

## **A Contrastive Socio-pragmatic Analysis of Anger Metaphors in English and Persian**

**Mehdi Abbasvandi,**

M.A. in TEFL, Department of English Language Teaching,  
Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Arak, Iran.  
and

**Mojtaba Maghsoudi,**

Ph.D. in TEFL, Farhangian University, Iran (Shahid Bahonar, Arak)  
[magsudim@yahoo.com](mailto:magsudim@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

Metaphor is an important socio pragmatic issue that has received a lot of ink in the review of literature and within these commonly used figures of speech emotion metaphors are ubiquitous in world languages. From among different concepts of emotion, anger involves a great deal of complexity so the present paper aimed to investigate anger metaphors in English and Persian from a socio cultural perspective. To do this, samples of English and Persian metaphors were selected. Then Kovecses's (2000) cognitive qualitative method for contrastive analysis of anger metaphors was utilized to compare and contrast the corpora. The findings of the study showed that although manifesting anger in English and Persian is culture bound and has differing lexico-semantics realizations, the universal aspects of these mappings can't be ignored.

**Keywords:** Anger metaphors; Contrastive analysis of metaphors; English; Persian; Metaphorical mapping

### **1. Introduction**

According to Lakoff and Johnson in 1980, metaphors are "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action as well". Most universal and basic concepts of the world we live in are comprehended via metaphorical mappings, such as time, state and quantity. They derive from our concrete daily experience and our knowledge of the world and are projected onto abstract concepts, thus acting as a pattern for the formation of such.

Most of our cognitive processes, the way we think, act, perceive, and view the world, are based on metaphorical concepts which structure and influence our language: "Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Of course, these concepts and metaphorical processes vary to a certain extent from culture to culture, from society to society, and range from universally applicable to language-specific metaphorical mappings.

One of the important advances in this field is our improved understanding of metaphor, which is no longer considered a figure of speech, but a conceptual mechanism. Metaphor can thus be defined as a cross-domain mapping (Lakoff, 1993), or more precisely as Barcelona (2000) states, as a cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain is partially 'mapped', i.e. projected, onto a different experiential domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one.

The widespread use of metaphorical expressions justifies their mentioning especially in foreign language acquisition. The lack of awareness of metaphorical concepts and lexical strategies

often lead language learners to render a metaphorical expression in their foreign language (L2) by using a corresponding counterpart of their native language (L1). Thus, the meaning of a word or sentence is often translated literally by activating the mother tongue concept due to a lack of knowledge of all possible meanings a word or expression may have. The concept from the L1 is simply translated into the L2. Teaching should make L2 learners aware of certain lexical strategies and impart how to effectively influence the underlying cognitive processes. Furthermore, learners should be encouraged to make use of metaphorical language, to produce and comprehend metaphors as tools of communication and thought.

A lot of studies have been done to compare different languages' metaphors to find out the differences and similarities between different languages. Within different kinds of metaphors emotion metaphors had received a lot of ink in the review of literature.

One of the troublesome areas of EFL for Iranian students and especially novice translators is the figurative use of language. The problem especially becomes grave if the relationship between language and culture is downgraded. In order to gain a communicative competence in the target language, it is crucial that our students not only learn the denotative meanings of words and expression, but also be able "to read between the lines". Therefore, there is a need for contrastive analysis of English and Persian metaphors to pave the way for the learners of English.

Some studies have been done for contrasting some metaphors, such as color metaphors (Eslami Rasekh & Ghafel, 2011), emotion metaphors (Pirzad Mashak, Pazhakh & Hayati, 2012) animal metaphors (Talebinejad & Dastjerdi, 2005) in Persian and English.

Eslami Rasekh & Ghafel (2011) in their study on color metaphors conclude 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.

Pirzad Mashak, Pazhakh & Hayati (2012) in their work on emotion metaphors found 3 different patterns of totally the same, partially the same and totally different. They also suggested that analysis of anger expressions in Persian and English revealed just the two patterns of totally the same and partially the same; the dominant pattern was indeed 'partially the same'.

Talebinejad & Dastjerdi (2005) in their study on the animal metaphors argued that although there are similarities some aspects of metaphors are culture bound.

Due to the small amount of research in this area, a more detailed contrastive account of the similarities and differences between English and Persian is still needed. This paper studies the scope of metaphor which forms the abstract concept of anger in English and Persian to see how it is conceptualized.

