

مجله علوم اجتماعی و انسانی دانشگاه شیراز
دوره بیست و یکم، شماره اول، بهار ۱۳۸۳ (پیاپی ۴۰)
(ویژه نامه زبان انگلیسی و زبان شناسی)

صورت نخستین معنایی در زبان فارسی

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چکیده

مقاله حاضر کوششی در جهت تشخیص صورتهای نخستین معنایی در زبان فارسی می‌باشد. اساس کار چهارچوب ارائه شده ویرزبیکا (۱۹۹۴) برای زبان انگلیسی است. این چهارچوب ناظر بر این نظریه است که در تمام زبان‌ها مفاهیم بسیطی وجود دارند که اساس مفاهیم (پیچیده) دیگراند. به این مفاهیم ساده «صورت نخستین» اطلاق می‌گردد. ویرزبیکا این مفاهیم را برای زبان انگلیسی مشخص کرده است و ادعا دارد که نظیر آن‌ها در تمام زبان‌ها یافت می‌شود. ادعای دیگر این است که ترکیب این مفاهیم با هم در جملاتی با نحو بسیار ابتدایی فرد را قادر می‌سازد تا مفاهیم پیچیده را با زبانی همه فهم و بدون بار فرهنگی ارائه دهد. در این تحقیق بر مبنای تعداد ۳۸ صورت نخستین در زبان انگلیسی متناظر آن‌ها در فارسی مشخص شده‌اند که این ادعای اول ویرزبیکا را تایید می‌کند.

Semantic Primitives in Persian

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Abstract

This study is concerned with what is believed to be the first application of a recently developed semantic approach in the analysis of language meanings in Persian. This approach is based on the fact that in all human languages there are some concepts functioning as bases for other concepts. In other words, the simplest of the former concepts are primitives.

Key words: 1.Semantic Primitives 2.Cultural Scripts 3.Natural Semantic Meta-language (NSM)

1. Introduction

The set of primitives presented and discussed here is based on the study done by Wierzbicka (1996), which as she says is "the result of the course of nearly three decades of research by colleagues and myself" (35). Her objective over these years has been to develop an 'alphabet of human thought' which can be identified via a systematic and methodological study of different languages. She calls this "a natural semantic meta-language." This consists of a small set of simple meanings, or semantic primitives, which her evidence suggests can be expressed by words or bound morphemes in all languages; for example, PEOPLE, SOMEONE, SOMETHING, THIS, WANT, THINK¹, etc. These appear to be lexical universals, that is, they have meanings that can be translated precisely into all languages because they are universal human concepts lexicalised in all languages. In contrast to the well-known approach of componential analysis (see Lyons 1981, Kronenfeld 1996 among others) that has been substantially developed in semantics and linguistic anthropology (e.g. in the study of kinship terms), Wierzbicka's approach uses everyday commonplace ('natural') terms. These terms combine according to a small set of universal grammatical patterns, functioning as a miniature language, or as a device highly suited for cross-linguistic semantics. Wierzbicka (1996:112) calls this set of patterns a "syntax of universal semantic primitives" or a "universal grammar". By using everyday terms in the language of the grammar (usually English but in theory any language), phrases are set up in a logical order and used as 'formulae' to express the analysis of target terms or 'cultural scripts'. These formulae should then be readily accessible not only to other researchers but also to teachers and students, either in their own or in target languages. This study represents the present writer's attempt to begin to apply this system to key terms associated with 'ta'arof', which is the subject of another forthcoming paper. The ultimate aim is thus to further explore ta'arof using a different approach, and in doing so, to evaluate Wierzbicka's approach.

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The system of semantic primitives started with a list of 14 concepts in 1972. This was expanded to 37 in 1993. Currently [2003], there are more than 60 concepts, but it is very likely that the ultimate figure will be something just under 100 as predicted by Boguslawski in 1965 (cited in Wierzbicka 1996:110). The first 37 concepts (or old primitives) have been used in a large body of empirical semantic research, much of it focusing on cultural 'key words', 'speech acts, and discourse particles (see Wierzbicka, 1991, 1992, 1996; Goddard, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1997 among others). The last remaining 18 concepts (or new primitives) have not yet been extensively tested cross-linguistically. The set of old primitives includes the following elements, following the established conventions, cited forms of primitives are capitalised:

Substantives	I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING, PEOPLE
Determiners	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER
Quantifiers	ONE, TWO, MANY (MUCH), ALL
Mental predicates	THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL
Speech	SAY
Actions & events	DO, HAPPEN
Evaluators	GOOD, BAD
Descriptors	BIG, SMALL
Time	WHEN, BEFORE, AFTER
Space	WHERE, UNDER, ABOVE
Partonomy & Taxonomy	PART (OF), KIND (OF)
Meta predicates	NOT, CAN, VERY
Interclausal Linkers	IF, BECAUSE, LIKE

The new primitives (Goddard 1998, Wierzbicka 1997, 1999) are:

Determiner	SOME
Augmentor	MORE
Mental predicates	SEE, HEAR
Non-mental predicates	MOVE, THERE IS, (BE) ALIVE
Space	FAR, NEAR; SIDE; INSIDE; HERE
Time	A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME; NOW
Imagination & Possibility	IF ... WOULD, MAYBE
Words	WORD

