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# A Corpus Analysis of ‘Death’ and ‘Life’ Metaphorical Expressions Based on Forough Farrokhzad’s Persian Poetry Book

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**Abstract:** Many inquiries of cognitive linguistic represented that conceptual metaphors have played a substantial role in the conceptual system of human. Metaphors are frequently grounded in culture and can thus answer as a beneficent source for the consideration of cultural ideas alluded in language. The present study attended the distribution of death and life conceptual metaphors in Forough Farrokhzad’s Persian poetry book and their metaphoric frequency in the users’ ideas, opinions, and thoughts. By studying Forough Farrokhzad’s Persian poetry book as one of the well-known literary books, rich of, death and life metaphorical expressions, a corpus of 33 death and life conceptual metaphors has been selected and analyzed. Two raters who were Persian Literature teachers were interviewed to prepare us by investigating the accuracy of the conceptions of death and life metaphors within the poems and giving their comments. Furthermore, as a research method, a focus group was employed by Persian Literature teachers to present their opinions about the positive and negative connotations of the included death and life metaphors in the pertinent book. Findings proposed that death and life metaphors are not equally distributed in this book, are used with multiple conceptions and stood for either positive or negative connotations. Likewise, it was detected that death and life metaphoric expressions mostly show positive attitudes, but some of these metaphors break the available rule, connoting negative attitudes only.

**Keywords:** Conceptual Metaphor, Death and Life Metaphorical Expressions, Peoples’ Thoughts, Culture

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## 1. Introduction

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) metaphorical language has been an essential segment of human life, containing language, intention, and function [1]. Thus, metaphor plays a significant task in people's daily language application and thought, and our conceptual system has been on the basis of experiments we have reached with interacting with people and things encompassing us. It is argued that cognitive linguistics assumes language as a convenient guide to detect the meaning and form of our conceptual system (Langacker, 1987; Lakoff, 1987, as cited in Koveceses, 2015) [2-4]. Grady (2007) stated that if cognitive linguistics is the consideration of ways in which specifications of language reverberate other facets of human cognition, metaphors prepare one of the most vivid picture of this relation [5].

Deignan (2010) has stated that metaphor is defined as realizing one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain and on the basis of cognitive approach, metaphor could be any kind of concepts and statement of an abstract segment [6]. In other words, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) has suggested that a metaphor is a connection between “source domain” which is usually concrete, containing essences, features, proceedings and relations that are instantly and physically experimented and “target domain” which has meant to be abstract and obtains its structure from the source domain via metaphorical connection.

According to Lakoff (1993) metaphorical expression is a unidirectional mapping through cognitive domains [7]. Also, Porat and Shen (2017) argued that the orientation of mapping from the source to the target domain in metaphorical

expressions rises from the conceptual links between its members [8]. Lönneker–Rodman (2007) [9] considered metaphorical expression as a traditionalized mapping between two variant domains of experience; however, according to Lakoff (1992) [10] some metaphorical concepts appeared to be worldwide, others were common, and some looked to be culturally specific. Many researchers examined death and life metaphors enthusiastically as two subject matters in the field of cognitive semantics. For example, Réka Benczes and Bence Ságvári (2018) investigated the conceptualizations of life in Hungarian and American English speakers. Hungarian speakers conceptualized life as a war, compromise, journey, gift, possibility, puzzle, labyrinth, game, freedom, and challenge; however, American English speakers conceptualized life as a precious possession, game, journey, container, gamble, compromise, experiment, test, war, and play [11].

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Many studies have been carried out on conceptual metaphors (Feldman, 2006; Wang and Dowker, 2007; Rodriguez, 2009; Wei and Wong, 2012; Sabariah, Pabiyah and Nurul Nadia, 2012; Aliakbari and Faraji, 2014; Kövecses, 2015; etc.) [12-17]; however, no attention has been paid to analyze death and life conceptual metaphors, to examine the distribution of death and life conceptual metaphors in Forough Farrokhzad's (2002) [18] Persian poetry book, to investigate Iranian's conceptions associated with death and life metaphorical expressions, and to observe the extent to which their attitudes toward death and life metaphorical expressions are positive / negative.

The research questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. How balanced is the use of death and life terms in Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book?
2. To what extent are death and life metaphors reflected in Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book?
3. To what extent do the death and life terms in Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book express positive or negative connotations?

