

Functions of Fate Schema:

The Case of Persian and English

LES FONCTIONS DU SCHÉMA DE DESTIN:

LE CAS DU PERSAN ET DE L'ANGLAIS

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Abstract: With an aim to contribute to the present knowledge of intercultural communications, this study explores the cultural schemas of *ghesmat* and fate in Persian and English societies. Particularly, it tries to demonstrate how comparable these two cultural schemas are across the speakers of the two speech communities. Data were collected by triangulation, through ethnographic observations, movies, and websites. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. To perform a quantitative analysis the frequency of the schema of fate and *ghesmat* in different situations in English and Persian was calculated. Furthermore, to find out the underlying themes of the schemas activation a qualitative content analysis and Wierzbicka's semantic analysis were employed. The findings further improve the cultural knowledge involved in intercultural communications and discuss the sociocultural roles of *ghesmat* and fate cultural schemas in the speech communities.

Key words: Schema; Cultural Schema; *Ghesmat*; Fate; Cultural Keywords; Intercultural Communication

Resumé Dans le but de contribuer à la connaissance actuelle des communications interculturelles, cette étude explore les schémas culturels de *ghesmat* et le destin dans les sociétés persane et anglaise. En particulier, il essaie de montrer à quel point ces deux schémas culturels sont comparables à travers les locuteurs de ces deux communautés linguistiques. Les données ont été recueillies par une triangulation, c'est-à-dire à travers des observations ethnographiques, des films et des sites web. Les données recueillies ont été analysées qualitativement et quantitativement. Pour effectuer une analyse quantitative, la fréquence du schéma du destin et de *ghesmat* dans de différentes situations en anglais et en persan a été calculée. D'ailleurs, afin de trouver des thèmes sous-jacents de l'activation des schémas, une analyse qualitative de contenu et l'analyse sémantique de Wierzbicka ont été employées. Les résultats améliorent davantage les connaissances culturelles impliquées dans les communications interculturelles et discutent des rôles socioculturels de *ghesmat* et des schémas de destin culturels dans les communautés de la parole.

Mots-clés: Schéma; Schéma Culturel; *Ghesmat*; Destin; Mots-Clés Culturels; Communication Interculturelle

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the underlying system in the semantic domains of different cultures has always been a focus of interest for ethnoscientists since it could demonstrate how members of a cultural group make sense of their world (Conklin, 1962; Frake, 1962 ; Werner, 1970). While Wallace's (1965) "maze way" (p. 280), Miller, Galanter and Pribram's (1960) "plans" (p. 62), Spradley's (1972) "rules" (p. 12), and Colby's (1975) "culture grammars" (p. 915) are involved in knowledge processing, a more recent and dynamic view of cognition could be achieved through the use of 'schemas'. Schema was considered as a set of sentences or propositions and the relations between them (Schank & Abelson, 1977) however recent connectionist theories view a schema as a pattern of interaction among interconnected units (Rumelhart, Smolensky, McClelland, & Hinton, 1986). Rumelhart (1980) viewed Schemas as 'building blocks of cognition' (p. 33); as units into which knowledge is stored. Schemas could be considered as cognitive frameworks people draw on to guide their behavior in life situations. It was believed that human behavior relies mostly on his collection of background knowledge and experiences stored in one's mind.

Furthermore, when schemas are considered at a group level as the members of the cultural group are exposed to experiences, schemas emerge through group's collective cognition. Cultural schemas are said to be the emergent properties of the interactions among the members of a cultural group across time and space. These schemas enable the members to think more or less in one mind (Malcolm & Sharifian 2002; Rice, 1980). Sharifian also declared that cultural schemas as one of the properties of the cognition of a community are heterogeneously distributed across the minds of the members of a cultural group.

