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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to study the meanings and applications of the animal names in English and Persian proverbs. Most of the animal expressions reveal the way of thinking and the cultural particularities of each society, so translation of some animal expressions from one language to another one may cause many cultural or communicational misunderstandings. In other words, animal expressions fulfill semantic and sociolinguistic functions in human languages. Most of the animal expressions developed from the culture, society, human relations, and their thoughts. So animal expressions have different positive or negative values and usages in each lingual society.

In this research we will deal with the names of some animals that may make cultural or communicational misunderstandings.

Keywords: Animal names, proverbs, semantic features, And cultural misunderstanding.

1. Introduction

The present study is within semantic – pragmatic framework. Over the years there has been an interest in research about metaphors, idioms, and proverbs within different frameworks, but studies on

animal expressions are few in both Persian and English. This research is an attempt to show some lingual misunderstandings through animal expressions.

2- Review of literature

Below given a review of some linguistic researches on animal expressions:

Fraser (1981, pp: 435-441) examined insulting animal expressions in different languages other than English to see if they have equal usages.

Newmark (1988,pp: 125-147) believes that animal metaphors are used to a great extent in order to describe inferior or undesirable human habits and attributes.

Dauids and Bentahila (1989, pp: 49-68) examined animal terms in British English and Moroccan Arabic. They use different theories like similarity and relevance to categorize animal metaphors.

Holmes (1992; Quoted by: Hsieh 2006) gives examples of the chicken metaphor in her sociolinguistic analysis of sexism in language.

Sutton (1995; Q by: the same) studies linguistic discrimination against females and makes a strong argument about the metaphor "women are animals".

Tomita (2000, pp: 1-15) works on a large amount of rhetorical expressions such as animal similes and metaphors which are used to delineate the physical appearances or distinctive personalities of various characters in Charles Dickens's novels.

Nadim (2000, pp: 291-299) examines animal roles in Shirazi proverbs with an approach to sociolinguistics. After analyzing about 100 animal expressions, he concludes that donkey expressions are the most frequent ones and have some salient semantic molecules such "crazy, worthless, and absurd".

Hsieh (2001; Q by: the same) studies animal expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German based on Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphors (1980).

Hsieh (2004; Q by: the same) further proposes that animal expressions are our vocabulary of values .

Hsieh (2006, pp: 2206-2220) investigates animal expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German. With a focus on cat and tiger expressions, he reveals the salient semantic molecules of these animals in both languages.

3- Research framework

In this study animal expression means any English or Persian expression which contains at least one animal name. Expressions with the names of specific animals as mentioned before will be used as the primary examples in the first part of the analysis in order to reveal the semantic features of animal expressions. Animal names are considered as metaphorical vehicles here, and most of the data are collected from the written English and Persian dictionaries of proverbs or idioms. Part of the raw data is taken from daily – life conversations.

4. Animal expressions and semantic features

In this part first some of the semantic features of pig, dog, cat, owl, and, crow expressions are exemplified, and then discuss and compare the salient features of these animal names in both English and Persian.

4-1- pig expressions and salient semantic features

In Islam some animals are considered unclean, pig is one of these animals and it is the symbol of dirt and **uncleanness** in Persian, sometimes pig name can be used to refer to a rich, fat person. Pig expressions in Persian always have negative connotation for example: مثل خوک (like a pig) means: impolite, cruel, and unclean.

In other languages especially in English, pig expressions can have semantic features as follow: **a) worthless**: "A hog in armor is but a hog", "you can not make a satin purse of a sow's ear", "Draff is good enough for swine", "cost not pearls before swine". (*Latin*)

b) **Unclean:** "A measly hog infects the whole sty", " the pig prefers mud to clean water" (*Latin*)," still swine eats all the draff".

c) **Disobedient:** "when the pig is offered, hold up the poke".

d) **Greedy:** "give a pig a finger, and he wants the whole hand". (*Yiddish*)

e) **Lazy:** " The lazy pig does not eat ripe pears".

f) **Trouble some:** " let a pig into your garden, and you can't get rid of him". (*Yiddish*)

g) **To show some thing Impossible happens:** " pigs might fly", "when pigs fly".