## 3. Method

The study contained a heuristic discussion of the metaphorical expression of death and life in Persian poems. It aimed to analyze the poems by regarding death and life

metaphorical expressions, to examine the distribution of death and life conceptual metaphors among Persian poems by a contemporary Persian poet, to investigate the poet's conceptions related to death and life metaphorical expressions, and to discover whether they implicate positive or negative perceptions to the language users. In addition, as a supporting research method, a focus group was engaged to enable internal validation for the results. As stated by Tewksbury (2009), focus groups are administered discussions in which a researcher, or scholar team, meet a group of people with similar statuses for intentions of manifesting information about an issue [19].

### Procedure

It took about two months to manage the research and to collect the data. To examine the precision of the conceptualizations of death and life metaphorical expressions within the poems, we held a direct interview with two literate teachers majored in Persian literature to prepare us by investigating the precision of the conceptualizations of death and life conceptual metaphors within the poems and giving their explanations. In those death and life conceptual metaphors the raters were in uncertainty regarding a concept, another rater, who was also a Persian Literature teacher, investigated the feasibility of the connotation. Likewise, they provided propositions on positive/negative specifications of the contained death and life conceptual metaphors in the selected poems. As noted before, a focus group was consulted to validate the raters' offers on the metaphoric conceptualizations of the pertaining metaphors. In so doing, one focus group, involving two sessions, were administered. It included five, ranging in age from 24 to 45 for the chosen group. Each session lasted about forty five minutes and managed by the researchers, who offered the Persian poems under investigation, 17 metaphors for the first session and 16 for the second session, and requested the monitors of the focus group to note on the ready connotations by the raters as they had some prepared notations. The monitors in focus group were permitted to communicate with the least timeout.

## 4. Findings

For the number of death and life metaphorical expressions in content, the materials were analyzed quantitatively. The conceptualizations of death and life conceptual metaphors and the connotation for each conception are showed in Table 1.

*Table 1. Conceptualization and connotation of death and life conceptual metaphors in Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book.*

Death Conceptualizations	Connotation	Life Conceptualizations	Connotation
Darkness	Negative	Street	Positive
Sensation	Positive	String	Positive
Mouse	Negative	Infant	Positive
Marsh	Negative	Inconstancy	Positive
Taste	Positive	Moment	Positive
Convulsion	Negative	Building	Positive
Region	Positive	Rivulet	Positive
Beach	Positive	Tremor	Negative
Love	Positive	Flower	Positive

Death Conceptualizations	Connotation	Life Conceptualizations	Connotation
Lust	Negative	Fortune	Positive
Travel	Positive	Teardrop	Negative
Laugh	Positive	War	Negative
Kiss	Positive	Prayer	Positive
		Silver	Positive
		Animate	Positive
		Cottage	Positive
		Desert	Negative
		Disloyalty	Negative
		Drunkenness	Negative
		Conflict	Negative
Total 13		20	

## 5. Discussion

To discuss the first question of the research and to check the proportion of death and life metaphorical expressions comprised in Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book, all the metaphors in the pertinent book were counted. 33 death and life metaphorical expressions were detected and brought to further investigation. As for the balance of the frequency of diverse death and life metaphorical expressions in the corpus, Table 2 shows the proportion of death and life metaphorical expressions included in the corpus.

**Table 2.** Frequency of death and life metaphorical expressions in Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book.

Metaphor	Death	Life
Frequency	13	20
Percentage	39.39	60.61

The number of death and life metaphorical expressions which noted in Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book was 33. 13 conceptual metaphors belonged to death with 39.39 percentage and 20 metaphorical expressions devoted to life with 60.61 percentage. Hence, all metaphorical expressions of death and life in the selected book came with the frequency of 1.

Answering the second and third questions (based on Tables 1 and 2), death was necessarily related to darkness, sensation, mouse, marsh, taste, convulsion, region, beach, love, lust, travel, laugh, and kiss. On the basis of all these affiliations, it can be asserted that death, surprisingly, was mostly considered as a positive connotation, yet it signified five negative attributes of darkness, mouse, marsh, convulsion, and lust (positive: 61.54%, negative: 38.46%). And, life was essentially related to street, string, infant, inconstancy, moment, building, rivulet, tremor, flower, fortune, teardrop, war, prayer, silver, animate, cottage, desert, disloyalty, drunkenness, and conflict. On the basis of all these affiliations, it can be asserted that life was mostly considered as a positive connotation, but it signified seven negative features of tremor, teardrop, war, desert, disloyalty, drunkenness, and conflict (positive: 65%, negative: 35%).

