The Comparison of Connotative Meaning in Animal Words between English and Persian Expressions and their Translation

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Abstract: Animal words and expressions have slowly become a significant member of the basic vocabulary of many languages in the world. Iranian and English are no exception. Some animal words in Persian and English are the same or similar in cultural connotations, because Iranian and the English people have some same capabilities of thought, some same laws of cognition, and some animals have the same important role in the human life of these two nations, and have the same attributes and features. But some of them are dissimilar or different. The cause of it is that the English people and the Iranian people are different in religion, history, geographical environment, and customs and so on. 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.

Keywords: Animal expressions, connotations, English and Persian Expressions

1. INTRODUCTION

In the long history of human beings, animals are always closely related to our existence and development. Some are a kind of important food to people; some offer the labor for agriculture; some support the inspirations for some inventions of science and technology; and some are a kind of close friends of people, playing an important role in the mankind’s society. Fraser (1981) examined insulting animal expressions in different languages other than English to see if they have equal usages. Newmark (1988) believes that animal metaphors are used to a great extent in order to describe inferior or undesirable human habits and attributes.

Davids and Bentahila (1989) examined animal terms in British English and Moroccan Arabic. They use different theories like similarity and relevance to categorize animal metaphors. Holmes (1992as cited in Hsieh 2006) gives examples of the chicken metaphor in her sociolinguistic analysis of sexism in language. Sutton (1995; cited in the same) studies linguistic discrimination against females and makes a strong argument about the metaphor "women are animals". Tomita (2000) 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) examines animal roles in Shirazi proverbs with an approach to sociolinguistics. After analysing 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 cited in the same) studies animal expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German basedon Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphors (1980). Hsieh (2004 cited in the same) further proposes that animal expressions are our vocabulary of values.

Hsieh (2006) 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. In another study Hsieh (2008) compares animal and plant metaphors to show the semantic autonomy of language and the cognitive level of using these metaphors in light of lay
views vs. scientific theories (Kövecses, 2000 as cited in Hsieh 2008) and verbal processes (Halliday, 1985 as cited in Hsieh 2008). He found that (1) metaphors are not scientific; (2) but the essence of metaphors and nature seems to overlap: in the natural world, animals are moving creatures while plants are motionless life forms; (3) in our languages, animal metaphors are active expression whereas plant metaphors are static. Estaji and Nakhavali (2011) Studied Semantic Derogation in Persian Animal Proverbs. Their analysis shows that sex and semantic derogation are not shown in Persian structures and proverbs as much as other languages, but in the cases with semantic derogation, the metaphorical meanings of the female proverbs connote worse qualities than those connoted by the male proverbs.

2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

An animal expression is defined in this study as any Persian or English expression that encodes at least one animal name. 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.

2.1. Animal Expressions and Semantic Features

In this part first some of the semantic features of fox, camel, horse, snake and eagle expressions are exemplified, and then discuss and compare the salient features of these animal names in both English and Persian.

2.2. Fox Expressions and Salient Semantic Features

In many cultures, the fox appears in folklore as a symbol of cunning and trickery, or as a familiar animal possessed of magic powers.

In Dagon mythology, the pale fox is the trickster god of the desert, who embodies chaos. The term "foxy" in English is defined as meaning - as the obvious "having the qualities of a fox" - also "attractive" and "sexy", as well as "red-haired.

Overwhelmingly, cultural consensus on fox animal symbolism deals with:

- cunning
- strategy
- quick-thinking
- adaptability
- cleverness
- wisdom

The fox encourages us to think outside of the box and use our intelligence in different, creative ways. The fox also brings us a message to try to approach our circumstances differently that we normally would. Be aware of some of our habits, and try a different angle of action.

The fox also a reminder that we must utilize all of our resources (seen and unseen) in order to accomplish our goals. Sometimes this means calling upon some unorthodox methods.

