

An Interpretation of the Significance of ‘Time’: The Case of English and Persian Proverbs

Ali Dabbagh

Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Gonbad Kavous University, P.O. box 163, Gonbad, Iran

Mahdi Noshadi

Department of Education, Fars, Iran

Abstract—This study aimed at investigating how people conceptualize time as an essential capacity of human cognitive processes and how such conceptualizations are reflected in a given language. Accordingly, English and Persian cross-culturally equivalent proverbs which reflect deeply rooted perspectives of the two languages were analyzed. After the classification of proverbs in four functions, Evan's (2007) model of temporal conception was utilized to analyze them. To understand the process of verb(s) and the role given to the word ‘time’ in those proverbs, Halliday's (1994) System of Transitivity was applied. Also, the frequency of senses and roles given to the word ‘time’ were calculated and compared to find out the dominant sense and roles, respectively and the probable cause(s) underlying their similarities and/or differences. Our findings indicated that English proverbs made use of more influential words and concepts about the significance of time. The overall results are discussed and implications are mentioned.

Index Terms—significance of time, proverb, language, culture, system of transitivity

I. INTRODUCTION

An appropriate use of the concept of time has long been a real challenge for all human societies. In addition, all over the world, different people perceive the concept of 'time' in quite different manners. That's why the provision of a comprehensive as well as operational definition for the concept of time in a non-controversial approach applicable to all natural languages and contexts has invariably eluded prominent philosophers and linguists. While different dictionaries suggest several definitions for the concept of 'time', the common ground in most definitions is that 'time' is a space. In *The Treasure of French Language*, for example, 'time' has been defined as “a coherent and uncertain space where there are organisms and objects and which is characterized by two properties of continuity and succession” (Imbs & Quommada, 2004, p. 908). Furthermore, in the *Dictionary of the French Language*, 'time' is also defined as "a space where it seems all organisms are irreversibly changing and transforming as well as events and phenomena which are consecutively in interaction with each other", (Robert, 2007, p. 625). In such definitions, there is only one general time. Elsewhere (Evans, 2007) the conception of time is depicted as “a neurological activity in the brain, innate timing mechanisms, which give rise to perceptual moments, and thus are in large part responsible for what we perceive” (p. 735). Therefore, it is possible that different neurological activities are the cause of different conception of time in different cultures or even within a certain culture. On the other hand, we have to empirically accredit that 'time' is a power imposed on our will, mind and spirit which can shape different modes in accordance with significant conducts by humans.

As one important factor in modern daily life and social interaction, time plays a large role in everyday communication among different societies with different cultural backgrounds. Obviously, where there exists no thorough understanding of the similarities and differences towards the meaning formation of time in people's mind, misunderstanding may occur in their social interactions. Proverbs are certainly one way to scrutinize people's thoughts and ideas towards different concepts. In addition, they are considered as one of the frequent units of language occurred in everyday communication. They are also rooted in folklore, religion, history and culture of a particular society (Honeck, 1997). Therefore, an investigation into the proverbs in different communities and cultures can reveal some hidden aspects of their people's viewpoint towards different social matters.

As a significant indicator of the culture and viewpoint of people, proverbs are mostly deprived of being the focus of the previous studies primarily conducted on people's conception of time. Smith (1961) sees ‘time’ as conceptually culture-bound. He believes that “cultures have different perspectives about time. In some cultures time is an important part of people’s life while in the others it is not. Three distinct versions of cultures and their views on time can be considered: cultures run by time, cultures without time, and cultures with unique perspectives on time” (p. 83). Other researches in this area, to name a few, were about whether Chinese and English think differently about time reflected in Yahoo and Google news, (Chen, 2007), and using special features of language to think about time (Boroditsky, 2000; Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2008), in none of which the proverbs of the language of interest were used as the unit of study. Moreover, despite a seemingly contrastive viewpoint of Iranian and English people on time, almost

no research has so far been conducted on the viewpoint of Iranian and English people on time. Thus the need to do research on the nature of Iranian and English people's understanding of time reflected in their proverbs remains, especially to see whether the reported findings support that these two groups have the same or different meaning for time.

Accordingly, the current study is an attempt to answer the following research questions: (1) how do Persian and English proverbs reflect Iranian and English people's perspective towards the significance of time in everyday life? (2) If there is found any differences in perspective, what is the rationale behind such differences?

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

One of the major institutionalized mechanisms in comprehending abstract concepts such as time and the way individuals act with regard to that understanding is definitely the use of conceptual metaphor which is closely related to works of scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1993). In its wide sense, conceptual metaphor is defined as "cognitive structures that allow us to conceptualize and understand one domain in terms of another" (Sharifian, 2015, p. 475). Recent studies have revealed that how use of language reflects culturally constructed metaphors (Kövecses, 2005; Quinn, 2005; Yu, 2003) that provide a basis of the way people from different cultures conceptualize their experiences differently. Such conceptual metaphors manifest themselves in almost all components of a given language including proverbs (Bartel, 1983) which reveal cross-cultural differences in their conceptual systems. In order to better understand a language or the way people of that language think, one may inevitably resort to the study of proverbs. The culture-specific attribute of proverbs manifests most when two languages are compared with each other. As a ubiquitous literary genre, proverbs have certainly a rich communicative function in different natural languages. Obviously, the extensive use of proverbs in a given language pertains to their crucial role they play in the negotiation of meanings among the speakers of that language. With this in mind, any failure to understand the metaphoric meaning of proverbs may break down any level of communication. Specifically, confusion may arise in terms of two cultures or languages in contact with each other.

