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Dear readers

In this issue of the journal of humanities, some papers have been reviewed and selected from different scholars in the domain of language studies. It goes without saying that areas of interest are diverse and theoretical frameworks in contemporary linguistics are expansive. Broadly speaking there are three major trends in linguistics. Formal linguists are interested in developing formal (read mathematical) rules and principles for studying different building blocks of language. So formal linguists take language as a system with well-defined patterns and symbols. On the other hand, functional linguists give priority to the role of speakers (not pure grammar) and the factors which lubricate language use. As a new offshoot of functional linguistics, cognitive linguistics emerged as a rival to the above mentioned theories. Nowadays, most of the forward looking universities with linguistics program are hard working to institutionalize their academic curriculum with Cognitive approaches to the study of language. In Iran TMU (Tarbiat Modares University) is the leading academic institute that included Cognitive linguistics in its PhD programs. In order to help researchers and academics who are desirous of cognitive linguistics, the guest editor has given more space to articles with cognitive interest and the appellation for this special issue of the journal comes from that.

Contents

A Cognitive Perspective on the So-called pro-drop Parameter in Persian Sahar Bahrami-Khorshid	1
Defining Typology of Ardelani Dialect of Kurdish Languagebased on Talmy Model on Motion Events Arsalan Golfam, Asrin Parang, Mohammad Dabir Moghaddam, Alieh Kurd Zafaranlou Kambouziya	16
Explaining the Construction of Euphemistic Meaning via Schematization in Persian: A Cognitive Approach Sadjad Mousavi, Arsalan Golfam, Ferdows Agha Golzadeh, Aliyeh K. Z. Kambuziya	30
The Study of Typological Correlations between Word Order Criteria and the Order of Verb and Direct Object in Sivandi Language Pooneh Mostafavi	44
The Ecofeminist Reading of Vladimir Nabokov’s Laughter in the Dark Jalal Sokhanvar, Sohrab Tavousi	58
Development and Validation of a Critical Language Pedagogy Literacy Scale in Iranian Universities Saeed Ketabi, Davoud Padiz	70

Explaining the Construction of Euphemistic Meaning via Schematization in Persian: A Cognitive Approach

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Abstract

Schematization is one of the general cognitive processes, which refers to the ability to construe and conceptualize a given situation at a coarse level of granularity. In Persian, the cognitive mechanism of schematization plays a very fundamental role in the structuring of a pleasant semantic content. The purpose of this paper is to explain how euphemistic meaning is constructed via schematization in Persian. Within the cognitive linguistic framework, this study shows that the conceptualizer/the language user, using the cognitive ability of schematization, conceptualizes and describes an unpleasant situation at a high level of schematicity and at a coarse granularity. This process directs the patterns of attentional distribution over a referent scene in such a way that lesser attentional strength is assigned to the detail of the unpleasant scene and consequently the particularities move out of the focus of attention. Decreasing the strength of attention over the detail will decrease the resolution of the semantic representation of an unpleasant situation. Therefore, by the general construal and conceptualization of an unpleasant situation, euphemistic meaning will be constructed. Also, this research illustrates that schematization is realized and expressed in Persian by the selection of open- and closed-class forms.

Keywords: Euphemism; Meaning Construction; Schematization; Attention; Construal; Cognitive Linguistics

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1. Introduction

Euphemism is an indirect, vague and pleasant expression that replaces plain and unpleasant ones (Fan, 2006). The Language users, using euphemistic alternatives, decrease the annoying semantic load of words and phrases in a given social situation (Fernández, 2006). Leech (1974: 53) defines this phenomenon as “replacing a word which has offensive connotations with another expression, which makes no overt reference to the unpleasant side of the subject”. Redfern (1994: 1181) also states that euphemism is a way of expressing the entities which cannot be spoken in normal mode and through which a safe area is created in language which is imposed by the politeness strategies on it. Euphemism is an interface between explicit discourse and complete ban (ibid). Rawson (1981: 1) points out that “[euphemisms] are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plain-spoken, ever get through a day without using them”.

