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Persian body metaphors in light of metaphoric competence

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Abstract

Metaphor shapes our language as well as our thoughts by grounding the concepts related to our body within an experiential framework in which we can accommodate abstract concepts. Being aware of their underlying structure and mastering them are believed to be integral in developing metaphoric competence and communicative competence in a second language. Body-related metaphors are among the prevalent, yet under-researched metaphors of Persian that can pose substantial challenges for foreign learners of Persian. This study explores the body-related metaphor constructions utilizing Lakoff and Johnson's conceptualizations in Persian language that can be problematic for learners of Persian. It was found that the Persian body metaphors are relatively rich and pervasive. In many cases, Persian speakers tend to use different metaphors as a kind of hyperbole to show the repetition and/or significance of a phenomenon or concept (both negatively and positively). It was also suggested that the primary function of metaphors in Persian could be explained based on the narrowing and expanding of meaning. The findings suggested that while systematicity is universal, there are also differences among the metaphor structures cross-linguistically and cross-culturally. The results could also provide another evidence for cognitivists' claim that the conceptual system by which we understand and communicate (about/with) the world around us is mostly metaphorical. Finally, the significance and implications of studies of this nature for the learning and teaching of Persian as a second/foreign language were discussed.

Keywords: Persian (Farsi), Language for specific/academic purposes, Body metaphor, Cognitive semantics, Embodiment, Culture-specificity

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1. Introduction

Expanding on Low's (1988) line of research in setting "out a series of skills that learners needed to master if they were to attain real skill with a second or foreign language," Littlemore and Low (2006) tried to "show how metaphoric language and thought play a significant, indeed key, role in all the areas of competence noted in the" communicative competence models inspired by "Bachman model, namely sociolinguistic, illocutionary, textual, and grammatical competence (or knowledge), and strategic competence" (p. 289). Littlemore et al. (2014) build on the same line of research as they contend that the findings of research into the forms, functions, and structure of metaphor can have serious implications for second language teaching and learning" (Littlmore & Low, 2006, p. 268). The relevance of such language analysis studies is more evident in the Language for Specific and Academic Purposes tradition. Here language analysis at different levels is an indispensable part of the needs analysis (as an integral part of curriculum and syllabus design), materials development, and assessment and evaluation (Coxhead, 2016; Hyland, 2006; Hyland & Shaw, 2016; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013; Pishghadam et al., 2011; Basturkment, 2010). There is, nevertheless, a dearth of studies, especially in the Iranian context of Persian for Specific and Academic Purposes, that aims at describing and explaining special types of metaphors linguistically and cognitively as one of the components interplaying with almost all the competencies comprising communicative competence (Heidari, Dabaghi, and Barati, 2008; Hoang, 2014; Shokouhi & Isazadeh, 2009; Littlemore & Low, 2006; see also Allami & Ramezanian, 2021).

The human conceptual system, as Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue, is fundamentally metaphorical; this is because most concepts and notions in languages are understood in terms of other concepts. Lakoff and Johnson have analyzed numerous domains of human knowledge to detect the underlying metaphors, and several studies have been inspired by their conceptualization of metaphor or this line of research, in general.

In order to address the under-researched aspects of metaphor, using the well-attested theoretical framework by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) as one of the major metaphor theories inspiring language education literature (see. Hoang, 2014), the current linguistic study aims to explore the body metaphors in Persian language. It is postulated that metaphor is an important medium through which a particular 'imaging' (Langacker 1990: 5) is projected on a given sense;

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moreover, the human body has always been a highly generative source for making new concepts by means of metaphors and it helps to conceptualize new meanings in different ways. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the applicability of Lakoff and Johnson's framework for Persian body metaphors and to see in what ways we can use body metaphors to explain the existence of common cognitive structures. We also want to determine what common factors, linguistically and universally (cross-linguistically), can be assumed for the semantic structure of the body metaphors. Actually, the current study, in line with the relevant studies in applied linguistics and language for academic purposes (LAP) (e.g. Hoang, 2014; Coxhead, 2016; Hyland & Shaw, 2016; Littlemore, 2001; Littlemore et al., 2014; Shokouhi & Isazadeh, 2009; Pishghadam et al., 2011), maintains that analysis of and awareness-raising about metaphoric expressions, their intra- and intercultural investigation and elaboration (by shedding light on the universality or culture-specificity argument), and explaining their forms and underlying structures can be a gigantic first step in developing metaphoric competence and consequently, communicative competence of language learners. Accordingly, the paper primarily attempts to elaborate on the (nature of) language of body metaphors, whereas some implications for language education are drawn towards the end of the study.

2. Literature Review

Drawing on the marked differences between English and Spanish in the blending of manner and emotion, Martinez-Vazquez (2017) utilized the Cognitive Metaphor Theory to cognitive-linguistically appreciate the way the release of emotion is conceptualized. She analyzed a sizable, established corpus of both languages for the words related to weep and cry (and their equivalents in Spanish) across different genres. Her analysis of the sample revealed that, despite the lower expressions of emotion conceptualization in English, "both cultures share a conceptualization of negative emotions flowing out of the body through a liquid path of tears" (Martinez-Vazquez:2017, p. 10) Moreover, the Spanish "typology privileges the lexicalization of path and manner in a single construction" that are motivated by factors other than linguistic ones alone which "restrain speakers of English from making reference to this specific physiological experience" (Martinez-Vazquez:2017, p. 10).

