

# Conceptual Metaphor of “Death Is a Journey” in Covid-19 Victim Memorial Messages Posted on Vnexpress.net and Rememberme2020.uk

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**Abstract:** The conceptual metaphor of death is a journey is a universal concept, appearing in discourses with different contexts. Its basic structure is a path diagram consisting of a starting point, a route, and a destination. While investigating the memorial messages for victims who died due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we used the conceptual schema “journey” to clarify the mechanism of copying and mapping the characteristics of “death” from the source to the target domain to find out the basic attributes that are often used to talk about an “abstract” and “taboo” category. Through the analysis of memorial messages in two languages, the results of this study aim to show the cognitive mechanism of “death” in Vietnamese and English through the schema of “journey”, compare some similarities and differences between the Vietnamese and British perception of “death” through this conceptual metaphor, and provide implications for language research and teaching relating to cultural factors.

**Keywords:** Conceptual metaphor, death, journey, source domain, target domain, mapping, schema.

**Subject classification:** Linguistics

## 1. Introduction

The concepts of the existence and loss of people are basic and universal categories represented in different sub-disciplines, from a specific scientific perspective such as biology and physics to abstract perspectives such as philosophy, psychology, and religious studies. Humans, begin the “journey” of living with birth, occupied with emotions and relationships on that journey and, at the same time, the “fear” of death, the “destination” of each life, which is not only biological and physical markers but also contains concepts of religion, culture, and beliefs. Although the two concepts “Life” and “Death” coexist, in daily life, we often talk about life, the existence of each person’s life, while avoiding

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mentioning death and death-related things. “Death” is considered a “taboo” in many cultures, and its expression typically causes awkward or uncomfortable feelings for the speaker. Therefore, each language has sought vivid and various expressions of death, which help to reduce inconvenience in communication as well as reflecting the human perception of the concept of “death”.

To fully clarify the conceptual metaphor related to “death” in different languages, the researcher carried out a survey on a specific category (death is a journey) in Vietnamese and English languages. The study uses the theory of conceptual metaphors of Lakoff and Johnson to determine the set of characteristic features of the source and target domains in the cognitive model, set up the mapping schema, explain the transfer mechanisms, and copy the attributes between the two spatial domains “source” and “target” in the conceptual expression. Based on the findings, the study explains the influence of culture, ways of thinking, and religious factors on how people use languages for the concepts of life and death. The study also shows similarities and differences in the expression and thinking of Vietnamese and English cultures. The results of the study can be used as one of the factors for more in-depth research on comparative linguistics and intercultural communication in the context of international integration.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1. Overview of studies related to conceptual metaphors of category “death”*

“Death” is an abstract concept that no one has direct experience; therefore, in every culture in the world, death is often interpreted through linguistic associations of more specific categories, such as “journey”, “a reunion”, or “a peaceful sleep”. Besides that, another argument in the language of “death” is that, in fact, talking about death is talking about a conceptual domain that brings anxiety, fear, and discomfort to most people. So, in numerous instances, people typically try to choose “polite” expressions, “understated”, or “avoidant” speech to reduce negative emotions as much as possible.

According to Allan and Burridge (Allan and Burridge, 2006, p.222), “the taboo related to death is related to some human fear, and is studied in light of the psychological theory of Control your fear”. The fear here can be summed up as: (1) the fear of losing a loved one, (2) the fear of the body not being a single entity, (3) the fear that death is the ending point of life, (4) fear of the evil of the soul after death, (5) fear of a senseless death, and (6) fear of not knowing what happens after death. Above all, “death is often a familiar and vulnerable topic, needing ‘verbal safeguards’ to protect against immediate and frightening reality.” (Fernandez, 2006, p.101).

