

STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE SPHERE OF COLOR DESIGNATIONS

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Abstract:

This article reveals a comparative study of the vocabulary of color naming, the totality of knowledge about the world, reflected in vocabulary, grammar, phraseology, as an idea of reality, reflected in linguistic signs and their meanings, and hypotheses were put forward about the relationship between the number of color designations with the level of cultural development of society.

Keywords: Vocabulary, color naming, linguistics, language picture, language division, language ordering, universal knowledge, achievements, language means.

Introduction

The comparative study of color designation vocabulary has long been a subject of interest in linguistics and is conducted using materials from languages of various types and families. We believe that the *linguistic worldview* plays a crucial role in such comparative research. In the comparative analysis of color-related vocabulary, special attention is given to identifying the role of color terms in shaping the linguistic worldview, their function in the conceptualization process, and the overall place of color vocabulary in cognitive mechanisms.

The linguistic worldview may be interpreted as “a set of knowledge about the world reflected in vocabulary, grammar, phraseology, etc.” [1], or as “a representation of reality expressed through linguistic signs and their meanings — a linguistic division of the world, a linguistic ordering of objects and phenomena, and the information about the world embedded within the system of word meanings” [2].

From our perspective, it is the linguistic worldview that offers the most comprehensive understanding of the national mentality of various languages, since universal human knowledge and cultural achievements can be transmitted, with varying degrees of adequacy, through linguistic means.

The structural-semantic similarities and differences in the sphere of color designations are connected to the diversity in worldviews held by representatives of different cultures. These are shaped by a range of factors including religious beliefs, historical and cultural traditions, climatic conditions, and other sociocultural features. Color names across different cultures possess both universal elements and distinctive national-cultural characteristics. This interplay reflects the deep interconnection between language, perception, and societal values.

Materials and Methods

Color perception and its evaluation are fundamentally subjective phenomena. They are shaped not only by the optical properties of color shades themselves but also by the psychophysiological processes that accompany perception. Alongside the individual's subjective experience, there exists a level of intersubjectivity in the cultural attitudes toward various colors. In exploring color symbolism, it is important to note that colors play an informative role in human interaction with the environment. Consequently, they have evolved into universal symbols for expressing different concepts and phenomena. However, color symbolism often varies significantly across languages and linguistic communities [3].

The role of color in the cultural and symbolic systems of various nations is profound. Colors have a psychological impact on individuals, which is why many societies associate particular colors with symbolic meanings. These associations may reveal both universal tendencies and culture-specific distinctions. The linguistic color worldview (*lingvo-color worldview*) of each language and nation is considered a dynamic construct, continuously evolving and reflecting changes in society. This makes it essential to investigate the lexicon of color designations from a linguocultural perspective.

This issue was addressed in one of the earliest dissertations on the subject by K. Chirner, who argued that "the comparative study of the semantic potential of color terms holds both theoretical value and practical importance, especially for language instructors teaching these languages as foreign languages. Moreover,

comparing color-related lexicon has significant implications for translation practices, given the pervasive polysemy in modern languages. A translator must be familiar not only with the core meanings of color terms but also with their derivative nuances, which are often the source of translation errors" [4].

Investigating object-based color terms from the perspective of translation expands our understanding of the relationship between lexical semantics and translation strategies. The insights gained enable deeper comparative analysis of basic color terms in English, Uzbek, and Russian, highlighting national and cultural specificities within each language's color system and their function in constructing a culturally shaped color worldview.

The term *object-based color designations* refers to color adjectives derived from the names of real-world objects (e.g., soil, sky, plants) and characterized by clear etymologies. Basic color adjectives serve as core lexical units for naming pure colors, typically without shades, and form the foundation of synonymic color sets. This reflects a strong linguistic component in defining basic color categories.

In English, basic color terms include: *white, black, red, brown, green, blue, yellow, orange, pink, grey, and purple* [5]. In Russian, the primary colors are: *красный (red), жёлтый (yellow), зелёный (green), голубой (sky blue), синий (blue), коричневый (brown), чёрный (black), белый (white), and серый (grey)*. Interestingly, the English terms *orange* and *purple* are considered basic, whereas their Russian equivalents are borrowed and thus tend to be more semantically narrow [4,6].

In the Uzbek language, the basic colors include: *oq (white), qora (black), qizil (red), yashil (green), sariq (yellow), ko'k (blue), moviy (navy blue/sky blue), jigarrang (brown), binafsha (purple), and kulrang (grey)* [6,7,8].

Differences in how the color spectrum is segmented and named across languages have led scholars to conclude that there are quantitative differences in the structure of color naming systems [9-12]. Some languages possess a wide range of lexical tools for expressing color perception, while others are more limited in this regard.

Scholars have also proposed that the number of basic color terms in a language correlates with the level of cultural development in the corresponding society. Societies with fewer color terms are often considered less developed in this specific linguistic domain. The necessity for diverse color terms arises from practical needs and the frequency with which certain shades appear in nature.

Additionally, the associative perception of colors, shaped by a community's cultural, religious, and historical experiences, significantly contributes to this variation.

