Hindi Idioms Analysis: A Cognitive Linguistics Approach (With special reference to 'Hand' idioms)

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Introduction

In recent years several linguists, philosophers, psychologists, psycholinguists have begun to challenge many dogmas about some fundamentally important aspects of the study of language. This new approach to the study of language has come to be known as 'Cognitive Linguistics.' It has changed our perception and proved useful in the study of a wide variety of linguistic phenomena including the study and analysis of idioms. Cognitive linguistics holds that language is part of a cognitive system which comprises perception, emotions, categorization, abstraction process, and reasoning.

Most of the idiomatic languages are human centered and human body serves as a significant source of idioms and this is most important reason for concentrating on the idioms related with body parts. Body part "hand" is chosen because of its frequent use in idiomatic expressions. It is easier to understand an idiom if it contains a part of human body because human body is an area which is closest to any human being both physically and metaphorically. Hindi is very rich in idiomatic expressions. In this article for the analysis of Hindi idioms related with *hand*, we will utilize the whole package of cognitive mechanism of idiom analysis. The cognitive mechanism being used here for idiom analysis is *metaphor, metonymy, and conventional knowledge about the use of hand.* Another aspect of this article is to check the effectiveness and utility of above mentioned Cognitive Linguistic tools for Hindi idiom analysis.

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Importance of Idioms in a Language

Idioms are special phenomena in a language. In fact, it is nearly impossible to speak of many human events and *abstract ideas* without employing idiomatic phrases that communicate non-literal meaning. Now-a-days, most of the news papers are using idiomatic expressions in headings and editorials. Idioms are the efficient tool utilized by the literary writers in Hindi for creating humor and satire. It is also quite true that idiom contains many cultural traits and many cultural traits of the society can be understood through idiomatic expressions. According to Ortony (1979) and Gibbs (1994); people use idioms to be polite, to avoid responsibility for the import of what is communicated, to express thoughts in a compact and vivid manner.

Linguistic Theory and Treatment of Idioms

Idioms are treated semantically as one unit whose components cannot be separated. Therefore, earlier, idioms were looked on as a special kind of literary phenomenon but cognitive linguists regard idioms and similar phenomena as central phenomena for the study of *language* and also *human mind.* As per this approach meaning of idioms are motivated and not arbitrary. In cognitive linguistic framework, idioms are treated as symbolic unit which represent a phonological (formal/surface form) representation with a semantic representation: cf. Taylor (2002).

Many previous studies of idioms fail to recognize their metaphorical roots because scholars tend to detect only a few of the conventional phrases. Cognitive view of metaphors holds that metaphors are not only poetical or rhetorical embellishments, but "in essence, a means of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 42).

Cognitive-Semantic Framework for Analysis of Idioms

In cognitive linguistics idioms are considered not merely linguistic ornament intended to dress up a person's speech style, but as an integral part of the language that eases social interaction, enhances textual coherence, and quite importantly, reflects *fundamental patterns of human thought.* According to the congnitivist view, the category of idioms involves several things like metaphors, metonymies, similes, cultural traits

and others. Most idioms are the products of our conceptual system. An idiom is not just an expression that has meaning that is somehow special in relation to the meanings of its constituent parts but it arises from our more general knowledge of the world. In other words the majority of the idioms are conceptual in nature. The basic premise of Conceptual Theory of Metaphor is that metaphor is not simply a stylistic feature of language but that thought itself is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

The motivation for the occurrence of particular words in a large number of idioms can be thought of as a cognitive mechanism that links domains of knowledge to idiomatic meanings. The cognitive mechanisms relevant in the case of idioms analysis are *metaphor, metonymy and conventional knowledge about the use of hand.*

Metaphors

There have been numerous linguistic definitions of 'metaphor'; the briefest one can be "metaphor is the transference of meaning from one object to another." Cognitive linguistics theory presents a broad conception of language grounded in biological, psychological, developmental, historical and socio-cultural factors and in formulaic language analysis theory of conceptual metaphors came into existence.

Conceptual metaphors can be said to represent ways of thinking, in which people typically construct abstract concepts in terms of more easily understood and perceived concrete entities. Conceptual metaphors bring into correspondence the two domains of knowledge. One is typically a well-delineated, familiar physical domain (source domain) and the other is a less well-delineated, less familiar, abstract domain (target domain)(Lakoff and Johnson 1980 and Lakoff 1994). The source domain is typically applied to provide understanding about the target domain.

