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The Comparison of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Blending in Explaining the Metaphoric Advertisements in Some Iranian Family Journals

Abstract

Over the last years, some studies have been done about the role of metaphor and conceptual blending (CB) in advertisements, but none of them have compared the two recent theories of metaphor, namely, conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending. Accordingly, the present study is an attempt, first, to study metaphor from the standpoint of these two theories and, second, to compare their effectiveness in explaining the metaphoric advertisements of some Iranian family journals. With this purpose in mind, 5 metaphoric adverts were chosen from the journals under investigation. To discover how the addressees understand the metaphoric adverts and to examine the effectiveness of the two theories, the adverts were shown to 30 college students. They were asked to identify the metaphor used in the adverts and to explain why the advertiser had used such a metaphor. The findings of the research show that conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) cannot explain metaphoric advertisements completely and conceptual blending should be used to explain metaphoric adverts as well. They also indicate that idiomatic expressions employed in these kinds of adverts cannot be explained by conceptual metaphor theory at all. Moreover, when conceptual blending was used in data analysis, it was observed that the adverts can be divided according to the network divisions: simplex networks, mirror networks, single-scope networks, and double-scope networks, as given in this theory.

Keywords: Metaphor, Metaphoric Advertisements, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Conceptual Blending, Iranian Family Journals

1 Introduction

“Advertising originally meant “taking note” or “considering”, however, its meaning later changed to ‘persuading’” (Abuczki 2009: 18). One of the best ways used by advertisers to persuade addressees is to use metaphor in advertising. By comparing the product advertised with the good experiences of the addressees, advertisers try to affect them and get them to buy the product. With regard to this point, the study of metaphor in advertising has become a main concern in recent years.

The present research aims at examining and comparing the two recent theories of metaphor, namely, conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual blending, in explaining the metaphoric advertisements of some Iranian family journals. By reviewing previous research

carried out in this area, we can see that both of these theories can be used to analyze metaphoric advertisements. However, through the present study, the authors want to find out which one of these two theories can be more successful in explicating the metaphoric advertisements.

In the CMT framework, metaphors are analyzed as stable and systematic relationships between two conceptual 'domains'. In BT [CB], by contrast, the basic unit of cognitive organization is not the domain but the 'mental space' (Fauconnier, 1994, as cited in Grady, Oakley, and Coulson, 1999), a partial and temporary representational structure which speakers construct when thinking or talking about a perceived, imagined, past, present, or future situation (Grady et al. 1999: 1-2).

Grady et al. believe that

Conceptual blending theory shares many aspects of conceptual metaphor theory. For instance, both approaches treat metaphor as a conceptual rather than a purely linguistic phenomenon; both involve systematic projection of language, imagery, and inferential structure between conceptual domains; both propose constraints on this projection; and so forth. However, there are also important differences between the approaches: CMT posits relationships between pairs of mental representations, while blending theory allows for more than two; CMT has defined metaphor as a strictly directional phenomenon, while BT [CB] has not; and whereas CMT analyses are typically concerned with entrenched conceptual relationships, BT research often focuses on the novel conceptualization which may be short-lived (1999: 1).

Nevertheless, Coulson (2006) maintains, "The two approaches are largely complementary, with similar assumptions about the relationship between language and conceptualization, but with different emphasis and foci" (p. 192).

Most previous researchers have studied metaphoric advertisements based on conceptual metaphor theory. Some of these studies are reviewed in what follows:

Anderson (1998) has examined the use of metaphor in on-line advertising. Her research shows that "working, clickable, and verbo-pictorial metaphors commonly appear in commercial websites. Shopping sites tended to use more pictorial, clickable, and directional metaphors than non-shopping sites. Verbal and verbo-pictorial metaphors tended to appear more often in non-shopping sites" (p. vii).

Dabrowski (2000) has worked on verbal metaphor. In his paper, he wants to know how advertising text is structured by conceptual metaphor. Having examined adverts from four different magazines, he identifies four groups of what is labeled as model metaphors:

Model 1: Abstract is concrete.

Model 2: Inanimate is animate.

Model 3: Metaphors based on the experience of sense.

Model 4: Familiar to describe less familiar. (Dabrowski 2000: 299)

Czerpa (2006) has done a comparative study of metaphors in cosmetics advertisements of the two Editions of the woman's magazine *Elle*. For analyzing the data, she uses conceptual metaphor theory. She concludes that metaphors play an important part in the advertisements of both editions and although there are some differences between these two, the metaphors used are based on common human experiences.

Martin (2009) devotes her investigation to pictorial metaphor. In her research, she wants to present how metaphor, apart from its verbal manifestations, can also occur in pictures. The results of her research indicate that the following stages help an addressee who makes use of

pictorial metaphor to understand the message in an advertisement: a) the pictorial context, b) the linguistic message, and c) world knowledge.

Abuczki (2009) is another researcher who has studied verbal metaphor from a cognitive perspective. In this work, she tries “to investigate the relationship between individual psychology, metaphor and media by means of a case study of the metaphors contained in two issues of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine” (p. 18).

Among researchers who use conceptual blending the following are referred to:

Lundmark (2005) has studied metaphor in British magazine adverts. For analyzing these adverts, she uses both conceptual blending and conceptual metaphor theories. She concludes that “these two theories are the best available analytical tools for describing the complex creative processes that take place in these ads” (p. 190).

Joy, Sherry, and Deschenes (2009) are among those researchers who have chosen blending theory to analyze metaphoric advertising. In their research, they recognize subtle similarities and differences between metaphor and blending, and examine their occurrences in three types of blending networks, i.e. simplex network, mirror network and single-scope networks, in adverts.

