

## **Basic Colors and Their Metaphorical Expressions in English and Persian: Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Focus**

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**Abstract:** Metaphorical language is an indispensable part of human life, involving language, thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1998). Accordingly, metaphor plays a major role in people's everyday language use and thinking. Our conceptual system is based on experiences we have gained with interacting with people and things surrounding us.

In this respect, color plays an important role in convention metaphorical expressions in people's lives and daily communication. As a sub-category of metaphors, color terms are widely used literally and metaphorically in different languages and may also reflect cultural identities of language users.

Replying on "Contrastive Analysis of Metaphors" proposed by Barcelona (2001, cf. Soriano, 2003) as a cognitive qualitative method and on the basis of "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999, 2003; Grady 1997; Kövecses 2000, 2002, 2005; etc), this paper tries to investigate the extent to which connotations of basic colors, as used in the structure of metaphors are varied in English and Persian on the one hand; and, as compared to their differences in their metaphorical mappings in the languages concerned, on the other hand.

To do so, we collected English instances from The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (Siefing, 2005) and The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (Speake, 2008) and some other dictionaries. Next, Persian instances were extracted from some Persian dictionaries. The findings of this comparative analysis show that, although the connotation of colors in the structure of metaphorical expressions are overlapping each other to some extent, most of the expressions are culture-bound and specific to each language.

**Key words:** Metaphorical expressions; English; Persian; Conceptual Metaphor Theory; Metaphorical mapping; Color connotations; Contrastive Analysis of Metaphors

### **Introduction**

Tacking the Etymology Online Dictionary as our trusted source as regards, the word 'metaphor' is derived from the Greek *metaphora*, which means 'transfer', the composite *meta*, which means 'transfer, carry over', and *pherin* which is translated in English as 'to bear', or 'to carry'. Metaphor is common to all languages and cultures. It plays an important role in everyday life and is grounded in culture. Metaphorical expressions have penetrated the various aspects of our life including thought and action.

Metaphorical language is an indispensable part of human life, involving language, thought and action. Writers and speakers use metaphor to express abstract, difficult-to-talk-about concepts in term of concrete entities which are easier to understand (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993). Metaphorical expressions (MEs, hereafter) are the cream of a language. They reflect the relationship between language and culture. It is a fact that English-speaking people use over 3000 metaphors weekly on average (Littlemore, 2001, cf. Kömür & Cimen, 2009); Persian is not an exception. Metaphoricity is the main feature of all human languages. In fact, a language or any form of language, without metaphorical traits is nonexistent (Goalty, 1997). It is not confined to language. It runs trough all veins of man's everyday life, including language, thought and action.

Cognitive linguistics provides a framework within which metaphors can be described and understood. Cognitive linguists claim that metaphor is not merely a figure of speech, but it is a specific mental and neural

mapping that influences a good deal of how people think, reason and imagine in everyday life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). As proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT, hereafter) indicates that human thought processes are largely metaphorical, and human conceptual system is structured and defined in a metaphorical way. Therefore, metaphor is defined as cross-domain mapping between source and target domain. A mapping is the systematic correspondence between constituent elements of the source and target domains. The relationship is in the form of 'TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN'. They are stored together in the mind (Lan & McGregor, 2009). However, under different cultures, cultural considerations play a crucial part while conceptual mapping is carried out.

Accordingly, color plays an important role in convention MEs in people's lives. As a sub-category of metaphors, color terms are widely used both literally and metaphorically in different languages and may also reflect cultural identities of language users. Certain connotative values can be more generally associated with colors, so that they carry uncontrolled resonances in a given culture. They have also connotative meanings which can be specific to particular area of life and can differ across cultures (Phillip, 2006). In addition, connotative meanings of colors are incorporated into conventional linguistic expressions such as *to feel blue* (feel sad), *to be in the pink* (to be in the best condition), and *to see red* (become angry very rapidly) in English and *ریش سفید* /ri:sh səfi:d/ *white beard* (experienced and knowledgeable/wise man), *چشم سفید* /chəshm səfi:d/ *white eye* (impudent; impertinent person), *سیاه بخت* /si:yˆh bæxt/ *black fortune* (bad fortune; unhappy one) in Persian. It is worthwhile to say that when we write about color metaphors, we deal with abstract associations. For example, the abstract associations include *white* with *eternity, virtue, innocence, purity, heaven and light*; and *black* with *death, mourning, murder, sin and devils*.

In light of the aforementioned explanations, and given that color terms are known to portray connotative meanings, which may differ across languages and cultures, the present study aimed to investigate to what extent color connotations and their attributed metaphors can be different across English and Persian. In addition, it endeavored to put under scrutiny the metaphorical mappings in the languages concerned.

