

## CONCEPTUAL COGNITION IN PASHTO POETRY: A COGNITIVE STYLISTIC MAPPING OF CONSTRUAL IN THE POEMS OF SAHIB SHAH SABIR

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### Abstract

Poetry has always been considered as an aesthetic activity, however; cognitive linguistics and stylistics show that it is a highly organized thinking process. This paper explores the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir as a system of conceptual cognition in the context of cognitive stylistics, based on the main theories in cognitive linguistics through the construction of meaning by the five main dimensions of construal: Perspective, Negation, Metacognition, Prominence, and Force Dynamics. The study combines mixed methods, allowing to employ qualitative close reading, visual modeling, and quantitative analysis of twenty selected poems. The findings show that the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir is a dynamic cognitive system that creates experience, resistance, epistemic power, and revolution. This piece of work aims in contributing to the field of cognitive stylistics by extending its practice to Pashto poetry, making Sabir a conceptual poet and broadening the domain of cognitive poetics beyond Western literary discourse.

**Keywords:** Cognitive stylistics, conceptual construal, Pashto poetry, Sahib Shah Sabir

### Introduction

Poetry has long been considered an aesthetic expression and an expression of emotion; however, modern trends in cognitive linguistics and cognitive stylistics demonstrate that poetic language is also a mode of thought. Poetry does not simply describe experiences; it structures, assesses, and conceptualizes them using language. In this regard, poems are considered as places of conceptual thought, where meaning is constructed through perspective, salience, force, and epistemic position (Stockwell, 2002). Cognitive linguistics has also determined that mental activity of construal, force dynamics, and viewpoint is encoded in language, and thus, it is a major way of how human cognition is organized (Langacker, 2008; Talmy, 2000). These revelations give a new prospect on the study of poetry not as an exaggerated language, but as a dynamic system of conceptual arrangement. Despite the extensive application of cognitive stylistics to English literary texts, it has hardly been applied to the Pashto poetry. This is a major gap since Pashto poetry is an abundant intellectual and philosophical tradition, where language operates not just aesthetically, but also cognitively and ideologically. Applying cognitive stylistic inquiry to Pashto literature benefits the development of theoretical knowledge in the field, as well as the comprehension of poetry as a universal mental activity on an international level (Stockwell, 2002; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2025). Sahib Shah Sabir holds a unique place in Pashto literature. He was not merely a renowned poet, but an excellent scholar who earned a PhD in Literature and worked as a Professor of Pashto at the University of Peshawar. His intellectual and cognitive sensitivity was a distinctive feature of his work because he was a scholar and a poet at the same time. Like Ghani Khan, who has been one of the greatest Pashto poets and philosophers, Sahib Shah Sabir envisions poetry as an observational and resisting zone, however; instead of tracing out an intellectual lineage, Sabir classifies poetic language as the site of experiential cognition, in which intellectual questioning

and epistemological conflict are created by the lived emotional and social realities. Although Sabir was an intellectual, there is little research on his poetry which is barely thematic or stylistic. The symbolism, emotion, and socio-political aspects have been studied the most, while the cognitive processes through which his poetry is constructed to create meaning have not been studied systematically. Additionally, past studies are based nearly on qualitative explanation and have not been empirically proven. The work that evidences the working of cognitive construal patterns in the corpus of Sabir and how poetic cognition can be studied, using a triangulated mixed-method approach is limited. This gap significantly inspires the current study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

While cognitive stylistics has already established poetry as a conceptual structure, its use in Pashto poetry, especially in the work by Sahib Shah Sabir is practically an unexplored area. The contemporary literature on the poetry of Sabir is mostly thematic, symbolic, or socio-political, emphasizing on what the poems articulate, focusing less on the cognitive construction of meaning through poetic language. Because of this, the systematic role of perspective, negation, metacognition, prominence, and force dynamics in the development of poetic cognition has not been empirically examined. In addition, the majority of previous studies are based on qualitative interpretation only, and they are not triangulated methodologically, which withdraws the stability and structural independence of cognitive patterns of validation. The current study addresses a methodological gap by employing a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis with visual modeling and statistical verification, which has not been applied to the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir before. This distance is particularly noticeable in the light of the fact that Sabir is a poet and a scholar, whose work is marked with clear philosophical and cognitive consciousness. This is why mixed-methods research that combines the qualitative analysis with visual modeling and statistical verification is necessary to verify how the poetry of Sabir is a structured system of conceptual cognition and place the Pashto poetry in the context of cognitive stylistics.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the cognitive construal strategies that shape the meaning of the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir?
2. How far can these construal strategies be identified as having stable and independent patterns of cognition throughout the selected poetic corpus?

### **Research Objectives**

- To determine and examine the significant cognitive construal dimensions within which the poetry by Sabir is conceptually constructed.
- To justify the distribution and independence of these dimensions of construal through statistical analysis.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study supports the argument that poetry is a kind of conceptual cognition as opposed to stylistic decoration in theory. It shows a methodological way of combining qualitative

interpretation, visual modeling, and statistical validation into a single mixed-methods system, and adhering to the best practices of the mixed-method research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). It culturally applies the cognitive stylistics to Pashto poetry, demonstrating that cognitive construal can be applied to linguistic and cultural contexts, and it is not limited to Western literary traditions. By placing the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir in a cognitive context, the paper establishes the poet as a poet of cognition, whose poetry turns language into an epistemic power, resistance, and conceptual structure.

### Literature Review

Cognitive poetics is an interdisciplinary discipline that combines the insights of cognitive linguistics, literary theory, and psychology to discuss the way readers create meaning out of the literary texts (Brône & Vandaele, 2009). Stockwell (2002) argues that cognitive poetics foregrounds the mental processes like attention, conceptual categorization, metaphor comprehension, and narrative simulation. They are not only activated in the process of reading but influence the interpretation of the text to the reader. According to Gavins and Steen (2003), literary language is a system of conceptual direction, which organizes the perception and organization of events by the readers. Existing research in the field of cognitive linguistics shows that language is a manifestation of general mental processes rather than arbitrary codes of symbols. To illustrate, as demonstrated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors in language are based on embodied experience, which influences conceptual cognition. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002), conceptual blending is a process in which the reader integrates different mental spaces to form imaginative meaning. This process is especially prominent in poetry (Gibbs, 1994).

Stockwell (2002) points out that poetry is not only decorative or expressive of emotions:

Poetry is a highly structured thinking process, where attentional control, conceptual metaphor, and perspective act in collaboration with each other to shape how the reader perceives and interprets the text.

Stockwell (2007) also believes that poetic devices lead to the systematic attention and conceptualization, while Tsur (2008) places cognitive poetics in a theoretical frame of systematic literary analysis. Empirical evidence shows that the reading process involves cognitive processes, which are measurable and comprehensible (Miall & Kuiken, 1994).