Due to the vague understanding of death and the avoidant concept of talking about death, linguists have found a variety of approaches to the conceptual metaphor of death

and demonstrated them in many studies, reflecting different ways of thinking, ideology, philosophy, and religion of different ethnic groups. Considering the works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980-2003), Bert Bultinck (1998), Eliecer Crespo Fernández (2006) and Juana Marín-Arrese (1996) it can be seen that all of these works used cognitive metaphor theory to explain the basic relationships constituting the projection of concepts such as departure, loss, journey, and sleep into the perception of death. The most common conceptual metaphors for death found in research are summarised in five broad categories: death is a journey; death is the end; death is a loss; death is a reward, and the physiological effects of death representing death under each of the above metaphors, such as death is the start and death is release (Lakoff, 2003; Lakoff and Turner, 1989).

In Vietnamese language, the conceptual metaphorical studies of “death” have only been appeared as small parts in larger works, such as the treatise “Vietnamese mind through several keywords - Essay on Linguistics of Culture - Cognition” by Lê Thị Kiều Vân. The study explains Vietnamese’s perception with keywords such as “destiny”, “body” and “soul” to see the experience of the body, the way of thinking, and the language used when referring to these notions of the Vietnamese (Lê Thị Kiều Vân, 2017, pp.131-171). The monograph “Conceptual Metaphors in Trinh Cong Son’s lyrics” (Nguyễn Thị Bích Hạnh, 2015) also mentions the concept of “death” in the cognitive metaphor human life is a day with time segments of a day (morning, noon, afternoon, night) corresponding to the stages in a person’s life (birth, adulthood, middle age, old age (death)); the cognitive metaphor life is a journey with conceptual metaphor models expressing Trinh Cong Son’s perception of life and people based on the concept of processes in a particular journey (space, vehicle, destination, and visitor status). From this first-order metaphorical expression, the author has led the metaphor to the lower-order metaphor death is sleep to further clarify the concept of life in the musician’s consciousness. In the orientational metaphor, the author mentioned the expression “disease and death oriented downwards”. Through surveying and analysing lyrics, the author has shown that directional metaphors are also used to reflect thinking about “death”. In addition, in the study entitled “An investigation into Linguistic features of Conceptual Metaphors in English and Vietnamese” (Nguyễn Thị Tú Trinh, 2011), the author has generalised the conceptual metaphorical expressions used in two languages English and Vietnamese based on a survey of 1,000 discourses in literary works, newspapers, and other sources. The work also points out the similarities and differences in the use of metaphorical expressions to indicate the concepts of life and death between the two languages, explaining the difference coming from factors related to living conditions, culture, belief, religion, and different ethnic groups.

In general, the above researches help to shape the initial understanding of conceptual metaphors of death in English and Vietnamese. However, there has not been a complete research study to compare and contrast the conceptual metaphor “death is a journey” on Vietnamese and English corpus to find out the similarities and difference between the two languages. Therefore, the research on this metaphor will be a specific example to add a voice to the field of study.

## 2.2. *Research questions*

This study was conducted to answer the following two questions:

- How is the mapping mechanism of the source domain “journey” projected to the target domain “death” in the metaphorical expression “death is a journey” in Vietnamese and English languages?
- What are the similarities and differences in the use of the same conceptual metaphor expression “death is a journey” in Vietnamese and English languages?

## 2.3. *Some related concepts*

### - Concept

According to Trần Văn Cơ, concepts are formed in the thinking process of people. A concept is created in the process of structuring information about an objective event in the world, including the content of information received from the real world and the imaginary world, then filtered through the subjective lens of the human being (Trần Văn Cơ, 2009). According to Lý Toàn Thắng, a concept is not only the result of the thinking process but also the product of the perceptual process, which is summed up by human experience over generations (Lý Toàn Thắng, 2015). Both authors believe that the concept is not only universal because it reflects the objective world, but also specific because it is associated with national cultural and linguistic characteristics.

### - Conceptual metaphor

A cognitive/conceptual metaphor is the conceptualisation of one mental domain through another, that is, the systematic mapping from a source domain to a target domain to create a cognitive model. Conceptual metaphors are considered to be associated with the cultural and spiritual characteristics of native speakers. In conceptual metaphors, the source domain (often concrete) provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target (usually abstract) conceptual domain, and this understanding takes place through similar corresponding schema mappings between the two domains. When these correspondences are enabled, mapping schemes can be activated and project from the source domain to the target domain.

