

Investigating the Application of the Theory of Mental Spaces in the Analysis of Persian Prose Literary Texts

(case study: selected part of the novel: *Jāy-e xāli-e- soluč*)

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Introduction

The issue of the present research is the application of the theory of mental spaces in the analysis of Persian prose literary texts. The theory of mental spaces is one of the tools of the cognitive approach to the study of texts, which was proposed by Gilles Fauconnier in the second half of the twentieth century and then expanded in the following years within the framework of the theory of conceptual blending. This theory can be useful in analyzing the linguistic, ideological, and mind-based dimensions of literary texts. The aforementioned theory considers the literary text as the result of the formation of mental spaces and the establishment of connections between them. This theory, relying on the final gestalt and the narrative style of the text, tries to trace the various components constructed by the author and the readers in the text. In this research, a selected part of the novel *Jāy-e xāli-e- soluč* has been analyzed as a case study. The results of this research show that the theory of mental spaces can help researchers in aspects of the analysis and criticism of Persian prose literary texts, such as analyzing the narrative flow, analyzing referential pronouns in character-based texts, and stylistic application related to the mechanism of characters.

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Aim

The research problem that the present study aims to solve is the method and extent of application of the mental spaces theory in the analysis of Persian literary prose texts. In other studies conducted on this topic, the theory of conceptual blending has been used for the analysis of texts, while the present study claims to apply the theory of mental spaces in the analysis of literary texts, individually. For this purpose, an attempt is made to answer the following question: how and with what quality does the theory of mental spaces analyze Persian literary prose texts?

Methodology

The method of this research is descriptive-analytical and has been conducted with a text-based approach. This means that after describing the theoretical foundations the mental spaces, we explained the applications of the aforementioned theoretical model in the analysis of Persian literary prose texts, and then we analyzed a part of the novel: *Jāy-e xāli-e-soluč*, as a case study, comprehensively within the theoretical framework under discussion.

Discussion

The mental spaces theory can be useful in the analysis of Persian prose texts in several ways, which we will discuss below:

Multifaceted analysis of the narrative flow:

Each text consists of several mental spaces that either belong to the characters in the text or to the narrator. Naturally, one of the textual features of prose literary texts, especially novels, is the temporal and spatial breaks in the narrative. For example, one of the characters may suddenly recall a memory from years ago or imagine him/herself in a new and unknown place. In other cases, the author may even unexpectedly place a completely new character, time, or place in the narrative with linguistic-rhetorical devices. In this case, the above theory can well justify and interpret the gaps that arise.

Analysis of referential pronouns in character/dialogue-based texts:

Another of the most important applications of the mental spaces theory is in texts that use the feature of direct dialogue with high frequency. In this situation,

this theory can be useful in accurately identifying the speaker and the elements of the proposition by using the feature of “textual evidence.” Also, in some texts, the number of characters makes it sometimes unclear to trace the referential pronouns to each of the characters, in which case this theory can be useful in identifying all the effective elements within the framework of the theoretical foundations of mental spaces.

Stylistic function

One of the important features of this theory is its reliance on linguistic elements. This theory considers various linguistic codes referring to time, place, action, or argumentative structures as space-makers, and thus carefully distinguishes between different types of mental spaces. Moreover, what is referred to as “elements” in this theory has various types, and analyzing their types brings the application of this theory closer to stylistics. In fact, one of the applications of this theory is to examine the frequency of different types of spaces, examine different types of elements in the text, and examine different types of parallels with a stylistic approach.

In addition to helping the critic analyze the mind of the author of a literary text, the theory of mental spaces also has other text-oriented functions. Stockwell has introduced several models of mental spaces in literary texts, as follows; each of which can be useful in some way in text analysis:

- Temporal spaces: present space or movement to the future or past, generally indicated by temporal adverbs, mood, and the tense of the verb.
- Spatial spaces: geographical spaces, generally indicated by specific adverbs of place and motion verbs.
- Domain spaces: the domain of activity, such as actions and behavioral activities.
- Hypothetical spaces: conditional situations, unrealized and hypothetical possibilities, and conjectures and suggestions.

Conclusion

This study attempted to examine the issue of how to apply the interdisciplinary theory of mental spaces in the analysis of Persian prose literary texts. The theory

of mental spaces, using the assumptions of cognitive science on the one hand and philosophy on the other, and considering the text as a set of mental spaces, attempts to justify and explain how mental spaces are created and how they are connected to each other and create the meaning of the text. Throughout the article, we have shown that this theory can be useful in the analysis of Persian prose literary texts in several ways: multifaceted analysis of the narrative flow, analysis of referential pronouns in character/dialogue-based texts, and stylistic application. In the following, we analyzed a selected part of the text of *Jāy-e xāli-e- soluč*. It was practically shown that this theory, in addition to working well in the narrative stage when dealing with Persian literary texts, can also well demonstrate its theoretical mechanisms such as tracking space-makers, explaining the relationship between spaces, and analyzing referential pronouns related to characters in Persian literary texts.

Keywords: Literary criticism, Theory of Mental Spaces, Persian Prose Literary Texts, the novel: *Jāy-e xāli-e- soluč*

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