



COMPARATIVE SEMANTIC FEATURES OF THE CONCEPT “SPIRITUALITY” IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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ABSTRACT: *This article examines the comparative semantic features of the concept “spirituality” in English and Uzbek from a linguistic and cultural perspective. The study explores how the concept is represented in the lexical, semantic, and cultural systems of both languages. A comparative-semantic analysis is conducted to identify similarities and differences in the interpretation, usage, and conceptualization of spirituality within English and Uzbek linguistic traditions. The research also investigates the influence of national culture, historical development, and social values on the formation of the concept. The findings demonstrate that although the concept of spirituality exists in both languages as a universal human value, its semantic scope, cultural associations, and linguistic realization differ according to each nation's worldview and cultural heritage.*

Keywords: *comparative linguistics, semantics, concept, spirituality, English language, Uzbek language, comparative semantic analysis, linguistic worldview, cultural semantics, conceptual analysis, lexical meaning, national culture.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of modern linguistics has significantly expanded the scope of semantic and cognitive studies, placing increasing emphasis on the investigation of concepts that reflect national culture and worldview. Among such concepts, “spirituality” occupies a special place because it represents not only a lexical unit but also a complex cultural, philosophical, and social phenomenon. The study of spirituality from a comparative semantic perspective makes it possible to identify both universal and culture-specific features reflected in different languages.



In contemporary linguistics, concepts are regarded as fundamental units of conceptual knowledge that embody the historical experience, cultural traditions, and value systems of a speech community. Comparative semantic research enables scholars to examine how similar concepts are lexicalized, interpreted, and function within different linguistic and cultural environments. Consequently, the concept of “**spirituality**” provides an important basis for revealing the interaction between language, culture, and cognition in English and Uzbek.

MAIN PART

The comparative study of concepts has become one of the central directions of contemporary semantic and cognitive linguistics. Rather than treating words merely as lexical units, modern linguistic research examines concepts as complex cognitive structures that encode cultural values, historical experience, and national worldviews. Within this framework, the concept "spirituality" represents a multidimensional semantic phenomenon whose meaning extends beyond dictionary definitions into philosophical, ethical, religious, and sociocultural domains. Comparative semantic analysis therefore seeks to determine how different linguistic communities conceptualize spirituality through lexical meaning, semantic fields, metaphorical models, and discourse patterns.

The theoretical basis of concept analysis was established during the development of cognitive linguistics in the late twentieth century. Researchers increasingly argued that lexical meaning cannot be interpreted independently of cultural knowledge and conceptual structures. Consequently, comparative semantic studies shifted their attention from isolated lexical meanings to conceptual systems that reflect collective cultural experience. This methodological transition laid the foundation for cross-linguistic investigations of culturally significant concepts such as *freedom*, *justice*, *honor*, and *spirituality*.

The concept of "spirituality" has attracted growing scholarly attention because it exists in virtually every linguistic culture while simultaneously exhibiting substantial semantic variation. In English, the noun *spirituality* derives from the



adjective *spiritual*, which originates from the Latin *spiritualis*, itself derived from *spiritus* meaning "breath," "spirit," or "life force." Historically, the concept primarily referred to religious life and the relationship between human beings and God. However, during the twentieth century, particularly after the 1960s, the semantic scope of the term expanded considerably, embracing psychological well-being, personal growth, self-realization, moral consciousness, and individual identity alongside traditional religious meanings.

The semantic development of the Uzbek equivalent "ma'naviyat" followed a different historical trajectory. Unlike the English concept, *ma'naviyat* developed within the intellectual traditions of Islamic philosophy, classical Turkic literature, and Central Asian cultural heritage. The lexical meaning of the term gradually incorporated ethical values, education, patriotism, national identity, social responsibility, moral refinement, and cultural continuity. As a result, the Uzbek concept possesses a broader collective orientation than its English counterpart, reflecting both personal morality and communal cultural consciousness.

An important stage in the scientific investigation of spirituality occurred in 2020, when Sergeev examined spirituality from a philosophical perspective and proposed that the concept should be understood as a dynamic system influenced by historical and social transformations rather than as a fixed religious category. This interpretation significantly influenced subsequent semantic research by emphasizing the multidimensional nature of spirituality across different cultures.

