Antonymy in Persian Language: a Cognitive Approach

Neda Gharagozloo

1- Faculty Member of Islamic Azad University, English Translation Department, Varamin (Pishva) Branch, Tehran, Iran.

*Corresponding Author Email: garfield3327@yahoo.com

Abstract

In this paper the author is concerned with the role of cognitive and mental abilities of humans in the formation of antonymy sense relation at the level of words of Persian language. The findings are as follows: The speakers of Persian language cause the formation of antonymy sense relation at level of words by using their mental and cognitive abilities, and mainly the experience they get from the environment. The speakers of Persian language make construals by the use of analytic-cognitive factors which consist of perspective, profile, and scanning for the formation of antonymy. The data collected from Persian, involving antonymy sense relation, can be analyzed on the basis of layered schemas program, and the contextual meaning interpretation of words has a very important role in the formation of antonymy sense relation at word level.

Keywords: cognitive factors, developed image schemas, layered schemas program.

Introduction

In this paper the author aims to investigate antonymy sense relation at the level of words of Persian language on the basis of cognitive linguistics and explain the role and effect of speaker's mental and cognitive abilities to make such sense relation between the words, meanwhile the role of image schemas, which are the body of abstract and complex informational knowledge in the minds of speakers, is mostly emphasized. The emphasis of the author is on the formation of developed image schemas, and their role in the formation of antonymy sense relation. Yet, all of the analytical-cognitive tools active in the formation of developed image schemas in the minds of Persian speakers are recognized. Finally the process of the formation of antonymy is analyzed on the basis of layered schemas program (LSP), and its different stages shown through some cognitive figures, which definitely can be useful in consistency and supporting the role of cognitive and mental abilities of speakers through these processes. The method of doing this research is theoretical on the basis of purpose, and descriptive on the basis of data collection, furthermore, this research is programmatic. Generally the author investigates four hypotheses in this article: A) the speakers of language cause the formation of antonymy sense relation at the level of words of Persian language, according to their cognitive and mental abilities, and the experience they gain from the outside world. B) Speakers of Persian language prove the fundamental role of cognitive factors such as construal including perspective (foregrounding, backgrounding and reference point), profile and scanning in the formation of developed image schema, by giving different construals from the scenes and phenomena of the outside world. C) antonymy sense relation at the level of words of Persian language can be analyzed by using layered schemas program (LSP), and also the activation of various schematic levels on the basis of linguistic and non-linguistic context, and interactions between complex schemas in higher levels as well. D) Meaning interpretation of words is accomplished on the basis of linguistic and non-linguistic context, and leads to the activation of some parts of the meaning potential of words in various schematic levels.

Additionally; we have to take into consideration that conceptual relations between the words of language, is a kind of relation between the different contextual interpretations of words, not a relation between the words themselves. Therefore, the contextual interpretation of words, has a very significant role in creating a conceptual relationship among the words of language (Croft, 2004).
Formation of Image Schemas Related to Antonymy on the basis of Cognitive Linguistics

The speakers of Persian language observe a scene in which an insect is deadly on the ground and in another context see that insect alive. Then they start to interpret that scene. Firstly, we have to see which element is put in the foregrounding in this interpretation by language speakers. The author believes that the opposition characteristic between the two phenomena is focused by the language speakers. It means one of these phenomena is "alive" and the other one is "dead", and this characteristic is put in the foregrounding. Moreover; both of them can't be used in comparative and superlative forms, and both are unmeasurable and absolute as well. Other analytical-cognitive tool is reference point which is the point with which the position of other elements in the scene is compared. So, reference point in the construal related to antonymy is considered as a passive cognitive factor because no point is assigned as a point for comparing the position of other elements with it. Finally; the profile of this scene is presented as follow:

This insect is dead and the other one is alive.

This kind of construal is called absolute construal because as mentioned before, none of these two characteristics can be used in comparative and superlative structures. The last stage is scanning this construal in the minds of language speakers. The absolute construal is scanned in the mind beside the other cognitive abilities and causes the formation of absolute antonymy schema. This abstract schema provide the ability for language speakers to create and recognize antonymy sense relation between the words of the Persian language.

Layered Schemas Program

The author has represented the theoretical constructs of layered schemas model, and named this model as layered schemas program (LSP). Accordingly, this program consists of i) the level of lexical concepts ii) primary layer of image schemas consists of experiential models iii) secondary layer of image schemas consists of various sub-models and vi) developed layer of image schemas containing more abstract and complex schemas. Thus the meaning of an intended word in an utterance arises by virtue of language users forming interpretations based on the lexical concepts employed, and the activation of different parts of experiential models, and sub-models. Moreover, the interpretations are always guided by background knowledge and extralinguistic context. Here the author is concerned with introducing and describing the construct of experiential models (primary layer). His claim is that experiential models, are related to the notion of frame (Barsalou, 1999) semantic frame (Fillmore, 1982; 1985; Fillmore and Atkins, 1992) and domain (Langacker, 1987). The main claim is that lexical concepts provide sites of access to experiential models and are relativised with respect to them. The reason for preferring this term over the related notions of domain/base or semantic frame, is that an experiential model is a coherent, non-linguistic knowledge structure, similar to what Langacker and Fillmore seem to have in mind. That is, it is a richly specified conceptual entity, akin to what Barsalou (1999) refers to by his use of the term frame. But an experiential model is accessed at various points by distinct lexical concepts, which are thus relativised to it, and in part, collectively constitute it. In other words, an experiential model represents an interface between richly-specified conceptual knowledge and nodes of access at particular points in the experiential models provided by specific lexical concepts. Additionally, lexical concepts are conceptual units specialized for symbolic representation in language, but experiential models (primary layer) according to the author can be used as a basis for perceptual simulations, and consists of some sub-models (secondary layer) with more specific informational knowledge (Barsalou, 1999; Prinz, 2002; Zwaan, 2004). These sub-models together make the experiential sub-models. Moreover, it is too important to add the point that in layered schemas program (LSP), all of the schemas are arranged from the most primitive ones to the most developed schemas in a hierarchical position. In lexical concept selection and interpretation process, linguistic or extra-linguistic context is needed for a particular lexical concept. Interpretation process is based on the correct lexical concept which is selected. During meaning construction various processes occur simultaneously, and it doesn’t show that these processes are sequential (Gibbs, 1994). Interpretation takes part in activating some parts of the semantic potential that each lexical concept has accessed. It is a consequence of interpretation that a concept is formed.
Evaluation of Antonymy on the basis of (LSP)