### Construal Theory in Cognitive Poetics

The concept of construal theory is crucial in cognitive poetics, which explains how language users selectively organize and interpret experiences (Langacker, 2008). Construal involves perspective, salience, force dynamics, and conceptual integration, which together determine representations of events that have been encoded in language (Talmy, 2000). Perspective influences the cognitive viewpoint, narrative agency, point of view, and subjective alignment with characters (Stockwell, 2007). The dynamic of force offers a paradigm of interpreting the interactions, resistance, and transformations in the texts, which determine causality and agency (Evans and Green, 2006). Conceptual blending allows the readers to mix the elements in various mental space, producing some imaginative meaning, especially in figurative language (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002). Negation emphasizes the contrast or absence to direct

interpretive attention, whereas metacognition helps a reader to think about cognitive processes, which leads to intense engagement (Freeman, 2012). Werth (1999) goes further to explain that readers create text worlds through combining linguistic signs with experiential knowledge to build immersive reading experiences.

### **Empirical Approaches in Cognitive Stylistics**

Although the theoretical frameworks provide explanations on the way cognitive mechanisms work, the empirical cognitive stylistics is evidence-based and is systematic. Quantitative validation is the complementary element of close reading, which enables the researcher to test the consistency of construal operations across the texts (Semino & Short, 2004). Diagrammatic and network-based approaches, including semantic network analysis and conceptual mapping, have been applied to cognitively model construal patterns and conceptual structure in literary works by cognitive poetics and cognitive linguistics (Drieger, 2013). Frequency counts, normalization, and non-parametric correlations are quantitative approaches that enable researchers to establish the presence of a recurring pattern in construal dimensions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Empirical cognitive stylistics shows that construal operations can be quantified and empirically validated, which is a compromise between subjective interpretation and scientific validation (Hakemulder et al., 2007). Empirical psycholinguistic studies have been used to analyze English poetry to explore how readers focus on and access conceptual metaphors during reading activities, which gives evidence of cognitive processing of metaphorical mapping in poems (Rasse et al., 2020). Cognitive stylistics is a combination of qualitative interpretation with various complementary analytical tools to deliver methodological rigor in various forms of textual analysis (Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010).

### **Practice of Cognitive Poetics in Poetry**

Applying cognitive poetics to poetry reveals the interaction of linguistic form and cognitive function. Metaphors provide a mapping of abstract conceptual domains, allowing the reader to re-envision complex concepts through embodied schemas (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). Fauconnier and Turner (2002) show that conceptual blending assists in the creation of new meaning in figurative language. Cognitive models of figurative language suggest that the interpretation of complex and metaphorical constructions which are the focal point of both ordinary cognition and poetic interpretation, involves the consideration of underlying conceptual mappings (Katz et al., 1998). The repetition or syntactic deviation is achieved through foregrounding, increases cognitive salience and directs attention on key conceptual frames (Miall & Kuiken, 1994). The change of perspective and narrative enables readers to co-create text worlds, simulating events and experiences of characters (Herman, 2002; Werth, 1999). Force dynamics frames interactions, resistance, and changes in poetry, adding to the temporal and affective experience of readers (Talmy, 2000; Evans & Green, 2006). According to Toolan (1998) and van Peer (2008), all these construal operations lead to the generation of multi-layered cognitive meanings that go beyond stylistic description.

### **Transference to Pashto Poetry**

Although cognitive poetics has been greatly applied to English and European literatures (Stockwell, 2002; Semino & Short, 2004), little research has been done on non-Western poetic traditions, especially Pashto poetry. Sahib Shah Sabir is one of the greatest Pashto poets, who

is acknowledged due to his philosophical richness and intense conceptuality. Existing research on Sabir and his contemporaries has been mainly thematic, socio-political, or stylistic (Gavins & Steen, 2003; Freeman, 2012). To the best of my knowledge, there no systematic study, that has explored the cognitive processes, such as perspective, negation, metacognition, prominence and force dynamics, that structure meaning in his work. Therefore, this absence represents both a theoretical gap and a methodological opportunity for the current study. In theory, it limits the knowledge of functioning of Pashto poetic language as a conceptual cognition system. Methodologically, cognitive stylistics may be investigated in a qualitative close-reading and quantitative corpus-informed manner to uncover repeated patterns of construal and stylistic phenomenon; pluralistic or mixed methodologies or approaches are documented in stylistics methodology (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; McIntyre & Walker, 2019) and generally in applied linguistics studies (Riazi & Amini Farsani, 2024). Application of cognitive poetics to the poetry of Sabir does not only place his poetry within a broader international framework but also proves the fact that the mechanisms of construal as traditionally studied in Western literary studies, can be seen in other linguistic and cultural settings. The mapping of these cognitive dimensions helps this study shed light on the complex interaction between language, cognition, and conceptual meaning in Pashto poetry, thus filling a critical gap in both the literary theory and empirical stylistics.

## Method

### Philosophy and Approach to Research

This study is based on an interpretivist philosophy and a constructivist ontological position, which assumes poetic meaning as cognitively constructed through language and perception rather than objectively fixed. Poetry is considered as a system of organizing experience, emotion and belief conceptually. Epistemologically, knowledge is produced through a systematic interpretation of linguistic patterns, whereas a pragmatic approach combines qualitative analysis and quantitative validation to ensure both the depth of the theoretical approach and empirical validation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The study uses a mixed approach of cognition stylistic method with qualitative priority and quantitative confirmation. Cognitive patterns are first discovered through close reading and then tested for stability through statistical analysis. This method enables poetry to be explored as conceptual cognition as well as a structured system of language whose patterns can be empirically verified.

### Research Design and Corpus

This study is a sequential mixed-methods research where qualitative analysis is followed by quantitative validation. The qualitative phase determines the way of operation of cognitive construal in the poetic language, and the quantitative phase confirms the stability and distribution of these patterns in the corpus. The corpus is a collection of twenty purposively selected poems of Sahib Shah Sabir taken from the book *د صاحب شاه صابر گلیات* (The Complete Collected Poems of Sahib Shah Sabir). Purposive sampling was followed in order to ensure formal and cognitive diversity, such as short poems, stanza poems, couplet poems, and ghazals. Selection has been based on the requirement for contrastive construal patterns rather than on frequency or popularity. The assumption that the corpus is closed and finite supports the application of confirmatory statistical methods used in designing the study as the objective is

not to investigate an open population, but to confirm the existence of identified cognitive structures.

### **Units of Analysis and Coding Framework**

Two units of analysis are used; the poetic line, expanded to couplet or stanza for qualitative interpretation, and the construal token for quantitative analysis. This difference makes interpretation based on textual structure and measurement cognitive, which provides methodological clarity (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2025). The framework is operationalized in five categories of construal, which are, PERSP (perspective and positioning), NEG (negation and epistemic boundaries), META (reflection on cognition and belief), PROM (foregrounding through repetition and patterning), and FORCE (pressure, motion, and transformation). META is coded when explicit epistemic reflection is involved and more than one category can be found in a unit, which indicates the multidimensionality of poetic cognition. The framework is based on construal theory and force dynamics in cognitive linguistics (Langacker, 2008; Talmy, 2000).

