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Cognitive study of schema in two poems by "Sohrab Sepehri"

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Abstract

The present study aims at analyzing cognitive schemas in two long poems. Path schema, containment schema, and force schema were frequent in the text. It is understood that some linguistic forms are connected with some schemas; some special prepositions with containment schemas, verbs (or nouns derived from them) containing the concept of motion with path schemas, and verbs (or nouns derived from such verbs) containing the concept of power accompanied by two nouns with force schemas. There are probably no relations between the theme of the text and path and containment schemas, but such a relation can be found between the theme and force schema.
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Keywords: Path schema; containment schema; force schema; verb; preposition

1. Introduction

Development of the new branch of cognitive science in the last three decades, says Lobner (2002), has had an immense effect on linguistics and especially on semantics, leading to the formation of a new school called "cognitive linguistics". Cognitive science deals with the operations of human mind and the fact that how it gets the information from the outside world through the five senses, compares them with the previous data and finally categorizes and stores them in memory. Cognitive linguistics, as its central concern, represents conceptual structure in language. It, thus, focuses on the linguistic structuring of basic conceptual categories, including space and time (Talmy, 2006; Rasekhmahand, 2004) describes language as a system of structures which mirrors thought patterns. The physical form of language is a representation of these structures and is affected by the environment as well as the experience (Golfam, & Yoosefirad, 2002).

As part of cognitive linguistics, Taylor (2006) states, cognitive semantics is also conceptualist, i.e., it focuses on meaning as a mental entity. In this regard, the study of metaphor and schema is of considerable importance because their concepts are the exact concern of cognitive linguistics. These two concepts are closely connected. Metaphor was introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) with schema being developed by Johnson (1987). Safavi (2004)

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explains that schema is the basis of metaphor, forming a deeper cognitive structure than it and that it provides us a relationship between physical experiences and more complex cognitive domains. The point is that we do different things every day and then we build some basic conceptual structures; we then use them to think about abstract issues. Schema theory was devised to account for the fact that linguistic denotation underdetermines meaning. It proposes a model of contextual information retrieval based on knowledge structures built up and refined from previous experience (Stockwell, 2006). Johnson (1987) determined some types of schema, three of which are as follows: a) path schema: related to experiences of motion and movement in a direction; b) containment schema: related to experiences of being in a place or containment and then using it as a container for more abstract things; c) force schema: related to experiences of encountering an obstacle and using one's power to overcome it. Schema has been a more important field of study in psychology rather than in linguistics where there've not been so many studies focusing on schema. Hoijer (1992) examined the relationship between language interpretation and schemas. She claims that we need to look at the inner mental conceptual world which an individual builds up in the form of cognitive structures based on their socio-cultural experiences. Schema theory offers a possibility to understand how social reality is turned into mental models or cognitive schemas.

1.1. Purpose

The principal purpose of the present article is to study the identification of schemas in two poems from the point of types, frequency and linguistic form, as well as their relationship with the theme of the language.

2. Method

This article is a descriptive type of study. It reviews cognitive schema in the long poems "The Footsteps of Water" (Sedaye Paye Ab) and "The Passenger" (Mosafer) by Sohrab Sepehri. The first poem contains 2211 words and the second one contains 1713 words. Despite their own complexity, Sohrab's poems are written in a simple language similar to the daily speech; therefore, this article can provide us insights about the role of schema in the daily spoken language. In this study, we'll fist shed light on the schemas of the two poems. We'll then categorize them into different types, and will finally count the number of items in each category. The presented results are categorized based on the most frequent types of schemas occurring in the poem down to the least frequent ones. Some comparisons will be done in the next stage between the theme of the poem and the type of schemas found in it. The schemas found in the two poems will be also compared with regard to frequency, type, and occurrence of different types. Ultimately, we will study the linguistic elements of schemas and will look for probable relations between their occurrence and frequency of the schemas.

3. Results

3.1. The types and frequency of schemas found in the two poems

The schemas found in the two poems are categorized into four groups, three of which accord with the types introduced by Johnson (1987). The frequencies of these three types are shown in the following table.

Table 1. The frequency of schemas in the two poems

| | The Footsteps of Water | | The Passenger | |
	Number	percent	Number	percent
Path Schema	29	38.1%	32	52.4%
Containment Schema	26	34.2%	29	47.5%
Force Schema	21	27.6%	0	0.0%
Total	76	100%	61	100%

As is shown in table 1, the first three types of schemas found in the poems are path schema, containment schema, and force schema. Path schema is related to the concept of motion. For example:

a. dar namâz.aš ǰarjân dârad mâh (from "The Footsteps of Water")

in prayer.his stream has moon

The moon streams in his prayer

b. sedâ.je huš.e gijâhân be guš mi.ʔâmad (from "The Passenger")

sound.of intelligence.of plants to ear was.coming

You could hear the sound of plants' intelligence

In both poems, path schema is of the highest frequency, slightly more than containment schema. Containment is related to places and connects them to more abstract things. Examples are as follows:

a. dar afsun.e gole sorx šenâvar bâš.im (from "The Footsteps of Water")

in charm.of flower red float be.1st person pl.

