

The Conceptual Field Of “Afterlife” In English And Uzbek Languages

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Abstract: This article explores the conceptual field of afterlife in English and Uzbek languages from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. It focuses on the semantic, metaphorical, and cultural aspects of the concept, which reflect the two nations’ spiritual and moral worldviews. The afterlife concept is analyzed through religious texts, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and literary works to determine its cognitive structure and metaphorical models. The study shows that in both linguistic systems, the concept of afterlife is linked with moral accountability, dualistic opposition (heaven/hell, jannat/do’zax), and the eternal destiny of the soul. However, while English discourse emphasizes peace, personal salvation, and eternal rest, the Uzbek worldview highlights divine justice, responsibility, and moral duty.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, concept, afterlife, metaphor, worldview, semantics, religion, morality.

Introduction: Language is a cognitive and cultural phenomenon that mirrors how a society interprets reality. Concepts such as afterlife (oxirat) occupy a special place in human consciousness, as they embody fundamental beliefs about life, death, morality, and eternity.

In both English and Uzbek cultures, the afterlife is not just a religious notion but also a cognitive and moral framework shaping how people perceive good and evil, reward and punishment, and the ultimate purpose of existence. Studying this concept comparatively helps uncover the intersection of thought, culture, and language in the two traditions.

METHODS

This study adopts interdisciplinary methods that integrates cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphorical theory, and linguocultural analysis.

The research is grounded in:

- **Conceptual Metaphor Theory** (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which views metaphors as a means through which abstract concepts (like the afterlife) are understood via concrete experiences (journey, light,

fire, etc.);

- **Conceptual Field Theory** (Apresyan, 1995), which defines how related words form a semantic network around a core concept;
- **Linguocultural Approach** (Karasik, 2002), which connects linguistic meaning with national and cultural worldviews.

Data were collected from four main types of sources:

1. Religious texts:

The Holy Bible (King James Version)

The Qur’an (Uzbek translation)

2. Literary texts:

John Milton’s Paradise Lost

Dante’s Divine Comedy (English translation)

Alisher Navoiy’s Munojot

3. Proverbs and idioms:

English: Rest in peace, Go to heaven, Burn in hell

Uzbek: Dunyo fano, oxirat boqiy, Oxiratda javob beradi

4. Modern discourse:

media texts, sermons, and everyday speech examples.

The study employs several complementary methods:

- **Conceptual analysis:** to determine the core and peripheral elements of the concept afterlife/oxirat;
- **Semantic field analysis:** to group related lexical units (heaven, hell, eternity, jannat, do'zax, abadiy hayot);
- **Metaphorical modeling:** to identify dominant conceptual metaphors;
- **Comparative analysis:** to contrast English and

Cognitive component	English examples	Uzbek equivalents
Continuity of the soul	eternal life, afterlife	abadiy hayot, oxirat hayoti
Divine justice	judgment day, God's will	qiyomat kuni, hisob-kitob
Reward	heaven, paradise	jannat
Punishment	hell, eternal fire	do'zax, azob
Peace/rest	eternal peace	ruhiy osoyishtalik

Both languages thus reflect a universal belief in posthumous moral evaluation — a life beyond death shaped by one's earthly deeds.

Metaphorical Model	English Expression	Uzbek Expression	Meaning
AFTERLIFE IS A JOURNEY	<i>pass into the afterlife</i>	<i>oxiratga ketmoq</i>	Transition from life to eternity
AFTERLIFE IS A DESTINATION	<i>enter heaven / fall into hell</i>	<i>jannatga kirish / do'zaxga tushish</i>	Spatial metaphor of ascent and descent
AFTERLIFE IS LIGHT / DARKNESS	<i>eternal light / dark abyss</i>	<i>nurli jannat / zulmat do'zax</i>	Contrast of moral purity and sin
AFTERLIFE IS A REWARD / PUNISHMENT	<i>heavenly reward / divine punishment</i>	<i>savob va gunohning jazosi</i>	Moral consequence of deeds
AFTERLIFE IS REST	<i>rest in peace</i>	<i>ruh osoyishtasin topsin</i>	The soul's peace after death

THIS MAPPING DEMONSTRATES THAT SPATIAL (UP–DOWN), MORAL (GOOD–EVIL), AND EMOTIONAL (PEACE–pain) metaphors structure the human understanding of life beyond death across both linguistic systems.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis revealed both universal cognitive similarities and culture-specific differences:

1. Universal Similarities

- **Moral dualism:** Both worldviews divide the afterlife into opposing domains — Heaven/Jannat

Aspect	English worldview	Uzbek worldview
Religious foundation	Christianity (salvation through faith in Christ)	Islam (faith and good deeds, divine justice)

Uzbek conceptualizations and their cultural implications.