### **Preparation of Data Rigor and Ethical Considerations**

All construal tokens are hand-identified and normalized per 100 lines to make comparison across poems (Biber et al., 2012). Qualitative analysis is the interpretation of poems as cognitive operations based on Pashto lines and exact English translations. Quantitative analysis tests the systematic distribution of these patterns using Excel for visualization, and JASP for descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank-order correlations are selected for non-parametric, confirmatory analysis. The rigor is provided by theoretical base, uniform coding, and clear procedures. Triangulation between close reading, visualization, and statistics contributes to the validity and reduces impressionistic interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Ethical responsibility is observed in the reliability of the text, the accuracy of excerpts and the consistency of translation as the poems are treated as cultural and intellectual artifacts without analytical manipulation.

### **Presentation of Data and Results**

This chapter presents a mixed method analysis of twenty poems written by Sahib Shah Sabir which were purposely selected from *د صاحب شاه صابر ګلیات* (The Complete Collected Poems of Sahib Shah Sabir). Grounded in cognitive stylistics, which takes poetry as conceptual cognition, a linguistic system by which experience, ideology, and emotion are mentally structured. The analysis takes an evidence first logic, a combination of close qualitative reading and quantitative patterning. The qualitative analysis reveals the operation of construal at the level of individual lines, couplets and stanzas, whereas the quantitative analysis captures the distribution and stability of the construal strategies across the selected corpus. The combination of these approaches guarantees both cognitive and empirical validity of interpretation.

### **Analytical Framework and Coding Model**

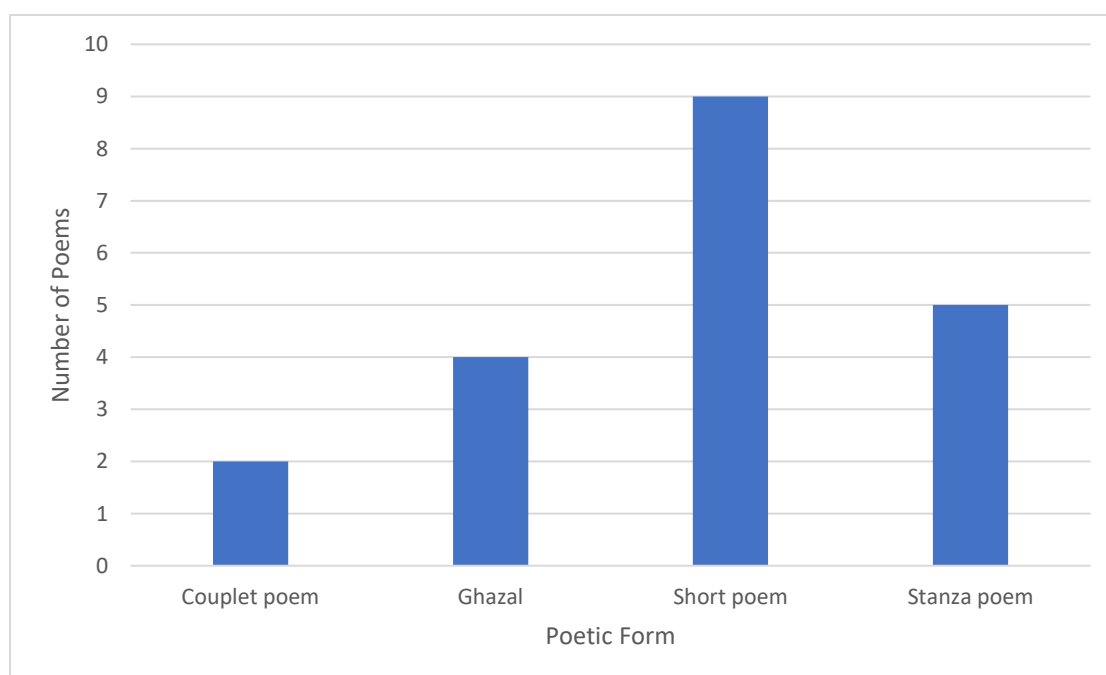
The present analysis is an interpretation of Sahib Shah Sabir's poems in terms of five construal dimensions which serve as cognitive strategies rather than procedural codes: Perspective and Deixis (PERSP), Negation and Refusal (NEG), Metacognition (META), Prominence and

Parallelism (PROM), Force Dynamics and Evaluation (FORCE). The self and other are positioned in PERSP, and the resistance and epistemic boundaries in NEG, conceptual salience in META, pre-conceptual in PROM, and pressure, movement, and transformation in FORCE. These dimensions combined indicate that poetic meaning is the result of interplay of cognitive processes, not merely the product of individual stylistic means. The fact they co-occur shows that poetic cognition is multi-dimensional, perspective, negation, reflection, salience, and energy are organized simultaneously to give the theoretical foundation of the visual patterns and qualitative analyses.

Figure 1 illustrates the formal composition of the selected corpus with the largest group of poems being short poems, followed by stanza poems and ghazals, and occurrences of couplet poems being less frequent. This diversity means that the compact and extended structures of poetry are both represented. Building on this overview, the analyses of the distribution of five construal categories: PERSP, NEG, META, PROM, and FORCE across the poems are based on normalized frequencies per 100 lines, in order to make systematic and comparable cognitive patterning possible.

**Figure 1**

*Distribution of poetic forms in the selected corpus of Sahib Shah Sabir's poems (N = 20)*



*Note.* This figure provides an overview of the formal composition of the corpus and confirms that the selected poems represent a balanced range of poetic structures for subsequent cognitive–stylistic analysis.

These normalized values are visualized in figure 2, as the rows are poems and the columns are construal categories. The darker the shade, the more a given construal strategy is concentrated, and the lighter the shade, the less the strategy is activated. Figure 2, thus, gives a cognitive signature of each poem and also one can easily compare various poetic construal profiles. The

aim behind this is to demonstrate whether the poems of Sabir work by the same cognitive mechanisms or whether they exhibit the systematic variation of the manner in which the experience, emotion, and ethical position are organized in the mind.

