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The Linguo-colour Image of the World as a Framework for the Analysis of Colour Terms: A Cross-Linguistic Study of the Uzbek and English languages

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ABSTARCT. This study applies a comparative cognitive-semantic framework to investigate colour terminology in Uzbek and English. The linguo-colour image of the world is defined as the culturally informed set of knowledge and evaluative attitudes that shape colour naming. Analysis of associative fields, connotative shifts and diachronic developments reveals that identical colour labels map onto different semantic domains across these languages. For instance, Uzbek blue (ko'k) links to mourning [1;450], British English blue to political conservatism [2;11549] and American English blue to intoxication [3;]. The semantics of Uzbek black (qora) shows historical elevation alongside contemporary pejoration. These findings indicate that colour semantics are embedded in national mentalities and historically mutable, underscoring the need to integrate national-cultural codes into cross-linguistic semantic analysis and bilingual lexicography.

KEY WORDS. Linguo-colour image of the world, colour terms, cognitive semantics, cross-cultural comparison, lexicography, associative fields.

INTRODUCTION. Language is a primary instrument through which humans perceive, categorize and communicate about the surrounding world. In the process of naming and describing phenomena, speakers organize sensory impressions, detect salient similarities and differences and thereby accumulate a structured body of knowledge about reality [4;13]. Over time, these collective cognitive and evaluative schemata crystallize into what recent interdisciplinary research in linguistics designates as an image of the world: a culturally informed ensemble of beliefs, concepts and attitudes about the world that is encoded and reproduced through language. As formulated in contemporary scholarship, the linguistic worldview comprises the subject's knowledge and reflections about real or imagined reality, preserved in relatively stable linguistic forms derived from scientific classification and cultural interpretation [5;17].

The idea of representing the image of the world dates back to ancient times and is closely associated with Anaximander. Nearly all early Greek philosophers attempted to depict the environment and existence according to their own understanding. However, most of them relied heavily on intuitive and emotional perception and as a result, they were unable to develop sufficiently rigorous theoretical knowledge regarding phenomena, objects and the fundamental nature of the universe.





This paper adopts the linguistic colour worldview as an analytic framework to investigate these phenomena. Its primary objectives are (1) to characterize the cognitive-semantic structure of selected colour lexemes in Uzbek and English; (2) to compare associative fields and culturally specific connotations; and (3) to trace diachronic tendencies that illuminate processes of semantic change. Methodologically, the study combines comparative cognitive-semantic analysis with corpus evidence, lexicographic materials and selected ethnolinguistic sources to map both synchronic distributions and historically informed developments.

By foregrounding the interplay between perceptual categorization and cultural coding, the research contributes to theoretical debates in cognitive semantics and sociolinguistics and offers applied recommendations for bilingual lexicography and cross-cultural communication. The ensuing sections present the theoretical background and methodology, followed by empirical analyses of key colour categories and a discussion of implications for lexicographic practice and future research.

Materials and methods. The study draws on an integrated set of theoretical, textual, lexicographic and empirical materials to investigate the image of the world across Uzbek and English. Foundational theoretical sources comprise classic and contemporary treatments of the linguistic worldview and related constructs by scholars such as L. Whysgerber, V. N. Teliya, Y. D. Apresyan, Y. N. Karaulov, V. I. Postovalova, A. A. Zaliznyak, B. A. Serebrennikov, Y. V. Poducheva, I. B. Levontina, S. G. Ter-Minasova, N. N. Kozlova, Y. S. Kubryakova and others; these works inform the operational definitions and typologies employed throughout the analysis. To ground theoretical insight in empirical evidence, the research compiles representative corpora and textual samples including contemporary written and spoken materials, literary texts, folklore collections, journalistic prose and selected historical documents in each language.

N. N. Kozlova emphasizes that language itself influences human cognition—the earliest simple, realistic and natural representations of the world are shaped under the influence of language, reflecting realities that are significant for particular groups of people. According to Kozlova, speakers of different languages express and conceptualize the same objective situation in the world in diverse ways, consistent with their linguistic representations. Language thus encodes various human perspectives on the world, including scientific, natural, religious (faith-based), aesthetic and other forms of understanding [6;82].

In linguistics, the concept of the “image of the world” is therefore interpreted broadly, with several distinct forms. For instance, S. G. Ter-Minasova identifies three forms of human comprehension of the surrounding world:





1. The real representation of the world – an objective depiction of the surrounding reality that exists independently of human perception;
2. The cultural (conceptual) representation of the world – a depiction shaped by human cognition, accepted through collective or individual sensory experience, and internalized in consciousness;
3. The linguistic representation of the world – a system of concepts encoded within a specific language [7;41].

According to Y. S. Kubryakova, “The representation of the world is the way in which a person perceives and conceptualizes the world, based on their worldview and cognitive level. It is a considerably more complex phenomenon than its linguistic representation, encompassing the part of a person’s conceptual world that is shaped by language and internalized through linguistic means [8;142].” She further argues that the linguistic representation of the world serves as the material form through which the conceptual representation of the world is manifested.

