

Translating Propositional Polysemy from English into Persian: the Case of *Over*

Fatemeh Behnamnia¹

Abstract

The widespread phenomenon of polysemy has been always a controversial and troublesome issue for linguists. However, in this study an attempt has been made to investigate translating polysemous word *over*, from English into Persian with the help of Tehran English-Persian Parallel Corpus (TEP), a corpus borrowed from Tehran University. For such an examination, the framework was based on the semantic network of *over* which was suggested by Tyler and Evans (2001). In this process, English semantic network of *over*, in different sentences with different senses were identified and the phrases and sentences including the considered polysemous word and their Persian translations were compared with each other. In the Persian version, the most intended meanings have been understood carefully and transferred into TT.

Keywords: polysemy, translation, semantic network, TEP corpus

1. Introduction

It is a linguistic convention that language, in both spoken and written forms, is message-oriented and serves a specific intended function so as to "pass on information" and "maintain social relationships" Nguyen Hoa (2004, p. 16). Prepositions are considered to be words which bear several meanings, even though their linguistic form remains consistent. Prepositions are highly polysemous in understanding the whole meaning of an utterance. This difficulty becomes more challengeable when a translator attempts to perceive the meaning of the source text correctly and then transfers it to the readers of the target one. So here the problem would be defined as two levels, first, understanding the meaning of the text rightly and second, translation of the text. Polysemy comes from Greek poly (many) and semy (to do with meaning as in semantics) and it happen when a word acquires a wide range of meaning. Therefore, a polysemous word is a word with different meanings and, therefore, a problematic ambiguity becomes the first issue whenever these words are used. Quiroge-clare (2003) claims that Polysemous words are the most common types of words causing ambiguity. According to Mason "adults realize that many words are polysemous, that without context words can be characterized by more than one meaning, and that only through context is a particular meaning obtainable" (1976, p. 4).

1. The differences between polysemy and homonym:

"Polysemy can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are related by extension"(Yule, 2010, p. 120).Radford held that most words are polysemy, as by passing time they may gain marginal meaning which are derived from the central one (1999, p. 263). According to Palmer (1976) a polysemous word is treated as one entry while homonyms are treated as different entries. This claim would be a great help in distinguishing between polysemy and homonym."Homonyms are words that have separate histories and meanings, but they have accidentally come to have exactly the same form"(Yule, 2010, p. 120).

¹University of Isfahan, Iran.

2. Radial categories:

Bloomfield (1933) believed that from the traditional point of view, the lexicon has been regarded as items which attained their meaning arbitrarily, with considering the regularity and productivity associated with language taking place in the syntax. Tyler and Evan held as a result of this perspective that the lexicon is "a static set of words and word senses, tagged with features for syntactic, morphological and semantic information, ready to be inserted into syntactic frames with appropriately matching features" (2001, p. 725).

Cognitive linguists try to interpret semantic networks on the basis of human perception, human experiences. It is assumed that different meanings of a polysemous word form a semantic network which extends from the primary sense suggested by Rosch (1975) to its sub-categories, described as a "radial category" which is introduced by Lakoff (1987).

Radial categories are based on semantic networks. A crucial feature of these networks is that they are placed around a core meaning which is generally called prototype. So prototypes are considered as good examples of a particular category. However the idea of radially is in strong opposition toward Aristotle category which all members of any category should have all determined feature, if not, they become excluded from the category.

By considering all these together, in cognitive semantic approach, the different meanings of a polysemous item like prepositions are regarded to form a family resemblance network. This is a prototype-based network where the relations among its members are highly motivated. Brugman and Lakoff (2003) believe that in the general theory, the links between members of the network are not arbitrary. The theory of radial categories comes with a characterization of possible link types. In the case of polysemy, the link types are the types of relations linking the senses of the word. In general, some of the links may involve shared information, some may involve relation between a general and a specific case, and some may be metaphoric.... But, overall, there is only a small number of types of relations between senses of words...."