**Figure 2**

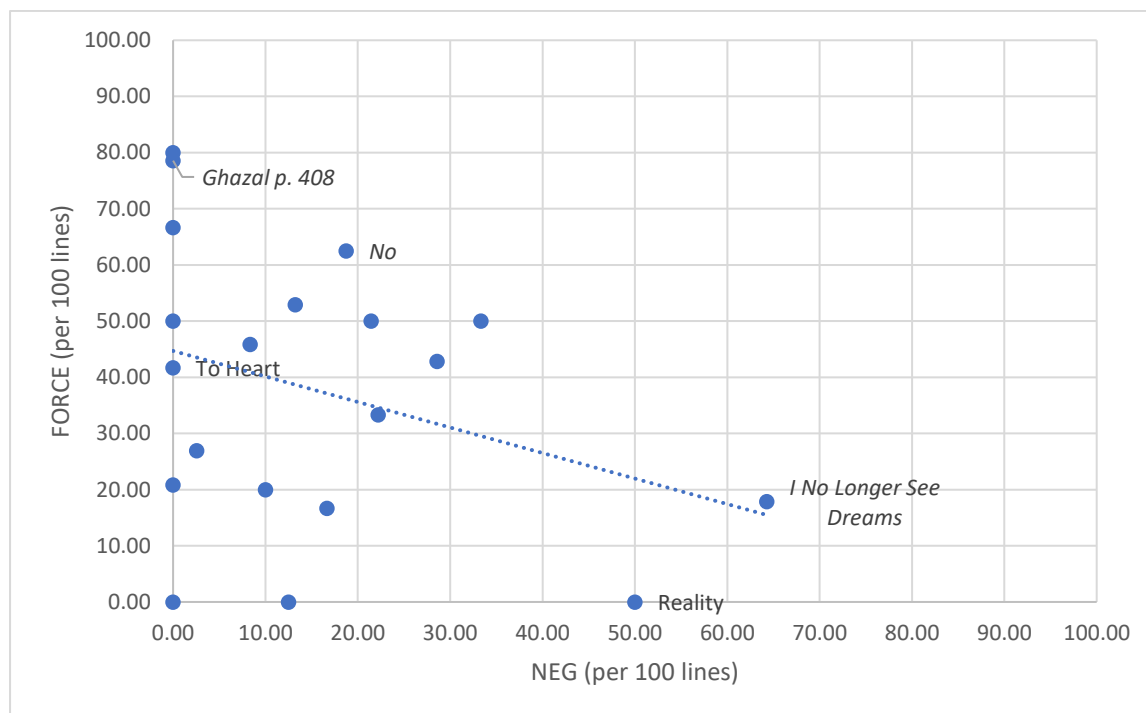
*Construal Heatmap of Cognitive Patterns in Sabir Shah Sabir's Poems*

Poem Title	PERSP per100	NEG per100	META per100	PROM per100	FORCE per100
To Heart	89.58	0.00	0.00	12.50	41.67
To Spring	25.00	8.33	0.00	12.50	45.83
Dedicated to a Kalasha girl of Bumburet	43.59	2.56	2.56	17.95	26.92
You and I	100.00	0.00	12.50	50.00	20.83
No	0.00	18.75	31.25	31.25	62.50
Reality	100.00	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00
I No Longer See Dreams	89.29	64.29	0.00	0.00	17.86
Helplessness	75.00	33.33	0.00	0.00	50.00
Astonishment	5.88	13.24	0.00	2.94	52.94
Interrogation	75.00	12.50	0.00	25.00	0.00
Ghazal (p. 263–264)	100.00	22.22	5.56	11.11	33.33
Ghazal (p. 282)	85.71	21.43	0.00	0.00	50.00
Ghazal (p. 358–359)	100.00	10.00	65.00	15.00	20.00
Ghazal (p. 408)	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	78.57
Memory	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80.00
Sin	28.57	0.00	0.00	14.29	0.00
Waiting	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00
Temptation	0.00	16.67	0.00	16.67	16.67
Exhaustion	66.67	0.00	0.00	33.33	66.67
Truth	0.00	28.57	0.00	28.57	42.86

*Note.* Values represent normalized frequencies per 100 lines. Darker shading indicates higher construal prominence.

Figure 2 indicates that the patterns of construal are systematically distributed throughout the corpus and do not create a homogenous profile. There are those poems where PERSP predominates and the subjective placement is central, while others with high values of FORCE, which anticipates the pressure of experience and the intensity of dynamism. META and PROM are more selective, and they are special cognitive resources but not ubiquitous structuring processes. Figure 2 indicates that there are specific cognitive profiles of the poems and offers a quantitative foundation of the following qualitative analyses. Although Figure 2 indicates the dominance of the construal categories in individual poems, it does not indicate the interaction. Figure 3 establishes a plot of NEG vs. FORCE to test the relationship between negation-oriented and force-oriented construals in the corpus.

**Figure 3**  
*NEG–FORCE Construal Relationship in the Corpus*



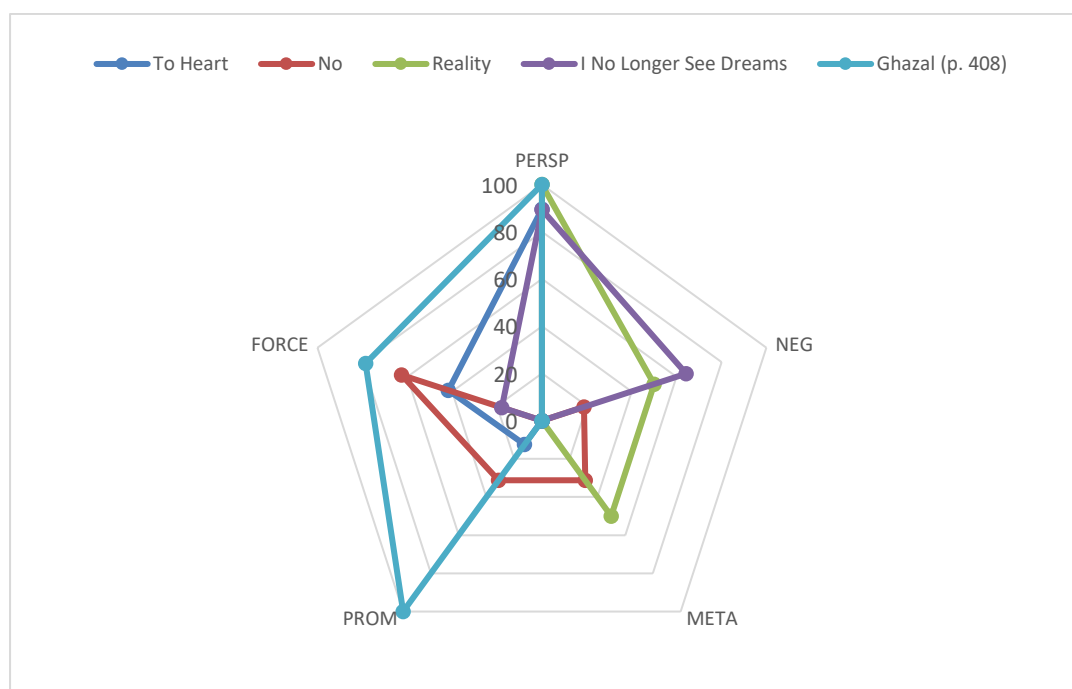
*Note.* Values are normalized per 100 poetic lines and selected poems are labeled to highlight extreme or theoretically salient construal positions.