Furthermore, the fox is a sign to be mindful of our surroundings. Phenomenally effective shapeshifters and incredibly adaptable, the fox beckons us to not make too many waves but rather, adapt to our surroundings, blend into it, and use our surroundings (and circumstances) to our advantage.

Other generalized fox symbolic meanings deal with

- focus
- determination
- right-action
- fox: crazy like a fox
- fox: a sexually attractive woman
- fox: Informal: to perplex or confound: to fox a person with a problem
- fox: to cause (paper, wood, etc.) to become discoloured with spots, or (of paper, etc.) to become discoloured, as through mildew.
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Out fox

- to trick; deceive
- sneaky as fox in the hen-house

In Persian fox expressions may have these semantic features:

رویاه

رویاه به انگور نمی‌رسد، می‌گوید ترش است.

Foxes when they cannot reach the grapes, say they are not ripe

رویاه به یاگ کاهگل داخل نمی‌شود

Try before you trust

- به روباه گفت شاهد کیست گفت ندم

One lie makes many

- اشاره به مکاری روباه دارد و سفارش می‌کند اماند خود را هرگز به او تسریع

Provide against a rainy day Set not the fox to watch the geese

- روباه پاژ: تحلیل و مکار
- نیست از راه تواضع خاکسازی دام را
- حیله بهانه خصوص رو به باز را افتادگی
- روباه پاژی: زرق و حیله کردن
- مکن روباه پاژی بیارام
- که په گرگ در مالیات ایام
- زیرکی sagacity

A good swimmer often drowned

رویاه از زیرکی اش به تله افتاد

رویاه سیاه از کمر به تله می‌افتد

too much cunning undone

- زیبی گرگ در مالیات ایام
- زیرکی

The better is sometimes bit

- اگر تو روباهی، من دم روباه

Behind an able man there are always other noble men

- اگر تو روباهی، من دم روباه

Camels are symbols meaning both humanity, willingness to serve and obstinacy. In medieval art and sculpture, the camel was used to represent humility and the willingness to bear another's burden, largely because camels are trained to kneel down to receive heavy loads. Many artists employing this symbolism had no direct experience with camels. In the east, however, camels are famous as being disagreeable and obstinate. An eastern proverb proclaims that the camel, "Curses it its ancestors on the way up a hill and its Maker on the way down.” For Egyptians, camels are symbolic of complainers and those who are slow on their feet.

2.3. Camel Expressions and Salient Semantic Features

Camels are symbols meaning both humanity, willingness to serve and obstinacy. In medieval art and sculpture, the camel was used to represent humility and the willingness to bear another's burden, largely because camels are trained to kneel down to receive heavy loads. Many artists employing this symbolism had no direct experience with camels. In the east, however, camels are famous as being disagreeable and obstinate. An eastern proverb proclaims that the camel, "Curses it its ancestors on the way up a hill and its Maker on the way down.” For Egyptians, camels are symbolic of complainers and those who are slow on their feet.
Some suggested keywords for symbolic camel meaning:

- Endurance
- Transport
- Protection
- Survival
- Conservation
- Journeying
- Adaptive
- Obedience
- Temperance
- Nobility
- Humility
- Stamina

CAMEL

- strain at gnats and swallow camels
- To criticize other people for minor offences while ignoring major offenses.
- plain as the hump on a camel
- obvious
- straw that broke the camel's back
- The thing to push you over the edge.

