From Heavy to Light Verb: The Case of dādaen (‘to give’) in Persian Based on the Cognitive Semantics

Reza Soltani
Ph.D. Candidate of Linguistics, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Dr. Mohammad Amouzadeh 1
Professor of Linguistics, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Received: 3 August 2017 Accepted: 4 February 2018

Extended abstract

1. Introduction

Light verb constructions (LVCs) are so pervasive in Persian that a heavy verb may act in various constructions as a light verb (LV). This makes the heavy verb lose some parts of its main meaning in such constructions and get away from its prototype meaning. However, this does not imply that no systematic relationship can be found between the heavy verb and its light counterpart. The purpose of this paper is to explore these relationships among the heavy verb, dādaen (to give), and the resulting LVCs.

2. Theoretical Framework

The framework adopted in this study is cognitive semantics in general and cognitive lexical semantics and force-dynamics in particular. Cognitive lexical semantics consists of various theories including prototype categorization, image schemas, conceptual metaphor and foregrounding. According to this approach, different meanings of a word form a semantic category whose semantic similarities and commonalities are greater in more central meanings than in more peripheral ones. Moreover, the relationships among these meanings may be explained in terms of conceptual metaphor, image schemas and foregrounding. LVs also form a network of related meanings that could be explained in this way. Another concept is force-dynamics which deals with interaction of entities in relation to force. Regarding the LVCs, it is assumed that the characteristics of the interactions of the forces of heavy verbs would be preserved in LVCs. These may include the source of energy, its direction and the recipient of the energy. For example, if a heavy verb denotes a self-oriented action, light uses also refer to a self-oriented event.

3. Methodology

This paper is a descriptive-analytical study. The data included LVCs using the verb dādaen and were collected from various library resources and previous studies. To analyze the data, first the semantic structure of the heavy verb, dādaen, was examined based on the Newman (1996)’s model and various aspects of this structure was
identified. Then, drawing on the principles of cognitive lexical semantics, the light uses of dâdæn and their relations to the components of the semantic structure of the heavy verb were established. Furthermore, the force-dynamics of the heavy verb dâdæn and its traces in the light uses were examined. As a result, the ways dâdæn could be lightened were discussed and characterized in different categories.

4. Results and Discussion

LVCs maintain one or more semantic aspects of the heavy verb dâdæn. The concept of “interpersonal communication” can be accounted for by the metaphoric mapping between elements of communication and the conduit metaphor. “Causality” is directly related to literal transfer of objects into the receiver’s control domain and the control aspect is associated with the concepts of “permission” or “strength” in LVCs. Moreover, control domain may be related to the concepts such as “emergence” of a phenomenon. Concerning the force-dynamic properties, light uses of dâdæn mostly tend to keep these properties as other-oriented outward actions.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

At first it seems that the heavy verb, dâdæn, has a simple structure and its main parts consist of a sender, an object, and a receiver. However, there are more to this structure such as control domain, force-dynamics, and transfer. The light uses of dâdæn are systematically related to various aspects of the semantic structure of the heavy dâdæn. In other words, these literal aspects are mapped onto more metaphorical concepts such as causality which is one of the most common concepts expressed by the light dâdæn. This means that the light dâdæn has turned into a causal verb in the process of losing the meaning of its prototype as a heavy verb. This may be directly a function of the force-dynamics of heavy dâdæn which similar to a causative verb, expresses actions towards other entities. In other words, transfer or imposition of a state on an entity is perceived as transfer of an object to a receiver.

Key Words: dâdæn, light verb, semantic structure, cognitive semantics

References (In Persian)

References (In English)