A structural metaphor is a metaphor where the meaning (or value) of a word (or expression) is understood (evaluated) through the structure of a word (or another expression). This type of metaphor typically uses the result of symbolisation in association, helping people understand the (typically abstract) target concept A through conceptual source constructs B (more concrete). In this study, the researcher presents how the structural metaphor “death is a journey” works, basing on the above-mentioned mapping mechanism.

### - Euphemism

According to Vietnamese dictionary (Hoàng Phê, 2003, p.1008), euphemism is defined as “a method of reducing speech, by not using direct expression but using a softer form of expression, due to stylistic reasons”. In English, the term euphemism is derived from a Greek

word where the prefix “eu” means good, and “phemism” means speech. Hence, euphemism is simply saying nice things.

Studies on euphemisms all claim that the existence of euphemisms in languages is universal and formed due to several needs, such as taboos or politeness. However, different sociocultural characteristics lead to separate ways of thinking in each language community and thus create different semantic environments. There are euphemisms formed from taboos that one nation has, but another does not. There are also euphemisms which are formed from metaphorical methods, in which the choice of things and phenomena to conceptualise depends on cognitive characteristics and cultural knowledge bearing national identity (Trần Thị Hồng Hạnh, 2015).

- Concept of “Death”

There are many definitions of “death” from biological and physical perspectives. In this paper, the researcher examines the concept from an epistemological perspective. In the work “Facing Finality: Cognitive and Cultural Studies on Death and Dying” (Erich A. Berendt, 2012), the author defines the perception of life and death according to the understanding of the mind and society as follows: “Death and birth give us the defining point of how we see ourselves. Accept the life, purpose, and values we create from those life experiences. At the time of birth, we begin to breathe, open our eyes, and make our first cry; at the time of death, our eyes close, we stop breathing, and the body is no longer warm.”

*2.4. Concept of “Death” from religious perspectives of Vietnamese and British people*

Along with the diversity in cultural characteristics, religions, and beliefs, each nation in the world will have different ways of thinking and explaining the concept of “death”. Vietnam is a country located in Southeast Asia with ideology, religion, and beliefs heavily influenced by Eastern cultures. Therefore, Vietnamese people’s ways of thinking and behaviour towards “death” are clearly expressed through ancestor worship and the influence of Buddhism as one of the main religions that a lot of Vietnamese believe in. In contrast, Britain is a Western country with entirely different cultural characteristics, especially religious beliefs, reflecting a different interpretation of the category of “death” from the point of view of Christianity as its dominant religion.

- The perspective of Vietnamese people’s belief in ancestor worship

Ancestor worship is a type of traditional belief that has been formed and maintained in the heart of Vietnamese society for a long time. Spiritually, for Vietnamese people, death is not the end but just a step into another world. From that world, the soul can still go back to visit children and grandchildren. The ancient Vietnamese believed that the realm of the death was a river region, where it was called the Nine Streams or Golden Stream (*Cửu Tuyền* or *Hoàng Tuyền*). This belief dates back to ancient times and has many explanations, possibly due to the influence of ancient Chinese culture with thousands of years of Northern domination, and also due to the living space of the ancient Vietnamese

people. In the Northern Delta region, interlaced with rivers and lakes, that space is also associated with the deceased (Võ Phuong Lan, 2017, pp.198-199).

- The Buddhist perspective

According to the Buddhism belief, death is a stage in the cycle of birth and death (Thích Như Điển, 2009). Birth precedes death, and death precedes birth. Birth and death are just different names, but the same process. The correlation between death and life, life and death is similar to that of water evaporating, cold vapour freezing into clouds, and clouds producing rain to release the water again. The cycle of life and death goes on and on. Death is merely the end of a life stage. Death means a change of location, like moving from this place to another. At the time of death, only the living environment and location were changed. Thus, according to the Buddhist concept, death is not the end, but only the temporary body is disintegrated, and the root cause of death is fate (karma).

