СООБЩЕНИЯ

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"PHYSICS WITH CHOCOLATE TASTE": A COGNITIVE-PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE TITLES OF IRANIAN EDUCATIONAL BOOKS

This paper investigates some linguistic strategies in educational books titling aimed at Iranian high school students. In Iran, the competition for admission in top universities is very significant, and thus studying supplementary material for school subjects is highly required. The books published by the Ministry of Education lack flexibility and innovation, and as such, the demand for high quality materials is very high, and consequently a rewarding book market has been formed. In this competitive market, publishers do their best to attract a higher number of customers, and choosing eye-catching titles for their published books is one of the most decisive marketing tasks. In the present study, a total of 120 book titles have been collected and analyzed. In terms of the cognitive processes, it was found that strengthening and mitigation play a significant role in creating book titles. According to the findings, the cognitive operation of strengthening is more dominant than mitigation: in 46 cases of book titles (25.8%), one positive feature is linguistically strengthened to promote book selling, with only 11 cases involving the mitigation process. It is also shown that authors and publishers tend to employ metaphors to create attractive titles for their books. The pattern BOOK IS A JOURNEY tends to be the most frequent metaphor (17 items), followed by those related to food (14), game (12), medicine (6), animal (4), and weapon (3). Some titles showcase a kind of allusion to literary works or cultural symbols reflected in various forms of arts and media.

K e y w o r d s: onomastics; book title; cognitive operation; cultural allusion; Iranian educational books; Persian language

1. Introduction

Title of a book is a window to the material communicated by its author(s), and all parties in the book market including authors, publishers, distributers, as well as marketing agents are supposed to be (un)consciously aware of the positive or sometimes negative effect the name might have in a book marketing campaign. The business side of the relationship between language and marketing has been studied by a number of scholars [e.g. Bergh et al., 1987; Klink, 2001; Bao et al., 2008; Danesi, 2011]. One interesting area of study is the role of lexical variations and cultural allusions in naming products.

Since book naming and marketing both deal with individuals' cognitive modes, we have to take the relevant mechanisms into account. The concept of cognitive operation and conceptual metaphors have been introduced by Lakoff and Johnson [1980] and Lakoff [1987], and extended in newer studies by other scholars who define *cognitive operation* as "a mental mechanism by which we derive a semantic representation from a linguistic expression in order to make it meaningful in the context in which it is to be interpreted" [Ruiz de Mendoza & Peña Cervel, 2005, *58*]. It is argued that linguistic expressions act as cues to take the receivers' attention to deeper levels of meaning construction and interpretation. To explain the diverse manifestations of such operations in varied linguistic domains, an exhaustive typology is proposed under the cover term of *lexical-constructional model* (ICM) by Ruiz de Mendoza [2010].

It should be pointed out that books and their titles have attracted the attention of scholars with varying backgrounds. Interested in the decision-making process of literary and non-literary fiction written for adults, Leemans and Stokmans [1991] noticed that the book title and style of writing are among the main attributes which determine the respondents' priority in choosing and buying a book. Another experimental study has shown that the attractiveness of the book cover — a page representing the book title — along with the reputation of the author and the publisher constitute three central variables with the statistically significant impact on readers' interest [d'Astous et al., 2006]. Motivated by the existing literature, in this paper, I attempt to analyze the naming practices followed by Iranian publishers of supplementary educational books. But first, we should describe the socio-cultural situation in which these books are published and advertised.

In Iran, following a k-12 education system, the elementary and secondary education is supervised by Ministry of Education. To get to higher education, high school graduates are supposed to take a comprehensive, standardized test, hereafter *konkur*, run annually by National Organization of Educational Testing. With limited admission opportunities for prestigious public universities, the test is so tough that for a typical student it usually takes at least a whole year to prepare for it. The executives of the *konkur* strongly insist that questions are extracted from

the material presented in official high school textbooks, but the exam is intended to select the best qualified candidates, and therefore, questions are mostly designed in a really challenging mode. To overcome such a challenge, almost all applicants have no choice but to study supplementary books. These books do not necessarily provide deeper insight into the content of formal high school textbooks. They just offer additional sample questions and some techniques for answering multiple-choice questions as quickly as possible. It is worthwhile mentioning that the trend has been spread to lower levels of education, and supplementary resources with the same methodology are also published for junior high school students. Thus, due to the high number of students and the role of *konkur* in the applicants' future course of study and career, a lucrative publishing market has been formed that publishes and sells a wide range of supplementary textbooks.