A. *Proverbs: Definitions and Investigations*

The study of proverbs is termed as 'paremiology' and according to Mieder (2005), research on proverbs dates back to human written records. With respect to the origins of the proverbs, Meider (2004) postulates that proverbs are invented by people either intentionally or unintentionally, as expressed in its definition in Lord John Russell's: "A proverb is the wit of one and the wisdom of many." (ibid, p. 1). According to Dahl (2003), proverb is a product of the extremely popular medium of communication. In the view of Meider (1985, p. 119) proverb is defined as "a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation". Norrick (1985, p. 78) asserts that "proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning". Beside the aforementioned attempts to define proverb, there have been some efforts to investigate this complicated language unit. In his study entitled "Idiotisms, Proverbs, Maxims (sayings)", Greimas A. J. (1961) investigated proverbs and maxims using structural and linguistic methods. By evaluating Signifier and Signified, he compared their structures using syntagmatic axis and indicated how implicit meanings and semantic halo are produced (the examples provided are in French language).

As proverbs are deeply rooted in people's culture and thought pattern (Honeck, 1997), they can show the attitude of a particular society towards different social concepts (see, for example, Mieder & Lewandowska (2008)). Time may not be an exception in this regard. Obviously, not everyone all over the world looks at the concept of time in the same way due to the fact that their fundamental understanding of notions such as time is based on "conceptual mappings which do not appear to be universal" (Sharifian, 2009, p. 244). Some cultures are wary of time passing by, while others run their lives by the clock. This assumption can be reflected in the language expressions people use every day like in proverbs. These expressions are reflections of the ideas and beliefs of communities and societies which are used as the weakest base of logic in everyday communication (Partovi, 2000).

B. *The Nature of Temporal Expression and Concept of Time*

Two primary problems of the conception of temporal expressions include: the metaphysical and linguistic problem of time. The former can be elaborated as "if we are aware of time, and yet cannot be said to actually perceive it without, for instance, 'the precise ticking of clocks', which serve to measure its 'silence', what is the nature and status of time?" (Evans, 2004, p. 4). The linguistic problem states that although time is central to our understanding of other events, we do not use time's own terms to talk about it and use other events, e.g. motion and space (Casasanto and Boroditsky, 2008). To better understand the nature of temporal conceptions, we should first answer the question of how our minds receive the temporal conception. It is necessary to look at the problem from temporal cognition point of view, i.e. "that aspect of conceptual structure which relates to our conceptualization of time" (Evans, 2007, p. 733). This view postulates that "it concerns the mental function responsible for temporal experience at the pre-conceptual level, as well as organization and structuring of the temporal concepts at the conceptual level, i.e. within the conceptual system". But there is a third view which claims, as Evans puts it, "[...] whereas temporal experiences do not have a veridical

sensory-motor dimension in the same way that, say, a motion event has, they are nevertheless *phenomenologically real*" (Evans, 2008, p. 32) [emphasis added]. This level of temporal representation derives from our own experience of the concept of time.

Conception of time in different cultures has to date been the focus of very few researches. Boroditsky (2001), in a study of Mandarin and English conception of time, when they use English as a medium of interaction, showed that English people talk about time horizontally but Mandarin talk about time vertically. In another phase of this study it was shown that the degree that English and Mandarin think about time vertically depends on their age when they start learning English. In another study, Cassanto and Boroditsky (2008) investigated whether people *think* about time by the use of special representation even when they do not use language code. In so doing, they devised six psychological experiments and found that judging about temporal duration is dependent on special conception but not the reverse. They concluded that "our mental representation of things we can never see or touch may be built, in part, out of representation of physical experiences in perception and motor action" (ibid, p. 579).

After all, the question is how we can get into people's mind and find out the ways different languages conceptualize different abstract concepts such as time. Kimeny (2006) claimed that it is possible to get insight into people's world view by investigating their vocabulary and especially proverbs. In another study by Gibbs and Bietel (1995) it was suggested that "many proverbs reveals the presence of metaphorical schemes that are ubiquitous in everyday thought" (p.133). The previous research on this issue can be divided into two main categories. In the first category, the proverbs were analyzed in general without focusing on certain notions. In this regard, Zolfaghari (2009) investigated Persian proverbs from semantic and syntactic perspectives. He explained borrowed, foreign, broken and taboo vocabulary in Persian proverbs and distinguished the syntactic part of proverbial sentences and their types. In another study, Kolahdouz Mohammadi and Nabifar (2012) comparatively analyzed 200 Persian and English proverbs using Halliday's systemic functional linguistics which resulted in describing the distribution of Halliday's processes in Persian and English proverbs. In the second category of studies on proverbs, a specific notion was put as the center of investigation. Numerous studies have revealed the reflection of different concepts in proverbs, including the use of proverbs in literature (Kimilike, 2008; Hadissi, 2010; Zolfaghari, 2012), understanding psychological disorders of a society through proverbs (Alexander & Schmiere, 2010), doing useless tasks (Shafaghi & Timdari, 2014), woman (Zahedi & Imani, 2011; Masoumi & Rahiminejad, 2012), color (Aliakbari & Khosravian, 2013) and animal (Estaji & Nakhavali, 2011). As it is clear abstract concepts such as time were deprived of being the focus in past studies on conceptual reflections in proverbs. This paper aims to investigate the conception of time represented in Persian and English proverbs to find out any probable differences.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Corpus