The emotion under examination is anger, Persian "خشم". One could argue that the semantic content of the word "خشم" may be different from that of the word "anger", and therefore they should not be treated as the same thing. However, there is enough overlap to consider them equivalent for the purpose of this study. The reason is that in this paper we are not interested in the detailed study of one single word meaning, but rather in the prototypical semantic content of the emotion that underlies the specificity of "anger"/ "خشم", "fury"/ "غضب", English "rage" or Persian "غيظ". From now on we will call this emotional concept ANGER (capitalized) to distinguish it from any particular word meaning. We will use capitalized names for other concepts too.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Data collection

Figurative expressions used to talk about this emotion in each language were compiled from The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (Siefring, 2005) and The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (Speake,

2008) and some other dictionaries. Persian instances were extracted from some Persian dictionaries namely *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).

### **2.2 Procedure**

First, the metaphoric instances in English and Persian from the sources mentioned above were selected. Then English and Persian samples were classified according to the sources they contain. After that they were explained connotatively and exemplified in English and Persian. Persian expressions were translated literally in English. Later, their conceptual mappings were described, qualitatively. Finally, English and Persian samples were compared to each other qualitatively.

### **2.3 Data analysis**

For this study the detailed guidelines for identification and description of conceptual metaphors proposed by Kovecses (2002) was complemented with Esenova's (2009) work on anger.

Some of the most typical conceptual metaphors that characterize emotions in Kovecses's work on conceptual representation of particular emotions include the followings:

- Emotion is a fluid in a container
- Emotion is heat/fire
- Emotion is a natural force
- Emotion is a physical force
- Emotion is a social superior
- Emotion is an opponent
- Emotion is a captive animal
- Emotion is a force dislocating the self
- Emotion is a burden

And a physiological, behavioral, and expressive response associated with anger was proposed as:

- body heat for anger

Esenova (2009) has identified a set of metaphorical expressions that have largely been ignored in cognitive linguistic literature.

- anger is a horse
- angry behavior is aggressive horse behavior
- angry speech behavior is aggressive snake behavior
- an angry gesture is snake behavior
- anger is an old snake skin
- hidden anger is an object buried in soil
- anger is a child
- anger is a plant

Universality of the conceptualization of emotion metaphors is confirmed by work of Kovecses (2000). However he believes that anger is a social construction and thus varies considerably from culture to culture. So this study mainly concerns the differences in metaphorical mappings.

Since all these parameters couldn't be included in this single study only those parameters for analysis of metaphors in English and Persian that seem to contain more culture bound differences are covered.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 *Anger is a fluid in a container*

She is boiling with anger. (Her blood started boiling.) خونش به جوش آمد.

As you can see this mapping exists in both languages. But the 'hot fluid' metaphor in English gives rise to a series of metaphorical entailments. This means that we carry over knowledge about the behavior of hot fluids in a closed container onto the concept of anger. Let's compare these entailments in both languages.

**Table 1. The metaphorical entailments for "Anger is a fluid in a container."**

The entailments	Examples in English	Examples in Persian
When the intensity of anger increases, the fluid rises	She could feel her gorge rising.	آمپرش زد بالا His ampere went up.
Intense anger produces steam	Smoke was coming out of his ears.	Doesn't exist used for expressing the state of being puzzled or confused
Intense anger produces pressure on the container	He was bursting with anger.	داشت از عصبانیت می ترکید. (He was bursting with anger.)
Emphasize on control	I suppressed my anger.	بر خشم خود غلبه کرد. (He overcame his anger.)
When anger becomes too intense, the person explodes	She flipped her lid.	Doesn't exist
When a person explodes, what was inside him comes out	His anger finally came out.	عصبانیت خودش را خالی کرد. (He made himself empty with anger)

#### 3.2. *Anger is heat/fire*

He's doing a *slow burn*. (He was burning with anger.) از عصبانیت آتش گرفت.

**Table 2. The metaphorical entailments for "Anger is a heat/fire."**

The entailments	Examples in English	Examples in Persian
Anger makes s.b burn.	His anger is <i>smoldering</i> .	از عصبانیت آتش گرفت. (He was burning with anger.)
Anger causes a red face.	He was red-faced.	از عصبانیت سرخ شد. (He was red with anger.)
Getting angry can be sudden.	A flash of anger	از عصبانیت آتش گرفت. (He was burning with anger.)

Getting angry can be not sudden.      He's doing a *slow burn*.      Doesn't exist.

### 3.3 Anger is an opponent

He was struggling with his anger.

سعی کرد بر عصبانیتش غلبه کند.

(He was trying to overcome his anger.)

In both languages anger is a force that people try to overcome it and control themselves.

### 3.4. Anger is insanity

The man was insane with rage.

اگر کارش میزدی خورش در نمی آمد. (هیچ چیز نمیفهمید.)

(He was so much angry that he wouldn't feel if you throw a knife into his body.)

### 3.5. Anger is a devil thing

Some of the unpleasant feelings in Persian are related to devil, there is also the belief that it is the devil that controls an angry person. So when the bad feeling stops and the person is insane again it is said that:

از خر شیطان پیاده شد. (He got off the devil's ride.)

