Extended Abstract

Exploring metaphorical conceptualizations involving the source domain up/ down in Iranian cinema: A case study of the films *Dancing in the Dust* and *Fireworks Wednesday*

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Introduction

Embodied cognition, a well-established field in cognitive science, emphasizes the role of the body's interaction with the environment in cognitive processes. Barsalou (1999, 2008) suggests that the human brain stores and reactivates information in the form of multimodal representations, leading to perceptual and motor simulations. These embodied experiences also play a crucial role in metaphorical functions, where individuals express abstract concepts through sensory-motor experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a, 1999). Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) refer to these metaphors, pervasive in our everyday language, as 'conceptual metaphors'. The UP/ DOWN source domain is one of the domains employed in spatial metaphors. Since physical orientations are concepts that we directly experience through our senses and physical interactions with the surrounding world, they form the basis of image schemas, which, in turn, underlie conceptual domains in primary metaphors (Grady, 1997). Ortiz (2011) argues that considering a primary metaphor as an analytical unit has many advantages and that primary metaphors can also be represented visually, making them a valid unit for analyzing non-verbal communication mediums. Among multimodal mediums, cinema, due to its dynamic discourse and diverse communication channels, closely resembles the

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practical application of metaphors in everyday life. This study has delved into the up/ down source domain in the multimodal medium of cinema by analyzing two films by Asghar Farhadi, *Dancing in the Dust* and *Fireworks Wednesday*.

Material & Methods

This study investigated the up/ down source domain and its relation to abstract concepts in language. It demonstrates that orientational metaphors associated with vertical structures (up/ down) are employed across various languages to express concepts such as power, emotions, social status, wealth, rationality, and morality. Numerous studies, including those by Cian (2017), Meier and Robinson (2004), Sundar and Noseworthy (2014), and Schubert (2005), have explored this relationship through empirical experiments. In the realm of linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) have investigated the association between positive concepts and 'up' and negative concepts and 'down,' suggesting that these metaphors are rooted in human physical and everyday experiences. Subsequently, researchers have explored these metaphors using multimodal media such as films and advertisements. For instance, Forceville (2006, 2008) and Ortiz (2015) have demonstrated that orientational metaphors related to vertical structures (up/ down) were employed in films and advertisements to elicit emotions in the audience. To examine the application of the up/ down source domain in the films *Dancing in the Dust* and *Fireworks Wednesday*, this study meticulously analyzed various scenes from these films. The analysis aimed to uncover how these metaphors were used to construct meaning and impact the audience.

Results & Discussion

A detailed, scene-by-scene analysis of *Dancing in the Dust* and *Fireworks Wednesday* revealed several shots and scenes where the mise-en-scène and camera framing were intentionally designed to represent abstract target domains using the up/ down source domain. These source domains were employed to depict concepts like power, weakness, social class, moral decline, and connection with the divine. For example, in *Dancing in the Dust*, the director used the up/ down source domain to represent the poverty and low social status of Reyhaneh and her mother. Their house was depicted under a bridge, serving as a metaphor for their marginalized social position. In another scene, Nazar, distraught and fearful, cast his gaze upwards to the sky and conversed with his God. This upward gaze was employed as a metaphor for his connection with the divine. This representation aligns with the findings of neuropsychological researchers on religious activities, suggesting that people's representations of the divine are closely linked to vertical perceptual representations. In a different scene, Haidar, seen crying as he stepped out of his car, cast a large shadow on the ground. The larger shadow represented the projection of his outward power and actual inner weakness, further emphasized by the high camera position. Haidar was positioned

lower than the viewer's perspective, diminishing his stature. In *Fireworks Wednesday*, a high camera angle and position was used to depict Mozhdeh's weakness and vulnerability in the first scene of her arrival at the building. Morteza's descent using the elevator also served as a symbol of his moral decline, a concept which was reinforced by the depiction of his violence against his wife. When Mortaza recounted this incident to Simin, he referred to himself as a "cow." The metaphor IMMORAL PERSON IS ANIMAL is thus conveyed through his descent from the elevator and his use of the word "cow." In another scene, after Mozhdeh failed to prove Morteza's infidelity, she was shown sitting down, positioned lower than Mortaza, who stood victorious beside her. The director uses conceptual metaphors VICTORY IS UP and DEFEAT IS DOWN to visually represent this concept. Overall, these metaphorical techniques and the use of mise-en-scène and camera angles help filmmakers to convey abstract concepts more tangibly to the viewer, enhancing the impact of the scenes.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that since positive and negative concepts are typically understood through metaphors related to vertical orientations in real situations, they are also prevalent in cinematic images. The analysis of scenes from the two films, *Dancing in the Dust* and *Fireworks Wednesday*, confirms the presence of up/ down source domain metaphors in Iranian cinema. However, it is worth mentioning that, as Forceville and Renckens (2013) aptly have pointed out, that the interpretation and identification of metaphors in non-verbal communication mediums ultimately rests with the audience. This study further highlights the adaptability of the up/ down source domain when employed in a multimodal medium like cinema. By employing the up/ down source domain, directors can effectively depict a range of complex human experiences, from social stratification and moral decline to the power dynamics between characters and their connection to the divine. These visual metaphors add a layer of depth and nuance to the cinematic narrative, inviting viewers to engage with the film on a deeper level. These results can contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of metaphors in shaping cultural narratives and the potential for these metaphors to influence audience perceptions. Additionally, the study offers insights into the effectiveness of up/ down source domain metaphors in conveying meaning and evoking emotional responses in viewers.

Keywords: Visual metaphor, Multimodal metaphor, Conceptual metaphor, *Fireworks Wednesday*, Up/ down source domain, *dancing in the Dust*, Cinema.

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