Cross-culturally equivalent Persian and English proverbs related to the concept of time, from *The Comprehensive Dictionary of Persian Proverbs* (Dehgan, 2004), *A Versified Dictionary of Farsi Proverbs and their English Equivalents* (Mousavi, 1963), *Dehkhoda's (1980) Amsal o Hekam* for Persian proverbs and *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (2004) for English ones were chosen as the corpus of the present study. The researchers checked the genuineness of the proverbs throughout the aforementioned sources and chose the common ones for analysis. The selected proverbs in the two languages were cross-checked with a comparative bilingual dictionary called *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Proverbs* (Gorjian & Molonia, 2004). This dictionary compiles Persian proverbs taken from Iranian culture along with their equivalent English ones from original proverbs and sayings in English literature. The authors of this dictionary have applied three methods in order to find the exact equivalents of the respective proverbs: 1. Entries wherein structural, semantic, as well as conceptual approaches are taken into account to find the equivalents. 2. Entries wherein structural and conceptual approaches are used through the same meaning equivalent but their literal meanings are not presented in Persian equivalents. 3. Entries wherein the conceptual translation is only suggested. It should be noted that as the nature of this study demands, we just took into account the proverbs in which the word 'time' was directly used.

B. Analytical Framework

Evans' (2007) model of conceptual meaning of time and Halliday's (1994) transitivity system were applied as the bases for analysis in the current study. Evans' (2007) model was applied in this study primarily because it was sought to find the conceptual viewpoints of people in Persian and English languages towards the senses of time as an abstract idea. Hence, the primary objective of the use of Evans' (2007) model was to compare and contrast the Persian and English proverbs in terms of the conceptual senses of time whereas Halliday's (1994) transitivity system aimed to find out the process of the verb(s) used in both Persian and English proverbs and the role given to the word 'time' in those proverbs as a means to reflect experiential meaning of time in the proverbs of the two languages. A brief explanation of the two models follows:

C. Evans' Model of Conceptual Meaning of Time

This model analyzes different concepts of time in terms of meaning, concept elaboration and distinct grammatical patterns which, in general, make a specific lexical concept for time as follows: **Duration sense**, in which the meaning

of time is associated with the notion of duration, elaborated as length and is grammatically considered as a mass noun. The **moment sense** determines a discrete temporal point, is elaborated based on ego-centric motion events, and is grammatically a count noun. In **Instance Sense**, time is thought of as an instance of a particular event, process, etc. With regard to lexical elaboration, time in this sense relates to something which is an instance of something else. In terms of grammatical structure, time in this sense can occur both in ordinal and cardinal numbers. The **Event Sense** indicates the beginning and end of an event sequence. The **Matrix Sense** refers to an unbounded entity which has unlimited elapse with an independent nature from what it subsumes. It is elaborated in terms of steady state and is a mass noun grammatically. The **Agentive Sense** has the ability to affect the environment or our lives in terms of bringing about a change of state which is grammatically a proper noun. Time in **Measurement System Sense** is used as a measurement system which correlates between a periodic behavior in the external world and our internal experience of duration. Time in **Commodity Sense** refers to an entity which is valuable and thus can be traded, acquired, etc. which is grammatically a mass noun. A summary of this model is given in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1.
SUMMARY OF LEXICAL CONCEPTS FOR TIME (EVANS, 2007: 748)

Name	Meaning	How elaborated	Grammatical encoding
Duration sense	Assessment of magnitude of duration	Length, e.g., a long time	Mass noun: can appear with definite article and some quantifiers
Sub-sense 1: protracted duration	Duration 'slower' than usual	Slow motion, e.g., time drags	
Sub-sense 2: temporal compression	Duration 'faster' than usual	Fast motion, e.g., time flies	
Moment sense	A discrete temporal 'point'	Ego- centred motion, e.g., the time is approaching...	Count noun: can appear with definite and indefinite articles
Instance sense	An occurrence of some kind	N/A	Count noun: can appear with ordinal and cardinal numbers
Event sense	A boundary-even of some kind	Ego- centred motion, e.g., Her time is approaching...	Count noun: cannot take articles but can be preceded by pronouns and possessive noun phrases
Matrix sense	An unbounded elapse conceived as the event subsuming all others	Non-terminal motion, e.g., time flows on forever	Mass noun: cannot be preceded by definite or indefinite articles
Agentive sense	A causal force responsible for change	Agent- centred action, e.g., time devours	Proper noun: cannot be preceded by definite or indefinite articles
Measurement- system sense	A means of measuring change and other behaviors, events, etc	Motion events oriented with respect to an inanimate centre, e.g., The time is moving towards 10	Proper noun or mass noun
Commodity sense	A resource	The manipulation of resources, e.g., We're spending time together	Mass noun