Nerliche, Todd, and Herman in their book " *trends in linguistics*" (2003) held that cognitive linguistics postulated the notion of **embodied meaning**: the meanings related to many individual lexemes are instantiated in memory not in terms of features, nor as abstract propositions, but rather as imagistic, schematic representations. Such **image-schemas** are considered to be embodied, in the sense that they arise from **perceptual reanalysis** of recurring patterns in routine physical experience.

II. Background:

Polysemy and the translation of the polysemous words have been studied from different perspectives. Golfam and Yousefi Rad (2009) investigated the Persian polysemous preposition /dar/ from the pedagogical perspective. Nguyễn Hải Hà (2012) in an MA thesis worked on examining linguistic ambiguity as a source of constructing funniness in English verbal jokes. Shirai (1990) has studied prototype and metaphorical extension, the polysemy of put. Evans and Tyler (2001) have worked on reconsidering prepositional polysemy networks: the case of over. Kamakura (2011) studied collocation and preposition sense. Mahpeykar and Tyler (2011) examined the semantics of the Persian preposition [be]by applying the principled polysemy model. The effect of Persian polysemy on the interpretation of English sentences is another attempt which has been done by Samanianpour and Hashemian (2011).

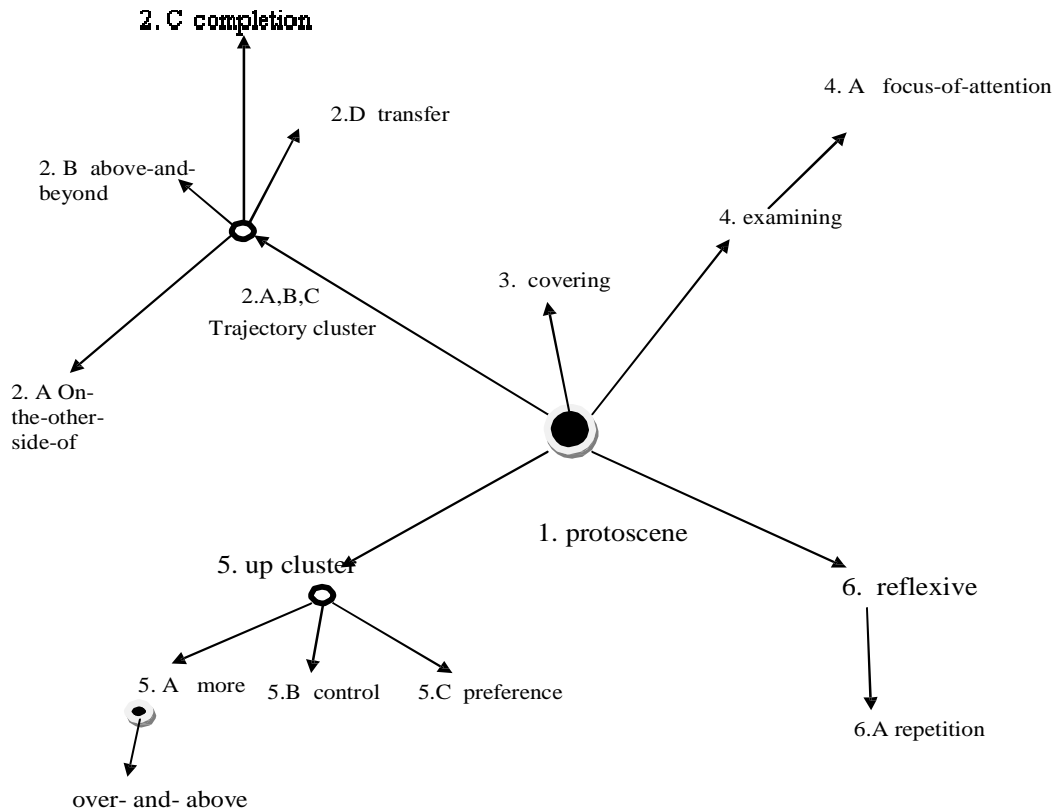
III. Methodology:

1. Design of the study

The present research is a descriptive study in which different usages of the preposition "**over**" were investigated according to the semantic network presented by Tyler and Evans (2001). Since the main aim of this paper was to show how these distinct senses had been translated into Persian, it was required to collect the data from the TEP corpus.