Yusofi Rad (2002) has investigated time metaphors based on Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Contemporary Theory of Metaphor (CTM) framework. She maintains that, in contrast to English

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data, there is also a TIME AS SPACE metaphor for understanding the concept of time in Persian speakers' mental model. The study by Safarnejad et al. (2014) is a contrastive study which examined how metaphorical expressions of happiness are employed in English and Persian. Their findings showed that the two languages share many metaphorical expressions of happiness. They attributed the similarities to the universality of conceptual metaphors, whereas differences are related to specific different cultural modes in English and Persian.

Reference to natural features including body parts is known to be a rich source of actual and metaphorical communication of ideas and emotions. The peculiarities of the Bantu language, Kifipa, in this regard, inspired Lusekelo and Kapufi (2014) to examine the artistic use of body parts metaphors to convey meaning in this African language. Their results showed that the metaphoric use of names of body parts in Kifipa relies on politeness, stylistic, and cognitive hypotheses as well as helping in word economy. The metaphors originating from names of body parts in Kifipa, interestingly, do not allude to universal terms that can be applied everywhere and in every sociocultural group, rather they are context-based.

Among the few recent studies dealing with Persian body part metaphors, Atef-Vahid and Zahedi (2013) contrastively analyzed the cognitive features of metaphorical expressions related to the ‘head’ domain in English and Persian languages. The analysis of the metaphor constructions and mappings is highlighted using five categories. They showed that there is a universal cognitive grid from which different languages conceptualize the world differently through semiosis. These metaphors are limited to the people’s selections, restrained by cultural and perhaps religious factors of semiotic mechanisms which are cognitively accessible to the people. Exploring the role of body parts in Persian political texts as metaphorical expressions, Sharifi et al. (2012) found that there are fifteen body parts which are conceptualized and reflected as political metaphors in the political discourse while "head" is the most frequent one.

2.1. Lakoff-Johnson Theory of Metaphor

Perhaps the most significant development in metaphor theory in the past four decades has been the work in cognitive linguistics showing that metaphor is not a totally linguistic or rhetorical figure of speech, but constitutes a fundamental part of people’s ordinary thought and life (Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999, 2003; Lakoff and Turner, 1989; Johnson, 1987; Sharifian, 2017; Sweetser, 1990).

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Lakoff (1987) and Johnson (1987) in their works (and also Lakoff and Johnson 1999) attempted to set out the types of evidence for the embodiment of conceptual metaphor that they believed best explains the evidence about language, conceptualization, and reasoning. Two fundamental conclusions of Lakoff-Johnson studies are:

(1) All language is metaphorical, and

(2) All metaphors are ultimately based on our bodily experience.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) defined three types of metaphor: "orientational" (in which we use our experience with spatial orientation), "ontological" (in which we use our experience with physical objects), and "structural" (in which natural types are used to define other concepts). Every metaphor can be reduced to a more primitive metaphor, in most cases.

Structural metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 62) are grounded in systematic correlation within our experience. These are cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another concept. Most of the orientational metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 15) deal with spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, and central-peripheral. Ontological metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 26) seem to be necessary for dealing rationally with our experiences. Human purposes typically require us to impose artificial boundaries that make physical phenomena discrete just as we are: entities bounded by a surface (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 60). This allows us to refer to them, measure them, identify a particular aspect of them, see them even as a cause, and act with respect to them. In addition to these cases, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 54) believe that there are some idiosyncratic metaphorical expressions that stand alone and are not used systematically in language or thought. These expressions are isolated instances of metaphorical concepts, where there is usually only one instance of a used part (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 55). Metaphors like these are marginal in most cultures and languages, and hence are called isolated. We sometimes encounter the overlap among the three or maybe more metaphorical constructings of the concepts that allow mixed metaphors of the following sort (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 103):

So far we have constructed the core of our argument.

Here “so far” is from the JOURNEY metaphor, and “construct” is from the CONTAINER metaphor (see Huumo, 2015 for more applications of the theory). Generally speaking, Lakoff and

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Johnson (2003) define metaphors as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (p. 5).

3. Data Collection

This study cognitively explored Persian metaphor constructions related to body organs. It adopted a descriptive-qualitative design to examine the research question. The researchers delimited their corpus to 150 mostly used body metaphors in Persian which were gathered from a corpus of 70000 sentences. These sentences were gathered and recorded from ordinary speech of people, especially in academic settings, TV and radio programs, scripts, novels and short stories, magazines, and newspapers. From among these sentences, 85 examples were selected and categorized utilizing the classification presented by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). These are the instances that are hypothesized to possibly pose problems for learners of Persian, and where possible, could be compared with English counterparts. Metaphors related to body parts have been used to construe meanings in various languages (cf. Barcelona 2003; Kovecses 2004; Polzenhagen 2007; Musolff 2008; Sharifian et al., 2008). Nonetheless, the existing literature seems to cover well-documented languages such as English and German, hence this leaves a lot to be considered concerning languages such as Persian which is a less-documented language in this regard.

4. Data analysis

In the following sections, we present some examples with their analyses after categorizing them based on the adopted framework from Lakoff and Johnson (2003); of course, there were cases where the researchers had to recourse to new or alternative categories, other than those proposed by Lakoff and Johnson to account for the Persian data. Based on their framework, metaphors are divided into (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, 45):

Structural Metaphors: A structural metaphor is a metaphorical system in which one complex concept (typically abstract) is presented in terms of some other (usually more concrete) concept.

