

A Cognitive Linguistic Study of Conceptual Metaphors in the Farewell Sermon of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the use of conceptual metaphors in the Farewell Sermon of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Drawing from discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, the study categorizes metaphors into structural, ontological, and orientation types, revealing how abstract theological and moral concepts are conveyed through culturally grounded metaphors. The findings highlight the cognitive strategies embedded in prophetic discourse and their enduring rhetorical power. The study contributes to both metaphor research and Islamic linguistic heritage by offering a deeper understanding of how abstract Islamic teachings are made accessible and memorable through metaphor. This research bridges cognitive linguistics and Islamic studies by analyzing how abstract moral and theological concepts are conveyed metaphorically. It contributes to understanding how religious discourse uses metaphor to make abstract principles tangible and relatable, reinforcing moral and spiritual instruction. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), introduced by (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), proposes that metaphor is not just a figure of speech but a fundamental mechanism of human cognition. Metaphors map concepts from a familiar source domain to a more abstract target domain, shaping thought, language, and behavior.

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1. Introduction

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), during his final pilgrimage delivered the Farewell Sermon in the year 632 CE, holds massive religious, ethical, and rhetorical importance within Islamic tradition. Which is the last public address by the prophet, it serves as a capstone to his prophetic mission, summarizing and illustrating foundational Islamic moral and social values such as justice, equality, morality, the sanctity of life and property, rules of conduct, and the rights of individuals—especially women and marginalized people of society. This sermon is not only a religious text but it is also a philosophical piece of persuasive discourse. Its linguistic continues to resonate with Muslim communities across times and cultures, emphasizing its enduring communicative power.

From a cognitive linguistic viewpoint, religious texts regularly use metaphorical language to precise abstract and supreme ideas through aware, concrete experiences (Gibbs, 2008; Kövecses, 2002; Sachiya et al., 2025; Suheri et al., 2025; Rahman, 2018). This is mostly evident in the Farewell Sermon, where spiritual concepts such as piety, moral accountability, and divine faith are framed in daily terms such as transactions details, partnerships, or witnesses. Such metaphorical structures enable believers to adopt and internalize multipart spiritual principles through cultural schemas and embodied cognition.

This study relates Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which is firstly introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), to analyze Farewell Sermon's metaphorical structure. CMT postulates that metaphor is not just a rhetorical embellishment, but it can be regarded a fundamental mechanism of human thoughts that maps familiar source domains (e.g., war, finance, physical space) onto abstract target domains (e.g., emotion, morality, theology). By using this theoretical lens to examine the sermon, the research uncovers how metaphor serves as cognitive tool that shapes religious understanding and reinforce the sermon's rhetorical and ethical influence.

Eventually, the aim of this study is to investigate the underlying metaphorical structures embedded in the Prophet's discourse and to determine how these metaphors reflect Islamic moral reasoning, spiritual cognition, and socio-religious dynamics.

Respondents

Core Components of CMT:

- Structural Metaphors: One concept is structured in terms of another (e.g., ARGUMENT IS WAR).
- Ontological Metaphors: Abstract entities are treated as objects (e.g., THE MIND IS A CONTAINER).
- Orientation Metaphors: Abstract concepts are organized spatially (e.g., HAPPY IS UP).

Components of CMT:

- Primary and Complex Metaphors: (Grady, 1997)
- Embodiment and Image Schemas: (Johnson, 1987), (Gibbs, 2008)
- Sociocultural Variability: (Kövecses, 2002, 2010)
- Deliberate and Dynamic Metaphors: (Steen et al., 2010); (Cameron & Deignan, 2006)

2. Methodology

This qualitative study uses discourse analysis informed by Conceptual Metaphor Theory Pragglejaz Groups (2007) manner not regards or take in its consideration the various types of metaphors like similes and analogies The metaphor identification procedure follows the MIPVU method (Steen et al., 2010). Expands and make metaphors included more types in its framework of identification the NVivo software may support coding and categorization. As CMT is not restricted to a particular procedure presently, researchers recognize that words or expressions include metaphorical meaning, "usually by noting the cross-domain mappings between a discourse topic and the source domain used to speak of that idea" (Gibbs, 2017, p. 58).

