

## ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTS OF "LIFE" AND "DEATH" IN CHINESE LINGUISTIC CULTURE

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**ABSTRACT:** This article poses the question of the necessity for a comprehensive examination of Chinese linguistic culture, including the examination of mentality, concepts of the world in Chinese linguistic culture, and the examination of universal concepts of existentialism such as "life" and "death" and their reflection in Chinese linguistic culture. In this regard, terms such as linguoculture, concept, linguocultural concept, and language picture of the world are examined, and the contents of the concepts "life" and "death" are also revealed. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the content of the concept "life and death" in the modern Chinese language picture of the world and to determine the way of their lexicographic representation. "Life" and "death" are two of the basic concepts that underlie the general development of human reality. They are universal but differ in national and cultural originality. The examination of concepts will reveal their linguocultural specifics. The relevance of the study is due to the fact that the understanding of life and attitude to life in any linguistic culture is a basic guideline of human behavior, which determines ethno-specific norms and stereotypes of communication, as well as the mentality of native speakers. An analysis of the verbal representation of the concepts "Life" and "Death" in Chinese linguistic culture shows not only the traditional but also the modern understanding of life and death and the attitude toward them.

**KEYWORDS:** concept, linguocultural concept, life, death, linguistic view of the world.

### 1 Introduction

Due to the political and economic circumstances on the global stage, the societal transformations, and the interrelationships between nations and peoples resulting from the pandemic, the prevailing lifestyles of the majority of individuals have undergone a significant transformation. The process of informatization of society is accelerating, leading to the widespread utilization of technical tools and information technologies, gaining the popularity of hybrid forms of education. All of the aforementioned facts contribute to the reassessment of values in contemporary society, blurring the distinctions between virtual and real and altering the perception of life in general. Due to upheavals and social changes, the usual picture of the world is changing, which is reflected in the language. The current century is commonly referred to as the century of Asia; therefore, there is an increasing interest in an influential nation, country, language, and culture. Consequently, the study of the Chinese language's picture of the world, their usual view of the world order, and their way of life is relevant. It is necessary to explore universal concepts such as the attitude to life and death, the meaning of life, and the axiological aspect. Because of large-scale migration, China's strong economic development, the spread of the Chinese language and culture, the introduction of multilingual education, etc., there is a clash of mentalities and conflicts between the usual ways of life and the new ones. It is important to quickly adapt to current changes, explore changes in language and thinking, culture, and make sure effective intercultural communication. Based on the aforementioned, it appears that the examination of the categories of life and death in Chinese linguistic culture holds significance. With the growing political influence of China, the popularity of the Chinese language worldwide, and the opening of a large number of Confucius Institutes, a new vector of development towards Asia for a new generation is set, and Sinology in Russia received a new impetus for its development. As you are aware, language thought, and culture are closely related. The issues of comparative linguistics and linguoculturology are interdisciplinary in nature, which is why it is especially important to study not only the Chinese language and culture but also the direct study of linguoculture and the linguistic view of the world. This article provides a succinct examination of the fundamental terminologies of linguoculturology, namely "linguistic picture of the world," "concept," "linguocultural concept," as well as the content of the concepts "life" and "death" in the linguistic cultures of Chinese and Russian.

#### 1.1 The concept of linguoculture and linguistic view of the world The content of the concepts "life" and "death"

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(Степанов, 2001). His proposed concept is characterized by a "layered" structure, wherein the "layers" reflect the outcomes of cultural life in diverse eras. Being a carrier and transmitter of meaning, the concept retains the ability to store a body of knowledge about the world, forming categories and classes from the developed and accumulated knowledge of society. A concept is defined as "a diverse range of mental structures that encode culturally significant meanings in a diverse range of configurations." (Алефиренко, 2002). The concept is understood as a large mental unit. According to G.V. Tokarev, the concept comprises three distinct layers: the first being universal (encompassing both scientific and everyday concepts), the second being cultural (encompassing cultural attitudes and stereotypes at the level of community), and the third being subcultural, comprising cultural attitudes and stereotypes at

Subsequently, in the field of linguoculturology, the term linguocultural concept was coined, indicating the axiological aspect. The linguocultural concept emphasizes the value component; consequently, the fundamental element of the concept is value.

