



## Translation and body-part terms: The case of *cheshm* 'eye' in Persian

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### Abstract

Translating body-part terms from one language to another presents a significant challenge due to the fact that such terms are usually associated with cultural conceptualisations, such as those of emotions and mental activities, which in many cases vary across languages. A literal translation of a body-part term from SL to TL, therefore, may alter the conceptual basis of the term, which may have significant semantic or pragmatic implications. This paper focuses on the case of *cheshm* 'eye' in Persian, a body-part term that is predominantly associated with emotions, including love, envy, and greed, as well as character traits such as naivety or wilfulness. The analysis of some Persian expressions that are associated with the body-part term 'eye' reveal significant differences with the connotation of 'eye' in English. For example, the conceptualisation of understanding is seeing, is not a dominant conceptualisation in everyday use of language by Persian speakers. There are, however, some words which do refer to the process of visual perception and which are mainly used in association with thinking. These expressions seem to be reminiscent of a historical cultural conceptualisation that can be traced back to the Pahlavi language, the major form of Middle Persian. The observations made in this paper call for a cultural-conceptual level of analysis, as a step in the general process of translating from one language to another.

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### 1. Introduction

The human body acts as a resource in conceptualising various aspects of our experiences, both internal and external to the body itself. This is reflected in the use of body-part terms to talk about our feelings, thoughts, etc. For example,

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English expressions such as “you broke my heart”, suggest a conceptualization of the heart as the seat of emotion. These expressions have often been described simply as figures of speech, but cognitive linguistics research has shown how the use of the body is fundamental to even our basic understanding of ourselves and our surroundings (e.g., Gibbs, 1999; Kövecses, 1999; 2000; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Recent research in Cultural Linguistics has revealed that these conceptualisations are far from universal. They may not only vary from one language to another but often have their roots in certain cultural models, including ethnomedical traditions (e.g. Maalej, 2004; Sharifian, et al, 2008; Yu, 2001, 2002, 2009a, 2009b). For example, while as mentioned above the heart is conceptualised as the seat of love in English, in Indonesian love is associated with *hati* ‘the liver’ (Siahaan, 2008). Siahaan traces back this conceptualisation to the ritual of animal sacrifice, and especially to ‘liver divination’, which was practiced in ancient Indonesia.

These observations have significant implications for translating body-part terms from one language to another. A literal translation of a body-part term from one language to another may entail an unintended conceptual, and therefore semantic, shift, if the two languages associate one body-part term with different conceptualisations. This paper elaborates on this theme by examining the conceptualisations that are associated with the body-part term *cheshm* ‘eye’ in Persian.

The analysis of a number of expressions that include this body-part term reflect conceptualisations such as that of eye as the seat of emotions. Yu (2004) observes that, in both English and Chinese, expressions that contain the body-term ‘eye’ reflect conceptualisations of perceptual organ for perception as well as thinking, understanding, and knowing is seeing. In Modern Persian, while there are a set of formal words that reflect the conceptualisation of thinking is seeing, the eye is most commonly conceptualised in relation to ‘ill-judged’ emotions and personality traits such as envy and greed. This paper elaborates on these themes by providing examples from the everyday use of Persian expressions that include this body part. Examples where ‘eye’ instantiates a Persian cultural model that attributes magical powers to this body part, are also provided.

First, we will begin by looking at some cases where the eye is, in fact, somehow associated with perception, which reflect the conceptual metonymy of perceptual organ for perception. ‘To casually look for something’ is described as *chashm andâ’khtan* ‘to throw eye’ as in the following example:

- (1) *Yek cheshm andâkht-am, chizi peidâ na-kard-am*<sup>2</sup>  
One eye threw-me something find not-did-I<sup>3</sup>?  
‘I had a look (lit. I threw an eye), but couldn’t find anything’

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1-The symbol *â* stands for a low back unrounded vowel close to the sounds of *a* in the English word *father*.