4-2- Dog expressions and salient semantic features

Another animal which is considered **unclean** in Islam is dog , and this belief is revealed in some Persian proverbs such as: سگ به هفت دریا پاک نشود (dog is unclean even if be cleaned in seven seas), از لف لف سگ دریا نجس می‌شود (sea won't be unlearned of dog's barking). Other semantic features for dog expressions in Persian are as follow:

2- Worthless: سگ با قلاده زرین هم (the dead lion is better than an alive dog), شیر مرده به که سگ زنده (dog is dog even with a golden collar) **3- Cruel and violent:** پا روی دم سگ نگذار (don't stand on the dog's tail), سگ گزنده همان به که آشنا باشد (It is better to be friend with the biting dog). **4- Loyalty:** سگ از مردم مردم آزار به (A grateful dog is better than an ungrateful man), حق شناس به از آدمی ناسپاس (the dog is superior to a man who upsets others).

5- Ungrateful: سگ رفیق استخوان است (Dog is friend with bone)

6- Vagrancy and wandering: به سگ گفتند چرا پیر شدی گفت: بسکه هرزه دویدم (ask the dog why you get old? He answers because of running in vain).

7- Disobedient: سگ را به زور به شکار نتوان برد (you can not force the dog to hunting)

8- Crazy: سگ در سایه دیوار راه میرفت گمان می‌کرد سایه خود اوست (dog walks in the shadow of wall and thinks its his own shadow)

9- Inattention: محل سگ به کسی نگذاشتن (to treat some one less than a dog)

10- Regret: مثل سگ پشیمان شدن (to regret like a dog)

11- Miserable: زندگی سگی داشتن (to have a life like a dog)

Semantic features of dog expressions in other languages can be:

- a) **Worthless:** "dog is a dog whatever his color". (*Danish*)
- b) **Cruel and violent:** "A cursed dog should be short tied".
- c) **Worthy:** "A living dog is better than a dead lion". (*Old test. Eccles*)
- d) **Ungrateful:** "Dogs wag their tails, not for you, but for your bread".
- e) **Uncleanness:** "look not for musk in a dog's kennel".
- f) **Loyalty:** "The more I see of men, the more I admire dogs". (*French*)
- g) **Guarding:** "when the dog is awake the shepherd may sleep". (*German*)
- h) **Miserable:** "to go to the dogs".

4-3- Cat expressions and salient semantic features

In Persian cat expressions may have these semantic features:

- 1- **Tricky and deceitful:** گربه از بغل افکندن (to throw the cat) means: to remove fraud and trick.
- 2- **Cunning and deceptive:** گربه در بغل داشتن (to have cat in arms): to deceive some one.
- 3- **Ungrateful:** مثل گربه کوره (like a blind cat): to be ungrateful
- 4- **Worthless:** به دعای گربه سیاه باران نمی‌بارد (It won't rain of the black cat's praying)
- 5- **Shamelessness:** در دیزی باز است حیای گربه کجاست (The Dizi is open where is the cat's shame?)
- 6- **To do something in a right time:** گربه را دم حجله باید کشت (the cat should be killed at the bridal

chamber)

7- Long life: گربه هفت جان دارد (the cat has seven lives)

In other languages:

- a) **Troublesome:** "If you play with a cat, you must not mind her scratch". (*Yiddish*)
- b) **Long life:** "the cat has nine lives".
- c) **Worthless:** "cats eat what hussies spare".
- d) **Clever and cunning:** "The cat would eat fish and would not wet her feet". (*Latin*)

e) **Tricky and deceitful:** "when I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me". (*Montaigne*)

f) **Spoiled:** "the more you rub the cat on the rump, the higher she sets her tail".

g) **To do a perilous thing:** "who shall hang the bell about the cat's neck". (*Spanish*)

4-4- owl expressions and salient semantic features

The only semantic feature that owl expressions have in Persian is ominous: مثل جغد شوم (like an ominous owl). It is the symbol of happening calamity and disaster.