In Persian Camel expressions may have these semantic features:

- شتر
- شتر بزروگ است زهمشته هم زیاد است
- the much coins, the much care
- آنجا که شتر بود به یک غاز، خر قیمت واقعی ندارد.
- Best is best cheap
- شتر خود را توی جاه می اندارد که صالحانه خر کردن
- nothing so bold as a blind mare
- شتر در جستجوی شاخ بود که گریز خود را گم کرد
- The camel going to seek horns lost his ears
- شتر در خانه صالحانه زانو می زند
- شتر در خواب بهند پنه دانه / گهی از لح خورده گاه دانه دانه
- The cat dreams of mice
- شتر دزدی و خم خمد
- The cats shuts his eyes while steals cream
- شتر دیدن ندید
- Say you saw me not
- شتر را با بار گم کرده، دنبال ردانش می گردد.
- Penny wise and pound foolish
- شتر که میرده آتش در جهانش می گیرد.
- Everyone worships the rising sun
- شتر مال صالحانه را یک تا دو می خورد، اما مال دیگری را ده م
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- It is a good beef that costs nothing
- شتر سواری نیست
- Truth will come to light
- شتر گارد و پیشه گیر رک
- The end makes all equal
- هیچ گاه خوب نمی‌بیند - شتر گوز خود را نمی‌بیند
- Camel never sees its own hump
- کور خود و یکنای مردم است
- Khorshid: ای که جز عیوب کس نمی‌بینی / عیب خود را چرا نمی‌بینی؟
- شتر را به تیغ جویین کشتن
- به کار بردن و سیب کوهچک برای کار بزرگ
- همین رود این مرا هسانا / کاگین‌تر نکن بم یک چوب
- روزه خواری کردن: شتر سواری
- خوش آنکه نکرد یا همه عمر / جز در رضمان شتر سواری
- شتر گوز خود را دراز می‌کند
- Flesh stands never so high but a dog will venture his legs
- شتر بزرگ است، زحمات هم زیاد است

2.4. Horse Expressions and Salient Semantic Features

The horse is a symbol meaning *willingness* to work and *independence*. In ancient Rome, the horse was clearly associated with death itself as it pulled the chariot of the sun god over the horizon into darkness. In ancient Nordic art and religious ceremonies, the horse replaced the sacrificial bull of Mediterranean cultures. The horse signified resurrection from the dead to the Nordic peoples as it carried the dead to the other side of life.

A summary of prevalent symbol meanings for the horse:

- Power
- Grace
- Beauty
- Nobility
- Strength
- Freedom

The Horse symbol meanings of power are widespread through most cultures, and it is linked as an emblem of *life-force*. Many cultures assign the attributes of the four elements to the Horse: Earth, Fire, Air, and Water.

**as strong as a horse/ox**
- very strong

**as stubborn as a mule**
- very stubborn.

**back the wrong horse**
- to support someone or something that cannot or does not win or succeed.

**beat a dead horse**
- to continue fighting a battle that has been won, to continue to argue a point that has been settled
bet on the wrong horse
- to misread the future, to not choose the winning person or solution

In Persian *horse* expressions may have these semantic features:

1- To eat like a horse:
بهره‌بری بی اندامه، به اندازه زیاد غذا خوردن

Straight from a horse’s mouth:
به همه مرده لگن نمی‌زند، آدم بدیخت با پیامدار آزار داد

- To flog a dead horse:
از اسب افتاده زمین اسب را رها نمی‌کند

A poor man wants something, a covetous man all thing
از اسب افتاده ایم، از اصل‌های نفهمته ایم

Money is not everything

What goes up, must come down

What goes up, must come down

Look not a gift horse in the mouth

As the work, so the pay.

As the work, so the pay.

Beauty is only skin deep

No work, no money

No work, no money

If two men ride on a horse, one must behind

You cannot see the wood for the trees

When you drink from the stream, remember the spring

Never make threats you cannot carry out

Every ass thinks himself worthy to stands with the king’s horses

A crow does not pull out the eye of another crow

A crow does not pull out the eye of another crow
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Every ass thinks himself worthy to stand with the kings horses

اسب بی خود آب می خورد، اسب بر جیزی تا خانه کنی می نیست و ناپذیر کردن.

2.5. Cow Expressions and Salient Semantic Features

In many cultures the cow is symbolic of Mother Earth, and has been a symbol of fertility, nurturing, and power. This makes udder sense (pardon the pun), cows have been generous with their life force for eons. They are closely associated with provision and very earth-associated in symbolism.