2 Research method

The data of the present study comprise of 5 metaphoric advertisements, namely, Familia foodstuffs, Sepid detergent powder, Tejarat bank’s selling terminal, LG home theater and Nokia cell phone, chosen from some Iranian family journals. With regard to the kind of metaphoric advertisements, adverts which contained combinations of pictorial and verbal metaphor were chosen. After the selection stage, the adverts were analyzed using the two theories of conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual blending. Then, to avoid subjectivity, 30 college students, ranging from age 18 to 28, were randomly selected for interview. The interviews, 120 to 180 minutes long, were taped and written down. The purpose for the interviews was to explore how the addressees understand metaphoric adverts. In order to find out how the addressees make sense of metaphoric advertisements, they were shown the adverts. During the interviews, they were asked to describe each advert and to tell what they knew about it. They were also asked, “what is the metaphor used in the adverts” and “why does the advertiser use such a metaphor.” Next, to analyze the addressees’ answers, they were divided into two groups. One group included the addressees’ employed conceptual metaphor theory and the other group embraced those who applied conceptual blending for explaining the adverts. After counting the numbers of the persons who used each theory, the data analysis was done via SPSS software.

3 Data description and analysis

3.1 *Famila foodstuffs*

The first advert to be discussed is for a group of foodstuffs: Famila. Famila is a known word in the spoken form of Persian; it's the plural form of the word 'famil' which means relative.¹ As Figure (1) shows, in the middle of the advert, there is a picture of some Famila's foodstuffs gathered around the globe. In the upper part of the advert, the brand of the production (Famila) has been written, and below the 'globe' the sentence "Welcome to Famila's World" has been inserted. CMT cannot explain this advert, since there is no similarity between the relatives and these foodstuffs; in other words, there is not a concept to be transferred from the source domain of relatives to the target domain of the foodstuffs. Instead, we are confronted with a blend or an integration network in this advert. The kind of network here is a simplex network. Descamp (2007) describes such a network as the following:

In a simplex network, the elements from one input are projected as values of another input that contains a frame with its projected values. Frames are provided by human culture and biology: these organizing frames delineate a mental space where a particular activity with its members and procedures occurs. An organizing frame could be the biological frame of family, with roles for a father, mother, daughter or son and so on; ... In a simplex blend, each element in one input corresponds to a role in the frame of the other input. When the two are blended, the structure from one input is integrated with the constituent values of the other input to present an incorporated whole (pp. 28-29).

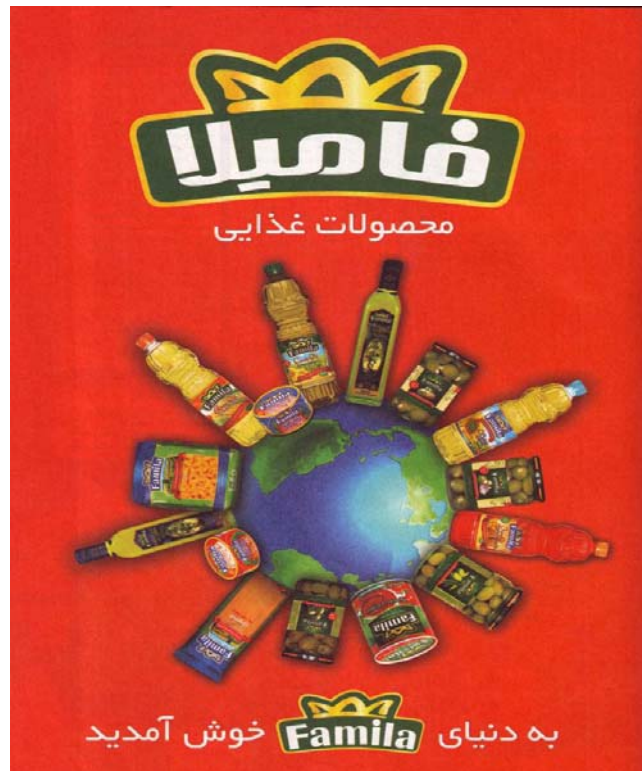


Fig 1: Famila advert

¹ The word 'famil' also means family. In spite of both meanings, this ad comprises of a simplex network.

In the Famila advert, a general human kinship applies to the entire network. In this blend, as shown in Figure (2), the relative relations (like aunt, uncle, et.) constitute the frame input (input space 1) and the Famila's productions are the values. The blended space compresses roles and values from the two input spaces. As a result, Famila's foodstuffs become relatives in this space, and so they form a world, as presented in Figure (1):

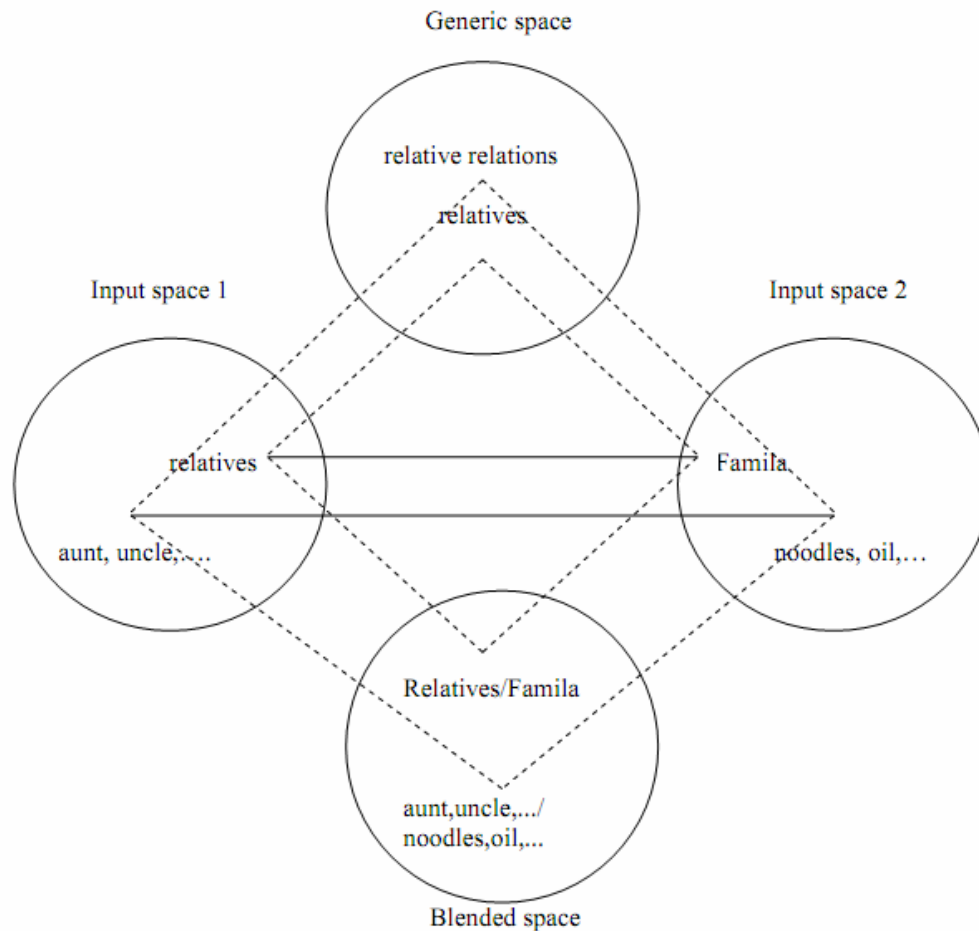


Fig.2: Simplex network

Samples of addressees' answers:

To explain this advert, all of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory:

Sample 1: "These productions, like human beings, are related to each other, so Famila's name is chosen for this production."

Sample 2: "These productions, like relatives, are gathered and united with each other."

Table 1 and chart 1 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who used conceptual blending for explaining Famila advert:

Familia		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CB	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Familia advert

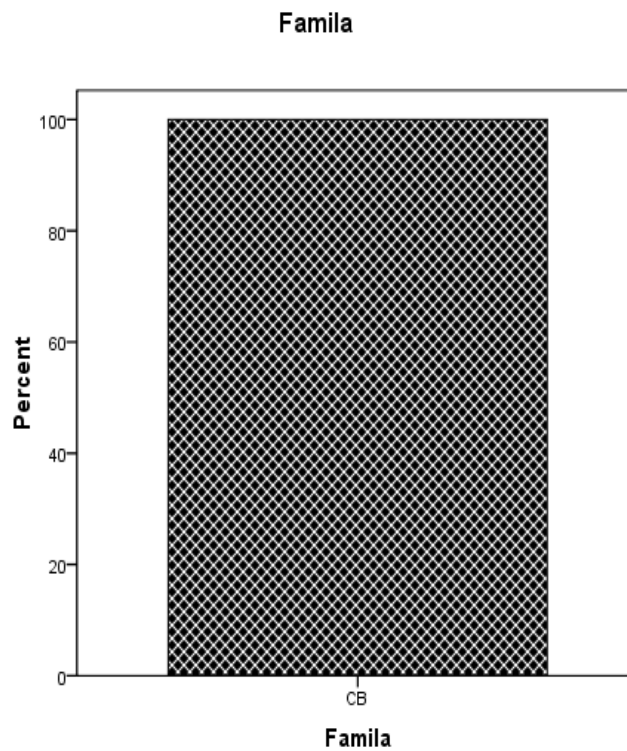


Chart 1: Percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Familia advert

3.2 *Sepid detergent powder*

An advert for a detergent powder, Sepid, constitutes our second advert for discussion. At the upper part of the advert, this phrase is printed: ‘New and novel like the first day’. It means that this powder preserves the quality and the colour of the clothes without destroying their brightness; in other words, it keeps clothes ‘new and novel like the first day’ (the same as the time they are manufactured).



Fig. 3: Sepid advert

Nevertheless, how can we make sense of this advert? How can we understand clothes which are used and washed, as new clothes? The answer is: by creating a mirror network.

Mirror networks have a single organizing frame connecting all the mental spaces- the generic space, input Space 1, input space 2 and the blended space. This frame specifies the nature of the activity, events, and participants. It is called a mirror network because all the spaces mirror each other although the blend may become a more complex frame as a result. Cross space mapping in such networks is simple (Joy et al. 2009: 44).

In the mirror network, as given in Figure (4), input space 1 contains new clothes and input space 2 contains clothes which are washed by Sepid:

