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Linguistic and semantic analysis of the concepts “heaven” and “hell”

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the image of heaven and hell in fiction. It was also a study of the expression of these images between languages and religions. To achieve this goal, four supernatural place concepts were analyzed and an explanation was created for each concept. Comparison of received explanations consists of two parts: semantic and linguistic template.

A linguistic analysis of the images of heaven and hell in the form of an analysis of the meaning, content, similarities and differences of the fragments. The result of the research conducted in this article is very interesting, the differences of the images in the works are clearly noticeable. That is, in one work, the image of the sky is given in a separate section, and various planets, layers of the sky are described with pictorial expressions. In it, the image of hell is depicted in the form of different layers and layers, similar to the image of heaven, and in each layer it is told how people are located. In the next, heaven is represented by the presence of beauty, grace and refinement, while hell is represented by pain, torment, various torments, punishing creatures and fire. A lack of similarity in terms of image and expression is expected.

Two works are discussed in the article, one of them is a great example of Western culture, and the other is a beautiful masterpiece of the East. The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion in the article.

First, it makes it easier to compare the abnormality associated with concepts in different languages.

Second, it reveals the embodied devices and concepts in the structure of supernatural place concepts, and also enables people to easily access these complex concepts.

Key words: representation, heaven, hell, concepts, literary, semantic, linguistic, components, the road to heaven.

The expressions "heaven" and "hell," which are used in many theological traditions, imply the polar opposites of a religious ideal.

Four notions with religious connotations: "jannat" and "jahannam" in Uzbek, English "paradise" and "hell". Each time a pair of concepts is mentioned, the other notion may be brought up as a result. This is a form of complementarity. The two notions in each pair can be considered to some extent to represent lexical converses, similar to the concepts of black and white or light and darkness. This comes as no surprise because the principles in each combination relate to rewards and penalties.

Although not all native English speakers believe in the existence of *heaven*, they appear to think of it as a place. It should be observed that there are people who speak of *heaven* as being a “**state**” rather than a “**place**”, but one could argue that most native English speakers would tend to think otherwise. This can be supported by the co-occurrence of gates with heaven; Here are two examples:

(1) *My son, embrace your father for me, for all of us, as he awaits you at the gates of heaven.*

(2) *There is an error at the gates of Heaven and a certain engineer, who is supposed to be ushered into paradise, is instead consigned to hell.*

Whether the use of *gate* with *heaven* is figurative or not, it still demonstrates that people tend to imagine *heaven* as a place. The following example is illustrative:

(3) **Heaven:** *where is it? How do we get there?*

The co-occurrence of *where* with *heaven* suggests that native English speakers view *heaven* as a place. More linguistic evidence comes from songs and other works of literature, in which *heaven* is described as such. Consider, for instance, the refrain of the Talking Heads song “*Heaven*,” which clearly refers to *heaven* as being a place.

Oh heaven, heaven is a place, a place where nothing, nothing ever happens. Heaven is a place, a place where nothing, nothing ever happens.

Hence, the first components of the explication of heaven read:

English heaven

(1a) *a place of one kind*

this place isn't like any place of any kind

(1b) *some people think like this: “there isn't a place of this kind”*

(1c) *when people think about this place, people can say things like these:*

Though the first component states that heaven is a place of one kind – implying that there are different kinds of places, of which heaven is but one of them – the subcomponent “this place isn't like any place of any kind” states that heaven, as a place, is very unique. This subcomponent ensures that the reader would not be misled into thinking that the explication is talking about a place that exists in our world. The second component notifies the reader of the contested ontological status of heaven, while the third component introduces the components that follow as depicting what native English speakers can say when describing heaven, irrespective of their belief or disbelief in its existence.

Heaven is viewed as the ‘habitat’ of God, angels, and all those good people who pass away. The words God and heaven are found together. God is described as being in heaven:

(4) *“You're saying,” the angel said, “that he has generated us as characters in a book He is writing, and when it is finished, we will all be reabsorbed into Him? ... “The world will end. All will be judged. The good will live in Heaven; the bad will go to Hell.*

(5) *...those who believe in him will have eternal life up in heaven with God.*

In addition, heaven seems to be associated with eternal life, as can be seen from example (5) above. The words eternal and heaven occur together. Heaven or life in heaven is described as being eternal.

Thus the relationship between God and good people, on the one hand, and heaven, on the other, can be represented as follows:

(1d) *God is in this place*

(1e) *after good people die, these people live in this place all the time, because God wants this*

Three comments are in order regarding these two components. First, while the word *God* is a semantic molecule, and thus can be included in the explication, the word *angel* is not. This means that for the concept of an angel to be mentioned in the explication, it would have to be explicated within the explication of heaven. Given the length and complexity of the explication of *angels*, we will not include the concept of an angel in the present explication. Second, in component (1e), we used the prime *After* and not *When* because the latter implies that good people can live in heaven immediately after their death, a belief which is not shared by all English-speaking Christians.

Third, We use the semantic prime *Live* to describe the fate of deceased good people because the concept of the *afterlife* implies that there is life after death, and wherever there is life, different entities (people, animals, etc.) can be said to 'live'; example (4) above is supportive of this notion.

Happiness appears to be an important feature of heaven, as can be seen from the following two examples:

(6) *And religion basically is, it says to us that the purpose of life is to come to the end of your life at peace with the Lord so that you may find an eternal happiness in heaven.*

(7) *I have always wanted to go to heaven. Everyone in heaven is rich and happy.*

Also, consider The Pixies' song "In Heaven," whose short refrain reads "In Heaven/ Everything is fine." In universal human concepts, this idea of heaven as a very happiness inducing place can be paraphrased as follows:

(1f) *when good people live in this place after these people die, these people can't not feel something very good because of this*

Heaven seems to be perceived as a place from which help and good things can come. The expression *manna from heaven* supports this notion. This expression is used to refer to anything good that a person unexpectedly obtains when s/he needs it. Another expression that supports this view is *heaven-sent*, which describes something that is received or happens, usually unexpectedly, at the time it is needed.

The collocation *heaven help* lends more support to the notion that heaven is perceived as a source of help.

It is used either to express sympathy for a person who is in a difficult situation or to show that the speaker will be angry with a person if this person does something. In both cases, the person who is in a difficult situation or the person whom the speaker will be angry with are/will be in need of help, and such help can come from heaven. It can be claimed that heaven, in these expressions, is used as a euphemism for God. We would argue, however, that, at least, for English-speaking Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Anglo Catholics, and Anglicans, not only God but also angels and saints are in heaven, and it is believed that both angels and saints can give a hand to people.

Therefore, the word heaven in the two 8 Sandy Habib expressions mentioned above does not necessarily refer only to God. But whether this notion is part of the everyday concept or not is an open question. To go around this problem, we will paraphrase the idea that people can get help from heaven as follows:

(1g) good things can happen to people because someone in this place wants this For those people who think that only God can help people, the word someone would refer to God. On the other hand, for those people who think that God, angels, and saints can assist human beings, someone would refer to any of these three beings.

Furthermore, it appears that someone in heaven is believed to be able to prevent something bad from happening. Evidence for this comes from such expressions as heaven forbid and heaven forefend respectively. This idea can be captured as follows:

(1h) bad things cannot happen to people because someone in this place wants this In component (1h) above, the particle not should be read as if it were part of the verb happen and not of the modal can. In other words, the sentence should be read as ‘bad things can [not happen] to people because of this place’ and not ‘bad things [cannot] happen to people because of this place.’ It also appears that heaven is thought of as a place which is above earth and very far from it. The excerpt below, taken from Geraldine Mc Caughrean’s novel *A Little Lower than the Angels*, supports this notion:

The play was over. The devil had crawled, on his belly, back into the Mouth of Hell, with a lump of charcoal in his mouth. And the fat, billowing angel had gone up to heaven to sit beside God. The clouds had hidden them both from sight.

Corpus data also support this notion. Consider, for example, the collocation stinks to high heaven. That heaven is above earth is also underpinned by the occurrence of the past tense verb ascended with the word heaven.. The present tense *ascend* and *ascends* appear with *heaven* 22 and 10 times, respectively, and the participle form *ascending* occurs with *heaven* 14 times. The occurrence of the verb ascend with heaven demonstrates that the average English speaker conceives of heaven as a place above earth:

(1i) when people think about this place, people can think like this:

(1j) this place is above the place where all people live

(1k) this place is very far from the place where all people live

(1l) before people die, people can't see this place, people can't be in this place

To recapitulate, English *heaven* refers to a supernatural place which seems to be perceived as the ‘habitat’ of God and deceased good people. It appears to be perceived as a place of ultimate happiness, and it seems to be imagined as being very far above earth. Also, it appears that someone in this place can do good things to people and prevent bad things from happening to them. The next subsection will explore the concept of *hell*.

