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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The study of time metaphor in Sohrab Sepehri's poem in the framework of cognitive linguistics

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Abstract

The present study is a descriptive study for determining the time metaphor which is taken as place. The data have been collected from the precious Persian poet Sohrab's poem. In this study, researcher tries to answer the following questions: What are the expressive mechanisms of time metaphor at Sohrab's poems? Does the contemporary theory of metaphor, explain the Time metaphor in poetry of Sohrab's poem? Our findings show that, in the poetry of Sohrab's poem understanding the concept of time, is dependent on "Time is running " metaphorical mapping , and the Lakoff contemporary theory of metaphor is a proper theoretical tool for analyzing the conceptual structure of Sohrab's poems.

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INTRODUCTION

In this study, the metaphor of time in Sohrab Sepehri's poems is being investigated according to cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is an approach in language study that deals with the relation between human language, his mind, and his social and physical experiences. Sohrab Sepehri's is a poet whose poems are replete with emotional and social meanings and he inspires profound social concepts to the reader through slang words and metaphors. Therefore, discovering these metaphorical concepts, understanding, and recognizing the thoughts used behind these metaphorical concepts are important linguistically. In this study, the author has attempted to investigate and analyze metaphor of time in Sohrab Sepehri's poems from cognitive linguistics viewpoint based on contemporary theory of metaphor by Lakoff (1992).

Statement of the problem

Cognitive approach toward metaphor appeared from 1980s. Metaphor is one of mental-lingual processes that the views of cognitive linguistics have brought extensive changes in views toward it. Cognitive semanticists have introduced metaphor as a means to think, understand and recognize abstract concepts that have extensive and various usages and functions in daily and literary language.

Although presenting cognitive linguistics and the contemporary theory about metaphor was proposed in Lakoff's paper under the title of "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor" (1992). Studies had been conducted in this regard beforehand. In these studies, authors have investigated different types of metaphor. In addition, they attempted to employ their cognitive approach in studying poetic metaphors, since they regarded acquaintance with conventional metaphors as an introduction to poetic metaphors and believed that poets employ routine metaphors in their poems. However, they extend them to show us other aspects of reality. Therefore, in this study this question was going to be answered that what the expressive mechanisms of time metaphor are in Sohrab Sepehri's poems.

Questions:

1. How are expressive mechanisms of time metaphor in Sohrab Sepehri's poems?
2. Is the contemporary theory of metaphor by Lakoff applicable in expressing metaphor of time in Sohrab Sepehri's poems?

Hypotheses:

1. In Sohrab Sepehri's poems, understanding the concept of time is dependent on metaphorical mapping of "Time is moving".
2. The contemporary theory of time by Lakoff is and appropriate theoretical means to investigate conceptual structure of Sohrab Sepehri's poems.

Cognitive linguistics

In their cognitive studies, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:127; 1990:54) concluded that in human conceptual domain, abstract concepts are organized using objective concepts. In other words, language directs us to express or understand abstract concepts according to objective concepts. Therefore, cognitive linguistics hypothesizes about language and the way cognition is reflected in language.

Langacker, who is a pioneer and one of the main characters in cognitive linguistics, calls his linguistics theory as cognitive grammar (Langacker, 1986:29). He introduced cognitive grammar in 1987 and 1991 in foundations of cognitive grammar. He introduced a number of important cognitive linguistics, concepts that are still valid and considered as the main concepts of this viewpoint. This is the most comprehensive and detailed grammatical theory in cognitive grammar that has been introduced ever since. He rejects considering language as a component independent of other cognitive components and he does not consider syntax as a component independent of other sections of language as well. According to him, cognitive grammar is completely different from other views proposed in generative grammar; however, it is close to functionalist views.

Geraerts (1995:115) cognitive linguistics is an approach which emphasizes language as a tool to organize, process and transfer information. In this approach, language is considered as a system of categories, and formal structure of language is not only investigated as an independent phenomenon; however, it is studied as an aspect of general conceptual system, categorization principles, processing mechanisms and experimental and environmental effects.

Ungerer and Schmid (1996:67) believe that cognitive linguistics describes categorization based on necessary and sufficient features as unrealistic. Linguistically speaking, there is no difference between ordinary and metaphorical language and metaphors are not considered as marginal sections of language; rather, language is taken from mental processes and it is metaphorical completely, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980:45) state, "metaphor is something we live by".

