

## **The Comparison of Connotative Meaning in Animal Words between English and Persian Expressions and their Translation**

**Leila Anjomshoa**

Department of Foreign Languages  
Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University  
Kerman, Iran  
Leila.anjomshoa@gmail.com

**Firooz Sadighi**

Department of Foreign Languages  
Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University  
Shiraz, Iran  
Firoozsadighi@yahoo.com

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**Abstract:** *Animal words and expressions have slowly become a significant member of the basic vocabulary of many languages in the world. Iranian and English are no exception. Some animal words in Persian and English are the same or similar in cultural connotations, because Iranian and the English people have some same capabilities of thought, some same laws of cognition, and some animals have the same important role in the human life of these two nations, and have the same attributes and features. But some of them are dissimilar or different. The cause of it is that the English people and the Iranian people are different in religion, history, geographical environment, and customs and so on. The present study is within semantic – pragmatic framework. Over the years there has been an interest in research about metaphors, idioms, and proverbs within different frameworks, but studies on animal expressions are few in both Persian and English. This research is an attempt to show some lingual misunderstandings through animal expressions.*

**Keywords:** *Animal expressions, connotations, English and Persian Expressions*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the long history of human beings, animals are always closely related to our existence and development. Some are a kind of important food to people; some offer the labor for agriculture; some support the inspirations for some inventions of science and technology; and some are a kind of close friends of people, playing an important role in the mankind's society. Fraser (1981) examined insulting animal expressions in different languages other than English to see if they have equal usages. Newmark (1988) believes that animal metaphors are used to a great extent in order to describe inferior or undesirable human habits and attributes.

Dauids and Bentahila (1989) examined animal terms in British English and Moroccan Arabic. They use different theories like similarity and relevance to categorize animal metaphors. Holmes (1992) as cited in Hsieh (2006) gives examples of the chicken metaphor in her sociolinguistic analysis of sexism in language. Sutton (1995; cited in the same) studies linguistic discrimination against females and makes a strong argument about the metaphor "women are animals". Tomita (2000) works on a large amount of rhetorical expressions such as animal similes and metaphors which are used to delineate the physical appearances or distinctive personalities of various characters in Charles Dickens's novels. Nadim (2000) examines animal roles in Shirazi proverbs with an approach to sociolinguistics. After analysing about 100 animal expressions, he concludes that donkey expressions are the most frequent ones and have some salient semantic molecules such "crazy, worthless, and absurd". Hsieh (2001) cited in the same) studies animal expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German based on Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphors (1980). Hsieh (2004) cited in the same) further proposes that animal expressions are our vocabulary of values.

Hsieh (2006) investigates animal expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German. With a focus on cat and tiger expressions, he reveals the salient semantic molecules of these animals in both languages. In another study Hsieh (2008) compares animal and plant metaphors to show the semantic autonomy of language and the cognitive level of using these metaphors in light of lay

views vs. scientific theories (Kövecses, 2000 as cited in Hsieh 2008) and verbal processes (Halliday, 1985 as cited in Hsieh 2008). He found that (1) metaphors are not scientific;(2) but the essence of metaphors and nature seems to overlap: in the natural world, animals are moving creatures while plants are motionless life forms; (3) in our languages, animal metaphors are active expression whereas plant metaphors are static. Estaji and Nakhavali (2011) Studied Semantic Derogation in Persian Animal Proverbs. Their analysis shows that sex and semantic derogation are not shown in Persian structures and proverbs as much as other languages, but in the cases with semantic derogation, the metaphorical meanings of the female proverbs connote worse qualities than those connoted by the male proverbs.

## 2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

An animal expression is defined in this study as any Persian or English expression that encodes at least one animal name. Animal names are considered as metaphorical vehicles here, and most of the data are collected from the written English and Persian dictionaries of proverbs or idioms. Part of the raw data is taken from daily – life conversations.

### 2.1. Animal Expressions and Semantic Features

In this part first some of the semantic features of fox, camel, horse, snake and eagle expressions are exemplified, and then discuss and compare the salient features of these animal names in both English and Persian.

### 2.2. Fox Expressions and Salient Semantic Features

In many cultures, the fox appears in folklore as a symbol of cunning and trickery, or as a familiar animal possessed of magic powers.

In Dagon mythology, the pale fox is the trickster god of the desert, who embodies chaos. The term "foxy" in English is defined as meaning - as the obvious "having the qualities of a fox" - also "attractive" and "sexy", as well as "red-haired".

Overwhelmingly, cultural consensus on fox animal symbolism deals with:

- cunning
- strategy
- quick-thinking
- adaptability
- cleverness
- wisdom

The fox encourages us to think outside of the box and use our intelligence in different, creative ways. The fox also brings us a message to try to approach our circumstances differently that we normally would. Be aware of some of our habits, and try a different angle of action.

The fox also a reminder that we must utilize all of our resources (seen and unseen) in order to accomplish our goals. Sometimes this means calling upon some unorthodox methods.

Furthermore, the fox is a sign to be *mindful* of our surroundings. Phenomenally effective shapeshifters and incredibly adaptable, the fox beckons us to not make too many waves but rather, adapt to our surroundings, blend into it, and use our surroundings (and circumstances) to our advantage.

Other generalized fox symbolic meanings deal with

- focus
- determination
- right-action
- **fox**: crazy like a fox
- **fox**: a sexually attractive woman
- **fox** :*Informal*: to perplex or confound: to fox a person with a problem
- **fox**: to cause (paper, wood, etc.) to become discoloured with spots, or (of paper, etc.) to become discoloured, as through mildew.

Out fox

- to trick; deceive
- sneaky as fox in the hen-house

In Persian *fox* expressions may have these semantic features:

روباه

روباه به انگور نمی رسد، می گوید ترش است.

Foxes when they cannot reach the grapes, say they are not ripe

روباه به باغ کاهگل داخل نمی شود

Try before you trust

- به روباه گفت شاهدهت کیست گفت دم

One lie makes many

- روباهی که لانه اش یک در داشته باشد زود گرفتار می شود

Provide against a rainy day Set not the fox to watch the geese

- اشاره به مکاری روباه دارد و سفارش می کند امانت خود را هرگز به او نسپرید
- روباه باز: تحلیل و مکار
- نیست از راه تواضع خاکساری دام را
- حیله باشد خصم رو به باز را افتادگی
- روباه بازی: زرق و حیلت کردن
- مکن روباه بازی و بیارام
- که پیه گرگ در مالیات ایام
- **sagacity** زیرکی

A good swimmer often drowned افتاد روباه از زیرکی اش به تله افتاد

- روباه سیاه از کمر به تله می افتد

too much cunning undone

- روباه حیله گر است ولی کسی که او را می گیرد حیله گرتر

The bitter is sometimes bit

- اگر تو روباهی، من دم روباهم

Behind an able man there are always other noble men

- صد تا مثل تو را لب رودخانه می برد و تشنه برمی گرداند

If you deal with a fox, think of his trichks..

- کاری که گرگ به سختی انجام می دهد، روباه به آسانی از پیش می برد

If the lion's skin cannot, the fox's shall

He is as cunning as a fox مثل روباه پیر

### **2.3. Camel Expressions and Salient Semantic Features**

Camels are symbols meaning both *humility*, *willingness to serve* and *obstinacy*. In medieval art and sculpture, the camel was used to represent humility and the willingness to bear another's burden, largely because camels are trained to kneel down to receive heavy loads. Many artists employing this symbolism had no direct experience with camels. In the east, however, camels are famous as being disagreeable and obstinate. An eastern proverb proclaims that the camel, "Curses it its ancestors on the way up a hill and its Maker on the way down." For Egyptians, camels are symbolic of complainers and those who are slow on their feet.

*Some suggested keywords for symbolic camel meaning:*

- Endurance
- Transport
- Protection
- Survival
- Conservation
- Journeying
- Adaptive
- Obedience
- Temperance
- Nobility
- Humility
- Stamina

CAMEL

- strain at gnats and swallow camels
- To criticize other people for minor offences while ignoring major offenses.
- plain as the hump on a camel
- obvious
- straw that broke the camel's back
- The thing to push you over the edge.

In Persian *Camel* expressions may have these semantic features:

- شتر
- شتر با بارش گم می شود
- dog eat dog
- شتر بزرگ است زحمتش هم زیاد است
- the much coins, the much care
- آنجا که شتر بود به یک غاز، خر قیمت واقعی ندارد.
- Best is best cheap
- شتر خود را توی چاه می اندازد که صاحبش خر کردند
- nothing so bold as a blind mare
- شتر در جستجوی شاخ بود که گوش خود را گم کرد.
- The camel going to seek horns lost his ears
- شتر در خانه صاحبش زانو می زند
- If you would wish the dog to follow you, feed him
- شتر در خواب ببند پنبه دانه / گهی لب لب خورد گه دانه دانه

The cat dreams of mice

- شتر دزدی و خم خم
- The cats shuts his eyes while steals cream
- شتر دیدی ندیدی
- Say you saw me not
- شتر را با بار گم کرده، دنبال ردپایش می گردد.

Penny wise and pound foolish

- شتر که بمیرد آتش در جهازش می گیرند.
- Everyone worships the rising sun
- شتر مال صاحبش را یک من می خورد، اما مال دیگری را ده من

- It is a good beef that costs nothing
- شتر سواری دولا دولا نمی شود.
- Truth will come to light
- شتر گذار و پیشه گیر رک: شتر را گم کردن و پی مهارش گشتن
- این شتری است که در خانه همه می خوابد
- The end makes all equal
- هیچ کس عیب خود نمی بیند - شتر گوز خود را نمی بیند
- Camel never sees its own hump
- کور خود و بینای مردم است
- تمثیل: ای که جز عیب کس نمی بینی / عیب خود را چرا نمی بینی؟
- شتر را به تیغ چوبین کشتن
- به کار بردن وسیله کوچک برای کار بزرگ
- همین رود این مرا همانا / کاشتر نکشم به تیغ چوبین
- روزه خواری کردن: شتر سواری
- خوش آنکه نکرده در همه عمر / جز در رمضان شتر سواری
- شتر که علف می خواهد گردن دراز می کند
- Flesh stands never so high but a dog will venture his legs
- شتر بزرگ است، زحمتش هم زیاد است

#### **2.4. Horse Expressions and Salient Semantic Features**

The horse is a symbol meaning *willingness* to work and *independence*. In ancient Rome, the horse was clearly associated with death itself as it pulled the chariot of the sun god over the horizon into darkness. In ancient Nordic art and religious ceremonies, the horse replaced the sacrificial bull of Mediterranean cultures. The horse signified resurrection from the dead to the Nordic peoples as it carried the dead to the other side of life.

A summary of prevalent symbol meanings for the horse:

- Power
- Grace
- Beauty
- Nobility
- Strength
- Freedom

The Horse symbol meanings of power are widespread through most cultures, and it is linked as an emblem of **life-force**. Many cultures assign the attributes of the four elements to the Horse: Earth, Fire, Air, and Water.

#### **as strong as a horse/ox**

- very strong

#### **as stubborn as a mule**

- very stubborn.

#### **back the wrong horse**

- to support someone or something that cannot or does not win or succeed.

#### **beat a dead horse**

- to continue fighting a battle that has been won, to continue to argue a point that has been settled

### bet on the wrong horse

- to misread the future, to not choose the winning person or solution

In Persian *horse* expressions may have these semantic features:

1- To eat like a horse: پر خوری بی اندازه، به اندازه زیاد غذا خوردن

Straight from a horse's mouth: شنیدن موضوعی از یک منبع موثق

- To flog a dead horse: به اسب مرده لگد نمی زنند"، آدم بدبخت را نباید بیشتر آزار داد.

از اسب افتاده زمین اسب را رها نمی کند

A poor man wants something, a covetous man all thing

از اسب افتاده ایم، از اصل که نیفتاده ایم

Money is not everything

اسب پیاده شده به خر سوار شده

What goes up , must come down

اسب پیشکش را به دندانش نگاه نکنید

Look not a gift horse in the mouth

اسب چوبی اگر گاه و خجو نمی خورد راه هم نمی رود

As the work ,so the pay .

اسب چلاق یال و دم فراوان دارد

Beauty is only skin deep

اسب دونده جود خود را زیاد می کند

No work ,no money

از اسب دو، از صاحبش جو

No mill, no meal

یک اسب دو سوارکار نمی خواهد

If two men ride on a horse, one must behind

اسب را گم کرده پی نعلش می گردد

You cannot see the wood for the trees

اسب را یک عمر گاه و جو می دهند که روزی به کار آید

When you drink from the stream, remember the spring

اسب سواری پیش کشت، قارچ زین را نگه دار

Never make threats you cannot carry out

اسب شاه را نعل می کردند، پشه هم پای خود را بلند کرد

Every ass thinks himself worthy to stands with the king's horses

به اسب پاه گفته یابو: کنایه از توهین کردن

اسب نجیب را نازیانه ای بس است (آهسته و پیوسته)

چون اسب نماند برنهم زین به خزان

Who has no horse may ride on a staff

اسب و استر به هم لگد زنند

A crow does not pull out the eye of another crow

اسبهای شاهی را نعل می کردند، قورباغه هم پاهایش را بلند کرد.

Every ass thinks himself worthy to stand with the kings horses

اسبی که ضمیرش نرنی می خورد آب

اسب بر چیزی تاختن کنایه از نیست و نابود کردن.

اسب و فرزین نهادن کف: ارفاق کردن، امکان و فرصت مقاومت دادن

**diligence** پشتکار

از اسب دو، از صاحبش جو

اسب چوبی اگر گاه و جو نمی خورد راه هم نمی رود

اسب تاختن: کنایه از تند روی کردن، از حد گذراندن

## **2.5. Cow Expressions and Salient Semantic Features**

In many cultures the cow is symbolic of Mother Earth, and has been a symbol of fertility, nurturing, and power. This makes udder sense (pardon the pun), cows have been generous with their life force for eons. They are closely associated with provision and very earth-associated in symbolism.

The cow is also a lunar symbol, aligning itself with feminine (yin) qualities (see list of yin attributes) among the Chinese yin-yang energies.

A quick-list of Animal symbolism of the cow would include:

- Patience
- Nourishment
- Abundance
- Fertility
- Female Power
- Potential
- Possibility
- Calming
- Grounded
- Provision
- Beginnings
- **as awkward as a cow on roller skates**
- - very awkward
- **a bull in a china shop**
- - a tactless person who upsets others or upsets plans, a very clumsy person
- **a cash cow**
- - a product or service that makes much money
- **have a cow**
- - to become very angry and upset about something
- **hit the bulls-eye**
- - to reach or focus on the main point of something

### **Holy cow**

- - used to express strong feelings of astonishment or pleasure or anger
- **a sacred cow**
- - a person or thing that is never criticized or changed even if it should be (from a cow which is sacred in India).

In Persian *Cow* expressions may have these semantic features:

- گاو
- گاو تا وقتی شیر می دهد عزیز است
- گاو تو زاییده دو گوساله
- گاو پیشانی سفید
- گاو چهل ساله به گوساله محتاج شود
- گاو خوش علفی است
- گاو را از خر تشخیص نمی دهد
- Not know a B from a bull's foot
- گاو را پوست کنده به دمش رسیده
- هرکسی گاو را دوست دارد، گوساله را هم دوست
- گاو کند و خر خورد
- گاو که پیر شد گوساله اش عزیز می شود: آدمی در پیری فرزند خود را بیشتر دوست دارد.
- گاو نه من شیر ده: نیکی های کرده خویش را به بدی ختم کند
- گاوان و خران باربردار / به ز آدمیان مردم آزار
- گاوم است و آبم است، نوبت آسیابم است.
- همه کس و در همه جا او را شناسند
- گاو پیشانی سفید
- As well-known as the village pump
- گاو به چرم اندر بودن: آشکار نبودن پایان کار
- It is and endless task
- گاو در خرمن ..... کردن - خراب و تباه کردن، مزاحمت فراهم کردن
- گاودل: ترسنده، ترسو
- گاوریش: ابله و نادان
- گاو زهره: ترسنده، ترسو
- گاو کسی زاییدن: کنایه از اتفاق نامساعدی برای کسی افتادن
- سر گاو توی خمره گیر کردن: کنایه از مشکل غیر مترقبه ای پدید آمدن که حل آن ناممکن بنماید.
- گاو بی شاخ و دم: نهایت نادان
- گاو بچرم اندر بودن: پایان کار آشکار نبودن
- گاو حاج میرزا آقا: کسی را که بیخبر و سرزده به همه جاغ وارد می شود به این گاو تشبیه کنند.
- گاو خوش علف: آنچه هیچ خوردنی را مکروه ندارد
- گاوش نلیسیده است: (هنوز ...) تجربه ندارد

## 2.6. Snake Expressions and Salient Semantic Features

Snake symbolic meaning, overwhelmingly and in various cultures, deals with primordial life force and usually turns our attention to gender supremacy (both male and female).

Consequently, snakes span the symbolic bridge between lunar and solar associations as well as aspects between water and fire.

Coiled within this polarity, we clearly see symbolism of duality and the search for balance. Other snake symbolic meaning includes:



- Cycles
- Rebirth
- Patience
- Fertility
- Eternity
- Balance
- Cunning
- Intuition
- Awareness
- Healing
- Intellect
- Protection
- Solemnity
- Rejuvenation
- Transformation
- Occult (hidden) Knowledge

The snake is a symbol meaning danger, charm and sexual energy (especially male). The snake is one of the oldest symbols, appearing repeatedly in the Bible as well as in the iconography of Egypt and other ancient cultures. The snake is one of the Chinese astrological symbols. Those born under the snake sign lead charmed lives, usually gain or inherit wealth and are seductive and attractive to others. They may be insecure or possessive but they know how to get things done.

#### SNAKE

**snake in the grass:** There is trouble.

**if it was a snake it would have bit you :**very close **mad as a struck snake:** cruel and angry  
**once a snake, always a snake :**people do not change **slippery as a snake :**Tricky–unable to trust

In Persian *Snake* expressions may have these semantic features:

مار

مار به دست دیگری گرفتن (کشتن)

او را سپر بلا ساختن

مار خوردن - تحمل گفته و کرده زشت و زننده کردن

مار در آستین داشتن - ظاهر الصلاح و بد باطن بودن

مار خوردن واقعی شدن - کنایه از سرد و گرم روزگار را چشیدن و بسیار مجرب و کار دیده

آنقدر مار خورده که افعی شده

مار را با زبان از سوراخ بیرون کشیدن - کنایه از زبان بازی و چرب زبانی کردن و کسی را فریفتن

مار از پونه بدش می آید در لانه اش هم سبزی می شود.

Everything goes to him who does not want it

مار گزیده از ریسمان سیاه و سفید می ترسد.

مار از پونه بدش می آید، جلوی لانه اش سبزی می شود.

مار اگر زهر داره پادزهر هم دارد

Take the bad with the good

مار بد آن است که بر جان می زند / یار بد آن است که بر ایمان زند

Better be alone than in a bad company

مار به دست دشمن می کشد

It is good to strike the serpent's head with your enemy's hand

مار پوست بگذارد، خون نمی گذارد

What is taken in with the milk, only goes with the soul

مار چو پیر شد افعی می شود

Old foxes want no tutors

از مار چه زایده، مار بچه

An evil crow, an evil egg

مار خاک هر جا را بخورد به رنگ همان خاک می شود

When you drink from the stream, remember the spring

مار خانه را به دست همسایه باید گرفت

Take the chestnuts out of the fire with the cat's paw

مار خوش خط و خالی است

He is like a snake in the grass

آنقدر مار خورده که افعی شده

It is good to follow an old fox

مار در آستین می پروراند

God defense me from my friends; from my enemies I can defend myself

مار که پیر شد قورباغه سوارش می شود

Little birds pick at the dead lion

مار مرده نگزد

Dead men don't bite

مار هر کجا کج برود توی لانه خودش راست می رود

The devil looks after his own

مارگیر را بالاخره مار می کشد

He has brought up a bird to pick out his own eyes

مار ماهی است نه مار است و نه ماهی

Neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring

اگر تو ماری من افعی هستم

The bitter is sometimes bit

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As it is revealed in the table, fox, camel, horse, snake and cow evokes semantic features both in English and some other languages than in Persian.

Traditional notions show themselves in the form of proverbs. In other words, proverbs like other linguistic vehicles are the reflection of speakers' views, cultures, beliefs, social behaviors and roles. So animal expressions can reveal the individual or social thoughts.

**Table1.** *The semantic features of some certain animals in Persian, English, and some other languages*

Language	vehicle	Semantic feature
English	fox	Cunning ,strategy, quick-thinking Adaptability, cleverness ,wisdom, focus, determination, right-action
English	camel	Endurance, Transport, Protection, Survival, Conservation, Journeying, Adaptive, Obedience, Temperance, Nobility, Humility, Stamina
English	horse	Power, Grace, Beauty, Nobility, Strength, Freedom
English	snake	Cycles, Rebirth, Patience, Fertility, Eternity, Balance Cunning, Intuition, Awareness, Healing, Intellect, Protection, Solemnity, Rejuvenation, Transformation, Occult (hidden) Knowledge
English	cow	Patience, Nourishment, Abundance, Fertility, Female Power, Potential, Possibility, Calming, Grounded, Provision, Beginnings

### **پشتکار**

شتر که علف می خواهد گردن دراز می کند

- Flesh stands never so high but a dog will venture his legs

از اسب دو، از صاحبش جو

No mill, no meal

اسب چوبی اگر کاه و جو نمی خورد راه هم نمی رود

As the work ,so the pay.

سبکتر برد اشتر مست بار

گنج و مار با هم هستند

### **پول**

شتر بزرگ است، زحمتش هم زیاد است

دم روباه و بال روباه است

### **تجربه**

اگر علی ساربان است می داند شتر را کجا بخواباند

آنقدر مار خورده که افعی شده

اگر تو ماری من افعی هستم

مار گزیده از ریسمان سیاه و سفید می ترسد

### **تواضع**

اسب شاه را نعل می کردند، پشه هم پای خود را بلند کرد

### **حرص**

از اسب افتاده، زین اسب را رها نمی کند

کره داده، شتر می خواهد

### **حقیقت**

شتر سواری دولا دولا نمی شود

### **دنیا**

زمانه ماری است که خشک و تر را می بلعد

### **دوستی**

یار بد بدتر بود از مار بد

یار قدیمی اسب زین کرده است

### **ذات**

از مار چه زاید، مار بچه

مار چو پیر شد افعی می شود

مار پوست بگذارد، خوی نمی گذارد

خر به زدن اسب نمی شود.

### **زیرکی**

روباه از زیرکی اش به تله افتاد

روباه سیاه از کمر به تله می افتد

اگر تو روباهی من دم روباهم

روباه حیله گر است ولی کسی که او را می گیرد حیله گر تر

#### سرنوشت

مهره مار دارد

بخت که برگردد، اسب تو طویله خر گردد

دسترنج قاطر را اسب می خورد

دنده ار شتر شکست، تاوانش را خر داد.

#### مرگ

مرگ شتری است که در خانه هرکس زانو می زند

مار مرده نگردد

#### معاشرت

زبان خوش مار از سوراخ بیرون می کشد

مار بد آن است که بر جان می زند / یار بد آن است که بر ایمان زند

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This paper analyses the connotations between the English and Persian animal words, and compares the animal images and their connotations. We have learned that animal words have their own features and cultural connotations in their own languages. Some of their cultural connotations and images are the same, but most of them are different, and some even exist only in their own language and make the vacancies between the two languages. These differences are caused by religion, history, geographical environment, customs, and so on.

We cannot always translate directly the animal words of the original from the source language into the target language. We must be well acquainted with the habits and environments of both the source language and the target language before translating them into the target language, and try our best to know the connotations carried by animal words. In the process of translation, we should pay special attention to the cultural connotations of animal words of the two languages, keep objectivity of the original and shun subjectivity. Only in this way, can we translate properly both the real meaning and the style of the original from the source language into the target language.

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#### **AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY**

**Leila Anjomshoa** is an instructor at Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran. She has been teaching English to EFL learners for about 10 years. She is a PhD candidate at Islamic Azad University shiraz Branch now. Her field of interest is first and second language acquisition and curriculum development.

**Firooz Sadighi** is a professor of Linguistics at Islamic Azad University and Shiraz University. He has been teaching M.A. and PhD courses for many years. He has been graduated from Illinois University, Unites States. His Field of interest is linguistics, first and second language acquisitions. He has published many worthy articles and books in the fields mentioned.