D. Halliday's Transitivity System

As a significant classification of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, Transitivity System analyzes various types of processes. Transitivity shows "how speakers encode in language their mental picture of reality and how they account for their experience of the world around them" (Simpson, 1993, p. 88). It is believed that "the particular form taken by the grammatical system of language is closely related to the social and personal needs that language is required to serve" (Halliday, 1970, p. 142). In Halliday's terms, these needs are called 'functions'. According to Halliday (ibid), these functions govern the form of clauses. They may be *representation* (ideational function), an *exchange* (interpersonal function), and a *message* (textual function), the first of which was used as the focus of this study due to its idea-revealing nature. For Halliday (1994), "process" is referred to as "the system of transitivity" (p.106) which essentially goes under the rubric of six main process types: **Material processes**, are expressed by verbs of "real tangible actions" (Eggins, 1994, p. 230) such as *walk, kick, speak, kill, and hit* which are processes of physical doing. Material verbs have as their principal participants an *actor (agent)*, that is, someone who performs the action, and a *goal (patient)*, the thing or person which is acted on. The 'actor' is obligatory, whereas the 'goal' is optional (Halliday, 1994). **Mental processes** are expressed by verbs to do with feeling, sensing, affection, and thinking. Verbs such as *love, hate, know, think, understand, and see*, fall into this category. According to Halliday, two participants are involved in this process: *senser (experiencer)*, a conscious being that feels or senses, and the *phenomenon (experienced)*, the one/thing that is sensed or felt. **Relational processes** are characteristically expressed by linking verbs such as *is, or have*. Halliday (ibid) subdivides this type of process into *attribution* and *identification*. *Carrier* and *attribute* are identified as participants in attribution processes, and *identified, identifier, token, and value* in identification ones. **Behavioral processes** are "typically processes of physiological and psychological behavior" (Eggins, 1994, p. 250), expressed by verbs such as *cough, yawn, and smile*. Halliday described them as half way between mental and material processes. These verbs have only one participant; the person who smiles or laughs is termed the *behavior*. **Verbal processes** are "processes of verbal action: saying" (ibid, p. 251), which include a large category of verbs such as *say, report, claim, and question*. Halliday regards the participant performing the saying as the *sayer*, what is said is the *verbiage*, and the person it is said to as the *target*. **Existential processes** consist of clauses in which there acts as a grammatical subject.

The only significant participant is the thing, or person, being affirmed as existing. This is termed the *existent* (Halliday, 1994). A schematic representation of this system is given in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2.
HALLIDAY'S TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM

Process	Definition	Participant
Material	it is the process of doing	a. Actor b. Goal c. Range d. Beneficiary
Mental	verbs to do with feeling, sensing, affection, and thinking	a. Senser b. Phenomenon
Relational	Being and relation among entities via identification, attribution, and possession	a. identifying 1. Token 2. Value b. Attributive 1. Carrier 2. Attribute 3. Circumstance
Behavioral	Physiological and psychological behavior	a. Behaver b. Behavior
Verbal	Activities related to information	a. Sayer b. Receiver c. Verbiage
Existential	Existing without predicting anything additional about it	Existence

E. Procedure

The design applied to conduct this study is descriptive. The procedure for data analysis was in two main phases as follows:

In the first phase of the study, the researchers divided Persian and English proverbs based on their functions in the respected language. Such classification resulted in the four functions of patience, value of time, significance of presence, and educational principle. The validity of the classification was cross-checked by two Ph.D. holders in Persian literature and two in Applied Linguistics. Then, based on Evans's (2007) model of conceptual senses of time in language, the selected Persian and English proverbs were compared and contrasted with each other. After that, Halliday's System of Transitivity was applied to the proverbs to find out the process of the verb(s) used in both Persian and English proverbs and the role given to the word 'time' in those proverbs.

In the second phase of the study, descriptive statistics were utilized to evaluate the relative frequency of the categories mentioned above for both English and Persian proverbs. Finally, the probable cause(s) underlying similarities and/or differences between the reflections of senses and role of the word 'time' in the proverbs were addressed.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, first the results of proverb analysis based on Evans' (2007) model of conceptual meaning will be detailed. Then, analysis of proverbs in terms of Halliday's (1994) Transitivity System will be presented and discussed. Finally, the overall results are discussed based on the previous studies.