Orientational Metaphor: a metaphor (or figurative comparison) that involves spatial relationships (such as UP-DOWN, IN-OUT, ON-OFF, and FRONT-BACK).

Ontological Metaphor: An ontological metaphor is a type of metaphor in which something concrete is projected onto something abstract.

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Mixed Metaphors: It is a combination of two or more incompatible metaphors.

4.1. Structural metaphors

Structural metaphors are grounded in systematic correlation within human experience. This kind of metaphor is very common in Persian, especially in media discourse. The following sentences are examples of structural metaphors common in Persian and English (when translated). In these metaphors, a more abstract concept (i.e. relationship) is conceptualized in terms of something more familiar in the everyday experience through referring to bodily experience.

(1) a. in je rɑbeteje bimɑre.

This a relationship sick-is

'This is a sick relationship.'

b. in rɑbete dige mordæst.

This relationship already dead-is

'This relationship is dead.'

In these metaphors, the physical status of the human body, e.g. its sickness, is mapped onto the abstract activity of its beholder – humans. Here relationship between people is conceived as a patient; this means that, like a patient, a relationship can be out of shape, sick, and dying. Here the source domain expression, patient, is systematically related to the target domain, relationship. Consequently, all the related metaphors can be categorized under a single metaphoric structure as RELATIONSHIP IS A PATIENT.

The following Persian sentences are realizations of other body metaphors in everyday conversations. When someone becomes angry, he feels ebullition, restlessness, and impatience; in the real world, heat has the same effect and finally causes the materials to boil and overflow (or sometimes to melt). For people, anger does the same as heat does in the physical world.

(2) a. delæm xonæk ʃod ʃohæreʃ dæstgir ʃod.

heart-me cool became her husband arrested became

'I became relieved (when I heard) that her husband was arrested.'

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b. særæm dɑG kærde bud

Head-me hot become had

'I was hot under collar.'

c. xunæm be d3uʃ ɑmæde bud.

blood-me to boil become had

'I got totally angry.'

d. æz æsæbɑnijæt særæm dɑʃt mitærækid.

From anger head-me was exploding

'My head was going to explode out of anger.'

When people want to transfer their meaning and talk about abstract and nonphysical experiences (e.g. anger), it seems that they talk more tangibly utilizing a bodily phenomenon (e.g. head) to transfer their ideas. The comparison here shows that anger can burn, boil, and even make explosions just like heat. On the other hand, when anger is removed the heat diminishes, and a cool breeze takes away the heat. It is possible to categorize all the above metaphors under a single one: ANGER IS HEAT where the source domain is heat and the target domain is anger. The sentences below have, somehow, a similar structure as the preceding ones. First, consider these examples:

(3) a. esmæmo sedɑ kærd, delæm jeho dæG ʃod.

name-me-OBJ call did, heart-me suddenly hot became

'as s/he called my name, my stomach churned.'

b. surætæʃ gor gerefte bud.

His face flame got had

'His face turned fire red.'

c. delæm mesle sir væ serke mid3uʃid.

heart-me like garlic and vinegar was boiling.

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'My heart was in my mouth/I had butterflies in my stomach.'

In the physical world, heat can produce movement and restlessness in things, and excitement is also linked with restlessness. Heating molecules, in physics, also make them move or shake faster. As asserted in the preceding examples, heat and movement are concurrent; restlessness and feeling of excitement are similarly linked with heat. This can be compared to a group of people when hearing very surprising and exciting news. As soon as they hear it, everyone would stand and try to show his/her excitement by moving, clapping, swirling, or even jumping in the air. This is another example that realizes EXCITEMENT in terms of HEAT. Hence the metaphor EXCITEMENT is HEAT.

4.2. Orientational metaphors

Orientational Metaphors are pervasive in Persian and provide an extraordinarily rich basis for understanding the concepts in orientational terms. Our physical experience provides many possible bases for spatialization metaphors, but the kind of patterns that are used may vary from culture to culture.

(4) a. ɑb æz sær gozæʃtæn

water from head passing

'Being completely in trouble.'

b. tɑ xerxere tu Gærze

To larynx in debt-he-is

'he is up to his neck in debt.'

These utterances, which are mostly representative of human posture, show that in Persian the increase of something is expectedly shown by the spatial orientation UP (referring to upper body parts like 'Head' and 'Larynx') and the decreasing by DOWN (referring to lower body parts). The use of this kind of metaphor is increasing in contemporary Persian, while it used to be less frequent in Persian. In the following sentences, up and down parts of the body are used as the source domains and the target domains are valid station and invalid station.

(5) a. mæs?ulɑne bolænd-pɑje nezɑm in rɑ midɑnænd.

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Officials long-leg regime this OBJ know-THEY

'The high-ranking governmental officials know this.'

b. Gædæmhɑʃɑn ruje tʃæʃm.

Steps-their on eyes

'They are most welcomed'

c. mɑ rɑ særæfrɑz nemudid

Us OBJ high-headed made-yuo.