The number of detected conceptual metaphors of death and life in the current study was 33. Most of the included metaphors in the chosen book devoted to life metaphors with 20 times frequency and the fewest contained metaphors belonged to death metaphors with 13 times frequency. All

death and life metaphors found in the selected book came with the frequency of 1 and we detected that the poet had careful, equal, and fair attention without any inequality than all the contained metaphors in her poetry book. Based on the results of the present study, we found that Forough Farrokhzad in her poems had both positive and negative viewpoints about death and life metaphors; however, she often paid attention to the positive aspect of the intended metaphors than the negative one, particularly about the positive sight of death metaphors. She unbelievably concentrated on the positive sight of death metaphor and directly stated that her standpoint than death metaphor is more positive, since she generally attended death metaphor as a new life in a new world that is even more fruitful than the worldly life. Likewise, we found that the poet believed in the sentence that "if death does not exist, life will be meaningless"; that is, she frequently paid attention to death metaphor to confirm the worldly life.

The present study was a corpus-based inquiry of Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book that we investigated the chosen corpus carefully to find the available death and life metaphors. After analysing the chosen corpus, we held a direct interview with two literate teachers majored in Persian literature to prepare us by checking the accuracy of the perceptions of death and life conceptual metaphors within the poems and giving their effective comments. Likewise, a focus group (as a supporting research method) was involved to enable internal validation for the obtained results. The logic behind using different experiments was to be completely sure of the internal validation of the findings of the study.

This study concentrated on Forough Farrokhzad's poetry book that is one of the richest Persian poetry books in terms of conceptual metaphors, especially death and life metaphors. It also used diverse methods to be sure of the internal validation of the findings of the study. In spite of the aforementioned strengths of the study, it had some weaknesses such as the limited number of the corpus of the study, concentrating on just Persian language, and ignoring more informants to participate in the study.

## 6. Conclusion

Firstly, it is needed to know Forough Farrokhzad is a contemporary woman poet who she has brought different thoughts to modern Persian poetry. Most poets know her the symbol of women's literature and its special form in which

her poems are considerably rich and valuable from the literary point of view. Secondly, a focus group was deliberated to validate the raters' propositions on the metaphoric conceptions of the pertinent metaphors and the chosen focus group helped the findings of the study to be strengthened. Then, the results of the research asserted that the distribution of death and life metaphorical expressions in Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book is diverse. As demonstrated in Table 2, 60.61 percent of the total death and life conceptual metaphors in Forough Farrokhzad's Persian poetry book belongs to life and 39.39 percent to death. Additionally, people's thoughts, opinions, and values are precisely reflected in their use of death and life metaphorical expressions.

Therefore, death and life are mostly discussed as positive (death: 61.54%, life: 65%) but they signified negative features yet (death: 38.46%, life: 35%). Having all these in mind, it is desired that the obtained results in the present study would function entirely as an instrument for efficiently hindering the feasible misinterpretation while reading varied kinds of texts in Persian. However, the main constraints that should be addressed mentioning the study are the limited number of the corpus, concentrating on just Persian language, and ignoring more informants to participate in the study. Investigating these limitations, it is suggested that the study be reiterated with a larger corpus from two or more linguistic and cultural settings to consider if similar findings will be achieved for the conceptual metaphor theory. Moreover, it is proposed that the other scholars can extend the corpus of their study by using some well-known Persian poetry books or diverse numbers of some Persian newspapers that are rich of death and life metaphorical expressions. In addition, they can use more informants with different age ranges. After all, they can design an open-ended questionnaire to give the informants for defining death and life conceptual metaphors based on their brainstorming. The abovementioned suggestions can help the other scholars to be completely sure of the internal validity of the findings of their study.

To conclude, Forough Farrokhzad who is the symbol of women's literature reflects both a positive and a negative point of view to death. But, she is more concentrated on the positive aspect of death than the negative one, because she believes in the better world than this nasty world after death. Likewise, she believes that we do not have any restrictions in enjoying the real life after death. She also has more interested in the positive aspects of the life, since she believes that life is having good and finite opportunities in which we should do the best until we are alive. Generally speaking, she has a more positive standpoint about death than life due to having the infinite opportunities for enjoying the real life after death.

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