A. Conceptual Meaning of Time Reflected in Persian and English Proverbs

The results of the analysis of English and Persian proverbs in terms of the senses used in both languages are presented in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3.
ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND PERSIAN PROVERBS IN TERMS OF THE SENSES AND FUNCTIONS (%)

Classification Sense	Significance of present		Patience		Value of time		Educational principle	
	P	E	P	E	P	E	P	E
Duration	5.88	0	0	0	11.76	6.44	0	6.44
Moment	5.88	0	0	0	0	3.22	0	3.22
Instance	0	3.22	0	0	0	0	0	6.44
Event	0	0	5.88	0	5.88	0	0	9.66
Matrix	0	0	0	0	11.76	19.32	23.2	3.22
Agentive	0	0	5.88	12.88	5.88	0	0	12.88
Measurement	0	0	0	0	0	3.22	0	0
Commodity	0	0	0	0	11.76	6.44	0	3.22

As the Table shows, approximately both languages have proverbs—although in different senses—about 'the value of time' with 47.04 % for Persian proverbs and 38.64% for English proverbs. Also, English language has twice as many proverbs about 'educational principle' as Persian (45.08% for English and 23.2% for Persian). This is while English still

has more proverbs about 'patience' but fewer about 'significance of present' than Persian. This quick comparison shows that English proverbs deal with the concept of time more than Persian ones.

To show the exact difference between the two languages in terms of proverb types regarding time, the minimum and maximum percent of proverbs about time used in different function classifications and senses were compared. As Table 3 presents, the minimum use of proverbs about time is in 'significance of present' and 'patience' for Persian language, while this is just in 'significance of present' for English. With respect to the minimum use of proverbs in Persian language, the above-mentioned Table shows the same proportion of the percent of proverbs for the two function classifications, i.e. 'significance of present' and 'patience' (11.76% for each classification). This similarity of the ratio in Persian uncovers that in Persian culture one has two options in dealing with opportunities; either to take advantage of it ('significance of present') or to wait ('patience') and let things happen. In contrast, the low frequency of proverbs on 'significance of present' in English (3.22%) demonstrates that in order to show this function, English people may resort to linguistic tools other than figurative ones. On the other hand, the maximum percent of proverbs in Persian and English about time was in 'value of time' and 'educational principle', respectively. This reveals that with regard to the transmission of cultural norms and knowledge to the next generation with the aid of time proverbs, it is evident that English people prefer to consider educational principle more transferrable via such proverbs; whereas, Persian people accentuate on the value of time to transmit their cultural understandings about time to their future generation. In addition, such comparison shows that the two languages are similar in this regard and their proverbs of time talk *less* about its importance without reference to its value or educational message.

Evans' (2007) model of conceptual meaning of time provides us with more detailed analysis of the similarities and differences in terms of the viewpoints of English and Persian languages toward time, especially when the senses cross with the function classifications. Accordingly, the following results can be obtained:

B. Proverbs with 'Significance of Present' Function

English and Persian languages, as reported above, are different regarding this function. A quick look at Table 3 can lead us to such point of difference: while English people only use proverbs related to 'significance of time' in 'instance' sense, Persian proverbs use it in 'moment' and 'duration' sense. This shows that Persian people see time in the present moment as something that moves towards them and that they may change their behavior based on what should be done at that time as in proverb (1). Also, they see the present time as something that may not stop and pass by without paying attention to what is going on, as in proverb (2). However, English people have a different view and understand the present time in comparison with other times (proverb (3)). In fact, if they want to imagine the present, they should remember another time and relate it to the present. Such view reveals that unlike Persian people who put an emphasis on the magnitude of duration to reflect the significance of present, English people consider the occurrence of the stated purpose in a specific time.

- (1) *væghtə kaar kərdən cholaagh əast o væghtə khordæn gholchomaagh*
When it is time to work, he is clumsy, but when it is time to eat, he is bully
- (2) *zəmaan bekhatərə kəsi əz gærdæš nəmistæd*
The flow of time never stops for anybody
- (3) *There is no time like the present*

C. Proverbs with 'Patience' Function

Contrary to the previous category, there is not much difference between English and Persian proverbs in 'patience' function. Both languages have proverbs in this function under the sense of 'agentive' which represents 'time' as something that can make a change in the environment as the examples provided in proverbs 4 and 5. This word for word equivalence in this example show that when people of both languages come to encourage others to be patient, they turn to the agentive sense of time to convince them that the passage of time can, by itself, be of great help. However, a slight difference can be found in the use of time under 'event' sense in this function. While Persian has one proverb (6) in this sense, English doesn't have any. This difference tells us that for Persian people 'patience' in time is meaningful only when they relate it to the beginning and end of events in the future to make the consequences vivid, especially in this case where the proverb user wants to talk about not doing something for ever by referring to a flower which never blossoms. On the other hand, we can trace no track of empty promise in English proverbs since the presence of such phenomenon may degrade the value of patience in English culture.

