Studying the Personification of Nature in Children's Poetry Based on Lakoff and Johnson's Viewpoints

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Introduction

Lakoff and Johnson believe that in metaphor, concept-formation in one field of experience (destination field) is done based upon the other field (source field). They divide conceptual metaphors into three categories of ontological, structural and directional; and believe the personification metaphor to be the most obvious of ontological metaphors. In this type of metaphor, the physical object is thought of as a person. This type of metaphor shows not only the viewpoint and thoughts of people, but also the way they treat the subject.

Literature, whether poetry or fiction, is one of the means of educational system through which we can educate children about various subjects, for example about issues related to preserving the environment. In fact, giving correct information to children about nature and animals is one of the aims and functions of children's literature (Shoarinejad, 2011: 90). This is one of the most important issues in Iranian children's literature, too. Previous researches show that 52 percent of topics in the children's poetry for age group C published in Iran from 1991 to 2001; 39.7 percent of topics in poems of 2001 to 2011; and 33 percent of topics in poetry from 2011 to 2021 are related to nature (Zarqani & Abbaspour, 2007: 172; Ostadzadeh, 2012: 2;

Alimi, 2015: 126). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze these poems in order to see what attitude is advocated in them toward nature, what understanding of nature is presented, and what behaviors are ensued from this understanding.

Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose

The aim of this research is to analyze the personification of nature based on the theory of Lakoff and Johnson in 40 poetry collections for children published by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The method of the research is descriptive-analytical and library research method is used for gathering information.

Several researches have been conducted before in this field. Niktalab (2013) in "The Conceptual Metaphor of Sun in the Poetry of Children and Adolescents" has studied the different metaphorical forms created by the image of the sun in children's poetry. Sojoodi and Qanbari (2012) in "A Semantic Study of Time Metaphor in Children's Fiction in Persian (Age Groups A, B and C)" have come to the conclusion that the Persian-speaking child in these age groups not only understands the concept of time by moving in time, but also the function of the pattern of "time is a thing" and "that thing is moving" in time metaphor is related to the moon and the sun and other objects around the child in an ontological projection which directly influence the understanding of the concept of time. And Sadeqi (2013) in "Evaluating the Growth of Metaphorical Language in Persian-Speaking Children: A Comparative study" has studied the process of development of understanding of metaphors in Persian-speaking children in three age

groups 6, 7 and 8 years of age and has come to the conclusion that the ability to understand metaphors starts in children from young ages and increases with age.

Discussion

In children's poetry, attention is paid to different aspects of nature; however, not all the elements of nature are personified in these poems as a result of the type of modern life, the lived experiences of children and also the environment of the poet. In children's poetry, there is no boundary between human and animal and nature considering the right to live; and all the elements have the right to live just like humans and are depicted as having purposeful actions. Not only the animals, but also all the other elements of nature are regarded as having emotion. Happy, sad, timid and regretful are some of the most important human emotions that are ascribed to natural elements. Some instances of personification in these poems are created by associating human body parts and appearance characteristics such as having hand, heart and head or being ugly or beautiful, heavy or thin, to natural elements. In children's poetry, people are asked to observe ethical principles in dealing with nature and learn moral behavior from natural element; furthermore, the poets introduce natural elements as having the ability to distinguish between good and bad. This is another aspect of personification in these poems.

In some of the poems in this study, natural elements have acquired a feminine identity. in fact, natural elements are associated with women more than men. The similarities are in different fields: physiological characteristics (giving birth); women's roles and

responsibilities at home (motherhood and raising children); familial relationships (being aunt and bride). It can be argued that women and nature are related to each other in three ways: the relationship between women and nature; the relationship between domination over women and domination over nature; and women's roles in solving ecological problems.

Another procedure for personifying nature is giving child characteristics to natural elements. Associating human clothing to natural elements is another way for personifying nature in children's poetry. By these metaphor, instead of forcing people to accept a specific approach toward nature, poets have tried to give nature a voice to talk about its own situation with children.

Conclusion

For personification of natural elements, poets have paid more attention to human actions and emotions because of didactic purposes. Ascribing these human characteristics to nature has resulted in the formation of a metaphor, "nature as human". Considering the different human characteristics, this metaphor has seven parts: "nature is an active human"; "nature is a human with emotions"; "nature has human body parts"; "nature is a human with an ethical attitude"; "nature is a woman"; "nature is a child"; and "nature is human for having clothes". According to these metaphors, nature is seen as a creature with a life like human's. Just like humans, natural elements have purposeful actions; they understand the humans' behavior toward them by the help of their emotions; and even observe ethical imperatives in performing their actions. These metaphors and their ensuing attitude result in

friendship with nature, determining the right way to deal with nature, giving natural elements the right to live, being kind, loving, respectful and caring and feeling responsible toward nature. Consequently, one can say that in children's poetry, a positive attitude is advocated for preserving nature.

Keywords: ontological metaphor of personification, children's poetry, nature, action, attitude

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