2. Objectives

In view of Wierzbicka's aims of developing a cross-linguistic system of semantic universals (and considering the relatively restricted range of languages used as examples in Chomskyian attempts to describe a somewhat different set of universals), it is significant that this system has been applied to a wide range of language groups. Thus writers in Goddard & Wierzbicka (1994) apply the system to such languages as English, Polish, French, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and several Indonesian and Australian languages. Persian is not among these and this study exemplifies, as far as is known, the first attempt to apply Wierzbicka's set of semantic primitives to Persian. The following sections give a brief syntactic outline of Persian with a view to identifying the equivalent semantic primitives in Persian as have been quoted for English. This is an important step in this kind of analysis because it avoids the cross-linguistic danger of analysing the Persian terms and concepts such as *ta'arof* in terms of English, which

might then be held to be an unwanted linguistic or cultural interpretation, or an imposition, which is difficult to check with the inside view of native speakers. However, if a set of equivalent semantic primitives can be identified in Persian then any subsequent analysis of the key pragmatic or cultural aspects of ta'arof can readily be expressed, using that set of primitives and its associated syntax in Persian. Thus, while later analyses in this work will be expressed in English, it will be demonstrated that the formulae can be translated into the equivalent Persian natural semantic metalanguage and are thus valid in NSM terms. A major advantage of the NSM is that, because its terms are in common usage (in English or Persian), formulae can be checked with native speakers in a non-technical manner. Since there is no precedent for an analysis in Persian, such equivalence cannot simply be assumed; it is demonstrated below.

The following sections build up evidence to demonstrate that there is a set of semantic equivalents in Persian for Wierzbicka's proposed list of semantic primitives. If such a list can be constructed, after considering a range of alternatives, this would imply that Persian could be added to the list of the world's languages to which the natural semantic language is applicable. This is, of course, a small further step to test Wierzbicka's (1996) claim that the terms are universal.

This study mostly uses old primitives for formulating explications for Persian. The only new primitive used, however, is FOR A LONG TIME. It seems sufficient, for the present purpose then, to try to locate the Persian equivalent for this remaining primitive, among the new ones.

3. The Persian language

The Persian language, also called Farsi by native speakers, is a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian language family of the Indo-European languages. It is most closely related to Middle and old Persian. Modern Persian is spoken in Iran as a first and a second language among Iranians of different ethnic origins. The number of people who speak it exceeds 60 millions in Iran. It is also spoken in some areas of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. There is no reliable source as to the number of the speakers in the latter two areas; however, Persian can be counted as one of the world's major languages. Dalby (2000) names it as one of the world's 28 'arterial' languages, spoken by at least 1% of humankind.

Modern Persian favours the Arabic writing system and has extensively borrowed many Arabic words. This has given the language a wide vocabulary and an enormous range of Arabic-Persian compounds. Since Persian is also much given to the use of idioms and metaphors, the language can be said to be quite flexible, adaptable, and delicate. Outside Iran, the Persian language has traditionally been highly regarded in the Indian subcontinent and Europe. The study of Persian has for many years had high academic standing, mainly on account of the very rich literary tradition written in Persian, especially poetry, with numerous epic, mystical and lyrical poets whose works have been much translated.

The written language is of the SOV type. Other orders of clause elements may occur in the spoken language, however. Generally speaking, nouns precede modifiers, including possessives and relative clauses, auxiliaries may follow or precede main verbs, and prepositions can occur pre/post nominally. There is no gender difference in Persian, but there is obligatory indication of number, tense, aspect, case system, and voice. There are six conjugational categories. Verbs can be monomorphemic or polymorphemic and/or derived from nouns, adjectives or adverbs. Many verb phrases are derived from Arabic nouns combined with Persian multi-functional verbs. In

addition, verbs can be transitive or intransitive. Many transitive verbs can be made intransitive by simply suffixing *andan* or *anidan*.

4. Old Primitives, Substantives

There is speech level differentiation for the first and the second person in Persian if the speaker wishes to create or to preserve a certain distinction or show signs of politeness. Jahangiri (1980) classifies Persian pronouns into three levels: low, neutral, and high. The low-level forms connote humility and politeness when a power relationship is involved. The neutral ones do not have any particular pragmatic characteristic. These forms, then, should be the primitive exponents of substantives in Persian. The high ones indicate superiority of the speaker over the hearer. The low and the high ones, for the most part, are, in fact, elliptical forms of noun phrases, that is, they can be used as noun phrases in combinations in sentences. This characteristic feature of the highs and the lows in many instances is mistakenly referred to as pronouns in Jahangiri (1980). The elided form, however, is usually the pronoun proper.

In order to be polite and exercise humility, the speaker might choose among a list of the low noun phrase forms to refer to him/herself. This list includes expressions such as *bande*, 'slave'; *chaaker*, 'devoted'; *haqir* 'despised'; *qolaam*, 'slave', used in reference to males, and *kaniz*, 'maid' which, as the English equivalent indicates, is used only for females. There are numerous other forms as well. The previous rulers and nobility of Iran basically used the high forms, which are not relevant for our purposes here. It should be noted that humility is a characteristically determining factor in dealing with others in Iranian society. Thus, Persian speakers normally would lower down themselves linguistically, while at the same time raising the other person. To reciprocate, the other person needs to do the same, so polite encounters involve the socially vital language game that each party continually lowers themselves while simultaneously raising the others.

The real substantives, then, are the neutral pronouns. *man*, I, is the semantic primitive to refer to the first person in familiar situations. For politeness purposes, however, one might use the plural of *man*, *maa*, which is also the pronoun for the first person plural. Canonical sentences for *man* in familiar and respective formal situations read like this:

1. <i>man</i>	<i>kasi</i>	<i>raa</i>	<i>didam</i>
I	someone	OM ²	saw+I ³
‘I saw someone.’			