English *hell*: Like heaven, hell seems to be viewed as a place. This idea is underpinned by the use of the relative pronoun where to refer to hell, as can be seen from the following two examples:

(8) “Now that your mother’s died? You do know she’s dead?” “Of course I do! Gone straight to hell where she belongs.”

(9) *Sophisticated satellite surveillance combined with highly accurate GPS data pinpointed Saddam Hussein's location currently in hell where he belongs along with his thugs and cronies from 9/11.*

Therefore, the first three components of the explication of hell are: English hell

(2a) *a place of one kind this place isn't like any place of any kind*

(2b) *some people think like this: "there isn't a place of this kind"*

(2c) *when people think about this place, people can say things like these:*

It seems that hell is believed to be the place where bad people are sent after their death. As evidence, consider the following quotation from McCaughrean's *A Little Lower than the Angels*:

'Bless you, child, it's only a play,' said a woman whose arm he had grabbed, pressing his dirty face into her dress. 'That's the Mouth of Hell that is, where all the damned souls go on the Day of Judgment for being wicked. Gobble, gobble! Ha-ha-ha!'

If a person is sent to hell, s/he will be suffering there forever. The following example supports this idea:

(10) *No doubt while in this world you obstructed the good works of the believers.*

What do you want now? Do you think that we can save you from the flames of Hell?

No, of course not.

That hell is eternal is also evidenced by the fact that people associate it with eternity; the words eternity and hell appear together; the combination of these two words is used to refer to life in hell as being eternal.

(2d) *after bad people die, these people live in this place all the time, because God [m] wants this*

(2e) *when bad people live in this place after these people die, these people can't not feel something very bad because of this*

While heaven seems to be imagined as being above earth, hell seems to be imagined as being somewhere down inside or beneath the earth. The collocation *raise hell* lends support to such a view. The fact that people use the verb *raise* in this expression suggests that they think of hell as a place which is beneath the place they live on. The following examples also support this notion:

(11) *You screw with me again and I'll send you straight down to Hell with your scumbag councilman.*

(12) *He dragged my daughter down to Hell! He was a criminal.*

As a formula, the location of hell can be expressed as follows:

(2f) *when people think about this place, people can think like this:*

(2g) *this place is below the place where all people live*

(2h) *this place is very far from the place where all people live*

(2i) *before people die, people can't see it, people can't be in it*

One may wonder about the need of the intensifier *very* in component (2h). We would argue that its necessity stems from the fact that hell is usually contrasted with heaven and the latter is normally described as being very far from earth (see component 1k above).

In addition, the intensifier serves the purpose of stressing the idea that hell is unreachable to living human beings. Hell appears to be associated with intense heat and/or fire. Evidence for this notion comes from such expressions as hotter than hell and until hell freezes over. It is used to describe a place or something which is very hot. Hell freezes over occurs 47 times in the same corpus. This expression is used to talk about a situation that will never take place. The only explanation for why this expression has this connotation is that people seem to perceive hell as a (very) hot place which would never freeze over. Thus:

(2j) *there is fire [m] everywhere in this place*

The fires of hell appear to be the source of suffering for deceased people who are sent there :

(13) *You will burn in hell for the acts you have committed. I just hope that day is an agonizingly long way away and that you have to suffer as much as we all have.* Also, consider the following two stanzas from Squirrel Nut Zippers' song "Hell," in which hell is described as a place where fire is eternally applied to the "bodies" of the deceased people:

In the afterlife

You could be headed for the serious strife

Now you make the scene all day

But tomorrow there'll be Hell to pay

...

This is a place where eternally

Fire is applied to the body

Teeth are extruded and bones are ground

Then baked into cakes which are passed around

Hence, I will add the following component:

(2k) *because of this, bad people feel something very bad after these people die* Note that components (2j) and (2k) are in fact subcomponents of component (2f). As a result, their information should not be taken literally. In a nutshell, it appears that people think of hell as the location where evil people go once they die in order to suffer there for all of eternity. It appears that this location is thought to be very deep underground and to contain fire that is used to punish the deceased evil people.

Summarizing the views of researchers regarding the essence of the concept, it can be summarized that within the framework of the linguocultural approach, the concept is multidimensional, including value, conceptual and figurative elements of mental education. The fundamental difference between cultural concept from a number of other conditional mental units that have high research potential for modern science, consists in that the concept, for all its multidimensionality, is characterized by a predominant the meaning of precisely the value attitude to the object of representation.

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