Johnson and Erneling (1997:4) define cognitive sciences as, "An interdisciplinary knowledge, which claims that fields such as artificial intelligence, philosophy, linguistics, psychology, neurology and so on are basically similar and they are different only in terms of surface aspects including methodology and what special aspects of science they are dealing with".

Lee (2001:2) Cognitive linguistics is an approach toward analyzing natural languages that considers language as a tool to organize, process, and transfer information. Establishing language contact means that users process their information in a specific way, organize it, and then transfer this information to others in the form of language interpretations.

Taylor (2002:4) believes that language is an inseparable part of human's cognitive power and it could be investigated only in the light of mind and mental processing. In this view, there is a direct link between language expressions and mental structures and language learning and using it would be based on those experiences formed in human's memory; in other words, language could not be separated from its speakers and surrounding environment.

Croft and Cruse (2003:2) present three principles to express cognitive linguistics' views toward language:

1. Language is not an independent cognitive talent.
2. Grammar means conceptualization
3. Language knowledge appears in language use.

They believe that prominent linguists of cognitive approach stand-up against governing views of their time, i.e. generative grammar and logical semantics.

Evans and Green (2006:54) believe that in cognitive linguistics, it is the task of linguistics to present a theory about nature of language and conceptual system reflected by language. It appears that cognitive linguists consider language as having communication performance that enables humans to express internal elements, create speech

acts and be effective. According to them, language provides the ability to create scenes, textures and experimental frames for humans. Conceptual domains reflected in language are the generator of and include beliefs and experiments related to each other.

Cognitive Semantics

In a world that sciences are continuously borrowing concepts and methods from each other, cognitive linguistics appeared because of linguistics affected by Gestalt and cognitive psychology. In 1980s and 1990s, a new movement in semantics was created in America under the effect of Lakoff (1987), Johnson (1987) and Langacker (1987) views, which was later called as cognitive semantics.

Formation of cognitive semantics is important in itself because of the importance of semantic studies in 21st century. Obviously, this view has characteristics that result in the increase of its proponents and each year the number of papers written in topics proposed in this domain, increases and numerous theses are being written in this regard (Golfam, 2003:65).

The term cognitive semantics was first used by Lakoff in a paper with the same name and then this view was introduced by 6 main characteristics:

- 1) Meaning regarded as a mental structure not based on the measure of truth and falsehood.
- 2) Using perceptual models to express language problems in this view are similar constructor lingual mechanisms and perceptual actions, which interact with each other.
- 3) Believing in the fact that meaning is formed according to geological, special and tangible structures. These structures create perceptual spaces with different qualitative dimensions. Some of these dimensions are perceived by our sensory receptors. The ability to reconstruct, perceive and produce other dimensions is acquired. Perceiving other dimensions depends on cultures.
- 4) In this framework, image schemas with special structure are considered as the main cognitive patterns.
- 5) Among language dimensions, in this view, semantics is regarded as the basic domain and it is because its perceptual substructure that enables it to affect communication mechanisms between language elements in other domains.
- 6) In cognitive linguistics, categorization of language elements is prototype-based (Golfam, 2003:68).

Metaphor:

Scientists in different sciences including literature, philosophy, and linguistics had considered metaphor in language. Traditional views that had overshadowed most previous studies, did not consider metaphor something beyond a literal array. However, studies of cognitive linguists within three recent decades have defined a new nature for metaphor. Metaphor is regarded as an expression in which a semantic or conceptual domain is perceived and experienced through another semantic or conceptual domain. Most of the authors believe that in processing metaphor, a special representation of the outer world is created in memory and during this process, those aspects of phenomena and relations are considered that are not regarded in ordinary verbal processing (Taheri, 1999:105).

According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor has covered all over daily life, not only in language domain, but also in thought and action. Our daily conceptual system according to which we think and act has a nature essentially based on metaphor. Concepts governing our thought do not only include mental issues. Rather, they cover our daily activities to the most trivial details. These mental concepts form perceptions' structure, our way of making relationships in the world and interaction with other people. Therefore, our conceptual system plays a major role in defining our daily realities.

Searle and Beardsley (1999) believe the criteria to recognize metaphor is that if we interpret metaphor literally, it would be quite false. However, Belec (1999) points to the fact that this test is true in the case of figurative applications including conflict and exaggeration as it stands for metaphor. Therefore, it is only an evidence of a figurative proposition not necessarily metaphor.

