

## THE CONTENT OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH COLOR TERMS

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**Abstract.** This article examines the semantic and cultural role of color terms in phraseological units in English, Russian, and Uzbek. The study is based on the premise that color perception constitutes an essential component of human cognitive activity and reflects culturally specific attitudes toward the surrounding world. Particular attention is paid to the symbolic meanings of colors and their ability to function as universal and culture-specific markers within different linguistic communities. The research highlights the role of qualitative (empirical) adjectives in the formation of idioms and analyzes the semantic structure of color terms as a combination of primary and figurative meanings.

**Keywords:** color terms, phraseological units, idioms, color symbolism, comparative linguistics, semantic structure, linguistic worldview, intercultural communication

The perception of color plays an important role in understanding the culture of past societies and their attitude toward the surrounding world. Due to the color perception of objects in the material world, which is considered one of the key aspects of human cognitive activity, the system of color terms is regarded as one of the most ancient terminological systems.

Speaking about color symbolism, it should be noted that there exists a theory according to which “colors play an informative role in the environment and therefore have become universal symbols for denoting various concepts and phenomena” [5, p. 96]. Color symbolism has the ability to transfer from one language to another, from one linguistic community to another: “Each language community possesses its own symbolism. Every language is associated with certain representations, impressions, and emotions” [3, p. 198].

In the formation of many phraseological units, empirical (i.e., qualitative) adjectives play an important role, as they are perceived through the senses [9, p. 27]. According to scholars’ hypotheses, the semantic structure of color terms should be understood as a combination of meanings that differ in their degree of abstraction and semantic significance, as well as in the nature of the relationship established between the primary (color) meaning and the figurative one [6, p. 4].

It is well known that all colors are divided into achromatic and chromatic ones. Achromatic colors are those that do not possess actual color characteristics, that is, they lack a color tone. The main achromatic colors are white and black. Chromatic colors, on the other hand, are those that have at least a faint оттенок (shade), such as reddish, greenish, bluish, or others. This category includes red, green, blue, and yellow [1, p. 6].

Linguists have repeatedly emphasized that the core component of many phraseological units is color-denoting words, which reflect essential concepts of life, are widely used, and are characterized by polysemy. In addition, they possess a high combinatory potential. Due to their semantic nature, they give phraseological units emotional expressiveness and imagery. Color adjectives are distinguished by their antiquity, semantic richness, and ability to generate new figurative meanings.

As in any study aimed at investigating certain linguistic phenomena, the key concept in studying idioms in English is equivalence. In this research, equivalence is defined semantically; that is, the comparison of idioms takes into account the meaning of the idiom as a whole, which is formed from the meanings of its individual components [2].

The conducted analysis shows that Russian, Uzbek, and English color terms have largely similar symbolic interpretations and evoke very similar associations. Only two cases of divergence expressed through idioms in the three analyzed languages were identified.

1. The first example concerns the expression of praise or recognition of something as the best within a group. This is represented through the colors yellow, red, white, black, and blue. For instance, English idioms express superiority using blue (*to be blue-ribbon*) and black (*to be in the black*), whereas in Russian this meaning is conveyed through white (e.g., *белая изба, белый царь*) and red (e.g., *красный угол, красная доска*). Uzbek phraseological units expressing praise include white and black (e.g., *ishonchni oqlamoq, oq ko'ngillik, oq-qorani ajratmoq*).

2. Another difference concerns negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption and its effects on health, expressed through color associations such as red, green, and blue. In Uzbek, intoxication can be described using the white color (*oq ichmoq*). In English, people under the influence of alcohol may be referred to as *admirals of the red*. In Russian, this concept is expressed through green, blue, and white (e.g., *пить до белой горячки, зеленый змей*).

The analysis also showed that the frequency of specific colors in idioms differs across English, Uzbek, and Russian. The dominant colors in all three languages are black and white. These are followed by red in Russian and blue in English, while in Uzbek no single color strongly dominates.

The findings suggest that these similarities are not accidental. On the contrary, they demonstrate that these languages share certain parallels despite differences in linguistic structure, origin, mentality, and culture.

At the same time, the situation in Russian differs in that the most frequent color is white (54 examples), while the least frequent—similar to English and German – is yellow (11 examples).

It is also noteworthy that there are several cases of full equivalence between English and Russian idioms that share the same color component. These idioms can be considered fully equivalent in terms of semantics, structure, lexical composition, and imagery. Among them are: *blue blood, to give the green light, to be a red rag to the bull, to be green with envy, black market, black list, the Black Death*, and others. These expressions are also found in German [4].

Additionally, seven corresponding idioms were identified between Russian and English, such as: *white knight, black mark, Black Tuesday, blue collars, white collars, until you are blue in the face, to be white as a sheet, to drive somebody to white heat*.

Thus, the analysis of these three languages shows that idioms containing color terms are language-specific. Although colors are perceived similarly, they evoke different associations and convey different emotions across cultures. Idioms with color terms in English, Uzbek, and Russian reflect the ethical mentality of each culture and therefore differ in the associations that particular colors evoke within each language and cultural context.

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