Euphemism is a pervasive linguistic phenomenon in Persian. Up to the present, this phenomenon in Persian has been studied from the perspective of literary studies, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, translation studies and language teaching. But, to the best of our knowledge, the cognitive nature and foundations of euphemism have not been yet discussed and how to construct euphemistic meaning in Persian has not been explained. It seems that for explaining the construction of meaning in euphemisms, we should not be confined to linguistic structures, and to investigate the foundation of euphemistic meaning, the cognitive mechanisms and processes of this phenomenon should be investigated. This paper, within the framework of cognitive

linguistics, analyzes the behaviour of euphemisms in Persian. Hence, the linguistic realization of euphemism is viewed as the representation of its conceptual and underlying cognitive system. In this regard, it seems that cognitive linguistics, unlike the other linguistic approaches, can provide a logical explanation for this phenomenon in Persian based on its theoretical tools and taking into account the cognitive processes and mechanisms involved in the construction of euphemistic meaning.

One of the most important commitments in cognitive linguistics is the study of language based on general human knowledge and cognitive processes such as perception, attention and categorization (Lakoff, 1990; Evans and Green, 2006). Cognitive linguists try to show how the general cognitive abilities are manifested in the language system. In other words, “Insofar as possible, linguistic structure is seen as drawing on other, more basic systems and abilities (e.g. perception, memory, categorization) from which it cannot be segregated” (Langacker, 2013: 8). As noted, it does not seem to be possible to explain the construction of euphemistic meaning at the linguistic level without regard to the cognitive mechanisms and general cognitive abilities which are fundamentally involved in the process of meaning construction. The aim of this paper is to explain the linguistic euphemisms which their cognitive underpinning is *schematization* as one of the main general cognitive abilities. To the extent of our knowledge, in cognitive linguistics, this study is the first to specifically try to explain euphemistic structures based on the cognitive process of schematization. It treats

euphemism as a cognitive phenomenon and views the linguistic realization of euphemism as the manifestation of the underlying conceptual system of the language users' mind. In fact, this research focuses on the phenomenon of euphemism as the product of the mind's cognitive functions. It seeks to answer the following question: How is euphemistic meaning constructed through the cognitive mechanism of schematization? This research is based on the hypothesis that the process of schematization plays a significant role in the construction of euphemistic meaning and a descriptive-analytical method is used for explaining euphemisms. Moreover, a lot of the data has been collected from several Persian dictionaries and digital writing media.

2. Literature Review

Euphemism has been studied from different perspectives within several disciplines. In the context of sociolinguistic (e.g., Rawson, 1981), the reasons for the use of euphemism such as fear and politeness have been addressed. In pragmatics (e.g., Allan and Burridge, 1991), more attention is paid to the study and classification of the fields in which euphemisms are used, including death issues, sexual relations, bodily effluvia, advertising, disability, insults, body parts, mental illness, drugs and business. In critical discourse analysis (e.g., Hammad 2007; Zhao, 2010), the functions of euphemisms in political discourses have been investigated. In recent years, euphemism has attracted the attention of some Iranian scholars. Mirza-Suzani (2006) has explored the use of euphemism in the translation of texts. The linguistic structures of euphemisms have been examined by Bayati (2010). Izanlou and Gholami (2012) have studied the death-

related euphemisms and Badakhshan and Mousavi (2014) have also provided the linguistic classification of the different kinds of euphemisms in Persian. But, none of these researches focus their efforts on the explanation of euphemistic meaning construction.

More recently, cognitive linguistics adopts a completely new and different approach to euphemism. Some linguists, such as Dominguez (2005), Crespo Fernandez (2006), Radden and Kovecses (2007), Tokar (2011), and Gradecak-Erdeljic and Milic (2011) have considered metaphorical and metonymic euphemisms in the context of cognitive linguistics. Most of the researches carried out in this framework are about metaphorical euphemisms and in some cases metonymic euphemisms have been studied. However, almost none of these studies seem to examine the functioning of the fundamental cognitive mechanisms involved in euphemistic meaning construction. However, since the subject matter of this paper is not concerned with metaphorical and metonymic euphemisms and such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper we leave it to future works.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper, within the framework of cognitive linguistics, attempts to explain how euphemistic meaning is constructed via schematization in Persian. Kövecses (2015: 16) states that "the most salient idea that distinguishes cognitive linguistics from other kinds of linguistics is the attempt to describe and explain language use with reference to a number of cognitive operations—commonly called "construal operations" in cognitive linguistics". The process of schematization is an important

aspect of construal (Talmy, 2000; Croft and Cruse, 2004; Langacker 2013). This process is discussed in this research and attention is given to it to explain the construction of meaning in linguistic euphemisms in Persian. Before discussing how the cognitive process of schematization works, we will examine *construal* as a central idea to cognitive linguistics.

