A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETATIONS OF ANIMAL METAPHORS IN PERSIAN AND ENGLISH

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Abstract

The present research is the result of an attempt to shed some light on one of the troublesome areas of learning EFL for Iranian students and novice translators, i.e., the figurative use of animal metaphors. Animal metaphors are generally used in the speech act of insulting; however, some of them are also believed to have positive connotations. This study aimed to find out whether and to what extent the animal metaphors and specially their interpretations are similar in Persian and English. The study also aimed to find out whether animal metaphors have also positive connotations or not. Four graduate students of TEFL as native speakers of Persian were asked: 1) to prepare a list of all possible animal terms used metaphorically to descibe people, and 2) to assign the most salient and relevant interpretations to those metaphors. On the basis of the suggestions of the informants a list of 36 animal terms and their interpretations were prepared. The list and especially the interpretations were also compared with two other different dictionaries. The information for the English translations of the same list and more specifically their interpretations were collected from three different dictionaries and one textbook of teaching figurative language to non-English speakers. The comparison and contrast revealed that despite outstanding agreements in some cases there are also differences in the animal terms and the interpretations assigned. From the viewpoint of contrastive analysis, the study revealed that when the intended meaning in L1 and L2 are the same but the formal devices to express them differ, negative transfer will take place. The study emphasized the role of immediate, remote and especially cultural context in the interpretations of animal metaphors and hence in TEFL. It is suggested that the findings of the present study should be drawn upon in material preparation and teaching practices of this important aspect of EFL more systematically.

Introduction

One of the troublesome areas of EFL for Iranian students and especially novice translators is the figurative use of language. The problem especially becomes grave if the relationship between language and culture is downgraded. In order to gain a

communicative competence in the target language, it is crucial that our students not only learn the denotative meanings of words and expression, but also be able "to read between the lines". Metaphor is one of the figurative uses of language which definitely plays a significant role in learning "to read between the lines".

The term metaphor has been defined in different ways, covering a wide variety of phenomena ranging from a literary figure of speech to everyday cliche expressions. The former usually calls for imaginative minds to appreciate and the latter are so commonplace that at least for some, they have lost their metaphorical values. Larson (1984, p. 247) believes that a metaphor is a figure of speech which involves a comparison of some likeness. Newmark (1988a, p. 84) on the other hand, is of the idea that "one serious purpose of metaphor is to describe an entity, event or quality more comprehensively and concisely and in a more complex way than is possible by using literal language". Newmark in another book (1988b, p. 104) gives a somewhat similar definition in different terms and observes that a metaphor serves two simultaneous purposes of referential and pragmatic nature. The first aim is to ensure that the point in question is clarified and the second is to impress the reader or the addressee. Regardless of variations and especially the scope of the metaphorical expressions, the common feature to all of the different definitions of metaphor is that a metaphor is "a word or phrase which establishes a comparison or analogy between one object and idea and another" (Goddard & Paterson, 2000, p. 117). So when it is said "He is an ox" (Larson, p. 251), most probably at least in the English language and culture the listener is reminded of the similarity between the person in question and the characteristic of being strong, huge, or unintelligent.

One of the widely used types of metaphors is animal metaphor. It seems that in most of the languages, animals are one of the rich sources of comparison with different phenomena, especially with human beings. Of course, different animals are analogized to different persons with differing characteristics in different languages and cultures. That is, as Gee (1999, p. 69) rightly observes " ... metaphors are a rich source of cultural models ... ".

Therefore it is crucial that in helping students to develop their communicative competency, their attention should be drawn, among other things, to the probable differences between connotations of different metaphors in different languages. For example, "He is a pig" (Larson, p. 250) necessarily does not remind different hearers of the same characteristics prevalent in his culture. It is quite possible that in EFL learners' mother tongue, a reference to a pig unlike English where it has the connotation of being dirty, means "someone who doesn't listen to people" (Larson, p. 251). Therefore in TEFL the treatment of animal metaphors cannot and should not be approached in an unplanned manner. Rather it calls for preplanned and thoroughly organized materials and classroom activities. To provide some of the necessary data for such a systematic approach, the present paper explored the animal metaphors in Persian and English and specifically it adopted a contrastive approach in examining the probable interpretations of the same metaphors in these two languages. In addition, because it is believed that generally speaking animal metaphors are used for the speech act of insulting in most of the languages (see Fraser, 1981), the present study also aimed at verifying or refuting the intuitive assumption that in addition to insulting, at least some of the animals in question have also positive connotations.

Theories of Metaphor and its Interpretation

By definition, a metaphor involves a relationship of comparison between different propositions which are believed to have some kind of similarity. Hence a metaphor is composed of three parts of: 1) topic, 2) image and 3) point of similarity. The topic is the focal point of a metaphor, because it is the phenomenon or proposition we are talking about. In "He is a mouse", "he" is the topic, because it is what the speaker is concerned with and by making a

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comparison with an animal, i.e., mouse, is trying to clarify its meaning. Image is the phenomenon or proposition which is utilized to clarify the meaning of the topic. In the above example "mouse" is the image. Finally, the point of similarity is the domain, or characteristic which originally belongs to the image but for the time being is drawn upon in order to clarify the characteristic of the topic or to give that characteristic artistic shades of meaning. In the example at hand, being timid, or not having enough courage is the point of similarity which is made use of in order to better describe the topic of the example, i.e., "he". The explanation is that, since "A mouse is timid" or is supposed and believed to lack courage, the connotation of the sentence "He is a mouse" is that "He is (likewise timid)". It is important to remember that, the correct understanding of any metaphor ... depends on the correct identification of the topic, image, and point of similarity. If it so happens that one of the constituents of a metaphor, usually the point of similarity, is missing, then it becomes somewhat difficult to answer the question of "In what way they [topic and image] are alike?" (Larson 1988, pp. 248-9). Whenever the point of similarity is missing, the role of context, whether the immediate or cultural context becomes significant.