Let's float in the charm of the red flower.

b. xotut.e ǰâde dar anduh.e dašt gom bud (from "The Passenger")

lines.of road in grief.of desert lost was

The lines of the road were lost in the grief of the desert.

Force schema, which is about overcoming an obstacle, had the least frequency in the first poem; it was not found in the second poem at all. Here are two examples:

a. ǰang.e tanhâji bâ jek âvâz

war.of loneliness with one song

war of loneliness with a song

b. haml.je jek vâʒe be fakk.e šâʔer

attack.of one word to jaw.of poet

the attack of a word to the poet's jaw

There were also another group of schemas with some general properties; hence, no term was determined for them. All of these schemas had a common verb form linking some action or form of process of physical entities to abstract ones. These actions had general semantic properties which is another reason for not determining a term for this group. These actions sometimes appear in the form of nouns derived from the verbs representing action or process of physical entities. Look at the examples below:

a. ruh.e man gâhi sorfe.ʔaš migirad (from "The Footsteps of Water")

soul.of mine sometimes cough.3rd person sing. takes

My soul sometimes coughs.

b. šur.e man mišekofad (from "The Passenger")

passion.of mine blossoms

My passion blossoms.

These schemas were pretty common in both poems probably because of their generality. Their frequency is shown in the following table 2.

Table 2. The frequency of the fourth group of schemas

	Sound of Water's Footsteps	The Passenger
	Number	Number
General Schemas	70	58

These schemas were not represented in the same table as the other ones because of their common form, not their semantic properties. They could be a combination of some new types of schemas.

3.2. The relationship between the theme of the poem and occurrence of schemas

The two poems have two different themes. The theme of the first poem is the importance of simplicity. The poet tries to see the beauties and realities of life and nature through looking at things differently. The second poem tells the story of a nostalgic passenger who is on a trip. His trip, however, is not for fun; the passenger is trying to find himself again through his journey. As table 1 shows, the frequencies of path and containment schemas are similar in the two poems, but there is a meaningful difference in the usage of force schema. In the first poem, as the last two examples show, there is a clash between the two things; one overcoming the other, indicating power and force. Therefore, the usage of force schema is comparable to the theme of the poem.

3.3. The linguistic forms specifying some types of schemas

Among the schemas found in the two poems, containment schema is clearly associated with a special linguistic form. According to the data collected, containment schema was always used in a form of prepositional phrase specified by these prepositions in Persian: ?az (from,of), dar (in), tu (informal "in"), dâxel (within), birun ?az (out of). On the other hand, path schema is less restricted, although it can still be associated with some specific linguistic forms. Regarding the schemas found in the two poems, path schema always appeared in the form of verbs containing the concept of movement in a direction or the semantic feature of [+ motion] or nouns derived from such verbs. As you can see in the first two examples above, both path schemas (ǰarjân dârad mâh:the moon streams, be guš mi?âmad: was coming to the ear) enjoy the concept of motion - similar to the rest of the schemas found. As for the force schema, the associated linguistic form is even less restricted, but it is worth noting that force schema always occurred between two things; one serving as the obstacle while the other one having the power to or trying to overcome the obstacle. This relationship is completed by a verb with the concept of power or semantic feature of [+ force] or a noun derived from such a verb. As illustrated by the examples concerning force schema, the formation of this type requires three elements; two nouns plus a verb to link them.

4. Conclusion

Schema is a feature of human mind. Based on the data collected in this paper, it can be concluded that among the schemas introduced by Johnson (1987), path schema is probably the most frequent one. This could be due to immense experiences involving movement and direction in human life. Containment schema has a bit less occurrence comparing to path schema, but it can be said that their frequencies are similar. The least frequent schema is force schema. A group of schemas was also found all of which in a verb form. They all relate a form of action or process of a physical experience to an abstract one. These are some general schemas which are similar regarding their structure. They need to be studied more before assigning a formal term for them. Some linguistic elements can also be used to specifically represent schemas. Containment schema can be linked to some special prepositions, path

schema appears in the verbs containing the concept of motion, and force schema requires two constituents (two nouns) and a verb with the concept of power in order to link them. Schema is a way of talking about abstract concepts. It is represented in the form of linguistic elements that contain the concept of concreteness. It also has the trace of the concrete experiences which form the basis for these concepts. There are probably no correlation to be found between the usage of path and containment schemas and the theme of the text, but such a relation can be noted for force schema. Determination on this issue needs more research and study.

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