



Persian Onomatopoeias: An Analysis Based on Iconicity

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study, identification, and explanation of the relationship between linguistic signs and their referents have been topics explored by thinkers in various fields, from philosophy to linguistics. Plato's *Cratylus*, for instance, delves into the connection between words and their meanings, discussing whether words have intrinsic and real meanings or if the relationship between linguistic signs is conventional. Naturalists also viewed language as a representation of the inherent truth of the universe, believing that each linguistic sign genuinely represents what it refers to.

In Greek philosophy, conventionalists divided the linguistic sign into two parts: the mental structure and the phonetic structure. They argued that while the mental structure related to a concept is the same for all individuals and languages, the differences between speakers of different languages lie in the choice of a phonetic structure for a specific concept, leading to variations in words and the formation of different languages. Later semiotic theories, like Saussure's, introduced the conventional nature of the phonetic structure. In contrast to his philosophical predecessors, Saussure introduced the signified, or mental structure, which Aristotle and his followers considered a fixed and common denominator—an agreed-upon concept.

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Throughout history, philosophers and linguists have approached these enduring problems from various perspectives. Onomatopoeia, a small group of words that represent a vocal imitation of sounds associated with them in nature, has been presented as evidence supporting the theory of a natural connection between linguistic form and meaning. Onomatopoeia enhances iconicity, which refers to the relationship of resemblance or similarity between the form and meaning of a sign.

From an iconicity perspective, onomatopoeias are "a group of new or conventional words based on the perception of similarity between a part of their phonetic form and the reference or an independent phoneme related to the source of

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the phoneme" (Benczes, 2019). The formation of onomatopoeia does not necessarily rely on an objective similarity between the word and its reference; the mental perception of such similarity is sufficient.

However, many onomatopoeias exhibit a direct or indirect iconic connection to their source. Thus, within the realm of iconicity, phonetic representation takes two main forms. The first form, known as "direct iconicity," involves a word that directly imitates the intended sound in such a way that hearing it evokes the natural sound in the listener's mind (Masuda, 2002). For example, the word "cuckoo" sounds similar to the sound made by a specific bird, creating a recognizable association for speakers of the language.

Van Humboldt (Mueller-Vollmer & Messling, 2017) distinguished between indirect iconicity and its direct counterpart. He referred to a set of words that, instead of directly mimicking the sound heard in nature, reconstruct the auditory effect of that sound on the listener's perception. In this case, rather than replicating the sound itself, the word captures the effect or impression of the sound. For instance, the feeling of pain, movement, happiness, or characteristics like color, sex, tenderness, roughness, softness, distance, or closeness are represented through the letter "Ava," forming what is known as an "ideophone."

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized the book "Dictionary of Onomatopoeia in Persian" by Dr. Taghi Vahidiyan Kamyar (1996) as a reference. The dictionary, which focuses on Persian onomatopoeias, provides definitions and theories related to this field. It categorizes onomatopoeias into "non-emotional" and "emotional" groups and presents a collection of Persian onomatopoeias within these categories. The present study involved analyzing all 277 pages of entries in the dictionary, extracting and examining over 2570 entries relevant to Persian onomatopoeias. The research followed a descriptive-analytical approach, collecting data and samples in a library-based manner. The study's results were further illustrated using a statistical graph.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aimed to conduct a corpus analysis of Persian onomatopoeias and explore their meanings in relation to iconicity. The analysis encompassed all 2570 onomatopoeias listed in "The Dictionary of Onomatopoeias in Persian." The data indicates that non-lexical direct phonological iconicity occurs least frequently. These onomatopoeias directly reflect sounds but do not conform to phonotactic rules. The most prevalent form of iconicity is direct lexical iconicity, where words both adhere to phonotactic rules and represent sounds. Other patterns such as associative onomatopoeias, ideophones, and exemplary onomatopoeias ranked second to fourth. The data also reveals that direct lexical onomatopoeias extensively contribute to word-formation processes, leading to the creation of new verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that different patterns contribute to establishing an iconic relationship between the form and meaning of words, including direct lexical and non-lexical iconicity, associative iconicity, exemplary iconicity, and ideophone iconicity. However, the usage and contribution of each pattern in the formation of Persian onomatopoeias vary. Direct lexical iconicity plays a significant role, whereas direct non-lexical iconicity has a minimal impact on the process. The direct non-lexical iconicity pattern is less utilized in constructing Persian onomatopoeias due to its non-compliance with phonological rules and lack of syllable nucleus.

Exemplary onomatopoeias rank next in terms of lower usage. Although the human mind can comprehend and establish similarities between sound and image, the lack of awareness of the iconic relationship between these forms and their meanings makes this group of words less prevalent. Ultimately, onomatopoeias formed through direct lexical iconicity have the largest presence in Persian onomatopoeia construction, highlighting their dynamic role in the language's word-formation process.

Keywords: Associative Onomatopoeia; Direct Lexical Onomatopoeia; Direct Non-Lexical Onomatopoeia; Expressive Onomatopoeia; Iconicity; Onomatopoeia; Onomatopoeic Word