



Article

# Linguocultural Characteristics of Proverbs with Color Components

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**Abstract:** Proverbs, as reflections of a people's ancient wisdom, inevitably encapsulate a nation's mode of thought, lifestyle, and ethnoculture. Over centuries, a nation bequeaths its accumulated life experiences to future generations through various media. Proverbs stand as a prime example of such an invaluable heritage. Having passed from mouth to mouth and been refined through the ages, they serve as a vital source of folk wisdom. Like other genres of folklore, proverbs represent the national literary and cultural wealth of every people. They fully express a nation's national-cultural characteristics and facets, its worldview, moral norms and principles, and the spiritual state of the nation.

**Keywords:** Phraseme, paremia, linguocultural codes, polysemy, world linguistics, linguistics, proverbs with color components, national values.

## Introduction

It is well-known that color nomination is considered one of the earliest formed lexical layers. Indeed, the presence of words with color semantics can be observed in the most ancient components of any language [1]. This perspective can be substantiated by the following thoughts of H. Jamolxonov: "The majority of common Turkic words are polysemous. In this layer, words denoting 'kinship,' 'human organs,' 'domestic animals,' 'wild animals,' 'birds,' 'labor activity,' 'household items,' 'color-hue,' 'taste-flavor,' 'quantity,' 'number,' 'action,' 'state,' and 'customs' constitute the majority". Consequently, color names existed even in the ancient Turkic language lexicon. In M. Kashgari's work "*Devon-u Lug'otit Turk*," there are about 60 color names. Examples include *kök* (blue/sky-colored), *boz* (gray or light-colored), *qizil* (red), *sarıg* (yellow), *yaşıl* (green), *aq* (white), *qara* (black), *al* (a shade of red), *koñur* (brown), and *göher* (pearl-colored) [2].

Such words belonging to the primary layer serve as standards for polysemy and similes. They participate as core components in stable units: phrasemes and paremias. Indeed, native speakers more easily comprehend and symbolize later-acquired elements of the world picture through a world picture that was mastered much earlier. Symbolized names serve to increase the conciseness, imagery, impact, and artistry of proverbs [3].

In Uzbek proverbs, the adjectives white, black, red, yellow, blue, green and the verbs derived from them, such as to turn white, to turn black, to turn yellow, to turn red, to turn blue/green, are utilized. In the Russian language, in addition to the primary color names like *черный* (black), *белый* (white), *серый* (gray), *красный* (red), *зеленый* (green), *синий* (dark blue), *голубой* (light blue) and their derived verbs, there are numerous hues such as

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алый (crimson), румяный (rosy), рыжий (red-haired/ginger), серый (gray), седой (hoary/gray-haired), цветной (colored), пестрый (variegated), рябой (speckled), золотой (golden), карий (hazel), желтый (yellow), серебряный (silver). Furthermore, terms specific to animals like буланый (dun), бурый (brownish-gray), вороной (raven-black), гнедой (bay), каурый (chestnut), пегий (piebald), сивый (light gray), саврасый (dun with black mane), соловый (palomino), чалый (roan), as well as words expressing color intensity such as темный (dark), светлый (light), бледный (pale), ясный (clear), мутный (cloudy/opaque), are frequently encountered [4, 5].

### Methodology

It should be emphasized that color names within paremias are often not used in denotative semantics based on actual color. That is, rather than naming a specific color, they primarily carry symbolic meaning. Turning to the frequency of color names in proverbs, the lexemes white and black, which possess symbolic significance, are used most extensively. Therefore, color names used in proverbs mainly express figurative, specifically symbolic, meanings.

Proverbs reflect the ancient wisdom of a people; they inevitably embody a nation's mode of thought, lifestyle, and ethnoculture. "Over centuries, a nation bequeaths its accumulated life experiences to future generations through various media. Proverbs stand as an example of such an invaluable heritage. Having passed from mouth to mouth and been refined through the ages, they serve as a vital source of folk wisdom. Like other genres of folklore, proverbs represent the national literary and cultural wealth of every people. They fully express a nation's national-cultural characteristics and facets, its worldview, moral norms and principles, and the spiritual state of the nation". As N. Maslova rightly noted, "proverbs and sayings are unique cultural stereotypes attached to the language that reflect the mentality of the people".

### Results and Discussion

When units with color semantics are used in proverbs, they reflect a specific people's concepts symbolized by colors, their conceptual knowledge, values, national assessment of the world, and color-related associations [6]. Indeed, "The diversity of languages is not only a difference in sounds but a result of the differences in seeing the world in each nation". "While color semantics exist in all languages, the primary meaning representing a specific color is often identical [7]. However, the associations, generalizations, similes, symbolic meanings, metaphorical, metonymic, and figurative expressions formed through a particular color can differ. As native speakers name concepts other than color through color-representative lexemes, each nation's unique national thinking and lifestyle are manifested in these nominations" [8].