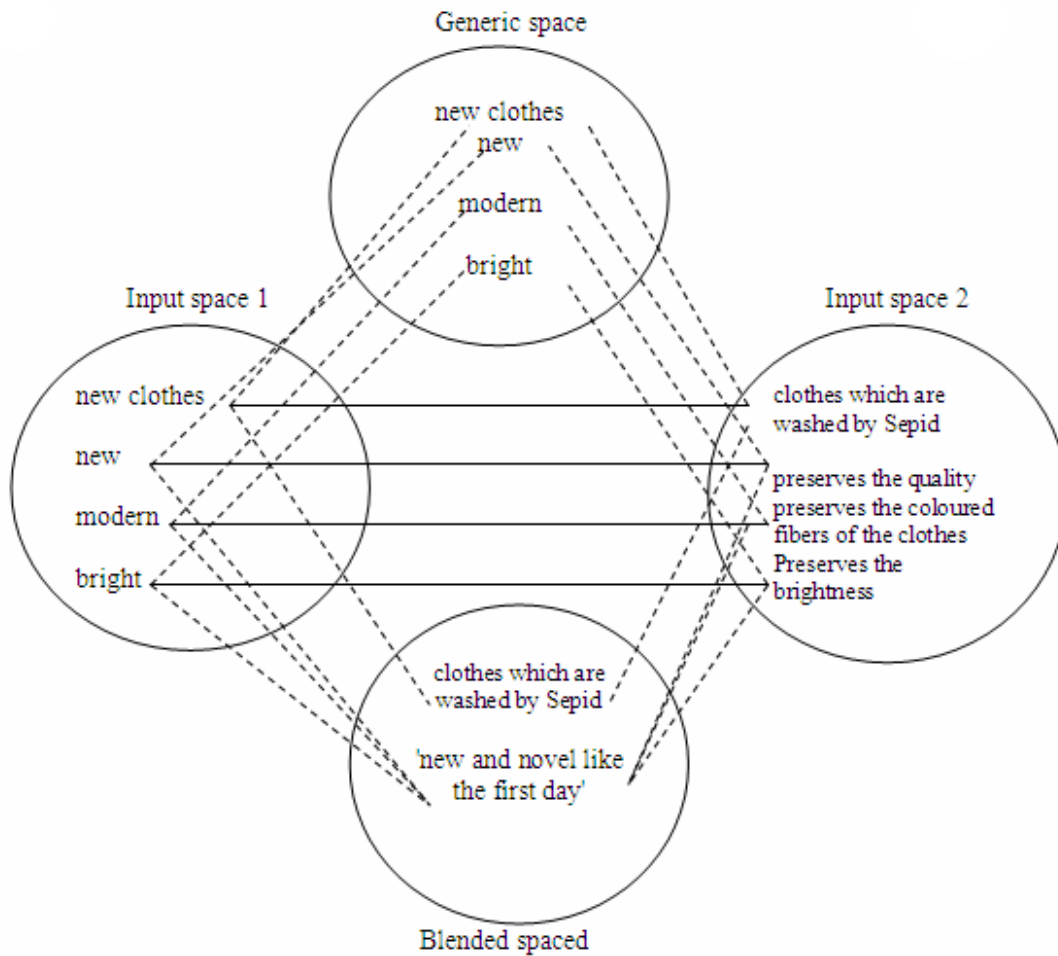


Fig. 4: Mirror network

Figure 4 displays a mirror network, because the entire spaces share an organizing frame, that of new clothes. The two input spaces have some common features, and these features are projected into the blend. Thus in the blended space, we comprehend clothes which are recurrently washed by Sepid as new clothes.

Samples of addressees' answers:

To explain this advert, all of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory:

Sample 1: “‘New and novel like the first day’ means that this detergent powder makes clothes new and novel like the first day that we buy them.”

Sample 2: “‘New and novel like the first day’ means that Sepid detergent powder preserves the quality and brightness of clothes and cleans them like the first day that we buy them.”

Table 2 and chart 2 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who used conceptual blending for explaining Sepid advert:

Sepid

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid CB	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Sepid advert

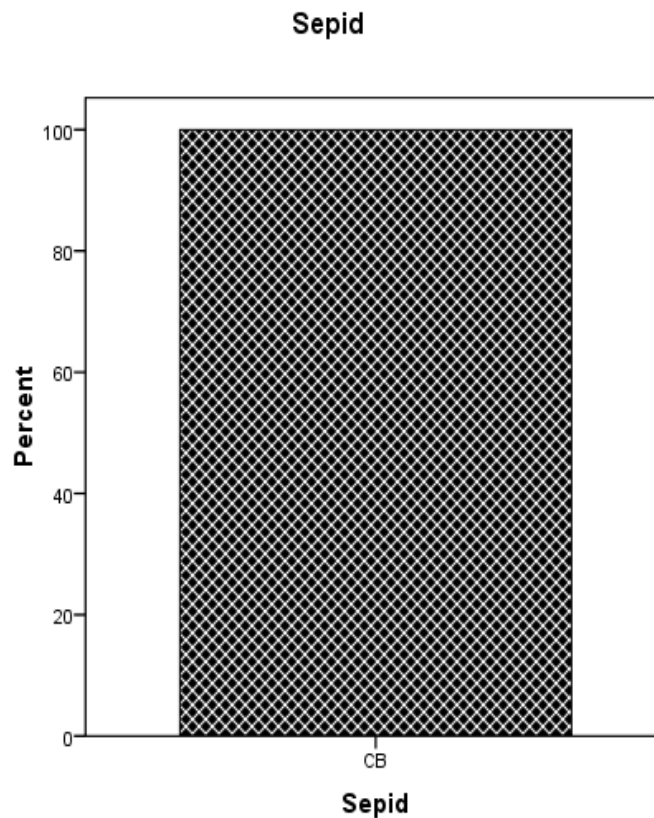


Chart 2: Percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Sepid advert

3.3 Tejarat bank's selling terminal

This advert is for a bank, Tejarat bank. It comprises a picture of a magic lantern which looks like a selling terminal. There is a caption below this lantern that can be translated as 'miraculous selling terminal'. This caption guides us to realize that this is really Tejarat bank's selling terminal which is compared to a magical lantern. It is miraculous because, like a magical lantern, it is magical and by giving prizes it can fulfill our wishes.



Fig. 5: Tejarat bank advert

Most Iranians know the fable of the magical lantern. The fable is as follow: a man whose name was Alaeddin found a lantern. He decided to clean it so he dusted it with a cloth. While he was rubbing the lantern with the cloth, a giant came out of it. Alaeddin was afraid of him, but the giant told him: “you have rescued me from the inside of the lantern, hence you are my boss. Now, tell me your wishes, I can fulfill 3 of them.” Although this is a fable and consequently it is unreal, everyone likes to find a magical lantern in order to achieve his/her wishes. Tejarat bank uses this ambition of Iranian people to achieve its goal. In other words, by comparing the selling terminal to the magical lantern, they are going to tell us that everyone who wants to have a magical lantern or to achieve his/her wishes, should use Tejarat bank’s selling terminal, as it is magical like the magical lantern and it can fulfill their wishes. Accordingly, these two, namely, the magical lantern and Tejarat bank’s selling terminal, are similar in satisfying goals. Both of them can fulfil the wishes of people, one by giving prizes and the other one by being magical. Nevertheless, there are also some differences; for instance, the magical lantern can fulfil three wishes of each person, while the selling terminal of Tejarat bank can only fulfil one wish of his/hers. The magical lantern can fulfill wishes by being magical, whereas the selling terminal can do the same thing by giving prizes. The

magical lantern is a fable and so it is imaginary or unreal, while the selling terminal is a real thing. With regard to these points, we cannot explain this advert with conceptual metaphor theory, because in this metaphor there is more than one concept that can be transferred from the source domain (magic lantern) to the target domain (selling terminal); in other words, we have combination and blending of information from source and target concepts. In this network as given in Figure (6), the magical lantern is in one input and the selling terminal is in another one. We have an agent, in the generic space, which stands for both of them. Some of the features of the magical lantern and the selling terminal are projected into the blended space and, there, they are integrated with each other:

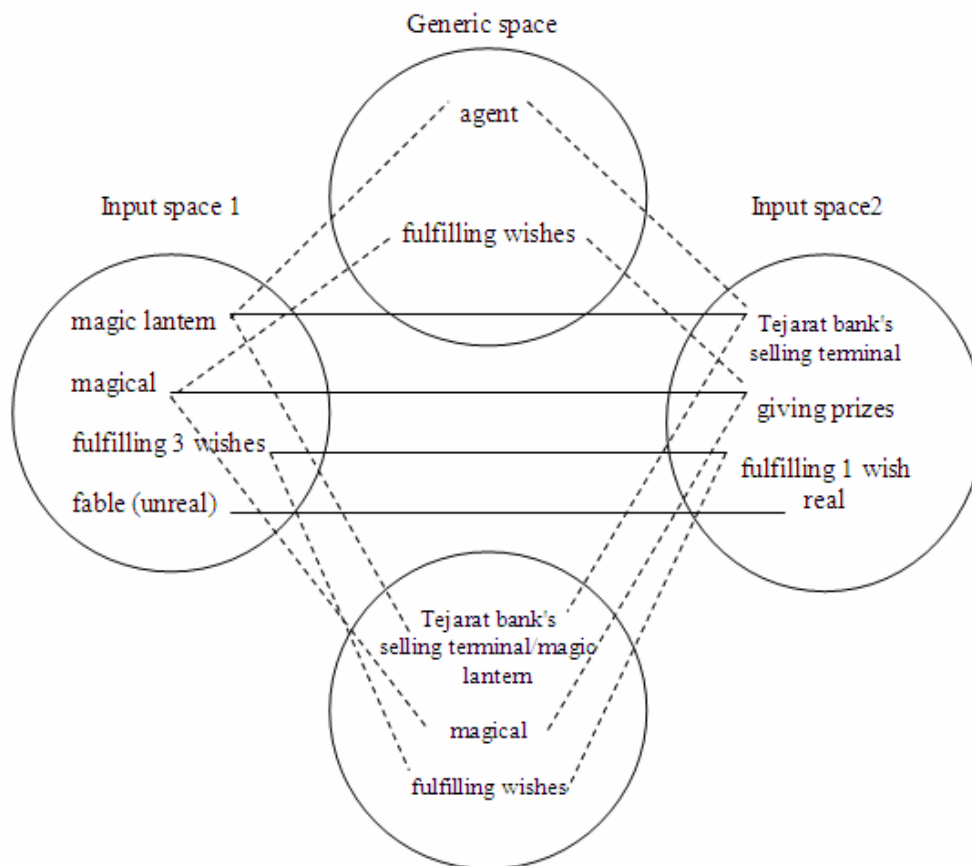


Fig. 6: Single-scope network

In this advert, there is a single-scope network; Fauconnier and Turner (2002) define such a network as the one that

has two input spaces with different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend. Its defining property is that the organizing frame of the blend is an extension of the organizing frame of one of the inputs but not the other. Single-scope networks are the prototype of highly conventional source-target metaphors. The input that provides the organizing frame to the blend, the framing input, is often called the 'source.' The input that is the focus of understanding, the focus input, is often called the 'target' (pp. 126-127).

In this advert, the magical lantern is ‘source’, and Tejarat bank’s selling terminal is the ‘target’. Since the organizing frame of the blended space is an extension of magical lantern input, subsequently, in the blend we understand the selling terminal as a magical lantern that can fulfil our wishes.

Samples of addressees’ answers:

To explain this advert, all of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory:

Sample 1: “Most of us know the story of the magic lantern. I think that, by using this metaphor, Tejarat bank wants to tell us that it can fulfil our wishes by giving prizes.”

Sample 2: “The giant of the magic lantern can fulfil the wishes; Tejarat bank can fulfil our wishes, too.”

Table 3 and chart 3 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who used conceptual blending for explaining Tejarat bank advert:

Tejarat				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid CB	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Tejarat bank advert

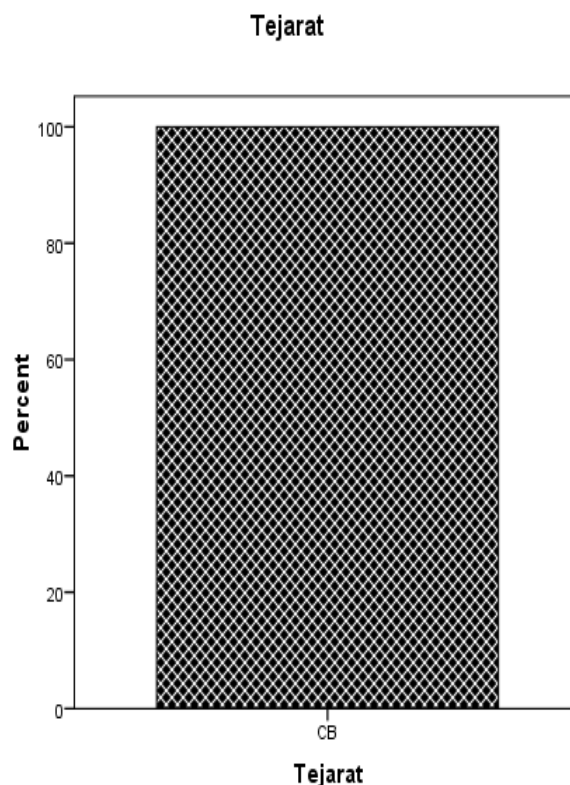


Chart 3: Percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Tejarat’ advert

3.4 LG home theatre

The next advert to be analyzed is for LG home theatre. The upper part of the advert has been occupied by the body copy which contains information about the home theatre. In its middle, a text has been inserted meaning ‘portray sound as picture.’

