

The Issue of Cultural Notes in the Conceptual Interpretation of Color Names in the English and Uzbek Languages

Akhmedova Guzal Yusufvna

A PhD student at Karshi State University

E-mail: guzalakhmedova00@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study explores the role of cultural notes in the lexicographic description of color names, focusing on conceptual interpretations of *black* and *white* in English and Uzbek. Employing comparative analysis, it investigates how general and linguocultural dictionaries reflect culturally specific values through etymological explanations of idioms and color-related traditions. Examining theoretical principles of semasiology and lexicographic interpretation, the study highlights how color adjectives acquire distinct connotations across cultures. Examples from Uzbek and English illustrate symbolic associations of *white* (purity, blessing) and *black* (mourning, misfortune). The research underscores the significance of cultural notes in enriching dictionary entries and facilitating a deeper understanding of the language-culture-color relationship, positioning the dictionary as a valuable tool for cultural exploration.

Keywords: Color Terms, Lexicography, Cultural Notes, Uzbek Language, English Language, Phraseology, Cultural Semantics, Cross-Cultural Comparison, Linguocultural Character, Symbol, National Spirit, Figurative Language

Introduction

The semantics of colors and attitudes towards them evolve in tandem with societal shifts, changes in people's worldview, lifestyle, and religious beliefs. These transformations are directly reflected and interpreted in dictionaries.

Colors play a significant role in national cultures. Dictionaries of a linguocultural character, as well as some general explanatory dictionaries, pay particular attention to the conceptual description of color in relation to national and cultural understandings. This includes the linguistic and cultural

description based on extralinguistic factors such as ethnic, areal, and regional specificity, along with cultural commentary.

Cultural Notes serve to provide users with a deeper understanding of global cultures and enrich their foundational knowledge [1].

In pedagogical lexicography, narrative text is often included as supplementary etymological commentary or historical explanation to enrich dictionary entries, enhancing user comprehension and retention of the presented information [2].

Cultural commentary, in this context, provides dictionary users with more in-depth information about linguoculturemes associated with color within a specific linguaculture. This encompasses concise narratives and explanations related to folklore, myths, legends, symbols, metaphors and similes, cultural stereotypes, the paremiological fund of the language (proverbs and sayings), phraseological units, and religious concepts, aiming to enrich their understanding of these elements.

Methodology

In her dissertation, “Theoretical Foundations of Semasiology and Lexicographic Interpretation of Linguistic Units”, Y.A. Maklakova addresses the national specificity of semantics, using color-based units as illustrative examples. She highlights how color-related adjectives acquire specific connotations within different national cultures: *рыжий* (*ryzhiy*) - *reddish-brown – rusted, to rust; ginger* – related to the *spice*, or *red-head* – referencing *hair color*. She also discusses how colors express national symbolic meanings, citing: “the association of *голубой* (*goluboy*) *light blue* with *homosexuality* in Russian linguistic culture, in contrast to American linguistic thought; *blue* – in classical English (British), it carries *conservative-traditional*, classical symbolic meaning, evidenced by *light blue* being the symbol of the *Conservative Party*; while in American English, *blue* can signify *being under the influence of alcohol or narcotics*; the semes of *sorrow* and *sadness* unite Americans and the British in the semantics of *blue*” [3].

Z. Rajabova, in her research on the presentation of phraseological units in learners' dictionaries, identifies the etymological explanation (information about the history of the phraseme, details related to the processes of phraseologization) as the second component of a dictionary entry. She emphasizes the significance of this component from linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical perspectives. She argues that the composition of the explanation is rich in artistic and figurative means, sometimes based on real-life events, sometimes on fiction, and characterized by the construction of an independent narrative. She also points out that the dictionary author can imbue the etymological story with a national spirit, adapting the story's content to the interests of the national ideology, while acknowledging that it is not always based on reality.

She asserts that “the etymological characteristic of the head phraseme is usually presented in the form of a brief, interesting historical narrative based on real events, sometimes on fiction. In this case, the etymological explanation is given not to a specific component of the phraseme, but to the entire combination. In explanatory phraseological dictionaries, the etymological explanation plays an important role from linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical perspectives in complementing the phraseological representation of the world. Typically, in phraseological dictionaries, information about the history of the phraseme and details related to the processes of phraseologization are the second component of the dictionary entry, following the phraseological meaning. The need for etymological explanation is particularly great in the semanticization of idioms containing historical remnants or archaic words”.

Rajabova substantiates her observations with the etymological commentary provided for the idiom “Daqqiyunus lit. “remaining from Daqqiyunus, having seen Daqqiyunus”, which is used in Uzbek to mean “very old, ancient” [4].