Metonymy

According to Geeraerts (1994:2477) metonymy is "a semantic link between two senses of a lexical item that is based on a relationship of contiguity between the referents of the expression in each of those senses." Traditionally metonymy has been regarded as a *stand for* relation in which

the name of one thing (source) is used to refer to another thing (target) with which it is associated or to which it is contiguous.

A widely accepted definition of metonymy inspired by Langacker (1993) is the one proposed by Radden and Kovecses (1999:21): "Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same cognitive model."

Metaphor and Metonymy

A metaphorical term is connected with what for which it is substituted on the basis of similarity; metonymy is based on contiguity or closeness. Metonyms tend to suggest that they are directly connected with reality in contrast to the mere iconicity or symbolism of metaphor (Jakobson & Halle 1956: 69). Jakobson stated that metaphor and metonymy are two basic axes of language and communication. Metaphor is a paradigmatic dimension (vertical, based on selection, substitution and similarity) and metonymy is a syntagmatic dimension (horizontal, based on combination, contexture and contiguity) (Jakobson & Halle 1956: 69).

Metaphor and metonymy is also regarded to be different in function. The function of metaphor is understanding while the function of metonymy is reference. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980:36), conceive metaphor as having primarily a function of understanding, which is a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and metonymy as having primarily a referential function which allows us to use one entity to stand for another.

Most contemporary accounts in cognitive linguistics have built on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) original distinction between metaphor as a cross-domain mapping and of metonymy as a mapping within one cognitive domain.

Analysis of Hindi Idioms Formed with 'Hand'

The notion of 'body' has been a most fundamental one in the social sciences and humanities. As Johnson argues, the fact that every human

being has a body bears directly on the nature of human cognition. According to Bhatia (2005:6) most of the idioms are based on body parts and their movements. To be human is to be embodied.

Exploring the deepest and most profound bodily sources of human meaning and understanding, Johnson (2007: IX) argues that "meaning grows from our visceral connections to life and the bodily conditions of life". That is, our embodied experience and with the world sets out the contours of what is meaningful to us and determines the ways of our understanding. This is because our "conceptual structure has everything to do with one's body and with how one interacts as part of one's physical environment" (Lakoff, 1994:42).

The idioms used in our daily communication, the most frequent and important parts are metaphors and metonymies. Namely, we use metaphor and metonymy every time we speak, often without realizing it. These are easy methods to explain something by conceptualized mapping. For the analysis of the Hindi idioms related with *hand* we will utilize the whole package of cognitive mechanism of idiom analysis. These are metaphor, metonymy and conventional knowledge.

Conventional Knowledge about the Use of the Hand

Apart from conceptual metaphor we also need some non-metaphorical conventional knowledge. Conventional knowledge as a cognitive mechanism means the shared information that people in a given culture have concerning a conceptual domain like the human hand. This knowledge includes standard information about the parts, shape, size, use and function of the human hand as well as the larger hierarchy of which it forms a part.

Consider the expression [kʰule hatʰ se kʰʏrtʃ kʏrna] meaning 'generously' as in [usʏne kʰule hatʰ se kʰʏrtʃ kija]. The image of a person who is physically giving objects to another with an open hand implies the knowledge that nothing is held back. This stands in marked

contrast to the knowledge about the image of a person who is not generous i.e. [hatʰ dᵛba kᵛr kʰᵛrtʃ kᵛrna].

The meaning of the idiom [donō hatʰō se kʰᵛrtʃ kᵛrna] is not only 'generously' but it shows the eagerness of the person. This idiom means to spend lavishly (लुटाना) [luṭana]. This again derives from our knowledge about the use of human hand. When we are eager to do the work fast we use both hands and when we are less eager to do the work we use one hand.

A special case of general conventional knowledge is involved when our knowledge relates to certain conventionalized gestures involving the human hand. What is special about these cases is that the motivation for the meaning of an idiomatic expression comes from what we know of the gestures itself and not from the meaning of the expression.

Some examples-

[hatʰ uṭana]	= To attack, to beat, to be helpless
[kɪsi ko hatʰ uṭʰana]	= To salute someone
[hatʰ məlna]	= To wring one's hands in despair/sorrow
[hatʰ dʰokər pɪtʃʰe pədna]	= To pursue obsessively, to pursue with a vengeance
[hatʰ dʰo beṭʰna]	= To wash one's hands off
[hatʰ pər hatʰ dʰəre beṭʰe rəhna]	= To remain idle, deliberately do nothing
[hatʰ marna]	= To acquire control over, To embezzle, to lay hands on, to pilfer
[hatʰ kʰītʃəna]	= To withdraw support, to refrain from, to restrain one's hand from
[hatʰ pəsare dʒana]	= To go to the other world (after death) empty handed

[hatʰ mɛ̃ kʰudʒli hona]   = An omen for monetary gain, to feel like beating someone

Metaphor of Hand

The motivation for idioms rarely comes from a single source. In most cases, motivation comes from a combination of two or even more sources.