2. Procedures

- i. First, the sentences and phrases containing **over** from the TEP corpus were gathered along with their Persian translations.
- ii. After collecting data, many usages of the preposition were categorized based on the semantic network of **over** which is suggested by Tyler and Evans (2001).



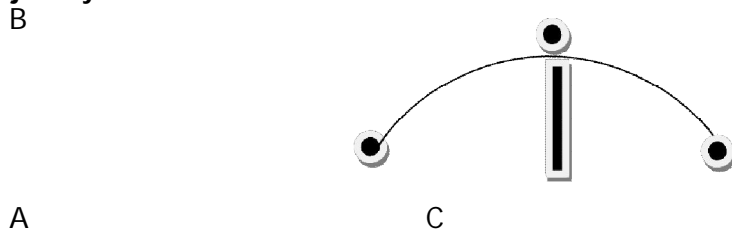
The semantic network for *over* (Tyler and Evans 2003a: 80)

The semantic network of *over*, which is given, here shows that the prototype at the center is surrounded by the peripheral senses and connected through clusters which represent attributes and which group similar senses together.

- iii. Then, by investigating the senses in the original text and Persian version of the ST, English text, an attempt has been made to examine how these senses are transferred to the TT. TT: target text; ST: source text; TR: trajectory; LM: landmark.

IV. Data Analysis and Discussion:

ABC trajectory



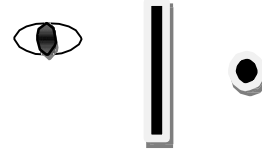
TR cannot hover and must return to the ground; and use of *over* is to designate the key spatial/functional configuration (i.e. the TR being higher than the LM in position but this configuration is temporary. Since, the TR returns to the ground again).

1. *Pas na, 'azroyehesarparidam, zānōmkeharāshide shod.*
1. So, no. **I jump over the fence**, I scraped my knee.

2. *ōnzāne 'alān 'azrōyendardehparid pain.*
2. That woman just **jumped over the side of the ship!**

According to the available translation of these sentences in the corpus, the concept of jumping from the starting point A, then hovering B, returning to the ground C was translated truly. TR here in the example 1 is a person and 2 is a woman. LM in example 1 is fence as translated by [*besār*] and in example 2 is the side of the ship which is translated as [*nardeyekeshti*]

i. On the other side of



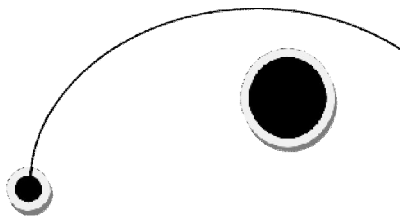
1. *vaManchester daghighanposhtesare in nardehāst, doroste.*
1. Now, **the Winchester is just over that fence**, all right.

The trajectory is Winchester. The considered sense of over is being located at a place where human's eyes can look at it from the far. In the Persian version, this sense of over is translated as [*poshtenardehā*].

ii. The above-and-beyond (excess I) sense

When the TR misses the target, it goes above and beyond the LM.

1. *Inzhenerātorbish 'az ... āmpertolidmikone, bishtar 'azhadiekelāzeme.*
1. This generator **produces over ... amp**, Much more than what is necessary.
2. *helikōpterke 'azbalāyesāhel rad shod, yekiino 'azash part kard.*
2. The chopper flew over the beach. Someone tossed this out.



In sentence 1 we cannot interpret the higher physical position of TR rather than the LM. However the considered sense here is an *excess* meaning, passing a definite limitation. In the TT, this sense was pointed out by [*bish 'az*].