One of such cultural schemas could be called 'fate' schema. The cultural schema of fate in general holds the view that all events in the history of the world and in particular, the actions and events in each individual's life are determined by some forces beyond men's control. The origin of this schema could be sought in Fatalism, a philosophical doctrine emphasizing that events are fixed in advance so that human beings are powerless to change them. It is the belief that holds "what will be will be," or what happens has to happen. Considering the notion of 'fate', Hobbes claimed that "the notion of free subject was as self-contradictory as that of a round quadrangle" (Nolan, 1967, p. 90). "Hume held that from one standpoint man's acts are free, whereas from another standpoint they are not...Acts of choice are strictly determined by preceding feelings or motives, as well as by character" (ibid). And Locke (1690) maintained that although people are free to act as they will, they are determined as to what they do will: "a man is not at liberty to will, or not to will, anything in his power that he once considers of: liberty consisting in a power to act or to forbear acting, and in that only" (p.327). In addition, being concern about the deterministic aspect of fate, Solomon (2003) delved into the notion of fate by drawing on some works of English literature. He tried to offer an explanation that why all discussion of fate got dismissed nowadays.

Fate schema in Persian context could be referred to as *ghesmat*. It is considered as one of the oldest doctrines of Zarvanism- a 4th century religion- in which people believed in the deity of time. They had a firm belief that their life from the first moment to the last is predetermined and the deviation from it is not possible. However, by converting Iranian to Islam, the belief in *ghesmat* got a new coloring. In the new context, *ghesmat* is defined as God's will in each individual life. The happening or not happening of an event is justified by referring to the will of God. Moreover, the notion of *ghesmat* (or *taghdir* or *sarnevesh*- as it is referred to in Persian scholarly papers) is explored by some Persian scholars (Azadarmaki, 1997; Fardia, 2006; Taghi, 2009). Heidarpour (2007) investigated Ferdowsi's¹ view on the role of *ghesmat* in the lives of some heroes in *Shahnameh*. She showed that, on one hand, Ferdowsi favored rationalism as it was demonstrated in *Zal*² story with some reflections of Zoroastrian beliefs about struggling in life to make one's own fate; on the other hand, in the story of Rostam and Sohrab tragedy, he showed his belief in *ghesmat* and deterministic aspects of life. However, she concluded that Ferdowsi's pessimism about the world and its affairs did not prevent him and human beings from their struggles.

Karami (2003), in his article, first was concerned about the etymology of the word 'taghdir' then he went on to explain the effect of taghdir on Persian culture and society. He concluded people use taghdir when they were not aware of the reason of current affairs. Also he counted the advantages and disadvantages of the belief in taghdir in the society. In his book, Ringgren (1952) had a comprehensive look on taghdir in Persian epics, 'Shahnameh' and 'Vis and Ramin'. He talked about the history of taghdir which goes far away to the time of deity of time in Sasanian Empire³; it was believed Zarvan, god of time, could determine the fate of heroes and fighters. He also explored the etymology of the words which were related to supernatural forces that believed to control human lives. He showed the connection of heaven and destiny which are related to astrology. Moreover, he argued about the role of God in fatalism. In his view, Ferdowsi did not integrate Islamic doctrines to that of Zoroastrian but used them along each other. Regarding the position of man toward his destiny, he concluded there is still a tension between fatalism and God who controls men's destiny and this tension never could be solved completely.

However, while previous studies have provided accounts of *ghesmat* and fate schema in the lives of Persian and English people in general and were mostly concerned about the deterministic aspects of these schemas, they have not identified the higher-level themes contained in the use of the schemas, therefore their functions in the societies. This study provides both qualitative and quantitative content analysis methods to provide descriptive statistics of the schemas as well as a thematic interpretation in English and Persian contexts that in combination offer a greater insight into the extent and nature of the cultural schemas people draw on in their daily conversations. Considering the above mentioned issues, present study made an attempt to investigate the functions of fate and *ghesmat* schema in Persian and English societies.

1. THE STUDY

As has been mentioned so far, the purpose of the research is to identify the role cultural schemas of *ghesmat* and fate could play on the lives of Persian and English adult speakers to further our understanding of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences. To accomplish this aim natural observation, drama movies and a corpus study of websites provided sources of data. The description and analysis of the data were carried out quantitatively and qualitatively. The following section elaborates on methodology that was employed in the empirical section of the study.

1.1 Ethnographic Observation

Ethnography is one of many kinds of qualitative research methods employed to investigate the cultural behavior of a group in naturally occurring, ongoing settings (Wolcott, 1992). Scholars define ethnography as a study that focuses on people in cultural groups, that has a holistic approach and counts insiders' (emic) perspective. The research priority of ethnography of communications is to investigate the functions of language use in real social and cultural contexts (a holistic approach). Furthermore, ethnographers seek to understand the communicative behavior of people by discovering their own (emic) views as members of the local culture and also by acknowledging any differences between these insiders' views and those of outsiders. In sum, the value of ethnography lies in its close attention to the function of people's behavior in the cultural context and the holistic interpretation of insiders' (emic) perspectives.

