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LINGUOCULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT OF MORALITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola ingliz va o'zbek tillari materiallariga asoslangan holda axloq konseptini lingvokulturologik nuqtai nazardan o'rganadi. Tadqiqot ikkala tildagi leksik birliklar, frazeologik iboralar, maqol-u hikmatlar va konseptual metaforalar orqali axloqiy qadriyatlar qanday ifodalanishini tahlil qiladi hamda umumbashariy va milliy-madaniy xususiyatlarni aniqlaydi. Nazariy asos sifatida V.A. Maslovaning lingvokulturologik yondashuvi, G. Lakoff va M. Jonsonning konseptual metafora nazariyasi, shuningdek D. Xudoyberganova va Sh. Safarovning o'zbek tilshunosligidagi ilmiy merosidan foydalanildi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, ikkala tilda ham axloq konsepti umumiy semantik asosga ega bo'lsa-da, uning madaniy ko'rinishlari sezilarli darajada farqlanadi: ingliz tilidagi axloqiy diskurs individualistik, aqlga asoslangan etika an'anasini aks ettirsa, o'zbek tilidagi axloqiy diskurs kollektivistik, dinga yo'naltirilgan va or-nomusga asoslangan qadriyatlar tizimiga singib ketgan. Tadqiqotning muhim xulosalaridan biri shuki, axloq o'zbek tilida yadroli konsept sifatida namoyon bo'ladi, vijdon, nomus, iymon va insof esa uning alohida konseptual tarkibiy qismlari hisoblanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: lingvokulturologiya, konsept, axloq, konseptual metafora, o'zbek tili, ingliz tili, qiyosiy tilshunoslik, konseptosfera, madaniy kod.

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Abstract: This article investigates the morality concept through a linguocultural lens, drawing on comparative data from English and Uzbek. The analysis focuses on how moral values are reflected in the lexical composition, phraseological stock, proverbial wisdom, and conceptual metaphor systems of both languages, thereby revealing shared human values alongside culture-bound distinctions. The study builds on the linguocultural tradition of V.A. Maslova, the cognitive-metaphorical framework of G.

Lakoff and M. Johnson, and the Uzbek scholarly perspectives of D. Xudoyberganova and Sh. Safarov. Results indicate that although both languages share a common semantic foundation for moral concepts, their cultural realizations are markedly different: English moral discourse is grounded in individualist, rational-ethical norms, whereas Uzbek moral discourse is shaped by collectivist, faith-based, and honor-regulated values. A key contribution of this study is the terminological clarification that *axloq* serves as the nuclear moral concept in Uzbek, while *vijdon*, *nomus*, *iymon*, and *insof* represent its constituent conceptual components.

Keywords: linguoculturology, concept, morality, conceptual metaphor, Uzbek language, English language, comparative linguistics, conceptsphere, cultural code.

Introduction. The bond between language and culture is one of the most productive research areas in modern linguistics. Vocabulary, fixed expressions, proverbs, and literary texts collectively serve as mirrors of a society's deepest values and worldview. Of all the value systems that shape human life, the moral domain holds a privileged position: it governs conduct, defines social expectations, and forms the core of cultural identity. At the same time, the specific ways in which moral principles are named, structured, and transmitted through language vary significantly from one culture to another.

Over the past three decades, linguoculturology has established itself as the principal framework for exploring this language-culture interface. Building on the groundbreaking contributions of V.A. Maslova (2001), Yu. S. Stepanov (1997), and A. Wierzbicka (1992), researchers in this tradition treat concepts — mentally stored, culturally saturated units of knowledge — as the central objects of investigation. The morality concept, encompassing such notions as virtue, conscience, honor, and ethical duty, offers an especially productive site for cross-cultural conceptual research.

Before proceeding, a terminological point of fundamental importance must be established. In Uzbek, *axloq* functions as the nuclear moral concept — the overarching category under which the entire moral domain is organized. The related terms *vijdon* (conscience), *nomus* (honor and shame), *iymon* (moral integrity grounded in faith), *insof* (equitable judgment), and *or* (collective self-respect) are not interchangeable with *axloq*; they represent its conceptual subcomponents, each encoding a semantically distinct dimension of the moral field. This study maintains this distinction rigorously throughout.

The aim of the study is to identify the universal and culture-specific linguocultural features of the concept of morality in English and Uzbek. The object of study is the morality concept as realized in the lexical-phraseological systems and proverbial corpora of English and Uzbek.

Literature review. The theoretical architecture of this study draws on three

complementary scholarly traditions, each of which contributes a distinct analytical tool to the investigation of the morality concept.