Conceptual, cognitive, and linguocultural analyses are distinguished in order to study concepts. The process of conceptual analysis involves identifying the most frequently used contexts of a word, aggregating them by subject and direction, scrutinizing the meanings of words, analyzing direct and figurative meanings, and analyzing idiomatic expressions and phrases, referred to as semantic analysis. The conceptual analysis is based on linguistic data and word compatibility. Cognitive analysis employs methodologies from related disciplines, such as neurolinguistics and psycholinguistics. Conceptual analysis allows us to examine how a concept has been historically formed in the national consciousness. The dynamics of the evolution of the corresponding concept in society can be envisioned by analyzing the alteration in the meanings of the corresponding lexemes, the emergence of novel and the disappearance of traditional meanings, and the difference in the definitions of the same word across various stages of language development. The linguocultural analysis elucidates the structure of the linguocultural concept, delineates the linguocultural specifics, and highlights the significant aspects of describing the linguistic picture of a particular society. The mentality of the people is rooted in an awareness and comprehension of life, derived from their historical experiences, and closely intertwined with their culture, worldview, traditions, religion, and teachings, etc. The abstract concept of life cannot be explained by simple ideas such as movement, motion, or speech. Nowadays, ordinary machines are capable of performing all of these basic functions. The problem with defining death is not as abstract and hard to understand as the problem of life. The issue of defining life and death has been a persistent concern for philosophers and religious organizations for centuries, primarily due to the fact that each philosophy or religion has attempted to define the significance of life and death solely from its own perspective. It appears that the most appropriate approach to this issue would be to comprehend the concepts posited in various philosophical and religious traditions, and utilizing this knowledge to formulate a fresh definition for each concept of existence.

In essence, in any linguistic representation of the world, the notion of "life" is undoubtedly a fundamental concept. It is a multifaceted phenomenon, a constant, macro concept linked to universal, categorical concepts. Its structure, content, and dominant characteristics reflect the nation's attitude toward the phenomenon of life and its value orientations. S.G. Vorkachev characterizes the linguocultural concept by three important dimensions — figurative, conceptual, and meaningful (Воркачев, 2004). It is also expressed lexically.

The concept holds significant significance to native speakers, is relevant to them, and is exemplified by a significant number of synonyms, including those with a metaphorical internal form, that exhibit rich lexical compatibility. It is also the subject of numerous proverbs, sayings, folklore plots, literary texts, and works of fine art, sculpture, and music. It is a concept that is deeply rooted in the language and culture of the people and thus is a diachronic constant of both language and culture.

## **2 Materials and Methods**

The research methodology employed in the work comprises the linguistic and cultural analysis of the concept, descriptive analysis, distributional analysis, and component analysis method. The research material comprised of the data from Russian-Chinese dictionaries, as well as Chinese dictionaries that provide both explanatory and phraseological information.

## **3 Results**

### **3.1 Reflection of the concepts of "life" and "death" in Chinese linguistic culture**

In the Chinese language and culture, it is important to single out ancient philosophical teachings as examples of culture. The notions of life and death are closely intertwined with other concepts such as being, non-being, the meaning of life, mission, debt, service, and existence.

Consider the basic meanings of the concept of life, presented in Chinese dictionaries. The first word we can isolate is 生活: 1) refers to the various activities of humans or animals: cultural life, political life, life of a cricket, etc. (生活经历 way of life (experience), 性生活 sex life 生活资源 livelihoods, 生活条件- living conditions, 幸福生活 happy life, 日常生活 daily life, 政治生活; 生活费 - living expenses) ; 2) the implementation of various activities: We live in a glorious era that opens up a new history of mankind; 3) to live, to save life; 4) maintenance of life (clothes, food, housing, transport and other aspects of the standard of living).

The next word for life is 生命. There are several meanings: 1) life (the ability of living organisms to exist and move); 2) viability (refers to the nature of things that can exist); 3) condition (refers to qualifications and ability to participate in certain activities); 4) fate. There are many phrases that we can find out, such as :生命力强viable, 生命视野life experience, 生命价值values of life, 付出生命to give one's life, 延长生命toprolong life, 牺牲生命tosacrifice one 's life, 生命的气息breath of life, and 冒生命危险 to venture life, to be indifferent to danger. Next word 生存: 1) refers to things that constantly take up time and space; in fact, they exist; 2) refers to various things or phenomena in general; 3) in philosophy, it refers to the objective world, which is not altered by human consciousness; 4) refers to behavior.

We also provide several idioms that describe life:

财连于命 Wealth is closely related to life. It means that people cannot survive without money.

乐天知命 Being satisfied with one's destiny.

牛马生活 Bonded, bestial existence.

朝露溘至 How the morning dew that describes the shortness of life.