The market is extremely competitive, and publishers employ all available means to attract more customers. Among other means such as well-known authors, innovative formulation of educational content, high quality of paper and book binding, one significant linguistic feature is the book title. A simple glance at the bookstores' windows or publishers' websites shows a wide range of cognitive, pragmatic and also morphological operations used for promoting supplementary educational books. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the main conceptual mechanisms implied by the current book titling strategies, which include cognitive operations, metaphors and cultural allusions.

To provide a clear framework for the study, the following questions are considered:

1) How strengthening and mitigation as two cognitive operations are used in naming Iranian educational books?

2) Which metaphors are employed in book titles?

3) Are cultural allusions used in book titles?

2. Methodology

The corpus of this study includes the titles of the educational books published in Iran to help students perform better in *konkur* or other mandatory, official exams. To collect the data, the titles of the supplementary educational books published by various publishers on all school subjects have been taken into account. The titles have been collected from publishers' print catalogs and online websites. In some cases, direct observation in libraries or bookshops was conducted too.

The final dataset is constituted by 120 book titles ranged from one single word to a long phrase. Sometimes, the book cover features more than one title. This is a routine practice adopted by large publishing companies. They keep their general brand name for all their products, and at the same time select and add another name (a sub-title) for a book series or one specific book.

3. Results

3.1. Cognitive operations: Strengthening and mitigation

Two cognitive operations, i.e. strengthening and mitigation, were explored in the dataset. Strengthening involves highlighting a feature associated with an entity or a state of affairs. When the strengthening operation is at work, the reader/hearer needs to "move the formulation up the scale to a point that is compatible with his perception of the state of affairs in order to make sense of the utterance" [Pérez Hernández, 2013, *42*].

As far as the corpus of study is concerned, there are five strengthening patterns with the focus on five notions including 'achievement,' 'attribute,' 'accuracy,' 'speed,' and 'size*.*' In book titles such as *Mo'jeze-e zist* 'Miracle of Biology,' some sort of achievement is promised to the readers. Similarly, in exaggerated titles like *Tiz shim* 'Let's Become Brainy' a kind of success is proclaimed. Sometimes a potential and typically imaginary attribute of a book is highlighted in the title. In *Doping-e fizik* 'Physics Doping,' for example, it is claimed that reading that book is like using performance enhancing drugs. In some books, accuracy is strengthened. The title *Zir-e zarrebin* 'Under Magnifying Glass' suggests that the authors have meticulously covered all minute points essential for readers. The speed of the reading/studying process is also evoked. The title *Dor-e donyā dar chāhār sā'at* 'Around the World in Four Hours' indicates that readers would be able to read and understand the materials as quickly as possible. Totally, 46 cases of strengthening operation have been observed in the dataset.

In contrast to strengthening, mitigation is a cognitive operation by which the user attempts to downgrade an attribute possessed by an entity or experienced in an event. It is usually achieved either through lexical choice or through the use of diminutives [Pérez Hernández, 2013, *42*]. Furthermore, this mitigation is closely related to the cultural norms such as politeness principles practiced in a community. In the present corpus, totally 11 cases of mitigation operation have been identified. Some books are mitigated in size, like *Jam'o jur* 'Compact.' Here, it should be noted that due to the tough challenge experienced by most applicants, any name or promotional message with regard to the compactness of the books would be appreciated.

3.2. Metaphors involved in book branding

Metaphors have been recognized as influential cognitive operations by which we make our language — or even our life — more colorful and livelier. The theoretical basis of metaphoric and metonymic mappings was outlined by Lakoff [1987] and Kövecses [2010], it has been extended to various areas of study such as games [Ching, 1993], the motivation for metaphor use [Grady, 1999], food and dining [Korthals, 2008], advertising [Pérez-Sobrino, 2013], and commercial branding [Pérez Hernández, 2013], to name a few.

As cognitive operations, metaphors enable us to make metaphorical expressions from various domains. In the corpus of the present study, it was revealed that in a large number of book titles, some elements of unrelated domains such as journey, food, game, etc. have been mapped to the book domain to arrive at unique book titles. Now we review the metaphors at work in branding Persian educational books.