2-I acknowledge here that there are dialectal differences in the use of the Persian expressions used in this paper, although the differences should be minimal.

3- The equivalents given under each word in the examples are just meant to serve as a semantic guide and are not to be taken as the exact morphosyntactic equivalents.

The following examples also show this body part involved in the act of perception.

(2) *cheshm az-ash bar.nadâr*

Eye from-it don't.take

'Keep watching (lit. Don't take eye from) it closely'

(3) *cheshm behesh dookhteh bood*

Eye to.it sewn was

'(he/she) was staring at (lit. had sewn eye to) it/he/she'

(4) *ageh beh cheshm-et khord bekhar-esh*

If to eye-yours hit buy-it

'If you happen to see it (lit. it hit your eye), buy it'

(5) *ageh cheshm-am beh.esh biofteh, midun-am bâ.hâsh chikâr konam.*

If eye-mine to.him/her fall/drop know-I with.him/her what do

'If I see him/her (lit. If my eye falls/drops to him/her), I know what to do with him/her'

It can be seen that in (2) the act of continuous, close watching is conceptualised as 'having an eye on something', terminating the act of watching is conceptualised as 'taking one's eye from it' while in (3) the act of staring at something is conceptualized as 'sewing an eye on it'. This has similarities with the English expressions 'keeping an eye on something' and 'taking one's eyes off something'. In sentence (4) 'coming across a 'thing' is conceptualised as 'one's eye hitting something' whereas in (5) coming across a person is understood as 'one's eye falling/drop onto someone'. This has things in common with Chinese where "seeing takes place when one's eye 'reaches' the target" (Yu, 2004: 666). It seems that there are similarities in conceptualisations of eye/perception across different languages and cultures. In the case of Persian and English, the reader is reminded that these two languages have a common proto-language, that is, Indo-European; so similarities may have historical roots. Nevertheless, where English extends the eye metaphor to 'accurate, unclouded or correctly judged' perception/thought, these expressions remain firmly located in the first level of literal seeing.

It should be added here that literary Persian includes another word for 'eye' which is *deedeh*. This word is used in many poems, exemplified in the following stanza from Bâbâ Tâher, an 11th century Persian poet and mystic:

(6) *zeh dasteh deedeh o del hardo faryâd*

From hand the.eye and the.heart both shout

'~I am frustrated with both the eye and the heart'

(7) *Harâncheh deedeh beenad del konad yâd*

Whatever the.eye sees the.heart does remember

'Whatever the eye sees, the heart remembers/longs for'

The stem of the word *deedeh* is *deed*, which refers to eyesight and in fact the word for the act of perception in Modern Persian is *deedan*. In this case then the act of perception takes part in forming a word that refers to the perceptual organ (i.e. *deedeh*).

## 2. Cheshm and conceptualizations of emotions in Persian

The body-part *cheshm* is used very frequently in conceptualisations of emotions in Persian. It is very closely linked to *del* ‘heart-stomach’, which is generally conceptualized as the seat of emotions such as love in Persian (Sharifian, 2008c). In fact many literary texts in Persian refer to *cheshm-e del* ‘eye of the heart’, as the spiritual insight as opposed to physical insight. This conceptualisation has its origins in Sufism, a mystic spiritual tradition, which has immensely influenced Persian literature and language. In Sufism, *del* refers not to the physical but the spiritual heart, and it is in the spiritual heart where a Sufi, in his journey towards perfection, eventually perceives the manifestations of God (Nurbakhsh, 1992). The spiritual heart is capable of seeing what the physical eye cannot perceive. It is the site of the vision *âlameh gheib* ‘the Unseen World’. The close affinity in Sufism between the eye and the heart as sites of emotions has been absorbed by Persian literature and from there has spread outwards to more general conceptualisations of the eye in the Persian language. This close link between the eye, both in the spiritual sense and the physical sense, and the heart in Persian literature is reflected in (6) and (7), and in the following popular saying:

- (8) *Az del beravad har.ânkeh az deedeh beraft*  
From the heart would.be.gone the.one from the.eye is.gone.  
‘goes from the heart, the one who goes out of the sight’

The above saying may seem similar to the English saying ‘out of sight, out of mind’. However, the Persian expression captures both the emotional and mental aspect of forgetting a person who is no longer seen. Although in Modern Persian *zahn* ‘mind’, associated with the brain, is largely conceptualized as the centre of thinking (Sharifian, 2008c), *del* reflects conceptualisations of both emotions and thinking/remembering. The English expression ‘out of sight, out of mind’ on the other hand, does not point the speaker or listener to the emotional dimensions that accompany the process of forgetting or becoming less attached to an absent person.

### 2.1. *Cheshm as the seat of love*

The emotion most strongly associated with the eye in Persian is love. Such expressions are usually used between family members such as a mother and a child, and do not convey the sense of a romantic love. Consider the following sentences:

- (9)-(a) *Nasrin cheshm-â-m-e*  
Nasrin eye-PL-my-is  
'I love Nasrin dearly (lit. Nasrin is my eyes).'
- (b) *Bâbak Noor-e cheshm-e mâmân-esh-e*  
Bâbak light-of eye-of mother-his-is  
'Bâbak is the apple of his mother's eye (lit. Bâbak is the light of his mother's eye).'
- (c) *dokhtar-am roo cheshm-â-m jâ dâreh*  
daughter-mine on eye-PL-mine place has  
'I love my daughter dearly (lit. My daughter has place on my eye).'

In (a) love is conceptualised in terms of one's eye, in the sense that the loved person is equated with one's eye. In (b), the loved person is conceptualised as the light of one's eye, which is roughly equivalent to the conceptualisation of 'apple of the eye' in English. This second expression reflects the conceptualisations of eyes are light sources, which is dominant in Chinese (Yu, 2004). However, in Chinese, eye-light is conceptualized as being able to hit a target with the meanings of 'eye-sight, foresight, vision, and insight' (Yu, 2004: 666) whereas in Persian eye-light is associated with emotion. In (3) loving someone is conceptualized as 'having place on one's eye'. The following is another expression that associates eye with affection.

- (10) *Siroosaz chesh-am oftâdeh*  
Siroos from eye-mine has fallen  
'I don't like Siroos anymore/I don't have any feelings for Siroos anymore (lit. Siroos has fallen from my eye).'

It can be seen that the loss of one's positive attitude toward and feeling about another person is here conceptualised as 'that person falling from one's eye'. This expression also reflects an image-schema whereby the eye is conceptualised as a place from/off which someone can fall. If this negative feeling towards someone is intensified it can be said that "one doesn't have eye to see that person", as in the following expression.

- (11) *Cheshm na.daram bebin-am-esh*  
Eye not.have-see-me-him  
'I hate him (lit. I don't have eye to see him).'

In Persian, the eye may also be used to conceptualize attraction, such as towards a car or a house, as in the following example:

(12)-(a) *In mâchin cheshm-am ro<sup>4</sup> gereft-e, mikhâm bekharamesh*  
This car eye-mine DO-marker has.caught want.I to.buy.me  
'I like this car (lit. This car has taken my eye). I'd like to buy it.

(b) *Cheshm-am in mâshin r gereft-e*  
eye-mine this car DO-marker has.caught  
'I like this car (lit. My eye has taken this car).

It can be seen that attraction to a car is here conceptualised as 'the car catching one's eye' or 'the eye getting/holding the car', which are expressions similar to some found in English.

## 2.2. *Cheshm as the seat of envy*

Another feeling that is associated with the eye in Persian is envy. To begin with, a person who is envious of others' successes and progress is referred to as *cheshm o nazar tang* 'eye and vision narrow', which means having narrow eye/eyesight. This is not similar to the physical narrowing of the eyes which is associated with negative emotions (particularly hatred) in English. Other expressions in which the eye is conceptualised in relation to envy include:

(13)-(a) *nemitooneh pishrafteh mâro bebineh*  
Can't.he/she progress our DO-Marker see  
'He/she is envious of our progress (lit. He/she can't see our progress).'