Metaphors have been classified in different ways by different scholars. For instance, Newmark (1988a) has suggested that there are five types of metaphors as follow: 1) dead, 2) cliché, 3) stock, 4) recent and 5) original metaphors, and in his next work (1988b, p. 106) he adds another class of 6) adopted metaphor to the previous ones. Crystal (1992, p. 249) recognizes four kinds of metaphors as: 1) conventional, 2) poetic. 3) conceptual, and 4) mixed metaphors. The aim of the present paper is not to dwell on the details of merits or disadvantages of each of the above and other classifications of metaphor types. The interested parties are invited to consult the classification of metaphor types in Pullman (1982), Petit (1982), and Vanparys (1984). Suffice it to say that for the purposes of the present paper there are two general types of metaphors as: 1) dead, and 2) live metaphors. Dead metaphors refer to those metaphors which because of overusage have become "a part of the idiomatic constructions of the lexicon (Larson, p. 249) and are "... processed without effort (Crystal, p. 249). The expression "leg of the table" is an example of a dead metaphor because "one no longer thinks about a person" (Larson, p. 249) when hearing that metaphor. A live metaphor, on the other hand, refers to those metaphors which are constructed as the need arises and is usually understood after paying especial attention to the analogy between the topic and the image. In the following sentence taken from a larger context, the live metaphor which is italicized, usually will not remind one of the mental pictures of the ocean, yet in the present context, it is used exactly for the purpose of creating this very picture: Mathew wouldn't have to be *fishing for complements* this year (Larson, p. 250).

One of the theories of interpreting metaphors is that of Beekman & Callow (cited in Larson 1988, p. 453) which is based on the implicit information. They believe that the implicit information of a metaphor is of three types, which for the purposes of the present paper it means that there are three ways of interpreting a metaphor.

That is, according to these scholars the implicit information of a metaphor can be derived from: 1) the immediate context in the printed matter, i.e. the preceding and following parts of the passage which is the easiest way of interpreting metaphors; 2) the more remote context utilized which is abundant in literature and especially in historical literary works, and refers to the kind of interpretation, where the immediate context is of no use and in order to grasp the point of view, the reader has to examine the "communication situation ..." , i.e., different sections of the work not adjacent to the metaphor in question or even other relevant literature, and 3) the cultural context which is of focal importance for the present research. Simply put, this type of context refers to the fact that the same metaphor used in different cultures usually will have different

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values. Larson (1988, p. 433) observes that "there are many things or events which at first glance might seem to be identical but which have a very different value or significance in the second culture".

The present study attempted to find out whether the same animal metaphors have similar meanings or values in Persian and English or not. The present research adopting a contrastive approach best fits in the comparison model of metaphor which depends on finding a common characteristic shared by the topic and the image. In contrastive studies usually this common ground is referred to as "tertium comparationis" (Jaszczolt, 1995, p. 2). That is to say the present study is concerned with metaphors of the kind "A is a B" where both the topic A and the image B have a common characteristic, i.e., a tertium comparationis. Therefore when it is said "Ali is a tiger", it is usually interpreted as meaning that both Ali and a tiger have a common characteristic such as ferocity. To be more exact, metaphors like the example in question are interpreted in the sense that the characteristic in question of the topic is similar to a very close characteristic of the image. It is noteworthy that in some cases it is quite possible for the image to have several distinctive characteristics and therefore it should be explained away why only the characteristic in question has been selected as the point of similarity. For instance, in the case of the example "Ali is a tiger" why the characteristic of ferocity should be regarded as the point of similarity and not aggression? Now, it so happens that in this case both of the properties of ferocity and aggression are very close to each other and belong to the same semantic field (James, 1980, pp. 86-96); therefore the selection of either will not make much difference to the analogy at hand. However, consider "Ali is an octopus".

In this case, we usually do not regard having tentacles as constituting the tertium comparationis, rather the metaphor is interpreted as having a topic which refers to a person of wide ranging influence and a person who has so to speak a finger in every pie. At this point the notion of salience becomes useful. The definition of salience as suggested by Ortoney et al (1985, cited in Davies & Bentahila, p. 50) is "The prominence or importance of an attribute in a person's representation of an entity or category". The application of the notion of salience for the interpretation of metaphors means that all things being equal, in the case of "Ali is an octopus" it has been established that the influence and interfering nature of Ali is the most salient characteristic than alternative interpretations.