In the Russian language, the word "красный" (red) expresses beauty (*Красная девка в хороводе, что маков цвет в огороде* — A beautiful girl in a round dance is like a poppy flower in a garden), whereas in the Uzbek language, it can carry a negative nuance meaning "greed/lust" (*Qizil tilim tiyolmadim, Qizimnikiga borolmadim* — I could not restrain my 'red' tongue [greed], so I could not visit my daughter's house); in the English language, it represents strong danger (*Red sky at morning, sailors take warning*) [9].

Color names exist as national-cultural codes in both Uzbek and Russian. According to V.N. Teliya, "Cultural codes are systems of secondary signs consisting of various material and formal means used to encode specific cultural content" [10]. V.V. Krasnykh's definition of the cultural code is also widely recognized: "Cultural codes can be imagined as a net cast over reality. This 'net,' inherent in our thinking, divides, organizes, shapes, and evaluates the world around us" [11].

F. Usmonov evaluates the cultural code as "a collection of core concepts, values, and norms that reflect cultural priorities". In Uzbek linguistics, the doctoral dissertation by Z. Muqimova titled *"The Role of Linguacultural Codes in the Linguistic Picture of the World"*

identified the mechanisms of linguacultural codes in the Uzbek language and determined their place within the Uzbek linguistic worldview. In this work, the linguacultural code is defined as follows: "A linguacultural code can be defined as a set of concepts and norms necessary for understanding and perceiving a specific culture, an expression of a particular nation's worldview, and a complete, concise conclusion of its figurative thinking reflected in language units [12]."

In world linguistics, the following types of linguacultural codes are distinguished: somatic code, spatial code, temporal code, object-commodity code, biomorphic code, spiritual code, anthropomorphic code, cosmic code, color-hue code, military code, medical code, architectural code, sports code, geometric code, gastronomic code, clothing code, mythological code, theomorphic code, and others [13].

The phenomenon of color-hue names carrying cultural information beyond merely naming a specific color is observed in many languages. In both Uzbek and Russian, color nominations are actively observed, becoming codes for essences formed by specific national conceptual views, national identities, and accepted norms. In Uzbek culture, black (*qora*) has become a code for the meaning of "support/backer," which is manifested in the phraseme *qora tortmoq* (to seek support) and in proverbs such as: *If you have a 'black' [support] at the Khan's side, your black ship will sail even on the hills.*

In contrast to the Uzbek language, the lexeme gray (*серый*) in Russian serves as a cultural code for several symbolic meanings [14]. For instance, the meanings of "simple/uneducated" or "plain/unremarkable" are observed in the following proverbs: *Epifan is glad to have earned a gray caftan; A shepherd's pillow is a gray stone, but his soul is a flower garden.*

The realization of cultural codes is actively observed in works of folklore, particularly in paremiological units (proverbs). Cultural codes found in the text of proverbs usually express specific symbolic meanings, national-cultural concepts, values, and notions that have become values. Therefore, in the process of cultural encoding in language, concrete objects familiar to the people become codes for concepts representing national values or anti-values, specific concepts, national evaluations, and attitudes that possess abstract semantics [15]. The object becoming a code must be familiar to the people and given in direct observation. It can be a body part, a color, a plant, an animal, or a household object. In this way, a formless abstract concept is conditionally objectified. For example, the concept of "innocence" is an epistemological, abstract concept not given in direct observation. When this concept is perceived through the color white, it becomes materialized, as white is a color that can be seen.

The process of linguacultural encoding occurs through cognitive metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and simile. National thinking forms the basis of this process.

The color names used in proverbs carry symbolic weight rather than literal meaning. For instance, in the Uzbek proverb "*Asli qora oqarmas, asli buzuq tuzalmas*" (That which is black by nature will not whiten, that which is corrupt by nature will not be mended), the colors black and white are used to signify the binary of "bad" and "good." The core philosophy suggests that individuals with an inherently bad character, ill intentions, or an impure heart—those "black" on the inside—do not simply transform into good people [16].

This conceptual framework is a staple of Uzbek national thought, also found in the verses of Alisher Navoiy: "*No matter how much you train a puppy or a donkey's foal, they will become a dog and a donkey, but never human.*" This idea, rooted in long-term societal observations and life experiences, likely stems from various perceived realities: impure lineage, poor upbringing, a toxic environment, or an inherently flawed nature. The underlying wisdom warns against being misled by eloquent speech or a reliable appearance; a person with an impure heart remains untrustworthy.

Such complex logic is encapsulated in the simple lines: *Asli qora oqarmas, asli buzuq tuzalmas*. This proverb presents two judgments: the impossibility of whitening the naturally black and the impossibility of mending the naturally corrupt. Each judgment is reinforced through antithesis (opposition): black versus white, and corrupt versus mended. These four elements—black, white, corrupt, and mended—function figuratively. In a literal (usual) sense, black and white are not opposites; they are merely different color categories. They only become opposites when they symbolize "good" and "evil." Thus, the Uzbek people use these color lexemes to express conceptual ideas in a way that is vivid, simple, concise, and artistically convincing. The statement "black color will never whiten" is more concrete and persuasive than the abstract thought that "a bad person will never be good," as concrete concepts are grasped much faster than abstract ones.

