

## **A Diachronic Investigation of “gereftan”’s Meanings from the Perspective of Componential Analysis and Cognitive Semantics: Proving Polysemy via Representation of Image Schemas**

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### **Extended abstract**

#### **1- Introduction**

Present research has been an attempt to investigate semantic aspects of “gereftan” diachronically, within the framework of cognitive semantics. The noticeable question in the present analysis is that if there exists a verb, namely “gereft/gir” which is used in modern Persian with many different meanings or if there exists different “gereft/gir”’s, each is associated with a meaning. For diachronic analysis of semantic aspects of “gereftan”, the authors have collected historical data from Iranian languages, i.e., forms and meanings of this verb have been gathered from Avesta, ancient Persian, middle Persian and modern Persian, namely Dari (versified and prose texts from Islamic era). Main questions in this research are: Do present documents affirm the polysemy of “gereftan”? Which image schemas are represented in compound constructions in which this word has been the verbal part? What kind of relationship is there between the represented image schemas on the one hand and the semantic components which have caused polysemy of this word on the other hand?

#### **2- Theoretical Framework**

*Polysemy*: Polysemy is a technical term in semantics used for words having different, but related meanings. Thus, in lexical semantics, words with different meanings are considered polysemous; but under the condition that was mentioned, meanings have at least one semantic component in common.

*Image schemas*: Image schemas are schematic pictures from humans’ embodied experiences imagined and formed in their minds. Image schemas lack details. They are abstract entities which contain repetitive models related to humans’ embodied experiences. Image schemas’ source of emergence is interaction with the outer world and conceptualizations after experiencing the world. The fact that humans talk so easily about abstract entities is because of the similarities they see or create between concrete experiences and concepts and abstract ones. Image schemas have different

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types as containment, movement, surface, force, path, directional, source, destination, event, and possession schemas.

### 3- Methodology

Gathering data for this research has been done in libraries and the analysis of the gathered data has been done using comparison and description. In order to determine semantic components of “gereftan”, first, different forms and meanings of this word have been cited from Avesta, Old Persian and Middle Persian. Then, using Dehkhoda dictionary, some parts of old versified and prose texts from Beyhaghi History and Shahnameh (by Ferdowsi) have been cited in order to investigate semantic function of “gereftan” in Dari Persian. Finally, evidences of semantic function of “gereftan” in New Persian have been found from Sokhan Persian dictionary. With observing the represented image schemas in the verb “gereft/gir” and the compound words in which this verb have been used, the authors have come to the conclusion that “gereftan” is a polysemic word according to historical and etymological evidences and certain types of image schemas are observed in linguistic constructions in which “gereftan” has been used. It was determined by the main semantic component of this word that in its own turn, has accompanied different meanings of “gereftan”.

### 4- Results and Discussion

The word “gereftan” is the remainder of the root “grab-” in Avesta and old Persian. The root “grab” is polysemous and had been used with the meanings “get”, “gain”, “understand” and “feel”. Getting something, occupying a place, understanding something and also feeling something all have a semantic component in common and that is [+ get something] / [+have something with oneself] either concretely or abstractly, as something which the agent do or the state which an experiencer experiences. In middle Persian, “giriftan/girift” and “gir” are the remainders of “grab-” in Avesta and in old Persian, associated with the meanings “get”, “feel”, “understand” and “percept”. In Dari, the word “gereftan” has been used with semantic components [+ receive] and [+ get the authority of]/ [+ have something with oneself]. Today, in modern Persian this word is used with semantic components [+ have something with oneself], [+ possession], [+ transmit power] and [+ initiate]. This semantic component can be used with different degrees of concreteness and abstractness. For instance, in the compound verb “bu gereftan” “bu” has been considered as a concrete object which the patient of the verb receives and keeps it with him. In a sentence as “matlab ra gereftam” (I got the point), speaker’s intention is to talk about receiving the content of the transferred message which is of course an abstract entity. The patient of “gereftan” might be something concrete like “yek nafar” (somebody) or something abstract like “ghol” (promise). In addition to possession image schema, other types of image schemas like movement, path, source and destination are also represented in compound constructions in which one of the building parts is “gereftan”. Because with semantic fulfilment of “gereftan”, we have movement in a certain direction and at the point where the patient of the verb is, we have the destination of such a movement, the point at which the movement ends. With regard to these common semantic components, different meanings of

“gereftan” can be analyzed considering the image schemas possession, path, source, destination and force. The concepts path, source and destination are primary concepts which are gathered together to form the image schemas movement and event.

### 5- Conclusion and Suggestions

Due to historical evidences, the verb “gereft/gir” must be considered as a polysemous verb and considering different “gereftan”s as homonym words is wrong. Historical documents and semantic evidences have shown that different meanings of “gereftan” have semantic component(s) in common, namely, movement in a certain path, from a certain source and reaching a certain destination. Today, these semantic components relate different meanings of “gereft/gir”. The investigations have shown that the type of formed and represented image schema is related to the main semantic component of the verb which has been used in a given compound verb. Observed image schemas in compound verbs with “gereft/gir” as verbal part are possession, force and source which represent semantic components [+ have something with oneself], [+ possession], [+ transmit power] and [+ initiate].

**Key Words:** diachronic semantics, cognitive semantics, componential analysis, polysemy and image schemas.

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