“Anger is a devil thing” is a special type of “possession” metaphor. Possession metaphors were first described by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) as part of their metaphorical system for the characterization of the Self. According to the scholars, we think of ourselves as a dual unit composed of one Subject and one or more Selves. In this conceptualization the subject corresponds to the part of the person that experiences consciousness, reason, will and judgment. It is also “the locus of a person's Essence —that enduring thing that makes us who we are”. The Self would be the part of the person comprising the body, social roles, past states and actions in the world. We understand our identity and inner life as the result of the interaction between the “essential subject” and the “behavioral self”. But such a mapping is absent in English.

### 3.6. Anger is a burden

He carries his anger around with him.

Doesn't exist in Persian.

No instance was found for such a mapping in Persian.

### 3.7. Anger is a snake

'You shall yet repent this', he *hissed*.

Doesn't exist in Persian.

The metaphors discussed in this section map the source domain of *snake* onto the target domain of *anger*. If snake is an angry person then the following entailments could be considered.

**Table 3. Entailments for anger as a snake.**

Source: Snake	Target: Anger	In English	In Persian
The old snake skin	anger	Exist	Doesn't exist
The snake	the angry person	Exist	Doesn't exist
Carrying of the old snake skin	Experiencing anger	Exist	Doesn't exist
Casting off the old snake skin	getting rid of anger	Exist	Doesn't exist

In Persian snake can be symbol of a revengeful person but not exactly an angry person.

### 3.8. Anger is a child

He decided to nurse his anger.

Doesn't exist in Persian.

Openly accessible at <http://www.european-science.com>

As is obvious, the *anger is a child* metaphor describes anger in terms of a child and an angry person in terms of the parent of that child. By doing so, the metaphor keeps us responsible for our anger. Furthermore, the source of anger is also conceptualized as a parent. In human society parents are responsible for their children's lives. The message conveyed by the metaphor is that in the same way as a human child may not survive without its parents' protection and nourishment, anger may not exist if we do not maintain it. So the following entailments are taken into account.

**Table 4. Anger as a child.**

Source: <i>child</i>	Target: <i>anger</i>	In English	In Persian
The child	anger	Exist	Doesn't exist
The parent	the angry person or the source of anger	Exist	Doesn't Exist
The conceiving of the child in the body	the creating of anger in the mind	Exist	Doesn't exist
Giving birth to the child	giving rise to anger	Exist	Doesn't exist
The nursing of the child	maintaining of anger	Exist	Doesn't exist

By comparing the available Persian metaphors it was found that such a kind of mapping doesn't exist in Persian for anger.

### 3.9. Anger is a plant

And this is where much of the anger *germinates*.

*Doesn't exist in Persian.*

Plant growth is mapped onto various stages of anger development in English samples. The seed image characterizes the initial stage of plant growth. This stage in the source domain correlates with the initial stage of anger development in the target. At this stage, anger comes into existence. Furthermore, the images like a germinating plant and a plant taking root, are also associated with early stages of plant growth. These stages in the source correspond to the early stages of anger development in the target. Moreover, humans view bloom as the best stage of plant growth. This is explained by the fact that people have positive associations with flowers because flowers induce the feeling of happiness in them. Therefore, the blooming stage of the plant's growth correlates with the best stage of anger development. Anger is a well-developed, full-fledged emotion at this stage. The fruition stage in the plant growth corresponds to the stage of anger development when the emotion leads to a concrete result. Finally, at the withering stage, the plant stops growing and it dies. This is the final stage of the plant life. Hence, the withering stage of the plant growth correlates to the final stage of anger development when anger ceases to exist. So the following entailments are considered.

Such a mapping was absent in the Persian samples of anger metaphors, rather the concept of "HATE" was associated with this mapping in Persian.

**Table 5. Anger is a plant.**

Source: <i>plant</i>	Target: <i>anger</i>	In English	In Persian
The stages of growth and fruition of the plant	the stages of anger development	Exist	Doesn't exist
The growth of the bud into the flower	the transition of another emotion into anger	Exist	Doesn't Exist
The size of the plant	the intensity of anger	Exist	Doesn't exist
The root of the plant	cause of anger	Exist	Doesn't exist

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

As you could see Data analysis section the mapping “anger as a fluid”, “ anger as heat/fire”, “anger as an opponent” and “anger as insanity” is present in both languages but the entailments doesn't overlap completely.

But the mappings “anger as a devil thing”, “anger as a burden”, “anger as a child”, “anger as a snake” and “anger as a plant” doesn't exist in both languages.