> ➢ HOLDING IN THE HAND IS POSSESSION - The shape and function of hand are similar to the container. Like the container, we put something in our hand and bend our fingers around it. For example:

[hatʰ dʒʰaɖna]   = Nothing left in hand, withdraw from some work

[hatʰ kʰali hona]   = To be penniless, to have nothing to do

[hatʰ kʰali nə hona] Hands to be full, to be busy

[kʰali hatʰ dʒana]   = To go empty handed

> ➢ HOLDING IN THE HAND IS CONTROL – We can think that something in our hand is our own, and further we can even control it. Abstract concept of 'control' is easily conceptualized by the specific action of holding in hands. For example:
> ab jəh mamla pulɪs ke hatʰ mɛ̃ hɛ   (Now the matter is in the hands of Police)

[hatʰ mɛ̃ ana ja pəɖna]   = To come under control, To gain

[hatʰ se dʒana ja nɪkəl dʒana] = To get out of one's control

[hatʰ ləgna]   = To come by, to lay hands on

[hatʰ me ana]   = To fall into the clutches of

➤ HOLDING IN THE HAND IS COOPERATION – The action of holding hands of each other implies that the two persons have a positive relationships. For example: [daud ibrahɪm ɔr tʃʰoʈa radʒən nẽ punəh hatʰ mɪla lɪja hɛ] Daud Ibrahim and Chota Rajan again joined their hands.

[hatʰ milana]   = To form companion/partnership

[hatʰ dena]   = To give signal, to lend a helping hand

[hatʰ pəkəɖna]   = To support, to obstruct, to marry, to accept a woman as a spouse, to look after, to obstruct, to provide support

➤ HANDS UP IS SURRENDER – As soon as we raise up our hands, we drop the weapons from our hands. This implies surrendering. For example: [hatʰ kʰəɖa kərna] - To surrender.

➤ TO KEEP HANDS ON (SOMEONE) IS PROTECTION – When we keep hands on someone actually we are protecting that person.

[kɪsi pər hatʰ rəkʰna]   = Protecting somebody

[kɪsi ke sɪr pər hatʰ rəkʰna] To patronize, to take one under protection

➤ FINDING SOMETHING IS PUTTING HANDS ON SOMETHING – Finding out about something. We usually say that we have put our hands on it. Therefore, the expression of putting hands on something means 'make contact with something' and further to 'find out something, attain, or succeed'.

[hatʰ hona]   = To have a hand

[hatʰ kʰali dʒana]   = To miss the target

[hatʰ adʒmana]   = To try one's hand

> ➤ FREEDOM TO ACT IS HAVING HANDS FREE- Freedom is largely conceptualized as freedom to act. It is felt to be natural that freedom is metaphorically understood in terms of the free use of hands.

[kɪsi ka hat^h rokna] to prevent, to refrain from	= To control some other person's activities,
[hat^h k^{h}ulna] spend lavishly	= To play ducks and drakes with money, to
[hat^h tʃəlana/tʃ^{h}oɖna]	= To hit, to strike

> ➤ HELPING SOMEBODY IS GIVING HAND - When we help others we generally use our hands this is embodied as helping.

[hat^h ləgana] = To support, to commence work, to beat

[hat^h bə̃ʈana] = Extend corporation, to lend a helping hand

[hat^h bəʈana] = Co-operate with a person, to endeavor to get anything

Metonymy of Hand

There are a lot of metonymical expressions of 'hand' and studies to go along with these expressions. In the studies of idiomatic expressions of 'hand' metonymical expressions are more in number than metaphorical expressions.

> ➤ HAND STANDS FOR PERSON- One of the best metonymies in Hindi is the *hand stands for the person*. For example:

[mɛnẽ əpna dahɪna hat^h k^{h}o dɪja] I   lost   my   right   hand,

[hər hat^h ko kam ɔr hər mũh ko roʈi] work to all and food to all.

Here in both the examples hand stands for the person. This metonymy is based on the part and whole relationship. Here is first

example [dahına hatʰ] means 'a loyal or reliable person'. In this example, the [dahına] implies 'good and favorable things' whereas [hatʰ] directly denoting a 'person'.