- (4) *Time is a great healer*
- (5) *zəmaan səfəa dəhənde æst*
Time is a healer
- (6) *væghte gole nei*
When the straw flowers

D. Proverbs with the 'Value of Time' Function

Although there are some differences in the use of proverbs in this function between the two languages with proverbs in 'event' and 'agentive' sense in Persian and not in English (proverbs 7 and 8) and in proverbs in 'moment' and 'measurement' sense in English and not in Persian (proverbs 9 and 10), similarities can be found in 'duration', proverbs

(11, and 12), 'matrix', proverbs (13 and 14), and 'commodity' senses, proverbs (15 and 16). This shows that in order to extend the value of time, both languages put an emphasis on the magnitude of the duration, i.e. the progression of the action in time. Also, the two languages see time as something precious like money, gold, something that flies away and cannot be found which reflects the amount of hard effort one should spend to grasp it.

- (7) *Zæmaan baa šətaab migozæræd*
Time passes quickly
- (8) *Zæmaan bæ æghæb bær næmigærædæd*
Time does not go back
- (9) *Take time while time is going away*
- (10) *One cannot turn back the clock*
- (11) *Væght tæng æast o æ'maal bəsiar*
Time is short and there are a lot of works to do
- (12) *Time flies*
- (13) *Zæmaanə gozæštə nəyaayæd bæ bær*
Time past cannot be recalled
- (14) *Lost time is never found again*
- (15) *Væght tælaast*
Time is gold
- (16) *Time is money*

E. Proverbs with 'Educational Principle' Function

As it can be seen in Table 3, most of the proverbs in different senses in this function belong to English language except for the 'matrix' sense in which Persian has more proverbs than English (see proverbs 17-19 below). This, comparing to the value of time function, reveals that English people exploit almost all senses about time as fully as possible to teach moral sense and behaviors, whereas Persian people do likewise to make people understand the value of time. Considering this huge gap in Persian proverbs in different senses under 'educational principle' and the large number of Persian proverbs in 'value of time' function, it can be concluded that compared to the English proverbs, Persian culture does not show interest in didactic pieces of advice on time as much as it shows to some precious things when talking about time. In other words, unlike Persian people, for English ones, the value of time is more understandable when used as a teaching point than as something worthy.

- (17) *Zæmaani mæiaasaai zə aamookhtæn*
Never be ignorant of learning
- (18) *Hær zæmaani raa mærdaanist*
Each time has its own men
- (19) *Procrastination is the thief of time*

F. Description of Time in Halliday's Transitivity System

Table 4 summarizes the results of the analysis of proverbs based on Transitivity System. With regard to mental and behavioral processes, it can be seen that none of the languages processes time using verbs to do with feeling, sensing, affection as well as thinking. Nor do they process time referring to physiological and psychological behaviors. Such similarity in the viewpoints of the people in both languages highlights the fact that the concept of time cannot transfer the above-mentioned processes. Meanwhile, a sharp contrast is observed in activities related to information i.e. verbal process. While 6.24% of English proverbs go under this category, no Persian proverbs make use of such process. The most frequent use of 'time' and the related concepts in proverbs are for 'goal' and 'actor' process in English (with 25% for both roles) and 'carrier' and 'actor' in Persian (both with 23.80%) from 'relational' and 'material' processes, respectively. It shows that Persian language views time as an element of being that takes a rather intangible quality contrary to the English one that uses time as a thing that takes a real tangible action. In other words, as examples in proverbs 20 and 21 illustrates, Persian people understand 'time' with letting it be by referring it to other entities while English people grasp it as the entity itself which receives a down-to-earth action.

TABLE 4.
THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND PERSIAN PROVERBS BASED ON TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM (%)

		Process		Process		
		Material		Relational		
		P	E	P	E	
Participant	Actor	23.80	25	Token	0	0
	Goal	9.52	25	Value	0	3.12
	Range	0	0	Carrier	23.80	12.5
	Beneficiary	0	0	Attribute	9.52	3.12
	Circumstance	14.28	6.25	Circumstance	9.52	9.37
		Mental		Behavioral		
		P	E	P	E	
		Participant	Senser	0	0	Behaver
Phonomenon	0		0	Behavior	0	0
Circumstance	0		0	Circumstance	0	0
		Verbal		Existential		
		P	E	P	E	
		Participant	Sayer	0	3.12	Existence
Reciever	0		3.12	Circumstance	0	0
Verbiage	0		0			
Circumstance	0		0			

This makes understanding the importance of time for English language users easier than Persian ones. Additionally, as the Table represents, there is no proverb with the use of 'mental' and 'behavioral' process in both Persian and English language. On the other hand, the concept of 'time' is used in 'goal', 'value', 'existence', 'sayer' and 'receiver' in English more than Persian, while in 'carrier' and 'attribute' it is utilized more in Persian and about the same in 'actor' in the two languages.

(20) *Zæmaanə gozæštə nəyaayæd bə bær*

Time past cannot be recalled

(21) *An inch of gold will not buy an inch of time*

Analysis of the English and Persian proverbs revealed that in most cases English proverbs used influential techniques, such as comparing the present with other times, use of tangible actions, comparing time with precious things that are difficult to grasp, and having an educational view in comparison with techniques Persian proverbs used like relating time to the beginning of an event in far future, use of intangible actions, and lack of educational view used in Persian proverbs. These techniques reveal the distinct conceptual metaphors of 'time' that Persian and English people embody and communicate which supports results of previous studies in this area including Kövecses (2005), Quinn, (2005), Sahrfian (2009), and Yu (2003). In addition, As Afifi (1992) puts, such conceptualizations can be preserved via proverbs. The results of the present study can enrich this line in that proverbs can even maintain techniques of influencing people about certain issues, especially abstract ones like 'time'.