The meanings associated with colors are often linked to features of the natural world that humans cannot alter—such as the color of the earth, sky, skin, or plants. As a result, the semantic content of certain colors remains consistent across cultures. For example, *blue sky* in English, *голубое небо* in Russian, and *moviy osmon* in Uzbek all reflect the same perception of the color blue in relation to the sky.

However, historical events, religious beliefs, and cultural norms can lead to divergent symbolic meanings for the same color. In Western cultures, black is typically associated with mourning, while white symbolizes purity. In Central Asia, both black and white can symbolize mourning, though white also carries connotations of cleanliness and moral purity.

A cross-linguistic comparison of color terms offers insights into both shared and divergent cultural connotations in English, Russian, and Uzbek. The connotative meaning of color terms in these languages sometimes overlaps and sometimes diverges. For instance, the Russian phrase *красна девица* (beautiful maiden) and the Uzbek expression *qizil yuz* (red face) both suggest beauty, whereas in English, *red in the face* often connotes embarrassment or shame. Similarly, *white eyes* (*oq ko'z*) in Uzbek can have negative or mystical connotations, such as illness or evil, while in Russian *очи белые* (white eyes) refers simply to light-colored eyes—this concept has no direct equivalent in English.

Results and Discussion

The reflection of national mentality in color-based expressions in English, Russian, and Uzbek can be illustrated through several representative examples. In English, the color *black* is often associated with negativity and danger, as seen in expressions such as *black market* (illegal trade), *blackmailing someone* (extortion), *black as ink* (very dark), *black as the devil* (symbolizing evil or a dark soul), *a black day* (a tragic or unfortunate day), and *a black spot* (a dangerous or problematic area).

In Russian, *черный* (black) carries similar negative connotations: *черная душа* (black soul), *черная кошка пробежала* (a black cat passed—an omen of bad luck), *черное дело* (illicit activity), *черный час* (a dark hour), *сидеть на черном*

хлебе (to live in poverty, “subsisting on black bread”), and *черная кость* or *черный народ* (referring to the lower classes or marginalized groups).

Likewise, in Uzbek, the term *qora* (black) reflects these meanings: *qora ko‘ngil* (black soul, i.e., an evil or cruel person), *qora mushuk o‘tdi* (a black cat passed), *qora ish* (dark or illegal business), *qora kun* (a difficult or fateful day), *qora nonda o‘tirish* (to live in hardship, subsisting on black bread), and *qora suyak* or *qora xalq* (referring to commoners or lower social strata) [13-16].

These examples demonstrate that while the symbolic use of black color is culturally specific, there are substantial overlaps between Russian and Uzbek, suggesting shared conceptualizations possibly rooted in common socio-cultural or regional traditions. In contrast, English exhibits partial semantic overlaps, though with some culturally distinct metaphorical extensions.

Color terms denote essential life concepts and form stable components of many idiomatic expressions and collocations. Due to their rich semantic nature, they contribute emotionally expressive and figurative nuance to idioms and phrases. Their widespread use and polysemy highlight their centrality in language and cognition.

Comparative analysis of phraseological units involving color terms reveals not only linguistic patterns but also the role of extralinguistic factors in shaping lexical meanings. These factors include national psychology, cultural consciousness, customs, values, and societal structures. As noted by Chirner, such analysis is indispensable not only for theoretical semantics but also for practical applications such as language teaching and translation [17-20].

The dominance of certain basic color names across languages reflects their communicative necessity. Universal colors such as *black*, *white*, *red*, *yellow*, *green*, and *blue* serve as the linguistic minimum required for basic human interaction across cultures [5]. Despite cultural variation, these core terms are foundational in human perception and form a shared conceptual ground.

Thus, the study of color terminology not only deepens our understanding of linguistic structures but also provides insight into cultural identity, historical experience, and psychological perception. Color-based expressions act as mirrors of national worldviews, encoding value systems, fears, taboos, and collective emotions. By identifying both similarities and differences in their usage, we gain a clearer picture of how language reflects and shapes thought in diverse linguistic communities.

Conclusions

The comparative analysis of color designations in English, Russian, and Uzbek has revealed significant structural-semantic patterns that reflect both universal and culture-specific features of color perception and symbolism. While certain basic color terms such as *black*, *white*, and *red* are commonly used across languages and hold shared core meanings, their figurative and phraseological applications vary notably according to historical, cultural, and social contexts.

The study has demonstrated that color terms serve not only descriptive functions but also play a crucial role in encoding cultural values, psychological associations, and collective experiences. Idiomatic expressions involving color reflect national mentalities and offer insights into the worldview of different linguistic communities.

Importantly, color vocabulary appears to be shaped by extralinguistic factors, including religious beliefs, folklore, historical memory, and environmental conditions. The recurrence of similar metaphors in Russian and Uzbek suggests cultural proximity, while English, though sharing some symbolic parallels, exhibits a more distinct semantic and idiomatic profile.

Furthermore, the identification and analysis of *object-based color designations* highlighted the semantic richness of colors derived from natural objects, illustrating how language evolves through perceptual and associative experiences.

Overall, this study contributes to the broader understanding of how language and culture intertwine in the lexical field of color, reinforcing the value of comparative linguistics in revealing deep cultural and cognitive structures. Future research may extend this inquiry to additional languages and consider how globalization influences the convergence or divergence of color semantics across linguistic boundaries.

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