Methodologically, a comparative cognitive-semantic design was adopted, combining synchronic description with diachronic analysis. Quantitative corpus measures (frequency counts, concordance, collocations) were supplemented with qualitative contextual reading to capture dominant senses, metaphoric extensions and collocational patterns. In different cultures, colour plays a significant role in describing a person’s hair, eyes, face, body, and clothing. Specific traits associated with a particular ethnicity are often conveyed through descriptions of hair as jet-black, brown, or blond, and eyes as pitch-black or deep blue. Y. V. Poducheva notes, “In a living language, you cannot fully depict the world exactly as it is: language initially provides its speakers with a particular representation of the world, since each language has its own characteristics, nature, and worldview.” As noted above, each nation and each individual perceives and conceptualizes the world in their own way, according to their own capacities and linguistic resources.

The opposite method was applied to the white-black (oq-qora) opposition, highlighting the contrastive and evaluative structuring of meaning. Native-speaker data were collected through structured tasks, including free association, contextual naming and semantic differential ratings. Participant sampling aimed for demographic diversity by age, gender and region. Ethical protocols were strictly followed, including informed consent and anonymization. N. Adizova, who studied the national and cultural characteristics of Erkin Vohidov’s epics, also notes that colours in literary texts serve to enhance expressiveness, emotional impact, and overall aesthetic effect. In particular, white and black are widely used in Uzbek proverbs, sayings, and traditional expressions. For the Uzbek people, black primarily symbolizes misfortune, grief, and sorrow, whereas white represents innocence, purity, and tranquility, holding significant cultural value. In





Vohidov's epics, black is predominantly employed to depict the tragic and unfortunate conditions of characters, often intensifying the scope of their suffering and sorrow. The poet's deliberate selection of colours according to the narrative context reflects his rich philosophical thinking and the harmonious integration of national and cultural elements.

Results and discussion. The naming of colours constitutes a complex system in each language and notable differences emerge across linguistic systems. These discrepancies become particularly evident in the process of translation, affecting both the choice of colours and the methods used to designate them. For example, when referring to eye colour, Uzbek typically emphasizes black, Russian highlights blue and English focuses on blue or brown. Consequently, if the eyes of an individual belonging to the Uzbek ethnic group are described using blue or light blue, additional explanation from the writer is often required. Such considerations have consistently occupied a central place in the attention of writers and poets.

In addition, colours carry nationally and ethnically symbolic significance in terms of their semantics. According to Y.A. Astakhova's analyses, red in Russia signifies high activity, aggression and combativeness (e.g., Красная Москва, Красная роза), yellow represents fire (the sun), separation and betrayal (жёлтые цветы); green in the United States symbolizes love and prosperity, in India life and grandeur, in China care, fortune and health, in Brazil hopelessness and in Syria mourning and death, silence and inexperience; white in European culture denotes youth, purity and innocence.

Gaps in the symbolic meaning of colours can arise across different national cultures. For instance, in Russian linguistic culture youth is expressed through green connotations such as зелёный юнец ("green novice") and зелен виноград ("green grapes"), whereas in Chinese tradition the same meaning is conveyed through white connotations: bai mian shu shen — "inexperienced youth entering knowledge [9]."

Black in many cultures, including Russia, symbolizes mourning and misfortune (чёрный костюм, чёрный день). Naturally, the role and symbolic characteristics of colours vary among different nations. The prominence and popularity of specific colours within linguistic cultures also reflect this. For example, red is widely recognized in Russia, Norway, Mexico and Iraq; dark yellow in the Netherlands; yellow in China; green in Austria, Bulgaria, Mexico, Australia, Ireland and Egypt; blue in India; white in Mexico and brown in Bulgaria [10;28].

Writers and creators employ colour qualities as expressive artistic tools in literature. According to Z. Pardaev, in the Uzbek language, adjectives denoting colours such as white, black, red, crimson, pink, yellow, blue, light blue, dark blue, green and ochre possess distinct lexical-semantic, grammatical and stylistic properties [11;15].





Sh. Turdimov notes that in examples of folk literature, colours like black, white and red are most frequently used: black primarily conveys mourning, separation and grief; white is associated with masculinity and purity; and red generally signifies femininity and positive events. Moreover, white symbolizes purity, while red represents passion and vigor [12;60].

Conclusion. As we can observe, the symbolic meanings of colours evolve not only across different nations and cultures but also across different historical periods within a single nation. This evolutionary development in colour semantics complicates the lexical-semantic classification of colour terms. Semantically, colours affect human perception in diverse ways and are interpreted differently by representatives of various nations. That is, a specific colour can convey both ordinary, general physical sensations and intense emotional or aesthetic experiences for individuals.

The linguo-colour image of the world possesses unique characteristics, shaped by a complex interplay of factors such as geographic location, climatic conditions, the availability of natural resources, historical developments, socio-economic structures, religious beliefs, customs, and lifestyle, which collectively contribute to observable cultural variations among ethnic groups.

Therefore, each nation's cultural imagination constitutes a crucial factor in defining its uniqueness. Understanding the cultural codes expressed through language allows for a deeper comprehension of ethnocultural differences.

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