Meaning Interpretation of Persian Noun-Noun Compounds: A Conceptual Blending Approach

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Abstract : Linguistic structures have two facades: form and meaning. These structures could have either literal meaning or figurative meaning (although it could also depend on the context in which that structure appears). The literal meaning is understandable more easily, but for the figurative meaning, a word or concept is understood from a different word or concept. In linguistic structures with a figurative meaning, it's more difficult to relate their forms to the meanings than structures with literal meaning. In these cases, the relationship between form and figurative meaning could be studied from different perspectives. Various linguists have been curious about what happens in someone's mind to understand figurative meaning through the forms; they have used different perspectives and theories to explain this process. It has been studied through cognitive linguistics as well, in which mind and mental activities are really important. In this viewpoint, meaning (in other words, conceptualization) is considered a mental process. In this descriptive-analytic study, 20 Persian compound nouns with figurative meanings have been collected from the Persian-language Moeen Encyclopedic Dictionary and other sources. Examples include ["Sofreh Xaneh"] (traditional restaurant) and ["Dast Yar"] (Assistant). These were studied in a cognitive semantics framework using "Conceptual Blending Theory" which hasn't been tested on Persian compound nouns before. It was noted that "Conceptual Blending Theory" could lead to the process of understanding the figurative meanings of Persian compound nouns. Many cognitive linguists believe that "Conceptual Blending" is not only a linguistic theory but it's also a basic human cognitive ability that plays important roles in thought, imagination, and even everyday life as well (though unconsciously). The ability to use mental spaces and conceptual blending (which is exclusive to humankind) is such a basic but unconscious ability that we are unaware of its existence and importance. What differentiates Conceptual Blending Theory from other ways of understanding figurative meaning, are arising new semantic aspects (emergent structure) that lead to a more comprehensive and precise meaning. In this study, it was found that Conceptual Blending Theory could explain reaching the figurative meanings of Persian compound nouns from their forms, such as [talkative for compound word of "Bolbol + Zabani" (nightingale + tongue)] and [wage for compound word of "Dast + Ranj" (hand + suffering)].

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