The point of departure is the linguocultural paradigm associated with V.A. Maslova (2001), who conceptualizes linguoculturology as a branch of science dedicated to uncovering the cultural knowledge stored within language. For Maslova, concepts are not merely cognitive categories but culturally laden mental formations that integrate cognitive, evaluative, and emotional layers of meaning[1, 175]. This framework is directly operationalized in the present study's analysis of how *axloq* in Uzbek and morality in English are structured differently in accordance with the distinct cultural and historical matrices of their respective speech communities. The contribution of Yu. S. Stepanov (1997) to the theory of cultural constants complements this approach: his demonstration that concepts such as conscience and goodness function as the organizing nuclei of a culture's conceptual universe provides the methodological basis for our treatment of *axloq* as the nuclear moral concept in Uzbek discourse[2, 243].

The second strand is the cognitive linguistic theory of conceptual metaphor, formulated by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980). Their central argument — that abstract thought is systematically structured through metaphorical mappings rooted in embodied, sensorimotor experience — has proven indispensable for cross-cultural research on moral concepts [3, 89]. The present study applies this framework to trace how both English and Uzbek speakers conceptualize moral virtue through spatial (height, straightness) and luminous (light, purity) imagery, and moral transgression through descent, darkness, and contamination. Where the two languages diverge in their preferred metaphorical schemas, the study situates these differences within their broader cultural contexts.

The third tradition is the body of Uzbek-language cognitive and linguocultural scholarship. D. Xudoyberganova's (2013) anthropocentric approach to textual analysis, which centers the human subject as both the producer and bearer of cultural meaning, informs the study's reading of moral values in Uzbek proverbial and literary discourse[4, 103]. Sh. Safarov's (2006, 2008) cognitive-pragmatic model of language use provides the framework for understanding how moral norms are enacted and transmitted in Uzbek communicative contexts [5,56]. Finally, A. Wierzbicka's (1992) cross-linguistic semantics, particularly her concept of universal semantic primitives, supplies a neutral metalanguage for comparing moral conceptualizations across typologically distinct languages[6, 136].

Research methodology. The primary linguistic data were collected from monolingual and bilingual English and Uzbek explanatory dictionaries, specialized phraseological dictionaries, and collections of national proverbs. The analyzed corpus comprises 30 English and 32 Uzbek phraseological units and proverbs, together with the full lexical fields of the morality concept in both languages. The research design integrates four mutually reinforcing analytical procedures:

– *Comparative analysis*: a systematic, parallel examination of English and

Uzbek lexical fields, phraseological inventories, and proverbial texts that encode moral meaning, with the goal of distinguishing universal from culture-specific features.

- *Conceptual analysis*: reconstruction of the cognitive architecture of the morality concept in each language, including its nuclear element, peripheral components, and associated metaphorical mappings, following the conceptual analysis framework of Maslova (2001) and Stepanov (1997).
- *Linguocultural analysis*: interpretation of the historical, religious, and socio-cultural factors that determine the particular configuration of moral concepts in each language community, drawing on Xudoyberganova (2013) and Safarov (2006).
- *Descriptive method*: systematic inventory and classification of the lexical, idiomatic, and proverbial material collected from English and Uzbek dictionary sources and proverbial collections.

Results. In the English language, the morality concept is encoded through a semantically rich and historically stratified lexical field. The central vocabulary items — morality, ethics, virtue, conscience, integrity, righteousness — each carry their own nuanced connotations, rooted in three major cultural strata: the Greco-Roman philosophical heritage, the Judeo-Christian moral tradition, and the Enlightenment's emphasis on individual rational agency. The word morality itself traces back to the Latin *moralis*, a term coined by Cicero to render the Greek *ethikos* into Latin, thereby anchoring the English moral lexicon to the ancient Western tradition of philosophical reflection on character and social duty.

At the phraseological level, the English language encodes a broad range of moral evaluations through idiomatic expressions that collectively reflect an individualist, conscience-centered understanding of moral life:

Table 1. English phraseological units encoding the morality concept

Expression	Moral meaning
<i>to have a clear conscience</i>	an untroubled sense of personal moral integrity
<i>to take the moral high ground</i>	to claim a position of moral superiority in a dispute
<i>to practice what one preaches</i>	alignment between declared values and actual behavior
<i>to stand by one's principles</i>	upholding personal ethical commitments under external pressure
<i>to be of good character</i>	possessing stable and reliable moral virtues
<i>to keep one's hands clean</i>	avoiding morally compromising situations
<i>to do the right thing</i>	acting in accordance with moral duty
<i>to follow one's conscience</i>	making decisions based on internalized moral judgment
<i>to be above reproach</i>	conducting oneself beyond moral criticism
<i>straight and narrow</i>	the path of moral rectitude and disciplined living
<i>to fall from grace</i>	experiencing moral failure after a state of virtue

