



Research Article

EXOCENTRIC COMPOUNDS IN PUNJABI: A CULTURAL ANALYSIS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 10th February, 2021

Received in revised form 2nd

March, 2021

Accepted 26th April, 2021

Published online 28th May, 2021

Key words:

Punjabi, Exocentric Compounds, Culture, Metaphors, Cultural Linguistics

ABSTRACT

The main focus of the paper was to analyze the exocentric compounds in Punjabi with the help of cultural linguistics. Exocentric compounds have always been marginalized in the linguistic literature due to their non-productivity and idiosyncratic meaning (Bauer, 2008). The absence of the semantic head in these constructions hinders in establishing a theory or model to analyze such formations and to resolve the issue that how the compounds shift from a literal towards a metaphoric interpretation. Keeping in view this issue this very preliminary study showed that the complex issue of arriving at the metaphoric meaning in exocentric compounds can better be resolved, if the compound is studied within the cultural perspective. The paper is a part of the researchers' PhD dissertation and a huge data is collected in this regard. In this paper only four examples of NV compounds were discussed, as these are the most productive formations in Punjabi. After the data analysis it concluded that culture plays an important role in arriving at the metaphoric meaning in exocentric compounds.

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INTRODUCTION

In the research filed compounding; a word formation process is being under discussion since *Panini* (5th BC). There are various definitions and classifications of compounds. Bloomfield (1933) makes a distinction between endocentric compounds and exocentric compounds on the basis of semantic head which helps in the meaning of the whole structure and determines the category of the whole compound. Whereas, in the exocentric compound the semantic of the compound is unpredictable from the meaning of the constituents taking part in the compound. These compounds do not have any semantic head and are called the headless (Booij 2002, 2005; Haspelmath 2002; Bauer 2003; Bisetto & Scalise 2005 & Dressler, 2006). Benczes, (2004, 2006, 2015) does not believe in the dichotomy of exocentric compounds. They opine that these compounds are metaphoric instances and should be treated in the same way as the endocentric compounds are treated, so there is no need of some other theory or model for these compounds. Benczes (2015: 9) states that these compounds are prototypical inferences of metaphor and metonymy and should be analyzed on the prototypical approach to semantics. Another issue with these formations is a general view that these are less productive and less common in the languages of the world. Only a few languages; (Turkana and Kayardild) show productivity in these patterns (Bauer, 2008: 71).

Contrary to the made claim (Bauer, 2008), the New Indo-Aryan languages, especially Punjabi in this case exhibits productivity of these formations. Punjabi being a marginalized language could not get the research attention, and the world does not know about the productive patterns of exocentric compounds in Punjabi. As per the knowledge of the researcher there is only a single work done by Akhtar (1992) available in Punjabi compounds. Akhtar (1992) pays focus in categorization of compounds and classifies compounds in nearly twenty-five different categories, but no attention is paid towards the exocentric compounds and their metaphoric meaning. So, keeping in view the above scenario, this very preliminary study with the help of huge data collected in Punjabi exocentric compounds tries to do two things; firstly, to nullify the made claims about the non-productivity of the exocentric compounds. Secondly, the study with the help of cultural linguistics makes an attempt to present a new perspective for the analysis of exocentric compounds. The study argues that every exocentric compound has a metaphoric meaning based on some cultural conceptualizations. On the basis of cultural knowledge, the native speakers not only form the new compounds, but can easily understand their metaphoric meaning. To accomplish this task, a large number of NV compounds from Punjabi are collected. This paper is a part of the researcher's PhD dissertation, so only four NV examples extracted from the collected data are analyzed here. The analysis is based on cultural linguistics, so it is compulsory to have an over view about Language and Culture, Cultural linguistic and Cultural Conceptualization.

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Language and Culture

Language and culture are intertwined and cannot be apart. The relationship between language and culture always been a key debating issue in the various disciplines such as sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistic and cultural linguistics etc. Culture being a collective programming of mind helps to make distinctions between the members of a group or categorizes people from one another (Hofstede, 1994; p. 5). All the cultural activities are culture specific (Langacker, 1999). A wide range of experiences are expressed with the help of language (Palmer, 1996). So, language and culture cannot be studied separately. For the cultural conceptualization memory works as a memory bank. These conceptualizations are the result of negotiation and renegotiation between the members of the speech community. Due to differences in language and cultures the conceptualizations are also different (Sharifian, 2003).

Cultural Linguistic

Cultural linguistics has merged as a new discipline in the research field and explores the relationships between language, culture and conceptualizations (Palmer 1996; Sharifian 2011, 2017). In Palmer's proposal linguistic meaning is subsumed within world view. Being a phonological discipline the cultural linguistic talks about synchronous interaction between language and culture. It studies both; the language and the culture. The cultural linguistics pays focus on human beings and their language. It looks at the interaction between language and culture, how the various ethnic group's culture is reflected in their language and how the people view the world around them. Its main objective is to study the culture in the language of the speech community and its developments. The discipline has a close relation with ethnolinguistic, but with some slight differences; in ethnolinguistic only the lexical system and historical developments are studied. Both the disciplines get united at the same objective; to study language and culture, two different codes.