Fig. 7: LG advert

The lower half of the advert contains a picture of a man leaning and listening to music. He has closed his eyes. It seems that he is in complete tranquility. He is listening to music, but the sound is so natural that he can imagine or see its picture: the picture of seas, which is a symbol of tranquility, with some fish in it, which are like music notes. But how can we portray sound as picture? Or, how can we see sound? We cannot answer these questions based on the conceptual metaphor theory, because there is no similarity between sound and picture. Instead, we need a blended space, where sound and pictures can blend with each other, as presented in Figure (8):

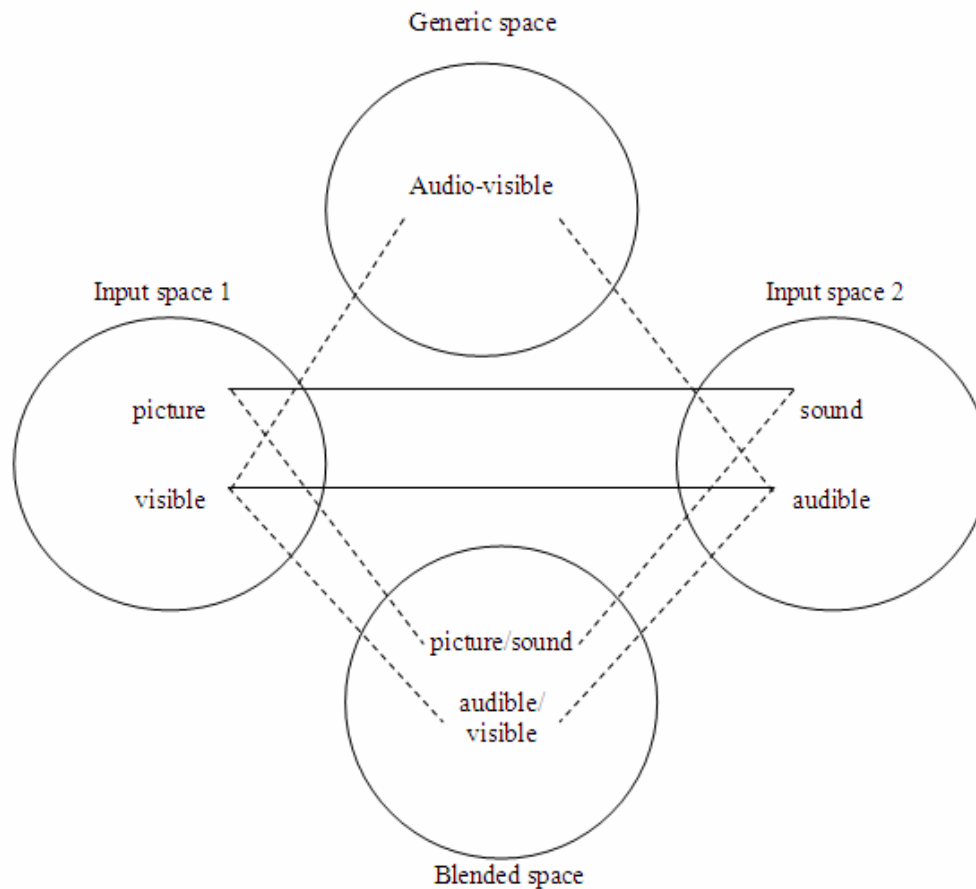


Fig. 8: Double-scope network

As Figure (8) shows, there are two input spaces in this integration network. The picture which is visible is in one input and sound which is audible is in the other one. With the help of LG home theatre, sound, picture and their features have integrated in the blended space. As a result, sounds can be visible in the blend. Here, we are confronted with a double-scope network. “Double scope networks integrate two conflicting notions to produce a blend with a new organizing structure and an emergent meaning of its own. Both organizing frames contribute equally to the blend even though they may clash. We have no difficulty integrating different identities and different frames to generate novel identities and frames” (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 46). In the blend, presented in Figure (8), each of the inputs has a different organizing frame. The blended space both inherits parts of each of those frames and has an emergent structure, i.e., a structure where sound becomes visible.

Samples of addressees’ answers:

To explain this advert, 90 % of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory and 10% of them could not explain it:

Sample 1: “The sound of this home theatre is so audible that we can imagine it in our mind.”

Sample 2: “The sound of this home theatre is so natural that we see its picture in our mind.”

Table 4 and chart 4 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who could not explain the advert and those who used CB in explaining LG advert:

LG

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid CB	27	90.0	90.0	90.0
None	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of the addressees who could not explain the advert and those who used CB in explaining LG advert