'You made us proud.'

d. ye karmænde dun paye?æm

one employee-of low leg-am

'I'm a low-ranking employee'

e. paye menbær neʃæstæn

leg-of minbar to sit]

'Sitting by the minbar (Mosque pulpit) [as audience]'

What the above examples show is that, to show valid station, one uses expressions such as High-headed (5c), on eyes (5b), and long-leg (5a) high-leg in Persian, which all have spatial orientation, UP, in them. In Persian, UP (or above in other words) has special connotations. Historically, when we study different historic books, people or things with more valid stations conventionally were placed higher or on top of the rest; besides, those inferior to them were located in a lower place. Consequently, people used to assign the higher part of a meeting to those whose status were higher than others. In other places, they put a pillow under the people's feet while sitting to show respect to their guests or leaders (who had more valid status). Similarly, the leg in examples (5d) and (5e) connotes the lower status of the concerned people in the context of Persian. All of these metaphors have the same essence: VALID STATION IS UP; INVALID STATION IS DOWN.

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The next group of Persian metaphors deal with orientation from a different perspective. The examples below mostly use the face gestures and their related configurations as being open, narrow, and expansive. This is because happiness tends to correlate physically with a smile and a general feeling of expansiveness. Examples of related metaphors can be seen here.

(6) a. surætæʃ æz nɑrɑhæti dʒæm? ʃode bud.

Face-her of sadness shrunk had got

‘(His wife was crying), and her face had shrunk with sadness.’

b. bɑ ruje dærhæm æz dæftær ræft.

With face meshed from office left

‘He left the office with a grim face.’

c. mærdom bɑ tʃehre?i goʃɑde be piʃvɑz ræftænd.

people with face-a expansive to welcome went-THEY.

‘People came to welcome (him) with happy faces.’

d. segerme?æʃ rɑ dærhæm keʃid.

Forehead-lines-his OBJ together pulled

He brought his forehead lines together [with anger].’ = He frowned

e. æz ʃɑdi be dæst?æfʃɑni væ paikubi pærdɑxtænd.

From joy to handsthrowing-in the air and foot-beating did-THEY

‘They started to celebrate out of excitement.’

f. delemɑn bæræje ʃomɑ tæng miʃævæd.

Heart=our for you tight becomes

‘We will miss you.’

Expressions like shrunk faces, tightening of hearts, and bringing the forehead lines together refer to sadness and nervousness. On the other hand, expressions like ‘expanded face’ are clearly

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illustrative of opening, flatness of the face gestures or the expansion in physical posture of humans, and it is related to happiness. These kinds of metaphors are mostly used in Persian and their coherence seems to be minor for English data, since the major metaphor in English culture, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 18) assert, is HAPPY IS UP. For generalization purposes, it is easy to say that the source domains of these metaphors are wide and narrow, while the target domains are happy and sad; consequently, all of these metaphors can be brought under the HAPPY IS WIDE and SAD IS NARROW metaphor.

(7) a. ba eftexɑr særæʃ rɑ bolænd mikonæd væ mi?isitæd.

with honor head=his Obj raises do and stands.

'He raises his head with honor and stands up.'

b. bæ?dæz behuʃ ɑmædæn dobɑre mitune ruje pɑhɑʃ be?iste.

after conscious coming again can on feet-his stand.

'S/he can stand on her/his feet as s/he regains his/her consciousness.'

Sick or dead people and animals are usually down on the ground position. At the same time, other elements like 'raising the head' and 'standing on the feet', in the above examples refer to life and health, since healthy or alive people mostly stand on their feet (when they are not asleep) and have a vertical posture most of the times to do their routine activities. One should note, however, as Iranian culture is interwoven with religion; therefore, it is common to see that most of the time people consider death as going up – to heaven – in this culture. Examples are widespread in religious contexts, to the extent that people talk about martyrdom or dying to serve God as "going up to heaven", "flying up to God", and "joining God". This cultural effect is an interesting point in metaphor studies and deserves careful attention in future research. All in all, the source domains in the above sentences are up and down and the target domains are health/ life and sickness/ death. These can be organized into another metaphor, namely HEALTH AND LIFE ARE UP; SICKNESS AND DEATH ARE DOWN.

Other body metaphors can be used to induce the source domain 'up and down'. This includes the most pervasive body-related metaphors, as in the examples below.

(8) a. doʃmæn sær forud ɑværd.

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Enemy head descend bring

'The enemy put the head down (surrendered).'

b. tʃænd modir bayale særetɑn migomɑrim.

some managers over head-your put-we

'We appoint some managers to supervise you.'

This kind of relationship may point to its basis in the historical and cultural consciousness of Iranian people as being governed by kings and patriarchs. The people of Iran, for thousands of years, have observed the royal families govern the country. The patriarch (e.g. the king) used to sit on the thrown in a high position during the meetings whereas other people used to stand or bow in the lower parts of the court. Therefore, UP and DOWN orientations as source domains are physically related to having control and being subject to control as target domains, respectively. Having control and being subject to control are the target domains in all of these metaphors. During history, too, the commanders of armies used to sit on the biggest armed animals to have control over all parts of the battlefield. This has made people conceptualize those with more control or power in a higher position than themselves.

Accordingly, in these sentences by uttering phrases like 'brings down its head' (example 5b), 'steps be on eyes' (8c), the observer is supposed to look from a lower position or is considering someone else to look at him or standing on a position higher than his; along this, the person who has CONTROL OR FORCE is UP, and the person BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL or FORCE is DOWN. Therefore, this metaphor can be imagined in the mind: HAVING CONTROL OR FORCE IS UP; BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL OR FORCE IS DOWN.