By "operationalized", it identifies clear standards for distinguishing between dissimilar sub-types of lexical metaphors and delivers explicit descriptions for each kind. According to the MIPVU (Steen et al. 2010), lexical metaphors are characterized into three sorts: direct, indirect, and implicit metaphors. As Herrmann (2015) records, these kinds differ primarily in two dimensions: directness and implicitness in metaphorical word use.

Corpus: The Arabic text and reputable English translations of the Farewell Sermon, primarily from Sahih Muslim and Sunan Ibn Majah.

Findings (To Be Completed with Textual Analysis)

Example 1: "Your blood, your property, and your honor are sacred to you like the sanctity of this day..."

- Ontological Metaphor: HONOR IS A SACRED OBJECT
- Function: Constructs ethical boundaries as divine mandates.

Example 2: "Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners."

- Structural Metaphor: MORAL BEHAVIOR IS A TRANSACTION
- Function: Links morality to tangible social responsibility.
- Types of Conceptual Metaphor

(CMT) claims that metaphors tell how human beings comprehend abstract domains by representing them onto concrete source domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). So in order to make the understanding of the examples that explained in finding and discussion three types of them elapurate below

a. Ontological Metaphors

Ontological metaphors empower us to remark abstract phenomena—such as feelings, thoughts, or mental states—as things, materials, or containers. This offers cognitive steadiness to imperceptible constructs by giving them as restricted units. Fedriani (2016) clarifies how sentiments in Latin are intellectualized along ontological and orientational lines, e.g.

representing “happy as up” or “sad as down,” providing observed support for embodiment-based metaphoric structures in both ancient and modern linguistic contexts

b. Structural Metaphors

Structural metaphors shape deeply how one domain in terms we conceptualize of the organization of another, transmitting systematic structure and logic. For example, in Ana Gelovani’s (2022) textbooks of linguistics analysis, ontological metaphors like “Language is a Mirror” or “Language is a Container” co-occur with structural metaphors like “Language is a Code”, “Language is a Living Organism”, or “Language relations are Family Relations”—demonstrating how conceptual mapping underpins academic discourse.

c. Orientational Metaphors

Orientational metaphors form abstract notions via spatial awareness or bodily orientations—such as front/back, down/up, out/in—often related to expressive or evaluative valence. While initial work by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) presented this concept, recent work like Fedriani (2016) confirms to what extent and how all these spatial mappings redirect common embodied skills across languages.

Recent research explores more types of conceptual metaphors by Cappa, Lippolis, & Zoia (2025) propose a layered, onion-like model of metaphor processing, integrating content analysis, conceptual blending, and pragmatic intentionality.

Also Lippolis, Nuzzolese & Gangemi (2025) introduce a specific kind of Metaphors relates to medical uses Corpus (MCC), proposing a dataset of scientific conceptual but this study restricted to analyze the using of the three types of them.

3. Result and Discussion

The metaphors in the Farewell Sermon illustrate a cognitive structure that aligns divine command with bodily and social experience. The use of metaphor allows abstract religious laws to become accessible, memorable, and emotionally resonant. This aligns with embodied cognition and cultural metaphor theory. The metaphors in the Farewell Sermon illustrate a deep intertwining of embodied cognition, social ethics, and divine authority. By metaphorically framing life as sacred, morality as a transaction, and knowledge as a chain of trust, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) establishes a schema through which abstract religious teachings become concrete and emotionally resonant. The use of spatial, relational, and object-based metaphors contributes to collective memory, moral orientation, and doctrinal clarity. These metaphors also resonate across time and culture, reinforcing the sermon’s universal appeal and pedagogical power.

The focus on a single sermon limits generalizability. Future studies could analyze a wider corpus of Prophetic traditions across sects, languages, and regions to map cross-cultural metaphorical patterns.

Conceptual Metaphor Analysis of the Farewell Sermon

1. “Just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust.”

- Type: Ontological Metaphor
- Metaphor: LIFE AND PROPERTY ARE SACRED OBJECTS
- CMT Mapping: Sacred time and place → Human dignity
- Function: This metaphor elevates individual life and property to a divine, untouchable status. It establishes moral boundaries and connects social ethics to divine sanctity, thus reinforcing religious responsibility.

2. “Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners.”