Figure 3 shows that NEG and FORCE have non-linear and scattered relationship throughout the corpus, meaning that high negation does not always mean high force. The maximum NEG with rather low FORCE is occupied by نور خوبونه نه وينم (I No Longer See Dreams), and the maximum values of FORCE are occupied by غزل (Ghazal p. 408). Equally, نه (No) displays a composite eminence of both NEG and FORCE, which makes it a position of construal conflict. These distributions indicate that NEG and FORCE are independent distributions that are interactively significant dimensions of poetic cognition.

Figure 4 of the five representative poems is used to display the positions of the articles in the construal space that have structurally prominent positions: زره ته (To Heart), نه (No), حقيقت (Reality), نور خوبونه نه وينم (I No Longer See Dreams), and غزل (Ghazal p. 408). The Figure then visualizes the distribution of cognitive weight of each poem in the five dimensions, allowing an integrated comparison of the inner conceptual structures of the poems. It, therefore, prefigures poetry as a dynamic system where various construal dimensions are in synchrony to build meaning.

**Figure 4**

*Construal Radar Profiles of Representative Poems in the Corpus*



*Note.* Values represent normalized frequencies per 100 lines for each construal dimension; larger radial extensions indicate greater cognitive prominence of the corresponding construal type within each poem.

Figure 4 indicates that there are distinctively different signatures of construal in the chosen poems. *زیره ته* (To Heart) is a mixture of high PERSP and high FORCE, which implies cognitively motivated experiential intensity. NEG and META are more prevalent in the poem *نه* (No), denial and reflective abstraction. Extreme NEG and less FORCE are observed in *نور* (I No Longer See Dreams), which reflects cognitive exhaustion. *غزل* (Ghazal p. 408) has the highest FORCE and PROM, which indicates that it is intensified the most dynamically. The NEG-META configuration of *حقیقت* (Reality) is balanced, which implies stabilized cognitive reflection.

### Poem-by-Poem Cognitive Analysis

This part shifts from pattern-level mapping to textual cognition through investigating individual poems as systems of conceptual construal. Although Figure 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicate global distributions, the following investigation indicates how the category of construal is represented in poetic language. Every poem is an act of cognitive system, where perspective, negation, metacognition, prominence, and force are used by working through the linguistic structure and poetry is an active mode of conceptual organization rather than aesthetic decoration.

#### *زیره ته* (To Heart) – Perspective Anchoring and Force-Driven Cognition

This poem shows the most extreme intersection of the PERSP and FORCE dynamics within the corpus. The poem has maintained a structure of cognition that is adhered to a contrastive

ته-زه (I-you) structure in which the speaker positions the زه (I) as existentially located in the suffering, action, and endurance, and the ته (you) is situated in illusion, desire, and aesthetic distraction. It is not just an inter-personal opposition, but it creates two incompatible cognitive worlds: one based on the gravity of experience, and the other floating in the comfort of imagination.

A perspectival division is created in the opening stanza:

زه د حالاتو په دارونو زانگم  
ته د چا زلفي بالبنټونه غواړي  
زه د وختونو په انگار دبره يم  
ته د چا سري شوندي گلونه غواړي

*I am hanging on the gibbets of circumstances  
while you want someone's tresses as pillows  
I remain camped on the burning embers of times  
while you ask for someone's red lips as flowers*

In this opening stanza, PERSP is cognitively actualized in the repetitive contrastive alignment ته-زه (I-you). The speaker to whom the construal is related is based on existential pressure د حالاتو په دارونو (the gibbets of circumstances), د وختونو په انگار (the burning embers of times), whereas the world of the addressee is based on softness and aesthetic desire زلفي بالبنټونه (tresses as pillows), سري شوندي گلونه (red lips as flowers). The perspective is a cognitive process of separating reality in terms of endurance and indulgence. The metaphoric density also triggers FORCE, which is not a matter of existence but a matter of coercion, weightiness, and physical imposition.

This force-oriented cognition intensifies in the later stanza:

زه د عمل د قافلو سره ځم  
ته د خيالونو په دنيا کبني گرځي  
زه په دې زمکه نوي ژوند توکوم  
تا نه ځان هېر دې په هوا کبني گرځي

*I move with the caravans of action  
you wander in the world of imaginations  
I stitch a new life into this earth  
you forget yourself, floating in the air*

There is the lexical contrast between the directional force of عمل د قافلو (the caravans of action) and د خيالونو په دنيا (in the world of imaginations), which is force as directional momentum. Action is theorized in the form of movement, stitching, construction, and grounding. The imagination is theorized in the form of suspension and cognitive drift. FORCE, in this case, is not aggression but ontological movement, the obligatoriness to form reality, not to avoid it.

Ethical confrontation is another spectacular expression of FORCE:

زه د دروغو گوداگي ماتوم  
ته دروغونو ته پناه ورکوي

زه په رښتياؤ کافر شوی یمه  
ته دروغونو له بقا ورکوي

*I break the puppets of lies  
you offer shelter to liars  
I have truly become a non-believer  
you give survival to fabricators*

In these lines, FORCE is moral and epistemic. The poet commits cognitive violence to falsity (break the puppets of lies), whereas the addressee preserves the act of lying. This makes FORCE an act of conceptual resistance, the truth has to be brought against the illusion.

The stanza also enhances FORCE by way of endurance suffering:

زه د ترخو غمونو زهر گونم  
ته شرابونه مېکډي یادوي  
زه په ډوډۍ پسې تکرې خورمه  
ته عشرتونه مېڅاني یادوي

*I swallow the poison of bitter grief  
you remember wine and bars  
I stumble while searching for bread  
you remember pleasure and partying*

In this case, FORCE is the survival compulsion. The ingestion of pain, the struggle to endure scarcity, and the preservation of dignity is achieved through struggle, and the addressee is still cognitively dissociated in hedonistic memory.

The poem is built in such a way that the point of view is ethical and not observational such that the *زه* (I) is brought to be the only point of cognitive power by enduring and being accountable. FORCE is an existential propulsion, which is propelled by pressure and action. That is why the values of PERSP and FORCE of the poem are extremely high in Figure 4. Its thinking is performative, where language acts out the survival, judgment and conceptual authority, making the poetry of Sabir a conceptual cognition in action.

#### **نه(No) – Negation as Conceptual Power and Cognitive Resistance**

In this poem, Sabir Shah Sabir uses one word of lexicon to turn it into a whole system of conceptual thinking. In contrast to *زړه ته* (To Heart), where action and endurance are the forces that create it, *نه* (No) is the cognition that is structured by NEG as its main principle and META as reflective consciousness of that principle. Negation does not constitute grammatical denial, but epistemic authority, which is a mental tool that questions authority, breaks the flow, and disrupts the dominance.