The following data show that the increase of virtues is realized with UP orientation and depravity like 'being under hand' is realized with DOWN.

(9) a. zire dæst næbɑʃ.

Under hand don't be]

'Don't be under other's hand meaning don't be an inferior!'

b. Særæfrɑz væ særbolænd bɑʃid

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High-headed and raised head be-you

'Be successful and proud.'

Again, body organs are the words and concepts that impose the up or down position of source domains in these sentences. Therefore, the source domain is up and down and the target domain is virtue and depravity. This has again its basis in the cultural organization of people's minds to bring all of them around a central metaphor 'VIRTUE IS UP; DEPRAVITY IS DOWN'.

Another orientational metaphor concerning directions pertains to the use of eyes and eye sight. Our eyes normally look in the direction in which we typically move (ahead, forward), and if we conceptualize time as a line (the same as we do when we explain tenses to language learners, for example), the time passes us and we would have it before us or behind us. To see the past, it is necessary to turn around and look back. Similarly, as an object approaches a person (or the person approaches the object), the object appears to be moving upward in the person's field of vision and as soon as the object passes the person (or the person moves away from the object), it appears to be moving downward in the person's field of vision.

(10) a. tʃe piʃe ru dɑrim ?

What in front face have-we

'what is ahead of us?'

b. æge beduni tʃe bædbæxti ro poʃte sær gozɑʃtæm

if know-you what misery OBJ back head put-I

'You can't imagine the miseries I've been through.'

c. ælɑn bɑjæd gozæʃte rɑ færɑmuʃ kærd væ ru bed3olo ræft.

Now must past OBJ forget do and face to front go

'Now you should forget about the past and keep going ahead.'

d. dɑre ru be d3olo mire.

is face to front go- s/he

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'S/he is moving ahead (succeeding).'

In the extracted examples, body parts are not the source domain but the exact source domains could be like this: up/ ahead and down/ back. Although body parts are not directly engaged in source domains, they constitute the underlying part of the source domains. The target domains of all the above metaphors are foreseeable future events and past events. So, FORESEEABLE FUTURE EVENTS ARE AHEAD; PAST EVENTS ARE BACK.

Other kinds of orientational metaphors are widespread in Persian, but there is not enough room to elaborate on them in this section. Therefore, further examples are excluded and the underlying metaphors are represented in the lines below because their relation to bodily metaphors appeared to be of comparatively less significance.

- SUCCESS IS UP; FAILURE IS DOWN
- HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN
- SPIRITUAL IS UP; MATERIAL IS DOWN

The last example has a religious basis in the Iranian culture, which we talked about earlier. Although further examples are skipped here, it is worth mentioning that there is an overall external systematicity among the various spatialization metaphors, which defines coherence among them. Thus GOOD IS UP gives an UP orientation to general well-being, and this orientation is coherent with special cases like HAPPY IS UP, HEALTH IS UP, CONTROL IS UP, and STATUS IS UP. Spatial metaphors again are rooted in physical and cultural experience; they are not randomly assigned because a metaphor can serve as a vehicle for understanding a concept only by virtue of its experiential basis.

4.3. Ontological Metaphors

This kind of metaphor allows looking at events, activities, ideas, and other nonphysical and/or abstract concepts as a thing or a physical and tangible material; this point of view by itself allows to refer to them, categorize them, and measure them. Consider the following examples which have the same structure in Persian and English:

(11) a. ?u xeili kæle gonde æst.

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S/he very head big is.

'S/he is a big shot.'

b. moʃkelαt kæmæræʃ ro xurd kærd.

Problems back=his Obj crush did

'His back was crushed by the problems.'

Sentence (11a) shows the state of being bigger than usual. In a nutshell, the use of 'head and shoulders' as source domains manifests one way of emphasizing the significance of an object or phenomenon in the target domain. In the examples, the concepts and things stand as someone that can do something just like what the human does. In (11b) the problems are so big and so powerful that they can break someone's back. All of the sentences above are akin to a major metaphor in Persian, namely 'SIGNIFICANT IS BIG'.

(12) a. αberujæm be bαd ræft.

Reputation=my to wind went

'I lost my (good) reputation/ I am disgraced/dishonored.'

b. bα in hærfeʃ αberuje mæno rixt.

With this word-his reputation mine poured

'With his (nonsense) words he disreputed/dishonored me.'

The 'reputation' (Literal Persian translation 'water of face'), in the above examples (12a and 12b), is referred to as if it is something that moves easily with the wind or could be poured on the ground like water. Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities as substances, and states as containers. Moreover, Persian speakers, as seen in the above examples, tend to use metaphors as a kind of hyperbole to show the repetition and/or highlight the significance of a phenomenon or concept (both negatively and positively). In the next examples, an event is viewed as a discrete entity:

(13) a. pαto æz in mæs?æle bekeʃ birun.

Foot=your from this issue pull out

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‘Keep your nose out of this issue.’

b. æz tæhe del xoʃhɑl budæm.

From bottom heart happy was-I

‘I was happy from the bottom of my heart.’

We project our own in-out orientation onto other emotional or mental states that are not really bounded by surfaces. We also view them as containers with inside and outside parts. This is how we conceptualize a problem to be like a container and conceive of happiness to have a place in the heart. Ontological metaphors like these are necessary for even attempting to deal rationally with our experiences. Other ontological metaphors come here as personification,

(14) a. dær Gælbe donjɑje botpæræstɑn ræft.