3.1. Construal

The term *construal* refers to our manifest ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways (Langacker 2013: 43). Construal is “the relationship between a speaker (or hearer) and a situation that he conceptualizes and portrays” (Langacker, 1987: 478-488). In other words, this notion is the relation between the conceptualizer and the conceptualized. The conceptualizer or the language user, by the selection of a specific construal or a particular linguistic expression and by the preference of one variant structure over another, can construe the same situation in a specific way (Radden and Dirven, 2007). Talmy (2000) uses the term *conceptual alternativity* which is strikingly similar to Langacker’s construal. Talmy considers this term as a cognitive ability to construe the ideational complex in a variety of ways; that is, the same identical complex in virtue of different conceptualizations can be represented. In other words, the language user can generally choose from a variety of possible conceptualizations to represent the same ideational complex. Therefore, the cognitive capacity of construal is a “systematic choice among alternatives of conceptualization” (Talmy, 2000: 14). Construal or conceptual alternativity “is indeed a very basic cognitive mechanism

regularly available in languages” (Lampert, 2009: 124). In Langacker’s view, “a meaning consists of both conceptual content and a particular way of construing that content” (Langacker, 2013: 43). The language users can construe the same conceptual content in different ways and consequently these different construals result in the construction of different meanings. “In other words, construal refers to a speaker’s choice between various alternatives. As such, linguistic production is in particular to be seen as an instance of the individual speaker’s choice or construal” (Pütz, 2007: 1147). For example, we may describe the contents of a bottle of water as being *half full* or *half empty*. In describing the bottle as *half full*, we look at the water that is still left in the bottle, and in the describing of the bottle as *half empty*, we pay attention to the water that is gone (Adapted from Radden and Dirven, 2007). In the figure below, the same spatial configuration can also be construed in two different ways:



- a) The star above the heart
- b) The heart is below the star

3.2. Schematization and Construal

“One dimension of construal is the level of precision and detail at which a situation is characterized” (Langacker, 2013: 55). Langacker refers to this aspect of construal as *specificity*. Using this construal operation, the conceptualizer can describe a given situation at different levels of granularity and resolution. We “can describe the temperature by saying that it is hot, but also—with progressively greater

specificity—by saying that it is in the 90s, about 95 degrees, or exactly 95.2 degrees” (ibid). Therefore, we can characterize the same situation at finer-grained detail. Also, in the following examples, the level of specificity and resolution increase from left to right and the same entity is described at the finer levels of granularity:

- 1) thing>object>tool> hammer> claw hammer
- 2) rodent >rat>large brown rat>large brown rat with halitosis
- 3) living> thing> creature> animal> cat>Persian cat
- 4) polygon> triangle
- 5) relative> aunt
- 6) This is here>the book is in front of me
- 7) I saw something doing something over somewhere.> I saw a dog digging a hole in the corner of the garden.>Yesterday at 5.00 a.m. sharp I spotted a rather large, brownish dog fiercely digging a deep hole in the wet sand of that bushy corner of our garden.

(Adapted from Croft and Cruse, 2004; Svorou 2007; Langacker, 2013; Badio, 2014)

As shown in the above data, the more specific expressions increase the levels of resolution, precision and detail of the events, actions, and objects. In fact, by changing the level of specificity from the specific, fine-grained levels to those of highly schematic, coarse-grained levels, the resolution of entities increases. In other words, by construing and describing the entities in the finer-grained detail, the conceptualizers from a closer distance can look at the same situation and conceptualize the desired entities at coarse-grained levels. Consequently, the speakers provide more detailed

descriptions selecting specific expressions. In fact, the conceptualizer/the language user selects the level of specificity of the same entities and represents them by the accessible linguistic constructions.