According to the collected data, the publishers of educational books use several mechanisms to evoke movement and journey in order to make book reading a fascinating activity. In doing so, some defining elements of the involved scenario such as path, speed, equipment and goal are put into operation. For example, in book titles such as *Xatte vizhe* 'Special Line,' the path of a hypothetical trip is highlighted. The names such as *Turbojet* 'Turbojet' concern the speed parameter. It was also revealed that some equipment or travel documents have been taken as suitable resources for book titling. The basic meaning of the book title *Kule poshti* 'Backpack' is a container for carrying objects, and *Gozarnāme-ye ingilisi* 'English Passport' refers to an official document needed for travelling abroad. The title *Zist-e ji pi es* 'GPS Biology' also hints that the book will always keep the reader on the right track. The title of *Jazire-ye asrār-e zist* 'The Secret Island of Biology' compares the book with an exciting undiscovered location waiting for adventure and discovery.

As shown in literature, food and eating have proved to be a good resource for metaphorical book titles. Relying on the examples extracted from the librarians' discussions, Ross [1987] has reported how the metaphor READING IS EATING motivated librarians in the late 19th century to describe certain books as tough meat, sugar, additive drugs, etc. In effect, they attempted to compare the relationship between a librarian and a reader with that of a doctor and a patient. In that context, therefore, the librarian was not just a "book-watchman," but he or she took a new role and acted as a "mental doctor" of a reader [Ibid., *157*]. In the corpus of our study, 13 book titles represent the metaphor BOOK IS FOOD which is a replication of the metaphor READING IS EATING, e.g., the title *Fizik bā ta'me shokolāt* 'Physics with Chocolate Taste' takes the book's content as a delicious edible stuff.

Howe [1988] and Ching [1993] have acknowledged the dominance of game and play metaphors in American life. The latter has listed the reasons for pervasiveness of such metaphors and argued that: (1) they depict an American prototypical person, (2) they are semantically flexible, (3) they simplify life's disparate experiences, (4) they condense multiple interpretations in one single form, and (5) they are temporally structured. Reminding that the reasons given are not limited to the American society, I would like to add one more item to the list above. All games and sports are fun. While activities like doing chores, studying, etc. tend to be unpleasant, playing games is supposed to be fascinating. Consequently, mapping an object or action from this fascinating domain to other serious, unpleasant domains would be unsurprisingly welcomed. Of 120 titles of educational books, 12 titles are based on the metaphor BOOK (READING) IS A GAME. The name '*Fināl-e joqrāfiyā*

'Geography Final' compares reading a book with the final of a sports competition, and the title *Mārāton-e riyāzi* 'Math Marathon' compares preparing for *konkur* to a long-distance foot race. The comparison is reasonable and creative as both events require great energy and patience.

Some instances of our dataset reflect another metaphorical pattern — BOOK (READING) IS A MEDICINE, where *medicine* refers to both medication and medical practice. In the corpus of our study, six book titles represent this pattern, e.g., *Vitāmin* 'Vitamin' and *Zistāmin*, i.e. a blended form of *zist* 'biology' and *vitamin*, two popular series in the book market from which the latter deals specifically with biology.

In book titles such as *Nabz-e arabi* 'Arabic Pulse' or *Nabz-e zist* 'Biology Pulse,' a relatively specialized medical term *nabz* 'pulse' is used. In another interesting title, *Vāzhe darmāni-ye arabi* 'Arabic Word-Therapy,' a student who is studying Arabic language as a high school subject is considered as a patient who needs care and therapy. In this case, consequently, the status of the writer (or publisher) is compared with that of a doctor or a therapist.

The use of animal terms to refer to human beings and other entities has become common in almost all languages and cultures. It is believed that the so-called 'animal metaphors' facilitate exchange of information and help humans to explore their relationship with nature [Hart & Long, 2011]. Reference to animals has been predominant in both classical Persian literature and contemporary Iranian pop culture. One assumes that if any animal term is to be used for book titling, it must represent a local species that can be associated to Iran. But contrary to our expectations, the animal terms appearing in the book titles include *dolfin* 'dolphin,' *fil* 'elephant,' *kāngoro* 'kangaroo,' and *kalāq* 'crow.' Interestingly, the first three animals are neither native to the country nor are they usually depicted in Persian fiction. Here, to explain this unexpected trend, I would like to recall the concept of markedness. The notion was originally developed by Jakobson and Trubetzkoy in structural linguistics, and later it was recreated and re-conceptualized to interpret varying concepts in aesthetic and social domains [see Battistella, 1996]. Put and redefined in the cultural and social context, the markedness concept explains that in a specific set of items — for example, animals — an item with unfamiliar traits or fewer frequency is 'marked,' and other more typical and more frequent ones are 'unmarked.' The marked entity catches the attention immediately and just this straightforward fact justifies the strategy taken by Iranian publishers. They (un)consciously employ marked animal terms along with some appropriate, eye-catching pictures on the cover to reach their marketing goals. The fourth term — *kalāq* 'crow' which signifies a common and 'unmarked' animal in Iranian literature and environment — could stand as a counterexample for our explanation. Interestingly enough, however, this term is combined with the Persian adjective *sepid* 'white' to make a 'marked' title *Kalāq-e sepid* 'White crow.'

