

Processing Conventional Conceptual Metaphors in Persian: A Corpus-Based Psycholinguistic Study

Ramin Golshaie · Arsalan Golfam

Published online: 9 May 2014
© Springer Science+Business Media New York 2014

Abstract Research on the psycholinguistic processing of conceptual metaphors has produced contrasting results in recent years. There have also been criticisms that in experimental studies of metaphor processing, linguistic stimuli are mostly intuition-based and not designed objectively based on the original language use data. To address these issues, we studied the processing of conventional metaphoric expressions in Persian language using corpus data. A reading time experiment was designed to test whether conventional metaphoric expressions activated conceptual metaphors. A corpus of 50 million word tokens was used to study the conventional patterns of metaphoric expressions usages and construct experimental items. Fifty five Persian speakers read a set of scenarios containing non-conventional metaphor, conventional metaphor and non-metaphor expressions on computer and the reading times of the following novel target sentence in each condition were recorded by DMDX stimulus presenter program. Comparing mean reading times using one-way ANOVA revealed that reading target sentence after conventional metaphor scenarios had been significantly faster than non-metaphor scenarios, but slower than non-conventional scenarios. The results show that conventionality has a weakening effect on the strength of metaphoric expressions to activate conceptual metaphors.

Keywords Metaphor comprehension · Language use · Persian · Conventionality · Corpus linguistics

R. Golshaie (✉)
Iranian Research Institute for Information Science and Technology,
No. 1090, Felestin & Enqelab Ave. intersection,
P.O. Box 13185-1371, 13157-3314 Tehran, Iran
e-mail: golshaie@irandoc.ac.ir

A. Golfam
Department of Linguistics, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran