

## Polysemy Comprehension in Persian-Speaking Children

Parisa Sadat Mirnejad<sup>1</sup>, Arsalan Golfam<sup>2</sup>,  
Hayat Ameri<sup>3</sup>, Sahar Bahrami-Khorshid<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D., Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran, Email: [ps.mirnejad@modares.ac.ir](mailto:ps.mirnejad@modares.ac.ir)

<sup>2</sup> *Corresponding author*, Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran, Email: [golfamar@modares.ac.ir](mailto:golfamar@modares.ac.ir)

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Persian Language Studies, Research Center of Persian Language and Literature, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran, Email: [h.ameri@modares.ac.ir](mailto:h.ameri@modares.ac.ir)

<sup>4</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran, Email: [sahbahrami@modares.ac.ir](mailto:sahbahrami@modares.ac.ir)

### Abstract

This paper aims to study 7 to 12-year-old Persian-speaking children's comprehension of polysemy through semantics. The research method is descriptive-analytic, and two kinds of methodology in data collection such as documentary resources and fieldwork have been applied. For collecting data, each of the six elementary school grades course books 'Farsi' (2018) has been studied and all polysemous words within each of these course books have been extracted. Accordingly, to evaluate polysemy comprehension in children, a multiple-choice test containing two questions was prepared for each grade and asked 25 participants to answer in each grade and each gender from among elementary schools in Tehran. In each grade, 100 answers were received and based on the number of correct answers children's polysemy comprehension was evaluated. These tests were administered under school authorities' control and children had to answer in 15 minutes. The results show that most children found the polysemous words without problem only within a context and in relation to the collocated words. Also, children can comprehend the exact meaning of polysemous words based on the encyclopedic viewpoint of meaning which is rooted in human social and physical experience. Moreover, children based on their background knowledge differentiate between multiple meanings of polysemous words.

**Keywords:** polysemy, encyclopedic knowledge, context, semantics

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## 1. Introduction

Polysemy is a crucial topic in semantic studies. Attention to various meanings of a word and comprehending them by language users has been the semanticists' goal. Thus, the vast extent of studies in semantics dedicates to it. According to structuralists, polysemy is an accidental phenomenon and the result of collocating words. "The fundamental assumption in the analysis of polysemy is to use a word in different contexts. In this approach, different meanings of a word refer to the effect of other words in the context. That is, if the collocations of a word in a context are changed, its meaning will change. So, the polysemy of a word will be unlimited and unpredictable" (Afrashi & Samet Jokandan, 2013, p. 31). In cognitive linguistics, polysemy is a mechanism for categorization. Accordingly, the related meanings of words rest in a category and organize around the prototype, and polysemy is not regarded as an accidental phenomenon, but as a systemic process and a cognitive mechanism (Afrashi & Samet Jokandan, 2013, p. 36).

Since children are at the basic level of academic language learning and comprehending multiple meanings of a polysemous word may challenge them, the motivation of this research is to study polysemy in children. Furthermore, based on six elementary school grade course books 'Farsi' (2018), although there are a small number of polysemous words, these words have been used many times within each course book. A few studies have been conducted on acquiring different sense relations in Persian-speaking children in different theoretical frameworks such as Raftari (2009), or Kheirabadi and Keirabadi (2017); meanwhile, none of them exactly dedicated to polysemy comprehension in school children. The innovation of this study is the data selected from the course books 'Farsi' and the way of evaluating children's polysemy comprehension through the tests according to each course book. Since 7 to 12-year-old children, normally, are in the early years of academic learning and course books can play a significant role in representing standard texts for these children, the course books 'Farsi', as academic references, have been taken into consideration for data collecting and preparing the related tests accordingly. Also, this study has been conducted and the data have been studied and evaluated among all six grades of elementary school children.