In terms of observation as one of ethnographic methods, Wolfson (1989) argued that long term participant observation of a group to which the researcher belongs is "the very best kind of data collection" (p. 75) and apart from easy access, this method has got the added advantage of preventing self-consciousness in the participants of the interaction under investigation, thus overcoming the observer's paradox (Labov, 1970, p. 32; Wolfson, 1989, p. 690). Moreover, in order to be more successful in revealing the linguistic strategies actually used in many sociocultural contexts in a given language, more authentic data should be collected in the context of the speech event as has been done for this research among Persian speakers.

1.2 Movies

Due to the lack of access to the observation of natural data in every day conversation of English speakers, their data was collected through analyzing English movies. Compared with other programs such as documentaries, talk shows or cartoons, movies and in particular dramas include more diverse speech act situations taken from daily life.

1.3 Websites

Although oral interaction has traditionally been considered "as part of the romantic legacy of ethnography, that tends to treat speech as more authentic than writing", increasingly, analysis of the written texts associated with culture has become equally valued as the indicator of reality. "Rather than being seen as more or less accurate portrayals of reality, texts should be seen as ethnographic material which tells us about the understanding which authors have of the reality which they inhabit" (Hine, 2000, p. 51). On this account, a content analysis of websites was done to reflect the situations in which the cultural schemas of *ghesmat* and fate were instantiated in Persian and English language use.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 Ethnographic Observation

Observation was done during a period of eight months, from Dei 1388 (Jan. 2010) to Mordad 1389 (Aug. 2010) by the researcher and her colleagues. Data collection was based on an ethnographic approach that uses field observations to gather the data- a method adapted from Wolfson and Manes' (1980) pioneering research on the speech act of compliment. A corpus of 45 examples of *ghesmat* schema were collected as they occurred in real life situations i.e. in everyday interactions among Persian people in Isfahan with different age and educational levels during six months. The participants were not aware of being observed. The instances were written down with detailed descriptions of the situation of

occurrence, the speech act as well as age and educational levels of the interlocutors at the time of occurrence. Therefore, the observed data could enjoy a high degree of internal validity.

2.2 Drama Movies

Forty eight English drama movies were analyzed to collect a corpus of twenty eight situations containing fate schema. The situations were transcribed with care and were analyzed qualitatively to find some patterns in the use of the schema.

2.3 Websites

To investigate the concept of *ghesmat* and fate as reflected in Persian and English language use, a bulk of 164 websites were considered and 32 examples representing the reflection of the cultural schemas were collected for the final analysis.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

One characteristic of qualitative research is that data analysis and data collection can be conducted simultaneously to enable the researcher to shape the study as it proceeds (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Johnson, 1992). In this study the analysis was conducted during and after the completion of data collection. The data collected from ethnographic observation, websites and drama movies were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. To do so, they went through content and thematic analyses which help to build- up a picture of the patterns that underlined instantiation of the cultural schemas in order to provide descriptive statistics of incidence contained in Persian and English societies.

3.1 Persian Observations and Websites

Observational and website data collected from Persian speakers examined first in its entirety without undertaking any coding, and then were analyzed qualitatively to develop the themes relating to the context of *ghesmat* schema activation. Then they were transcribed onto the coding form. As content analysis is particularly susceptible to researcher bias (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991), the data were independently coded by the researcher and her friend whose field of study and sociolinguistic background are the same as the researcher. Next, the results were compared across the two coders' output. There was almost complete agreement. The discrepancies were solved after investigation of the context in which the schema had been activated. After the frequencies were tabulated for each code, the descriptions of context and content of data were analyzed qualitatively to develop themes. This involved constant iterations between the data and emerging themes to ensure soundness of fit (Schilling, 2006) and was by necessity a subjective process (Kracauer, 1952).