- The Christian perspective

Christians believe in the existence of a soul and a world for the dead. Therefore, in the perception of death, Christianity believes that death is the door leading to life. Death is not the end of life, but one day people will be resurrected. For every Christian, the afterlife is the land of the resurrected, where those who die find a new life after death. It is where the followers will live the eternal life that God has promised them. Therefore, Christians must make efforts from the moment they are living in the present life to deserve salvation, i.e., forgiven for their mistakes to be accepted into the kingdom of God. Christianity exhorts its followers to let the dead die peacefully because they believe that the eternal life is awaiting them (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1996).

### **3. Research methods**

The research data includes 400 messages of remembrance in Vietnamese language written by relatives of victims who have passed away because of the Covid-19 pandemic, shared on the section “Remembering Covid-19 victims” of VnExpress.net and 400 memorial messages in English on the “Memorial” section of Rememberme2020.uk, which were posted between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021. Data was collected randomly according to the order in which they appear on the website to ensure objectivity.

The study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative research was used to establish a direct comparison between the two blocks of Vietnamese and English corpus, while qualitative research was utilised to analyse with more in detail the “journey” diagram and identify similarities and differences between Vietnamese and English languages on the same type of discourse relating to the concept of “death”.

Specific research methods used include:

- Descriptive method: used to describe the conceptual metaphor model “Death is a Journey” in memorial messages about the deaths of Covid-19 written in Vietnamese and English languages.

- Method of analysing conceptual metaphor: used to analyse the mapping schema of “Death is a Journey” metaphor.

The corpus was surveyed and identified according to the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) with four steps proposed by Pragglejaz (2007).

- Methods of statistics and classification: used to count the frequency of occurrence, popularity, and classify linguistic and cultural characteristics based on collected data. The statistics show the popularity of the cognitive model and form the basis for quantitative comparisons between Vietnamese and English.

#### 4. Death is a journey mapping schema

The conceptual metaphor death is a journey appears in many memorial messages. Stemming from the interrelationship in experience, the knowledge about the source domain (a journey) is irradiated to the target domain (the death). According to the replication mechanism, the target domain selectively acquires some attributes of the source domain and carries new knowledge of that source domain.

The basic structure of conceptual metaphor *death is a journey* is a path diagram consisting of a starting point, a route traversed, and a destination. This schema comes from the knowledge gained by human experience: when a person (regarded as a traveller / passenger) died, the event will be considered the end of a life journey on Earth and the beginning of a new journey. The journey of the dead person has the starting point of the trip (departure with the mood, the rituals, the person sending them off at death), the activity on the journey (similar to the movement of leaving from one location to another) and destination (the place conceived as the final home of the dead). During that journey, the traveller receives the instructions, wishes, and greetings from those who stay alive. The traveller can also meet companions who go with him and reunite, reach achievements and the end of the journey. The mapping schema death is a journey is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Death Is A Journey Mapping Scheme

Journey source domain	Death target domain
Traveller/passenger	→ Dead person
Depart/departure	→ Ritual, signs of death
States of the voyage/travel	→ States of death
Destination	→ The place where the dead stays
Companion/partner	→ Other dead people

Source: Author.

In the survey corpus, many metaphorical expressions appear corresponding to attributes of the source domain “journey”. According to the principle of metaphorical irradiation, typical references related to the “journey” have been selected, activated, and projected onto the target domain “death”.

There is also a special feature in the mechanism of copying the source domain to the destination domain in the structural metaphor death is a journey, that is, some source domains are not specific and clear, functioning as the destination of the journey (Heaven, Golden Stream, Western bliss, etc.) because they have become familiar in human perception due to its existence in the mind for a long time as symbols or in communications, oral stories, legends, beliefs, and cultural identities.

### 5. Conceptual metaphor death is a journey in column “Remembering the victims of Covid-19” on VnExpress.net

The source domain activates the typical attributes of the “journey” such as departure, pick-up, drop-off activities, itineraries, and destination. A series of examples include goodbye, leave, wish to have a peaceful travel, follow, reunite, and meet grandparents (Vietnamese: *từ biệt, bỏ lại, chúc đi bình an, đi, đi theo, đoàn tụ, gặp gỡ ông bà, về nơi chín suối...*) from this source domain come from the way Vietnamese people think and imagine about the journey and the death.