## 2. Metaphor, language and culture

### 2.1. Metaphoricity of language

Metaphoricity is the main feature of all human languages. In fact, a language or any form of language, without metaphorical traits is nonexistent. (Goalty, 1997, p.1). It is not confined to language. It runs through all veins of man's everyday life including language, thought and action.

Investigating conceptual metaphoric systems across cultures is enlightening in more than one aspect. It tells us whether the metaphoric concepts that shape our life are similar to, or different from, the other nations. Maalej (1999) stated that if the same conceptual metaphors are used to structure our lives, despite our belonging to different cultures (in our study English and Persian), we are conceptualizing the concepts in the same way; and in the case of different conceptual metaphors that structure our lives, the study of our respective metaphoric systems will highlight how we model our reality and how the understanding of these systems may contribute to further intercultural understanding.

To clarify, we can focus on '*Pot calling the kettle black*'. It is a metaphorical expression that is used in English when someone who criticizes someone else is as guilty as the person he or she criticizes. The construction of this ME originated from the fact that when cooking was done over fire, the smoke made cooking pots turn black (Oxford Idiom Dictionary, p.29; OID, hereafter). In Persian people use '*دیگ به دیگ می گوید رویت*' /di:g bə di:g mi:gu:yəd ru:yat si:yˆh æst/ (i.e.: pot calling the pot black). The underlying conceptual metaphor for these expressions is PEOPLE ARE THINGS metaphor (Kovecses, 2006) that uses the same metaphorical mapping to construct the concept. The other metaphoric concepts that are embedded in these expressions are that BLACK IS BAD and subsequently BEING GULTY IS BLACK. As we can observe, the metaphorical mapping is the same in English and Persian.

Metaphor is not a 'special' use of language, but pervades all interaction (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2000). They claim that metaphor in language is the result of analogical nature of human conceptualization. It is a conceptual phenomenon with external manifestations in everyday language and a key to the metaphorical nature of mind. It is argued that metaphor is conceptual and that a great number of our reasoning and thought processes are guided by metaphorical conceptions, although we may not realize it (Lakoff, 1995).

In this connection, our way of thinking, our experiences and our activities are all a matter of metaphor-phenomena which are more or less automatically dealt with in everyday life.

## **2.2. Metaphor and culture**

Language is not only the carrier of information but also of culture. It is a mirror which reflects the society and has strong cultural characteristics. Metaphors, as a part of language, reflect the society and have strong cultural characteristics. Li (2007) stated that metaphors, as part of language, are closely associated with nation's history, culture and customs.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2003) describe the relationship between culture and metaphor as follows: "The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in culture." (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; 1980, p.22). Metaphors reflect the relationship between language and culture. Human beings' environment and the things that they use and experience are in many aspects similar; therefore, English and Persian metaphoric expressions are not exceptions and may have some similarities and differences in their cognitive mappings.

Culture is the reflection and pattern of thinking and understanding. Thinking and understanding can be sometimes inevitably metaphorical, and then culture and metaphor would also fall into a relation of mutual promotion or restraint, depending on how this relation is interpreted. That is, culture plays a role in shaping metaphor and in return, metaphor plays a role in constituting culture. Corradi Fiumara (1995) noted that metaphors are more appropriate for conveying cultural concepts (cf. Fahad Al- Jumeih,

In this respect, let us consider emotion within cultural metaphor type. There are several emotion subtypes within the FEELING IS COLOR metaphor (Apresjan, 1997). For instance in English '*green*' is associated with envy and jealousy as in '*He was green with envy* when he saw their expensive new car' (OID, P.147) but in Russian '*yellow*' is associated with envy as in '*pozeletet' ot zavisti*' (cf. Apresjan, 1997) that means '*to turn yellow with envy*', but envy and jealousy does not have any color in Persian.

Metaphor is common to all languages and cultures. Although the use of metaphor is universal, the choice of metaphor for interpreting the world may be culture- specific (Liu, 2002, cf. Leung, 2007). In a nutshell, metaphor plays an important role in every day life and grounded in culture. Hence, conceptual metaphors expressed in language can serve as indicator of culture and a good resource for investigating of cultural beliefs expressed in language. The application of metaphorical concept shows that the metaphor cognition is universal across cultures, but, at the same time, it has some differences in their application because of their different social and cultural backgrounds.

### **2.2.1. Metaphor and color**

Color terms are playing a more and more important role in human communication, especially in bilingual communication (Zhang, 2007). Colors terms in any language are not only express the colors themselves, but also are carved and endowed with rich cultural characteristics of each nation. The relation between culture and language leaves a great effect on connotations of color words (Wang, 2007).