(b) *Cheshm-e deedan-e man ro na.dâreh*  
Eye-of see-EZ<sup>5</sup>me DO-marker not.have  
'He/she hates me (due to envy) (lit. He/she doesn't have eye of seeing me).'

(c) *Cheshm-esh koor mishe barâ mâ*  
Eye-his/her blind becomes for us  
'He/she is envious of us (lit. Her eye becomes blind for us).'

(d) *Tokhm-e cheshm-esh barâ mâ dar.miâd*  
Ball-of eye-his/her for us out.comes  
'He/She is envious of us (lit. The ball of his/her eye come out for us).'

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4- The morpheme *râ* (expressed as *ro* or *o* in spoken form) can be used in Persian as a definiteness marker, a specificity marker, and a topicalization marker. For more on this morpheme, see Shokouhi and Kipka (2003).

5- EZ is the grammatical abbreviation of *ezâfe*, which refers to morphemes that provide a link between various constituents within a noun phrase in Persian, and are frequently used to form possessive and attributive constructions, among others.

In (13)-(a) envy is conceptualised as ‘not being able to see someone’, in the sense of not being able to tolerate seeing the object of envy. This is conceptualised as ‘not having an eye to see someone’ in (b), ‘one’s eye becoming blind’ in (c), and ‘one’s eyeball coming out’ in (d). The intensity of envy increases from (a) to (d), so intense envy is conceptualised as the desire for the envious person to be blinded, so as to be able to avoid seeing the object of envy forever. These expressions seem to be partly metonymically motivated. A prominent aspect in becoming envious of people or their possessions is *seeing* them, so envy is likely to lead to a desire not to see these people or their possessions that are the object of envy. Such conceptualisations of course may exist in totally different languages and cultures. For example, Swartz (1998) observes the association of the eye with envy in Mombasa Swahili and maintains that for these speakers, “envy begins in the eyes that see what is desirable, is experienced and influenced in the heart where the desire to have what the other has is produced and may find expression through the tongue thus spreading and increasing the envy” (Swartz, 1998: 30). Again, here the motivation for the association of the eye with envy seems to be rather metonymic as perception is considered a cause of envy.

The eye in Persian is also associated with a cultural schema that attributes certain destructive powers to the eyes. The expression *cheshm kardan* (eye do), or *chashm zadan* (eye hit) in Persian roughly means ‘casting a charm or spell’ on someone or something, either intentionally or sub-consciously. This is accomplished largely through envy and animosity, or it can even be a result of genuine admiration of a person’s talent, possession, etc. The charm may invite, either intentionally or inadvertently, bad luck in terms of a sickness or a loss on the part of the envied person. A person with the power to cast this kind of charm is described as having a salty eye (*cheshm-e shur*, lit eye-salty). The casting of such a charm may be attributed to anyone suspected of envy. Traditionally people took, and still may take, certain measures to counteract such evil powers and intentions. Touching wood is associated with complimenting and often the giver of the compliment touches wood to protect the receiver. Burning certain leaves in the house of a person liable to attract envy is another custom. The association of the eye with jealousy (e.g., Ameka 2002; Swartz, 1998), evil powers, and the notion of the evil eye, is also found in other cultures. Nevertheless the exact nature of these conceptualisations and their linguistic expressions do differ from one language to another.