As in many other languages, in Persian there is also a t/v distinction for formality for the second person singular and plural (see Peeters, Onishi, Chappell, etc. all in Goddard and Wierzbicka, 1994). *to* is the equivalent of YOU (thou) but it is used in very intimate and informal situations. *shomaa* is the plural and can be used for the second person singular or plural. In order to be polite, however, one may opt for any of a wide choice of noun phrases as forms of address which, in this case, raises the hearer and, by implication, lowers the speaker in relation to the addressee. This politeness ranges from utilising the pronoun *shomaa* to rather polite and extremely polite noun phrases or to honorific titles (see Beeman 1986 and Sahragard 2001)

Persian has two sets of allomorphs for *man* and *to*: *man*, *-am* for the first person and *to*, *-at* for the second person. Both *man* and *to* can be subjects or objects but if they come as objects they are followed by the direct object marker *raa*. *-am* and *-at* are inflexional endings which attach to the nouns to make possessive NP constructions, as in *ketaabam*, 'my book', for the first person singular and *ketaabat*, 'your book', for the

second person singular. There are verb ending counterparts for *man* and *to* as well. These are the suffixes *-am* and *-i* respectively. They are syntactically obligatory and cannot be elided from the verbs. In the above canonical sentence the *am* is attached to the verb *did* to make it grammatically correct. The subject *man*, however, can be dropped from the above sentence since the suffix *-am* explicitly shows the doer of the action.⁴

It is clear now that the pronouns *man* and *to* are well established semantic primitives for I and YOU. They cannot be satisfactorily decomposed and they behave syntactically and semantically exactly the same as their English counterparts do or their equivalents do in a wide range of languages (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 1994).

SOMEONE and SOMETHING are expressed by means of *kasi* and *chizi*. Morphologically they look similar to the English equivalents. The morpheme *-i* attached to both words functions as indefinitiser (known as the *nakare* marker in Persian grammars) as does 'some' or 'a' in English. *kas* and *chiz* are the equivalents of 'one' and 'thing' respectively. There are other words for the semantically primitives *kasi* and *chizi*, namely, *yeki* which is originally a Persian numeral word. *shaxsi* and *fardi* are also other forms, their roots borrowed from Arabic but with the Persian *nakare* signal as indefinitiser. *kasi* and *yeki* both refer to a person, a human being. If the indefinitiser is dropped from both the words, there remains *kas* and *yek*. *kas* still keeps its original meaning but *yek* just denotes the numeral 'one' in Persian. The root morpheme of *kasi* and *chizi* can be made plural but not in combination with the indefinitiser *i*. With a negative verb they mean 'nobody' and 'nothing' (anything) respectively:

2. *kasi* *chizi* *did*
 someone something saw
 'someone saw something.'

SOMEONE and SOMETHING can, therefore, be added to the list of semantic primitives for Persian (the upper case signifies that while English is used as the language of exposition, the term has, as demonstrated, an equivalent in Persian).

The English word PEOPLE is expressed by the word *mardom*. It is a plural noun which takes a plural verb, e.g. *mardom aamadand* 'the people came'. The 'and' is syntactically an obligatory ending for the third person plural. Some definite and indefinite markers can come before and after *mardom*. Broadly speaking, a noun becomes indefinite by the addition of *-i* as *kasi* above. So *mardom* is definite and *mardomi* indefinite. Although *mardom* is plural, it is sometimes doubly made plural. In the spoken language *-haa* is usually suffixed to the word while in the written form *-aan*, another pluraliser, is preferred.

PEOPLE, then, is clearly a semantic primitive for Persian.

3. *mardom* *miguyand* *xodaa* *hame chiz* *raa* *midaanad*
 people say+they God everything OM know+he
 'People say that God knows everything.'

4.1. Determiners and Quantifiers

Persian has a clear and unproblematic exponent for THIS. This is *in*. Syntactically it has most of the functions that THIS has. It has deictic and anaphoric applications. This can be pointing to extra-linguistic situations or anaphorically to previous elements within the discourse. A nominal and adnominal use of *in* is illustrated in (4) and (5) respectively:

4. *be* *in* *negaah kon*
 at this look+you
 'Look at this.'

5. *in chiz*
'This thing'

It seems clear that there is no other alternative for *in* in Persian. Wierzbicka (1994) argues that the traditional definition of THIS as 'near the speaker' cannot be right, because THIS can also be used to refer to the internal parts of the speaker's body (and is used anaphorically as noted). This holds true for *in* in Persian as well. When referring to the parts of the body one may say *in paa* 'this leg'; this should not be interpreted as the leg near me.

Harkins and Wilkins (1994:292) point out that "there are close conceptual links between 'sameness', 'oneness'... and 'likeness' ... and one might expect some overlaps in the use of the equivalents in various languages for THE SAME, ONE, and LIKE" Such overlaps do indeed occur in Persian. There are, however, separate exponents for all the three concepts in question. For example:

THE SAME	<i>hamaan/hamin</i>
ONE	<i>yek/yeki</i>
LIKE	<i>mesl, shabih</i>

There are, of course, many more allolexes for the three words given above in Persian but the basic forms are those suggested here. It should also be noted that depending on the context one might render the three English words into Persian using the words given interchangeably. Thus the sentence 'both are the same' might be translated *hardo yeki hastand* or *hardo shabih-e ham hastand*. Interestingly enough, the uses of *hamaan* or *hamin* are considered anomalous equivalents for THE SAME in this context.