In other languages, owl expressions may have different features:

a) **Wise:** "A wise old owl sat on an oak", "as wise as an owl".

b) **Ominous:** "when the owl comes, so too calamity". (*Chinese*)

c) **Optimistic:** "the crow wished everything was black, the owl, that everything was white".

d) **To be awake far in to the night:** "To be a night owl" .

e) **Sharp-sighted:** "The rabbit's eye differs from that of the owl".

4-5- Crow expressions and salient semantic features

In Persian crow expressions may have some semantic features as follow:

1-**Imitative:** کلاغ خواست راه رفتن کبک را یاد بگیرد راه رفتن خودش را هم فراموش کرد (Crow wants to learn partridge's way of walking, he forgets his own way of walking too)

2- **Nosey:** زاع سیاهش را چوب زدن (to beat his black crow with a stick) means: To intrude

3- **Inexperienced:** کلاغ امساله است (It is the current year's crow)

4- **Worthless:** سنگ مفت، کلاغ مفت (stone is gratis, crow is gratis too)

5- **Troublesome:** هیچ زاغی بی داغ نیست (there's no crow without trouble)

In other languages crow expressions may have some similar and some different semantic features as follow:

a) **Worthless:** "To shoot at crows is powder flung away".

- b) **Ominous:** "An evil crow-an evil egg".
- c) **Ungrateful:** "Bring up a raven, and it will peck out your eyes". (*Spanish*)
- d) **Rare:** "Rarer even than a white raven". (*Latin*)
- e) **Cheeky:** "The raven said to the rook, stand away, black coat!" .
- f) **Rumormonger:** "Report makes the crow blacker than they are".
- g) **Clever and tricky:** "old crow are hard to catch". (*German*)
- h) **Cursing:** "cattle do not die from the crow's cursing".

Table 1- the semantic features of some certain animals in Persian, English, and some other languages

Language	Vehicle	Semantic features
Persian	Pig	Unclean. Worthless, unclean, disobedient, greedy, lazy, troublesome To show some thing impossible happens.
English & other languages.	Dog	Unclean, worthless, cruel, loyal, ungrateful, vagrancy, disobedient crazy, inattention, regret, miserable. Worthless, cruel, worthy, ungrateful, uncleanness, loyalty, guarding miserable.
	Cat	Tricky, cunning, ungrateful, worthless, shamelessness, to do some thing in a right time, long life. Troublesome, long life, worthless, clever and cunning, tricky, spoiled, to do a perilous thing.
	Owl	Ominous. Wise, ominous, optimistic, to be awake far into the night, sharp- sighted.
	Crow	Imitative, Nosey, inexperienced, worthless, troublesome. Worthless, ominous, ungrateful, rare, cheeky, rumormonger, clever and tricky, cursing.

5- Conclusion

1-As it is revealed in the above table, pig, owl, and crow evokes more semantic features in English and some other languages than in Persian, because the names of these animals are more productive in use in other languages than in Persian.

2-The analysis of about ten thousand Persian and English proverbs shows that there are 207 dog and 73 cat expressions in Persian and 97 dog and 53 cat expressions in English, so cat and dog expressions are more productive in Persian.

3. Animal expressions refer to undesirable characteristics and traits of man and low, inferior aspects of human life, so most of them carry negative connotations.

4. Traditional notions show themselves in the form of proverbs. In other words, proverbs like other linguistic vehicles are the reflection of speakers' views, cultures, beliefs, social behaviors and roles. So animal expressions can reveal the individual or social thoughts.

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