The fact that proverbs of time, as shown above in detail, can be the mirror to the way people of a certain culture value time is in line with many studies documenting the guiding character of proverbs in dealing with the complexity of culture and its different elements (Gibbs & Bietel, 1995; Honeck, 1997, Partovi 2000; Dahl 2003; Mieder & Lewandowska 2008; Zahedi & Imani, 2011; Estaji & Nakhavali, 2011; Alikhani & Khosravian, 2013). Although this is particularly true for tangible concepts in proverbs, the data in this study reveals that such reflection happen for abstract concepts, such as time, as well.

Additionally, results confirm claims of previous researchers like Kimeny (2006), Honeck (1997) and Partovi (2000) that it is possible to get insight into a people's mental conceptualizations through investigating their proverbs used in everyday life. Ghobadi (2013) is also of the idea that not only is proverb a good instrument to unveil social and cultural beliefs of people, but also they can make people accept a certain ideology. The results of the present study can be another movement supporting culture-revealing function of proverbs in abstract concepts like 'time'.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research reported in this paper helped to illuminate some less acknowledged aspects of language reflected in proverbs. The investigation of linguistic patterns hidden in time-related proverbs of the two different languages in this study, namely Iranian and English languages, shed light onto the conceptualization of time by the natives of the two camps. This was done through the analysis of the proverbs of the two languages both conceptually and linguistically. To highlight the important findings of this study, reference can be made to the following points:

(I) Understanding and appreciating how two apparently different languages conceptualize an abstract concept like time may have some effects in the social communication of people from these two languages in their daily lives especially when it comes to important communication types like business and political interactions.

(II) Proverbs related to a certain concept like time reflect the communal sense of people in a society, though they may be different cross-culturally, in a way that the language users believe in the ideology the proverbs represents.

Research into the nature of language-culture relationship with the focus on proverbs can be furthered through (a) investigating proverbs that indirectly refer to the concept of time with the use of words, such as ‘tomorrow’, ‘last year’ and the like, (b) analyzing diachronically the *change(s)* in view points towards time cross-culturally during history, (c) pairing native speakers’ view from the two cultures with linguistic and conceptual analysis of the proverbs regarding time.