OTHER can be interpreted as the negative for THE SAME in English and "so be entirely superfluous as a primitive" (Wierzbicka 1994:471). But not all canonical contexts can allow for 'not the same' to be substituted for OTHER. In Persian the word for OTHER covers also the meaning 'different' and 'else'. There is, however, the word *digar* that is the clear exponent of the primitive concept OTHER and which best fits into the context of canonical sentences:

6. *man va do kas-e digar*
I and two person+of other
'I and two other people'

digar is both an adjective and an adverb and it can occur pre/post-nominally; the latter use is basically literary. The adjectival function of *digar* is the primitive for OTHER.

ONE and TWO hardly need any explanation: their Persian exponents are *yek* and *do*. The word *yek* has polysemic uses; it functions as the numeral ONE and as an indefinitiser (a, an).

7. *u do doxtar va yek pesar daarad*
s/he two daughter and one son has+s/he
's/he has two daughters and one son.'

ALL can be rendered by means of *hameh*. *hameh* can be used to make 'absolute generalisations' as in the sentence:

8. *hameh-ye anvaa?-e parandegaan*
all types of birds
'all types of birds'

In the present writer's view, *hameh* for ALL implies a sense of 'total exhaustiveness'. In other words, it always implies 'all, without exception' and not 'nearly all'.

Persian has many words for MANY. It is suggested that *ziyaad* functions as the primitive exponent for MANY. It is not highly frequently used in everyday spoken language but the reason for its selection is based on selecting another word for VERY (*xeyli*) which happens to have the same equivalents as MANY (or MUCH) in Persian. That is, if *xeyli* is selected for VERY, *ziyaad* will be chosen for MANY. The alternative of interpreting *xeyli* as a homophonous element for both MANY and VERY, i.e. *xeyli1*, and *xeyli2* which might be distinguished in terms of their grammar frames, seems unnecessary since *ziyaad* and other candidates are readily available. Wierzbicka (1999:310) justifies such a homophonous possibility for *ada* in Malay to cover both existence (THERE IS) and possession (have). Other candidates for MANY such as *besyaar*, *faraavaan*, *bishomaar*, are less common than *ziyaad*. *besyaar* is mostly used in writing, and hence is infrequent, as a modifier for count nouns. *faraavaan* is used in both the written and the spoken language with a relatively similar frequency of use. It can function as a modifier for both count and non-count nouns. Its use, however, is confined to concepts indicating abundance and being plentiful rather than concepts indicating MANY. *bishomaar* is a modifier for a rather limited number of count nouns such as people, animals, things, etc. It consists of the bound morpheme *bi*, 'without', and the free morpheme *shomaar*, roughly 'numeration' or 'number'. *ziyaad* can also be used for MUCH. This is because Persian does not observe to the same extent the distinction between count and mass nouns as English does.

9. u doxtar-haa-ye ziyaad-i daarad
s/he daughters of many has+s/he
's/he has many daughters.'

4.2. Mental Predicates

THINK is *fekr kardan* in Persian, made out of the combination of the Arabic word *fekr* 'thought' and the Persian auxiliary *kardan*. The Persian allomorph for this word is *andishidan*, now mainly used in written form. *fekr kardan* can be used either transitively or intransitively. A canonical context for *fekr kardan* is given in (10):

10. *fekr mikonam u aanraa xorde ast*
think+I s/he OM has eaten+s/he
'I think s/he has eaten it.'

For the verb KNOW, Persian has at least four words. KNOW can mean being acquainted or familiar with a person, *aashenaa budan* or *shenaaxtan*; or having the knowledge of something, *aagaah budan*; or knowing how to do something, *balad budan*, or being aware of something, *daanestan*. This last instance is the best candidate for semantic primitive for KNOW in English since the English primitive implies the same sense of meaning in an unmarked form. The possibility of having two primitives to distinguish the two meanings of knowing, knowing as perception, e.g. to distinguish people (*shenaaxtan*) compared to knowing facts, reasons or knowing as a subject of thought (*daanestan*) might be useful. This is a decision adopted by Wierzbicka (1999:37) for *saber* and *conocer* in Spanish to yield the primitive *saber/conocer* for KNOW. However, this is unnecessary in the present study as *daanestan* will cover the meanings which will be focussed here, and it is the more general term.

11. *midaanam kojaa raft*
know+I where went+s/he
'I know where s/he went.'

It is noticeable that the first three compound verbs for KNOW are Noun-Verb combinations in Persian as was also the case for THINK. This phenomenon is very common in Persian. Noun-Verb combinations are very prolific and are used in Persian where there is not a satisfactory simple word equivalent for an English verb. This raises

the interesting question of whether the primitives have to be simple word forms in other languages (cf. discussions about basic or core English, or about terms and elements in componential analysis in which single word items are obligatory or preferred). In fact, Wierzbicka (1999:37) lists primitives A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME (which are multi-word units in English here) with single word equivalents in Malay, *lama*, *sekejap*, *sebentar*, but multi-word equivalent primitives for Spanish, *mucho tiempo*, *poco tiempo*, *por un tiempo*. This suggests some flexibility on this issue, although all things being equal single words would be preferred for reasons of economy and simplicity. Writers in Goddard and Wierzbicka (1994) do not insist on single word primitives. As explained, it is characteristic of Persian to have multi-word lexemes, particularly for Arabic-Persian basic meanings. In this study, therefore, it is assumed that there is a common semantic equivalent in Persian for the primitives and that in some cases these equivalent terms are multi-word units.