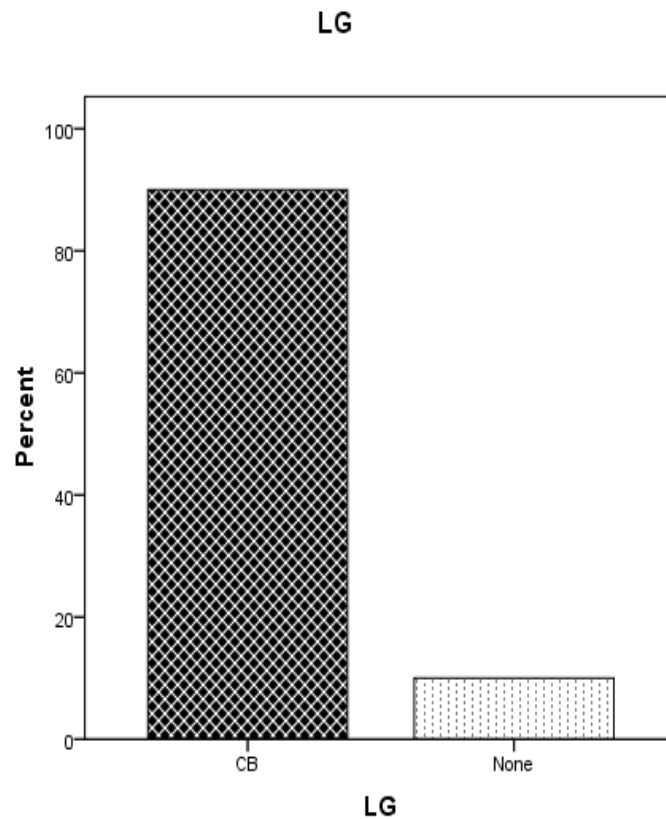


Chart 4: Percentage of the addressees who could not explain the advert and those who used CB in explaining the LG advert

3.5 Nokia cell phone

The final advert in this paper is for two models of Nokia: X3-02 and C3-01. What we want to explain in this advert is a Persian idiom which is used recurrently by Persian speakers: ‘one arrow and two targets’ (to hit two birds with one stone). This idiom is written in the upper

part of the advert, making it the first phrase that we can see in the advert. But, what is the arrow and what are the two targets? The other sentences written below the idiom and the picture inserted in the middle of the advert can help us to answer this question:

- Touch easily and type fast
- With the touchboard and the keyboard, access your favorite pictures, messages, and applications



Fig. 9: Nokia advert

From these phrases and the pictures, we can understand that the arrow is the cell phone and the targets are its two usages, i.e., the touchboard and the keyboard. How did we arrive at this result? The answer is that by creating a blend or a double-scope network, as shown in Figure (10):

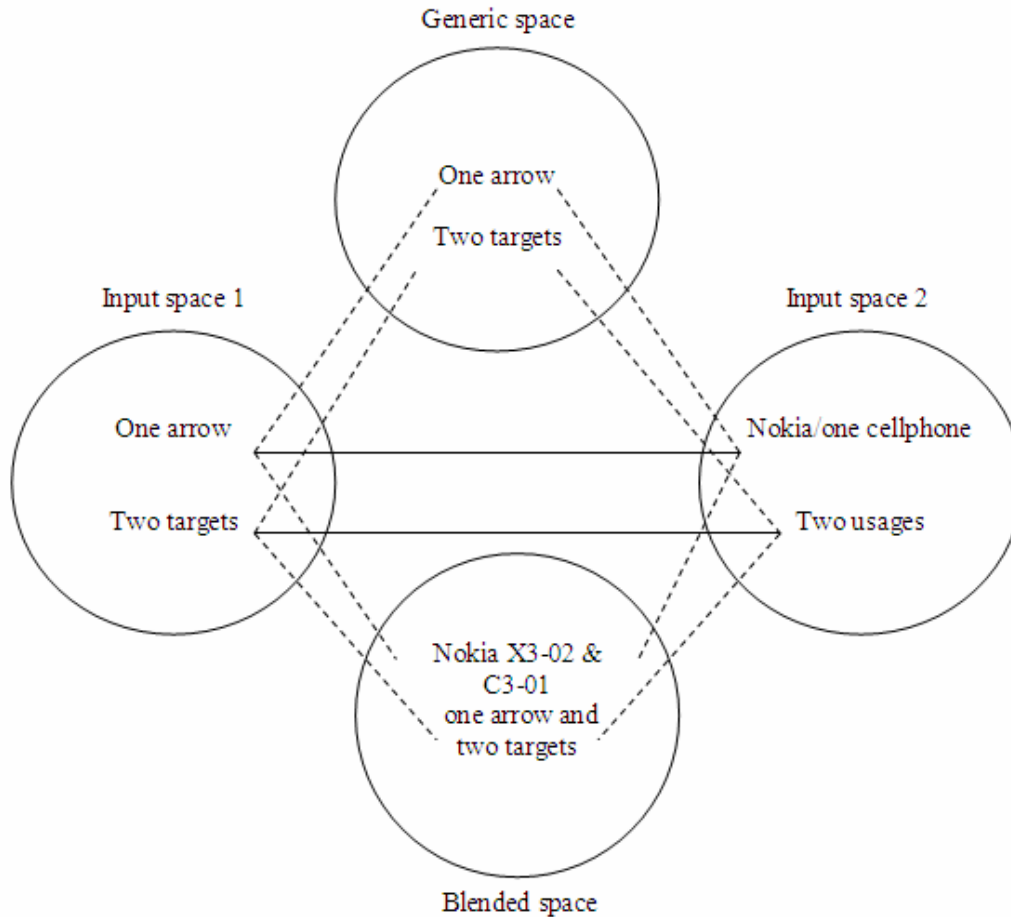


Fig. 10: Double-scope network

Figure (10) is a double-scope network, since the two inputs have different frameworks and the blend inherits a combination of both.

Samples of addressees' answers:

To explain this advert, all of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory:

Sample 1: “ ‘ One arrow and two targets’ means that by buying this cell phone we can enjoy its two usages”

Sample 2: “Some persons like to work with the keyboard, some of them like working with the touchboard, and still some of them like working with both of them. By buying this cell phone we can hit two birds with one stone.”