In addition, the tests were administered in a similar way without teaching children polysemy before evaluation and the results of the tests purely refer to children's comprehension of polysemous words. Moreover, this research is only dedicated to studying and evaluating polysemy comprehension peculiarly in Persian-speaking school children, not any other sense relations. Thus, the chief aim of this paper is to study polysemy comprehension in children through semantics, and the main questions are: 'To what extent do 7 to 12-year-old Persian-speaking children comprehend different meanings of polysemous words?' and 'How can we analyze it in semantic doctrines?' Based on the authors' primary studies on polysemy comprehension in children, one hypothesis is that comprehension of the exact meaning of a polysemous word in a context refers to the meaning of other lexical units in that context.

## 2. Literature Review

Most research studies such as Wei and Lou (2015), Carston (2020), and Li (2022) more recently have been conducted on polysemy; however, the study of polysemous words is not very remarkable among Persian-speaking children. Regarding polysemy and semantics, several studies can be mentioned.

Ravin and Leacock (2000) declare that sometimes a linguistic unit is represented with several words which is called 'synonymy' and sometimes it has multiple meanings which is entitled 'polysemy'. Fayyazi (2008) studied polysemy in Persian to provide a new cognitive theoretical ground for such a semantic modification. Fenk-Oczlon and Fenk (2010), on the emergence of polysemy and homophony, demonstrated that one of the most important factors which have a significant role in polysemy formation is 'frequency'. High frequency causes bleaching of meaning of words and creates polysemy. Khormae et al. (2019) explored the polysemy of four negative non-verbal prefixes in Persian based on 'principled polysemy'. Data analysis shows that metonymical shift occurs at the level of morpheme/prefix sense and at the level of word formation, and the former leads to more straightforward relations within the semantic network.

Gandomkar (2016) introduces certain studies conducted in some Asian languages and polysemy of the verb 'xordan' [to eat] in Persian. Comparing other languages and Persian demonstrates that this verb is a common polysemous verb and has multiple meanings remarkably. The results of her study in Lexical Typology show that according to the context, each word may have a particular meaning, and all hearers comprehend it without any problem. Moreover, Bonvini (2008), Family (2008), Golfam et al. (2013), Afrashi and Samet Jokandan (2014), Afrashi and Asgari (2017), Soltani and Amouzadeh (2018), Ghaderi et al. (2019), and Azimi and Afrashi (2020) have studied the meanings of different verbs.

Safavi (2013) studying 'meaning' as the most complicated matter in linguistics, introduces the main theories in the study of meaning and concentrates on two points: 1. Study of meaning in linguistics would pose in Lexical Semantics, and 'word' is the unit of study in all semantic theories until now, 2. In these theories, a 'word' has meaning; whether it is fossilized or flexible. So, a 'word' has unlimited meanings revealed within the context. Cruze (1986) depicted the meanings of words with a descriptive approach. He has made explicit assumptions concerning the meaning and established a consistent way of studying it. Sharifian (2012) used Cultural Conceptualization, Hesabi (2017) by considering radial categories, and Imani and Rafiei (2020) concentrated on Construction Morphology have studied polysemous words related to body parts.

Kheirabadi and Kheirabadi (2017) study the extent of applying sense relations in children's stories based on Functionalism. Their research method is descriptive-analytic, and the results show that reiteration and collocation are the most, and synonymy is lesser-used relation among lexicon. There are a few kinds of antonyms in the lexicon. The authors do not tend to use synonymy, homonymy, and polysemy. There are many differences in children's vocabulary scope, but the

stories written for them have similar features in terms of lexical cohesion with no difference in applying sense relations.

According to recent studies related to this paper, the study of children's comprehension of polysemous words, especially for creating theory-based children's literature is crucial, and the authors of the current study have tried to depict it within the context and the tests.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

In this paper, polysemy comprehension in 7 to 12- year- old Persian-speaking children has been studied semantically. Thus, through the following subheadings, the sense relation 'polysemy' according to Safavi (2004) and Hurford et al. (2007), and crucial concepts in semantics introduced by Geeraerts (2010) have been presented.

#### 3.1. Polysemy

Lexical relations are among words. Most semanticists abstract these relations using 'concept' instead of 'meaning' and call them 'sense relations'. The same as many languages, Persian vocabularies are connected in a network of sense relations. "These relations have captured the interest of various brands of philosophers, cognitive psychologists, linguists, early childhood and second language educators, computer scientists, literary theorists, cognitive neuroscientists, psychoanalysts whose interests involve words, meaning, or the mind" (Murphy, 2003, p. 4).