It is very common to express feelings typically directly using the appropriate stative verb of emotion in Persian. Using verbs meaning FEEL is redundant and functions as a kind of add-on in the sentence. Thus one may say the following sentences:

12. *sardam/garmam* *ast*
 cold/hot+I is
 'I feel cold/hot.' or 'I am cold/hot.'
13. *xoshhal/naaraahat* *hastam*
 happy/unhappy am+I
 'I feel happy/unhappy'

There are two immediate candidates for primitives for FEEL, however, *ehsaas kardan* and *hes kardan* are interchangeably used in many contexts. They both suggest a state of the mind that goes beyond and includes physical dispositions. Morphologically they are both derived from the Arabic word *hes*, 'sense'. Syntactically they are transitive verbs. They are also accompanied by the auxiliary *kardan*. Semantically, however, *ehsaas kardan* displays a more mental tendency than *hes kardan*. I would, then, suggest that *ehsaas kardan* be considered as the primitive equivalent for FEEL. In the surface structure of the canonical sentences for *ehsaas kardan*, an indefinitised noun (object) or gerund usually appears a position that is mostly taken up by adjectives in English. So the sentence reads:

14. *ehsaas-e* *xubi* *mikonam*
 feel of good do+I
 'I feel good.'

Clearly, one can conclude that FEEL easily locates its place amongst Persian primitives. It is noticeable that again an idiomatic noun-verb combination best equates with the English single word concept. As mentioned before, this feature of the Persian language is prevalent and arguably basic. The choice of auxiliary verbs in such combinations is obviously limited (see conclusion), but their combinations with the nouns make an enormous number of verbs. Neither Wierzbicka nor others working with her would allow compound words as semantic primitives. In Persian as the evidence suggests, however, these combinations are very common, of great expressive power and some of them, as observed here, can be functionally primitive, perhaps recognised, as indicated, as multi-word units or basic lexemes rather than idioms. This, then, one could argue, would allow a potential extension to the range of verbs as primitives for Persian, since not only simple word verbs are considered but a range of common auxiliaries, such as *kardan*, which make up the Persian elements of the multi-word verb phrases. These auxiliary verbs are more numerous than the comparable range of auxiliaries in English (including modals) and might be regarded as delexicalised verbs,

as Lewis (1996) has argued for English with verbs like 'get' or 'take'. The Persian verbs in question have far wider application than such English examples, however.

xaastan WANT has a similar range of use in Persian as 'want' in English. It may be followed by either a verb or a clausal complement. In the former case it requires the latter verb in the subjunctive. In the sentence *mixaaham baa to beravam* 'I want to go with you', *beravam* is in subjunctive mode. Subordinate clauses starting with *ke* 'that' may come after *xaastan* where an emphasis is required. For instance:

15. *mixaaham ke to in raa bedaani*
 Want+I that you this+OM know+you
 'I want you to know this.'

It can be concluded that THINK, KNOW, SAY, FEEL, and WANT can be added to the list of semantic primitives for Persian, with the equivalents in Persian being those discussed above.

4.3. Speech

As in the case of pronouns, Persian verbs meaning SAY can also be classified into high, low and neutral (see chapter 6). The neutral one in this case is *goftan*. This is apparently the most straightforward and the simplest of words in its own right compared with the high and the low variants. It is among the first words children acquire in infancy. Given the wide range of possible high and low forms for SAY, clearly there are many candidates for SAY as a semantic primitive in Persian, however, most of them except *goftan* depend on the situational context and variables involved in a speech event. There are other allomorphs with the same primitive qualities in Persian. Words such as *harf zadan* and *sohbat kardan* can be easily substituted for *goftan* but they cannot be satisfactorily fitted into all the contexts where the English SAY appears.

16. *man hamin raa goftam*
 I the same OM said+I
 'I said the same.'

Thus, *goftan* is the best candidate for the semantic primitive for SAY in Persian.

4.4. Actions and Events

In Persian DO and HAPPEN have their distinct exponents; *kardan* and *ettefaaq oftadan* respectively. *kardan* is always implicitly associated with the noun *kaar* 'job' without which some of the canonical sentences become meaningless. Consider the following:

17. *mixaaham hamin kaar raa bekonam*
 want+I the same job OM do+I
 'I want to do the same.'

The compound verb *kaar kardan* cannot be considered as the primitive exponent for DO since it denotes a kind of physical work or the very specific word 'working'. *Kardan* is clearly basic, given its function in forming a huge number of compounds.

There is a slight problem with HAPPEN. The majority of the verbs of happening, including the one given here, have adverse overtones. This is also reported for Chinese (Chappell 1994:127-129). Thus a sentence such as 'This kind of thing often happens to her' in Persian implies a misfortune. However, this problem can be reduced when positive adjectives are introduced into such sentences. The sentence, then, reads 'This kind of good thing often happens to her' (evaluators such as GOOD will be discussed in subsection below). The solution of considering the use of HAPPEN with non-human patients, as proposed by Chappell (1994), doesn't seem to work for Persian. However, the most obvious choice for HAPPEN in Persian is *ettefaaq oftadan*.

18. *dobaare hamaan chiz ettefaaq oftaad*
 again the same thing happened+Ø
 'the same thing happened again.'

Again, selecting *ettefaaq oftaadan* for HAPPEN demonstrates the necessity, for Persian, of choosing compound verbs for semantic primitives. Again, it is an Arabic-Persian combination, literally 'event' (Arabic noun) and 'fall' (Persian verb).

4.5. Evaluators and Descriptors

These are straightforward primitives. In Persian GOOD and BAD are deeply rooted in religious concepts of heaven and hell, virtue and vice, etc. The quality of things and the manner of doing them or the appearance of the things or persons always fall into this dichotomy. The Persian adjectives *xub* and *bad* seem to have rather similar domains of use as their English counterparts.

19. *in xeyli xub/bad ast*
 this very good/bad is
 it's very good/bad.