In heart world-of idol-worshipers went-he

‘He went to the center of idolaters’ world.”

b. d3ɑje pɑje fæGr bær piʃɑnije mærdom mɑnde

Place-of foot-of poverty on forehead-of people remained

‘There are still traces of poverty in the people’s faces.’

The first sentence (14a) attributes a 'heart' to an imaginary world, as the heart is one of the most important parts of the human body. Whenever you enter someone’s heart, you have entered the most important and affecting domain of his/her territory. In sentence (14b) the speaker looks at an abstract concept – an imaginary era - as a living thing that has a ‘forehead’. Again, the head as an important part of the human body becomes highlighted. In the sections below, there are some major metaphors every one of which involves other ontological metaphors.

4.3.1. SOCIETY and IDEAS are PEOPLE

Here the source domain is a person and the target domain is society. The examples found for this major metaphor are ample in Persian and are mostly common in English.

(15) a. dʒɑme?e mɑ mærize.

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society our sick-is-it

'Our society is sick.'

b. d3αme?e mitune ruje pαhαʃ be?iste

society can on feet-his stand

'Society can stand on its feet (again).'

c. eslαmgærαhα ælαn dær tʃæʃme d3αme?e hæstænd

islamists now in eye society are

'Islamists are in the eye of the society now.'

d. hædæfe æslije mæn ine ke bα bædæne d3αme?e hαmrαh ʃævæm.

goal- of main I-genetive is-it that with body-of society accord

'My /main goal is to accord with the body of (our) society.'

Human purposes typically require us to impose artificial boundaries that make physical phenomena discrete just as we are (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 26). Society, by this metaphor, is a person with head and feet and also someone who could get sick. Now, consider the other aspect of the metaphor, IDEAS ARE PEOPLE. This metaphor was found to be, most of the time, the same both in English and Persian.

(16) a. in næzærαt sαlhα piʃ mordæn.

these ideas years ago died

'These ideas died off several years ago.'

b. tæfækore ?u hamiʃe zende mimαnd.

Ideas-of he forever alive remain

'His ideas live on forever.'

c. in næzærije hænuz dær dorαne kudæki besær mibæræd.

this theory still in era infancy stay do

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‘This theory is still in its infancy.’

d. ?in fekr bɑjæd dobɑre zende ʃævæd

this thought ought to again alive becomes

‘That is an idea that ought to be resurrected.’

4.3.2. The Case of EYE

By looking at the next set of data, one may rightly induce a more general metaphor: SEEING IS TOUCHING; EYES ARE LIMBS.

(17) a. tʃeʃɑʃo be televiziun tʃæsbunde.

Eye-his-Object to TV glued

‘(He sits) with his eyes glued to the TV.’

b. tʃeʃɑʃun be hæm xord.

Eyes-their to eachother hit

‘Their eyes met.’

Now consider the following metaphors.

(18) a. Mitunestæm tærs ro tu tʃeʃɑʃ bebinæm.

Could-I fear OBJ in eyes-his see-I

‘I could see fear in his eyes.’

b. tʃeʃɑʃ por æz xæʃm bud.

Eyes-his full of anger was

‘His eyes were filled with anger.’

c. tu tʃeʃɑʃ por æz ʃowG bud

in eyes-his full of desire was

‘His eyes were full of desire.’

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The first example (18a) of the container event has a prepositional phrase (in his eyes). This consists of a preposition in which tells us that there is a containment and a noun phrase (an eye) which is the container event. The postposition with in example (18b) indicates containment while the noun phrase (the eye) indicates the container. In all of the above sentences, the eyes have been used as a kind of container for feelings and emotions. This tells us that even when people do not use language to give vent their emotions and feelings or when they do not want to show it in their behavior, the eyes as a container ooze out the emotions and betray their owners. So, emotions are also considered objects or things in these metaphors. Hence, the EYES ARE CONTAINERS FOR THE EMOTIONS can be seen more precisely. It needs to be pointed out that although Lakoff and Johnson (1980) discussed at great length the Container metaphors under Ontological metaphors, we notice that Lakoff (1993) comes back to them when he presents the EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor. He (1993) claims that we usually use ontological metaphors to understand events, actions, activities, and states as containers.

4.3.3. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL STATES ARE ENTITIES WITHIN A PERSON

These metaphors specify different kinds of objects. They give us different metaphorical models for what they stand for and thereby allow us to focus on different aspects of mental experience.

(19) a. mixɑm ru=ʃ ro kæm konæm.

Want=I face=his OBJ reduce do

'I want to embarrass him.'

b. tuje del=æʃ mæræz dɑr=e.

In heart=his malady has=he.

'He wants to annoy us.'

Perhaps the most obvious ontological metaphors are those where a physical object is further specified as being a person. This allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities.

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4.3.4. THE MIND IS A MACHINE

The way that machines work and their quality of working are highly dependent on their total condition (i.e. being new or old and the duration of their usage). The brain is also responsible for activities like understanding, remembering, decision-making, problem-solving, and other cognitive activities. Sometimes, these activities are done properly and sometimes they encounter difficulties and disorders just like machines. Such similarity is the experiential basis of this metaphor.

(20) a. mæGz=æm kɑr ne=mikærd, xæste bud=æm

Brain=my work NEG=do, tired was=I

'My mind wasn't working, as I was tired.'

b. MæGz=æm ælɑn dɑre kɑr mikone.