Thus, we observe a large number of adjectives that describe a way of life, such as luxury, simplicity, lightness, warmth, comfort, joy, tranquility, satisfaction, employment, and originality.

Let us proceed with the study of the concept of "death." The fear of death has resulted in the transformation of the word "death" into a euphemism and a taboo in Russian linguistic culture. The word death has magical powers, and instead of using the word death, they began to use the word life: "to depart this life" and "to part from this life." The Russian consciousness is characterized by the idea that there is a certain space between life and death, but it is very small. In the Russian consciousness, there is the idea of a certain space between life and death, but this space is very small.

According to the Chinese linguistic view of the world, death is like the changing of the four seasons, a natural part of the ebb and flow of the transformations that make up the movement of the Tao. To mourn death or fear one's own death is to arbitrarily evaluate what is inevitable. It is ineffective, arbitrary, and stupid to oppose what is natural. Let us examine the vocabulary used to denote death. We would like to begin with the character 死: 1) to die, perish, fall to an end, disappear, dead, deceased, killed, death; 2) to the death, mortally (verb modifier); 3) to kill, mortify, execute; 4) even unto death; venture life; 5) irreconcilable, deadly; 6) to the highest degree, to the death, terrible, very (modifier of verbs and adjectives); 7) unchanging, strong, rigid, inflexible, stereotyped (also verb modifier); 8) blind (back to the wall), dead-end; tightly, doubly tight; impossible to pass (also verb modifier).

死亡: 1) loss of life; 2) relate to the dead; 3) die, disappear.

死神 1) mythological figure, god of death.

灭亡 1) to perish, to be destroyed; death; 2) to destroy; to scathe; 3) extinction.

毁灭 1) to wipe off from the face of the earth, to destroy, to annihilate, to raze to the ground; to exterminate, to devastate; devastation, destruction, annihilation;

2) to be consumed with grief (during mourning), to bring oneself to grave for grief;

圆寂 1) to dive into parinirvana ; 2) to go meet Maker, die (in relation to the monk)

至死 even unto death, unto death, till one's dying day, for perpetuity;

至死不变 not change till death, to cleave till death;

丧 to lose, to forfeit (smth.);

受禄无丧 having accepted the bounties [of heaven], not to lose [them];

丧了命 to be bereft of life, to die;

3) to destroy, to annihilate; dial. To bring to death; to tomb;

天丧予 the sky is ruining me;

1) to die, to perish, to disappear, to get lost;

殄 to discard, to refuse, to die; death;

故去 to die, to decease, to rest, to pass to one's rest;

死命 ruin, fate;

离世 1) to die, to pass away; 2) detach oneself from the world;

无禄 1) without salary (reward), without pay; 2) unhappy; unfortunately; 3) to die; death.

Therefore, it is important to analyze the dominant ideologies in order to determine the content of concepts, which reflect the above vocabulary. In order to accomplish this, it is essential to conduct an analysis of ideology, ethics, and thinking. The Confucian ethics system is a system of virtue ethics that has had a significant impact on the formation of thinking and national identity. Its influence still persists in contemporary Chinese culture. According to Confucianism, a limited number of individuals possess the capacity to love. Love is the beginning and end of life. Following traditions, fulfilling one's duty is life. We can learn that wellbeing and prosperity are secondary: "The person who believes in a well-fed and calm life is not worthy of being a scientist." The human essence is the ability to live. A man possesses life, knowledge, and, in addition, a sense of righteousness, thereby humanis the most noble individual on earth. In people, we observe a moral potential that allows them to lead a moral life, which is considered an inalienable attribute of a person, which lies in the ability to live a moral life. In Confucianism, the attainment of an ideal moral personality is the ultimate objective of life, as well as the significance of life. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that personal dignity is more valuable than universal dignity in certain circumstances. Under certain circumstances, an individual may be required to make a sacrifice of their life in order to uphold their dignity. In order to illustrate the concepts of life and death, we present a general table of the concepts of life and death in Confucianism and Taoism.

**Table 1**

<b>Concepts of life and death in Confucianism</b>	<b>Concepts of life and death in Taoism</b>
The doctrine of entering the world (society)	Teaching about leaving the world
"Humanity" and "politeness" are defining qualities of life and human behavior	Tao is the space of the intersection of the individual and the universal in a person and his life
Filial piety, i.e. devotion to parents	"De" 德 is "high morality", a reflection of Tao in the inner world of a person
"If we don't know life, how can we know death?"	"The body and the name (glory), which of them is closer (more expensive)? What is more – body or material goods?"
Sacrifice life for justice	The permanent state of human life is "life, death, sickness and old age"

Source: Tao, 2020.