Another point to remember is that in some cases it might so happen that there are several characteristics all of which might be considered equally salient. For instance, in the previous example of "He is an ox", it is possible to suspect that the characteristic of being strong is as salient as being huge or being unintelligent. In cases like this we have to utilize the notion of relevance as suggested by Grice in his maxims of conversation.

The linguist-philosopher Grice in accounting for the use of language as a social act observes that there are four common sense conventions or maxims of conversation, which support the cooperative principle of conversation (Brown & Yule, 1983) in order for the verbal communication to take place successfully. The fourth maxim which is by the way perhaps the most important one, because it "covers all the other ... " (Brown & Yule, p. 32), is the maxim of relation which means that in conversation one should be relevant. The implication of this maxim for the present research is that in interpreting metaphors usually one would choose a property which in addition to being salient is also relevant to the topic of the metaphor in question. This point once more emphasizes the significance of context, specially cultural context in interpreting the analogy of the metaphors.

Utilizing this system of interpretation, the aim of the present study is to compare and contrast the salient and relevant points of similarities of animal metaphors in Persian and English. If 'He is an ox' is used in the course of a discussion of somebody's physique, it will be relevant to interpret the metaphor as meaning huge; on the other hand, if

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the discussion concerns someone's mental capabilities, it would be interpreted as referring to his being unintelligent.

Finally, it should be mentioned that, there are other theories of interpreting metaphors, which have dealt with this phenomenon from different perspectives. For example, some like Gibbs (1985, cited in Davies & Bentahila) believe that metaphors are interpreted without prior processing of the literal meaning. On the other hand, Janus & Bever (1985, cited in Davies & Bentahila) have offered conflicting views. The point to remember is that first and foremost the role of metaphors is so important that Newmark observes that if one studies the evolution of languages through time, one will find out that in a sense languages "consist entirely of metaphors" (1988a, p. 124). Secondly, it still seems crucial to invoke the notions of similarity, salience and relevance in order to explain the interpretation of metaphors which is arrived at by examining the relationship between literal and figurative implications.

Method of Research

The present research is concerned with metaphors used in everyday life in ordinary conversational exchanges as opposed to original metaphors used in creative works of literature. This does not mean that their use is exclusively confined to oral verbal communication; rather it means that if ever they are used in written literature, it usually reflects the ordinary use of language in everyday life. This statement also does not imply that in ordinary daily conversational exchanges people never produce original and innovative metaphors. Yet the fact remains that the scope of the present study is limited to metaphors relatively familiar to ordinary speakers of both Persian and English. From this point of view, the present study differs from the majority of the previous ones (for example, Ortoney et al., 1985) in that the other works were mainly concerned with investigating original metaphors. Because the present research uses familiar metaphors, it is expected that more or less homogeneous interpretations will be found in both languages.

The present research also differs from most of the previous works on metaphors in that as mentioned above it adopts a contrastive approach and is interested mainly in the differences of interpretations between Persian and English languages. Since most of the work done on metaphors traditionally have been undertaken by literary critics, they have made the observation that especially in the case of original metaphors, the creatively successful metaphors are those which are not limited to one language, and one culture, rather in a sense they must be universal and the similar interpretations should hold true across different languages and cultures. The present work does not have any claim of studying universal features. Yet it is believed that the investigation at hand might and would shed some light at least on the problems of Iranian students studying EFL. Despite the fact that idioms and metaphorical usages have a special place in the syllabus of English majors, yet specifically speaking it seems that animal metaphors have not received their due attention. Perhaps this is because it is assumed that meanings of animal metaphors are quite transparent and there is no need to spend extra time and energy on them. However as our experiences as teachers of EFL reveal and as the findings of some researches like that of Fraser verify, this is not the case. Fraser's findings (1981, p. 440) indicate that even in the case of apparently transparent animal metaphors like "He is a pig" there are differences of interpretations depending on the mother tongue of the student subjects in question.

The reason for the selection of animal metaphors is partly due to the fact that it seems to be a very rich area of figurative use of language. It seems that both in Persian and English they have a especial place among all possible metaphors. And of course there are some researches which have verified this intuition. For example, Davies & Bentahila quote from Norrick (1986) who found out that "animals make up by far the largest class of simile vehicles: animals appear ... in almost 38% of the total of 366 entries for stock similies" (p. 53). Another reason

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for the selection of animal metaphors is the fact that apparently they are widely used as insults. Fraser for instance used six English animal metaphors with speakers from different mother tongues in order "to obtain at least a preliminary feeling for a comparison of insult terms across a range of languages" (1981, p. 439). Animal metaphors can also be studied to verify or refute the belief that they are also used as terms of endearment. In addition, in view of the fact that to the best of my knowledge there is no published work devoted to the study of Persian animal metaphors, the present study was undertaken to find out whether animal metaphors are used exclusively as terms of insult or not and what the differences among the Persian and English languages are in this regard.

In order to prepare a preliminary list of animals used as metaphors, five graduate students of TEFL as native speakers of Persian were asked: 1) to prepare a list of all animals which they believe are used to describe human beings, and 2) to give the characteristics which according to them are the salient features of those animals and are attributed to people. The students were also reminded that in case they believe the animals in question have more than one salient feature, they should give all of those characteristics in descending order of significance. Consequently, in most of the cases, more than one characteristic were assigned to animal terms. One of the students could not prepare the required list in due time and consequently the list of animal metaphors in Persian was based on four lists. The four lists thus prepared were tallied and the information provided was used to prepare a frequency table in descending order of frequency both for the names of animals and the characteristics attributed to them. It was assumed that as a preliminary step, the list of 41 animal names prepared in this way was representative of common Persian animal metaphors. Needless to say, both the animals and their attributes had varying degrees of frequencies.

