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## METAPHORICAL EXTENSIONS OF 5 ENGLISH AND PERSIAN VERBS

### An image-schematic analysis

#### **Abstract**

Languages change and this change may occur in the sound structure, morphology, syntax, lexicon and the lexical meaning. Lexical and semantic change may produce polysemy based on different mechanisms of semantic changes. Metaphor as one of the mechanisms of semantic change extends the possible range of lexical meaning, operates on the basis of a real or assumed similarity between the source and target domains. This similarity, in turn, derives from conceptual structures called *image schemas* that are active in the mind of speakers of different languages. The present research, therefore, attempts to investigate metaphorical extensions of 5 cognate English and Persian verbs of common Indo-European origin. The ultimate goal of the article is to compare and contrast image-schematic types of the selected verbs based on image-schemas proposed by Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Turner (1989). The analysis reveals that the present verbs have similar types of image-schemas in both English and Persian including image-schemas of path, existence, containment and attraction. This is along with the fact that not all cases of polysemy act similarly due to the diachronic nature of semantic changes and different historical and social circumstances.

**Key words:** semantic change, mechanisms of semantic change, metaphor, image-schema,

#### **1. Introduction**

Languages change in time and part of this change is the shift in their meaning (Finegan, 2012). Shift in the meaning or semantic change happens in verbs as well. This shift starts from the original meaning changing it into its more abstract renderings based on some sort of similarity between the old and new

meanings. An important point here, however, is to investigate tendencies and qualities of change in various languages, that is, to inquire whether languages tend to change in certain directions and if the results are similar or different.

This paper attempts to analyze five English and Persian verbs having a common Indo-European origin. The aim here is to explore tendencies of metaphorical extensions in the selected English and Persian verbs based on the image schematic theory.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Language and Semantic change**

Languages change with time, all living languages are subject to changes and this process is continuing all the time. The language change is universal, continuous and to a very considerable degree- regular. Despite different theories of language change, there is no comprehensive and inclusive theory that can cover all the reasoning and facts about language change.(Lyons, 1990) The change in language can be viewed at two levels; first, at the level of phonological, grammatical and lexical changes, second, at the level of internal and external factors. After being coined and lexicalized, words often undergo subtle but wide-ranging changes. The most common type of change is change in meaning referred to as semantic change. (Kuiper and Allan, 1996). In other words, semantic change is the type of lexical change in which no formally new creation occurs, but an already existing form is extended in use. (Grzega and Schöner,2007)

### **2.2. Mechanisms of semantic change**

There are certain mechanisms by which lexical semantic change happens. Semasiological mechanisms involve the creation of new readings of an existing lexical item. Semasiological innovations provide existing words with new meanings contrary to onomasiological innovations that express a concept by a new or alternative lexical item.(Geeraerts, 2010) Within semasiological mechanisms, there is a distinction between changes of denotational, referential meaning and changes in connotational meaning, especially in the emotive meaning of the word. Denotational changes in meaning comprise the classical set of specialization, generalization, metonymy and metaphor. On the other hand, the major types of emotive meaning change are pejorative and ameliorative; that is- a shift toward a more

negative emotive meaning versus a shift toward a more positive emotive meaning respectively.(Geeraerts,2010)

### **2.3. Metaphors**

One of the commonest of all types of semantic change is metaphor. Metaphors apply a word to something it does not literally denote in order to draw attention to a resemblance (Trask, 2003). In linguistic terms, a simple way to look at a metaphor is to consider it as a breach in the normal literal selectional restrictions that the semantic components of words have in a sentence (Kuiper and Allan, 1996). Viewed as the most important form of figurative language use, metaphor is usually regarded as reaching its most sophisticated forms in literary or poetic language. The two main concepts involved in a metaphor are referred to differently in the related literature. For instance, the starting point or described concept is often called the target domain whereas the comparison concept or the analogy is called the source domain. (Geeraerts, 2010)

Based on a classical Aristotelian view metaphors are a kind of a decorative addition to ordinary plain language; a rhetorical device to be used at certain times to gain certain effects (Saeed, 2009). Thus according to this theory, metaphors are considered to be beyond the normal use of the literal language acquiring special forms of interpretation on the part of listeners or readers. The other view on metaphor often referred to as the 'romantic view' holds that metaphor is integral to language and thought as a way of experiencing the world, it is evidence of the imagination in conceptualizing and reasoning and it follows that the language is metaphorical by definition, so that there is no distinction between literal and figurative languages (Saeed, 2009).

Lakoff and Turner (1989: 135) assert that "Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another. To serve this function, there must be some grounding, some concepts that are not completely understood via metaphor to serve as source domain".

#### **2.3.1. Features of metaphors**

Cognitive semanticists argue that metaphors exhibit characteristic and systematic features. Some of these characteristics bear the headings of conventionality, systematicity, asymmetry and

abstraction(Saeed, 2009). Conventionality raises the issue of the novelty of the metaphor. Systematicity refers to the fact that a metaphor does not just set up a single point of comparison: features of the source and target domain are joined so that the metaphor may be extended, or have its own internal logic. The third feature asymmetry refers to the way that metaphors are directional. They do not set up a symmetrical comparison between two concepts, establishing points of similarity; the mappings in metaphors do not work the other way round. Finally, the fourth feature is abstraction related to asymmetry. It has often been noted that a typical metaphor uses a more concrete, specific source to describe a more abstract target. In fact, in cognitive semantics this allows metaphor its central role in both categorizing of new concepts and the organization of experience (Saeed, 2009).