Table 5 and chart 5 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who used conceptual blending for explaining Nokia's advert:

Nokia

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid CB	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5: Frequency and percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Nokia's advert

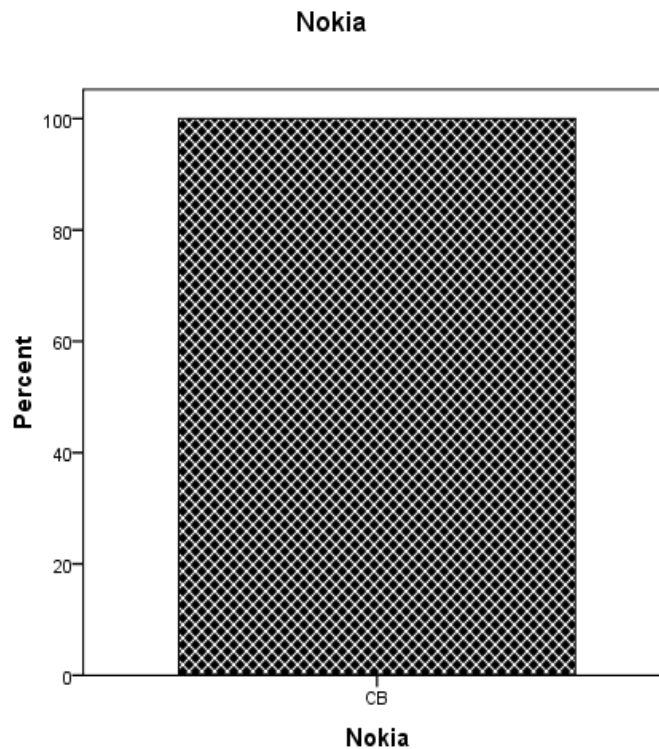


Chart 5: Percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Nokia's advert

4 Result and discussion

According to Forceville (1996), metaphors help advertisers to make their message attractive to draw the consumers' attention. Furthermore, one way of realizing the goal of making a claim for his/her product in a brief spatial or temporal span is for an advertiser to forge a link between the product and something that already possesses the characteristics he desires to claim for the product. Now, this closely echoes what happens in metaphor.

Whereas different pieces of research have been carried out on the role of metaphor in advertising from the perspective of the two theories of conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending, the present research was done to study and to compare the effectiveness of these two theories in explaining the metaphoric advertisements of some Iranian family journals. "While MT [CMT] generally deals with "stable knowledge structures represented in long-term memory," BT [CB] describes "the dynamic evolution" of an individual's unique repre-

sentation. Weick (1989, as cited in Joy et al., 2002) favours the view of the unexpected and creative nature of metaphorical language (BT) [CB] rather than the usual ways of thinking about metaphors (MT) [CMT], even though such patterns may exist within an organization. The assumption of directionality from source to target is problematic; metaphor comprehension involves more than a set of directional mappings. There is often an active combination and blending of information from target and source concepts.” (Joy et al. 2002: 39)

In this paper, five metaphoric adverts were studied according to the conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending theories. Their analyses show that while conceptual metaphor theory cannot explain some metaphoric adverts completely, it cannot explain some metaphoric adverts at all. In this regard, conceptual metaphor theory can not explain Famila advert, since, in this advert, Famila’s foodstuffs are compared to the relatives, but there are no similarities between these productions and relatives. When this advert is analyzed with conceptual blending, a simplex network will be found in it. In this network, relatives relations are in input space 1 and Famila’s foodstuffs are in input space 2; in the blended space with the combination of Famila’s foodstuffs with the relative relations, these productions become relatives. Conceptual metaphor theory cannot elucidate Sepid’s adver, either as. like with the Famila advert, there are no similarities between the elements in the two inputs in this advert. Hence, for its elucidation, conceptual blending is needed, because for the comparison of new clothes with old ones a mirror network is required. In the blended space of this network, the features of new clothes and the old ones are integrated and, in this space, the old clothes are understood as ‘new and novel as the first day.’

Joy et al (2002) maintain that “metaphor comprehension involves more than a set of directional mappings. There is often an active combination and blending of information from target and source concepts” (p. 39). In the Tejarat bank advert, more than one feature is projected from the source domain of the magical lantern to the target domain of Tejarat bank’s selling terminal; as the result, it cannot be clarified by conceptual metaphor theory. It contains a single-scope network in which the magical lantern and Tejarat bank’s selling terminal are placed in the two inputs; after integrating their features in the blended space, the selling terminal is understood as a magical one. In the LG advert it is claimed that “Portray sound as picture”. Because of the lack of similarity between sound and picture, this advert cannot be accounted for by conceptual metaphor theory, either. Since sound and picture are quite different, when this advert is justified by conceptual blending, a double-scope network is formed. In this double-scope network, after feature integration of sound and picture, sound becomes visible. The final advert, that is, the Nokia advert, contains a Persian idiom: “one arrow and two targets” (to hit two birds with one stone). Here, again, like the Tejarat bank advert, we have “an active combination and blending of information from target and source concepts” (Joy et al. 2002: 39), consequently it should be explained applying conceptual blending. The integration network of this advert is a double-scope network, where after the integration of the concepts in the two inputs, Nokia (X3-02 & C3-01) is understood as “one arrow and two targets.”

With regard to the adverts’ understanding by the addressees, the interview results manifest that they analyze the metaphoric advertisements by using their experiences and world knowledge. The interview results also confirm Martin’s (2009) results. According to Martin (ibid), to understand an advert completely addressees pass through some stages. These stages,

“which move bottom up, follow a subsequent order: a) the pictorial context, which depicts the basic context the viewer will be working with; b) the linguistic message, which will help the viewer fix the intended meaning (anchoring function); c) and finally the world knowledge, which enriches the information put together so far by applying a wider context than that imposed by the pictorial metaphor” (Martin 2009: 178-179). In this respect, the interview results also confirm the fact that most addresses apply conceptual blending theory for explaining adverts (cf. tables (1-5) and charts (1-5)). In this regard, all of them could identify the networks (simplex, mirror and single-scope, and double-scope) applied in the Famila, Sepid, Tejarat and Nokia’s adverts. For the LG’s advert 90% of the addressees could recognize its double-scope network, while 10 %of them could not.

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*The Comparison of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Blending in Explaining
the Metaphoric Advertisements in Some Iranian Family Journals*
Argumentum 8 (2012), 158-178
Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó

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