In order to make sure that these metaphors are also used in English, the list was first compared with two separate lists given by Stone in his textbook of "Modern English Idioms with Exercises" (1975). It was believed that since the book is a textbook on teaching figurative language, therefore it would undoubtedly include animal metaphors about which there are common consensus. In other words, if there were disagreements about the interpretations of those animal metaphors, definitely they would not have been included in a textbook of TEFL to non-native speakers. Stone offers two separate lists of: i) domestic animals with 12 entries, and ii) wild animals with 25 entries. The comparison of the lists prepared for the present study and that of Stone revealed that in the case of 12 domestic animals, 7 are included in the list provided by Persian informants. In regards to wild animals only 10 had been supplied by Persian speakers. That is, altogether only 17 of the metaphors suggested by Persian students were found in Stone's list of 37 domestic and wild animals. It was decided that the 17 animal metaphors used both in Persian and English should be included in the final list.

Next, in order to find out whether there are other animal names provided by Persian speakers which are also used in English, the preliminary list was also compared with the list of animals used by Davies & Bentahila in their 1981 study . The comparison revealed that 15 animal names were also included in their list. In other words, 15 of the entries of the list provided by Persian subjects had also been used both by Stone, on the one hand and Davies & Bentahila on the other hand. In addition, another 13 more entries of the list provided by Persian speakers which were also used by Davies & Bentahila and not by Stone were added to the list. Thus far, the list contained a total of 30 entries. The comparison of this list with that of Fraser (1981) revealed that 4 out of 6 animal names used by him had also been included in the present list. In order to broaden the scope of the study and accordingly to increase its validity, it was decided that all of the animal names which had been

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supplied by two or more Persian informants should also be included in the study and the remaining names with only one frequency should be discarded. Thus the final list of animal names for the study consisted of 36 entries after eliminating another 5 entries with just one instance of occurrence. The animal name of "turkey" was included in the final list despite the fact that it had been supplied by just one informant. The reason for this exceptional decision was that it has more or less the same connotations as the commonplace chameleon in English and was also included in Davies & Bentahila's list.

Two further steps were taken in order to further increase the validity of the research. First, the list was compared with two scholarly Persian dictionaries of: i) Encyclopedic Dictionary of Dehkhoda (1998 reprint) and ii) Persian Dictionary of Mo'in (1981 reprint). The figurative definitions provided in these two rather classical works enriched and validated the interpretations of animal metaphors and in a sense no doubt was left as to the common interpretations of the entries of the list suggested by Persian speakers. Secondly, the same procedure was undertaken with the English equivalents of those metaphors. That is, once more the same list was checked against: i) Shorter OED (1991), ii) Websters' New Collegiate Dictionary (1976), and iii) The Longman Lexicon (1981). Therefore, all of the figurative usages of the animals given in these sources were also added to the frequency of interpretations in Persian and English respectively. In summary, it should be repeated that the data for Persian interpretations were based on 6 sources, i.e. 4 native speakers and 2 scholarly dictionaries, and the data for the English interpretations of the same animal list were collected from 4 different sources.

Results and Discussion

The first finding of the research concerns the significant agreement in both Persian and English regarding the interpretations of certain examples. Table 1 gives the list of animals for which more than 50% of the sources consulted gave the same interpretations, (i.e., 3 or more out of 6 possible for Persian and 2 or more out of 4 possible for English).

As the table shows there are 13 cases of agreement among Persian sources and 31+2=33 such agreements in English sources. The two exceptional cases included the distinction of masculine versus feminine made in English, i.e. dog and bull versus bitch and cow respectively, but Persian lacked such a distinction. Both in Persian and English there was only one case of unanimous agreement in interpretations. That is, in the case of donkey both in terms of intragroup and intergroup there was 100% agreement regarding the interpretation of stupidity. Another exceptional case was that of gazelle where both Persian and English sources, regardless of the possible different totals, 3 sources had agreed over the interpretation of gracefulness. Still another interesting case was that of fox, where out of the total number of sources consulted all but one had agreed that the appropriate interpretation is crafty or cunning. In addition, as the table shows, with regard to Persian, there were 6 items about the interpretation of which, half of the sources were in agreement. However in the case of English there were altogether 26 entries which half of the sources consulted had agreed on their interpretations.

Another interesting point in Table 1 is that there were only 4 entries which were common both to Persian and English. Three of these entries had been assigned the same interpretations in both languages, but one, i.e. peacock was given different interpretations in the two languages. That is, while half of the Persian sources consulted believed that its interpretation is "beautiful", the English sources had suggested the figurative meanings is vain and ostentatious.