Sadouk and Belec (2000) were the first authors who delicately differentiated dead and live metaphor. As Sadouk states, live metaphor is a new metaphor, which has not achieved public use and is not recorded in dictionaries. Instead, dead metaphor is a selection in the past, which is recorded in dictionaries. About this classification, Belec states that studying dead metaphor is similar to attempting to cure a dead person. In other words, dead metaphor is

not considered as metaphor anymore. Rather it is just an ordinary expression with no metaphorical generative power.

Kövecses, Zoltán (2010) has compiled a book under the title of "*Applied Introduction to Metaphor*". This book is one of the few comprehensive works that deal with cognitive metaphor. General features of this book are classified in three parts: the first feature is cognitive metaphor as being an innovative subject. This novice domain has only passed three decades of its life with a vast perspective and flexible and dynamic application. While, it is rooted in centuries of human studies on metaphor domain and other sciences, its branches are not only used to decorate poetry and words, but also they contain mechanisms that express the cognitive aspects of human mind.

Eco Umberto et al. (2011) Book of "*Metaphor*" that deals with studying the base of thought and tools of making beauty was published for the second time with efforts of Farhad Sasani, including articles by Eco Umberto, Richard Mourn, George Lakoff and so on. Reported by Sooreh Mehr News Agency, the book of "Metaphor" consists seven articles in an attempt to introduce different views about an explanation called "metaphor". According to these views, metaphor is excluded from mere literary, poetic and artistic sphere and its acquisition is shown in the whole system of language and mind.

Richards' views (2013) could be a turning point in metaphor studies. As he states with regard to the relativity of meaning and inherency of ambiguity for language, metaphor is the ubiquitous principle of language. Without metaphor, we are not able to express an ordinary fluent sentence. It means metaphor is not an unusual and special application of language; rather the whole language is essentially metaphorical. Metaphor is the product of language and affects hidden meaning. It is a language process. Richard believes that developing language is the main task of metaphor. It develops reality and creates it.

Contemporary Theory of Metaphor:

In the second edition of "*Metaphor and Thought*" by George Lakoff, he described the outlines of a new theory he called as "Contemporary Theory of Metaphor":

- 1) Metaphor is the most important mechanism through which we perceive abstract concepts and reason abstractly.
- 2) Most issues from trivial ones to complicated scientific theories could be perceived and understood only through metaphors.
- 3) Inherently, metaphor is a conceptual not a lingual phenomenon.
- 4) Lingual metaphors are only a superficial emergence of conceptual metaphors.
- 5) Although most of our conceptual system is metaphorical, a significant part of it is non-metaphorical. Our metaphorical perception is based on this non-metaphorical part.
- 6) Metaphor enables us to understand a relatively abstract or a formless subject based on a more concrete or at least structured subject.

The contemporary theory of metaphor meant that many abstract concepts including concepts used in philosophy have a metaphorical structure. In language level, these metaphors could be hidden, but they govern concepts. To understand Lakoff's statements better and profoundly, consider this common example that our understanding of time is generally metaphorical. We perceive time in terms of space. Consider this:

*The New Year is close and it's coming soon.

In this example, a location adjective (close) is used to describe a time phenomenon and we speak in such a way that we are standing on a fixed location and time is moving toward us on a ride. Despite criticisms drawn from the contemporary theory of metaphor in some aspects, this theory clarified the importance of metaphor cognitively and paved the way for more profound studies on human conceptual system (Kamboziya, 2009:121-123).

Time as Space Metaphor:

Lakoff and Turner (1989:76) Time is an abstract concept and as stated before, one of the achievements of metaphor is perceiving something abstract through something more concrete. Perceiving time as space, object or a closed space is the most prominent example of metaphorical perception of an abstract concept. Through time as space metaphor, time shift is perceived as location shift.

Klein and Li (2009:6) The phenomenon of "time" accompanies humans from birth. Therefore, we are always interacting with it. Every child starts recognizing and conceptualizing time from the beginning. However,

recognition of time by human is very diverse. In order to present a plan for the concept of time in mind, first, it should be determined that about what concept of time we are talking. Time includes various concepts. Philosophers, physicists, biologists, anthropologists, psychologists, linguists and son on study their views of language and present definitions for that.

Evans (2013:62) In addition, "time" is generally considered from its psychological perspective; i.e. that concept of time, which has internal aspect and the individual forms it in his mind and cognition according to personal experiences, lingual and cultural metaphors (Evans, 2004, 2013). Since, this concept of "time" does undoubtedly exist, all people experience it, and it is reflected in their language and conceptual system.