Polysemy is one of the most common sense relations in which a linguistic unit may have several meanings; for instance, the polysemous word 'tup' in Persian has three meanings: [ball], [military weapon], or [unit of measuring cloth] (Gandomkar, 2016, p. 151). "The linguistic unit can be a morpheme, a word, or a sentence but according to the related studies, polysemy and its analysis gain significance only at word level" (Safavi, 2004, p. 111). Polysemy is close to homonymy, but Lyons (1995, p. 27) believes there is no clear distinction between them. In fact, it is close to full homophony and homography, so sometimes differentiation between them is sophisticated. "In polysemy, a word has several closely related senses. In other words, a language user has intuitions that different senses are related to each other; for example, 'mouth' [of a river or an animal]. These senses are related by the concepts of an opening from the interior of some solid mass to the outside, and of a place of an issue at the end of some long narrow channel" (Hurford et al., 2007, p. 130).

#### 3.2. Semantics

From the middle of the nineteenth century, studies on 'meaning' have been done in Lexical Semantics, and the unit of study was 'word'. The meaning of a sentence is considered the composition of lexical concepts and due to this fact, Jackendoff (1990) has paid attention to lexical semantics, i.e., study of meaning at the word level in his studies.

There are several approaches to studying meaning. “Historical-philological Semantics is a diachronic viewpoint toward Lexical Semantics. This approach concentrates on the study of word meaning evolution and the classification of its mechanisms” (Safavi, 2013, p. 20); accordingly, the basis of studies was considering a fossilized meaning for each word; it means that each word with a definite meaning at a moment, has definite meaning or meanings at the other moments, too. By comparing these meanings, the kind of meaning-changing mechanism would be apparent. In Structuralist Semantics, the emphasis is that meaning study must not be limited to the words independent of each other but should be developed to the domain of semantic constructs. Also, they should be synchronic and converted to a branch in linguistics. Fossilized meaning(s) should be considered for words, too. Safavi (2013, p. 15), following Geeraerts (2010), named it Generativist Semantics which linked Structuralist Semantics to the subjectivist philosophy of language and utilized a formal description of structuralism. Paying no more attention to semantic studies in American Structuralism mainly refers to Bloomfield (1933, p. 158) who assigned the meaning of a linguistic form to the realities out of language. To him, by producing a linguistic form, the speaker makes the hearer react. Any reactions or related responses are the linguistic meaning of that form. Lyons’s (1963, p. 59) approach to semantics was directly linked with the structuralist template. He presented a new description for the meaning of words and believed that the meaning of a word can be described based on its semantic relations with the meaning of other words.

The objections to Generativist Semantics caused the proposal of ‘Neostructuralist Semantics’ and ‘Cognitive Semantics’. The theories of Neostructuralist Semantics are classified in different ways while in all of them, a word must have fossilized meaning or meanings; that is, the meaning of a word is the basis of the meaning study. “Cognitive Semantics introduced new patterns for analyzing meaning. Cognitive semanticists emphasize the flexibility of word meaning. The meaning of words is not fossilized; otherwise, it is impossible to differentiate linguistic meaning and encyclopedic meaning. According to this theory, meaning comprehension is encyclopedic and it is impossible to comprehend the meaning of words without knowing the related encyclopedic knowledge. This knowledge is rooted in human social and physical experience” (Evans & Green, 2006, p. 207). “In Cognitive Linguistics, the context determines the meaning. Thus, the meanings of words depend on their usage in the context and should be comprehended within their frame or domain” (Rasekh Mahand, 2018, p. 76). Evans (2009, p. 9) believes that the meaning of any word is subordinate to encyclopedic knowledge. Safavi (2013, p. 21) provides examples (1) in which encyclopedic knowledge must be used to comprehend.

- (1) a. ‘farhad pandzare ra baz card’ [Farhad opened the window.]  
 b. ‘farhad jereftejije lule ra baz card’ [Farhad unblocked the pipe.]  
 c. ‘farhad ?in matlabe pitjide ra baz card’ [Farhad solved the problem.]