Color is a kind of natural phenomenon. Color terms play an important role describing things, expressing words' meanings and strengthening languages' influence, and also rich in cultural associations. That is to say, they can be used either literally to refer to different colors or metaphorically to convey their associative meanings. Colors in different languages and cultures may convey different associative meanings.

According to what is cited in Phillip (2006), " the color metaphors are influenced by metonymy , because most of the connotative meanings assigned to colors seem to be grounded , at least to some extent to reality"(Niemeir, 1998). Additionally, the connotative values of colors emerged from conventional linguistic expressions that are constructed around folk beliefs about color meaning. The language user can appeal to his or her linguistic knowledge to support a belief (Niemeir, 1998, cf. Phillip, 2006).

Colors may convey different messages to people of different cultures. They play an important role in describing things, expressing words' meanings and strengthen languages' influence, and also quite rich in cultural associations. That is to say, they can be used either literally to refer to different colors or metaphorically to

convey their associative meanings. The conceptual meanings conveyed in different languages and cultures (English and Persian in this study) may convey different associative meanings.

Color meaning is often supported by citation from language, in the form of set phrases such as *green with envy* (i.e., to be envious and jealousy), *go as red as beetroot* (i.e., embarrassment, anger, shame), *to see in black and white* (i.e., absolutely bad or good; wrong and right with no grades between them), *the black sheep of the family* (i.e., odd member of a group or family), yellow-belly (i.e., cowardice) etc. in English and پشت لبث سبز شده /pu:sh̄tə læbət sæbz shu:dəh/ (i.e., maturity), چرا زرد کردی /chərˤ zærd kærdi:/ (i.e., to be cowardice), ریش سفید بودن /ri: sh səfi: d shu: dæn/ (i.e., to be experienced; wise; and knowledgeable person), سق سیاه /sæq si:yˤh/ (i.e. evil-speech person), etc. in Persian. Phillip (2006) in her study claimed that it is a fact that these phrases in current language is seen to add weight to their authority and appropriateness as examples of figurative meanings ascribed to colors, and the use of color words in the language.

In a nutshell, color words are considered as a kind of common language for people of different countries and different association of meanings is certainly produced beyond the literal concept of color words under the effect of cultural differences of each nation. Because of different cultural backgrounds, English and Persian may vary in the connotations of colors.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Data source and collection

Researchers used a number of English dictionaries on idioms and proverbs to collect the data such as *The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms for learners of English* (Siefring, 2nd Eds., 2005). *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English* (Soanes & Hawker, 2008); *McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms and phrasal verbs* (Richard A. Spears, 2006); *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (Speake, 5<sup>th</sup> Eds., 2008); and Online Etymology Dictionary. Besides, four dictionaries were used in Persian to find Persian metaphoric expressions. They included: *Loghatnaamey-e-Dehkhoda*; *Amsal-o-Hekam-e-Dehkhoda*; *Farhang-e-Estehat-e-Adabi* (Hoseini, 2008); and *Zarb-al-Masalhaay-e-Mashur-e-Farsi* (Azarli, 1989). The researchers also searched the connotations of Persian colors in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, the great Persian epic book, the Holy Qur'an and some works in Persian.

#### 3.2. Procedure

Idiomatic expressions of colors cover different source domains both in Persian and English. Therefore, this article focused on selected source domains including HUMAN BODY (e.g. BODY including emotion; health; illness; and BODY PARTS) and LIVING THINGS (e.g., ANIMAL and PLANTS) to limit the scope of the study.

First, the researchers compiled the metaphoric instances in English and Persian from the sources mentioned above. Then English and Persian samples were classified according to the sources they contain. In addition, each Persian idiomatic expression with its English phonetic representation (EPR, hereafter) and its metaphorical meaning (MM, hereafter) were put in order. After that they were explained connotatively and exemplified in English and Persian (EE and PE, hereafter). PE's were translated literally in English (literal translation, LT, hereafter). Their cultural backgrounds were explained deeply, if someone wants to study culture-bound metaphorical expressions, it is necessary to pay more attention to the cultural background besides the surface meanings. Later, their conceptual mappings were described, qualitatively. Researchers used Google search engine to exemplify the Persian idiomatic instances in the text. They were typed in the search engine in order to find the text which contained the metaphoric expression. Finally, English and Persian samples were compared to each other qualitatively.

#### 3.3. Data analysis

Having chosen a cognitive approach and considering CMT as a theoretical basis for the current study, the researchers used some factors of Contrastive Analysis of Metaphors method proposed by Barcelona (2001) as a complement to describe conceptual metaphor.

### 3.3.1. HUMAN BODY

#### (1) *He is green with envy*

#### **Metaphorical meaning: To be envious and jealousy**

Green is often associated with jealousy and envy and it had taken its place in English by Shakespeare's time (cf. Phillip, 2006). The MEs '*Green with envy*' (Green is associated with envy, so jealous suitors used green jade as a potion) and '*green-eyed*' (the green-eyed monster in *Othello*) show the association of green with jealousy and envy clearly (Phillip, 2006). It is adhering to the same general concept as *green with envy*, i.e. to feel so envious that the bile makes you feel bad. Hippocratic medicine assigns *yellow* to the choleric personality, characterized by bile, which is yellowish-green in color (cf. Phillip, 2006). The metonymic connection between *green*, *yellow* and *bile* give rise to a set of expressions in English and other languages (Persian in our study). The conflict between *green* and *yellow* is not particularly surprising, as both of these colors correspond to the color of bile, and this metonymical connection gives rise to another set of expressions absent in English but present in Persian. While most of these emotional states are related to physiological state of nausea, English prefers *green* as the color of *envy* and *jealousy*. For instance, 'he was *green with envy* when he saw their expensive new car' (Oxford Idiom Dictionary, p, 147). In this example, the conceptual keys for this metaphoric expression are as in Table (1)

**Table 1: The conceptual keys for '*He is green with envy*'**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTION
ENVY IS A FLUID IN THE CONTAINER
INCREASE IN BILE PRESSURE STANDS FOR ENVY
BECOMING ENVIOUS IS BEING GREEN IN COMPLEXION
COLOR FOR EMOTION
EMOTION IS COLOR
<b>ENVY IS GREEN</b>

Real, physiological sickness is the reaction of one's body to emotion of envy. A metaphorical mapping links the feeling of *envy* to this bodily sensation. Thus, envy is linguistically and cognitively conceptualized as a mental sickness. To some extent, this mapping can be consistent with the DISEASE mapping as *green* is a color associated with *sickness*, as people's skin takes on a slightly yellow/green tinge when they are seriously ill (cf. Kyive, 2007).

**EE:** *He was green with envy* when he saw their expensive new car (OID, p, 147)

#### (2) *look green around the gills*

#### **Metaphorical meaning: To be ill**

Green is the color used in English to describe the pallor of person's face caused by nausea, shock, fear and illness (Phillip, 2006). Green is a color associated with sickness, as people's skin takes on a slightly yellow/green tinge when they are seriously ill (Kyive, 2007); yet, the expression *to look green around the gills* is generally interpreted as an expression of illness, adhering to some general physiological manifestation in the complexion. Although in the 1800s *white* and *yellow* were paired with gills to suggest illness, the alternative green has survived them (American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms, 1997).

**Table2: Conceptual keys for: ' to look green around the gills'.**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
THE BODY IS THE CONTAINER FOR ILLNESS
THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT OF BECOMING GREEN STANDS FOR ILLNESS
INCREASE IN BILE PRESSURE STANDS FOR ILNESS
BECOMING GREEN IN FACE STANDS FOR ILNESS
BECOMING ILL IS BEING GREEN IN COMPLEXION
<b>ILLNESS IS GREEN</b>

English example (EE, hereafter): After a long flight my friend *looked green around the gills*, and I am very pitiful about it (OID, P.147).

As you see, all the abovementioned conceptual mappings in (1) underlie this metaphoric expression in English except the two last ones. BECOMING GREEN IN COMPLEXION refers to ILLNESS mapping in this ME (i.e. people's skin takes on a slightly yellow/green tinge when they are seriously ill).

**(3)! رنگ و رویت زرد شده (ræng væ ru:yæt zærd shu:dəh! ' You look yellow in the face!')**

**Metaphorical meaning: To be ill**

In Persian, MEs that are constructed around color yellow have associative meanings to *illness, stagnation* and *death*. It is the color of autumn, which reminded people of falling leaves of trees and stagnate vision. Therefore, the expressions like رنگ رویت زرد شده است /ræng væ ru: yæt zærd shu:deh æst / (i.e., your face turns yellow) connote someone's illness. Descriptions of human appearance focus on the color quality of skin and eyes as the factors revealing good or poor health. Colors occur naturally and are consistent in their manifestation under given sets of conditions. Liver disorders may well turn the skin *yellow* (Phillip, 2006). As mentioned in number (1), the Hippocratic medical view is also consistent in Persian. Ancient Persian medicine has classified people's personality (mezaj) based on the choleric (soda mezaaj), phlegmatic (balghami mezaaj), bilious (safraavi mezaaj) and sanguine (damavi mezaaj) into four groups (Internet, www.iranerooz.com/health/). The choleric personalities are bad-tempered and irritable because it is believed that they influenced by predominating in cholera (Concise Oxford Dictionary), but phlegmatic personality is calm and unemotional. Bilious people were considered to be easily affected by vomiting and nausea. Therefore, this ME that is connoting ILLNESS is evoked on the basis of the following conceptual keys:

**Table 3: The conceptual keys for ræng væ ru:yæt zærd shu:dəh!**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
THE BODY IS THE CONTAINER FOR ILLNESS
THE FACE IS A CONTAINER FOR ILLNESS
BECOMING YELLOW IN COMPLEXION STANDS FOR ILLNESS
INCREASE IN BILE PRESSURE STANDS FOR ILNESS
BECOMING ILL IS BEING YELLOW IN COMPLEXION'
<b>ILLNESS IS YELLOW</b>

When someone is sick his or her skin looks pale and unhealthy but not the real yellow. Both (1) and (2) are different metaphoric indications of the same result (pallor) and differ only pragmatically in their cultural evaluation. English prefers *green* and Persian preference is *yellow*.

**PE:** رنگ و روی زردش، نشان می داد که چند روز است غذای درست و حسابی نخورده...  
(Collected from [www.rasekhoon.net/Article/Show-50875.aspx](http://www.rasekhoon.net/Article/Show-50875.aspx))

**EPR:** /ræng væ ru: yə zærdæsh nəsh`n mi:d`d kə chænd ru:z æst qæz`yə du:ru:st væ həs`bi: næxu:rdəh æst/

LT: His yellow complexion showed that he did not eat food, properly.

(4) چرا زرد کردی؟ /*chər^ zærd kærdi:/?* (i.e., 'Why do you turn yellow?')

**Metaphorical meaning: To be cowardice**

Certain light colors possess a negative cultural connotation, if used with reference to facial color, e.g., yellow color. Yellow color cannot signify a positive emotion in Persian, even though it is a light color. In چرا زرد کردی؟, the metonymical connection of bile and liver is responsible for meaning of *yellow*, though the focus is different. The adrenal glands secrete the so-called *fight or flight* hormone, with cowardice relating to the later. In the case of cowardice/fear the fluid is bile. Given that the expression was coined at a time when the liver was believed to be the seat of courage (Allan, 2009), the conceptual key that underlies this Persian ME is THE BODY IS THE CONTAINER FOR EMOTION metaphor.

**Table 4: The conceptual keys for 'chər^ zærd kærdi:'?**

Conceptual Keys
THE BODY IS THE CONTAINER FOR EMOTION
THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR FRIGHT
BECOMING YELLOW IN COMPLEXION STANDS FOR BEING COWRAD
INCREASE IN BILE PRESSURE STANDS FOR ILLNESS
BECOMING ILL IS BEING YELLOW IN COMPLEXION
FEELING IS COLOR
<b>FRIGHT IS YELLOW</b>

PE: بدجوری زرد کردی ها. حداقل مرد باش و پای حرف خودت و ایسا

(Collected from [www.hageghatnews4.wordpress.com](http://www.hageghatnews4.wordpress.com))

EPR: /hæd ju:ri: zærd kærdi: h^ . hædæ æqæl mærd b^sh væ p^yæ hærfæ xu: dæt v^ys^/

LT: You turn yellow, drastically. At least be a man and insist on your words.

(5) ریش سفید بودن / ریش سفید بودن / *ri: sh səfi: bu:dæn / , /gi:s səfi:d bu:dæn/* (i.e.: 'To be white bread / to be white hair')

**Metaphorical meaning: To be experienced man/ lady**

According to Ferdowsi's great epic book, *Shahnameh*, in ancient Iran, especially in Persian mythology, white is the symbol of *superiority*, *spirituality* and *virtue*. Additionally, knowledge ability of elderly people and their life experiences are referred to as white in Persian. Therefore, ریش سفید /*ri: sh səfi:d/* (i.e., white bread) for male ones and گیس سفید /*gi:s səfi:d/* (i.e., white hair) for female ones use metaphorically in Persian. People get old, and their hair, beard and mustache turning to be white because of their age. An old person has experienced the ups and downs of life more than others and therefore is a good counselor for the younger ones. In the Persian culture, such people are considered as wise and experienced. Therefore, younger ones refer to them and consult them to find a solution for their problems. *rish sefid* (for male ones) and *gis sefid* (for female ones) is used for an old man or lady, metaphorically. It is a kind of metonymy because the color of hair or bread stands for the whole person. The *whiteness* of the hair (as a part of the body) or bread is mapped for *experienced person* (the whole person). The conceptual keys that underlie this ME may be as follows:

Table 5: The conceptual keys for (ri: sh səfi: d bu:dæn / gi:s səfi:d bu:dæn

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
THE BODY PART STANDS FOR THE PERSON
THE BREAD/HAIR STAND FOR THE PERSON
WHITE COLOR OF THE HAIR/BEARD STANDS FOR WHOLE PERSON
OLDNESS IS BECOMING WHITE IN HAIR AND BREAD
OLDNESS STANDS FOR BEING WISE/KNOWLEDGEABLE
BEING WHITE IN HAIR/BEARD STANDS FOR BEING WISE/KNOWLEDGEABLE
<b>WISEDOM IS WHITE</b>