### 3. Conceptualizations of *negah* ‘look’ in Persian

A common usage of the word *negâh* ‘look’ in Persian is associated with expression of emotions of different kinds, such as anger and the active expression of affection. Here are some examples of this usage:

- (14)-(a) *Negâh-e tond-ibeh man kard*  
 Look-EZ sharp-ART at me did  
 ‘He/she looked at me irascibly (lit. He/she had a sharp look at me).’
- (b) *Negâh-e khashmgini beh man andâkht*  
 Look-EZ angry at me threw  
 ‘He/she cast an angry look at me’ (lit. He/she threw an angry look at me).
- (c) *Negâh-e por mehr-i be man kard*  
 Look-EZ full affection-ART at me did  
 ‘She/he gave me an affectionate look’ (lit. He/she gave an affectionate look at me).
- (d) *Negâh-esh asheghuneh bood*  
 Look-his/her amorous was  
 ‘His/her look was amorous’.

The above examples clearly reveal that the expression of the eyes can be perceived as an expression of emotion. We should note here that while the word ‘look’ in English may be associated with the whole facial expression, *negâh* in Persian specifically focuses on a person’s eyes and the ways in which they are used to express emotion.

*Negâh* may also be used to express other things, for example to give someone a feeling of intellectual inferiority, as in the following sentence:

- (15) *Yek negâh-e âghel-âneh-yi be man kard.*  
 One look-EZ wise-mannered-such at me did.  
 ‘He/she gave me a look that made me feel intellectually inferior (lit. He/she gave me such a wise-mannered look).’

This parallels English expressions like ‘He looked at me like I was stupid.’ or ‘He gave me a contemptuous look.’ The following section focuses on the expressions of *cheshm* in relation to character traits.

#### 4. Cheshm and character traits

The body-part term *cheshm* is also associated with a number of character traits in Persian, exemplified in the following expressions:

Table 1. Cheshm character traits

Persian expression	Literal meaning	Near equivalence in English
(16)-(a) <i>Cheshmo gush basteh</i>	Ear and eye closed	Naïve
(16)-(b) <i>Cheshm sefid</i>	Eye white	Wilful, stubborn
(16)-(c) <i>Cheshm pâk</i>	Eye clean	A man who doesn’t prey on women
(16)-(d) <i>Cheshm darideh</i>	Eye torn	Rude (usually a girl)



In (16)-(a) above, having a closed eye and ear is associated with a lack of worldly experience. This conceptualisation appears to be metonymic, in that the maturity that comes with worldly experience is viewed as leading to open eyes and ears (*cheshm o gush-e bâz* ‘eye and ear open’), or attentiveness, literally active perception, towards what is happening around a person in daily life. In (16)-(c) the ‘cleanness’ of the eye is a *cultural conceptualization* (Sharifian, 2003, 2008b). In Iran males who prey on females are culturally condemned and conceptualised as having a ‘dirty’ eye (*cheshmna-pâk* ‘eye not-clean’). Thus refraining from this behaviour is conceptualised as having a ‘clean’ eye. The case of (16)-(d) is also another cultural conceptualization. A girl who shows culturally inappropriate behaviour, like ‘talking back’ to parents or elders, is often called *cheshm darideh* ‘eye torn’.

*Cheshm* is also associated with greed, conceptualised as ‘having an eye, or greedy eye, on something that others have’, as in the following example:

- (17) *Shohar-esh be mâl-e pedar-esh cheshm dâreh*  
 Husband-her to wealth-of father-her eye has  
 ‘Her husband is after her father’s wealth (lit. Her husband has an eye to her father’s wealth.)’

The same sentences could also be used with *cheshm-e tama* ‘eye of greed’, rather than *cheshm dâsht*, which means the same thing. The basis for this conceptualisation seems to be the thought that ‘one who looks at something, wants it’, as discussed above.

Greed may also be conceptualised in terms of a hungry eye, with a greedy person called *gorosneh cheshm* ‘hungry eye’, or *cheshm gorosneh* ‘eye hungry’. A greedy person may be conceptualised as someone whose stomach is full but whose eye remains hungry as in the following:

- (18) *Shekam-esh sir shodeh, cheshm-eshna*  
 Stomach-his/her full has.become eye-his/her not  
 ‘He/She is still greedy’ (lit. His/her stomach has become full, but not his/her eye).