Safavi (2013, p. 22) says that the meaning of the verb ‘to open’ in (1a) differs from its meaning in (1b) and (1c), and considering a fossilized meaning for it, is impossible. So, the meaning of a word is determined based on the context and our encyclopedic knowledge of it. “In Cognitive Semantics,

meaning compositional rules operate in another way. Each word, based on its meaning flexibility, is collocated with the words which have meaning flexibility. Thus, when the words are put together, among different meanings of a word, the compatible meaning with the selected meaning for the other words is selected and by the composition of these words, the sentence would be meaningful” (Evans, 2009, p. 219). Safavi (2013, p. 28) believes that a word has meaning, but it is not meaningful; that is, each word has one meaning or more in the lexical system of language in contrast with the meaning or meanings of other words in this system.

(2) a. ‘fereʃte be ʃiraz ʔamad’ [Fereshte came to Shiraz.]

b. ‘fereʃte be ʃiraz raft’ [Fereshte went to Shiraz.]

The contrast between the meaning of ‘ʔamad’ and ‘raft’ causes meaning opposition in sentences (2). So, these words have meaning but out of context, they are not meaningful because their different meanings are comprehended only within the context. Paul (1920, p. 75) emphasizes the importance of context in the clarification of semantic changes. Sinclair (2004, p. 29) distinguishes between two patterns of words which are dependent on two kinds of meaning; one for referring to the world and the other as the result of contextual combinations. “The distributional attitude based on the way of collocating words together is a formal criterion for determining the meaning of a word which prohibits the use of intuition in meaning determination” (Geeraerts, 2010, p. 59).

#### 4. Methodology

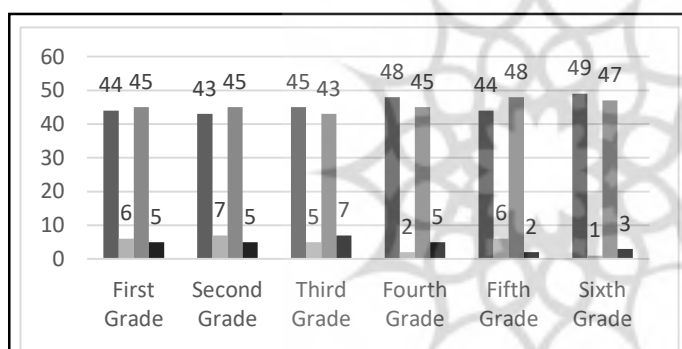
The method of this research is descriptive-analytic and two kinds of methodology in data collection such as documentary resources and fieldwork have been applied. For collecting data, each of six elementary school grade course books ‘Farsi’ (2018) has been studied and all polysemous words within each of these course books have been extracted and separately documented in Excel. Accordingly, to evaluate polysemy comprehension in children, a multiple-choice test containing two questions has been prepared for each grade and asked 25 participants to answer in each grade and each gender from among elementary schools in region two of the city of Tehran. These tests have been administered under school authorities’ control and the participants had to answer the related test for each grade in 15 minutes. Due to the limited space of this research paper, one of these two questions in each grade is presented. In each question, six sentences have presented in which there is only one polysemous word that children should choose. The total number of answers to the two questions by 25 boys and 25 girls (50 participants) would be 100. According to the number of correct answers to each question, children’s comprehension of polysemy has been evaluated and studied in semantics. It should be mentioned that the Persian data have been transcribed based on International Phonetic Alphabet, according to Catford (2001).

## 5. Results and Discussion

In this section, a comprehensive extent of data and related analysis based on children's comprehension of multiple meanings of the words have been presented. For this purpose and to prepare course book-based tests, all polysemous words in six elementary school grades' course books 'Farsi' (2018) have been extracted. According to this page-by-page book survey, polysemous words were determined in each elementary school grade. Of course, each polysemous word has been used in several different contexts within each course book. Accordingly, two randomly selected polysemous words in each grade were asked children through the tests. The results of the tests have been presented in Figure 1 (In each elementary school grade, the first two bars are respectively referring to the number of boys' correct and incorrect answers, and the last two bars are respectively referring to the number of girls' correct and incorrect answers).

**Figure 1**

*Results of Tests*



According to the results of the tests, boys in sixth grade with 49 correct answers, and in third grade with 43 correct answers have, respectively, provided the most and the least correct answers to the questions which evaluate the extent of children's ability to comprehend multiple meanings of polysemous words. On the other hand, girls in fifth grade with 48 correct answers and in third grade with 43 correct answers have, respectively, provided the most and the least correct answers. The following data demonstrate questions in each test that included six sentences in which four choices have been presented in bold. Each option contains a word that has been applied in two or three contexts. The children are asked to check each word within the related sentence and select the polysemous word.

### 5.1. First Grade

- 1) 'xorus raft **sare** d3ajaf ta dane boxorad' [The rooster went **beside** its dish to eat the seed.]
- 2) '**sar** va **badane** halazun henjame **harecat** birun ?ast' [The **head** and the **body** of a snail are out during **moving**.]
- 3) 'tjera ?abrha **harecat** miconand' [Why do the clouds **move**?]

- 4) 'halazunha **badane** narmi darand' [Snails have a soft **body**.]  
 5) '**sofreje** haftsine ma zibast' [Our Haft-Sin **tablecloth** is beautiful.]  
 6) 'cenare **sofre** tʃe casani ra mibini' [Whom do you see beside the **tablecloth**?]

In 2 and 3, 'harecat' has no meaning difference and refers to [movement], respectively, of 'snail' and 'clouds'. 'sofre' in 5 and 6 has the same meaning according to the context. Based on encyclopedic knowledge, children know that Haft-Sin is set on [cloth], and the people sit around it on the ground to eat meals. 'badan' in 2 and 4 means [body]. But 'sar' in 1 and 2 has different meanings; respectively means [on] or [beside] as a preposition, and based on the encyclopedic knowledge, children know that the rooster's food is in a place for staying on or beside it to eat, and because of collocating the words 'sar' and 'badan' means [head]. Most of the children can comprehend and differentiate between the meanings of 'sar' only according to the context. Although, the prototypical meaning of this word refers to 'a part of body' which is easier than the other meanings to comprehend, children often have no difficulty to understand its other meanings based on the context.

### 5.2. Second Grade

7. 'calag donbale **gaza** bud' [The crow was searching for **food**.]  
 8. 'harvagt **sir** baʃim, nabajad tʃizi boxorim' [When we **are satiated**, we should not eat anything.]  
 9. '**sir** va pijaz **gaza** ra xoshmaze miconand' [**Garlic** and onion make **food** tasty.]  
 10. 'tʃejune mitavnim **pasoxha** ra bijabim' [How can we find the **answers**?]  
 11. 'parandeha xejli **fecr** cardand' [The birds **thought** a lot.]  
 12. 'baraje **pasox** dadan **fecr** miconim' [To **answer**, we **think**.]

In 7 and 9, 'gaza' means [food] without meaning difference. 'sir' in 8 and 9 has different meanings; respectively, it means [to be satiated] and [garlic], based on the context. Studying the meanings of this word independent of the other words and out of the context would be impossible. Children perceive the exact meaning of 'sir' by using the contexts in which its different meanings can be determined. 'fecr' in 11 and 12 refers to [thinking] without meaning difference. 'pasox' means [answer] in 10 and 12 without meaning difference.

### 5.3. Third Grade

13. 'ʃorbeje **vahʃi ʃad** bud' [The **wild** cat was **happy**.]  
 14. '**ʃire** boz ra duʃidam' [I **milked** the goat.]  
 15. '**ʃirha vahʃi** hastand' [**Lions** are **wild**.]  
 16. '**ʃir** ra beband ta ʔab hadar naravad' [Close the **spigot** for not to waste water.]  
 17. 'ʔaz ʔin **car ʃad** budam' [I was **happy** with this **job**.]  
 18. 'ʔan **car** ra cardam' [I did that **job**.]