In example 2, there is an implicit meaning that the LM here beach, represents an intended goal or target and the TR, chopper, moved beyond the intended, or desired point. In the Persian version of the sentence, this concept was transmitted by [*rad shod*].

iii. The completion sense

1. *kheilikhobnamāyeshbtamum shod.*
1. All right. **Show's over.**

2. *Tamāmēekhtelāfathal shod.*

2. **Everything has been smoothed over completely.**

Here, in both examples the intended sense of over is being complete. In the Persian sentences, the sense is transferred by [*tamum shod*].

iv. The transfer sense

1. *Farmāndetasmimgereftandke in dokhtarrā be shomābargardānim,*

1. The general has decided **to turn her over to you.**

2. *To be man gholdādikeōrabe man midahi.*

2. You promised you'd **hand him over to me.**

In two sentences, *over* is used to convey the transfer sense. Here, the motion of TR from one point to another is the main usage of *over*. In the Persian version, the transfer is indicated by [*bargardānim*] in example 1 or [*midahi*].

v. The covering sense

Eye



TR



LM

1. *In ye gönieslehamunikerōyesare man gozāshān.*

1. It's a hood, just like the one **they put over my head.**

2. *Khob, Inger, digarbāyadsarpōshbrā bar rōyetabōt to bogzārim.*

2. Well, Inger, we must **put the lid over you.**

3. *Inchizārōyesōratamnažārid.*

3. **Don't put that thing over my face.**

The surface of TR is perceived as covering the surface of the LM. All the examples show this concept and in the Persian version this sense is completely conveyed.

vi. The examining sense

In this case, the connection is construed as that between the examiner and the examined. Because the protoscene for *over* contains these elements—a TR higher than a LM, proximity between the TR and LM, and a conceptual connectedness.

1. *Man parvāndeye to robarresikardam.*

1. I've been **looking over your case.**

2. *Khob, negāhibeheshunbendāzīdva 'agar barsoalidāshātid be daftaramzangbezānid.*

2. So, **just look these over** and if you have any questions, call me at my office.

3. *'Avalinmoshtariam, yekmardenirumand be name Vākāri bud, kebe deghatmanochekkard.*

3. My first client, a stout man named Vaccari, **looked me over carefully.**

In the examining sense, the TR's line of vision is directed at the LM. In these sentences, by TR examined something carefully and the same sense in their translation is conveyed by using: [*barresikard*], [*chekkard*], and [*negāhandakht*].

vii. The focus-of-attention sense

1. *Tōyekhōneneshastamvabarātgeryekardam.*

1. I sit alone at home and **cry over you.**

2. *Enjilikemāmişbenāsimdarnahāyattavasoteyekmardnezārat shod.*
 2. The bible as we know **it was finally presided over by one man.**

Here, TR is as means for directing attention toward LM. Since the focus of attention in both examples is LM. Over in the first sentence can be replaced by an "UP" cluster.

viii. The more sense

1. *Emröz, bishtar... tā barge bude...*
 1. Today, they were **over**... pages.

The normal interpretation of *over* in this context is "more than". In translated sentence by using the adjective [*bishtar*] is transferred the mere sense.

ix. The over-and-above (excess II) sense

1. *Man kboshbālam, ghalbe man sarshar 'azehsas 'ast.*
 1. I'm happy... my heart's **overflowing with emotions.**
2. *Agar daryācheMishigāntoghyānkone chi.*
 2. Suppose, **lake Michigan overflows.**
3. *Salonbāpormishod 'azgāvcherōnbāvam'amōrānrāb 'abānvaekteshāfkeonandehāyem'adenvatofangdārkhāvaghomārbāzkhāvazānān.*
 3. Saloons just **overflowing** with cattle drivers and road agents, prospectors, gunslingers, gamblers and women.

