



Известия Саратовского университета. Новая серия. Серия: Филология. Журналистика. 2023. Т. 23, вып. 1. С. 42–47

Izvestiya of Saratov University. Philology. Journalism, 2023, vol. 23, iss. 1, pp. 42–47

<https://bonjour.sgu.ru>

<https://doi.org/10.18500/1817-7115-2023-23-1-42-47>, EDN: IPLMLA

Article

The linguistic and cultural aspects of color meanings in the language picture of the world (Based on the material of English and Russian languages)



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Abstract. The study of the color picture of the world is of interest in the linguistic and cultural aspect, since color is one of the most important means of emotional impact on the reader, color meanings express the author's view of the world, and are also important for constructing a national picture of the world. There are some patterns that link color values in different cultures of the world. It is worth noting that there are differences in color symbols in different languages. It depends on the historical past of the people, its geographical location, etc. Despite this, we trace some similarities using examples of phraseological units with elements of color designations. An important factor is that color has a psychophysiological effect on a person. In Russian and English, "red" has a positive connotation to a greater extent. This is their common feature, although in both languages there are more or less negative characteristics of this color. The similarity can also be seen in phraseological units with the color component. There are quite a lot of equivalents in both Russian and English. Along with the common symbolic features that still prevail, there are also distinctive features that are associated with Russian and English history and culture.

Keywords: color picture, language picture of the world, color symbols, color designations, color meanings

For citation: Zارايسкий A. A. The linguistic and cultural aspects of color meanings in the language picture of the world (Based on the material of English and Russian languages). *Izvestiya of Saratov University. Philology. Journalism*, 2023, vol. 23, iss. 1, pp. 42–47. <https://doi.org/10.18500/1817-7115-2023-23-1-42-47>, EDN: IPLMLA

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Научная статья

УДК 811.161.1'23'27+811.111'23'27

Лингвокультурный аспект цветообозначений в языковой картине мира (на материале английского и русского языков)

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Аннотация. Изучение цветовой картины мира представляет интерес в лингвокультурном аспекте, поскольку цвет является одним из важнейших средств эмоционального воздействия на читателя, цветовые значения выражают авторский взгляд на мир, а также важны для построения национальной картины мира. Имеются некоторые закономерности, которые связывают значения цвета в разных культурах мира. Стоит отметить, что существуют различия в цветовых обозначениях на разных языках. Это зависит от исторического прошлого народа, его географического положения и т.д. Несмотря на это, мы прослеживаем некоторые сходства, используя примеры фразеологических единиц с элементами цветовых обозначений. Важным фактором является то, что цвет оказывает психофизиологическое воздействие на человека. В русском и английском языках слово «красный» в большей степени имеет положительную коннотацию. Это их общая черта, хотя в обоих языках есть более или менее отрицательные характеристики этого цвета. Сходство можно увидеть и во фразеологизмах с цветовым компонентом. Существует довольно много эквивалентов как в русском, так и в английском языках. Наряду с общими символическими чертами, которые все еще преобладают, существуют также отличительные черты, связанные с русской и английской историей и культурой.

Ключевые слова: цветовая картина, языковая картина мира, цветовые символы, цветовые обозначения, цветовые значения

Для цитирования: Zارايسкий A. A. The linguistic and cultural aspects of color meanings in the language picture of the world (Based on the material of English and Russian languages) [*Зараиский А. А. Лингвокультурный аспект цветообозначений в языковой картине мира (на материале английского и русского языков)*]. Известия Саратовского университета. Новая серия. Серия: Филология. Журналистика. 2023. Т. 23, вып. 1. С. 42–47. <https://doi.org/10.18500/1817-7115-2023-23-1-42-47>, EDN: IPLMLA

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In the modern world, the number of color names is constantly increasing. Researchers in the field of philosophy, linguistics, ethnology, psychology, linguistics, as well as disciplines close to them, for example, ethnolinguistics and psychosemantics have long been interested in the problems of color. Despite the large number of works related to this topic, the issues of coloratives remain relevant.

The ability to distinguish colors is of great importance for human visual perception. Color has always been of great importance because of its close connection with the general philosophical and aesthetic understanding of the world. Color gives us the opportunity to evaluate the world around us. The problem of studying color perception through the prism of linguistic facts became more relevant due to the awareness of the need to study the language picture of the world, which reflects precisely our understanding of reality.

However, each individual nationality sees the world around in its own way, depending on its national culture and mentality. In this context, we can talk about the existence of certain concepts (“representations”) that are displayed primarily in the language. Such studies will help to understand more deeply the peculiarity of the worldview of different nations.

The main problem for linguists is to study color in the context of the world picture. The color spectrum may be divided in different ways which is explained by peculiarities of higher nervous activity. The concepts of colors, the words expressing these concepts, the relationship between concepts and words depend on different systems. Such understanding of colors is considered to be universal and is found out even if there are no names for the corresponding color shades [1].