Thus, the present study confirms the belief that the same animals would be used to suggest different figurative meanings in two different languages and cultures. Numerous other examples to verify the

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Table 1. Most common interpretations in both languages

Language	Animal	Interpretation	No.in Agreement
Persian	donkey	stupid	6
Persian	fox	crafty	5
Persian	horse	gently	4
Persian	owl	inauspicious	4
Persian	gazell	softness of eyes	4
		graceful	3
Persian	cow	stupid	4
		gluttonous	3
Persian	turkey	changeable	3
Persian	peacock	beautiful	3
Persian	rabbit	smart	3
Persian	lion	brave	3
Persian	tick	tenacious	3
English	donkey	stupid	4
English	gazelle	softness of eyes	3
		graceful	3
English	cat	spiteful woman	3
English	fox	cunning	3
English	rat	treacherous	3
English	dog	worthless	3
	bitch	lewd woman	2
English	bear	uncouth	3
		rough	2
English	goat	licentious man	2
English	tiger	ferocious	2
English	lamb	weak	2
		gentle	2
		simpleton	2
English	swan	graceful	2
		melodious before death	2
English	snake	treacherous	2
English	parrot	mimic	2
English	peacock	vain	2
		ostentatious	2
English	bull	big	2
English	wolf	rapacious	2
		ferocious	2
English	monkey	mimic	2
		fool	2
		playful	2
		mischieveous	2
English	rhinoceros	insensitive	2
English	crocodile	hypocrite	2
English	cock	leader	2
English	chicken	inexperienced	2
English	dove	innocent	2

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significant role of cultural context also abound in the present study.

The explanation for the overwhelming agreement in the interpretations of animal terms given in Table 1 may rest in the fact that they are related to popular clichés. For example, donkey, snake and owl are common terms of insult in Persian, in the same way that rat, cow and bear are in English. From a different point of view, gazelle, lion and peacock are commonly used in Persian as terms of endearment, more or less in the same way as the words monkey (for naughty children), chicken and dove which have somehow positive connotations in English.

In some other cases the assigned interpretations may be related to stock similies which would justify the choice of interpretations, for example in Persian "as changeable as turkey" or in English "as cunning" as a "fox". However, it is also noteworthy that excluding some of the animal terms where there is unanimity of interpretation, in the remaining cases, despite these rather idiomatic usages, there is much discrepancy between the assigned interpretations and even in some cases the interpretations proposed are quite contradictory. For example, in the case of "cock", Persian sources had suggested both the interpretations of "punctual" and "inopportune", or for "cat" both "spiteful" and "loveable" interpretations were proposed. The English sources, on the other hand, had proposed the interpretations of both "cowardly" and "gallant" for "dog". This point indicates the fact that even in the case of frequently used animal metaphors, one cannot expect completely unanimous interpretations.

Another point worthy to notice is that in some cases in addition to the conventional interpretations, there is also, relatively speaking, a wide range of interpretations suggested. Of course, given the relatively limited number of sources consulted, the frequency of such uncommon interpretations is restricted in scope. Yet the fact remains that the salient and relevant features considered to be significant are not always unanimous. Hence, for example among the interpretations for "mouse" in Persian we find: timid, sneaky, small, weak and prolific. The sources consulted for English, on the other hand, had given five various interpretations for "dog" as: worthless, surly, cowardly, unattractive female and gallant. Consequently, perhaps it can be concluded that even the existence of idioms with animal names will not necessarily result in consistent agreements in interpretations. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the definition of "salience" given above has nothing to do with the scientifically verified information about the animal in question. That is, the saliency in question cannot be objectively quantified, rather it relates according to definition (Ortoney, et al., cited in Davies & Bentahila, 1989) to the assumptions of informants assigning the interpretations. Therefore, whether on the basis of the findings of the science of zoology it is turkey or chameleon which is changeable, as Persians and English repectively believe it to be, is immaterial to the discussion.

If Persians regardless of the findings of zoology believe turkey to be changeable, then it is necessary to consider being changeable as a distinctive feature of the prototype "turkey". The same assumption is true on the part of the English speakers for chameleon. Hence different speech communities with different cultures will and do attribute quite different properties to the animal metaphors in question.

Although in some cases people from widely different linguistic and cultural backgrounds propose the same interpretations, at the same time it seems that a characteristic typical of one animal in one culture is associated with a completely different animal in a different culture. The interpretations collected for the present study revealed many such contrasts between Persian and English. For example, it will not be an exaggeration to suggest that the animal metaphor of "pig" with its derogative connotations is one of the most commonplace metaphors in English. This fact is verified by the findings of other researchers like