Persian has no problem rendering BIG and SMALL. This is achieved by the adjectives *bozorg* and *kuchek*. *bozorg*, BIG, almost always gives a positive sense to the things being qualified. Conversely, *kuchek*, SMALL, tends to degrade things and disqualify them. Broadly speaking, in Persian culture big things present a positive feature and may be considered as 'good', while small ones carry with them a sense of being 'low-down' and 'bad'.

20. *in xeyli bozorg/kuchek ast*
 this very big/small is
 'It's very big/small.'
21. *deraxt-e bozorgi raa didam*
 tree of big OM saw+I
22. *man sag-e kucheki raa didam*
 I dog of small OM saw+I

4.6. Time and Place

In Persian, the concept of time, WHEN, can be rendered by means of the interrogative *key*. Other allomorphs are *zamaan*, *vaqt*, *mowqe?*, *moddat*, and *hengaam* which are further reasonable equivalents for TIME in English. *key*, however, can only be used in questions. In sentence constructions such as *at that time*, *at time t*, *before/after time t* etc. *zamaan* seems to be the best alternative. Besides being an interrogative, WHEN can occur in adverbial constructions, a function taken up by the adverbials: *zamaan-i ke*, *vaqt-i ke*, *mowqe-i ke*, *hengaam-i ke*, etc. Literally they all paraphrase WHEN to mean 'a time that'. They are made up of 'time' (*zamaan*, etc.)+ the indefinitiser 'I' and 'that' (*ke*). The use of *key*, *zamaan*, and *vaqt-i ke* is exemplified in the following:

23. *key in kaar raa kardid*
 when this job OM did+you
 'When did you do it?'
24. *in dar hamin zamaan etefaaq oftaad*
 this at the same time happened
 'It happened at the same time'
25. *vaqt-i ke raftim be baaq-e vahsh, maa ...*
 When went+we to zoo we
 'When we went to the zoo, we ...'

It can be concluded that there are at least three words or combination of words for the concept of time in Persian depending on the contexts where they occur. That these are apparently several equivalents for different aspects of WHEN in Persian is not a problem, as long as these equivalents are available as basic terms and as long as the NSM meanings are covered in Persian. In questions about time *key* is the best option, in adverbial constructions any of the four adverbial constructions given above can be a primitive, in circumstances where duration of time is meant *moddat* is the appropriate word, and in specific references to 'time' *zamaan* is the answer.

The exponent for WHERE as another interrogative is expressed by *kojaa* in Persian. There are various allomorphs for the locative notion of PLACE, however. These are *jaa*, *mahal*, *makaan*, *saraa*, and *ma?vaa* among others. The present researcher prefers to use *jaa* as it seems the simplest and the most frequent amongst other words.

26. *u alaan kojaa ast*
 he now where is
 'Where is he now?'
27. *dar hamin jaa etefaaq oftad, na dar jaa-ye digar*
 the same place happened no in place of other
 'It happened in the same place, not in a different place.'

For AFTER and BEFORE Persian makes use of the two Arabic words *ba?d* and *qabl* more frequently than others though some are originally Persian. They both take the postposition *az* 'from' to indicate the temporal relationship between two events.

28. *haalaa aanhaa dar X zendegi mikonand.*
 now they in X live+they
 'They live in X now.'
29. *qabl az in dar Y zendegi mikardand*
 before this in Y lived+they
 'Before this they lived in Y.'
30. *ba?d az in haalesh beham xord*
 after this his/her health got sick+it
 'After this, s/he got sick.'

The Persian exponent for ABOVE is clearly *baalaa*. This word is used in reference to locational domains where the two objects being contrasted may be vertically very close to each other as if one is 'on' the other or separated with some space between them. *baalaa*, then, includes both ABOVE and UP.

paa?in is antonymically related to *baalaa*, but the former is not equivalent to UNDER. Nevertheless, the immediate word for UNDER given in bilingual dictionaries is *zir*. Both *baalaa* and *zir* usually take the preposition *dar* (at or in).

31. *abrhaa-ye siyahi dar baalaa-ye kuh bud*
 clouds of dark in above of mountain was (were)
 'There were dark clouds above the mountain.'

4.7. Partonomy and Taxonomy

In English PART can be used in many different ways. Wierzbicka (1996) makes it clear that the primitive one is not that which refers to "pieces of something" or "a subset of a group of discrete entities", but rather to "things identifiable ...within larger things" (p 60), as in 'the head is part of the body'.

Persian has no difficulty in rendering the primitive PART since there are at least three words which quite satisfactorily fit into the three categories of PART referred to above. They are *joz?*, *baxsh*, and *qesmat*. Originally *joz?* is a singular Arabic noun with *ajza?* as its plural. *baxsh* and *qesmat*, however, refer to subsets or pieces of something

which may not be identifiable in isolation. They, therefore, cannot be considered primitives, so *joz?* is the favoured choice.

The link between PART/S (OF) and other parts of the discourse is established through HAVE or BEING PART OF in English. In Persian this is done by the equivalent of HAVE *daashtan* or (*joz?/ajzaa?*)-e *budan*. Thus Persian, like English, can represent part-whole relationships either through a specific nominal meaning 'part' or through a verb of 'having'.

32. *aan asb dom-e bolandi daarad*
that horse tail of long has+it
'That horse has a long tail.'

33. *golbarg joz?i az gol ast*
petal part of flower is
'A petal is part of a flower.'

KIND presents no problem in Persian. The obvious equivalent is *now?* which can function syntactically either as a common noun or as a classifier. There are of course other equivalents such as *jens*, *jur*, *sheq* etc., but it seems that *now?* is more acceptable and powerful in providing specific classifications.