Brain=my now is work doing

'My mind is working now.'

Source domain: machine

Target domain: mind

Persian speakers, in these sentences, use the verb 'work' for what the brain does; this is a mechanical specification which is attributed to brain activities. People can talk about the brain in terms of a complex machine like a computer; this is a very common metaphor. The similarity is obvious, both in their functions and structures, because they both do complex functions and have internal structures which are hard to figure out (e.g. brains have millions of neurons and complex networks, and computers have many switches and wires). Brain in such Persian contexts actually refers to abstract activities of the brain (i.e. mind). Then, it does not contradict the overall view of the target domain. The bodily basis of the human experience again helps them to understand and express their daily affairs.

4.4. Mixed Metaphors

A great deal of Persian metaphors collected for this study contained some kind of personification, but at the same time implicitly possessed some kind of orientation. Therefore, an ontological

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metaphor and an orientational metaphor could be argued to satisfy two purposes; this means the overlap between metaphors. Such overlaps can be characterized in terms of shared metaphorical entailments and the cross-metaphorical correspondences established by them, this is what Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 93) called a 'mixed' metaphor. Consider these examples: sangdel 'hard-hearted', sare nax 'Head of thread' (clue), dastgire or daste 'Handle', the hand of time, suræt mæs'æleh 'Face of question', surat hesɑb 'Face of account' (bill) Head of army, Head of the next line, Head of the page, Head of the book, Head of the table, Head of the cabbage, the Leg of table (page, door, chair, TV, etc.), Mind's eye, hope's Eye, the Arm of chair, the Arm of sea, the Lip of chair, the Lip of pitcher, the Lip of bed, the Lip of sea (water), the Tongue of shoe, the Tongue of railway switch, the Tongue of lock, the Tongue of a bell, the Teeth of a comb, the Teeth of a key, the Leg of a table, the Leg of a chair, the Leg of bed, the Leg of scene, etc.

The formal structure of these phrases, apart from their literal meaning, is important for the analysis. As can be seen in these metaphors, the spatial orientation is mapped onto the human body. The numerous examples found in this section shows again the importance of human body parts. At the same time, personification is a general category that covers a wide range of metaphors, each picking out different aspects of a person or ways of looking at a person. What they all have in common is that they are extensions of ontological metaphors and that they allow us to make sense of the phenomena in the world in human terms; terms that we can understand based on our own motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics.

4. 5. Isolated metaphors

As stated before, there is a claim by Lakoff and Johnson that there are idiosyncratic metaphorical expressions that stand alone and are not used systematically in the English language or thought. Their example was MOUNTAIN IS A PERSON metaphor. In normal English discourse (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 55) people do not speak of the head, shoulders, back, neck or trunk of a mountain. They are marginal in the English language; the used part may consist of only one conventionally fixed expression of the language and few of them are used. Therefore, as they claim, examples like the foot of the mountain are idiosyncratic, unsystematic, and isolated in English. They do not interact with other metaphors, play no particularly interesting role in the English conceptual system, and hence are not metaphors that they live by (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 56).

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In Persian, interestingly, this is not the case. This metaphorical expression does not stand alone and is used systematically. They are essential in Persian culture and language and their use is widespread. They interact with other metaphors and are systematic in Persian, and hence are metaphors that we live by. Therefore, the above list of metaphors can be continued as:

the Head of a mountain/ hill, the Shoulder of a mountain/ hill, the Waist of a mountain/ hill, the Foot of a mountain/ hill, the neck of a mountain, the Back of a mountain/ hill, even the Skirt of a mountain/ hill ….

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Motivated by both theoretical and pedagogical preoccupations with language analysis, this study explored the extensive role metaphors play in the way our mind functions, the way we conceptualize our experience, and the way we speak. In everyday life, we keep in touch with people who might be insensitive' (pust koloft ‘skin thick’) or ‘touchy’ (nɑzok nɑrend3i ‘thin orange’), which makes it necessary to treat them properly. Moreover, it may be possible that our feelings towards others are mingled with physical and tangible experiences. The primitive, concrete language of human beings raised its abstract concepts by going up the ladder of metaphors, to the extent that the abstract world can be said to have been created based on metaphors. But the real role of these metaphors is not very clear. Studies like ours strive to expose some aspects of the human mind in this respect. As supported by other works comparing Persian and English metaphors systematically (Sharifi et al. 2012, Safarnejad et al. 2014, Yusofi Rad 2002), reliable clues can be provided for discovering how different cultures conceptualize their experiences, leading toward the understanding of important issues such as cognitive universality and cultural variation (Kövecses 2005, 2015). Additionally, studies of this nature are of significance in analyzing the communicative needs of and developing materials and courses for students of Persian as a second or foreign language (Hyland, 2006; Hyland & Shaw, 2016; Low et al., 2008; Paltridge & Starfield, 2016; Tomlinson, 2013; Nation and Macalister, 2010). As pointed out earlier, it is one of the major steps in developing language for special/academic purposes courses and programs (Basturkmen, 2010; Dudley-Eavns & St John, 1998; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013) which can empower the audience (including the educators who assist or assess learners) in breaking the linguistic code and simplifying the intricate language in use. When examining Lakoff and Johnson's proposal through lists of metaphors, it is remarkable to see how completely we are

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engrossed in them, and how our thinking is enabled by them. It is perhaps impossible to say many things in a literal, word-for-word version, because the whole system of language seems to be metaphorical in nature and metaphor pervades our conceptual system. Since so many of the important concepts for us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (e.g. emotions, ideas, and time, among others.), we need to understand them through other concepts and notions that we understand in clearer terms (e.g. spatial orientations) which consequently lead to metaphorical definitions in our conceptual system (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 116).