The cow is also a lunar symbol, aligning itself with feminine (yin) qualities (see list of yin attributes) among the Chinese yin-yang energies.

A quick-list of Animal symbolism of the cow would include:

- Patience
- Nourishment
- Abundance
- Fertility
- Female Power
- Potential
- Possibility
- Calming
- Grounded
- Provision
- Beginnings
- as awkward as a cow on roller skates
- - very awkward
- a bull in a china shop
- - a tactless person who upsets others or upsets plans, a very clumsy person
- a cash cow
- - a product or service that makes much money
- have a cow
- - to become very angry and upset about something
- hit the bulls-eye
- - to reach or focus on the main point of something

Holy cow
- - used to express strong feelings of astonishment or pleasure or anger
- a sacred cow
- - a person or thing that is never criticized or changed even if it should be (from a cow which is sacred in India).
Cow expressions may have these semantic features:

- Not know a B from a bull's foot
- It is an endless task
- As well-known as the village pump
- It is and endless task

Snake symbolic meaning, overwhelmingly and in various cultures, deals with primordial life force and usually turns our attention to gender supremacy (both male and female).

Consequently, snakes span the symbolic bridge between lunar and solar associations as well as aspects between water and fire.

Coiled within this polarity, we clearly see symbolism of duality and the search for balance. Other snake symbolic meaning includes:
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- Cycles
- Rebirth
- Patience
- Fertility
- Eternity
- Balance
- Cunning
- Intuition
- Awareness
- Healing
- Intellect
- Protection
- Solemnity
- Rejuvenation
- Transformation
- Occult (hidden) Knowledge

The snake is a symbol meaning danger, charm and sexual energy (especially male). The snake is one of the oldest symbols, appearing repeatedly in the Bible as well as in the iconography of Egypt and other ancient cultures. The snake is one of the Chinese astrological symbols. Those born under the snake sign lead charmed lives, usually gain or inherit wealth and are seductive and attractive to others. They may be insecure or possessive but they know how to get things done.

**SNAKE**

**snake in the grass:** There is trouble.

**if it was a snake it would have bit you:** very close **mad as a struck snake:** cruel and angry

**once a snake, always a snake:** people do not change **slippery as a snake:** Tricky—unable to trust

In Persian **Snake** expressions may have these semantic features:

مَار

مار به دست دیگری گرفت (کشتن)

او را سپر بی‌سانختن

مار خوردن - تحمل گرفته و کرده زشت و زندنه کردن

مار در استیت ذاشتن - ظاهر الاصلاح و بدباطن یوحن

مار خوردن واقعی شدن - کنایه از سرد و گرم روزگار را چشیدن و بسیار محرب و کار دیده

انقدر مار خوردنه که افغی شده

مار را با زیان از سوراخ بیرون کشتن - کنایه از زیان بازی و چرب زیبایی کردن و گرمی را فرفتن

مار از پونه بهش می آید در لانه اش هم سبز می شود.

Everything goes to him who does not want it

مَار گرده از ریسیمان سیاه و سفید می ترسد

مار از پونه بهش می آید، جلوی لانه اش سبز می شود.

مار اگر زهر دارد، یاده به هم دارد

Take the bad with the good

مار به آن است که بر گان می زند / بر آن بن است که بر ایمان زند

Better be alone than in a bad company

مار به دست دشمن می کشد
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It is good to strike the serpent’s head with your enemy’s hand

