

## **The Relationship between Analyzability and Idiom Comprehension Within and Between (Across) Languages**

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Most people consider idioms as fixed phrases that mean something other than the literal interpretation of their individual words (for e.g. Fraser, 1970) while more recent research considers idioms as linguistic units with varying degrees of analyzability (Gibbs and Nayak, 1989). In an attempt to test this issue across languages, Bortfeld (2003) made speakers of three different languages rate sets of idioms from their language and the language they were unfamiliar with for the analyzability of the relationship between idiom's literal and figurative meaning and came to the conclusion that there exists a continuum of analyzability in both familiar and unfamiliar languages. As cultural knowledge might play a role in lexicalizing figuratively intended concepts in any given language (Kecskes and Papp, 2000), this study is designed to shed more light on the analyzability of idioms in Persian as a familiar and English as an unfamiliar language spoken in two different cultural settings. Toward this end, two groups of undergraduate students of Persian literature whose native language is Persian will participate in the present study. 90 Persian and 90 English idioms will be selected from reliable dictionaries of both languages based upon three semantic domains of anger, revelation, and secrecy. Each domain will include 30 idioms. Two English native speakers will divide the English idioms into three categories: normally analyzable, abnormally analyzable, and unanalyzable. Two Persian-speaking graduate students whose major is Persian literature will also divide the Persian idioms into the mentioned categories. In the end, each semantic domain will include 10 normally analyzable, 10 abnormally analyzable, and 10 unanalyzable idioms. Participants will then be presented with the selected idiomatic phrases. Their task will be randomly reading each presented idiom on a computer and then determining which semantic domain it belongs to in terms of its figurative meaning. The speed and accuracy with which native Persian speakers are able to categorize idioms from Persian and those translated from English will be measured. Only correct responses and response times within 3 SDs of each person's average RT will be included in the analysis. If the speed and accuracy of responses are the same in both languages, the use of analyzability in interpreting the figurative meaning of idioms from both familiar and unfamiliar languages will be confirmed. Otherwise it will be ruled out.

**Keywords:** analyzability, idiom comprehension, figurative meaning,

### **References**

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