The experiment conducted by B. Berlin and Kay on the basis of 20 languages from different language groups, they were able to identify 11 basic colors for all selected languages (white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, gray).

Color designation of concepts, words and connections between them makes a basis for differences in cultures: “Culture is a meaning-bearing and meaning-transmitting aspect of human practice and its results, a symbolic dimension of social events that allows individuals to live in a special life world that they all more or less understand, and perform actions whose character is understood by everyone else” [2, p. 41].

Following the ideas of A. T. Khrolenko we may state that “culture is a world of meanings” and colors are also considered as meanings. The national culture includes a color language of a person and a “color consciousness” [3, p. 59]. Despite the fact that the per-

ception of a particular color by different people has a universal character, unconscious relations between individual colors and certain images may be found out. “Social stereotypes and ethnopyschological features are imposed on the “physiological” meaning of color, thereby causing certain associations characteristic only of this linguistic community” [4, p. 5].

If we analyze “red”, we will see that in different countries and in different cultures it has different meaning. The same concerns the white color in the countries of the East and Continental Europe. Main colors are limited by such names as white, black, red, blue, green, yellow and purple. Actually, it is culture that helps us to define the number of main colors. In practice it seems to be a rather difficult task to classify different colors as basic ones.

R. M. Frumkina proves that an ordinary native speaker has a naive picture of existing colors. This fact is fixed through language but the process of fixation as well as the relations arising are not realized by the speaker. “They are not realized by the speaker precisely because they are already fixed in the language of which he is the bearer, and the “naive picture of the world of color” turns out to be one of the elements of the naive picture of the world as a whole, manifested through language” [5, p. 175].

T. A. Mikhailova believes that it is impossible to expect a strict identity of color paintings of different people, not in contact with each other and at different stages of their development [6, p. 120].

Dealing with the developed culture, we can observe the expansion of monochromatic colors although the number of basic color meanings is extremely small: in the most developed languages there are usually eleven, in Russian – twelve.

It is rather interesting that the symbolic meaning of colors within the same linguistic culture is not the same. Color associations depend not only on a socio-cultural nature but on a perceptual (emotional, sensual) one as well. So, we can divide colors into cold, warm and even hot. In addition, color designations can cause different taste associations: they can be *sour and sweet*, *bitter and salty*.

Besides the visual forms of the color symbol, there are also language and speech symbols – stable expressions with the “color” seme (“to be blue in face” and “to be black in face” in the English language and “to turn purple with anger” in the Russian language).

Thus, color is perceived as an almost universal unit of language that everyone understands. Each individual nation has its own correspondences between individual colors and certain images, despite the relative universality of the perception of a particular color by all people.



In all languages, color has certain symbolism. The symbolism of color in the language picture of the world is very ambiguous. For each individual person, color has its own specific meaning. According to V. G. Gak, “even such an objective feeling, common to all people, as color, is reflected differently in different languages, the names of colors make up a complex system in each language, and the systems of different languages show significant discrepancies” [7, p. 198].

Color designations are often used in phraseology, as in Russian, for example, red like a tomato, turn green with envy, blue blood, and in English – blue collar, be green with envy, white as snow. There are also absolute phraseological equivalents, such as, dark horse – темная лошадка, see through rose-colored glasses – look through rose-colored glasses, get the green light – give green light. The concept of «color» also acts as an epithet – green longing, red maiden, golden autumn. Such a stylistic device in combination with a color designation allows you to characterize the subject especially vividly and figuratively.

All of the above mentioned indicates that color has a special stylistic expressive potential and is a part of the language, and is also able to exert a psychophysiological influence on a person.

Studying the verbalization of color perception, color meanings are divided by linguists into classifications. For example, A. A. Bragina believes that colors are divided into: basic (absolute); shade.

Absolute color names, in turn, are divided into: chromatic, which are called the seven colors of the rainbow spectrum; achromatic (white, gray, black) [8]. All other color designations are shade-based and differ in the way the shades are transmitted.

There is a group of color designations that convey shades of color analytically. Among them are color adjectives:

- a) secondary nomination (lilac, milk);
- b) not having a clearly traceable etymology (brown, scarlet);
- c) having limited compatibility (light brown, brown, bay);
- d) borrowed color designations (solferino, indigo);
- e) terminological units (cobalt, ultramarine);
- f) neologisms and archaisms (pepsinium, cubic, smaragdum);
- g) occasionalisms (blackness).

According to I. V. Makeenko, there is also a group of shade color designations that clarify the color shades:

- a) complex, with formants bright, light, dark, tender, etc., clarifying the intensity of coloring;

b) two-part color designations, which are called mixed colors or multicolored objects: yellow-green, blue-white, etc. [9, p. 15].

In addition, structurally complex (genetic) color designations (honey color, sea wave color) and comparative turns (like poppy color), usually located on the periphery of the color microfield, are also distinguished.