3.1.1 Quantitative analysis

The eight-month observations (45 samples) of the Persian conversations, 48 English movies, 167 English and Persian websites all were analyzed. The most recurring content among Persian speech community were about future, marriage and love, food, visiting a place or a person, game , sympathy, exam, occupation, death and life. The most popular content among all was marriage and love by 21% as presented in Figure one:

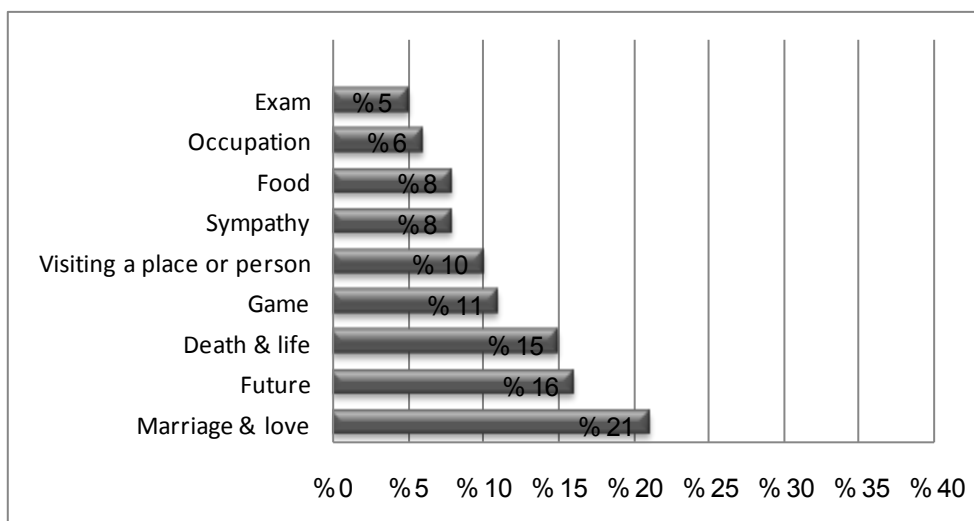


Figure 1: Schema Activation Contexts of Ghesmat in Persian Natural Data

The next most popular category for instantiation of *ghesmat* schema among the Persian is 'future'. That is when Persian speakers are talking about the occurrence or non-occurrence of an event in the future, in 16% of cases they drew on *ghesmat* schema. The next very close category is 'death and life' in which people justified somebody's death or life by referring to *ghesmat* schema.

3.1.2 Thematic analysis

Examination of the content of the data showed that Persian people have a tendency to activate the schema of *ghesmat* widely, in all aspects of their life, from everyday eating to predicting about future. However, the most frequent themes obtained from the analysis of observations and websites include, first, talking about pain or expressing sympathy about a sorrowful situation, as has been stated in the following examples:

A thirty five year old female speaker justifies her life as:

- a) *Ghesmat-e man hamishe tanh â-ei bode.*

Ghesmat-of I always loneliness had been

'Loneliness was always my *ghesmat*'.

A young educated female student says to her friend who wasn't admitted into a university at PhD level:

- b) *Ish âl â ghesmat-et mi-she s âle dige ghabol mi-sh-i.*

If it be the will of God, *ghesmat*-of you (sing-2nd person) become year-of another accept become.

'If it be the will of God, it would be your *ghesmat* to get admitted next year'.

A boy loses his competition and justifies it:

- c) *Ghesmat na-bood ke barande be-sham.*⁵

Ghesmat no-was that winner be (subj art)- become-I

'It was not my *ghesmat* to win'.

Second, the Persian community may employ the schema of *ghesmat* when they are seeking reasons for some unexpected events for which they cannot find a good worldly cause. It should be mentioned that if a situation requires the efforts of individuals, Persian speakers believe one should first make all necessary efforts in achieving the goal. However, if they failed to achieve it, there should be some benefits in that. These notions are demonstrated below:

An old aunt tells her nephew by offering him a gum she had in her bag. The gum has been in her bag for some time, although it had good quality, she didn't have time to chew it.

- d) *In âd ân-sam ghesamt-e Amin bood.*

This gum-too *ghesmat*-of Amin was.

'This gum was Amin's *ghesmat*'.

