thought further. (p.130),

[bish æz in nætævanest reshte æfkaræsh ra **donbal konæd.**]

بیش از این نتوانست رشته افکارش را دنبال کند. (ص ۱۰۱)

[digær nemitævanest reshte æfkaræsh ra **hefz konæd.**]

دیگر نمی توانست رشته افکارش را حفظ کند. (بلوچ ص ۱۱۰)

Removal of restrain

13. a Party member of sixty who later **committed suicide to avoid arrest.** (p. 165)

یک عضو شصت ساله حزب که بعدها برای پرهیز از دستگیری خودکشی می کند. (ص ۱۲۷)

یک عضو شصت ساله حزب که بعدها برای اجتناب از دستگیری خودکشی می کند. (بلوچ ص ۱۳۷)

DISCUSSION

Although there are similarities in the use of image schemas in English and Persian, some differences are noticeable. Mind is considered to have content in English and Persian, but, in the example no.1, this sentence seems to reflect a path schema. Here, mind is

considered to be a landmark and information as trajectory. This is visualized by the preposition “æz” in Persian. It is noticeable that the word “æz” visualize content if it is followed by the word “dærun” as it can visualize a containment schema. In the second example, ‘him’ is an example of metonymy; the semantic content of this pronominal appears in Persian. In other words, this metonymy has not been transferred into Persian in this translated text. Some schemas occur together in the same sentence. In example 2, the word ‘went into’ [forubichid] can be regarded to visualize path schema while ‘through him’[dær janæsh] containment schema. The pronominal ‘him’ is considered as a deictic word in pragmatics, while, here, it functions as the metonymic relation “container for content”. The person who ‘him’ refers to is the container and his soul is the content. This dual function can support the idea that semantics cannot be separated from pragmatics or syntax. In the following example.

“He had given a quick glance up and down the street. (p.9)

نگاهی سریع به بالا و پایین خیابان انداخته و.. (ص ۲۱)

Path schema is visualized by the pronoun ‘He’ as the source of and the word ‘up and down’ as the destination. However, the Persian word [ændakhteh] which is the equivalent suggested for the word ‘given’ visualizes a containment schema. The prepositions ‘upon’ and ‘through’ have been translated into the Persian preposition [bær] in the following examples.

A tremor had gone through his bowels. (p. 10)

لرزهای بر اندرونه‌اش دویده بود. (ص. ۲۲)

A sense of complete helplessness had descended upon him. (p. 10)

حس زبونی کامل بر جاننش فرو نشسته بود. (ص. ۲۲)

The preposition ‘upon’ and ‘through’ visualize surface and containment schema respectively in English, however, this distinction is difficult because the same preposition has been used in the two contexts. Nevertheless, the verbs can be helpful in identifying the schemas in Persian. The verb [neshæsteh, pp. sat] can happen on a surface and the verb [dævideh, pp. run] can happen in a time or place space.eg.

He has run 10km in that soccer match.

اودراین مسابقه فوتبال ده کیلومتر دویده‌است.

It is necessary to mention that sometimes two schemas may be visualized at the same time. And, the schema may not be represented metaphorically in the two languages. In the example,

A wave of synthetic violets **flooded** his nostrils. (p. 179),

[mowji æz ætr-e bænæfshe mæshamæsh ra **por kærd.**]

Por kard is the Persian equivalent word selected by the translator. Both of them indicate the arrival of something abstract, and there should be a space for the occurrence of the verb “flooded” and [por kærðæn]. Therefore, it seems that the speaker applied the destination and containment schema simultaneously. It is also necessary to mention that the Persian word [por kærð] does not have a figurative meaning as the English word “flooded”.

CONCLUSION

The first important point is that the teaching of image schema is recommended to be part of the curriculum of translation courses as they can be appropriate criteria to evaluate translated texts. In addition, a text translated with equivalent image schemas can have the same effect as the original text has on the native speakers. With regard to the examples, Hosseini has done his utmost attempt to transfer image schemas from English to Persian especially by using the following verbs [forupichid, birun mirixt, gardanid, donbal konad, micharxid]. Second, as the verbs used by Hosseini are all motion verbs, it can be concluded that these kinds of verbs have a paramount role in the expression of image schemas in English and Persian. This is the point the other translator has disregarded.

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