- Type: Structural Metaphor
- Metaphor: MORALITY IS A TRANSACTION
- CMT Mapping: Economic transaction → Ethical obligation
- Function: This metaphor conceptualizes ethical behavior in legal and financial terms. Trust and responsibility become “goods” that must be preserved and returned, reflecting the Prophet’s emphasis on justice and accountability.

3. “Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you.”

- Type: Orientation Metaphor (with a reciprocal structure)
 - Metaphor: HARM IS A RETURNABLE FORCE
 - CMT Mapping: Physical harm ↔ Social equilibrium
 - Function: This encourages a moral balance, reinforcing mutual non-aggression and community cohesion.
4. "Beware of Satan, for your safety of your religion. He has lost all hope...in big things, so beware...in small things."
- Type: Ontological Metaphor
 - Metaphor: SATAN IS A DECEIVER / TEMPTER ENTITY
 - CMT Mapping: Evil as an agent → abstract concept personified
 - Function: Satan is portrayed as an active being, emphasizing vigilance in both major and minor matters. The metaphor simplifies complex temptations into human-level interactions.
5. "They [women] are your partners and committed helpers."
- Type: Structural Metaphor
 - Metaphor: MARRIAGE IS A PARTNERSHIP
 - CMT Mapping: Cooperation schema → Domestic/spiritual relationship
 - Function: This metaphor rejects male ownership and reframes marriage as mutual responsibility, elevating women's status while maintaining Islamic values of structure and accountability.
6. "YOU ARE ALL EQUAL. NOBODY HAS SUPERIORITY OVER OTHER EXCEPT BY PIETY AND GOOD ACTION."
- Type: Ontological and Structural
 - Metaphor: MORAL ACTION IS MEASURED VALUE
 - CMT Mapping: Piety → standard of worth
 - Function: Social hierarchy is overturned and replaced with moral evaluation. This reinforces Islam's meritocratic ethics using the conceptual frame of balance and measurable worth.
7. "One day you will appear before ALLAH and answer for your deeds."
- Type: Ontological Metaphor
 - Metaphor: DEEDS ARE TESTIMONY / ACCOUNTABLE OBJECTS
 - CMT Mapping: Moral acts → legal/recorded documents
 - Function: Accountability before God is structured like a courtroom trial, a clear and culturally powerful mapping to induce responsibility.
8. "I leave behind me two things, the QUR'AN and my example, the SUNNAH..."
- Type: Ontological Metaphor
 - Metaphor: GUIDANCE IS INHERITANCE
 - CMT Mapping: Legacy/inheritance → religious knowledge
 - Function: Spiritual legacy is treated as a tangible trust to be safeguarded and passed down, reinforcing continuity of faith and doctrine.
9. "All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again..."
- Type: Structural Metaphor
 - Metaphor: KNOWLEDGE IS A CHAIN / LIGHT
 - CMT Mapping: Teaching → propagation mechanism

- Function: This metaphor emphasizes transmission and accumulation, reinforcing collective responsibility for preserving and sharing knowledge.

10. "BE MY WITNESS O ALLAH THAT I HAVE CONVEYED YOUR MESSAGE TO YOUR PEOPLE."

- Type: Ontological Metaphor

- Metaphor: MESSAGE IS A SACRED TRUST / BURDEN DELIVERED

- CMT Mapping: Prophetic duty → legal/physical delivery

- Function: The Prophet frames his mission as the successful transfer of entrusted responsibility, invoking legal language to affirm fulfillment.

Table 1. Summary Table Of Metaphors

#	Metaphor	Type	Source → Target	Function
1	Life is a sacred trust	Ontological	Sacred time → Human dignity	Moral sanctity
2	Morality is a transaction	Structural	Finance → Ethics	Social justice
3	Harm is reciprocal	Orientation	Action → Reaction	Ethical balance
4	Satan is a deceiver	Ontological	Agent → Evil	Moral vigilance
5	Marriage is a partnership	Structural	Business → Relationship	Mutual respect
6	Piety is value	Ontological	Deeds → Worth	Meritocracy
7	Deeds are testimony	Ontological	Actions → Legal evidence	Accountability
8	Guidance is inheritance	Ontological	Scripture → Legacy	Continuity
9	Knowledge is a chain	Structural	Light/transmission → Teaching	Propagation
10	Message is trust	Ontological	Duty → Delivery	Fulfillment

1. LIFE AND PROPERTY ARE SACRED OBJECTS

English: "Just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust."