Expression	Moral meaning
<i>a slippery slope</i>	a course of action leading to progressive moral deterioration
<i>to go astray</i>	deviating from accepted moral norms
<i>to turn over a new leaf</i>	committing to moral reform and a fresh start
<i>to wash one's hands of something</i>	publicly disavowing moral responsibility for an outcome

What these expressions reveal, when examined collectively, is the centrality of spatial and directional metaphorical thinking in English moral discourse. Moral uprightness maps onto vertical elevation and linear movement (the moral high ground, the straight and narrow, to stand by one's principles), while moral failure maps onto downward movement and lateral deviation (to fall from grace, to go astray, a slippery slope). This patterning is a direct realization of the MORALITY IS UPRIGHTNESS conceptual metaphor documented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) [7, 237].

The proverbial tradition further illuminates the cultural values encoded in the English moral conceptosphere. Expressions such as honesty is the best policy foreground the pragmatic dimension of moral virtue; actions speak louder than words privileges behavioral consistency over mere intention; do as you would be done by encodes the principle of moral reciprocity; the road to hell is paved with good intentions subordinates intention to outcome; and virtue is its own reward asserts the intrinsic value of moral conduct independent of external recognition. Together, these proverbs sketch a moral culture in which personal integrity, rational deliberation, and reciprocal accountability are the governing norms.

In Uzbek, the nuclear moral concept — axloq — is embedded in a cultural framework shaped by three interrelated traditions: Islamic ethical thought, the Eastern philosophical legacy represented by such thinkers as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Alisher Navoi, and the collectivist social values of Central Asian civilization. The term axloq itself is borrowed from Arabic (from khuluq, meaning innate character or moral disposition), a linguistic fact that encodes the deep historical integration of Islamic moral philosophy into the fabric of Uzbek cultural life.

As noted in the introduction, the Uzbek moral conceptosphere is organized around axloq as its nucleus, with five distinct conceptual subcomponents:

- vijdon (conscience) — the internalized capacity for moral self-evaluation and self-judgment
- nomus (honor/shame) — externally regulated honor tied to family standing and community reputation
- iymon (faith-based moral integrity) — moral conduct grounded in Islamic religious conviction
- insof (fairness/reasonableness) — the moral disposition to act with equity and measured judgment
- or (self-respect/shame) — a form of moral self-regulation rooted in

awareness of the collective gaze

Each of these subcomponents encodes a semantically distinct dimension of the moral domain. Their coexistence within the Uzbek moral conceptosphere reflects a conception of morality that is simultaneously personal, social, and spiritual — one in which the individual moral actor is always situated within overlapping networks of family obligation, community expectation, and religious duty.

The Uzbek phraseological corpus encoding the morality concept is notably rich:

Table 2. Uzbek phraseological units and proverbs encoding the morality concept

Uzbek unit	Translation and moral meaning
<i>Yaxshilik qil, daryoga tashla</i>	Do good and cast it into the river (moral virtue practiced without any expectation of personal reward)
<i>Halol mehnat — baxt kaliti</i>	Honest labor is the key to happiness (the moral and spiritual value of righteous work)
<i>Ota-onangga yaxshi bo'l, farzandlaring ham senga yaxshi bo'ladi</i>	Be good to your parents and your children will be good to you (filial piety as the foundation of moral order)
<i>Nomusni yerga urmoq</i>	to trample one's honor into the ground (the conceptual mapping of moral failure onto physical debasement)
<i>Vijdoni toza</i>	a clean or pure conscience (moral integrity expressed through the purity metaphor)
<i>Iymonli odam</i>	a person of faith and moral soundness
<i>Insofli bo'l</i>	be fair and reasonable (a direct moral exhortation to equitable conduct)
<i>Ko'zingni och</i>	open your eyes (a call for moral and spiritual awakening)
<i>Yaxshi ish — duo oladi</i>	a good deed earns a blessing (the moral economy of virtue and divine reward)
<i>Haromdan qoch</i>	flee from what is religiously and morally forbidden
<i>Kichikka hurmat, kattaga izzat</i>	show consideration to the young and reverence to elders (the moral hierarchy of intergenerational respect)
<i>Elga yaxshi inson bo'l</i>	be a good person to your community (the moral primacy of collective belonging)
<i>Nonu tuzga vafo qil</i>	be faithful to bread and salt (loyalty and gratitude as core moral obligations)
<i>Mehmon — xudoning mehmoni</i>	a guest is God's guest (hospitality as a divinely sanctioned moral duty)
<i>Yolg'on gapirma, hech kimni aldama</i>	do not speak falsely and do not deceive anyone (truthfulness as a foundational moral norm)