### **2.3.2. Image-schemas**

Image schemas are conceptual structures that are formed as the result of our physical experience of being and acting in the world and our perceiving the environment, moving our bodies, exerting and experiencing force etc. These basic conceptual structures are then used to organize thought across a range of more abstract domains.

Domains that give rise to images are embodied (Lakoff 1987: 267; Johnson 1987: 19-23) or grounded (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 113). Johnson provides the most precise specification of which domains are embodied: those that refer to physical experience (1987), specially “our bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects, and our perceptual interactions” (1987: 29; see also Lakoff 1987: 267). An inventory of image schemas collected from Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Turner (1989) includes the following:

SPACE UP±DOWN, FRONT±BACK, LEFT±RIGHT, NEAR±FAR,

CENTER±PERIPHERY, CONTACT

SCALE PATH

CONTAINER, CONTAINMENT, IN±OUT, SURFACE, FULL±EMPTY,

CONTENT,

FORCE BALANCE, COUNTERFORCE, COMPULSION, RESTRAINT,

ENABLEMENT, BLOCKAGE, DIVERSION, ATTRACTION

UNITY/MULTIPLICITY MERGING, COLLECTION, SPLITTING, ITERATION, PART±

WHOLE, MASS±COUNT, LINK

IDENTITY MATCHING, SUPERIMPOSITION

EXISTENCE REMOVAL, BOUNDED SPACE, CYCLE, OBJECT, PROCESS

### **3. Data and Methodology**

To carry out the analysis considered in this article, five Persian verbs of Indo-European origin and their English cognates were selected from Cheng (2007). Then the diachronic developments including semantic changes and the polysemy of the selected verbs were elicited and studied both in English and Persian. To do this, the following dictionaries were used: English Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles (2006), Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Eleventh Edition (2004), five-volume etymological dictionary of Persian by Hassandoust (2016) and 16 volume Dehkhoda dictionary of Persian available at online Abadis dictionary (2017). Next, the instances of semantic change and polysemy were analyzed based on the image-schema inventory proposed by Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Turner (1989).

### **4. Data analysis**

#### **1. PIE. \* step (to hasten, to op/press)**

\* OIr. *abi-štāpa* > MPers. *wīštab* (to hasten, to op-press), NPers. *šīaftan* (to hurry)

OCS. *stōpiti* (to tread) > ORuss. *stopa* (fast-step) > Russ. *stopa*

OE. *stæppan* > ME. *stæppan* > NE. *to step*

PIE. \* *step*

### English

1. Moving by raising the foot and bringing it down somewhere else
2. Dance
3. To go on foot, walk
4. Advance, proceed
5. Be on one's way; leave
6. Press down with the foot
7. To come into
8. Set
9. To make erect by fixing the lower end of sth
10. To measure by steps
11. To construct and arrange as if in steps

### Persian

1. Hurry up
2. Rush, go hastily

### 2. PIE. \*steH<sub>2</sub> (to stand, to place)

Av. stā- (to place, set, stand); MPers. īst (to stay, stand, be); NPers. īstādan (stop, arrest, rob, stand against)

OE. standan > ME. standan > NE. stand

### English

1. Support oneself on the feet
2. To rise in an erect position
3. To take up or maintain a specified position or posture
4. Obs. Hesitate
5. To be a candidate, run
6. To occupy a place or location
7. Agree, accord
8. To exist in a definite written or printed form
9. Remain valid or efficacious
10. Endure or undergo successfully
11. To participate in a military formation
12. Remain firm in the face of sth

### **Persian**

1. Getting up on, rising upside 2. Stop, hindering 3. Insisting on  
4. Agreeing, consent 5. Being upright  
6. Reside, be located 7. Delay 8. Stop moving 9. Insist 10. Continue to do

**3. PIE. \*Har-** (to set in motion); **PIE. \*H<sub>3</sub> er** (to move, to set in motion)

Av. ar- (to set in motion); MPers. rān (to drive, to expel, to pursue), NP. rāndan (to drive away, expel)

OE. rinnan /iernan > ME. ronnen/rinnen > NE.run

### **English**

1. To go faster than a walk 2. Flee, retreat, escape  
3. To go without restraint, go freely 4. To keep company, consort  
5. To enter an election, race 6. To go back and forth, ply 7. Turn, rotate  
8. Function, operate 9. Melt, fuse 10. Spread, dissolve 11. Hunt, chase  
12. Reach 13. Manage 14. Smuggle 15. To cause to produce or flow 16. Drive for a graze 17. Thrust

### **Persian**

1. Making to go or move 2. Driving a car or airplane  
3. Making an animal move and go 4. Expel, drive out 5. Describe, write