In her article dedicated to the lexicographic description of basic color terms in various types of dictionaries, A.Y. Yevtushevskaya provides the following example of cultural semes associated with the color *black*: “*CULTURAL NOTE* In the US and UK, people traditionally wear black clothes when they go to a funeral, as a sign of sadness. In some old stories and films, especially WESTERNS,

the bad character wears black clothes, and the good character wears white clothes” [5]. That is, in the US and the UK, there is a tradition for people to wear black clothes as a sign of sympathy when attending a funeral ceremony. In some old stories and films, especially Westerns, the villain is depicted in black clothing, while the virtuous character is portrayed in white clothing.

Results and Discussion

In contemporary Uzbek linguistic culture, *white* (oq) symbolizes *light, openness, purity and innocence*. This is reflected in linguistic units such as: *oq ko'ngil* (meaning kind/sincere), *oq yo'l* (meaning a safe journey/blessing), *oppoq orzular* (meaning pure/untarnished dreams), *oq ko'ylak* (white dress, specifically a wedding dress), *oq-qorani ajratmoq* (to distinguish black from white, meaning to differentiate between good and bad, friend and foe, benefit and harm/to understand), and *oq fotiha bermoq* (meaning to give a sincere blessing/approval). *Black* (qora), on the other hand, typically symbolizes *darkness, bad luck, separation, sorrow, hardship, misfortune and other unpleasant things*.

The lexeme *black*, in both Uzbek and English, shares the semantic components of *death, allusions to separation, mourning and bereavement*. For example:

In Uzbek	In English
<p><i>Yusufbek hoji xatmi qur'on qilib, yurtga osh berdi. O'zbek oyim qora kiyib, ta'ziya ochdi</i> [6]. - <i>Yusufbek Hoji held a khatmi Qur'an (a complete recitation of the Quran) and hosted a osh (a traditional pilaf feast) for the community. Uzbek Oyim, wearing black clothing, held a ta'ziya (a mourning ceremony) Beva kampirning egnida qora ko'ylak, boshida ham motam munosabati bilan bo'yalgan shtapel ro'mol</i> [7]. - <i>The widowed old woman wore a black dress, and on her head was a staple scarf, also dyed black in observance of the mourning period.</i></p>	<p><i>His widow, a woman of great strength and fortitude, followed behind, dressed in deep black. Her face was pale but composed, and her eyes were dry</i> [10].</p>
<p><i>Malikalar, shahzodalar va shahar ayonlarining xotinlari Muhammad Sulton Mirzo xonaqohiga borib, ta'ziya marosimini boshladilar. Ular ko'k kiyinib, sochlarini yoyib, yuzlarini tirnab qonatib, qorakuya surtib, dod-faryodlar qilib, aza ochadilar</i> [8]. - <i>The princesses, princes, and wives of the city notables went to the Muhammad Sultan Mirza khanaqa (Sufi lodge) and began the mourning ceremony. They wore blue, let down their hair, scratched their faces until they bled, applied qorakuya (black soot) to their faces, and, with loud cries and lamentations, began the period of mourning (aza).</i></p>	<p><i>"I wish I could cry," she said. "But I can't. It's just –"she shook her head, a quick jerk. "It's just black inside"</i> [11]. In this example, the word black signifies the character's psychological state – a deep emptiness and hopelessness. Although it does not refer to physical death, it expresses a sense of inner death or loss</p>
<p><i>Ro'zimurodning onasi aza ochdi. Qarindoshlar oq kiyib, ovoz chiqardilar. (Sh.Ashurova, Yanga) [9]. - Ruzimurod's mother began the period of mourning (aza). Relatives wore white and wailed aloud.</i></p>	<p><i>That is where she sat for the wedding, a forbidding, solemn figure in her widow's weed.</i> [12].</p>

The term **widow's weeds** refer primarily to the black garments worn by widows, especially during the Victorian era. During this period, mourning was governed by strict social conventions that dictated a widow's appearance, behavior, and conduct following her husband's death. As examples illustrate,

in European countries, including those within the English linguistic culture, mourning attire was predominantly *black* or *dark brown*: **sable** (derived from the name of an animal with fur ranging from *dark brown* to *black*) and *dark greenish*: **weeds** (related to the Old English word for *clothing* - *weeds*, and to the name of a green plant - *weed*). These colors, especially *black*, were most often observed in the attire of widows. In contrast, among the Uzbek people, *blue*, and sometimes *white* and *black*, are considered mourning colors, and are worn by the deceased's close relatives as a sign of bereavement.