- ➤ HAND STANDS FOR ACTIVITY- It is not very difficult to imagine that hand stands for the activity by the hand. Basis for this conceptual metonymy is that many prototypical human activities are performed with hands.

[hatʰ pãʊ t͡ʃəlana/pʰĕkna] = To exert for earning livelihood

[hatʰ kət d͡ʒana] = To be helpless

[hatʰ bət͡ʃana] = To defend oneself against a blow, to protect oneself

[əpna hatʰ rokna] = To control self activities

[hatʰ dəbna] = To be in hot waters, to be in the grip of a crisis

- ➤ HAND STANDS FOR TREMENDOUSNESS – If we will take hand as measurement sometimes the length of hand is indicator of extremeness or tremendousness of the human activity.

[hatʰ bʰər ka kəled͡ʒa hona] = To be wildly delighted, to have tremendous courage

[hatʰ bʰər ki zəban hona] = To be insolently outspoken

- ➤ HAND STANDS FOR SKILL- Not only activity but also some skill needs to perform the work. This appears through some metonymical expression related with hand. The source of the metonymy is likely to be the idea that the activities that require the use of the human hand usually also require skill and sophistication in the use of the hand.

[hat^h dɪk^{h}ana] one's efficacy	= To show one's skill, to show proof of
[hat^h dʒəmana]	= To acquire perfection
[(kɪsi kam mẽ) hat^h bɛʈ^{h}na ja dʒəmna]	=To have acquired a proficiency
[hat^h sap^h kərna]	= To plunder, to pilfer
[hat^h mẽ səp^{h}ai]	= Manual skill

> HAND STANDS FOR CONTROL- Holding something is our hands, it naturally belongs to us and we can even further control it.

[(kɪsi ʋjəktɪ ka) hat^h mẽ ana ja pəɖəna] = To come under control

[(kɪsi ʋjəktɪ ka) hat^h se dʒana ja nikəl dʒana] =To get out of one's control

> HAND STANDS FOR WARMTH/EMOTIONS – Sometimes hands stands for the warm behavior or emotions.

[hat^{h}õ lena] = To give a warm reception

[hat^{h}õ hat^h le lena] = To receive cordially, to receive one with all respect.

> FOLDED HAND STANDS FOR INACTIVITY/ SURRENDER – It is already explained that hand stands for activity. If we will take from opposite, folded hands stands for the inactivity or complete surrender.

[hat^h bãd^{h}e k^{h}əɖe hona] submission = To be at one's beck and call, complete

[hat^h bãd^{h}e hona] = bounded by some promises

> ➤ HAND STANDS FOR GIVING/HELPING – When we help others we generally use our hands i.e. pulling luggage, taking down something from one place to others, working in the filed, cleaning etc. Therefore *hand* is used to indicate the activity of helping. The action of giving is also one of the most important roles of Hand.

[hat^h ləgana]	= To support. to commence work. to beat
[hat^h bə̄ʈana]	= Extend corporation. to lend a helping hand
[hat^h ḍalna]	= To meddle. To undertake a work.

With the utilization of cognitive mechanism of idiom analysis (metaphor. metonymy and conventional of the use of hand) maximum number of idioms of Hindi can be analyzed but some of the idiom needs native speakers like control over the language to understand the inherent meaning due to local cultural traits. For example:

[usəke hat^h ke mēhəndi əbhi sukhi b^{h}ɪ nəhi thi kɪ betʃari ʋɪd^{h}əʋa ho g əji] Here mehandi is conveying meaning ʻrecently marriedʼ.

[hat^h ka mɛl]	= To be of no consequence. trivial
[hat^h ki ləkir]	= Oneʼs fate
[hat^h mē mēhəndi ləgi hona]	= To be absolutely idle. to be incapable of taking necessary action
[hat^h pər dəhi dʒəmana]	= To show oneʼs promptness
[hat^h pile kərna]	= To marry off a daughter

Conclusion

Cognitive linguistics places central importance on the role of meaning, conceptual process and embodied experiences. This has influenced the structure of the metaphors and metonymy. The whole set of this exercise is to provide structure to understand one conceptual domain (target domain) with the help of other conceptual domain (source domain). This allows inferences which hold in the source to be applied to the target. With the help of above discussed examples it can be said that most of the idioms are conceptual and not only linguistic in nature. The meaning of nearly all the

idioms is motivated rather than arbitrary in the sense that linked literal meanings to the figurative idiomatic meaning. Analysis of body-part related idioms can be understood in the light of this mechanism.

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