



An inquiry into Meaning Extension of Persian Taste Terms in Golestan Saadi: A Cognitive- Semantic Approach

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Received: 22/01/2023

Accepted: 05/04/2023

1. Introduction

Taste is a complicated mechanism that relies on an intricate network of receptors and nerves (Sturtevant, 1964). The importance of taste and taste terms should not be underestimated in human cognition and language. Since ancient Greek philosophy, the linguistic study of taste terms has been downplayed due to lack of scientific understanding of taste and gustatory language and this can be the reason behind limited range of scientific works in taste compared to other senses such as vision and hearing. The present research is an attempt to study Persian taste terms in Golestan Saadi and to investigate conceptual mechanisms (metaphor and metonymy) along with language-external factors such as culture, use, entrenchment, body structure, and nature of human mind through which figurative meanings are derived from gustatory words. In cognitive semantics, metaphors and metonymies are considered as cognitive mechanisms that lead to semantic change and motivate polysemy of lexical items (Bagli, 2017). Conceptual metaphors act as a bridge to connect two concepts in two different domains, while metonymies are considered as tip of an iceberg that leads us to see the rest of the ice-berg under the sea. Metaphor and metonymy are both motivated through our embodied interaction of the physical world (Perez-Sobrinho, 2017). The main objectives in this research are to find how conceptual metaphor and metonymy in language, together with other external factors account for construction and derivation of non-literal meanings of taste terms in Golestan Saadi. This study determines to answer the following questions:

1. How do conceptual mechanisms trigger figurative meanings from Persian taste terms in Golestan Saadi?
2. How do language-external factors such as perception, culture, embodied experience, language use and entrenchment intervene in meaning extension of Persian taste terms in Golestan Saadi?
3. What figurative meanings are derived from Persian taste terms in Golestan Saadi?

2. Materials and methods

The data including sentences and verses with taste terms: shirin(sweet), talkh(bitter),

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torsh(sour), shour(salty), tond(spicy) and namakin (moderately salty) are collected from Golestan (a book written by Saadi, a notable poet of 7th century AH). The analysis is carried out using tenets of Cognitive Semantics such as embodiment of meaning and principled polysemy according to which distinct meanings of a polysemous word form a semantic network and are related in a conceptual level such that the meanings linked to that particular lexical form constitute a semantic continuum (Tylor & Evans, 2003, p. 36-37).

3. Results and discussion

According to table1, the most frequent taste term in Golestan Saadi is *Shirin(sweet)* with 17 occurrences, followed by *talkh (bitter)* and *torsh (sour)* with 9 occurrences, *tond(spicy)* with 5 occurrences, *shoor (salty)* with 4 occurrences and *namakin (moderately salty)* with 1 occurrence. Findings indicate that the taste term *shirin* is used as a source domain in conceptual metaphors in Golestan to conceptualize love, beauty, affection, cuteness, drinkable (water), eloquent (speech) while *talkh* and *torsh* are used to conceptualize negative feelings such as hatred, disappointment, anger, sadness and bad temper. The taste term *shoor* is used to conceptualize uncontrollable excitement, unluckiness and extremist behavior. The taste term *namakin* which means moderately salty, metaphorically signifies cuteness.

Table 1: Numerical details of occurrences of Persian taste terms in Golestan Saadi

<i>Taste</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Literal meaning</i>	<i>Figurative meaning</i>
Shirin(sweet)	17	3	14
Talkh(bitter)	9	0	9
Torsh(sour)	9	2	7
Tond(spicy)	5	0	5
Shoor(salty)	4	1	3
Namakin(moderately salty)	1	0	1

4. Conclusion

Figurative meanings of taste terms in Golestan Saadi are triggered by both conceptual mechanisms and by other language-external factors such as culture, entrenchment and language use. Conceptual mechanisms namely, metaphor and metonymy are both based on embodied experiences and frequent use of gustatory expressions. The way human body reacts to food ingestion such as pleasant facial expressions after tasting sweet food, painful experience of ingesting bitter substances, negative facial reaction to sour food, emotional change after increasing heat and irritation due to exposure to spicy food, and unwelcoming reaction to salty water are some embodied experiences used in the mappings between taste terms and temperaments. That's the reason behind the positive and pleasant figurative meaning of the taste term *shirin*. Other taste terms such as *torsh*, *talkh*, *shoor* and *tond*, due to the rejection of these tastes by our body, conceptualize negative and unpleasant meanings. Taste terms in Golestan Saadi are used as the source domain in conceptual metaphors to conceptualize personality features, temperaments and emotions. In the conceptual metaphor *bribe is sweet*, the taste term *sweet* is considered as the source domain to conceptualize the abstract domain (bribe). In some cases, conceptual metonymies such as *result for the cause* account for the mapping between two concepts in one domain. Culture and lifestyle of Iranian community in 7th century AH play a crucial role in conceptual metaphors and

figurative language that appear in Golestan Saadi. Based on the lifestyle and social relations of Iranian community, people's physical experiences are filtered through cultural beliefs that are idiosyncratic to that nation, and then elements that are in accordance with that culture become more salient and appear in linguistic realization. In mapping process between two different domains in metaphor, culture decides the kind of source- domain object that is used to conceptualize the abstract concept of target domain. The figurative meanings derived from taste terms in Golestan Saadi are constructed on-line as the consequences of integrating semantic representation of taste terms, contextual cues and the encyclopedic knowledge we have concerning tastes and other issues in the outside world.

Key words: Cognitive Semantics, conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, Golestan Saadi, meaning extension, taste terms

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