(6) سق سیاه داشتن /sæq si: y<sup>h</sup> d<sup>h</sup>shtæn/ (i.e.: To have black palatal)

**Metaphorical meaning: someone whose imprecation caught others**

In ancient Persian, black is the symbol of *Ahriman* (evil). It is bad and the symbol of wicked spirit. In addition, in the Holy Koran (cf. Ayatollahi, 1998) the heart and the face of bad people is black (Zakhrif, 17; Naml, 58; Al omran, 106; Joseph, 27). Black is a cue for evil and mischief (Bahar, 1997). The Holy Koran teaches that they who desire to dwell in the presence of God, to experience His blessing, are those who will live righteously and who will not badmouth. Imprecation is not accepted according to the Persian culture and their religious believes because this evil manner poisons the tongue. There is a metaphorical motivation for this expression. Considering the points mentioned before, BLACK IS BAD in Persian. This orientational metaphor motivates a lot of MEs (idiom, proverb, etc.) in Persian. It is believed that a person who speaks offensively in a way that his/her evil manner caught others is *səqə siyaah* (i.e., *black palatal*) (Internet, www.loghatnameh.com). Here the BADNESS of speech is mapped in a BODY PART (speech organ; PALATAL).

Table 6: The conceptual keys for /sæq si:y<sup>h</sup> d<sup>h</sup>shtæn / (i.e.: ' To have black palatal')

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
THE BODY PART STANDS FOR PERSON
THE MOUTH (PALATAL) STANDS FOR PERSON
BLACK FORCE IN PALATAL STANDS FOR EVIL SPEECH
<b>BLACK IS BAD</b> (Soriano & Valenzuela, 2009)
<b>MANNER IS COLOR</b>
<b>EVIL-SAYING IS BLACK</b>

PE:

تو چه سق سیاهی داری آقای کامالی! از صبح سائیتی که میزبان عکس منه از کار افتاده

EPR:/tu: chə sæqə si:y<sup>h</sup>i: d<sup>h</sup>ri<sup>h</sup> q<sup>h</sup>yə kæm<sup>h</sup>li æz su:bh s<sup>h</sup>yti: kə mi:zb<sup>h</sup>nə æksə mænəh æz k<sup>h</sup>r u:ftædəh /

LT: Mr. Kamali! *What a black palatal you have!* The website that is hosting my photo does not work from morning till now.

(7) پشت لب سبز شدن /pu:shte læb sæbz shu:dæn/ (i.e. 'to be green behind the over lip')

**Metaphorical meaning: To begin to be mature; to be naive, to be young**

Green is an important color in nature. It is the color of grass and the leaves on trees, the color of most growing plants. In this connection, green always symbolizes the young, fresh and growing. It also can be taken of *safety, hope, peace, and environment protection*. (Lan & McGregor, 2009). Green also exhibits the idea of *inexperience*, an *immature* state. So it can be used ranging from unripe corn to person (Phillip, 2006).



In Persian *green* is the color of vegetarian and *nature*. It is also associated with initial stages of maturation and youth. In the maturation period, the back of the boys' upper lip turns to be in darker color due to growing mustache and makes a green shed. It is similar to the way that grass come out of the earth at the first days of spring and shows a green shade on the land (Dehkhoda, 1999; Partoei Amoli, 1996). In this ME, the line of early growing grass is mapped to the growing of mustache on the back of boy's upper lip. This evokes conceptual links between PEOPLE and PLANTS. Lakoff's (1992) proposed conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS that can underlie this ME. The freshness of people in their maturity and experience is mapped in plant domains.

**Table 7: The conceptual keys for /pu:shtə læb sæbz shu:dæn/ (i.e. 'to be green behind the over lip')**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
PEOPLE ARE PLANTS (Lakoff, 1992)
BEING GREEN BEHIND THE OVERLIP STANDS FOR BEING NEW IN ADULTHOOD/YOUNG
<b>YOUTH IS GREEN</b>

**PE:** الان سالها از اون روزي كه مادرم مي گفت: "هنوز پشت لب ت سبز نشده!" مي گذره. ديگه كم كم پشت لبم داره سفيد ميشه.  
 (Collected from [www.qudsdaily.com/archive/1385/html/2/.../page50.html](http://www.qudsdaily.com/archive/1385/html/2/.../page50.html))

**EPR:** æLˆn sˆlhˆst æz u:n ru:zi: kə mˆdæræm mi:gu:ft hænu:z pu:shtə læbət sæbz næshu:dəh mi:gzærəhØ di:gəh kæm kæm pu:shtə læbæm dˆrəh səfi:d mi:shəh

**LT:** Nowadays, many years passed from the days that my mother had said that *you were not green behind the lip*. It turns to white little by little.