Cultural Conceptualization

Cultural conceptualization means the various aspects of shared experiences of the members of a speech community (Sharifian, 2003). Due to linguistic diversity the conceptualizations are also different. Various emotions, feelings, rituals are conceptualized differently by the people belonging to different ethnic groups. The knowledge about these cultural conceptualizations are a good source of cultural understandings and lack of knowledge about these cause misunderstandings in the intercultural communications. With the help of these cultural conceptualizations people may use the things metaphorically and make their communication sensationalized.

Conceptual Metaphors

With the publication of ground breaking work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), *Metaphors We Live By*, the concept that metaphors are not simple figures of speech, but are pervasive devices on thought and every day speech. The metaphors can be characterized as follows:

1. Metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon, the property of a word
2. It is a rhetoric and artistic device
3. It is based on two resembling entities
4. It is the conscious use of words

According to cognitive linguists one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another in metaphors for e.g., love is understood in the journey domain as love is a journey. In metaphor the domain A is the target and B is the source domain. Conceptual metaphors address very systematic as there is a correspondence between the source and the target domain. This process is called mapping. Metaphors enable us to arrive at the abstract from a concrete without facing any problem. Otherwise, it would become very difficult for us to talk about the abstract entities such as emotions, feelings, desires, time etc. When we are able to conceptualize one abstract entity in the target domains, then these can be conceptualized in different domains such as human body, cooking and food, forces etc. In short it can be said that metaphoric thinking is rooted in our everyday life.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) emphasize the role played by the human experience. They talk about that how with the use of metaphoric expressions the abstract concepts are arrived at. In the conceptualization the embodiment plays a key role, as concepts are originated from and are used through body and mind. The perceptual and sensory motors help in giving meaning to concepts. So, it can be said that the directly embodied concepts provide the basis for metaphoric projection and enable us to understand the meaning of abstract concepts.

Data Analysis

Punjabi exocentric compounds are the combination of two words. Every constituent carries some cultural conceptualization and the native speakers with the help of their cultural knowledge can easily understand the metaphoric meaning of the novel compounds too. In Punjabi these compounds are considered a main part of their everyday communication and to express various cultural practices, as illustrated in the examples below:

Example1: *larr* 'string' (N) + *bunnaa* 'to tie' (V_{inf})
 → 'to get someone married'

The compound *larbunnaa* is the combination of two constituents; a singular feminine noun *larr* and a verb *bunnaa* 'to tie' with ¹infinitive form of verb having a base form *bunn* 'tie'. In this formation the noun works as a morphological modifier and the verb is the morphological head. The compound in literal sense is 'tying the string', but the metaphoric meaning is 'to get someone married'. This meaning is unpredictable from the meaning of the constituents taking part in the formation. Now the question is that how to arrive at this meaning? To get the answer we need to move towards culture. ²Marriage is a social and religious agreement between two people to live together. The relationship of marriage is culturally understood as very delicate as well as a very strong relation. Culturally, when someone gets married it means they are bound in a string. So, the compound is metaphorically used for the concept of marriage. Here the question arises that how a social practice having a literal meaning moves towards a metaphoric interpretation? For getting the answer it is compulsory to look at the meaning of the constituents. Here the constituent *larr* 'string' does not

¹ This is one of the characteristics of Punjabi language that the exocentric compounds are formed with the infinitive form of verb.

² In Hindu culture it is a marriage ritual that on the occasion of the wedding a scarf is tied around the neck of the bride and groom. This is a symbolism of eternal bond between the couple. It is called *gathbunhaan*, means making the bride and groom socially, emotionally and physically one unit. Although, this practice is not followed in Punjabi culture, but the compound is used for the concept the marriage.

mean a real string, but it is metaphorically used to convey the sense of making one unit. This is a metaphoric extension from the literal meaning towards the metaphoric one. On the other hand, the verb *bunnaa* also shifts from literal meaning of tying towards the metaphoric interpretation of getting together.