This methodological triangulation ensures the study captures both linguistic form and cultural meaning.

RESULTS

1. Semantic Structure

The research identified the following shared cognitive components of the afterlife/oxirat concept in both languages:

Cognitive component	English examples	Uzbek equivalents
Continuity of the soul	eternal life, afterlife	abadiy hayot, oxirat hayoti
Divine justice	judgment day, God's will	qiyomat kuni, hisob-kitob
Reward	heaven, paradise	jannat
Punishment	hell, eternal fire	do'zax, azob
Peace/rest	eternal peace	ruhiy osoyishtalik

2. Dominant Metaphorical Models

The study identified the following cross-linguistic conceptual metaphors:

Metaphorical Model	English Expression	Uzbek Expression	Meaning
AFTERLIFE IS A JOURNEY	<i>pass into the afterlife</i>	<i>oxiratga ketmoq</i>	Transition from life to eternity
AFTERLIFE IS A DESTINATION	<i>enter heaven / fall into hell</i>	<i>jannatga kirish / do'zaxga tushish</i>	Spatial metaphor of ascent and descent
AFTERLIFE IS LIGHT / DARKNESS	<i>eternal light / dark abyss</i>	<i>nurli jannat / zulmat do'zax</i>	Contrast of moral purity and sin
AFTERLIFE IS A REWARD / PUNISHMENT	<i>heavenly reward / divine punishment</i>	<i>savob va gunohning jazosi</i>	Moral consequence of deeds
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(good, light, reward) vs Hell/Do'zax (evil, darkness, punishment).

- **Continuity of consciousness:** The soul (ruh) continues beyond physical death.
- **Divine justice:** The moral actions of life determine the soul's eternal fate.

These shared elements demonstrate that the concept of the afterlife serves a moral-regulatory function in human cognition: it maintains ethical order through the idea of posthumous justice.

2. Cultural Differences

Aspect	English worldview	Uzbek worldview
Emotional tone	Peace, reunion, eternal rest	Accountability, justice, spiritual test
Dominant metaphors	<i>light, home, journey</i>	<i>balance, fire, judgment</i>
Communicative use	Personal and poetic discourse	Ethical and communal discourse

In English discourse, the afterlife often carries a comforting, personal tone (He's in a better place now), emphasizing peace and forgiveness.

In contrast, Uzbek discourse stresses responsibility and moral accounting (Har kim oxiratda javob beradi — "Everyone will answer in the afterlife"), highlighting the ethical dimension of faith.

3. Cognitive and Cultural Implications

The findings illustrate that while the conceptual cores of afterlife and oxirat are universal, their cultural embodiment varies. The English model centers on personal salvation and spiritual comfort, whereas the Uzbek model embodies collective morality and divine justice.

This suggests that concepts are culturally framed mental constructs, shaped by the interaction between language, religion, and national worldview.

CONCLUSION

The comparative cognitive analysis of the afterlife concept in English and Uzbek reveals that both languages conceptualize it as a moral, spiritual, and emotional continuation of human existence. Despite differing theological traditions, both cultures encode shared human concerns about justice, peace, and eternity.

The study proves that:

1. The afterlife/oxirat is a universal conceptual structure rooted in moral cognition.
2. Its metaphorical models—journey, light, reward, and punishment—are cross-linguistic cognitive universals.
3. However, the emotional and evaluative nuances depend on cultural context: English emphasizes serenity and divine love, while Uzbek highlights duty, accountability, and God's justice.

This demonstrates how language not only describes reality but also shapes the moral imagination of a community.

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