How did languages and cultures so different as English and Persian, produce a remarkably similar shared metaphor the pressurized container metaphor? The reason may be that, English and Persian people appear to have very similar ideas about their bodies and seem to see themselves as undergoing the same physiological processes when in the state of anger. They all view their bodies and body organs as containers. And, also as linguistic evidence suggests, they respond physiologically to certain situations causes in the same ways. They seem to share certain physiological processes including body heat, internal pressure and redness in the neck and face area (as a possible combination of pressure and heat). Now what can be the reason of differences?

Differences due to language-specific mappings

One of the metaphors both languages share is “Anger is a (hot) fluid in a container.” However, Persian —unlike English— does not exploit the entailment sub-mapping by virtue of which the effects of anger on the person are conceptualized as “steaming” (The effect of anger on person is steam production). For example, English instantiations of the mapping such as (1) and (2) do not have any equivalent in Persian.

(1) To get all steamed up

(2) To let off steam

Even though the ‘steam’ projection does not have linguistic realizations in Persian can easily understand it.

#### Differences due to the degree of linguistic exploitation

Let us deal now with a case of contrast between English and Persian that is due to a different degree of linguistic exploitation of a shared mapping; in other words, a contrast due to the productivity of a mapping in the language.

A rigorous account of this type of differences would involve statistical calculations that have not been carried out for the present study, but some more coarse-grained differences in terms of linguistic productivity have been identified.

This is the case of the contrasting linguistic exploitation of the metaphorical entailment “when the intensity of anger increases, the fluid rises” which can be rephrased as the entailment sub-metaphor “The increase in intensity of anger is the rise in fluid” so as to express what corresponds to what in the source and target domains. This entailment sub-metaphor of “Anger is a (hot) fluid in a container.” is evidenced in many conventional English expressions.

His pent-up anger welled up inside her  
We got a rise out of him

This extremely productive projection in English is only instantiated in Persian in a few constructions.

In conclusion, the “rise’ mapping in Persian —unlike in English— is only scarcely instantiated in the language and only in an implicit manner.

As Kövecses (2000) states, the view that anger is both (near) universal and culture-specific can be called ‘body-based social constructionism because we find in it universal elements of the body (human physiology) and culture-specific elements of cultural explanation (of different kinds).

The fact that conceptualization of anger in different languages is near universal and somehow culture specific has been confirmed in this study on anger metaphors. In spite of sharing a general inventory of basic-level conceptual metaphors to construe the concept ANGER, English and Persian have some differences in mappings too.

### Reference

- Azarli, K. (1989). *Zarb-al-masalhaay-e-mashur-e-Farsi*. Tehran: Arghavan Publication.
- Barcelona, 2000. On the plausibility of claiming a metonymic motivation for conceptual metaphor. In A. Barcelona, ed., *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads. A cognitive perspective*. Berlin/ New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 31-58.
- Chilton, P. (1996). *Security Metaphors: From Containment to Common House*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Dehkhoda, A. (1999). *Amsaal va Hekam-e-Dehkhoda*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publication.
- Esenova, O. (2009). Anger metaphors in the English language. *Varieng journal*, 3.
- Eslami Rasekh, A, & Ghafel, B. (2011). Basic colors and their metaphorical expressions in English and Persian: Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory in focus. 1st international conference on foreign language teaching and applied linguistics, Sarajevo, May 5-7.
- Hoseini, S. (2008) *Farhang-e-Estehat-e-Adabi*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publication.
- Kövecses, Z. (1990). *Emotion Concepts*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Kövecses, Z. (1991). Happiness: A definitional effort. *Metaphor and symbolic activity*, 6/1, 29-46.
- Kövecses, Z. (2000). *Metaphor and emotion: Language, culture, and body in human feeling*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kovecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: a practical introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought*, 202–251. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Kövecses, Z. (1987). The cognitive model of anger inherent in American English. In D. Holland, & N. Quinn (eds) *Cultural models in language and thought*, 195-221. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matsuki, K. (1995). Metaphors of anger in Japanese. In J. Taylor & R.E. Maclaury (Eds.), *Language and the cognitive construal of the world*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 137–151.

Pirzad Mashak, Sh., Pazhakh, A., & Hayati, A. (2012). A comparative study on basic emotion conceptual metaphors in English and Persian literary texts. *International Education Studies*, 5/1, 200-207.

Siefring, J. (2005). *The Oxford dictionary of idioms*. (2nd Eds.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Speake, J. (Ed.) (2008). *The Oxford dictionary of proverbs*. (5th Eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Talebinejad, M., & Vahid Dastjerdi, H. (2005). A cross-cultural study of animal metaphors: When owls are not wise. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 20/2, 133-150.

Yu, N. (1995). Metaphorical expressions of anger and happiness in English and Chinese. *Metaphor and symbolic activity*, 10/2, 59-92.