From the statistics on the discourse of remembering Covid-19 victims posted on VnExpress.net, the conceptual metaphor death is a journey appeared in 151 messages with 224 leads. The specific figures are described in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Examples of Conceptual Metaphor Death Is A Journey on Remembering Covid-19 Victims - VnExpress.net

Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances	Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances
Departure activities/ pick-up/ drop-off/ message/ preparation for the trip	Không lời từ biệt [No goodbyes]	8	Companions/ partner/ States of the traveller	Lặng lẽ một mình [go alone quietly]	3
	Tiền biệt [Farewell]	4		Cô đơn [alone]	3
	Ông trời gọi đi [God called]	2		Dắt ... theo ... [take...with...]	1
	Không kịp ... [not on/ in time ...]	6		Với ... [go with]	2



Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances	Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances
	<i>Tạm biệt</i> [goodbye]	2		<i>Đi theo ...</i> [follow]	1
	Nếu gặp ... xin gửi lời hỏi thăm [If meet, please send greetings]		Destination	Nơi cõi Phật [in the Buddha land]	11
	Không ai đưa tiễn [no one sends off]	3		Nơi vĩnh hằng [eternal place]	4
	Chúc ... đi bình an [have a good journey]	1		Chín suối /suối vàng [Nine streams / Golden streams]	5
	Rời khỏi .... [moved]	10		Nơi miền cực lạc [joyful place]	4
	Chư Phật mười phương tiếp dẫn ... [The Buddhas of the ten directions lead...]	1		Nơi thiên đàng / Trên trời [Heaven]	7
	Đề lại / bỏ lại ... [leave]	4		Nơi Chúa [in the God's land]	3
	Tiến [see off]	2		Nơi hạnh phúc/ bình an / tốt đẹp nhất [the happiest /the most peaceful place]	9
Activities of traveller/ passenger	Ra đi / bỏ đi [go away]	26		Thế giới bên kia [another world]	3
	Đi [go/ depart]	35		Gặp lại ông bà/ con trai/ Nội và các bác/ Nơi có ba [reunite with grandparents / son /ancestors/...	21

Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances	Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances
	Đến [arrive]	4		Nơi đó / nơi ấy / nơi khác [that place]	11
	Về [come]	9			
	Đi du lịch [travel]	2			
	Đi công tác xa [go on a business trip]	1			
	Đoàn tụ [reunite]	16			
Total			224		

Source: Author.

In metaphors with the source domain “journey”, discourses aimed at helping readers perceive “death” as a “journey”. Because the pandemic has taken many lives, causing fear, confusion and grief, loss to the survivors, the way of thinking about “death” as a “journey” is the way to avoid causing more sad and negative emotions to the survivors. “Journey” will be understood as the time when relatives have to leave those who stay behind to move to another place. During that journey, the living person will express regret when saying goodbye, and refer to the event of “death” by activities of “going away”, “returning to reunite with ancestors, grandparents...”, “to a better place”, “to the Western realm of bliss”, “to the Buddha”, and so forth. Here are some examples:

(1) *Mong chú và bà đi thanh thản, con cháu sẽ nhớ về 2 người. Nếu vô tình gặp được cậu Thắng và ông Đáng, cho cháu gửi lời hỏi thăm nhé. Lúc nghe tin dì Thúy đã sốc lắm, bố mẹ cháu thậm chí còn không tin.* (<https://vnexpress.net/nguyen-thi-huong-4392671.html>)

[Hope you and your grandma went peacefully, your children and grandchildren will remember you two. If you accidentally meet Mr Thắng and Mr Đáng, please send our regards. Aunt Thúy was so shocked when hearing the news, my parents didn't even believe it].

(2) *Hôm qua, cái Thất đầu tiên của Út. Út đi rồi nhưng chưa kịp nhắn nhủ với ai điều gì. Thôi thì không còn mệt, không còn mất ngủ nữa Út nhỉ.* (<https://vnexpress.net/nguyen-van-dung-1962-2021-4392285.html>)

[Yesterday was the first week since Út's death. Út left but did not have time to tell anyone anything. Well, no longer tired, no more insomnia, Út?].