نه یو ټکی دی یو غږ دی  
یو افت دی یو غضب دی  
چې په کومه ژبه و اوري  
هغه ژبه دائمي شي

لافاني شي، لاثاني شي  
نه ٽٽيري، نه غوڻڀري، چي خوڻڀري

*No is a single word, a single sound  
it is a calamity, a storm  
Whichever language it passes through  
that language becomes eternal  
immortal, unmatched  
It does not weaken, it is not cut off; once it moves*

In the above lines, NEG is raised to the level of ontological force. The poet explains the meaning of نه (No) as *يو افت* (a calamity) and *يو غضب* (a storm), and cognitively re-defines a negative action as disruptive. The poet does not describe negation as the absence, but as the presence that has power. This is the reason why نه (No) takes a high NEG position in Figure 3 and 4. Constructive refusal is not passive refusal, but cognitive refusal.

The META dimension is manifested as the poet thinks about the interaction of negation with the language itself:

چي په کومه ژبه و اوږي  
هغه ژبه دائمي شي

*Whichever language it passes through  
that language becomes eternal*

This is the highest form of metacognition. The poet is not talking, but he is contemplating the way language works by negation. نه (No) transforms into a meta-linguistic agent of speech, which provides speech with permanency and power. Hypothetically, Sabir bases his theorization of language within poetry, showing that poetic speech can achieve philosophical thinking.

The power of the negation is then directly connected to the political and social power:

د چا راج ته خطره وي  
د چا تاج ته خطره وي

*it becomes a threat to someone's rule  
a danger to someone's crown*

NEG in this case is very political. It endangers the sovereignty and hierarchy. Sabir Shah Sabir introduces negation as a mental process that disrupts the systems of supremacy. Conceptually, NEG turns into a destabilizing power, which can dismantle authority with a single expression. The poem نه (No) builds negation as a mental absolute as opposed to a form of grammar. It has a high NEG and FORCE value, indicating that refusal is energy, resistance, and epistemic assertion. META is formed out of the realization of language as a locus of power and permanence. The poem shows that negation is a knowledge production, in which cognition, language, and conceptual defiance come together.

**حقيقت (Reality) – Negation as Epistemic Boundary and Metacognitive Recognition**

In this poem, Sabir Shah Sabir creates a rather tight, yet philosophically thick mental zone in which NEG and META work in a reciprocal and mutually supporting relationship. In contrast to نه (No) which is resistance and force as a form of negation, in this case, negation is an epistemic boundary, a manner of denoting what cannot be claimed, possessed, or known completely. The poem then changes the mind to the face-to-face to the recognition and negation to the instrument of conceptual honesty.

ما وي چي ڪه ورڪه په مخه دي بنه  
نه مي ڪه بي او نه دي پيڙنمه

*I said, go, may your path be easy  
I neither know you, nor do I recognize you*

The two negatives نه مي ڪه بي (I neither know you) and نه دي پيڙنمه (nor do I recognize you) interpret NEG as epistemic disengagement in place of aggressive disengagement. Negation in this case, identifies the cognitive limits of self and other, and determines responsibility limits. In the meantime, META is triggered since the awareness of itself is the object of reflection, the non-recognition and knowing are predetermined as cognitive processes. The poem, therefore, turns denial into metacognitive awareness in which the epistemic limitation becomes the major conceptual content.

This intercourse is intensified by the final couplet:

هغه وي ته به زما صبر نه شي  
زما صابره زه دي پيڙنمه

*She said, you will not be able to endure me  
my dear Sabir, I know you*

In this couplet, there is reversal of perspective with the other asserting recognition and building a rival cognitive authority. The reality is defined by the one voice in terms of the negation نه (nor do I recognize you) and the other voice in terms of the recognition زه دي پيڙنمه (I know you), forming a metacognitive dialogue of epistemic positions. The reality is then negotiated as a cognitive position rather than an object. The poem illustrates the way NEG is a kind of epistemic discipline, which governs cognitive commitment, and META is developed by reflecting on knowledge and awareness. Such a balanced NEG-META set up describes its stabilized status in Figure 4 and casts reality, not in terms of emotional intensity, but in terms of conceptual accuracy.

#### **نور خوبونه نه وينم (I No Longer See Dreams) – Extreme Negation and Cognitive Exhaustion**

In this poem, Neg prevails and the FORCE is significantly undermined, which is depicted in Figure 3 and 4. In contrast to نه (No), where the power of negation is empowered and resists, here, the negation is a cognitive depletion. It is not in conflict with reality but flees out of it, and the most radical conceptual closure in the corpus, which results in the elimination of imagination, hope, and future orientation from mental space.

نور خوبونه نه وينم  
نور غمونه نه ڪووم

نور پالونه نه گورم  
نور وهمونه نه کووم

*I no longer see dreams*  
*I no longer grieve*  
*I no longer look toward illusions*  
*I no longer wander in doubts*

The rhythm of grammatical deletion is created by the repetition of *نور، نه* (no longer, not). This does not consist of mere denial of something, but rather the withdrawal of whole areas of cognition, such as dreaming, grieving, imagining, and doubting. Here, the poet makes negation a conceptual boundary-maker, sealing off the process of mental activity, which customarily supports poetic subjectivity. Conceptually, the speaker does not oppose reality, but gives up on interacting with it. The force element is also purposely reduced. No movement, challenge, conflict. Relatively, the thinking process is directed to inaction and mental closure. NEG acquires the connotation of existential fatigue, rather than rebellion.

This cognitive closure is reinforced in the second stanza:

هر څه دروغ وختل  
يو خوب مې رښتيا نه شو  
نور خوبونه نه وينم

*Everything turned out to be false*  
*not a single dream of mine came true*  
*I no longer see dreams*

In this stanza, negation is both retrospective and prospective. The past is proclaimed to be fake and the future is aborted. The experience is condensed into a complete cognitive failure using the line *يو خوب مې رښتيا نه شو* (not a single dream of mine came true). It is negation, therefore, made absolute to obliterate memory as well as expectation.

The metacognitive aspect manifests itself in the overt doubting of belief:

نور په څه باور وکړم؟  
څنگه دروغ ومنم؟  
نوره د زره نه اورم  
نوره د زره نه منم

*What should I believe in now?*  
*How should I accept lies?*  
*I no longer listen to my heart*  
*I no longer obey my heart*

These lines are deeply META oriented. The poet is no longer saying something emotional but contemplating about the circumstances of belief itself. To inquire *نور په څه باور وکړم؟* (what should I believe in now?) is to doubt the principles of thinking. The heart, which is the traditional location of poetic intuition is cognitively rejected. The poet dismantles the power of emotion as a source of truth.