In 13 and 15, 'vahji' means [wild] without meaning difference. 'fir' in 14, 15, and 16 has different meanings; respectively means [milk], [lion], and [spigot] based on the collocated words. Children get the related meaning of 'fir' through sentences. Doubtlessly, it has meaning out of the context but it is not meaningful and only by applying it in a context, the exact meaning is perceived without any problem. 'car' in 17 and 18 means [job] without meaning difference. 'jad' means [happy] without meaning difference in 13 and 17.

#### 5.4. Fourth Grade

19. 'bezađ mari be řaste **pa**je sajjad/ gaza bar **baz** xord řan tiro řoftad' [The hunter's big toe (of the **foot**) was stung by a snake/ accidentally, the hunter shot the **falcon**, and it fell]
20. 'mixastam **cetab**haji dařte bařam' [I wanted to have some **books**.]
21. 'vađti třeřm **baz** card dar sađeli **dur** bud' [When he **opened** his eyes, he was at a **far** beach.]
22. 'barre řaz madarař **dur** řod' [The lamb was **far** from his mother.]
23. '**baz** **cetab** xaridam' [**Again**, I bought a **book**.]
24. 'madar nax ra be **pa**jař bast' [The mother fastened the string to her **foot**.]

In 21 and 22, 'dur' means [far] without meaning difference. 'cetab' in 20 and 23 means [book] without meaning difference. 'pa' means [foot] without meaning difference in 19 and 24. 'baz' in 19, 21, and 23 has different meanings and according to each context, respectively, means [falcon], [open], and [again]. This word has multiple meanings based on the context and this is not problematic in children's comprehension of different meanings. Therefore, the meaningfulness of 'baz' in the case of a single word and out of the context is impossible.

#### 5.5. Fifth Grade

25. 'galbař řaz řadi tond mizad' [Its **heart** was pulsating because of **happiness**.]
26. 'dařt řaz farjade řadi larzid' [The plain shook due to the shouting of **happiness**.]
27. '**bar**e cadž be manzel nemiresad' [An unsteady **load** never makes it home.]
28. '**mardom** be řijahan řalage dařtand' [The **people** loved the plants.]
29. 'řanduh **galbe** **mardom** ra dard řavard' [Grief pressed **people's** **hearts**.]
30. 'man **bar**ha řecast xordam' [I failed several **times**.]

In 28 and 29, 'mardom' means [people] without meaning difference. 'řadi' in 25 and 26 means [happiness] without meaning difference. 'galb' means [heart] without meaning difference in 25 and 29. In 27- a proverb in Persian- and 30, 'bar' has different meanings and according to the context, it means [load] and [time], respectively. Comprehending the precise meaning of this word without considering the effect of other collocated words at the sentence level is impossible and its main meaning cannot be understood by children correctly; so, it would be meaningful within the context. In 27, moreover, the collocated words, children's encyclopedic knowledge would help them

recognize the meaning of the word easily. They know that the main sense of 'bar', idiomatically, refers to 'way'.

### 5.6. Sixth Grade

31. 'ʔu ba ʔaʃc dar tʃeʃm ʔamad' [He came with **tears** in his eyes.]
32. 'ʃah dʒam ra bar **lab** nahad' [The **king** put the cup on his **lip**.]
33. 'daneʃdʒujan ra ʃalajhe **ʃah** taʃviG cardand' [They encouraged the students against the **king**.]
34. 'zendeji **lab** ze xande bastan ʔast' [Life is the closure of **lips** against smiling.]
35. 'ʔaz rah ʔajar bemanio **roʃan** ʃavad hava/taclife ʃahre xaterehaje to **roʃan** ʔast' [If you stopped in the way and it becomes **bright**/ the status of your city of memories is **clear**]
36. 'tʃeʃmaf be ʔaʃc neʃast' [The **tears** appeared in his eyes.]

In 32 and 34, 'lab' means [lip] without meaning difference. 'ʔaʃc' in 31 and 36 means [tear] without meaning difference. 'ʃah' means [king] without meaning difference in 32 and 33. 'roʃan' in 35, respectively, means [bright] and [clear] referring to the 'air' and 'status'. Children often comprehend these different meanings based on the collocated words in the context; while out of the context, its first meaning is 'to be turned on'; and its other meanings 'transparent', 'definite' and 'clear' would be understood within the context later. According to Ullmann (1962, p. 159), this is called 'synchronic polysemy' at the word level.