The dead acts as a traveler and are referred to with a lot of action verbs. For example:

(3) *Hôm nay đã được 81 ngày rồi mẹ đã ra đi. Mẹ đã ra đi mãi mãi ko 1 lời từ biệt chúng con rất nhớ thương mẹ. Mong mẹ sớm về nơi miền cực lạc. Nam mô A Di Đà Phật!* (<https://vnexpress.net/nguyen-thi-hiep-1949-2021-4392300.html>)

[Today has been 81 days and my mother passed away. Mom is gone forever without a goodbye we miss you so much. I hope you return to the land of paradise soon. Namo Amitabha Buddha].

(4) *Ba ơi, con nhớ ba! Nhớ cái vẫy tay cuối cùng và nói coi như đi du lịch nữa tháng sau lại về nhưng ko ngờ ba lại về theo cách như thế này. Ba ơi, ba ở đâu? Nhớ phải về bên tụi con bên mẹ ba nhé.* (<https://vnexpress.net/phan-ba-linh-1964-2021-4392046.html>)

[Daddy, I miss you! I remember the last wave of my hand and said it was like going on a trip again in a month, but I didn't expect my dad to come back like this. Dad, where are you? Remember to come back to us with mom, daddy].

At the end of the journey is the destination. Destinations in this journey are not tangible, but are symbolic and familiar in the Vietnamese way of thinking about death.

(5) *Con nhớ Ngoại quá Ngoại ơi, thương Ngoại ra đi không có một người thân nào bên cạnh, không ai để tang, chỉ kịp làm lễ 49 ngày vào ngày đầu tiên thành phố mở cửa trở lại 1/10/2021. Cầu nguyện cho linh hồn của Ngoại và chú Thường được trở về cõi Phật an vui.* (<https://vnexpress.net/cau-ba-2021-4392456.html>)

[I miss you so much Grandma, you passed away without a loved one by your side, no one to mourn, only had time to celebrate 49 days on the first day the city reopened on October 1, 2021. Pray for the souls of Grandma and Uncle Thường are returned to the Buddha land happily].

(6) *Ba đã được đoàn tụ cùng ông bà nội rồi. Ba ơi ở trên đó ba có nhớ mẹ con con không ba ơi...* (<https://vnexpress.net/vu-khac-chuong-1966-2021-4393170.html>)

[Dad was reunited with his grandparents. Dad, do you remember me up there, dad...].

## **6. Conceptual metaphor death is a journey in column “Memorial” on Rememberme2020.uk**

Similar to Vietnamese, metaphors with the source domain “journey” associated with the destination domain “death” in the Memorial section of Rememberme2020.uk appeared with the frequency of 112 memorial messages with 148 references. Thanks to the features of the source domain “journey”, the British also use this concept to describe death with the purpose of reducing negative emotions when facing with the harsh reality of Covid-19 pandemic during the most terrible days around the world. The number of metaphorical references in memorial messages that are classified in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Examples of Conceptual Metaphor Death Is A Journey in Memorial Section of Rememberme2020.uk

Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances	Attributes	Allegories	No. of appearances
	Farewell	1	Companions / partner/	Travel on together	2
	Left behind	3	States of the		
	Say goodbye	6	traveller		
Departure activities/ pick up / drop off / message / preparation for the trip	Meet again	35			
	God took you	1	Destination	Heaven/ Paradi/ Heaven's gate	26
				God	16
				Sky	7
				With your little sister/ daughter	2
Activities of traveller/ passenger	Gone	14			
	Left	7			
	Travel	2			
	Fly	8			
	Pass away	12			
	Walk	1			
	Re-united	5			
Total	148				

Source: Author.

In the messages to remember the Covid-19 victims of the British people, the survivors also use examples with outstanding features and characteristics of the concept “journey”, such as sending people off, the movements of riders, companions, and destinations.

To start the “journey to the other world”, the person who stays (the living person) also has a farewell greeting and an appointment to see again, as if the dead are only the first to go, the living will follow at some point in the future.