“The converse of specificity is schematicity”¹ (Langacker, 2013: 55). Schematization as a general cognitive process is related to this aspect of construal. Schematization means that the events are viewed and construed at a coarse-grained level (Langacker, 2013; 2017):

- 1) kitchen chair>chair> furniture>artifact
- 2) bright red> red>coloured
- 3) the glass with water in it> the container with liquid in it
- 4) Palomino> horse> mammal> animal> living thing> thing
- 5) You have made a mistake here>someone has made a mistake here
- 6) A pretty little girl wearing a red sweater was carefully scrutinizing a beautiful porcelain bowl with a very distinctive shape.>A pretty little girl was examining a bowl.>A little girl was looking at a container >A girl was interacting with an object. > Someone was doing something.>something was happening.

(Adapted from Talmy, 2000; Verhagen, 2007; Taylor and MacLaury, 2010; Langacker, 2017)

In all of the above examples, by the selection of the more schematic expressions, the referent scenes are structured at a coarser granularity or in coarser-grained detail. Therefore, the generic characterization of the entities is

¹“Specificity is just the opposite of schematicity—they are the same thing viewed in opposite directions” (Langacker, 2017: 6).

instantiated by any number of more schematic ones in different ways and to different degrees. Schematization as a general cognitive capacity refers to the ability to select the level of granularity at which a situation is described (Badio, 2014). Svorou (2007) also points out that by the conceptualizer, the process of schematization leads to the adjustment of the level of schematicity. This cognitive ability is used for construing and conceptualizing the same situation at different levels of detail or granularity and is linguistically manifested, for instance, by the words related to super ordinate as well as subordinate levels (Langacker, 1987: 132-135). This mental ability, based on the level of schematicity, allows us to understand and structure the world in a specific manner (Kermer, 2016). It is worthy to note that, schematicity is not a specific linguistic ability (Langacker, 2013) and is independent of the language system. Schematicity as an aspect of construal has a direct impact on conceptual content or meaning and the every conceptual content has a different level of schematicity. For example, the phrase *the glass with water in it* has a different conceptual or semantic content than *the container with liquid in it*, which is a more general expression. Since these two expressions in terms of schematicity as an aspect of construal are different, they evoke two different construals or conceptual contents; it means that these two linguistic expressions have different meanings. Therefore, the selection of the level of schematicity as a dimension of construal, or, in other words, the cognitive process of schematization plays a very fundamental role in the structuring of the semantic content of a linguistic expression. Schematization is a cognitive

mechanism that will be considered in this paper to explain how euphemistic meaning is constructed.

3.3. Schematization and Attention

Due to the importance of studying the relationship between schematization and the cognitive ability of *attention* for the explanation of linguistic euphemisms, we investigate the relationship between these two cognitive abilities. Schematization and attention interact with each other (Langacker, 1987, Talmy 2000, Croft and Cruse, 2004). Langacker (2017) views schematicity or the process of schematization as an aspect of the *selection* operation. *Selection* refers to “language users’ capacity to selectively attend to some facets of a conceptualization and ignoring others” (Verhagen, 2007: 53). Croft and Cruse (2004) considers attention as a complex cognitive ability whose one of its aspects is the ability of schematization, or, in other words, the ability of granulation (coarse-grained). Talmy (2000) also mentions the level of schematicity and specificity under the term of the *level of particularity* and considers it as one of the patterns of the distribution of attention in the attentional system. According to the above discussion, the process of schematization is in interaction with the cognitive ability of attention. But, what is important in this regard and plays a very important role in the analysis of the euphemistic data is the kind of relationship that exists between the process of schematization and attention. Indeed, there is a correlation between schematization and the strength of attention, meaning that as the level of schematicity increases, the intensity of attention to detail decreases and also the resolution of the described

scene is reduced. Reversely, by decreasing the level of schematicity, the intensity of attention to detail increases; consequently, detail is processed more intensely and at a high level of resolution. The speaker via schematization selectively and volitionally distributes less attention over the detail of a referent scene. Therefore, the language users distract attention away from the particularities of a situation. This means that language can influence the level of schematicity and specificity, and can direct attention to the generalities and detail of a given situation (Langacker 1987; Talmy, 2000).