**(8) To catch someone red-handed.**

**Metaphorical meaning: caught someone in the act of guilty or wrongdoing; caught with evidence**

In the American history, red does not have positive connotations. It connotes *cruelty, battle, death, danger and revolution*. As Itten observes (1961:34, cf. Phillip, 2006), red is the color of revolution because of its links with political favor and spilled blood. In this vein, the expression *catch someone red-handed* was originally a metonymy because it describes a situation in which a killer had his hands covered with blood; the red hands stood metonymically for the killing. Red-handed does not have a mythical origin. The term originated from Scotland. The earliest known printed version of red-handed is from Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, 1918 (Internet, [www.phrases.org.uk](http://www.phrases.org.uk)). Therefore, the original conceptual key for this expression is RED IS BLOOD (Lan & McGregor, 2009). Red has traditionally been regarded as a symbol of guilt. Extreme anger can lead to crimes of passion and murderous intent clearly lies at the origin of the phrase. Kövecses (2002, cf. Czepeczor, 2009) considers blood on the culprit's hands as the primary image and motivation for the use of *red* in the phrase (STAINED OR COVERED WITH BLOOD). This signification omitted through the time. Later it became a metaphor for all the individuals who are found to be behaving *inappropriately, illegally* and *guilty* because only exceptionally would a killer get blood on his hands and thus it became a metaphor for any form of wrongdoing besides murder. In other words, the abovementioned historical origin of the phrase is no longer perceived as relevant to its implied meaning. Today, the idea of being discovered in the middle of wrong-doing still remains with this expression. Therefore, the conceptual keys that underlie this ME may include:

**Table 8: The conceptual keys for 'To catch someone red-handed'**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
THE BODY PART STANDS FOR THE PERSON
THE HANDS STAND FOR THE PERSON
STAINED WITH BLOOD IN HANDS STANDS FOR BEING GUILTY
<b>WRONGDOING IS RED</b>

**EE:** A: How can you be sure that it was Rob who has been stealing the CDs?

B: Linda saw him putting the in his bag during lunch break. He was caught red-handed (Wright, 2002, p.55).

### 3.3.2. LIVING THINGS (ANIMALS and PLANTS)

#### **(9) *Black sheep of the family***

**Metaphorical meaning: To be bad and odd one out**

In western culture, the black color is the sign of darkness. In the Bible, the black stands for the devil, the pain and misfortune (He, 2009). According to Jordan (1997), black was associated even in Elizabethan times with *dirty, sinister and wicked qualities*, as opposed to white which stood for beauty, virtue and goodness (Benczes, 2007). Considering the connotation of black and its attribution, *black sheep* is used to connote the situation that the only person in a respectable and successful family, who has not achieved success, but instead has proven to be a disappointment. HUMAN IS ANIMAL, HUMAN IS SHEEP (Goatly, 2006) and BLACK IS BAD underlie this metaphor. BLACK SHEEP as an Animal stands for HUMAN. This metaphoric expression refers to someone who is considered to have done something bad within every family or group to which they belong and make them to feel shame.

**Table 9: The conceptual keys for 'The black sheep of the family'**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
HUMAN IS ANIMAL (Goatly, 2006)
HUMAN IS SHEEP (Goatly, 2006)
ANIMAL STANDS FOR HUMAN
BLACK SHEEP STANDS FOR BAD HUMAN
<b>BLACK IS BAD (Ruiz, 2007 ; Maalej, 1999)</b>

It is constructed around the fact that shepherds used to dislike black sheep because their wool was not as valuable as white wool (OID, p, 29).

**EE:** Everyone in the family expected Susan to go to university like the rest of us, but she got a job in a casino on a ship. *She was the black sheep of the family.*

#### **(10) *He went as red as a beetroot***

The redness of the beetroot is compared with the redness of people's complexion when they feel ashamed, embarrassment or angry. The physiological effects of some emotions increase the blood pressure. This phenomenon makes the complexion red in color. Blood is vital for our existence, and the metonymic use of *red* therefore carries the connotation over to other domains and areas of human existence and activity. The physiological effects of anger are supplemented by the metonymic pattern COLOR FOR ANGER.