2. Research Method

This research is conducted through descriptive-analytic method. In addition, data is collected through library method by surveying the collection of Sohrab Sepehri's poems.

Data analysis in this study is based on the contemporary theory of metaphor by Lakoff (1992) that deals with time as space metaphor in Sohrab Sepehri's poems. First, verses of poems are investigated in terms of finding time metaphors and verses with time metaphor are extracted. Then, according to time metaphor, these verses are divided into two groups of moving time with fixed observer or fixed time with moving observer.

3. Discussion:

Time is a moving object or space and the observer is fixed relative to that.

- *The rusty day is passing the road.*

The poet (fixed observer) is a person who is seemingly standing by the road and watching the day passing (moving object) that road, while, the day is tired and rusty. This expression is a metaphor of the end of the day and approaching night, which shows a working day accompanying fatigue. Here, the poet is the fixed observer and time is considered as a moving object.

- *Darkness is coming.*
- *The plain becomes quiet.*
- *The colorful story of the day*
- *Ends up.*

The plain that is dynamic and moving during the day becomes motionless and quiet when the night falls and the day which had accompanied the plain, starts moving and leaving it when the night falls. Day and night are moving objects, when one enter, the other exists. Here, the plain is fixed observer and day and night as time elements are moving.

- *Moist wind of time passes*
- *Color is pouring upon our bodies .*

Here, time is resembled to moist wind that cleans the color from our faces when it comes. It points to the removal of color and freshness from human faces. In other words, people lose their beauty and freshness by age. Therefore, in this verse, human is fixed element that is standing in front of time and time is the moving object that comes and fades away the beauty and color from humans' faces.

- *It's morning*
- *Here comes the sunrise.*

In this verse, when the sun rises, the morning comes as well and light covers everywhere when it is morning and the sun rises. Therefore, sunrise as the symbol of day is the moving object and the poet who is watching sunrise, is the fixed element.

Time is a fixed object or place and the observer is moving relative to that.

- *I saw you; I escaped the pinch of time.*
- *I saw you; the passion of nihility arose in me.*

The poet says, when I saw you such a passion and excitement arose in me that I was able to pass the time that had made everything so difficult for me. As if time has been like a narrow catwalk that the poet had not dared to pass it.

However, when he saw his beloved, he was able to pass the time difficulty through the passion and spirit created in him. Therefore, time is considered as a fixed difficulty and the poet is moving element that has crossed it.

- *I was moving alone in lightless nights.*

In this verse, the poet states that he has been alone and shelterless in the darkness of nights. The night is standing in its place and it is the poet who has crossed the night without a comrade and is passing it. Therefore, the poet is the moving observer and night is the fixed element.

- *And I left time.*

In this verse, time is considered as fixed object and the poet who has been sitting by the time and is now leaving and moving, is considered the moving element.

- *And the stream is passing across the time .*

Here, time is the fixed element that is standing in a place and the stream of life is moving along it. The stream is moving element and time is considered as fix place.

4. Conclusion

1. Data show that in Sohrab Sepehri's poems, time is restricted through a place or space or it is perceived as an object. However, these metaphors are classified under two general categories:
Time as space or moving object where the observer is fixed relative to that or time is considered as a fixed space or object and the observer is moving.
2. Since time has been employed as space, just like the space it takes the features of space in such a way that in the mentioned poems, space particles could be observed including "in, to, from, on, on the other side, this side, behind it".
3. Investigating these data expresses other features for abstract phenomena of "time" in addition to special features that include: time has weight and volume, it is ephemeral, sometimes it has not yet come and sometimes it has been lost; sometimes it is hastily and moving and sometimes it is fixed, standing and motionless; sometimes, it recedes and sometimes approaches. All of these features suggest that the poet has personalized "time" as an abstract phenomena and he considers time as a person who comes and goes. In addition, it could be stated that the poet clearly is using personification in his poems.
4. Human experiences from his motion and moving objects around him has enabled him to create an abstract schema called moving schema in his mind from this physical motion and grant it to an abstract phenomena like time. In this moving schema of time, all features of a physical moving object including start point and endpoint or destination, the route and speed are considered.
5. In some metaphors, two different metaphorical mappings could be used synchronically, i.e. time as space or time as motion. This suggests that mappings are open sets of potential correspondence that are activated whenever required and they do not act necessarily apart from each other.

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