Example 2: *mondha* 'shoulder' (N) + *denaa* 'to give' (V_{inf.})
→ 'to bear the dead body'

The compound *modhadenaa* is the concrete realization of the abstract concept of 'death'. Morphologically, two free constituents a singular masculine noun working as a morphological modifier and verb with infinitive form are combined together to form the compound. Apparently, the compound with its literal meaning is an endocentric, but on the basis of metaphoric meaning it is exocentric. Like every exocentric compound in this formation too the meaning is unpredictable from the meaning of the constituents. Here the cultural knowledge needs to be approached. As per the culture the compound is the representation of one of the rituals performed at the occasion of death. It is one of the important rituals. When someone dies, the dead body is taken to the grave yard for burial. The dead body is placed on a wooden cot and four people pick it up on their shoulders. The people in the procession turn by turn give a shoulder to the dead body. The basic purpose is to pay homage and respect to the departed soul and make him/her realize that even at the last time everyone is with him/her. This physical activity is metaphorically presented by the compound *modhadenaa*. In this metaphoric shift the body part *mondha* is metaphorically used as a supporting object to bear the weight of the dead body. On the other hand, the verb *denaa* faces a shift from its literal to metaphoric meaning. Thus, the compound can be read metaphorically for the abstract concept of death.

Example 3: *dewa* 'lamp' (N) + *bujhanaa* 'to extinguish' →
(V_{inf.}) 'to kill the son'

The compound given in example 3 following the same fashion of compound formation adopted by the example 1 & 2 above carries two constituents; a singular masculine noun and a verb with infinitive form. The noun is the morphological modifier and the verb is a morphological head. In the literal sense the compound means 'to extinguish the lamp', but according to the metaphoric interpretation it means 'to kill the son'. Neither the modifying element nor the modified element help to arrive at this meaning. As it is already discussed in the introduction the exocentric compounds are culture based, so it is compulsory to look at the culture to arrive at the metaphoric meaning. Culturally, the compound is a concrete realization of the abstract concept of finishing the race. Traditionally, Punjabis have petty issues among themselves due to land and property. Sometimes, these issues take a shape of severe enmity and carry on from one generation to another. Due to these issues sometimes, the whole families are murdered. When the only son of a family is murdered it is metaphorically said *dewabujhanaa*. Again, the question is still unanswered that how the compound gets this meaning? The cultural conceptualization of the constituents helps to resolve this issue. As per the cultural conceptualization son is personified as *dewa* 'lamp made of clay'. As the lamp gives light and brighten the dark, the same connotation is associated with a son. He is considered to be the lamp of the family, means a source for the continuity of race. Culturally, the race is continued with the male members, so if the only son of a

family is murdered, it means there is no hope of continuity of the race. This is a metaphoric shift from a literal meaning towards a metaphoric interpretation. The verb *bujhanaa* also shifts from a denotative meaning towards a metaphoric interpretation. Thus, the compound shifts from a literal reading towards a new metaphoric interpretation of 'killing the son'.

Example 4: *paag* 'turban' (N) + *watanaa* 'to exchange' (V_{inf.})
→ 'to make someone a brother'

Morphologically, in the example 4 *paagwatanaa* two free standing constituents take part. The first constituent is a singular, feminine noun and the second is a verb with infinitive form. The noun *paag* is the morphological modifier and the verb is a morphological head. Apparently, looking at the compound, it seems to be an endocentric as the meaning is 'to exchange the turban', but the metaphoric meaning 'to make someone brother' gives it the status of an exocentric. For getting the idea that how the literal meaning shifts into an exocentric meaning, let's see what role does culture play. Culturally, *paag* 'turban' is a clothing item and most of the Punjabis tie it on their heads. When someone wants to make some brotherly relations with some other person, the turbans are exchanged. This activity is known as *paagwatanaa*. This is a shift of the compound from a literal meaning towards a metaphoric interpretation. Kraska-Szlenk (2018) states that in the metaphoric interpretation exocentric compounds of the combined constituents play an important role. The constituent *paag* is culturally conceptualized as a sign of honor and respect. When someone puts his *paag* on someone other's head, it means that he is sharing his honor and respect with him. So, a clothing item metaphorically stands for a symbol of brotherhood. On the other hand, like the noun the verb also gets a shift from literal to metaphoric reading.

DISCUSSION

After having an analysis of the above given examples, it concludes that in Punjabi the NV compounds are the combination of a noun and a verb with its infinitive form. Every constituent plays a fundamental role not only in the formation of compound, but also making a shift from a literal meaning towards a metaphoric interpretation which is based on the cultural conceptualization of the constituents and the role played by them.

CONCLUSION

In the present paper an analysis of Punjabi exocentric compounds is presented with the help of cultural perspective. The study concludes that every exocentric compound has a metaphoric meaning based on some cultural conceptualizations. The study also nullifies the made claims about the exocentric compounds that their meaning is unpredictable and cannot be arrived at. The study with the help of cultural linguistics proves that the culture plays an important role in the metaphoric interpretation, so with the help of cultural knowledge it is very easy to understand the metaphoric meaning in exocentric compounds.

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How to cite this article:

Saima Jamshaid and Raja Nasim Akhtar (2021) 'Exocentric Compounds in Punjabi: A Cultural Analysis', *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*, 10(05), pp. 24270-24273. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2021.24273.4812>