3.4. Realization of Schematization in the Language System

Another important point that needs to be addressed before analyzing the data is the linguistic realization of schematization. As noted in Section 3.1, the same situation can be construed in different ways. On the other hand, language also systematically provides alternative means for the various construal of the same event or situation. "In choosing one conceptual or linguistic alternative rather than another, the speaker "construes" her thoughts in a specific way" (Radden and Dirven, 2007: 21). Since, schematization is also an aspect of the ability of construal; it is represented at the linguistic level. In this sense that the cognitive ability of perceiving a situation at different levels of resolution or granularity has linguistic correlates in the language system (Verhagen, 2007). Each of the linguistic data in Section 3.2 corresponds to our perceptions of things or situations at the different levels of granularity. The language user can, by selecting a particular closed- (grammatical) or open-class (lexical) form, express the referent scene at

the desired level of granularity (Talmy, 2000). For instance, in order to increase the level of specificity, the language user can select lexical units or new expressions of any size for elaborating a scene (Langacker, 2013). "We can make an expression as specific as we like, for it can be of any length. By making it longer, we can always describe a situation more precisely and in greater detail. There are practical limits, however" (ibid: 56). The language system is equipped with tools through which it can affect the level of specificity and schematicity of a given situation. In summary, it can be said that humans have the mental ability to schematize entities, and the language system also provides different linguistic categories for realizing this general cognitive ability (Kemmer, 2003).

4. Data Analysis

In Persian, the cognitive mechanism of schematization in many cases contributes to the construction of euphemistic meaning. In the following section, we will investigate and explain some of euphemisms in Persian according to the topics discussed in the theoretical framework section. As described in section 3, there are various ways to portray and describe the same situation, or, in other words, to construe the same situation and these construals have different levels of schematicity. The construal of a situation at the different levels of schematicity plays a very fundamental role in the construction of euphemistic meaning in the Persian language. In the following examples, the linguistic construction *felān*(so-and-so) and

the like, provide a general construal of the unpleasant situations¹:

- 1) uasabāni šod va goft... **felān felān**
 he angry becam and said... so-and-so
 šodečērā rafti?
 became...why went-2.SG.NOM
 'He got angry and said ... the so-and-so
 ... why did you go?' (curse and insult).
- 2) modām Sārā bezan-eRezā
 continually Sara to woman-EZ Rezā
 mi-guy-adke šohar-at
 IMPRF-tell-3.SG that husband-your
felānkarde**bisār**karde
 such-and-suchdidsuch-and-such did
 'Continually Sara tells Reza's wife that
 your husband did such-and-such'
- 3) in pul-o be ān **felān felān**
 this money-OM to that so-and-so
 šode-hā be-de, pesar-at az
 became-PL IMPR-give, son-your from
 zendānāzādmišavad
 prison free becomes
 'Give this money to the so-and-sos, your
 son is released from prison'

In these examples, the language users or the conceptualizers construe and conceptualize the unpleasant situations at a coarse level of granularity and characterize them in the schematic linguistic constructions (like *felān*). Through schematization, the resolution of the conceptualized insults, news, and the other unpleasant entities decreases. Because, by the construal of a situation at a coarse level of granularity, lesser attention goes to the unpleasant particularities of a referent scene and move out of the focus of attention and by allocating less attention to the detail of the unpleasant content, the resolution of conceptualization or semantic resolution

¹Occasionally, we simplify matters by not glossing some items which are not vital to our discussion of semantics.

decreases. In fact, linguistic expressions are euphemistic because these euphemisms represent the unpleasant situations at a coarse level of granularity and consequently the offensive detail receives lesser attention.

In the below examples, another most used linguistic construction (i.e. *čiz*(thing)) which represents euphemistic meaning is shown:

- 4) in **čiz**-hā-i ke tu varzešgā-hā
 this thing-PL-INDF that atstadium-PL
 mi-šnav-i...
 IMPRF-hear-2.SG.NOM
 'These things that you hear at
 thestadiums...' (curse and insult)
- 5) **čiz**-hā-yeziyād-ibe mā goft-ø
 thing-PL-EZlot- INDF to us told-
 3.SG.NOM
 'He told us a lot of things' (curse and
 insult)
- 6) **čiz**-i ke zan-hā har mā
 thing-INDF that woman-PL every month
 tajrobemi-kon-and
 experienceIMPRF-do-3.PL.NOM
 'The thing that women experience every
 month' (menstruation)