Here we consider some poems of Persian in which antonymy sense relation has been used:

Dæræxte dusti benjân ke kâme Del be bâr āræd [tree of friendship plant that wish of heart creates]

Næhâle dœmæni bærkæn ke rænææ bi joystick āræd [Hafez, Oveysi M, et al 2007]

[Nearly born tree enemy uproot that pain countless bring]

Dâæmæni hærææ teævângææ bâræd [human being whatever powerful be]

[Newly born tree enemy uproot that pain countless bring]

[King of nature, you have created that people will be enemy]

[Newly born tree enemy uproot that pain countless bring]

âdæmi hærææ teævângææ bâræd [human being whatever powerful be]

[Newly born tree enemy uproot that pain countless bring]

Let's consider one example of antonymy from Persian poems to be analyzed according to (LSP):

Xænde oæjæm [laugh cry lovers from somewhere else is]

[Laugh cry lovers from somewhere else is] Let's consider one example of antonymy from Persian poems to be analyzed according to (LSP): [Hafez, Oveysi M, et al 2007] [I say poems at night during dawn I cry]

Firstly, the author shows the relationship between lexical concept laugh [xænde], its experiential models (primary layer of image schemas), sub-models (secondary layer of image schemas), and developed layer of image schemas:

Developed image schema

Experiential sub-models

Experiential models

Lexical concept

[Laugh cry lovers from somewhere else is]

Figure 2. Formation of concept laugh

Here the author shows the relationship between lexical concept cry [gerje], its experiential models (primary layer of image schemas), sub-models (secondary layer of image schemas), and developed layer of image schemas.

As you see in figure 2, lexical concept laugh [xænde] has occurred in an utterance. Before the use of this concept in context, that special lexical form provides access to its semantic potential within experiential models and sub-models. When it is used in linguistic context (utterance), and also by considering extralinguistic context, some parts of the semantic potential which were accessed before, become activated. Eventually, it causes the simulation of some parts of experiential models (primary schemas) which contain general information about concept laugh [xænde]. Therefore, primary schemas are activated to create a very simple and elementary concept of laugh [xænde]. Then, in the second layer which is the level of experiential sub-models, the concept laugh [xænde] provides access to the more detailed and specific body of knowledge in the form of some secondary schemas, so sub-models are activated in the second level as well. As a result of the activation of primary and secondary schemas, the intended concept arises.
Developed image schema

Experiential sub-models

Experiential models

Lexical concept

[laugh cry lovers from somewhere else is]

Figure 3. Formation of concept cry

In figure 3, the process of the formation of concept cry [gerje] has been shown in this cognitive model. The lexical form cry [gerje] has occurred in an utterance which is considered as linguistic context, and by considering the extralinguistic context, some parts of the semantic potential of the special lexical concept are activated. Put it another way, some parts of the experiential models (primary schemas) are simulated, and some parts of the experiential sub-models (secondary schemas) are activated as well to add more details and information knowledge to the concept cry [gerje]. Meanwhile, the two concepts activate the completely different parts of the experiential models and sub-models because they are atonyms. Finally, at the last level, named developed layer of image schemas, a kind of relationship is made between the developed image schema related to the concept laugh [xænde] and the one related to the concept cry [gerje]. This sort of connectedness between the schemas which belongs to the two concepts leads to the formation of antonymy sense relation at the level of the two intended words of Persian language. In figure 4, this whole process has been demonstrated completely.

Figure 4. Model of formation of antonymy sense relation at word level

Conclusion

As the findings of this study showed mental and cognitive abilities of the speakers of Persian language, and also the experience they received from the environment played a significant role in the formation of antonymy sense relation at the level of words of Persian. Meanwhile, image schemas were made on the
basis of knowledge of outside world. As I proposed in this paper, one developed schema named absolute antonymy image schema, and primary-secondary layers of schemas were involved in the formation of antonymy sense relation. All together were made in the speaker's minds on the basis of some cognitive and mental factors and tools. As proved and shown in the paper, factors like perspective (foregrounding, backgrounding and reference point), profile and scanning, totally known as construal, had the main role of making developed image schemas in the minds of speakers. Finally, I analyzed one Persian example according to layered schemas program (LSP) proposed here. By the use of (LSP) we were able to move towards a cognitive inter-lexical semantics, because it played the role of an interface between lexical concepts and cognitive principles and factors. The contextual meaning interpretation of words has a very important role in the formation of antonymy sense relation at level of words. Moreover, the research presented here was programmatic. As the mentioned models were psychological rather than linguistic entities. Additionally, I have presented no experimental evidence for the different cognitive and mental processes involved here. Clearly, psycholinguistic evidence will be required to support the proposed and used theories in this paper.

References