Therefore, the fear of death lacks a significant "balance", a sufficient psychological compensation, as exemplified in the teachings about the other world, paradise, etc., that is, even the religious and philosophical teachings of China lack an effective means of appreciably neutralizing the fear of death. A person holds a high regard for their life and holds it instead as an uncompensated value, despite the fact that in ideological teachings, it remains the noblest act to give up one's life for the sake of justice.

#### **4 Discussion**

In contemporary linguistics, there exist three distinct paradigms: comparative-historical, which is the initial approach to studying language, system-structural, which places the word at the center, and anthropocentric, which examines a person in language and a language in a person. During the process of the advancement of comparative linguistics, the field of linguoculturology emerged. Cultural linguistics is a science that combines linguistics and cultural studies, and is therefore synthetic. Linguoculturology (from Latin: *lingua* - language, *cultura* - culture, *logos* - science, teaching) studies linguocultures, including segments of culture and language. Leo Weisberg introduced the term "linguistic world view" into science, argued that "language is not a fact (*ergon*), but an activity (*energia*)" (Байсрѣбер, 1993). The establishment and advancement of cultural linguistics in Germany is closely associated with Wilhelm von Humboldt, who developed the fundamental principles of cultural linguistics. He believes that language is a reflection of culture and that the worldview of the people is embedded in its language. A person lives with objects as the language presents them to him from within himself. In France, the formation of linguoculturology is associated with the name of Emile Benveniste, who noted the connection between language and culture. In General Linguistics, Benveniste combines the study of vocabulary with an analysis of culture and history. The national culture, its differences from other cultures, reflected in the language and linguistic units, is the subject of study of linguoculturology. Therefore, language is a fundamental product and a vital component of culture.

As language and culture are intrinsically linked, as well as language and thought, it is vitally important to distinguish the notion of a linguistic representation of the world. It is extremely important to take into account national specifics when studying the worldview of any nation. "In studies on cognitive linguistics, it is customary to distinguish between a "linguistic view of the world" and a "conceptual view of the world." It is generally acknowledged that these pictures do not coincide despite the emphasis on the globality and volume of the latter. Linguoculturology asserts the necessity to emphasize the value-based picture of the world, alongside linguistics, within the framework of the general picture of the world" (Ангелова, 2004, p. 105). V.A. Maslova describes linguoculturology as "a science that studies both historical and modern linguistic facts through the prism of spiritual culture" (Маслова, 2007). The primary functions of the linguistic view of the world encompass the correlation of language units with categories that reflect an individual's understanding of the world, language units, as well as the comprehension of the acquired information and the formation of concepts, conceptual structures in the psyche.

The picture of the world is formed by the need to describe the world around, the processing of a person's information about the environment, and the formation of appropriate categories-concepts. The term a "linguistic view of the world" aims to "materialize the cultural and philosophical hypostasis of the language into a tangible form, not as a mere sign system and a means of communication and cognition, but as a "house of the spirit" of the people, which encompasses both the national identity and national worldview in the broadest sense of the term, as well as concrete facts about the history and culture of the people. Linguoculturology is a discipline that aims to describe the linguistic picture of the world. In order to achieve an objective representation of the linguistic picture of the world, it is important to maintain an uncomplicated view - to analyze the usual "linguistic organization of the world" as one of the possible types of ideas about the world. It is formed as a concept unit through conceptualization.

## **5 Conclusion**

The search for the meaning of life and the limitations of earthly existence are extensively debated and scrutinized by numerous scholars across diverse disciplines and are reflected in diverse ways in diverse cultures and languages. The contemplation of death, the comprehension of death, and the notion of it consistently occupy the thoughts of individuals, and the more so, the more educated and independent the thinking of a person. Hence, the fundamental inquiry of human thought pertains to life and death, not in isolation but in tandem. Death is the limit of life, and without it, there would be no life. Similarly, there would be no life without death. Therefore, the fear of death does not have a significant counterweight or sufficient psychological compensation, expressed in the theory of another world, paradise, etc. That is, even the religious and philosophical teachings of China do not have an effective means of noticeably neutralizing the fear of death. As the concept is a cultural imprint that permeates a person's thought process and outlook on the world, the analyzed notions of life and death,

the associated phrases, and idiomatic expressions constitute a substantial resource for research. This article provides a short list of vocabulary and idioms that describe life and death, which requires further in-depth analysis and study.

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