The language users select a coarse level of granularity at which the unpleasant events is characterized and they provide a more general construal of the unpleasant situations. In fact, construing the scenes at a high level of schematicity will affect the direction of attention over the unpleasant detail of the scene and reduce the strength of attention to the detail. In all of the above examples, by the selection of the more schematic expressions, the offensive referent scenes are structured at a coarser granularity. In other words, the speakers have chosen a level of schematicity to talk about an unpleasant subject which reduces attention to the detail of the curses and the

other blunt and disagreeable talks in the given situation. Since the language user can construe and conceptualize the same offensive situation at varying levels of schematicity, according to the options available in the language, by selecting *čiz* (thing) for representing the high level of schematicity of the scenes, the conceptual prominence of the offensive detail decreases. By increasing the level of schematicity, the primary attention to the detail decreases, and by decreasing the intensity of attention to the detail, the precision and resolution of the described situations decrease. As can be seen in these examples, the cognitive process of schematization is manifested through the selection of the open-class form *čiz*. By the selection of this linguistic form for characterizing the given situations, the level of detail or granularity of the unpleasant referent scenes decreases. Therefore, the conceptualizers/the speakers conceptualize the situations in general ways and encode them in schematic linguistic constructions. This kind of general conceptualization, due to the reduction of focus on the detail and defocusing on the unpleasant particularities, will make the intended euphemistic meaning.

Another commonly used term in the Persian language for representing euphemistic meaning is the schematic word *kār*.

- 7) ān mard-hā**bad kār**hast-and
 that man-PL evil act be-3.PL
 'Those men are evil-doers' (fornicator)
- 8) yek *kār*mand: man ān**kāre** ni-sta-m
 anemployee: I that act NEG-be-1.SG
 'An employee: I don't do that
 business' (bribe-taking)
- 9) bačče-hā noghtebe noghte-ye pārk
 childrenpoint to point-EZ park

kār-ebitarbiyatkard-and
 job-EZ impoliteness did-3.PL
 'The children do impolite job everywhere
 in the park' (urination and defecation)

- 10) u yek**kār**-e zaruridāšt--ø
 sheonejob-EZ urgent had- 3.SG
 'He had an urgent job to do' (urination
 and defecation)

Also in these data, the most fundamental mechanism that forms the basis of constructing euphemistic meaning is the cognitive mechanism of schematization. The speakers increase the level of schematicity through the accessible linguistic construction *kār* which decreases the attention distribution to the detail of the unpleasant topics, events or actions. Via the linguistic realization of schematization, a vast number of components of the unpleasant scenes are simply ignored and lesser attention is drawn to their offensive detail. On the other hand, by increasing the level of schematicity, the precision and resolution of the described unpleasant subjects, scenes or situations decrease, thus the speaker makes a more pleasant meaning. In fact, this means that euphemistic meaning will be constructed when the levels of detail or resolution of the conceptualized situations decrease. In these examples, the speaker has determined the level of schematicity and the degree of detail in a way that the conceptualization of the event attracts greater attention to the general issues of the unpleasant entities and this cognitive operation is encoded and represented by the schematic linguistic forms. Therefore, the level of granularity at which the same situation is characterized plays a fundamental role in the construction of euphemistic meaning. Due to the ability to construe the same scene at different levels

of schematicity, the speaker has conceptualized the unpleasant scene at a very coarse level of granularity. Thus, linguistic expressions distribute lesser attention over the semantic detail of the unpleasant content.

Also, the language user can express the offensive referent scene by closed-class forms in less detail or at a more coarse-grained level:

11) **kasi**eštebāhikarde
 someonea mistake done-3.SG
 'Someone has made a mistake'

12) **Baziyā** dorugh goft-and
 somelie said-3.PL
 'Some lied' (Ali and Reza)

The speaker can take a more coarse-grained view of the scenes selecting among alternative closed-class forms. When the unpleasant action is taken, the schematic pronouns can be used to avoid possible loss of the audiences' face. For instance, the speaker can use *kasi* instead of *shomā*, and increase the level of schematicity. *Shomā* identifies the particular agent for the unpleasant act, while *kasi* is expressed at a more generic level and solely marks the participation of some agent (Talmy, 2000). The vague pronouns distract attention from the particularities and place the detail on background. As shown in Example (12), by the selection of vague pronouns instead of the proper nouns, the speaker can describe the particular agent involved, at a more generic level. In Persian, it seems that there are no closed-class forms whose function is solely to indicate the level of schematicity at which a situation is conceptualized.