It should also be noted that the *white-black* opposition does not always have a strictly consistent semantic basis. In Uzbek, there are also expressions such as *oqpadar* and *oq qilmoq* (meaning “to curse, denounce, turn away from, or disown a disobedient, disrespectful child”, which necessitates a critical examination of the *white-black* dichotomy[13]. As I. Haqqulov points out, in the distant past, among Turkic peoples, *white* was a symbol of mourning, calamity, and even drought, and among the Altaians, white was considered a symbol of mourning. Sources also indicate that, for the Turkic-speaking Solor people who lived in China, *white*, among other meanings, symbolized mourning. Not only among Turkic peoples, but also among some other cultures, *blue* and *white* were considered symbols of mourning and sorrow. Over time, this situation changed. This is evident in the shifting attitudes towards the color *black*. In ancient times, *black* held a more significant position in the worldview and thought of the Turkic peoples than *white*. Therefore, the word *black* occupied a more prominent place in their religious beliefs. Mahmud Qoshgari documented that the Khagan rulers were called “Kara” (black), as in “Bugra Kara Khagan”. More recently, interpretations have been proposed suggesting that even the origin of the ethnonym “Kashgar” can be traced back to the word “black”. The Karakalpak scholar D. Aytmuradov writes: “E.M. Mirzayev explains the toponym Kashgar as follows: “Kashgar - nephrite stone, nephrite mountain; “kash” - nephrite, “ghar” – stone”. In our opinion, the second part of the toponym “Kashgar”, “ghar” or “qar”, is actually the word *qora* (black) with the final “a” sound omitted, and means *black*” [14]. These facts and evidence call for a special attention to the color *black*.

The Uzbek language is rich in color-based phraseological units that embody the beliefs, customs, spirituality, morality, legends, myths, and traditions of the people. Examples include: *ichi qora* (black-hearted), *qizil qor yoqqanda* (when red snow falls, meaning “never”), *ko'ngli oq* (meaning “sincere”), *oq yo'l* (safe journey, literally “white road”), *oq fotiha* (a sincere blessing/approval), *qora mushuk* (black cat), *qora niyat* (evil intention), and many others. The “Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language” includes entries under the “qora” (black) headword containing phrases with this component, such as: *qora yer bo'lmoq* (to be humiliated), *qora kiymoq* (to wear black, meaning “to mourn”), *qora kursi* (black chair, meaning “difficult or undesirable position”), *qora mehnat* (hard labor, literally “black labor”), *qora tortmoq* (to target someone), *qora xalq* (common people), *qora chaqam yo'q* (I don't have a black penny, meaning “I am penniless”), *qora qilmoq* (meaning “to defame, to smear someone's reputation”), *qorasi o'chmoq* (meaning “to disappear without a trace”), *qorasini ko'rsatmoq* (meaning “to appear”) [15].

Modern English learner's dictionaries, such as the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, highlight the nuanced use of the adjective *black* when referring to people of African descent. It is recommended to use *black* as an adjective (sometimes capitalized as *Black*) to describe individuals with dark skin whose ancestry originates in Africa. Caution is advised against using *black* as a noun, as this can be perceived as *offensive* in some contexts. The dictionary notes that Black people in the UK with Caribbean heritage often prefer the term *African-Caribbean*, while in the United States, *African-American* is typically the preferred designation. Furthermore, in Australian English, *black* is used to refer to Aboriginal Australians, whose ancestors inhabited the continent prior to European colonization [16].

The Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture provides a cultural note on the terminology surrounding race, stating: 'USAGE Compare *black*, *coloured*, and *Negro*. *Black* is the preferred term by many people of African descent. *Coloured* and, particularly, *Negro* are now widely

considered *offensive*. Therefore, in formal contexts within the United States, such as news articles or government publications, *African-American* is commonly used [17].

Conclusion

There are noticeable differences in the placement of real, linguistic, and conceptual descriptions of color alongside cultural commentary within dictionary entries. General or learner's dictionaries, such as the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language*, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, and *English-Uzbek dictionaries*, typically present the real-world description of a color first, followed by its conceptual interpretation. In contrast, in linguocultural dictionaries, such as the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, the entry prioritizes linguocultural senses based on extralinguistic factors related to ethnicity, region, nationality and cultural concepts, before providing the real-world description of the headword.

These analyses indicate that within the dictionary entry components dedicated to interpreting color names, the linguocultural commentary distinguishes itself from the primary interpretation through its richness in artistic and figurative language, its reliance on imagery, real-world realities and sometimes symbols, cultural stereotypes, myths and legends. This commentary often features an independent narrative structure, imbued with a national spirit and aligned with national ideological interests. From this perspective, it provides a basis for assessing the dictionary as a learning tool that embodies encyclopedic qualities.

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