34. *anvaa?-e ziyaadi az heyvanaat raa didim*
kinds of many from animals OM saw+we
'We saw many kinds of animals.'

4.8. Meta-Predicates

"Negation is probably the least controversial of all the lexical universals which have ever been proposed" (Wierzbicka 1996:64). Persian has no problem rendering the NOT/NOT WANT/NO constructions. There are three allolexes for the primitive NO in Persian. They are *na*, *xeyr*, and *naxeyr*. *na* can be considered the primitive in demand. It is used to give negative answers to questions or to make negative statements when prefixed to verbs. In the latter case, a change in vowel takes place that is basically a feature of the standard (Tehrani) accent, i.e. *na* can be *ne*. The other two allolexes are generally used in responses. Pragmatically, however, the apparent double negative *naxeyr* conveys an emphatic NO. NOT WANT has as its Persian exponent *naxaastan*, a negated infinitive which changes to *nemixaham* in the first-person singular of the simple present tense.

35. *na man in kaar raa nakardam*
no I this job OM didn't+I
'No! I didn't do it.'

36. *nemixaham in ettefaaq biyoftad*
don't want+I this happen+it
I don't want this to happen

It should be noted that, when used negatively, *naxaastan* may be followed by a subordinate clause whose verb is in the subjunctive. It is clear from the example above that the second verb concurs with its immediate subject rather than the actual subject 'I'.

Persian has no problem with the 'ability' side of CAN and its past COULD. This is rendered by means of the infinitive *tavaanestan* as well as many other allolexes such as the compounds *qaader budan* and *qourat daashtan*, the prepositional compound verb *az ohde baraamadan*, etc. *tavaanestan* seems the obvious simplest candidate as the relevant primitive for CAN/COULD. For the 'possibility' and 'permission' meanings, however, other allomorphs come into play. The equivalents for MAYBE are often used to suggest 'possibility'. CAN, COULD, and MAYBE are thus translated similarly. From this discussion one can conclude that there is at least one primitive Persian word

for the three ones cited above. It is proposed to consider *shaayad* as the primitive for situations where a 'possibility' arises.

37. *u emruz nemitavaanad kaar konad*
s/he today can't+s/he work
's/he can't work today.'
38. *shaayad fardaa baaraan biyaayad*
could/maybe tomorrow rain+it
'it could rain tomorrow.'

4.9. Interclausal linkers

In universal semantic explications BECAUSE will almost always be followed by THIS, to which OF is preceded. Persian favours more combinations of words to express BECAUSE OF THIS. It can be translated into Persian using the following prepositional phrases:

1. *be in xaater* 2. *be in sabab* 3. *be in dalil* 4. *be in ellat* or 5. *be xaater-e in*
6. *be sabab-e in* 7. *be dalil-e in* 8. *be ellat-e in*

The construction from 1 to 4 is: the preposition (*be* meaning 'on')+THIS (*in*)+ the noun CAUSE (*xaater*, etc.). The construction from 5 to 8 is: the preposition *be* + *xaater*, etc.+ possessive 'e', of + *in*.

Since there is such a range of candidate words for BECAUSE OF THIS in Persian, and all are ostensibly equally primitive, it is suggested to consider *be in xaater* as the Persian primitive. This is a somewhat arbitrary choice but it seems satisfactory. BECAUSE proper, however, can be rendered using *ziraa*, *chun* or *chunke*. *ziraa* is used in more formal situations and writing and the latter two are used more in spoken everyday language. *chun* seems to be a better choice for BECAUSE since it is more commonly used compared with *ziraa*. *chunke* is decomposable into *chun* (the word stem for *chunke*) BECAUSE, and *ke*, 'that'. It, then, should be discarded as a primitive. That is, the present consideration allows decomposable expressions, anomalously in terms of the universal approach, for Persian primitives only when there is no other feasible choice, as seen in the earlier discussion of compounds using such verbs as *kardan*.

39. *saro-sedaaziyaad bud be xaater-e aan natavaanestam bexaabam*
noise much was because of thatcouldn't+I sleep+I
'There was a lot of noise. Because of that, I couldn't sleep.'
40. *u raft ziraa man az u xaastam*
s/he went because I of him/her asked+I
's/he left because I asked him/her to.'

The other meta-predicates seem to be straightforward: *agar*, *mesl*, and *xeyli* are the equivalents of IF, LIKE, and VERY respectively. LIKE THAT or LIKE THIS may better be translated using *aan towri/juri* and *in towri/juri*. *mesl-e in*, a literal translation for BECAUSE OF THIS, is anomalous and hardly fits into the proposed canonical contexts.

41. *agar baaraan biyaayad naxaaham aamad*
if rain+it won't come+I
'If it rains, I won't come.'
42. *intowri in kaar raa kard*
like this this job+OM did+s/he
'S/he did it like this'
43. *in mesl-e laale ast ammaa laale nist*
this like tulip is but tulip isn't
'this is like tulip, but it isn't tulip.'

5. New Primitives; Time: For Along Time

A paraphrase for FOR A LONG TIME would be '*baraa-ye moddati tulaani*' or *baraa-ye moddat-e ziyaadi*. *moddat* as mentioned for TIME in old primitives signals duration of time and as such is primitive. It can be compared with *zamman* which may also indicate duration of time. *zamaan*, however, happens to occur more frequently in written than spoken modes of language. LONG functions adjectivally in the English phrase and so does *tulaani* or *ziyaadi* for Persian. The present writer prefers to consider *ziyaadi* as a more suitable word in this construction. The preposition *baraa-ye* can optionally appear at the beginning of the phrase, however. This happens to be in the spoken language, though. It is suggested, then, to consider *moddat-e ziyaadi* as the primitive for FOR A LONG TIME in Persian.