REFERENCES

- [1] Afifi, R. (1992). Proverbs and wisdoms. Tehran: Soroush.
- [2] Alexander, R. & P. Schmierer. (2010). Proverbs and non-literal language in schizophrenia: A systematic methodological review of all studies published (1931-2010). Tübingen: University of Tübingen.
- [3] Aliakbari, M. & F. Khosravian. (2013). A corpus analysis of color-term conceptual metaphors in Persian proverbs. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 70, 11-17.
- [4] Bartel, R. (1983). Metaphors and symbols: Forays into language. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- [5] Boroditsky, L. (2000). Metaphoric structuring: understanding time through spatial metaphors. *Cognition* 75, 1-28.
- [6] Boroditsky, L. (2001). Does language shape thought? Mandarin and English speakers’ conception of time. *Cognitive Psychology* 43, 1-22.
- [7] Casasanto, D. & L. Boroditsky. (2008). Time in the mind: Using space to think about time. *Cognition* 106, 579-593.
- [8] Chen, J.Y. (2007). Do Chinese and English speakers think about time differently? Failure of replicating Boroditsky (2001). *Cognition* 104, 427-436.
- [9] Dahl, V.I. (2003). Russian proverbs. Moscow: Eksimo Press.
- [10] Dehghan, B. (2004). The comprehensive dictionary of Persian. Tehran: Assar Publication.
- [11] Dehkhoda, A.K. (1980). Amsal –o- Hekam. Tehran: Sanaii.
- [12] Estaji, A. & F. Nakhavali. (2011). Semantic derogation in Persian animal proverbs. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 1.9, 1213-1217.
- [13] Evans, V. (2004). The Structure of time: Language, meaning and temporal cognition. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- [14] Evans, V. (2007). How we conceptualize time: Language, meaning and temporal cognition. *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 18. 2, 733-765.
- [15] Evans, V. (2008). Simulation semantics and the linguistics of time: Commentary on Zwaan, *Language Learning* 58, 27-33.
- [16] Eggins, S. (1994). An introduction to systemic functional linguistics. London: Pinter Publications.
- [17] Ghobadi, A. (2013). Folklore: An instrument for cultural studies. *Faslnameye Motaleate Farhangi va Ertebatat* 30.155 – 178.
- [18] Gibbs, R. W. & D. Bietel. (1995). What proverb understanding reveals about how people think. *Psychological Bulletin* 118.1, 133-154.
- [19] Gorjian, B. & S. Molonia. (2004). A comprehensive dictionary of proverbs. Tehran: Moatabar.
- [20] Greimas, A. J. (1961). Idiotisms, proverbs, maxims (sayings). *The Notes of Lexicology* 3, 41- 61 [In French]
- [21] Hadissi, K. (2010). A socio-historical approach to poetic origins of Persian proverbs. *Iranian Studies* 43, 599-605.
- [22] Halliday, M.A.K. (1970). Language structure and language function. In J. Lyons (ed.), *New horizons in linguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 140-165
- [23] Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). An introduction to functional grammar (2nd ed.) London: Edward Arnold.
- [24] Honeck, R. (1997). A proverb in mind: The cognitive science of proverbial wit and wisdom. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- [25] Imbs, P. & B. Quemada (2004). The treasure of French language. Paris: CNRS.
- [26] Kimenyi, A. (2006). Names and proverbs: Religious significance. *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* 12. 437-440.
- [27] Kimilike, L. (2008). Poverty in the book of proverbs. An African transformational hermeneutic of proverbs on poverty. New York: Peter Lang.
- [28] Kövecses, Z. (2005). Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [29] Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In Andrew Ortony (Ed.) *Metaphor and thought* (2nd ed.) (pp 202-251). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [30] Lakoff, G. & M. Johnson. (1980). Metaphors we live by. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- [31] Meider, W. (1985). A proverb is a short sentence of wisdom. *Proverbium* 2, 109-143.
- [32] Mieder, W. (2004). Proverbs: A handbook. London: Greenwood Press.
- [33] Mieder, W. (2005). A proverb is worth a thousand words: Folk wisdom in the modern mass media. *Proverbium* 22, 167 - 234.
- [34] Mieder, W. & A. Lewandowska. (2008). Sprichwort-Gebrauch heute. Ein interkulturellkontrastiver Vergleich von Sprichwörtern anhand polnischer und deutscher Printmedien. Bern: Peter Lang.
- [35] Mohammadi, K. & N. Nabifar. (2012). A comparative study of English and Persian proverbs based on Halliday’s experiential metafunction. *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies* 2. 8&9, 22-36.
- [36] Mousavi, M. (1963). A versified dictionary of Farsi proverbs and their English equivalents. Tehran: Jahan Rayaneh.
- [37] Norrick, N.R. (1985). How proverbs mean? Semantic studies in English proverbs. Amsterdam: Mouton.
- [38] Oxford Proverb Dictionary. (2004). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [39] Partovi, M. (2000). Historical roots of proverbs. Tehran: Sanaii.
- [40] Quinn, N. (ed.) (2005) Finding culture in talk: A Collection of methods. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. Quirk, R. (1981) *Interna*.
- [41] Robert, P. (2007). Dictionary of the French language. Paris: Robert.
- [42] Shafaghi, M. & A. Timdari. (2014). Linguistic comparative investigation of expressions about useless task in Russian and Persian. *Faslnameye Jostarhaye Zabani* 17. 1, 107 – 126.
- [43] Sharifian, F. (2009). Cultural conceptualization in English as an international language. In F. Sharifian (ed.). *English as an international language: Perspectives and pedagogical issues*. Salisbury: Multilingual Matters, 242-253.

- [44] Sharifian, F. (2015). Cultural linguistics. In F. Sharifian (ed.). *The routledge handbook of language and culture*. New York / London: Routledge, 473-492.
- [45] Simpson, P. (1993). *Language, Ideology, and point of view*. London: Psychology Press
- [46] Smith, R.J. (1961). Cultural Differences in the Life Cycle and the Concept of Time. In R.W. Kleemeier (eds.). *Aging and leisure: A research perspective into the meaningful use of time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [47] Yu, N. (2003). Metaphor, body, and culture: The Chinese understanding of gallbladder and courage. *Metaphor and Symbol* 18.1, 13–31.
- [48] Zahedi, K. & A. Imani. (2011). ‘Woman’ in English proverbs: A critical discourse analysis approach. *Critical Language and Literary Studies* 4.7, 81-113.
- [49] Zolfaghari, H. (2012). Use of proverb in Iranian poetry. *Pajuheshnameye Zaban va Adabe farsi (Gohare Guya)* 6.1. 95-122.

Ali Dabbagh is an Instructor and Lecturer of Applied Linguistics at Gonbad Kavous University, Iran, where he teaches courses in Language Testing, Research Methodology, Teaching Methodology, Phonetics and Linguistics. He serves as the reviewer of *Enjoy Teaching Journal (ETJ)* and *Journal of Advances in Linguistics*. He presented and published articles in national and international academic journals and conferences. His research interests center on interlanguage pragmatic instruction and assessment, language and culture, depth of vocabulary knowledge and second language skills.

Mahdi Noshadi is an English language teacher in Department of Education, Fars, Iran. He is also an instructor in Payam-e-Noor University where he teaches General English, language testing, and English for Specific Purposes. He finished his undergraduate studies at Kharazmi University of Tehran, majoring in TEFL. He continued his graduate studies at University of Zanjan, where he got his MA degree in TEFL. He published articles in national and international academic journals and conferences. His research interests include Task-Based Language Teaching, Metacognition, and writing.