A word referring to weapon is usually supposed to render the concepts of power and destruction simultaneously. There are three titles with weapon words in our corpus: *Bomb*

'Bomb,' *Fāntom-e zist* 'Biology Phantom,'[1] and *Nok-e magasak* 'Tip of Iron Sights.' Metaphorically, in the first item, a book has been compared to a bomb that explodes. In the second title, the book is considered as a jet that takes its navigator (reader) to the farthest locations. And the last one, refers to a sighting device in weapons that assists accurate aiming. These words notoriously signify devices designed to cause physical damage and bodily harm, which may seem odd in the context of educational book titling. However, these three words/expressions each have a positive aspect of meaning. A bomb is a device that releases energy, and energy is basically something a hard-working and sometimes bored student is looking for. The *Phantom* is known as a high-speed jet, and the speed is also a positive characteristic for *konkur* candidates. Likewise, the last name referring to iron sights conveys the idea of accuracy and precision. These examples illustrate how book branders and (hopefully) customers flexibly ignore some negative semantic features of words in favor of positive connotations to achieve their intended pragmatic and/or business goals. One last point should be added here. Due to the negative associations of weapon or war-related terms, applying them in the bookselling (or any other non-war) domain requires much care. The limited number of cases (just 3 out of 120 items) is a good sign of the care taken by authors and publishing houses.

3.3. Cultural allusions

By cultural allusion I mean a wide range of indirect references to things, places, events, or cultural symbols reflected in various forms of arts and media. There are 28 cultural allusions in our corpus from which four cases are explained here. The book series entitled *Estand'āp komedi tārixe adabiyāt* 'Stand-up Comedy of History of Literature' has been among the popular titles in the *konkur* book market. To account for such a naming strategy, we should refer to the global popularity of the stand-up comedy genre, and its sudden popularity in Iranian setting, especially through *Khandevane* TV show, an entertainment program aired since 2014. In its seven seasons, the program has had different parts like live music, interviews, and also stand-up comedy. The comedy performances are held in stages and previously unsigned contestants who enter the final stage of competition usually gain public recognition. As such, the whole TV show and its broadcasted stand-up performances are associated with enjoyment and success.

Reference to literary works has been a rich resource of cultural allusions. To give an example, we may refer to a textbook on the English language. English is a challenging subject for many high school students, and most *konkur* candidates find comprehension questions really hard and ironically fearful. To cope with such a fear, a supplementary English book with structured passages and comprehension questions has been published entitled *Va natarsim az matn* 'Let Us not Fear Text'. This title is clearly based on a line

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[1] In Persian, the word *fāntom* refers primarily to a military jet. It derives from the name of the military aircraft F-4 Phantom II produced by McDonnell Douglas from 1961 to 1991. Such jets are still in active service in Iranian Air Force.

from the poem *The Footsteps of Water* by Sohrab Sepehri (1928–1980). In his widely praised poem, this eminent poet presents his vision of life and, prior to his illuminating sentences on death, he writes: "Va narsim az marg" (Let us not fear death).

The title *Chelle neshini bā matne arabi* 'Forty Days Worship with Arabic Texts' is another interesting example which is inspired by traditional Iranian-Islamic teachings. In Islamic mysticism, the term *chelle neshini* basically refers to a religious, mystical ritual which requires an individual to resort to a secluded place, worship God and gain supernatural power for forty days. The title compares a student with a mystic as both of them should attempt to acquire knowledge in a specific period of time. The title sends another underlying message too, as it gives a holy value to Arabic as a school subject in general and Arabic high school books in particular. Interestingly, due to the spiritual nature of the whole practice, the expression *chelle neshini* has been limited to just *Arabic* as a school subject.

Color terms are also employed to enrich the associative palette. There is a book series which is introduced on the advertising print catalogs or webpages as *Ketāb-e zard-e konkur* 'Konkur Yellow Book.' Pragmatically speaking, the expressions 'yellow book' or 'yellow pages' remind us of the telephone directories of businesses within a specific geographical area. Accordingly, the title *Ketāb-e zard-e konkur* 'Konkur Yellow Book' advertises that the book has provided complete, reliable educational content.

Table illustrates the frequency, percentage and one example for each cognitive operation as well as cultural allusions.