## 5. Other eye-related expressions

Some other meanings in Persian that turn on the use of the eye include the following:

Table 2. Eye-related expressions

Persian expression	Literal meaning	Near equivalence in English
(19)-(a) <i>Cheshm pooshidan</i>	Eye covering	Forgive
(19)-(b) <i>Cheshm behrâh</i>	Eye to road	Anticipate, esp. someone’s arrival
(19)-(c) <i>Beh cheshm âmadan</i>	To eye come	Appear as sizable/be conspicuous
(19)-(d) <i>Sarâpâ cheshm</i>	Head.to.foot eye	All eyes
(19)-(e) <i>Cheshm-tars shodan</i>	Eye-fear become	Becoming cautious as a result of negative experience

In (19)-(a) above the act of forgiving someone is conceptualised as covering one's eyes, and thus overlooking the fault or injury. In (19)-(b) anticipation, such as waiting anxiously for someone to arrive, is conceptualised as having an 'eye to the road', which can also be expressed as *cheshm beh dar dookhtan* 'sewing one's eye to the door'. In all the above expressions, there is a metonymic element. In other words, the eye is involved at a literal level in the action described. For example, when waiting for someone, we often look towards the door or at the road in order to catch the first glimpse of their arrival. Similarly, in (19)-(d) fully attending to something usually involves a hyperawareness of one's own eyes, which is conceptualised as being eye from head to foot. The English equivalent of the Persian expression (i.e. 'being all eyes') reflects a similar conceptualisation, although it does not specifically mention the head to foot extent of the coverage. The case of (19)-(e) is a frequently used expression that refers to becoming cautious or over-sensitive as a result of a direct (although not necessarily personal) negative experience, as in the following example:

- (20) *Man az.vaghti tasâdof-e barâdar-am rodidam cheshm.tars shodam*  
I since accident-of brother-my DO-marker eye.fearhave.become  
'I've learned a lesson and have become cautious since I saw my  
brother's accident (lit. I have become eye-feared since I saw my  
brother's accident).'

Here fear has been provoked by witnessing an event and thus the compound *cheshm-tars* foregrounds the conceptualisation, perhaps as a shorthand term for FEARING AS A RESULT OF SEEING.

Persian includes expressions that reflect conceptualisations of *cheshm* as relating to something that one greatly trusts or something that is very highly valued. The following are examples of such usage:

- (21)-(a) *mesleh chesh.â.m behesh etemâd dâr-am.*  
like eye.PL.my to.him/her trust have-I  
'I trust him very much' (lit. I trust him/her like my eyes).
- (b) *mesleh chesh.â.m az.ash morâghebat mikonam*  
like eye.PL.my from. him/her/it look. after do  
'I look after him/her/it very well (lit. I look after him/her like my  
eyes).'

In (a) above, the speaker likens trust in another person to the degree of trust that he/she has to his/her own eyes. This expression indicates the utmost degree of trust possible. In (b), the speaker promises to look after something/someone as well as he/she would look after her/his own eyes, which suggests a very high degree of commitment.

There are also expressions associating *cheshm* with politeness. For example, *chashm!*, a formal pronunciation of *cheshm*, is a polite way of acceding to a request. This usually takes the following form of exchange:

- (22) *misheh khâheshan in nâmeḥ robarâ.m post koni?*  
Is.it.possible please this letter DO.marker for.me mail do?  
'Could you please mail this letter for me?'

*Chashm, hatman*  
Yes (lit. eye) certainly  
'Yes, certainly.'

A more intense degree and even more polite form of expression of willingness in response to a request is expressed as *beh.rooy-e cheshm* 'upon [my]eye'. Another example of the use of eye in relation to politeness can be found in the following invitation.

- (23) *Ghadam-e-toon beh.rooy-e cheshm*  
Step-of-your upon-of eye  
'You are very welcome' (lit. your step be on my eye).