Overall, in this study, we wanted to see if Lakoff and Johnson's framework was applicable to Persian body metaphors and in what ways we can use body metaphors to explain the existence of common cognitive structures. Our findings suggest that Lakoff and Johnson's framework, based on the Persian body metaphors analyzed in this research, can be successfully applied to Persian metaphorical structures. It is claimed (Barcelona 2003; Kovecses 2004; Polzenhagen 2007; Musolff 2008; Sharifian et al., 2008, Lusekelo and Kapufi 2014) that metaphor pervades our normal conceptual system and human body is a highly generative source for making new concepts utilizing metaphors and it helps to conceptualize new meanings in different ways. Consequently, people mostly use concrete source domains and transfer them to abstract target domains; this helps their sentences to be more emphatic. However, one should note that this is not always the case for Persian data, because we can find phrases and sentences in which both the target and source domain are concrete or even both are abstract.

When translating the Persian body metaphors, we noticed that many metaphorical structures are common both in Persian and English. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider them as common conceptual cognitive structures in the minds of people from different cultures—of course, this needs further comparative research across different languages of the world—as some metaphors are culturally rooted and are different from culture to culture.

We were also interested in the common factors which can be assumed for the semantic structure of the body metaphors. It was found that the Persian body metaphors are relatively rich and their use is pervasive. On the other hand, the recurrence of particular metaphorical patterns across cultures is so striking that any experience, which could give rise to these metaphors, must be fundamental to human life in general, rather than based on particular, local, and culturally bound types of experience. While referring to a kind of universality, this does not mean that all metaphors

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are the same in all languages of the world, but as shown and discussed in this research, there were instances which proved to be totally language-specific. The universal part of metaphors, though, is mostly their universal systematicity which could be found in all languages while there are minor differences between the metaphor structures cross-linguistically and cross-culturally; to the extent that in each category, there proved to be a need to introduce new metaphors to the inventory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003).

The research findings confirmed our two implicit hypotheses raised by the research questions. The first one, embodiment, claims that humans experience their environment through their bodies and hence also construe the world in terms of their bodily experiences; the other asserts that cultural differences may arise because of differences in environments or ecologies. Such cultural differences may give rise to differences in conceptual construals of reality and hence also in the conceptual metaphors of different languages. Furthermore, the analysis of the data showed that in many cases Persian speakers tend to use different metaphors to emphasize the repetition and/or significance of a phenomenon or concept (e.g. negatively or positively). Thus, one of the most important functions of metaphors in Persian seems to be based on the narrowing and expanding of meaning.

The findings of this research were in line with Yusofi Rad (2002) and Atef-Vahid and Zahedi (2013) who referred to common cognitive constructions in the compared languages. On the other hand, Atef-Vahid and Zahedi (2013), Safarnejad et al. (2014), and Sharifi et al. (2012) emphasized the universality of most conceptual metaphors while relating differences to specific cultural modes in the two languages. As Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 20) state it is hard to distinguish the physical from the cultural basis of a metaphor since the choice of one physical basis from among many possible ones has to do with cultural coherence. However, as the data showed in this research, the basis of many body metaphors seems to be cultural and physical.

Reviewing these findings, it can be concluded that our research could be another evidence for the cognitivists, who claim that the conceptual system by which we understand the truth and our world is mostly metaphorical, and metaphor is not restricted to figurative language. The most striking point here is the emphasis on the role of the body in the shaping of the mind. Cognitive linguistics is still a long way ahead in exploring many areas of study, especially with regard to under-researched domains and languages, such as Persian.

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Persian as a second or foreign language learning and teaching is a field which can substantially benefit from the findings of cognitive linguistics. Particularly, with an increase in research which unprecedentedly underlines the determining role of comprehension and production of metaphors in communicative competence (Coxhead, 2016; Low, 1988; Low, Littlemore, & Koester, 2008; Littlemore, et al., 2011), more studies of this nature are needed to shed light on the nature and application of various metaphors common in the Persian language. This is even more urgent in the context of Persian for Specific and Academic Purposes where the learners are more likely to face several problems experienced by the students or professionals mentioned by Littlemore et al. (2011; 2014) and Low et al. (2008) in understanding target language lectures or communicating orally and in written format. Explicating the underlying structure of the metaphorical language, such studies can equip the teachers, materials developers, and language testers with the content—in the sense used by Nation and Macalister (2010)—and substance needed in developing effective awareness-raising and empowering techniques, tasks, strategies, materials, and tests along the lines suggested in the extant literature (e.g. Hoang, 2014). Still, accentuating the complexity of the metaphors as mental and cultural artefacts, the findings of such explorations are expected to sensitize the instructors, materials developers, and language testers to the difficulties Persian learners can encounter in encoding and decoding metaphoric expressions; consequently, more realistic, achievable objectives are recommended to be established, and more understanding (of the learners' difficulties) and appreciation (of their achievements) on the part of the educators, course planners, materials writers, test developers, program managers, and the larger academic community is humbly recommended.

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