Cognitive operations in book titles

Cognitive Operations	Frequency	%	Examples
Strengthening	46	25.8	*Rotbe sāz* 'Rank Maker'
Mitigation	11	6.1	*Jibi* 'Pocket Size'
BOOK IS A JOURNEY	17	9.5	*Gozarnāme-ye ingilisi* 'English Passport'
BOOK IS FOOD	14	7.8	*Sāndevich-e riyāzi* 'Mathematics Sandwich'
BOOK IS A GAME	12	6.7	*Fināl-e joqrāfiyā* 'Geography Final'
BOOK IS A MEDICINE	6	3.3	*Vāzhe-darmāniye arabi* 'Arabic Word-therapy'
BOOK IS AN ANIMAL	4	2.2	*Kalāq-e sepid* 'White Crow'
BOOK IS A WEAPON	3	1.6	*Bomb-e fizik-e pāye* 'Bomb of Elementary Physics'
Cultural allusions	28	15.7	*Va natarsim az matn* 'Let Us not Fear Text'
Total	141	79.2	

4. Conclusion

This study shows that Iranian individual authors as well as publishing houses creatively employ cognitive operations and/or cultural allusions to communicate novelty in their competitive business. In general, within the corpus of 120 book titles, 141 items of cognitive operations, cultural allusions have been detected. According to the findings, the cognitive operation of "strengthening" is more dominant than "mitigation," and among metaphors, the pattern BOOK IS A JOURNEY tends to be the most frequent one, followed by those related to food, game, medicine, animal, and weapon.

To answer the first question outlined in the introduction, we can claim that strengthening plays a significant role in educational book naming. In 46 cases of book titles (25.8%), one positive feature in achievement, affiliation, accuracy, speed or size is strengthened to promote book selling. Only 11 cases of mitigation process indicate the more limited share of this cognitive process. As far as the second research question is concerned, it is revealed that, to create eye-catching titles for their books, authors and publishers have employed a number of metaphors related to journey, food, game, medicine, animal and weapon. To deal with the third question, it should be restated that 28 cases of cultural allusions have been seen in the book titles.

One of the limitations of the present study was that the commercial success of the analyzed books has not been investigated, and therefore, the actual impact of each cognitive operation and/or morphological process in brand recognition has remained unknown to us. Addressing such an issue requires a separate study with a multidisciplinary approach, an approach that deals with both linguistic devices, e.g. naming practices, as well as non-linguistic aspects such as the cover design and aesthetics, number of circulation and the general marketing strategies planned and implemented by publishers.

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«ФИЗИКА СО ВКУСОМ ШОКОЛАДА»: КОГНИТИВНО-ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД К НАЗВАНИЯМ ИРАНСКИХ ШКОЛЬНЫХ УЧЕБНИКОВ

В статье исследуются некоторые лингвистические стратегии создания названий учебников, предназначенных для иранских школьников. В Иране поступление в ведущие университеты осуществляется на конкурсной основе, поэтому изучение дополнительных учебных материалов является необходимым условием успешного поступления в вуз. Книги, издаваемые Министерством образования, не отличаются методической гибкостью и привлекательностью, а спрос на высококачественные материалы очень высок. Как следствие, в Иране сформировался прибыльный рынок учебной литературы. На этом конкурентном рынке издатели делают все возможное, чтобы привлечь покупателей, и выбор броских названий для публикуемых книг является одной из наиболее важных маркетинговых задач. В настоящем исследовании проанализировано в общей сложности 120 наименований книг. Из когнитивных процессов, актуализируемых в названиях книг, наиболее значительную роль играют «усиление» (*strengthening*) и «смягчение» (*mitigation*). Согласно полученным данным, когнитивная операция усиления является более частотной, чем операция смягчения: в 46 случаях (25,8 %) какая-либо положительная черта оказывается лингвистически «усиленной», и лишь в 11 случаях отмечены признаки лингвистического «смягчения». Также показано, что авторы и издатели склонны использовать метафоры для создания привлекательных названий. Самая частотная метафорическая модель (17 случаев) — «книга — это путешествие», за ней следуют метафорические модели, связанные с едой (14), игрой (12), медициной (6), животными (4) и оружием (3). Некоторые названия содержат культурные аллюзии и символы, получившие широкое распространение в прецедентных литературных текстах, произведениях искусства, в материалах СМИ.

К л ю ч е в ы е   с л о в а: ономастика; названия книг; когнитивные механизмы; культурные аллюзии; учебная литература в Иране; персидский язык