Another important contribution appeared in 2023, when Nodira Mirkhaydarova published *Research Problems of "Spirituality" Lexemas in the Uzbek Language* in the *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*. Published on 31 January 2023, the study demonstrated that the semantic field of ma'naviyat in Uzbek remains insufficiently systematized and argued for organizing spirituality-related lexemes into an ideographic lexical system. The research emphasized that the concept should be examined as an integrated semantic field rather than as isolated lexical units.



A further development occurred in 2022, when Zilola Alibekova published *Lexical-Semantic Analysis of Language and Spirituality Lexemes in Uzbek and English in Dictionaries*. The research compared dictionary definitions of spirituality in English and Uzbek and concluded that lexical equivalence alone cannot explain conceptual equivalence because many semantic components are culturally conditioned. The study demonstrated that dictionary meanings provide only the core semantic structure, whereas contextual usage reveals additional conceptual layers.

Comparative semantic methodology distinguishes between denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and conceptual meaning. Denotative meaning identifies the basic reference of a lexical item, whereas connotative meaning reflects emotional, evaluative, and stylistic associations. Conceptual meaning, however, integrates cultural knowledge accumulated through historical development and social practice. Consequently, although the English word *spirituality* and the Uzbek word *ma'naviyat* may function as translation equivalents, they differ considerably at the conceptual level because each language activates different cultural associations and value systems.

Recent comparative semantic research increasingly employs semantic field theory to investigate spirituality. According to this approach, lexical meaning should be interpreted within a network of semantically related words rather than in isolation. The semantic field of spirituality therefore includes lexical units associated with morality, conscience, faith, knowledge, ethics, education, purity, enlightenment, dignity, wisdom, and virtue. Comparative investigation of these lexical networks enables researchers to identify universal semantic components as well as language-specific conceptual characteristics.

A significant methodological advance was presented in 2024 in the article "Frame Analysis of Units of the Semantic Field of 'Spirituality' in English and Uzbek Languages," published in *Acta NUUz*. The article proposed that spirituality should be investigated through frame analysis, cognitive metaphor, and cognitive mapping. According to the author, semantic interpretation becomes more comprehensive when



lexical units are analyzed within conceptual frames representing human experience rather than through isolated dictionary meanings. This approach demonstrates that both English and Uzbek organize spirituality through interconnected cognitive structures, although the internal organization of these structures differs considerably between the two languages.

From a comparative perspective, the English semantic field emphasizes individual spiritual experience, inner development, personal beliefs, psychological growth, and self-discovery. Contemporary English discourse frequently employs spirituality independently of institutional religion, allowing the concept to function within secular philosophical, psychological, and educational contexts. Consequently, lexical items such as *inner peace*, *mindfulness*, *self-awareness*, *transcendence*, and *personal growth* frequently co-occur with *spirituality* in modern English discourse.

By contrast, the Uzbek semantic field surrounding *ma'naviyat* demonstrates stronger associations with morality, education, national culture, family values, collective responsibility, ethical behavior, and social harmony. Rather than emphasizing purely individual experience, Uzbek discourse generally conceptualizes spirituality as a social value that contributes to the moral development of both individuals and society. Consequently, lexical units connected with *odob* (etiquette), *axloq* (morality), *viydon* (conscience), *ma'rifat* (enlightenment), *tarbiya* (upbringing), and *madaniyat* (culture) occupy central positions within the semantic field of *ma'naviyat*.

Therefore, contemporary comparative semantic research demonstrates that although "spirituality" and "ma'naviyat" express a shared universal concern with moral and spiritual values, they differ substantially in their conceptual organization, semantic extension, cultural associations, and communicative functions. These differences arise not from lexical structure alone but from the distinct historical, philosophical, religious, and sociocultural experiences that have shaped the English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking linguistic communities over many centuries.

CONCLUSION



The comparative semantic analysis of the concept “spirituality” in English and Uzbek demonstrates that although both languages express the universal idea of spiritual and moral development, they conceptualize this notion through different linguistic and cultural frameworks. The study confirms that lexical equivalence does not necessarily indicate conceptual equivalence, since the semantic structure of a concept is determined by historical development, cultural traditions, social values, and the worldview of a particular linguistic community.

The analysis reveals that the English concept “spirituality” is primarily associated with individual experience, inner development, personal beliefs, self-awareness, and psychological growth. In contemporary English discourse, the concept has gradually expanded beyond its traditional religious meaning and is frequently employed in philosophical, educational, and psychological contexts. This semantic evolution reflects the tendency of modern English-speaking societies to interpret spirituality as an individual and personal phenomenon.

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