مار یوست یگدارد، خون نمی گدارد

What is taken in with the milk, only goes with the soul

مار چو پیرش آفی میشود

Old foxes want no tutors

از مار چه زایده، مار بچه

An evil crow, an evil egg

مار خاک هر می قوی ردگ مان خاک میشود

When you drink from the stream, remember the spring

مار خانه را به دست همسایه بادی گرفت

Take the chestnuts out of the fire with the cat’s paw

مار خوش خط و خالی است

He is like a snake in the grass

اندر مار خورده به که افاغی شده

It is good to follow an old fox

مار در استفسی می پروراند

God defend me from my friends; from my enemies I can defend myself

مار که پیرش قورباغه سوارش میشود

Little birds pick at the dead lion

مارمرده نگرد

Dead men don’t bite

مار هر کجا که بروند توی لانه خودش راست میروند

The devil looks after his own

مارگیر را بالا خوره مار میکشد

He has brought up a bird to pick out his own eyes

مار ماهی است نامار است و نه ماهی

Neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring

اگر تو ماری ن من افوعی هستم

The bitter is sometimes bit

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As it is revealed in the table, fox, camel, horse, snake and cow evokes semantic features both in English and some other languages than in Persian.

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

Table1. The semantic features of some certain animals in Persian, English, and some other languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>vehicle</th>
<th>Semantic feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>fox</td>
<td>Cunning, strategy, quick-thinking, Adaptability, cleverness, wisdom, focus, determination, right-action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>camel</td>
<td>Endurance, Transport, Protection, Survival, Conservation, Journeying, Adaptive, Obedience, Temperance, Nobility, Humility, Stamina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>horse</td>
<td>Power, Grace, Beauty, Nobility, Strength, Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>snake</td>
<td>Cycles, Rebirth, Patience, Fertility, Eternity, Balance, Cunning, Intuition, Awareness, Healing, Intellect, Protection, Solemnity, Rejuvenation, Transformation, Occult (hidden) Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>cow</td>
<td>Patience, Nourishment, Abundance, Fertility, Female Power, Potential, Possibility, Calming, Grounded, Provision, Beginnings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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پشتکار
شتر که علف می خواهد گردن دراز می کند

- Flesh stands never so high but a dog will venture his legs

از اسب دو، از صاحبش جو
No mill, no meal

اسب چوبی اگر کاه و جو نمی خورد راه هم نمی رود
As the work, so the pay.

سیگر برود اسکر می یابد
گنج و مار با هم هستند

بول
شتر بزرگ است، زحمت هم زیاد است
dm روباه باین روباه است

تجریه
اگر علی ساربان است می داند شتر را گذاشته بخواهند
اندر مار خوردگی که افعی شده
اگر تو ماری من افعی هستم
مار گزیده از ریسمان سیاه و سفید می ترسد

توضیح
اسب شاه را نعل می کردن، به هم پای خود را بند کرد

حرص
از اسب افتاده، زین اسب را رها نمی کند
کره داده، شتر می خواهد

حقیقت
شتر سواری دولالا نمی شود

دنیا
زمانی که ماری است که خشک و نر را می بلند

دوستی
یار بیدنتر بود از مارد
یار قدمی اسب زین کرده است

ذات
از مار چه زاید، مار بچه
مار چو پیر شد افعی می شود
مار پوست با گذراد، خوی نمی گذارد
خر به زدن اسم نمی شود

زیرگی
روباه از زیرگی اش به تله افتاد
روباه سیاه از کمر به تله می افتد
اگر تو روباهی من دم روباه
4. CONCLUSION

This paper analyses the connotations between the English and Persian animal words, and compares the animal images and their connotations. We have learned that animal words have their own features and cultural connotations in their own languages. Some of their cultural connotations and images are the same, but most of them are different, and some even exist only in their own language and make the vacancies between the two languages. These differences are caused by religion, history, geographical environment, customs, and so on.

We cannot always translate directly the animal words of the original from the source language into the target language. We must be well acquainted with the habits and environments of both the source language and the target language before translating them into the target language, and try our best to know the connotations carried by animal words. In the process of translation, we should pay special attention to the cultural connotations of animal words of the two languages, keep objectivity of the original and shun subjectivity. Only in this way, can we translate properly both the real meaning and the style of the original from the source language into the target language.

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