

A Study of the Semantic Changes of Some Lexical Entries in Some Persian Dictionaries

Afsaneh Eftekharzadeh

Chabahar Maritime University

Email: afsane_eduir@yahoo.com

This research aims to study the semantic changes over a forty-year period of all Persian lexical entries from /b/ «ب» to /z/ «ذ» (ten letters of the Persian alphabet: four letters with a high number of entries, four letters with average number of entries, and two letters with a low number of entries) in Móeen, Sokhan and Sadri Afshar dictionaries. Móeen dictionary (first edition: 1966) was chosen as a dictionary that was written more than a decade before the revolution, and one whose sources were chosen from medieval Farsi texts. Sadri Afshar dictionary (second edition: 2003) on the other hand was chosen as a dictionary that has used contemporary Farsi texts. Sokhan dictionary was also chosen for having an extensive range of definitions and examples (from medieval to modern times) that clearly depicts the semantic changes of the lexicon in Farsi in the span of time between Móeen and Sadri Afshar dictionaries. All the entries that come under the above letters have been the subject of a diachronic study with a descriptive-comparative approach. The semantic changes of these entries have thus been listed as 6 prototypical categories (deletion of entries, emergence of neologisms, semantic additions, semantic reductions, multiple semantic changes, without semantic changes) and 9 fluid categories, and also 3 criteria of “language tendency and level of speech”, “etymology” and “field of usage”. The results (43622 entries) were registered in a dynamic database according to which 37 diagrams, 43 tables and 2 continuums have been presented in this research. All has been done to record the diachronic semantic changes in some entries in the above Farsi dictionaries. Based on the statistical data derived from the above information, the research came to a number of results some of which are as follows:

- 1) 43.66% of the entries have been deleted or have the tendency for becoming obsolete. 38.48% of the entries have remained semantically unchanged. 9% of the words were neologisms. 0.7% of the entries experienced multiple semantic changes. Semantic reductions and semantic additions were the lowest at 6.99% and 1.14% respectively.

- 2) From the aspect of “language tendency and level of speech” criteria, most neologisms belong to 3 fields: “colloquial, figurative, ironic” and most deleted entries belong to 3 fields: “figurative, colloquial, and poetic”.
- 3) From the aspect of “etymology” criteria, most neologisms have been borrowed from 3 languages: “French, Arabic, English” and most deleted entries have been borrowed from 3 groups: “Arabic, Turkish, arabicized (mo’arrab)”.
- 4) From the aspect of “field of usage” criteria, most neologisms belong to 3 fields: “zoology, technical, chemical,” and most deleted entries belong to 3 fields: “botany, zoology, governmental”.

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