Arabic: "إِنَّ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَرَامٌ كَحُرْمَةِ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا..."

2. MORALITY IS A TRANSACTION

English: "Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners."

Arabic: "فَرُدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا"

3. HARM IS A RETURNABLE FORCE

English: "Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you."

Arabic: "لَا تَظْلِمُوا فَلَا تُظْلَمُوا"

4. SATAN IS A DECEIVER / TEMPTER ENTITY

English: "Beware of Satan, for your safety of your religion..." Arabic: "فَاخْذَرُوا عَلَىٰ دِينِكُمْ، أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ قَدٌ..."

Arabic: "...يَبْسُ أَنْ يُعْبَدَ فِي بِلَادِكُمْ"

5. MARRIAGE IS A PARTNERSHIP

English: "Treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers."

Arabic: "...فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فِي النَّسَاءِ، فَإِنَّكُمْ أَخَذْتُمُوهُنَّ بِأَمَانِ اللَّهِ."

6. PIETY IS VALUE

English: "Nobody has superiority over another except by piety and good action."

Arabic: "لَا فَضْلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَى أَعْجَمِيٍّ... إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى"

7. DEEDS ARE TESTIMONY / ACCOUNTABLE OBJECTS

English: "You will appear before ALLAH and answer for your deeds."

Arabic: "وَسَتُنْفِقُونَ رَبُّكُمْ فَيَسْأَلُكُمْ عَنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ"

8. GUIDANCE IS INHERITANCE

English: "I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example (Sunnah)..."

Arabic: "تَرَكَتُ فِيكُمْ أَمْرَيْنِ، لَنْ تَضِلُّوا مَا تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَسُنَّةَ نَبِيِّهِ"

9. KNOWLEDGE IS A CHAIN

English: "All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others..." Arabic: "...فَأَلْبِيغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْعَائِبَ"

10. MESSAGE IS A TRUST

English: "Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people."

Arabic: "اللَّهُمَّ هَلْ بَلَّغْتُ؟ اللَّهُمَّ فَاتَّهَدُ"

4. Conclusion

Powerful lens for analyzing Islamic religious discourse delivers through conceptual metaphor theory. This study proves that the Farewell Sermon is not only a theological and moral document but also it is a cognitively rich text that convey profound truths relies on metaphor. This research elucidates that the Farewell Sermon delivered by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplifies a significant instance of conceptual metaphor within religious discourse, serving not merely as a theological communication but also as a cognitive paradigm for comprehending Islamic values. Through the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), the examination has discerned structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors that are intricately woven into the fabric of the sermon, including constructs such as LIFE IS A SACRED TRUST, DEEDS ARE TESTIMONY, and GUIDANCE IS AN INHERITANCE. These metaphors function as cognitive frameworks that align abstract spiritual and ethical notions with tangible human experiences, thereby rendering divine directives more comprehensible, memorable, and emotionally impactful.

The integration of both Arabic and English texts has revealed the consistent cognitive richness of these metaphors across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. For instance, metaphors such as *الحياة أمانة مقدسة* (Life is a sacred trust) and *الأعمال شهادة* (Deeds are testimony) exemplify how prophetic language shapes moral reasoning and societal structure through embodied metaphorical frameworks.

Furthermore, the metaphors unveiled in this analysis not only encapsulate religious teachings but also serve a rhetorical function by reinforcing community identity, gender ethics, social justice, and spiritual accountability. The Prophet's intentional deployment of metaphor aligns with contemporary advancements in CMT, including Deliberate Metaphor Theory and the dynamics of metaphor within public discourse.

In summary, this inquiry substantiates that metaphor is integral to Islamic prophetic discourse. It functions as a conduit between divine revelation and human cognition, embedding theological principles within culturally rooted, experientially accessible frameworks. Grasping these metaphorical constructs is essential not only for appreciating the rhetorical elegance of the Farewell Sermon but also for enhancing interpretive engagement with Islamic theoretical perspectives.

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