Considering the aforementioned observation, color red is coined from these two different domains and constructs this English expression, metaphorically. Therefore, the domain of physiological effect in human body is conceptualized in the domain of beetroot as plant to imply the abstract target domain of shame or embarrassment. The underlying conceptual keys can be as follows:

**Table 10: The conceptual keys for 'He went as red as a beetroot'**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
PEOPLE ARE PLANTS
PEOPLE ARE BEETROOT

BEING RED IN BEETROOT STANDS FOR RED IN COMPLEXION
COLOR FOR EMOTION
FEELING IS COLOR
<b>SHAME/EMBARRASMENT/ANGER IS RED</b>

**(11) مثل ليو سرخ شد /məslə læbu: su:rx shu:d/(i.e., 'He went as red as a beetroot')**

In this Persian expression, like number (10), the redness of the beetroot is compared with the redness of people's complexion when they feel ashamed, embarrassment, but here the source is boiled beetroot. As far as we all know, boiled beetroot is a beetroot that is boiled in water and is ready to eat. Therefore, in this case source domain is FOOD domain as like as its English counterpart. The only difference between them is that English speakers use beetroot in the construction of metaphor as raw food, but Persian speakers prefers it boiled form. It is important to say that the researchers did not find example that connote anger by using of this expression in Persian. Therefore, it seems that Persian speakers prefer to use this metaphoric expression just to connote embarrassment and shy not anger. Along these lines, both the connotation of color and the mental map for this expression seem to be the same in either language. They differ just lexically. Accordingly, the underlying conceptual keys can be as follows:

**Table 39: The conceptual keys for /məslə læbu: su:rx shu:d/ (i.e., 'He went as red as a beetroot')**

<b>Conceptual Keys</b>
PEOPLE ARE FOOD
BEING RED IN BEETROOT STANDS FOR RED IN COMPLEXION
COLOR FOR EMOTION
FEELING IS COLOR
<b>SHAME/EMBARRASMENT IS RED</b>

**PE:** پسره خجالت کشید سرش رو انداخت پایین و مثل ليو سرخ شد! ...

(Collected from [www.parmisazar.persionblog.ir](http://www.parmisazar.persionblog.ir))

**EPR:** /pəsærə xəj'lət kəshi:d. særæsh ræ p'yi:n ænd'xt væ məslə læbu: su:rx shu:d/!

**Equivalence translation:** The boy was ashamed, bend down his head and went as red as beet root.

Good and evil, health and illness, elderly and youth, experienced and inexperienced, etc. were paradoxes in the color connotations of this study. As seen in the above instances, the connotations expressed by color names, though similar in some cases, are culture-specific; that is, the way each culture views and values the world in relation to color names is different. Although metaphoric expressions are representative of culture from which they arise, they demonstrate significant associations.

## Conclusion

It is worthwhile to mention that the relation between language and culture creates a great effect on connotations of color words. Considering the metaphoric expressions of colors in this study, the researchers concluded that although colors share common connotative ground in two languages, this does not necessarily entail the use of similar expressions. They were more culturally oriented and specific to each language. For instance, BLACK IS BAD and WHITE IS GOOD are, as conceptual metaphors, are present in either language, but, as the data has shown, each language and culture fill them with specific concepts and shows different mental mappings. The data in our study has shown that construction of metaphorical expressions of colors in English and Persian are grounded in reality as well; cultural believes, and to some extent symbolism, may also have a role to play. In addition, the findings of this study showed that metaphorical expressions of colors, besides their universality, are also culturally-oriented, which implies that even though some mappings seem to be universal in their generic level, many of them, especially the more specific ones, are culture specific and reflect the socio-

cultural context in which they are used. For instance, considering BODY IS A CONTAINER metaphor in its generic level, the metaphorical expressions 'you look green around the gills' and 'ræng væ ru:yat zærd shodäh' are both constructed around the BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTION conceptual metaphor, but English filled the generic level with GREEN as DISEASE color and Persian filled it with YELLOW as DISEASE color. Therefore, we have differences at specific level, namely, GREEN IS DISEASE in English and YELLOW IS DISEASE in Persian. Our study also revealed that color-based metaphorical expressions are interpreted mental mappings of their users. For instance *rish sefidy* that connotes *knowledge* and *wisdom* was reflected a specific mental representation in Persian and there was not such mental mapping in English data of the present study.

Metaphor research may help us build up language-specific cultural model as well as reflect cultural differences based on the model identified. Since language is a part of culture, cross-cultural studies like the present study can shed light on cross-cultural similarities and dissimilarities in ways of thinking and speaking. For instance, the emotion of *envy* does not have any color in Persian but as it is shown in the study English conceptualize it as ENVY IS GREEN. Even so, for some European countries ENVY IS YELLOW.

All in all, this study indicates that detailed contrastive analysis can shed light on similarities and differences between English and Persian, and identify properties that may have been overlooked in analysis of either language in isolation. But, first and foremost, this study revealed how contrastive analysis of metaphorical expressions of color may hint at the pervasiveness of metaphor in language.

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