6. Inflicting diarrhea

**4. PIE. \*sed (to sit)**

Av. hiṣ / had (to sit, to be seated, sit down), OPers. ni-šād (to establish), MPers. nišastan (to sit down) > NPers. nišastan

OE. sittan > ME. sitten > NE. Sit

**English**

1. To sit on the buttocks
2. Perch, roost
3. Occupy a place as a member
4. Brood
5. Serve as a model
6. Dwell
7. Lie, rest
8. To remain inactive
9. Babysit
10. To please or agree with one
11. To cause to be seated
12. Squelch, repress

**Persian**

1. Establishing a living
2. Putting on the throne of the monarchy and the Emirate
3. Preaching at home or at work to visit friends
4. Riding (on horseback riding etc
5. Hold something in something
6. Accommodation, staying
7. Disposal of the discharge

**115. PIE. \*grabH (to grab, seize, take)**

Av. grab- (gərəvnāiti) (grab, seize, take), OPers. grbā (to seize as possession, as a prisoner), MPers. griftan (take, seize) > NPers. giriftan

OCS. grabiti (to rob) > Russ. grabit'

OE. gripe (LGer. Grabben) ME. > NE. grab



### **English**

1. Take or seize by a sudden motion
2. Obtain unscrupulously
3. To take hastily
4. To seize the attention of
5. To impress favorably and deeply

### **Persian**

1. Accept
2. Select
3. Reprimand
4. Start
5. Effect
6. Capture
7. Grab
8. Do
9. Hunt
10. Impede
12. Happen
13. Eat/drink

## **5. Findings and results**

1. Looking through the polysemic structure of the verb “to step” in English, it appears that most of the semantic extensions are related to the sense “motion” and “movement”. On the other hand, Persian polysemy shows the same sense of “movement with haste”. Thus, an underlying image-schema for this verb could be that of “path” schema that reflects our everyday experience of moving around the world and experiencing the movement of other entities. Consequently, these two languages depict the similar image schema, involved in the interpretation of the metaphorical extensions.
2. The verb “to stand” in English conveys meanings of “being present”, “remaining motionless, firm or steadfast”. Apparently this verb indicates presence and existence at underlying layers of the metaphorical interpretations although this presence at times assumes the upright and erected form. In Persian the meanings of “existence” and “stopping” are at the core of most of the polysemy either in the form of “stopping to go forward or ” stopping going forward” and becoming motionless. In fact, these meanings take up different image schemas in each of the polysemy. For example, in the sense of “reside and wait” the apparent image involved is “existence” while in the meanings

“insist” and “continue” the images involved are “force and path”. Likewise, the image actualized in “finish” is “containment”.

3. In both Persian and English the dominant image schema for the verb “to run” is “path” because in both inventories of polysemy the main underlying sense is that of “motion” from which most of the metaphorical extensions related to this verb are derived. Thus both languages show dynamicity with parallel but different levels of abstraction from more concrete meanings as driving a car or an animal to more abstract meanings of operating, managing, writing and taking part in elections. Evidently, in all these cases beginning and ending points are imaginable.
4. The dominant image-schema in the verb “to sit” in both Persian and English seems to be “containment”. The sense of being present and staying somewhere is visible in most of the meaning inventories, for instance, Persian staying, establishing living and putting on the throne all have a core meaning of settlement somewhere. Likewise, English showing more diversity in the range of the verb meaning from dwelling, sitting on the buttocks, resting, and remaining inactive, goes to more abstract instances of pleasing and repressing that altogether share the same element of existence within a framework or confine.
5. The verb “to grab” indicates an act of picking up and getting. An act of moving things in directions aimed toward the speaker. Metaphorical extensions of this verb in both languages share this essential sense and concept. The major image-schema involved here is that of “attraction”. Here English shows more uniformity where the metaphorical meanings have to do with taking and seizing; typical instances of attraction. Persian, however, reveals more diversity in realization of this underlying image-schema. Whereas in “accept, select, hunt, eat” there is a sense of “moving towards the speaker” either in concrete or abstract forms, there are instances such as “happen, start, impede, and do” that are less typical and could have other image-schemas involved like the case of “impede” and the image-schema of blockage.

## **6. Conclusions**

Investigating the underlying image-schemas of the metaphorical extensions of 5 English and Persian verbs shows that metaphORIZATION, being the main process of the semantic change in verbs, is mostly based on similar image-schematic structures among the selected verbs of English and Persian. In other words, whereas the image schemas involved are the same, the resulted metaphors may be different, depending on the indeterminate nature and sequence of the circumstances in life and the outer world. For example in **PIE. \*grabH**, evidently there is a common core meaning of “take and seize” that is, the image-schema of “attraction” in both languages, the same similarity is relevant to **PIE. \*sed (to sit)** where the core meaning of “sitting, staying, dwelling and resting” is evident in the verb polysemy in both languages- an instance of the “containment” image-schema. In fact, while analyzing image-schematic structures, special attention must be paid not to the superficial similarity or differences but to the underlying core meaning with due consideration of the varying levels of abstraction in rendering different metaphors.

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