One of Iranian football player in his TV interview about the team that failed to win the game says:

- e) *M â tal âsh-e-mun-o kard-im ama engar ghesmat na-bood ke be-bar-im.*

We attempt-of-our- (Do marker) did-we but as if *ghesmat* no-was that be(subj art)-win-we

'We did our best to win, but it seems it was not our *ghesmat* to win'.

A middle aged man writes about his days:

- f) *Belakhare ghesmat shod-o tonest-im ems âl ham be nam âyeshg âh ber-im.*⁶

Finally *ghesmat* became-and can-we this year also to exhibition go-we.

'Finally it became our *ghesmat* and we could go to the exhibition this year'.

Somebody used the quote below as the header of his blog:

- g) *Har kasi ro ke dost dar-i âz âd bez âr. Age ghesma-te to b âshe barmigarde vargarna be-don az aval mâle to na-boode.*⁷

Each one (Do marker) love have-you(2nd -sing) freedom put. If *ghesmat*-of you(2nd-sing) is return otherwise be (subj art)-know-you (2nd sing) from first belong-of you(2nd sing) no-had been.

'Let one you love to be free. If she/he is your *ghesmat*, she/he would return back to you otherwise, know that, she/he was not meant to be yours.'

A middle age man about staying in his football team says:

h) *Agar ghesmat b âshe b âz ham dar khedmat-e in tim hast-am.*⁸

If *ghesmat* is again in service-of this team be-I.

‘If it was *ghesmat* I would be at the service of this team again’.

Finally when talking about future events, Persian speakers often instantiate *ghesmat* schema in their speech, as is reflected in the following examples:

A mother who has missed her son tells him:

i) *Sh âyad-am ghesmat shod-o sorat-e m âhet-o did-am.*⁹

Perhaps also *ghesmat* was-and face-of moon-you(2nd sing) saw-I.

‘Perhaps it was *ghesmat* and I saw your beautiful face’.

Two acquainted families from different cities are traveling to a city in north of Iran, to Chalooos nearly at the same time. Both of them are not very keen on visiting each other. One old member of the family says:

j) *Age ghesmat b âshe un âro to Ch âloos mibinim.*

If *ghesmat* become they in Chalooos mi(decl art) see-we.

‘If it is *ghesmat* we will meet them in Chalooos’.

3.2 Quantitative Analysis of English Movies and Websites

48 English movies were either watched or their scripts were read to collect 28 extracts. In addition, 32 cases of website data were gathered through internet. The obtained data went through the same process as Persian data did for analysis and codification. The qualitative content analysis of the English data revealed some categories in which the schema of fate was mostly activated. The categories include life & death, marriage & love, unexpected event, occupation, game and science which are depicted in Figure two based on their frequencies:

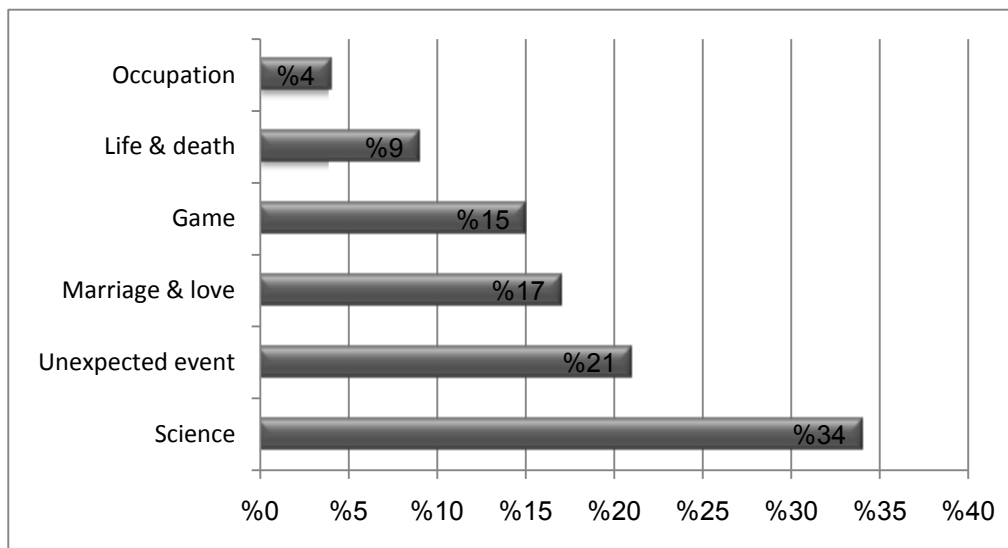


Figure 2: Schema Activation Contexts of Fate in English Natural Data

As the Figure shows, the most popular category in the activation of fate schema is ‘science’. It seems the word fate is mostly used in scientific contexts than in everyday English conversions. The next most popular category is the attribution of fate to ‘unexpected events’ in which English people use the fate schema as an explanation for situations such as coincidences. Marriage and love is the next category in which some ‘meant to be’ events regarding the lover and beloved could have happened, therefore, people might find fate as the reason.

3.2. 1 Thematic analysis

Content analysis shows English people use the schema of *fate* not very much in their daily talks. However, concerning the use of fate schema in different contexts, two broad categories emerged. One is the use of fate schema as an explanation

and justification of (unexpected) events. These events could be anything from meeting a friend to that of marriage. Some examples are presented below:

A young man and woman are talking about the marriage of another couple:

a) The men and women are meant to be together. I'm talking about fate (Greisman & Reiner, 2003).

A young boy tells his mother when his mother's ex-love accidentally comes to the same hotel that she works to give a speech. This event leads to their marriage:

b) It's like fate (Goldsmith-Thomas, Schiff, Schindler & Wayne, 2002).

Tommy Chong, a Canadian comedian, actor and musician, in a website plays with the role of fate in life and states:

c) Wow man! It's like fate wanted us to find each other! ... So do I know you man?¹⁰

A young football player says in an interview about his entrance to a new team:

d) "They recruit great talent to find talent. Hopefully, it was my destiny to be here. I'm waiting to see what the process brings for me."¹¹

In addition, the use of fate and destiny in daily talks evoke an image of a place, a destination to reach at in future. This destination usually has negative connotations for fate but is positive for destiny. People usually make an attempt to achieve their destiny such as stated in the following examples:

When a young girl who has failed her exam insists there is something wrong with the exam results says:

e) I want my destiny (Grey, Baer, Cohen & Barreto, 2003).

A young girl talks about how she got her life:

f) I thought that my career was my destiny. Then I married Prince Charming and a change came over me ... I bloomed into a happy housewife, dreaming of le creuset, vintage, aprons and babies!¹²

The following example is extracted from a golf player narration of his life:

g) I started golf in 1979 at age 12 by caddying for my Dad, but to be honest for the first six months I only went along the Peach Melba desert. Within a couple of years I knew Golf was my destiny. My development as a player was really stilted by my desire to be the best player in the World!¹³

A young boy in his blog expresses his love:

h) You are the air I breath the reason I live you are my destiny. I wouldn't be able to live life without you. You're my girl, my dream come true.¹⁴

Two middle aged men talking about saving a person from death:

i) Jo: Another lawyer won't be good enough. They need you. You know how to win. You know they have a case. And you know how to win. You walk away from this now, and you have sealed their fate.

Kaffee: Their fate was sealed the moment Santiago died (Brown, Scheinman & Reiner, 1992).

Also, fate in the meaning of 'destination' as mentioned, has been used mostly in scholarly and scientific writings which is a kind of modern usage of the schema in which the negative connotations have been removed but the image of destinations still exists:

j) Fate of Virus in Wastewater Applied to Slow-Infiltration Land.¹⁵

k) Production and Fate of Bacteria in the Oceans.¹⁶

l) The fate of Africa: from the hopes of freedom to the heart of despair.¹⁷

m) The Fate of Katherine Carr.¹⁸

3.3 Semantic Analysis

Wierzbicka and her colleagues have developed an approach for exploring the cultural underpinning of speech acts which is known as Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Wierzbicka, 1991; Wierzbicka & Goddard, 2004). Within this approach, cultural values and attitudes, or what they term 'cultural scripts', which give rise to pragmatic devices, are explicated in terms of a set of fundamental meanings, termed 'semantic primes', which are alleged to be universal. Employing this approach, the section tries to find out how comparable are the concepts of *ghesmat* and fate as reflected in Persian and English language use.