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Fraser, Davies & Bentahila and others mentioned above. Yet, for Persians evidently this particular animal has no such a salient property. The explanation perhaps lies in the fact that Persians mainly for religious and hence cultural beliefs are not supposed to consume this animal. This cultural belief is so deeply rooted that even one of the four informants had not even included "pig" in their lists. Neither had any of the written sources consulted; they had dealt with this animal very briefly and definitely not in the same length as it was done in English. Likewise, Persians seem to associate the characteristics of gentleness and dignity with "horse" and hence they might take it for granted that these properties are obviously universal. Yet, the data revealed that none of the English sources had even hinted at horse as one of the common animal metaphors, let alone to the possibility of horse having the aforementioned connotations. Moreover, even within the same linguistic and cultural community a single metaphor may result in differing interpretations depending on the experience and knowledge of the individuals involved. Consequently, it seems as though the objective evaluation of the metaphorical interpretations is not viable and one has to contend with subjective appraisals of the interpretations assigned. Therefore, one is led to be cautious in the application of the theory of salience both intralingually and interlingually. One of the other shortcomings of the theory of salience is that the metaphorical interpretations and the actual properties of the image usually are not identical. For instance, those who are fond of their pet dogs, definitely would understand the derogative and depreciative connotations of the term when applied metaphorically to human beings. Undoubtedly, this group of people do not believe that their dogs have those extremely negative qualities which accompany the metaphorical usage to the extent that they function as insults. In other words, undoubtedly, the figurative connotations and literal meanings are not taken to be identical. The two are definitely seen in different lights. This fact was also verified by the research carried out by Pulman (1982) who asked the subjects in two different occasions first to describe the animals in question as accurately as possible and secondly to paraphrase certain metaphors containing the same animal terms. Pulman found out that about 35% of paraphrases of metaphors given by the subjects did not contain any of the information given in the first stage of research. Therefore he concluded that linguistically speaking "many of the properties figuring in our interpretations of a metaphor are not antecedently associated with the words involved" (1982, p. 85). Here again, it seems that the link between literal and figurative connotations is subjective and therefore it is not inconceivable to think of people who believe that for example dogs are base and foxes are cunning. The above discussion reveals the fact that drawing hard and fast border lines between idiosyncratic and conventional interpretations is not that easy. Individual's cultural background, knowledge or schemata and experiences play a significant role in assigning interpretations to the same metaphors.

Next, we will consider the similarity of the interpretations provided. Table 2 gives the most outstanding cases of similarity of interpretations. In some cases the similarity of interpretations cannot be traced back to the distinctive characteristics of the animals in question; for example, the softness of eyes in the case of gazelle was assumed to be salient by both Persian and English sources. Other interpretations seem to be related to stereotyped associations which happen to be common to both Persian and English, e.g., the interpretation that "foxes are cunning" or "wolves are treacherous" can be traced in both cultures to traditional folk stories about these animals. It should be reminded that the animal metaphors with single frequency of the interpretation in either language are not given in this table.

Even a cursory look at Table 2 reveals that most of the animal metaphors used in both languages have a negative figurative meaning. The fact that animal metaphors in general have negative

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Table 2. Similar interpretations in two languages

Animal	Interpretation	No. giving this interpretation in	
		Persian	English
donkey	stupid	6	4
fox	crafty/cunning	5	3
gazelle	softnes	4	3
	graceful	3	3
cat	spiteful	3	3
lion	brave	3	2
dog	despicable	2	2
snake	treacherous	2	2
parrot	mimic	2	2
bull/cow	big	2	2
monkey	playful	2	2
mouse	timid	2	2
crocodile	hypocrite	2	2

connotations is a common belief among speakers of different languages, which has also been born out by research. Fraser for example deals with three techniques of verbal insulting and observes that "the third verbal technique is unique to verbal insulting ... involves ascribing to the hearer some characteristic that is devalued in that society" (1981, p. 438). In his research, he tried to discover cross-language interpretations of 6 terms in 11 languages. His research proved that in all of the languages including Persian all of the 6 animal terms are used for insulting. However the present research revealed that animal metaphors have in some cases positive connotations, despite the fact that in both languages majority of them have depreciative and derogatory connotations. It was interesting to examine the interpretations from this perspective too.

Table 3 gives examples of animal metaphors with positive interpretations in both languages. Three of the entries given in the list had mainly negative connotations; yet because they had also been assigned positive connotations, they were given in Table 3 and are also distinguished by asterisks. It should also be mentioned that only those animals with positive connotations in both languages have been included in Table 3.

Table 3. Metaphors with positive connotations

Animal	Interpretations
gazelle	Persian: softness of eyes(4), graceful (3)
	English: softness of eyes (3), graceful (3)
lion	Persian: brave (3), strong (2), graceful(1)
	English: brave (3), outstanding (2), courageous (1)
lamb	Persian: gentle (1)
	English: gentle (2), innocent (1)
swan	Persian: graceful (1), whiteness (1), clearness (1)
	English: graceful (2), melodious (1)
dog*	Persian: faithful (2)
	English: gallant (1)
monkey*	Persian: playful (2)
	English: playful (2)
cock*	Persian: youngester (2), early riser (1), punctual (1), melodious (1)
	English: leader (2)
ant	Persian: industrious (1), perseverance (1)
	English: industrious (1)
owl	Persian: inauspicious (4)
	English: wise (1)
dove	Persian: peace loving (1), herald (1)
	English: peace loving (1), innocent (2)

Table 4 illustrates highly negative figurative uses of animal metaphors which as mentioned repeatedly includes an overwhelming majority of metaphors. Those animals which had negative connotations in one language, e.g., cow in Persian, but not in the other language at least in the sources consulted, were not included in this table.

Tables 3 and 4 reveal that there are striking similarities between the two languages in assigning positive and negative connotations to anmial metaphors. The assignment of positive or negative interpretations does not correlate with binary distinctions between for example domestic (e.g., cat and cow) versus wild (e.g., fox and monkey), or between useful versus useless (for instance, in both languages and cultures cows and horses are regarded as being useful), or between animals having lower versus higher forms of life (e.g., bee and tick). The fact that there is some kind of subjective positive or negative connotations in these

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animal metaphors, which has nothing to do with their physical characteristics, has also been acknowledged by Fraser (1981). One exceptional case perhaps is a tendency to assign negative characteristics to reptiles and adults in contrast to quadropes and the young species of the same animal (e.g., snake versus cow and sheep versus lamb).