In Persian, euphemistic meaning is constructed through the process of

schematization about various sensitive subjects which we will discuss some of them in the rest of this section. One of these subjects is sexual behaviours or acts that fall under the process of schematization:

13) **be ellat-e faghr** bazi az doxtar-ān
 to cause-EZ poverty some from girl-PL
berāh-e badmi-oft-and
 intoway-EZ bad IMPRF-fall-3.PL
 'Due to poverty some girls fall into a bad way' (sexual acts)

14) **hame-ye afrād-e dāra-ye**
 all-EZ people-EZ possessor-EZ
raftār-hā-yepor xatar ... bāyesti
 behaviour-PL-EZ highrisk... must
 āzmāyēš-eydz be-dah-and
 test-EZAIDS SUBJ-give-3.PL
 'All people with high-risk behaviours ... must be tested for AIDS' (sexual activity)

15) **u penhāni** va gheyre mostamar
 she furtively and non-continuously
 be **amal-e badtan** mi-dah-ad
 to act-EZ bad body IMPRF-give-3.SG
 'She furtively and non-continuously commits a bad act' (sexual activity)

16) **u be gheyr** az šohare xod bā
 she to other than husband her with
 čandmard **rābetedār**-ad
 severalman relationshipphas-3.SG
 'He has relationship with several men other than her husband' (sexual relationship)

17) **Ali jāvān-e harze-i n-ist**
 Ali young-EZ dissolute NEG-BE-3.SG
 vabe bazijā-hā ne-mirav-ad
 and to some place-PL NEG-IMPRF-go-3SG.NOM
 'Ali is not a dissolute young man and he does not go to some places' (brothels and bars)

The speaker describes the unpleasant issues in the different ways and to the different

degrees of resolution and precision. By decreasing the detail and precision of the described acts and the places related to sexual affairs, lesser attention is mapped on to the sensitive detail of the conceptual contents, and the result of this operation is the reduction of the semantic resolution of sexual issues and this will make the meanings more pleasant or more euphemistic. Therefore, the euphemistic meanings of these expressions depend on both the conceptual content invoked and on the level of schematicity at which the unpleasant contents are construed. For this reason, the higher the level of schematicity at which conceptual content is construed, the more the pleasant or euphemistic meaning will be constructed. Also, at the linguistic level, lesser attentional strength is placed in the offensive detail by the selection of open-class forms. In fact, linguistic expressions can refer to the same unpleasant situation at a greater or lesser level of detail and can evoke it in a listener's cognitive representation at a coarse level of granularity and this makes the listeners perceive more pleasant or euphemistic meaning.

In Persian, schematization forms the cognitive basis of the construction of many linguistic euphemisms. At the end of this section, only a few other examples are presented about diseases, commerce, bodily effluvia and narcotics:

- 18) rang-ašparide bud, fekr
 colour-his jumped was thought
 kon-am ke **jānevārdār**-ad
 IMPRF-do-3.SG that animal has
 'She had turned very pale. I think that she has ascaris'(roundworms)
- 19) be ellate taxir dar pardāxt, bank-hā
 to cause-EZ delay in payment,bank-PL
 azvām girande-hā pul daryāft

from loan recipient-PL
 moneyreceiptmikonand. **infesād**ast
 do-3.PL.NOM. thiscorruption is
 'Due to delayed payments, banks receive money from the loan recipients. This is corruption' (usury)

- 20) u barāye **ghazāy-e hājat** az
 she for fulfilment-EZ need from
 otāghbirun raft-ø
 roomout went-3.sg.NOM
 'She left the room for nature's needs'
 (urination and defecation)
- 21) u bādoxtar-ašbrāye **rafe**
 she with daughter-her forfulfilment
hājataz otāghbirunraft-and
 demand fromroomoutwent-3.PL.NOM
 'She left the room with her daughter for demands of nature'(urination and defecation)
- 22) Ali **āludegī**dārad va
 Ali pollution has and
 ne-mi-xāh-ad tark kon-ad
 NEG-IMPRF-want-3SG quit SUBJ-do-3.SG
 'Ali is polluted and he doesn't want to quit it' (addiction to illegal narcotics like opium,heroin, cracketc.)
- 23) dobāred**avā**xorde bud,dahan-aš
 againdrug eaten was,mouth- his
 bumidād
 smellgave-3.3G
 'He had used drug, his mouth smelled'
 (alcoholic drink)
- 24) bā **davā**dasgir šod
 withdrug arrest became-3.SG
 'He arrested with drug' (heroin)