The picture presented by English fate and destiny is so much different from the one presented by *ghesmat* in Persian culture. In addition to the semantic difference, however, there is a huge cultural difference: Neither of the English words is a common everyday word, like *gehsmat*. “For example, one can easily read a long English novel, or a volume of letters or memoirs, without encountering fate once” (Wierzbicka, 2010, p. 8). But it is highly unlikely to read a Persian novel or a memoir without coming across references to *ghesmat*.

Dictionaries often offer fate or destiny as the closest English word, but actually the meaning of fate differs considerably from that of *ghesmat*. In addition, English dictionaries generally failed to explain how destiny is different from fate. For example, Merriam- Webster (2003) suggests that *fate* is ‘the will or principle or determining cause by which things in general are believed to come to be as they are or events to happen as they do; destiny’ or Longman dictionary(2005) informs us that *destiny* is ‘the things that will happen to someone in the future, especially those that cannot be changed or controlled; fate’. However, the old dictionary of synonyms by Charles Smith (1903) is full of insight:

The idea of destiny involves elements of greatness and immutability. It is not applicable to common things or persons or details of life, but to its apparent purpose and consummation. . . . Anyone might speak of his fate or his lot; only those who run important careers could speak of their destiny. . . . Fate . . . is seldom used in a favorable sense, as, ‘In travelling it is almost always my fate to meet with delays’. So far as a man’s condition has resulted from unconscious causes, as the laws of the material world, we speak of his fate. So far as we attribute it to the ordainment of more powerful beings, we speak of his destiny. Fate is blind; destiny has foresight. (p.319)

Fate is a deterministic concept. It refers to things which ‘happen’ and it presents them as inevitable, irreversible, uncontrollable and determined by earlier causes (Wierzbicka, 1992). However, this emphasis on inevitability and uncontrollability is very different from what represents Persian *ghesmat*. The schema of *ghesmat* puts stress on the notion of unpredictability rather on the uncontrollability which implies ‘anything can happen’. Unlike *ghesmat*, fate does not suggest any mystery behind the events and situations but English view of empiricism and skepticism. Also, the usage of fate in scientific discourses is common and typical. Thus a list of books titled as: 1) *Farming and the fate of wild nature: essays in conservation-based agriculture*, 2) *Fate of pesticides and chemicals in the environment*, 3) *The fate of persistent organic pollutants in the North Sea and Oil wealth and the fate of the forest: a comparative study of eight tropical countries*. Furthermore, fate could be determined by a person as in the following context:

- a) ‘The prisoner never even saw the judge who was to determine his fate.’

A judge can determine a person’s fate but it is inconceivable that *ghesmat* or even *sarnevesh* could be used like that. *Ghesmat* has a strong divinely oriented perspective which English fate or destiny doesn’t have. It seems the concept of fate is more objective, this-worldly and positivistic which can be used with respect to people and things whereas the usage of *ghesmat* is limited to people. The Persian draw on the schema of *ghesmat* when they are talking about events in people’s live. More specifically, Persian people believe that when something is somebody’s *ghesmat* it will be the best and the most beneficial event that could happen at that specific time for the person even when the event is not desirable. They credit the fact that there might be some divine prudence behind the event which the individual is ignorant of. Thus, *ghesmat* is compatible with a religious outlook that implies an attitude of acceptance and resignation when an individual has made all his/her effort to reach his/her goal; one should accept whatever happens to one as if it were assigned by God.

On the other hand, according to Wierzbicka (1992) “although the English fate recognizes the operation of irreversible causes which fully determine events, it does not encourage the view that it is the general human condition to be subject to impenetrable forces, which influence, if not shape, the course of every human life. This view leads to a new cultural orientation of English-speaking Western societies” (p. 94).

The polarization between destiny which has a good implication and fate which has a bad one is accompanied by a limitation of destiny to ‘somebody’s destiny’, whereas fate continues to be used to refer to ‘fate in general’ as well as to ‘somebody’s fate’ but it is also increasingly used as ‘something’s fate’ as in the *fate* of water pollution in the natural cycle.