In all, considering semantic doctrines and children's analyses about various meanings of polysemous words through data, it is easy to comprehend the prototypical meaning of a word than the other periphery meanings and fundamental to comprehend these meanings. In recent semantic theories entitled Cognitive Semantics, polysemy is a mechanism for categorization, and it cannot be considered an accidental phenomenon. The meanings of a word are activated in the speaker's or hearer's mind within different contexts. "The study of meaning is encyclopedic, and in this viewpoint, all words and larger units are considered entries that can provide an unlimited network of knowledge" (Azimi & Afrashi, 2021, p. 3).

## 6. Conclusion

Reviewing the history of semantics, this paper, demonstrated that the study of meaning has been always based on Lexical Semantics and there are two approaches to the word meaning; in the first approach, each word has one or some fossilized meanings and is based on the other, each word has a series of unlimited meanings that represented in the context.

The results of the tests show that most children could find the polysemous words without problem by considering them only within a special context and in relation to the collocated words. This can be analyzed according to the structuralist semantic approach in which meaning studies are

not limited to the words independent of each other. Also, based on the encyclopedic viewpoint of meaning in cognitive semantics, children's ability to comprehend the exact meaning of a polysemous word can be analyzed which is rooted in human social and physical experience. Moreover, children based on their own background knowledge can differentiate between multiple meanings of a polysemous word. This vast knowledge includes certain domains which are cognitive in their essence and children deal with them every day.

Based on the number of correct answers provided by children in each grade and each gender, the main results of the tests show that 7 to 12-year-old Persian-speaking children can comprehend multiple meanings of a word within six elementary school grade course books 'Farsi' (2018) to a desirable extent. According to the results of this study, a descriptive analysis on the basis of the number of correct answers provided by children in each grade is reported; boys in sixth grade with 49 correct answers and third grade with 43 correct answers have, respectively, provided the most and the least correct answers to the questions evaluating the extent of children's ability to comprehend multiple meanings of polysemous words. On the other hand, girls in fifth grade with 48 correct answers and in third grade with 43 correct answers have, respectively, provided the most and the least correct answers.

According to semantic approaches, context can play a significant role in helping children's comprehension of different meanings of polysemous words. Furthermore, children mainly use their background knowledge to differentiate various meanings of polysemous words. According to the results of the tests in each grade and making conversations with children about their reason(s) for choosing the answer, their analyses made clear that they are equipped with certain cognitive domains which is called background knowledge and most of the time they can grasp the meaning of words by activating and using these domains. This illustrates a kind of knowledge that children use it as a cognitive tool to perceive the exact meaning of a polysemous word and differentiate between its multiple meanings in various contexts which is called background knowledge in cognitive semantics.

In other words, based on encyclopedic knowledge and participants' analyses in this paper, children can comprehend the exact meaning of a polysemous word in terms of comprehension of its encyclopedic meaning, and word meaning comprehension means comprehension of the semantic domain in which it has been used. Thus, the meaning of words must be comprehended concerning the frame or domain they are in. Therefore, it is concluded that most children use the encyclopedic meaning of words and the context or collocational words to differentiate and comprehend the exact meaning of a polysemous word. As an example, children comprehend the accurate meaning of the word 'sar' based on their encyclopedic knowledge because the prototype of this word is 'a part of body', which is easier to comprehend than its periphery meanings, and they use their background knowledge along with the context that the word has been located. Also, background knowledge, remarkably, helps children comprehend polysemous words and their multiple meanings. The results of this study confirm Evans's (2009) and Safavi's (2013) claims concerning the effect of context on

comprehending the exact meaning of polysemous words and considering 'word' as the unit of the study of meaning in semantics. Different approaches in semantics, especially lexical and cognitive doctrines, shed light on polysemy which, in particular, in the early years of academic language learning employing course books can enhance and impact the accurate use of contexts and collocations provided for children's resources and makes children literature theory-based, easy to understand and enjoyable.



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