The climax of the cognitive negation appears later:

خاڻ ته ملامته شوم  
يو خوب مي رڻتيا نه شو  
نور خويونه نه وينم

*I blamed myself  
Not a single dream of mine came true  
I no longer see dreams*

This is not self-accusation by force but in conceptual resignation. The responsibility is realized, but there is no strength left to turn it into the action. The negational construal in the selected corpus is most fully represented in نور خويونه نه وينم (I No Longer See Dreams). In the above lines, NEG does not play the role of resistance or power, rather, is a cognitive shutdown that withdraws future projection, emotional agency, and imaginative vitality. META manifests itself in contemplation of faith and emotional power, and FORCE is deliberately repressed. This is the reason why this poem has such extreme NEG and low FORCE values in Figure 3 and 4, and proves that it is the model of cognitive exhaustion, demonstrating the fact that negation can be used as a psychological finality, not rebellion.

#### غزل (Ghazal p. 408) – Force as Transformational Energy and Cognitive Momentum

This poem is the greatest realization of FORCE in the chosen corpus, as depicted in Figure 3 and 4. Contrary to نور خويونه نه وينم (I No Longer See Dreams), where negation causes cognitive fatigue, movement, transformation, and redirection, while they are cognitive factors here. FORCE is pro-creative, not devastating, which is how the reality is conceptualized as something that can be restructured with the help of will and the energy of feelings.

رنگ د مېکدي په بله واړوه  
و خاڼده کاسي په بله واړوه

*Turn the color of the bar in another direction  
laugh, and turn the wine glasses another way*

The major linguistic indicator of FORCE is the repeated واړوه (turn). It renders thought in the form of movement and dictation. Reality is not explained, it is taught to be different. In the couplet, the poet puts perception in context as being an active process in which the subject gives the world a sense of direction. FORCE, therefore, becomes a mental force of re-direction of meaning.

The effect of this is heightened in the following couplet:

گوري گوري زلفي لري خنډو هه  
غرونه غرونه شپي په بله واړوه

*Carelessly let your tresses fall to the side  
turn mountains of night another way*

In this couplet, FORCE grows out of the intimate زلفی (tresses) to the universal غرونه غرونه شیبی (mountains of night). The poet is able to reduce scale and demonstrate that the same thought power that can be used to move the hair of a beloved can also rearrange darkness itself. This is the conceptual hyperbolism, but it is cognitively an expression of complete agency, where no sphere is hostile to change.

The poem also develops FORCE with the help of spatial renewal:

راشه د رنگونو سپرلي راوله  
داسی دا کوڅی په بله واروه

*Come, bring the spring of colors  
turn these streets in a new direction*

In these lines, FORCE is imaginative reconstruction. د رنگونو سپرلي (the spring of colors) is not a description of the season, but a metaphor of the renewed perception. Affective command reprograms the کوڅی (streets) a cognitive space, through reprogramming. That is why the poem is deeply FORCE and PROM, where the foregrounded does not imply suffering and negation, but conversion energy.

Even hurtful feelings are re-arranged with the help of force:

مات زړونه په مست نظر کښي وپیره  
ورانې ادیري په بله واروه

*Carry broken hearts in your intoxicated glance  
turn ruined abodes another way*

The imperative once more makes loss move. Brokenness is not lamented but is turned around. Through cognition, FORCE substitutes the resignation with reorientation. The poem refuses inaction.

The invocation that culminates is the invocation that specifically is cosmic:

عشقه! دا زړه دنیا بدله کړه  
خیال د زمانې په بله واروه

*O Love! change this heart's entire world  
turn the thinking of time another way*

In this couplet, FORCE is brought to a metaphysical level. عشقه (O Love) is addressed as a cognitive engine that can redesign personal reality and past time, which is why the poem takes the extreme FORCE place in Figure 3 and 4. FORCE is a creative thinking, in which thought is posed as action, agency, and change. The reality is not refuted or tolerated but is rather actively remade, which explains its high values of FORCE and low values of NEG. Sabir Shah Sabir, therefore, imagines the concept of poetry as a tool of thinking in reverse gear, where language is a tool of transformation.

The qualitative breakdown indicates that the pattern of construal observed in the visualizations is cognitively based and semantically represented. All the poems perform a specific structure

of perspective, negation, metacognition, prominence, and force relations, which serve to reveal the fact that the poetry of Sabir is a set of consistent operations of conceptual cognition, in which language actively structures experience, resistance, exhaustion, transformation, and epistemic awareness.

### Statistical Validation of Construal Patterns

This part statistically confirms the construal patterns that were found in the previous sections. Although the visualizations indicate universal distributions, and the qualitative analyses illustrate the patterns of the poem-level realization, while the current analysis evaluates the stability of the patterns within the chosen corpus. The process is strictly confirmatory with normalized values on a 100-lines basis. Descriptive statistics and the rank-order correlations of Spearman are used to analyze the central tendencies, variability, and theoretically predetermined relationships between PERSP, NEG, META, PROM, and FORCE, where descriptive statistics form the empirical basis of the following correlational analysis.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics for construal categories per 100 lines across 20 poems*

*Descriptive Statistics*

	PERSP per100	NEG per100	META per100	PROM per100	FORCE per100
Valid	20	20	20	20	20
Mean	61.71	15.09	8.344	18.56	37.83
Std. Deviation	38.89	17.91	18.50	23.64	24.65
Minimum	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Maximum	100.0	64.29	65.00	100.0	80.00

*Note.* All values are normalized per 100 poetic lines.

The descriptive results demonstrate that there is a significant difference among the categories of construal, which proves the cognitive diversity of poetry by Sabir. PERSP and FORCE have more central means, which suggests that they are the most important in organizing poetic cognition and NEG and META have less central and more dispersed ones, which indicate that these factors are activated according to the situation. There is a significant variability in PROM, which is in line with its salience-based operation. All these patterns contribute to the trends in Figures 2 to 4 and prove the fact that the construal system is a dynamic and differentiated cognitive system, not a homogeneous stylistic template.

After the descriptive analysis, correlations between theoretically motivated constructs of the selected construal categories were tested with the help of Spearman rank-order correlation. The three fundamental linkages, such as NEG, FORCE, and NEG were analyzed as an index of tension between resistance and dynamism, NEG, FORCE, the marker of reflective negation, NEG, META, and the marker of the relationship between subject positioning and energetic movement, PERSP, FORC. Such correlations are a way to establish the internal consistency of the construal system as opposed to producing new theoretical statements.

**Table 2**

*Spearman's rank-order correlations among selected construal categories per 100 lines*

<i>Spearman's Correlations</i>			Spearman's rho	p
PERSP per100	-	NEG per100	-0.122	.609
PERSP per100	-	META per100	0.336	.147
PERSP per100	-	FORCE per100	-0.048	.840
NEG per100	-	META per100	0.179	.450
NEG per100	-	FORCE per100	-0.274	.242
META per100	-	FORCE per100	-0.280	.232

*Note.* N = 20 poems, where all values are normalized per 100 poetic lines. Spearman's rho ( $\rho$ ) is reported because the analysis is non-parametric and confirmatory in nature and significance level was set at  $\alpha = .05$ .