This expression, which literally means 'May your step be upon my eye!' is usually a welcome given to visitors to the speaker's house, or it may even be used as a farewell. Another politeness formula that employs the eyes is the following utterance, which is a very frequent compliment response:

- (24) *Chesh-mâ-toonghashangmibineh!*  
Eye-PL-your beautiful see  
'Your eyes see beautifully'

This formulaic expression is used to respond to praise such as wearing a nice dress, or having a nice haircut or having a beautiful handwriting, etc. (Sharifian, 2008a). The complete interchange usually takes the following form:

- (25) *cheh moblemâneh ghashangi dâr-i-n!*  
What furniture beautiful have-you-PL  
'What beautiful furniture you have!'

*Chesh-mâ-toonghashangmibine.*  
Eye-PL-your beautiful see  
'Your eyes see beautifully'

In these cases, by identifying the other person's eye as seeing everything beautifully, the compliment recipient uses this formulaic utterance to deflect the compliment reassigning it to the giver of the compliment. This usage is part of politeness ritual and reflects the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*

‘modesty’, which encourages recipients of compliments to reject them, play them down, and reassign them to the complimenter or others, including a family member (Sharifian, 2005, 2008a).

### 5.1. Thinking as seeing

The body-part term *cheshm* does not appear to be associated with *zehn* ‘mind’ and thinking in Persian, and the most common perception related words, *deedan* and *negâh kardan*, are not associated with thinking. However, Persian does have the word *nazar* ‘eyesight’ which is also used to refer to a person’s opinion. It should be noted this word is now so strongly associated with ‘opinion’ that it is losing its reference to eyesight. Currently the most common Persian word for eyesight is *negâh*, a word which is not, in its everyday usage, commonly associated with thinking. There are also some rather formal Persian words that reflect the conceptualisation of SEEING AS THINKING. The following are examples of such words:

**Table 3. Seeing as thinking**

Persian expression	Literal meaning	Near equivalence in English
a) <i>deed</i>	Eyesight	A state of mind, perspective, opinion
b) <i>binesh</i>	Seeing	Vision, insight
c) <i>basirat</i>	Vision	Clear vision, insight
d) <i>jâhanbini</i>	Worldview	Worldview
e) <i>negaresh</i>	Seeing	A state of mind, perspective

The word *deed*, which means eyesight, is sometimes used when people refer to the quality and strength of their eyesight, for example stating that someone has *deed-e ghavi* ‘strong eyesight’. In formal contexts, however, this word may also be used to refer to a state of mind. A person may, for example ask, *deed-e to beh in mas’alehchieh?* meaning, ‘What do you think of this issue?’.

The word *binesh* is also mainly used in formal contexts such as academic texts. It has largely lost its literal sense of referring to the act of perception, although the stem of this word, *binâie*, is still used as a formal term to refer to the faculty of eyesight. A derivative of this word, namely *bebin* ‘look’ is also used in Persian, to grab a person’s attention, as in the sense of , ‘Look!’ in English. It may also be used to invite someone to take a look at something, as in the following sentence:

**(26)** *In naghâshi-ejadeed-am o bebeen*

This painting-EZ new-mine DO-marker see  
 ‘Have a look at my new painting’.

The Persian expression *mikhâm bebin-am* (lit. want.I see), which may be used to mean ‘I want to know’ or ‘I want to find out’, also reflects conceptualisation of knowing is seeing. This conceptualisation is however limited to this one expression.

The word *basirat* is a borrowing from Arabic and, although it is now used in formal, non-religious contexts too, it originally referred to three categories of religious insight according to the Sufi tradition<sup>6</sup>. The word *jahânbeeni* ‘worldview’ appears to be a calque, or loan translation, from English. *Negaresh* presents a noteworthy case in Persian. Although originally the word refers to the act of perception, currently speakers only use it to refer to a state of mind or the way one thinks about an idea, proposition etc, and in rather formal contexts. Its verb *negaridan* ‘seeing’ is a highly formal word which is hardly ever used in Modern Persian. A historical search, however, traces the etymology of this word back to Pahlavi, the ancient language of the Iranians. The following conjugations of this word are found in *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (MacKenzie, 1971):