Similarly, the Russian proverb "*Рубаха черна, да совесть бела*" (The shirt is black, but the conscience is white) highlights the primary importance of conscience in the Russian national consciousness. It emphasizes the priority of spirituality over materiality; though the clothing may be old or dirty (black), the conscience remains pure (white). Abstract essences are not tangible; logically, they should not form syntactic connections with color-semantic units. However, such a connection is forged through the symbolic "pure/untainted" meaning of the color white (белый).

It is well-known that through language, human beings do not merely name the world but also express their attitudes toward it. "Through the evaluative function of language, the spiritual world, moral views, and national values of a people are manifested". Indeed, any evaluation provided by a nation is conditioned by its mentality.

For instance, in Uzbek culture, a young woman's decisiveness is sometimes interpreted not as "firmness" (*qat'iyat*), but as being outspoken or brash (*shaddodlik*, *shapshaklik*), which is why the lexeme *shapshak* exists. This indicates that Uzbek culture evaluates this trait negatively. There is no exact equivalent of the lexeme *shapshak* in the Russian language. While the terms *упрямая* (stubborn), *своенравная* (willful), *неуступчивая* (unyielding), or *строптивая* (unruly) can be used with negative semantics, they do not align perfectly with the semantics of *shapshak*. While the negative term *строптивая* includes the differentiating semes of "rudeness" and "disobedience," the semantic structure of *shapshak* carries the potential seme of "disrespect toward elders." In such instances, national evaluation manifests in connection with the system of values. In Uzbek culture, a young woman's attitude based on respect for elders is valued more highly than her decisiveness or boldness. This lexeme was skillfully employed by Abdulla Qahhor in reference to Saida, the protagonist of the work "*Sinchalak*", who does not fit the typical mold of an Uzbek woman: "...why do you act so *shapshak* [brashly] when someone older than you says something?" (A. Qahhor, *Sinchalak*). Regarding this, J. Hamdamova writes: "In the Uzbek language, the evaluative function is inextricably linked with cultural codes and serves as a linguistic expression of national values".

National evaluation is also expressed through color components, a phenomenon clearly visible in both phrasemes and proverbs. The expression of an evaluative attitude through color occurs primarily through its symbolic meaning. In the primary nominative sense, a color simply names a specific hue in the world—for example, naming the color of a green leaf, red blood, or black coal. It is not accurate to say that different people have a specific inherent attitude toward these concrete colors. How could a person evaluate the color of a simple object, such as a raspberry, as positive or negative? However, when native speakers symbolize these colors—that is, when they accept a color as a symbol for certain abstract concepts—evaluative semantics emerge. In this case, the evaluation is given not to the color itself, but to the concept it symbolizes.

For example, in the Uzbek language, there are antonymous phrasemes such as *ichi oq* (white-hearted/pure) and *qalbi qora* (black-hearted/evil). Here, the symbolic meanings of the lexemes white (*oq*) and black (*qora*) are realized; the nation uses "white" to name a

positive attitude and "black" to name a negative one. This relationship is manifested in various proverbs, where the people use concrete symbols to distinguish between good and bad, valuable and worthless, right and wrong, thereby revealing the didactic nature of proverbs.

In the Uzbek language, the negative and neutral semantics of the lexeme black (*qora*) are realized in the proverb: "*Yuzning qoraligi uyat emas, yuzi qoralik uyat*" (Having a black [dark] face is no shame; being 'black-faced' [disgraced] is the shame). It is known that in Uzbek linguoculturology, the "face" (*yuz*) is a somatic cultural code representing reputation, honor, and dignity. This cultural code is realized in phrasemes like *yuzi yorug'* (bright-faced/honorable) and *yuzi qora* (black-faced/disgraced). Black is also a cultural code in Uzbek linguoculturology and carries negative semantics. Through this proverb, a national worldview is expressed: physical appearance is not important; rather, a person's spiritual "face" must be clean. Disgrace and shamelessness are condemned.

### Conclusion

When the picture of the world is transferred into language through a conceptual lens—that is, when it is verbalized—the language performs the function of distinguishing and isolating the elements of the world from one another. This is a highly complex process where, after stages such as generalization, separation, abstraction, and categorization at the conceptual level, the isolated element of the world is differentiated by a specific meaning. For example, humanity conceptualized and categorized the "face" as a concept, leading to the meaning of "face." Now, color names help to differentiate it: a red face implies a healthy face, while a yellow face implies a sickly face. These distinctions are opened up even more clearly through proverbs:

*Qizil yuzni sarg'aytma,*

*Aziz qo'lni qavartir.*

(Do not let a red face turn yellow; let dear hands become calloused.)

In the Russian language, color names also perform similar distinguishing functions within proverbs. For example:

1. Black hands (*чёрные руки*) — signify hardworking hands: "*Black hands — white bread.*"
2. Snow-white hands (*белые ручки*) — signify lazy hands: "*White hands love the labor of others.*"
3. Golden hands (*золотые руки*) — signify creative or skillful hands: "*Golden hands know no boredom.*"

Thus, proverbs with color components exist in both the Uzbek and Russian languages. They are significant in manifesting national-cultural identity, performing an evaluative function, and differentiating concepts.

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