Moreover, Wierzbicka proposed the following semantic primes to differentiate between destiny and fate:

Destiny

- (a) Different things can happen to different people
- (b) Different people can do different things
- (c) Some people can do things that other people can't do
- (d) I imagine I know that someone wants it
- (e) This someone is not part of this world

Fate

- (a) Different things happen in the world that are bad for people

- (b) These things happen because some other things happen
- (c) If those other things happen, these things cannot not happen (p.95)

She also added *destiny* would be the only concept which focuses on what people can *do* (not all people but *some* people) and in fact on what *some* people appear to be *meant* to do. As it is manifested when English people say '*dancing is my destiny, I want to fulfill it*' or when a famous golf player says '*golf was my destiny*'. Also this notion is depicted in the following English proverb:

- b) Our destiny offers not the cup of despair, but the chalice of opportunity.

Nevertheless, the Persian concept of *ghesmat* has no polarization as good and bad. It entails the possibility of the good and bad happening which are independent of an individual's will. Also *ghesmat* refers to what has meant to *happen* to people and not to some people but to *all* people, as the example below shows:

- c) In khone az aval ghesmate to bod.

This house from beginning *ghesmat*-of you (2nd sing) was.

This house was meant to be yours.

We could explicate the folk philosophy encapsulated in the word *ghesmat* as depicted below:

Ghesmat

- (a) Different things can happen to people
- (b) Not because they want it
- (c) Good and bad things can happen to a person
- (d) All good and bad things that happen are for the benefits of the person
- (e) Used only for people
- (f) It is not part of this world
- (g) It is not someone like a human being

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study employed a contrastive analysis to explore the schema of *ghesmat* and fate among native Persians and English speakers. The findings of the study revealed that there are differences between these two schemas. It appears that Persian speakers most probably draw on *ghesmat* schema mainly to achieve three functions in the society, a) to justify (unexpected) events, b) to employ *ghesmat* schema as a consolation device when people are in pain and c) to talk about future events. On the other hand, in English society, broadly speaking the schema of fate serves two functions; a) to explain and justify (unexpected) events similar to Persian *ghesmat*, and b) to evoke an image of a future destination. This destination usually has negative connotations for fate but positive for destiny. In addition, fate in the meaning of 'destination' as mentioned, has been mostly used in scholarly and scientific papers in which the negative connotations have been removed but the image of destination still exists. Using Wierzbicka Semantic Metalanguage (1991), the chapter discussed the prime semantics of fate and *ghesmat*.

Moreover, in this era of intercultural communications, it is not hard to imagine situations where the cross-cultural differences would lead to miscommunication. Being aware of different cultural schemas would be of prime significant. Therefore, the investigation of more Persian cultural schemas in this respect is recommended. In addition, the future studies could explore the effect of social variables such as age, gender, social class and ethnicity in the instantiation of *ghesmat* and fate schemas.

The present paper is hoped to make a contribution to understanding of English and Persian cultures and calls for more studies to be conducted on the explication of schemas that embody different cultures and languages. Studies of this kind can highlight the differences and similarities among divergent cultural systems to enhance our intercultural competence and prevent cultural misunderstandings.

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NOTES

1. Ferdowsi is a highly esteemed Persian poet. He was the author of the Shahnameh, the national epic of Iran.
2. Zal is a legendary Persian warrior in Shahnameh
3. It is a tragedy in which Sohrab, the son, was killed by Rostam, his father.
4. The Sassanid Empire was the last pre-Islamic Persian Empire ruled by the Sasanian Dynasty from 224 to 651.
5. www.azari87.mihanblog.com/post/34
6. <http://razi000.blogfa.com/>
7. www.ours-weblog.mihanblog.com
8. <http://sorkhpoush.blogfa.com/>
9. <http://mohammad-mani.blogfa.com/post-44.aspx>
10. <http://www.tvloop.com/that-70s-show/show/quotes/leo-wow-man-its-like-fate-wanted-us-to-find-each-244932>
11. http://www.colts.com/sub.cfm?page=cheer_bio&id=1317
12. <http://secretwifelife.blogspot.com/2010/09/new-blog-design.html>
13. <http://www.cga-golf.com/blog/?p=123>
14. <http://4smart.net/blog/>
15. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC242023/pdf/aem00177-0137.pdf
16. www.jstor.org/stable/1309138
17. <http://www.amazon.com/Fate-Africa-Hopes-Freedom-Despair/dp/1586482467>
18. <http://www.amazon.com/Fate-Katherine-Carr-Thomas-Cook/dp/0151014019>

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