Table 4. Metaphors with positive connotations

Animal	Interpretations
donkey	Persian: stupid (6), frivolous (1), ignorant (1)
	English: stupid (4), obstinate (1), ignorant (1), conceited (1)
fox	Persian: crafty (5)
	English: cunning (3), untrustworthy (1)
dog	Persian: fidgety (2), despicable (2), dirty (1)
	English: worthless (3), despicable (2), surly (1), cowardly (1)
cat	Persian: spiteful (2), unfaithful (2)
	English: spiteful (3)
snake	Persian: treacherous (2), malicious (2), mischievous (2), devil (1)
	English: treacherous (2), worthless (1)
bear	Persian: fat (2), gluttonous (1)
	English: uncouth (3), rough (2), unmannerly (1)
monkey	Persian: ugly (2)
	English: fool (2), mischievous (2)
mouse	Persian: timid (2), sneaky (1), small (1), weak (1)
	English: treacherous (3), timid (2), nervous (1), sly(1)
crocodile	Persian: hypocrite (2)
	English: hypocrite (2)
wolf	Persian: cruel (1), ferocious (1)
	English: ferocious (2), rapacious (2), cruel (1)
rhinoceros	Persian: insensitive (1)
	English: insensitive (2)

In some cases the interpretations assigned in both languages, although related to similar characteristics of animals in question, differ in attitudes or relative degree of evaluation. For example, "fox" seems to have the same kind of connotations in both languages, yet English usually defines it as being "cunning", whereas Persian sources prefer to call it as being "crafty" . This shows a more charitable attitude on the part of Persians than English. Another example is monkey, although it invokes a similar kind of reaction in both cultures, in Persian it is characterized mainly by the attribute of ugliness whereas in English it is regarded as being mischievous and fool.

Another observation is that there are cases where the interpretations in the two languages are quite contradictory. The most obvious examples include "owl" and "turkey" which generally speaking are believed to have negative connotations in Persian, but somehow positive interpretations in English. The opposite seems to be true of "peacock" which has a positive connotation in Persian, but the reverse is true in English. This finding is the most troublesome for Persian learners of EFL as well as the Persian translators of English or into English. Within the transfer theory of contrastive analysis (CA), this kind of learning or translation problems for Iranian students is best explained by paradigm B "where stimuli are functionally identical and responses are varied, negative transfer and retroactive interference are obtained, the magnitude of both decreasing as similarity between the responses increases (Osgood, cited in James 1980, p. 15).

When this case obtains it means that the same meaning in two languages of for example Persian and English is accompanied by differences in formal devices used to convey that meaning. Therefore in translating from Persian to English with the aim of assigning figurative meaning of "inauspicious" it will be counter productive to use the animal metaphor of "He is an owl". In English "owl" has the positive connotation of being "wise". Within the transfer theory of CA, this situation is schematically represented as paradigm B below where students of EFL are concerned with the same meaning, i.e., S1 in both L1 and L2, but different formal devices, i.e., R1 and R2 respectively. And since in this case maximum difference exists between Rs in L1 and L2, according to classical CA, negative transfer will result.

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Paradigm B

L1 L2

S1-R1 S1-R2

(James, 1980, p. 17)

As mentioned above, the basis for the interpretations can and has been classified in different ways. For example, Davies & Bentahila (1989) observe that whereas Matic & Wales (1982) have classified the grounds of interpretations into: i) structural and ii) evocative, Fraser (1981) has suggested: i) physical class and ii) behavioral class and finally both classifications have a third class of iii) functional categories. The analysis of the data of the present study revealed that it contained examples for all of these types of classifications. Only few examples are given to illustrate the point: bull: big, and mouse: small, are examples of physical class and wolf: cruel and fox: crafty/cunning may be counted as examples of behavioral class, both suggested by Fraser. On the other hand, snake: treacherous and gazelle: graceful are examples of evocative class, and finally donkey which usually carries heavy goods might be regarded an example of functional class suggested by Matic & Wales. The point to be emphasized is that unlike the first impressions of the labels of these classes, the borderlines between these classes are not very clear and even in some cases they overlap and therefore decisions made as to their origins are subjective.

For example, the attribute of dirty as suggested by one of the Persian sources for "fox" or as it is commonplace to be attributed to "pig" in English could belong to both physical and behavioral connotations. Another interesting case is "turkey" for Persians (the same as chameleon for English) is that its physical or behavioral characteristic of changing colors has been to refer to a personality trait of changing ideas and beliefs as need arises. It seems that in cases like this, a salient characteristic of the animal (physical or behavioral) is used metaphorically to describe a human being, whereas in the case of "fox", traditionally it is established to be crafty/cunning. Other classes like evocative are also problematic because it is not clear according to the definition where "... a strong evaluative component ..." starts and where it finishes, e.g., treacherous for snake.