The rank-order correlations of Spearman did not show any statistically significant correlations between the chosen pairs of construal. The correlation of NEG and FORCE was weak and negative ( $\rho = -.274$ ,  $p = .242$ ), the correlation of NEG and META was weak and positive ( $\rho = .179$ ,  $p = .450$ ) and the correlation of PERSP and FORCE was weak and negative ( $\rho = -.048$ ,  $p = .840$ ). These findings suggest that the major dimensions of construal are mostly independent throughout the corpus. The fact that there are no important correlations confirms the structural independence of PERSP, NEG, META, and FORCE as independent cognitive dimensions. The constituent categories of construal are rather interacting and independent elements in a multidimensional cognitive mechanism, as opposed to converging into one dominant axis. This statistical independence is consistent with the qualitative results of Section 4.2 and the trends presented in Figures 2 to 4, which confirms the consistency and that internal stability of the construal framework and that the cognitive insights of this chapter have quantitative support. Since the construal system has since been statistically validated, the next chapter proceeds to discuss the wider theoretical consequences of poetry as conceptual thought and how the work of Sahib Shah Sabir has contributed to the field of cognitive stylistics.

### Summary of Results

The findings reveal that the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir is a conceptual cognition, not a form of style ornamentation. Meaning is organized by five dimensions of construal interaction and independence, namely, PERSP, NEG, META, PROM, and FORCE. The poetic cognition is based on PERSP and FORCE, whereas NEG and META are mechanisms of resistance and epitomical reflection, and PROM predicts conceptual salience. The patterns of visual analysis and the analysis at the level of poems prove that no poem is a homogenous stylistic pattern, but a separate cognitive system. The JASP results also confirm this model by demonstrating low-level correlations between the important dimensions, which proves their structural independence. In general, the poetry of Sabir can be discussed as a multidimensional cognitive network where language structures experience, power, and transformation.

## Discussion

This paper showed that the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir is a systematic arrangement of conceptual cognition, aimed at organizing it in terms of five dimensions of cognitive construal, PERSP (Perspective), NEG (Negation), META (Metacognition), PROM (Prominence), and FORCE (Force). These dimensions are actively involved in creating meaning over the poetry of Sabir and resist the perception of poetry being an aesthetic or emotional expression. The research confirms the argument of Stockwell (2007) that literary language is essentially a process of thinking, rather than an act of artistic decoration. It also fills a methodological gap by applying a mixed-methods approach, which combines qualitative close reading, visual modeling, and quantitative analysis, thus providing a more robust framework for understanding cognitive construal in the poetry of Sahib Shah Sabir.

## Poetry as Conceptual Cognition

Out of these five dimensions, two are central, such as PERSP and FORCE. PERSP puts the speaker in the center of his argument, grounding meaning on subjective experience, whereas FORCE brings the dynamic energy, molding experience under pressure, endurance, and conversion. The two dimensions organize the essence of the poetic thought of Sabir, which stresses the idea that the meaning is the result of active participation rather than passive contemplation. NEG operates, together with these key aspects as the instrument of cognitive resistance, epistemic boundary setting, and closure, influencing both content and form. The secondary controlling meaning is META and PROM. META is a reflection on cognition, as the poetry of Sabir often addresses the act of making meaning, knowledge, and belief. By focusing on the repetition and patterning of specific concepts, PROM has an effect in the cognitive prioritization of ideas without necessarily determining the content. The statistical analyses and Figure 3 to 4 demonstrate that every poem constitutes a unique cognitive arrangement, which reflects the multidimensionality of the poetic cognition of the poet. The low correlations between dimensions of construal indicate that the poetry of Sabir is not based on one effective strategy, rather, every poem is a multifaceted interaction of PERSP, FORCE, NEG, META, and PROM, while a rich and dynamic cognitive environment is formed. The way these dimensions are reflected is depicted by representative poems. Constructing cognition is the main work of *زړه ته* (To Heart), which is linked to existential endurance and dynamic energy by using PERSP and FORCE. It is an epistemic authority of NEG that is used in *نه* (No) to rebuild negation as a cognitive opposition. The NEG is countered through balancing it with META, and as such, negation is introduced as an epistemic border, yet consideration of knowledge limitation is made. Production of NEG as cognitive exhaustion, which marks the end of imagination, and FORCE as generative transformation, which emphasizes the creative possibilities of forceful cognition, are depicted in *نور خوبونه نه وینم* (I No Longer See Dreams) and *غزل* (Ghazal p. 408) respectively.

## Contribution and Scope

This paper extends the concept of cognitive stylistics to Pashto poetry and show that the conceptual construal is a systematic cognitive process that functions in both linguistic and cultural contexts. This study offers a holistic method of poetic cognition, using visual modeling, qualitative analysis, and statistical validation. It also adds to cognitive poetics, by

acknowledging the poetry of Sabir as an advanced cognitive system that systematizes experience, resistance, and epistemic authority using language. This fills the gap in the available literature, which offers a subtle insight into the way meaning is mentally created in poetry, not merely by analyzing their content or style. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approach allows exploring the nature of the cognitive processes in the poetry of Sabir more deeply, and this model can be applied to other literary traditions.

### Limitations and Future directions

The current research is controlled by its purposively chosen sample of twenty poems, which does not allow the researcher to generalize the results to the whole poetic discourse of Sabir. Besides, the non-parametric statistical techniques confirm the observed trends, but do not describe causality. Although the translation of the poems was done with care, some of the refinements of the Pashto poetic expression might not be presented in the English language. Future studies may increase the corpus to more poems of Sabir or examine other Pashto poets. The universality of the construal framework could be put to the test in comparative studies across languages and cultures, and its usefulness across literary traditions can be improved. More dimensions of cognition may be incorporated in the future studies to enhance the analysis, including metaphor networks, emotional valence, or conceptual blending. Bigger data sets and more sophisticated statistical methods would enable a more in-depth comprehension of the relationships between the categories of construal and allow to unearth some subtle cognitive tendencies in the poetry of various genres.

### Conclusion

This paper demonstrated that the poetry by Sahib Shah Sabir is a systematic process of conceptual cognition, where meaning is created by the relationship between the PERSP, NEG, META, PROM, and FORCE. The results place the poetry of Sabir in the cognitive poetics framework, which declares that poetry is not simply a kind of expression of emotions, but a complex system of thought. The research confirms that the cognitive processes are systematically organized with the help of language and poetry, which is an active process of cognition that systematizes experience, resistance, and epistemic authority. Using cognitive stylistics to analyze Pashto poetry, this study contributes to the theories of cognitive poetics and expand the international understanding of Pashto literary traditions. The complex cognitive architecture of the poetry by Sabir provides a useful contribution to understanding of the way in which language influences human cognition and proves the universal applicability of cognitive poetics to various linguistic and cultural settings.

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