Taken together, these phraseological units reflect a moral sensibility that is communal in its orientation, spiritual in its grounding, and honor-based in its

regulatory mechanism. The recurrence of light and purity imagery (vijdoni toza, halollik — oppoq) to encode moral virtue, and the use of debasement and pollution imagery (nomusni yerga urmoq) to encode moral failure, reveals a conceptual system in which the awareness of God’s judgment and the community’s gaze are inseparable from moral experience.

Discussion. Placing the English and Uzbek moral conceptospheres side by side brings into relief both the universal foundations of moral conceptualization and the culture-specific forms that these take in each language. At the universal level, both languages organize their moral vocabulary around the foundational opposition between good and evil, virtue and vice. Both encode moral uprightness through imagery of height, straightness, light, and purity, and moral failure through imagery of descent, deviation, darkness, and contamination — a cross-linguistic pattern documented by Kövecses (2000) and Wierzbicka (1992) and confirmed by the evidence assembled in this study [8.90]. The key comparative dimensions are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparative linguocultural features of the morality concept in English and Uzbek

Aspect	English	Uzbek
Core lexeme	Morality / Ethics / Virtue	Axloq / Fazilatilik
Moral regulator	Conscience	Vijdon / Nomus
Cultural orientation	Individualistic	Collectivistic
Primary metaphor	MORALITY IS UPRIGHTNESS	MORALITY IS LIGHT/PURITY
Key proverb type	Pragmatic reciprocity	Selfless virtue / filial piety
Religious dimension	Judeo-Christian (indirect)	Islamic ethics (direct)
Collective honor concept	No direct equivalent	Nomus (honor/shame)
Individual autonomy concept	Privacy as moral value	No direct equivalent
Shame mechanism	Internal guilt	External social shame (or)

The nationally specific divergences are equally significant. English moral discourse is organized around the individual moral agent: the locus of moral authority is the personal conscience, the operative principle is rational ethical reasoning, and the primary virtue is personal integrity — all values consonant with the Anglo-American cultural tradition of liberal individualism rooted in Enlightenment philosophy and Protestant ethics. The Uzbek moral conceptosphere, by contrast, positions the individual within a web of collective obligations: the primary moral regulators are nomus (collective honor) and iymon (faith-based duty), and the operative mechanism of moral sanction is social shame (or) rather than individualized guilt.

These contrasts are also evident at the level of lexical gaps. The Uzbek concept of nomus, which functions as a community-monitored moral regulator linking personal conduct to family honor, has no single-word equivalent in English. Conversely, the English moral valorization of privacy — the idea that individuals

possess a protected sphere of autonomous moral choice — finds no precise expression in the Uzbek conceptual system, reflecting fundamentally different assumptions about the boundaries between the self and the collective.

These are not merely differences in vocabulary but manifestations of deep structural divergences in how the moral life is understood, organized, and reproduced across generations in these two cultural traditions.

Conclusion. This comparative linguocultural investigation of the morality concept in English and Uzbek has produced the following substantive findings:

- *Universal features identified:* both languages share the conceptual oppositions of good/evil and virtue/vice, and both employ the MORALITY IS UPRIGHTNESS/LIGHT and MORAL FAILURE IS DARKNESS/DESCENT metaphorical schemas as cognitive organizing principles.
- *Nationally specific features identified:* English moral discourse reflects an individualist, conscience-centered, and reason-governed ethical tradition; Uzbek moral discourse is embedded in a collectivist, honor-regulated, faith-oriented, and community-accountable cultural framework.
- *Conceptual metaphors compared:* while both languages ground moral concepts in embodied metaphorical experience, English foregrounds spatial and directional schemas (verticality, linearity), whereas Uzbek foregrounds luminous and purity-based schemas alongside the metaphor of the communal gaze.
- *Conceptual components clarified:* the study establishes that axloq constitutes the nuclear concept of the Uzbek moral domain, while vijdon, nomus, iymon, insof, and or are semantically distinct conceptual subcomponents — not synonyms — a distinction with direct implications for translation practice and cross-cultural discourse analysis.
- *Linguocultural implications established:* the findings are directly relevant to intercultural communication, foreign language pedagogy, and the translation of morally charged texts between English and Uzbek.

Future research might productively extend this comparative framework to literary, media, and spoken corpora, and could further expand the scope of comparison to include other languages of the Central Asian region.

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