44. *moddat-e ziyaadi ast ke chizi nagofti*
 time of long is that anything didn't say you
 'you didn't say anything for a long time'

The following list summarises the proposed list of semantic primitives for Persian, taking into account the foregoing discussion. As the discussion indicates this list is not categorically finalised, since for many terms a variety of more or less equal terms are available in Persian. However, this list seems justified and is workable.

6. Summary of the Primitives in Persian;

6.1. Old Primitives

substantives	I [<i>man</i>], YOU [<i>to</i>], SOMEONE [<i>kasi</i>], SOMETHING [<i>chizi</i>], PEOPLE [<i>mardom</i>]
determiners	THIS [<i>in</i>], THE SAME [<i>hamin/hamaan</i>], OTHER [<i>digar</i>]
quantifiers	ONE [<i>yek</i>], TWO [<i>do</i>], MANY/MUCH [<i>ziyaad</i>], ALL [<i>hame</i>]
mental predicates	THINK [<i>fekr kardan</i>], KNOW [<i>daanestan</i>], WANT [<i>xaastan</i>], FEEL [<i>ehsaas kardan</i>]
speech	SAY [<i>goftan</i>]
actions & events	DO [<i>kardan</i>], HAPPEN [<i>ettefaaq oftaadan</i>]
evaluators	GOOD [<i>xub</i>], BAD [<i>bad</i>]
descriptors	BIG [<i>bozorg</i>], SMALL [<i>kuchek</i>]
time	WHEN [<i>key/zamaan/vaqt-i ke</i>], BEFORE [<i>qabl</i>], AFTER [<i>ba?d</i>]
space	WHERE [<i>kojaa/jaa</i>], UNDER [<i>zir</i>], ABOVE [<i>baalaa</i>]
partonomy & taxonomy	PART (OF) [<i>joz?/joz?i (az)</i>], KIND (OF) [<i>now?/now?i (az)</i>]
metapredicates	NOT [<i>na</i>], CAN [<i>tavaanestan/shaayad</i>], VERY [<i>xeyli</i>]
interclausal	
linkers	IF [<i>agar</i>], BECAUSE [<i>chun</i>], LIKE [<i>mesl</i>]

6.2. New Primitives

Time: FOR A LONG TIME [*moddat-e ziyaadi*]

7. Conclusion

In general, identifying the putative semantic primitives in Persian has proved to be unproblematic. Clearly, however, it has been laborious to identify them since one cannot find a trace of information in contrastive lexical semantics, published or otherwise, in the literature on semantics about Persian. Somewhat surprisingly, the present writer's efforts to search the linguistic literature in Persian on this point, has

revealed that even in the language itself there is no report available on the semantics of Persian words.

On the whole, this study supports the hypothesised set of universal semantic primitives. In fact, Persian seems to be a powerful language particularly in dealing with basic and primary language notions. This may be partly because it has a lexicon of huge expressive capability enriched with borrowed words from Arabic.

There remain two points to be discussed here. One is that in Persian there are more primitives for some of the English exponents (see summary). Obviously, this is not an indication for a weak point for the set of the English primitives. However, it shows that, in some instances, there is more than just one correspondence between the English and the Persian exponents and that there is at least one equivalent for the English word. Thus, any shortage of corresponding concepts in Persian seems to be unlikely.

The other point is with regard to the use of the multi-word Noun-Verb combinations in Persian. Persian is highly idiomatic with large numbers of metaphors in common use, i.e. basic terms are frequently combined in compounds rather than using lexical innovation or long nominalisations, etc. A wide range of nouns, especially from Arabic, collocates with a fairly narrow range of very common verbs from Persian (see below). There is some strength in the argument that some of these verbs enter into such a wide range of general multi-word combinations with Arabic nouns that they are almost delexicalised or that they effectively function as an extended range of auxiliaries. Contrary to Wierzbicka's general expectation, this indicates that there may be, in fact, a language that categorically uses multi-word combinations to express primitive concepts. There is good reason to believe that Persian is such a language. This, then, calls for reconsideration in the range of verb categories for inclusion in the set of primitives presented by Wierzbicka. Obviously, this may not be a universal feature for all languages, but, certainly, it allows a new perspective to consider and to follow in other languages.

The basic list of verbs in N-V compounds in Persian would include at least the following:

<i>kardan</i>	do	<i>xordan</i>	eat, drink
<i>daashtan</i>	have	<i>aamadan</i>	come
<i>namudan</i>	make, do	<i>keshidan</i>	draw
<i>daadan</i>	give	<i>oftaadan</i>	fall
<i>zadan</i>	beat, hit	<i>gereftan</i>	take, catch
<i>shodan</i>	become	<i>yaaftan</i>	find
<i>gashtan</i>	become	<i>bordan</i>	take

This study has established the set of semantic primitives in the natural semantic metalanguage (NSM) for Persian. This will allow the subsequent analysis of Persian cultural notions such as ta'arof to be expressed in English, in the secure knowledge that scripts could be readily expressed in Persian using this established list of NSM terms. The basic syntax to be used with these terms, in Persian, should not be problematic; Persian is an Indo-European language and syntactic differences with English are not believed to be of a nature to interfere with formulating explications in Persian.

Notes

1. Following Wierzbicka's convention, capitals indicate 'semantic primitives', i.e. they are translatable or universal concepts.
2. OM= Object Marker
3. The "I" attached to the verb is the first person singular inflexional ending.

4. Where appropriate, for space purposes this format has been followed entirely in this paper, i.e. the subject pronoun is dropped in Persian examples.

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