(7) Neelam Bhalla

In loving memory of our beautiful mum & grandmother. Taken far too early, we couldn't even say goodbye properly. We love and miss you so much...life isn't the same without you. Till we meet again. (<https://www.rememberme2020.uk/page/9/#memorials>)

(8) Adele Ritson

Adele passed away leaving behind a loving family who miss her very much. She was taken far too soon and had so much to live for. Our lives will never be the same without her in it. Forever in our heart and thoughts. (<https://www.rememberme2020.uk/page/11/#memorials>)

Instead of using the verb 'to die', the speaker also uses verbs indicating the traveller's movement, such as 'go away', 'fly away'.

(9) Carole Pickin

Carole was a special lady with a huge heart, filled with love for her family and friends. Although she is gone from us, she and all our memories together will live in our hearts forever. (<https://www.rememberme2020.uk/page/12/#memorials>)

(10) Christine Hewitt

I miss you every day mum, fly high and be free! (<https://www.rememberme2020.uk/page/7/#memorials>)

The destination in the "special journey" of the "traveler" here is thought of as "to heaven" or "to God".

(11) Kim LeBrocque

Kim was loved by all his family and friends and we shall miss him in this world and look forward to meeting him in heaven. So sleep peacefully beautiful brother, see you soon. (<https://www.rememberme2020.uk/page/11/#memorials>)

(12) John Anderson

Loving husband father and Papa to Marie, Michelle, Joanne and Grace, and loved by all who knew him. God keep you in his arms till we meet again. (<https://www.rememberme2020.uk/page/6/#memorials>)

## **7. Similarities and differences in conceptual metaphor death is a journey between Vietnamese and English languages in memorial messages**

The results of an investigation on 800 memorial messages in Vietnamese and English has revealed that there are many similarities regarding conceptual the metaphorical expression death is a journey, appearing at a relatively high level of popularity and metaphorical frequency in the two languages (VnExpress.net contains 151 metaphors with 224 leads; Rrememberme2022.uk has 112 metaphors with 148 leads). From quantitative data collected, it can be seen that both Vietnamese and British people tend to perceive death as a "journey" to a new destination.

However, the researcher found that there are two main differences between Vietnamese and English in the way of copying, mapping from the source domain “journey” to the destination domain “death”.

*Firstly*, Vietnamese people who follow ancestral worship always have a belief that people will be reunited with their ancestors after death, so when describing the destination of the journey, it also reflects this way of thinking through the concept of “reuniting with grandparents, parents, brothers,..., or returning to the resting place/golden stream...”. In addition, most Vietnamese have faith in Buddhism and therefore also think that after death they will “return to Buddha”/“Return to the Western paradise”. Furthermore, with the influence of history and Western culture, a part of Vietnamese people follows Christianity and also reflect Christian thinking in the belief about the afterlife after death that is to be “returned to the kingdom of God”.

The British, in terms of the influence from religion and beliefs, are mostly Christians, so their way of thinking about the destination in their journey away from earth is “to Heaven” or “the God’s garden”, “Paradise”, and “back in the arms of the Lord”. All these symbols are extracted from bibles and stories of Christianity.

*Secondly*, referring to the action in the “journey to the destination” in Vietnamese, people only use verbs indicating the movement of leaving the position horizontally or downward (going, leaving, coming, returning, down) but in English, the verb “fly” is also used to talk about the movement of the dead person upwards. This also comes from the belief in Christianity that the dead transform into Angels with wings to fly to Heaven, the final resting place.

## 8. Conclusion

From the results of a survey on 800 Vietnamese and English remembrance messages, the research concluded that the common source domain journey is used with great frequency to express the concept of death in both Vietnamese and English languages. The study also proved that human knowledge (mind, physiology), religious, and cultural factors have influenced the way Vietnamese and British people think and express “the death”. The findings of the research also provide suggestions for people from other cultures in choosing and using language appropriately when practising communication in international environments, and especially, avoiding difficulties or uncomfortable feelings in some situations where “taboo” content is mentioned. The research conclusions are also a source of reference or implications for further and in-depth studies of conceptual metaphors.

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