

Synaesthetic Metaphors in Persian: a Cognitive Corpus Based and Comparative Perspective

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Abstract : Introduction: Synaesthesia is a term denoting the perception or description of the perception of one sense modality in terms of another. In literature, synaesthesia refers to a technique adopted by writers to present ideas, characters or places in such a manner that they appeal to more than one sense like hearing, seeing, smell etc. at a given time. In everyday language too we find many examples of synaesthesia. We commonly hear phrases like 'loud colors', 'frozen silence' and 'warm colors', 'bitter cold' etc. Empirical cognitive studies have proved that synaesthetic representations both in literature and everyday languages are constrained ie. they do not map randomly among sensory domains. From the beginning of the 20th century Synaesthesia has been a research domain both in literature and structural linguistics. However the exploration of cognitive mechanisms motivating synaesthesia, have made it an important topic in 21st century cognitive linguistics and literary studies. Synaesthetic metaphors are linguistic representations of those mental mechanisms, the study of which reveals invaluable facts about perception, cognition and conceptualization. According to the main tenets of cognitive approach to language and literature, unified and similar cognitive mechanisms are active both in everyday language and literature, and synaesthesia is one of those cognitive mechanisms. Main objective of the present research is to answer the following questions: What types of sense transfers are accessible in Persian synaesthetic metaphors. How are these types of sense transfers cognitively explained. What are the results of cross-linguistic comparative study of synaesthetic metaphors based on the existing observations? Methodology: The present research employs a cognitive - corpus based method, and the theoretical framework adopted to analyze linguistic synaesthesia is the contemporary theory of metaphor, where conceptual metaphor is the result of systemic mappings across cognitive domains. Persian Language Data- base (PLDB) in the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies which consists mainly of Persian modern prose, is searched for synaesthetic metaphors. Then for each metaphorical structure, the source and target domains are determined. Then sense transfers are identified and the types of synaesthetic metaphors recognized. Findings: Persian synaesthetic metaphors conform to the hierarchical distribution principle, according to which transfers tend to go from touch to taste to smell to sound and to sight, not vice versa. In other words mapping from more accessible or basic concepts onto less accessible or less basic ones seems more natural. Furthermore the most frequent target domain in Persian synaesthetic metaphors is sound. Certain characteristics of Persian synaesthetic metaphors are comparable with existing related researches carried on English, French, Hungarian and Chinese synaesthetic metaphors. Conclusion: Cognitive corpus based approaches to linguistic synaesthesia, are applicable to stylistics and literary criticism and this recent research domain is an efficient approach to study cross linguistic variations to find out which of the five senses is dominant cross linguistically and cross culturally as the target domain in metaphorical mappings , and so forth receiving dominance in conceptualizations.

Keywords : cognitive semantics, conceptual metaphor, synaesthesia, corpus based approach

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