This sense is closely related to the previous sense. The nuancedifference is that this sense adds the meaning of too much. In the Persian version, words like [*sarshār 'ast*], [*toghyānkardan*]and [*porshodan*]are used. These words accurately transferred the intended sense from the ST to the TT.

x. The control sense

1. *'Age ön to rābedozdeönvagbiman majbōramtaslim sham.*
 1. If the criminal were to, say, kidnap you, he would have **power over me.**
2. *hamishedonbālepīruzīmīgardihattā 'age in pīruzībar 'alaiheshkekāyāt e khodetbāshe.*
 2. You look for any victory you can get, even a victory **over your own self-doubt.**
3. *yaniketamāme in forudgābziredaste mane.*
 3. It means that **my authority over the security of this airport is absolute.**

This sense does not mean that TR is higher than LM with respect to the physical position. Main sense here is that, for instance in the third sentence, TR, the person's authority is influencing the LM, airport. In the translated version for pointing to power of TR on the LM, words like: [*taslim sham*], [*'alayhekhodetbāshe*]and [*ziredaste mane*]has been applied.

xi. The preference sense

1. *Ishunhamisheberenj e sefidronesbat be berenjesefidbalöbiatarjihmidādand.*
 1. She has always **preferred white rice over rice with beans.**
2. *Inkheilibehtar 'ast 'azīnkeshomā 'az man mobāfezatmikardid.*
 2. I **prefer it over you trying to protect me**in being considerate.

In an experiential feeling being physically up is related to human's positive states. Here the usage of over shows the significance of one item rather than the others. In the TT some words has been applied such as: [*tarjihmidādand*]and [*'in kheilibetar 'ast*].

xii. The reflexive sense

1. *Alan tötakhtehaltkbordva be man goftkenemitunamsōratamroheskonam.*
 1. **Alan rolled over in bed**and he looked at me and he said, I can't feel my face.

2. *Man sbenidamyekbārheivunrālehkardebudandvaönmorde bud.*

2. I heard an animal once do that, but then **they rolled him over, he was dead.**

As the name of this sense introduces itself, reflexive position is intended. The initial position of Alan (in the first sentence) is distinguished from his final position, in which the he is lying on the other side of his bed. For transferring this sense, [*ghaltkhord*] and [*lehkardeboodand*] have been observed.

xiii. The repetition sense

1. *Bāyadberizameshdörva 'az 'avaltadvineshkonam.*

1. I've got throw it out and **start all over.**

2. *Vabāzgashtabadüneke to yekzendegirādobārevadobāretajrobekoni.*

2. And eternal recurrence is when you live the **same life over and over again.**

The main reason for using over in these sentences is to achieve the repetition meaning. This sense is indicated again in the translated versions by using [*'az 'avval*] and [*dobārevadobāre*].

V. Conclusion:

This study was an attempt to show that how semantic networks of polysemous word **over** has been transferred. Based on this investigation most of the intended meanings in the ST have been translated into TT with the same sense in the mind of the TT reader. As a result, radiality is a property for both of the source and target languages. The main conclusions of this study were reflected on the table below.

Table 1: English phrases and sentences and their Persian translation in the case of intended senses of "over"

Intended sense	English phrases and sentences including over	Persian translation
ABC trajectory	I jump over the fence/ jumped over the side of the ship	'azroyehesarparidam
On the other side of	the Winchester is just over that fence	Manchester daghighanposhtesare in nardebast
The above-and- beyond (excess I) sense	This generator produces over amp/ The chopper flew over the beach	bish 'az ... ampertolidmikone/ helikopterke 'azbalāyesabel rad sbod
The completion sense	Show's over/ Everything has been smoothed over completely	keheilikhobnamāyesbtamum sbod.
The transfer sense	to turn her over to you/ hand him over to me.	to turn her over to you./ hand him over to me
The covering sense	they put over my head/ we must put the lid over you/ don't put that thing over my face	rōyesare man gozāshtan/ put the lid over you
The examining sense	looking over your case/ just look these over / looked me over carefully	negābibeeshunbendāzid/ be deghatmanochekKard
The focus-of- attention sense	cry over you / It was finally presided over by one man.	barātgeryekardam/ tavasoteyekmartnezārat sbod
The more sense	they were over ... pages	bishtar
The over-and-above (excess II) sense	myheart's overflowing with emotions/ lake Michigan overflows/ Saloons just overflowing	sarshar 'azehsas 'ast/ daryācheMishigāntoghyānkone chi/ Salonhāpormishod
The control sense	power over me / over your own self-doubt /my authority over the security of this airport is absolute	manmājborāmtaslim sham/ bar 'alaibesbekāyat e kbodetbāshe./ tamāme in forūdgābzāredaste mane.
The preference sense	preferred white rice over rice with beans / I prefer it over you trying to protect me	berenj e sefidronesbat be berenjesejidbalōbiātarijibmidadand./ In kheilibhtar 'ast 'azinkeshomā 'azmanmohāfezatmikardid
The reflexive sense	Alan rolled over in bed / they rolled him over	Alentōtakebtghaltkbord/ heivunrālehkardebudandraönmorde bud.
The repetition sense	start all over / same life over and over again	'az 'avaltadvineshkonam./ yekzendegirādobārevadobāretajrobekoni