Regarding the frequency of different kinds of interpretations, it seems that like the previous research by Matic & Wales, the functional basis for interpretations is much less frequent than other types. Also, it should be noted that the demarcation of actual traits of animals and their connotations is not always easy to draw. Table 5 gives 20 interpretations in each language with the highest frequency.

Table 5. Frequency of interpretations

Persian	F	English	F
stupid	6	stupid	4
gentle	6	treacherous	4
graceful	6	graceful	4
spiteful	6	ostentatious	4
crafty	5	ferocious	4
softness of eyes	4	brave	4
gluttonous	4	worthless	4
beautiful	4	uncouth	4
strong	4	mimic	4
fat	4	promiscuous	4
weak	4	cunning	3
inauspicious	4	softness of eyes	3
timid	4	spiteful	3
changeable	3	innocent	3
smart	3	gentle	2
brave	3	outstanding	2
tenacious	3	timid	2
grumpy	3	despicable	2
ferocious	3	rough	2
treacherous	3	weak	2

Table 5 shows that some of the characteristics are assigned to animals in both languages, for instance: stupid, cunning, gentle, treacherous, graceful, brave, spiteful, weak, ferocious, timid and softness of eyes. The differences between the two languages lie in the fact that the properties of: gluttonous, inauspicious, beautiful, smart, tenacious, grumpy, strong and fat are cited in Persian but not in English. On the other hand, in English we find: worthless, despicable, uncouth, rough, mimic, innocent,

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ostentatious and promiscuous, but these are not among the top 20 attributes given in Persian.

One of the most significant differences between Persian and English is that apparently the Persian sources have a tendency to emphasize aspects of physical appearance more than English, therefore four of the attributes in Persian are related to physical characteristics, namely: gluttonous, beautiful, strong and fat, whereas in the case of English only 1 physical attribute of "big" is given. On the other hand, perhaps it can be suggested that the English prefer behavioral or personality traits, therefore we find: worthless, despicable, uncouth, rough, mimic, innocent, ostentatious and promiscuous. Davies & Bentahila (1989) also found similar results in their study of Arabic and English. The significance of this point becomes more evident if it is considered that almost all of the aspects of physical characteristics in the Persian list are among the top ten attributes with relatively high frequencies, but not so in English. Table 6 gives a contrastive summary of the interpretations of animal terms preferred by Persian and English sources with the number of sources assigning those interpretations.

Table 6. Contrastive interpretations

	Dominant Interpretation	
Animal	Persian	English
dog/bitch	faithful (2)	worthless (3)
		lewd woman (2)
goat	grumpy (2)	licentious man (2)
turkey	changeable (3)	pompous (1)
peacock	beautiful (3)	ostentatious (4)
bear	fat (3)	uncouth (3)
		rough (2)
rabbit	smart (3)	clumsy (1)
	agile (2)	
cow/bull	stupid (4)	big (2)
	gluttonous (3)	
lion	strong (2)	brave (2)
monkey	ugly (2)	mimic (2)
		fool (2)
		mischievous (2)
cock	youngster (2)	leader (2)
owl	inauspicious (4)	wise (1)

Conclusion

The present cross cultural contrastive study, admittedly though sketchy, provided enough evidence to support the claim that animal metaphors are not interpreted in Persian and English cultures in the same way. The findings of the present study verified the observation made some twenty years ago by Fraser that "The Farsi speaker who wants to tell an English speaker that he in sneaky and uses the term "fox", the animal used in Farsi, is of course telling him that he is crafty and clever, not sneaky (1981, p. 440). On the one hand, the findings of the present study revealed that apparently the physical properties and especially visual appearance are more salient for Persians, whereas for the English the behavioral and personality are more seminal. Theoretically speaking, since the two languages use different formal devices, i.e., animal terms, to talk about the same meaning interpretation of metaphors both in learning EFL and translation, negative transfer will take place. It is recommended that as a means of overcoming Persian learners' problems in learning EFL the area of animal metaphors should receive its due attention both in material preparation and in practices of teaching translation. The role of culture especially deserves considerable attention because as the findings of the present study revealed the same animal could be used figuratively to propose different connotations or the same figurative meaning can be conveyed by using different animal terms. The animal term of "pig" for instance is so commonplace and well known in English language and culture for being dirty and being the insulting beast that all of the sources consulted for the present study had mentioned it. The significant role of "pig" and its high frequency of usage has also been admitted and verified in all similar works. Yet this very important and commonplace metaphor was not given even in one single Persian source. Another example in English is the well known animal of chameleon which is used figuratively to refer to a person who changes his behavior, ideas, etc. to suit his own purposes.

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But in Persian unlike English this very same connotation is attributed to turkey. Therefore, it is hoped that the present study has shed some light on the significance of the relationship of language and culture.

The present study, on the other hand, showed that although animal metaphors are generally used as a means of insulting, yet they are also used with positive connotations like endearment terms. The study also showed that although the two languages have at least one animal which is used metaphorically to convey stupidity, timidity, worthlessness, treachery and so on, yet the animals might differ between the two languages. In TEFL it is important that the differences in images of metaphors should be brought to the attention of our students and beginning translators. If this crucial fact is overlooked in our educational practices, i.e., in preparing EFL materials and in teaching practices, we might encounter erroneous performances on the parts of our students and translators.

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