The descriptions of these events are coarse-grained and these highly schematic expressions characterize the situations with low resolution. These expressions represent a euphemistic meaning due to the direction of lesser attention over the offensive detail of

the referent scenes. Therefore, schematization as a general cognitive ability is involved in the construction of euphemism through assigning lesser attention to the unpleasant detail. Schematization serves as a *zoom lens* for the speaker to divert the listener's attention away from the annoying detail of a referent object or scene. This mechanism zooms out too far on the detail, that is, via schematization; the offensive detail does not fall into the listener's focus of attention and is thus backgrounded.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explain how euphemistic meaning is constructed through the general cognitive ability of schematization in Persian. It was shown that schematization as an underlying cognitive operation has a significant role in the construction of many linguistic euphemisms. It was further argued that the conceptualizer/the speaker, via this cognitive process, construes and describes the same unpleasant scene at a coarse level of granularity and with low resolution. By

increasing the level of schematicity, the detail of the unpleasant situation receives lesser attention and is removed from the focus of attention. Therefore, the unpleasant situation is construed and conceptualized at a coarse level of granularity. By the general conceptualization of the unpleasant situations through schematization euphemistic meaning is constructed. It was also shown that the Persian language systematically provides alternative means for the realization of the general cognitive ability of schematization. The language user can express an unpleasant referent scene in less detail or at a coarse-grained level by the selection of a particular open- or closed-class form. In short, the present paper treated euphemism as a cognitive phenomenon and viewed the linguistic realization of euphemism as the manifestation of the underlying conceptual system of the language users' mind. In other words, linguistic euphemism is the product of the mind's cognitive functions. Finally, this research re-emphasized on the interaction of language and the other general cognitive abilities.

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تبیین ساخت معنای به‌گویانه از طریق فرایند کلی‌سازی در زبان فارسی: رویکردی شناختی

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چکیده

کلی‌سازی یکی از فرایندهای شناختی عام است که به توانایی تعبیر و مفهوم‌سازی یک موقعیت معین با سطح دانه‌بندی درشت اشاره دارد. در زبان فارسی، سازوکار شناختی کلی‌سازی در ساختار بندی محتوای معنایی خوشایند نقشی بسیار بنیادی دارد. هدف این مقاله، تبیین چگونگی ساخت معنای به‌گویانه از طریق سازوکار شناختی کلی‌سازی در زبان فارسی است. این پژوهش، در چارچوب زبان‌شناسی شناختی، نشان می‌دهد که مفهوم‌ساز/کاربر زبان، با استفاده از توانایی شناختی کلی‌سازی، موقعیت ناخوشایند را در سطح کلی‌بودگی بالا و با دانه‌بندی درشت مفهوم‌سازی و توصیف می‌کند. این فرایند باعث می‌شود که الگوی توزیع توجه بر روی صحنه‌ی ارجاعی به گونه‌ای باشد که شدت توجه کمتری به جزئیات صحنه ناخوشایند تخصیص یابد و جزئیات از کانون توجه خارج شوند. کاهش شدت توجه بر جزئیات، از شدت وضوح بازنمایی معنایی یک موقعیت ناخوشایند می‌کاهد. بنابراین، با تعبیر و مفهوم‌سازی کلی موقعیت ناخوشایند معنای به‌گویانه ساخته می‌شود. همچنین، در این پژوهش نشان داده می‌شود که مفهوم‌سازی کلی صحنه‌ی ارجاعی ناخوشایند از طریق انتخاب صورت‌های زبانی طبقه‌ی باز یا بسته، بازنمایی و بیان می‌شود.

واژه‌های کلیدی: به‌گویی، ساخت معنا، کلی‌سازی، توجه، تعبیر، زبان‌شناسی شناختی

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