Reference:

- Bloomfield, L. 1933. *Language*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.
- Brugman, C & Lakoff, G. (2003), "Cognitive Topology and Lexical Networks", *Cognitive Linguistics, Basic Reading*, (ed) Dirk Geeraerts, Mouton de Gruyters.
- Golfam, A & Yousefi Rad, F (2010). *A Cognitive Semantic Approach to Persian Spatial Prepositions, a Pedagogical Perspective, Case Study: Persian Preposition /dar/*. Pazhuhesh-e Zabanha-ye Khareji, No. 56, Special Issue, English, Spring 2010, pp. 167-179. [Online] Available: <http://journals.ut.ac.ir/page/download-cRlyLsQdoTs.artdl>
- Hài Hà, N. (2012). *Examining linguistic ambiguity as a source of constructing funniness in English verbal jokes*. University of Languages and International Studies. M.A Thesis: English linguistics, Code: 60 22 15. [Online] Available: <http://dl.vnu.edu.vn/bitstream/11126/476/1/04051000635.pdf>
- Kamakura, Y. (2011). *Collocation and preposition sense: a phraseological approach to the cognition of polysemy*. A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of doctor of philosophy. [Online] Available: http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/1592/1/Kamakura_11_PhD.pdf
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lee, D. (2001). *Cognitive Linguistics: an Introduction*. Oxford university Press.
- Mason, J, et al. (1976). *Effects of Polysemous Words on Sentence Comprehension*. Illinois: University of Illinois.
- Nerlich, B, Todd, Z, Herman, V & Clarke, D. (2003). *Polysemy: Flexible Patterns of Meaning in Mind and Language*: Mouton de Gruyter Berlin . New York.
- Nguyen Hoa. (2004). *Understanding English Semantics*. Hanoi: VNUH Publisher. 16-67.
- Palmer, F. (1976). *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quiroga-Clare, C. (2003). *Language ambiguity: a curse and a blessing*. Translation Journal. Volume 7, issue 1. [On line] Available: <http://accurapid.com/journal/23ambiguity.htm>
- Rosch, E. (1975). *Cognitive representations of semantic categories*. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 104, 192-233.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language*. Fourth edition. Cambridge university press. Radford, A,
- Atkinson, M, Britain, D, Clahsen, H, & Spencer, A. (1999). *Linguistics: an Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shirai, Y. (1990). *Putting PUT to Use: Prototype and Metaphorical Extension*. Issues in Applied Linguistics. [Online] Available: <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/0df4z0hr>
- Samanianpour, S & Hashemian, M. (2011). *The Effect of Persian Polysemy on the Interpretation of English Sentences*. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol. 1, No. 6, pp. 732-736, June 2011. [Online] Available: <http://ojs.academypublisher.com/index.php/tpls/article/view/0106732736>
- Tyler, A & Vyvyan, E. 2001. *Reconsidering prepositional polyhsemy networks: the case of over*. Language. [Online] Available: <http://www.vyvevans.net/over.pd>