*Nigeridan*: *negaridan* ‘to see’, *tavajoh kardan* ‘to pay attention’, *morâghebat kardan* ‘to look after’, *âzmâyesh kardan* ‘to examine, to try’, *fekrkardan* ‘to think’

*Nigeridâr*: *negâh konandeh* ‘viewer’, *motovajeh* ‘attentive’, *daghigh* ‘precise’, *fakur* ‘thinker’, *morâgheb* ‘careful/attentive/watchful’

These dictionary entries suggest that in Pahlavi, perception was a basis for the conceptualisations of attention, care, and thinking. The principal remnant of the verb *nigeridan* and its conjugations in Modern Persian is *negaresh*, which was mentioned above, can only be used to refer to a state of mind. Persian traditional literature also employs some derivations of this word, for example, *negar kard.am* (lit. saw did.I) meaning ‘I saw’. However, this expression is confined to the literary genres in Persian. Thus it seems that expressions that reflected conceptualisations of thinking as perception have become limited to formal usage in Modern Persian. In falling out of the languageeveryday use, they have almost all lost their former associations with perception entirely. As mentioned earlier, in contemporary Persian, the body-part ‘eye’ and the act of perception are far more frequently and strongly associated with feelings, personality traits, attention and knowing, etc, than with thinking. This is also reflected in the following expression, which is used to refer to someone who takes things at face value or who believes things by simply seeing them:

(27) *aghl.esh beh cheshmâsh-e*  
ability to reason.his/her to eyes.his/her  
(roughly: he believes what he sees)

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6- <http://www.geocities.com/druidarab/cosmos7.html>

In other words a gullible person is described as having their thinking ability in their eye. This conceptualisation then views a sound ability to reason as something that transcends perception.

### 5.2. *Intuition as perception*

The act of perception is also often conceptualised in relation to immediate intuition in Persian. For example, Persian speakers can maintain that they have grasped the true nature of someone after a brief look at them. In this sense, perception is associated with intuition and inspiration. The following examples reveal this usage.

(28) *Beh yek negâh fahmid-amâdam-e ghâbel-e etemâdinist*  
With one look realized-I person-EZ worthy-of trust is.not  
'With one look, I realized he is not trustworthy'.

(29) *Bâ hamoon negâh-e aval ehsâs kard-am ensân-e mohtaram-ieh*  
With that look-EZ first feel did-I person-EZ respectable-is  
'At first glance I did feel he/she is a respectable person'

As the speaker gains an intuitive insight into the true character of a person through a brief/first look, these expressions reflect conceptualisation of INTUITION AS PERCEPTION.

## 6. Concluding remarks

In general the observations made in this paper about the body-term *cheshm* 'eye' and its related concepts and processes, such as visual perception, reveal that a number of conceptualisations of *cheshm* are different from those associated with the same body part in languages such as Chinese and English. The findings support the premise that speakers of different languages anchor to various parts of their body differing conceptualisations of their experiences and faculties. These conceptualisations often have their roots in certain belief traditions. Collectively the observations made in such studies point to the role of language as a "memory bank" and "archive", for cultural conceptualisations (Sharifian, 2009). As such, languages provide a rich resource for the study of the varying conceptualisations of aspects of human experience such as emotions, thoughts, character traits, etc.

The analyses presented in this paper also make it clear that in some contexts a literal translation of the word *cheshm*, for example into the English word 'eye', may lead to a conceptual shift, since for example the English word 'eye' is associated with understanding but *cheshm* is not.

Overall, in the light of the observations made in this paper, I argue that where relevant, the process of translation should involve a step of cultural-conceptual analysis to identify cases where translating one word or expression from the source language to the target language may involve a conceptual

change. Differing conceptualisations of body-part terms is a phenomenon which may carry significant risks and challenges in certain contexts, such as that of translating religious books.

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