When describing color meanings, linguists face many problems. The main one is the problem of classification of color adjectives. Most researchers use the classification of color values by the name of the colors of the rainbow spectrum: *red, orange, yellow, green, cyan and blue* (often they are combined into one class), purple. To chromatic colors are added the designations of three achromatic colors (*white, gray, black*). In addition to abstract color designations representing the semantic center of the paradigm, it also includes genitive phrases (*the color of blood with milk*) and models formed according to the principle of regular polysemy (“related to X, similar in color to X”: *lead, crimson, etc.*) Color designations formed with the help of different modifiers and qualifiers belong to a separate group, which indicate shades, texture, etc. (*spring green, clay yellow*).

Coloratives are classified according to the most diverse criteria.

1. According to the structural feature of the color name, simple (*red, blue, black*) and complex (*sky-colored, caramel-colored*) can be distinguished. English color designations are formed by combining two colors (*melon-pink, oil-black*), as well as by specifying the subject using the model “color of...” or “... – colored” (*color of the cement, color of sand, straw-colored, off-color*). One of the most productive ways to form color designations is to transfer the color of the object to the name. This method is often used by the authors of explanatory dictionaries: *milky* adj. 1 the colour of milk, *honey* adj. 1 the colour of honey [10, p. 246].

A. V. Vassilevich identifies 10 categories, according to which such adjectives can be grouped by subject areas that are part of them: 1) inanimate nature – *sky-blue, ash-grey*; 2) flora – foliage green, *mossgreen*; 3) fauna – *canary yellow, camel, dove*; 4) fruits and vegetables – *limegreen, caroty, olive*; 5) food products – *coffeebrown, milky, bordeaux, honey*; 6) flowers – *oldrose, hyacinth*; 7) precious stones, metals – *golden, rubyred, pearl*; 8) products of human activity – *bottlegreen, brickred, slate*; 9) dyes – *indigo, carmine*; 10) words with complex etymology – *Sistine, Oxfordblue, Rome purple* [11, p. 40].

A productive way of word formation in English is the use of modifier words: bright, dark, deep, dirty, dull, light, mat, moderate, pale, pastel, shocking, soft, virulent, vivid, etc. The choice of the “modifier +



color designation" model is determined by two factors: first, some modifiers have narrow compatibility, for example, shocking is combined only with pink; virulent – only with red; secondly, modifiers in 90% of cases are combined with color values that are part of the "basic" group.

2. Stylistic classification. Coloratives can have different stylistic coloring: most of them can be classified as words with neutral coloring (*red*), others – with negative coloring (*blood-red*), others – to poetic vocabulary (*cerise*), the fourth – to colloquial (*brick*).

3. According to the presence or absence of motivation, adjectives of color are classified on motivated adjectives and names that have lost motivation. There are 11 basic colors, and in total, according to A. P. Vassilevich, there are more than two thousand.

One of the most popular and common colors in the Russian language is red. This color designation has an equally important role in the English language consciousness. Since ancient times, the color red has aroused special interest among people. In Russia, the red color was attributed magical, protective properties, which allowed it to be used as a talisman. Moreover, in the XIX century, it was customary for peasants to dress the bride in a red wedding dress. In Russian, red meant – light, bright, good, beautiful, valuable. Red was perceived as a joyful, beautiful, cheerful color. In addition, this color symbolizes not only beauty, but also the harmony inherent in man and things.

This color occupies a special place in the history of Russia, since domestic flags have always been red. Red is the color of revolution. Many perceive this color as forbidding, due to well-rooted associations – *a red traffic light, a red rag for a bull*.

In Russian, it also symbolizes high activity, aggression. In English-speaking culture, red is no less

important than in Russian. Initially, "red" means pain, anger, blood, war and death. For example, the word "bloody" realizes its meaning in such a phraseological unit as: *as red as blood – blood-red*; some expressing anger: *to be like a red rag to a bull* – to be likely to cause uncontrollable anger.

"Red" is also the color of love, health and manhood. The concept of red as a color goes back to something beautiful and pleasant. For example, *as red as a rose* – beautiful, attractive. The red color may reflect a symbol of fun and enjoyment: *to paint the town red* – to go and have an extremely good time. In England, red has always been popular. So it remains to this day. They adore this bright color, as red buses, telephone booths, and soldiers' uniforms convince us. Even the national emblem of England, which dates back to the time of the Lancastrians, is a scarlet rose. The British consider red a symbol of vitality, youth, physical strength, joy and celebration. In the perception of the British, it expresses exclusively positive emotions. "Red letter day" means "public holiday", such days are marked in red in the calendar.

Thus, the red color in Russian culture, as well as in English, carries not only an aesthetic function, but also has a great temporary tradition in the interpretation of politics, power, freedom, the state, morality and religion. In both cultures, the semantics of red is the same. In general, both Russian and English the color designation "red" has a positive connotation. However, there are also some differences in symbolic definitions, which are more based on the historical past of languages.

As shown in Table, in the languages studied, there is a parallel between some phraseological units with components of color designation. We chose the semantic field "Red" as the color under study, since this color is basic and has a rich symbolism.

Table. Comparison of lexical units with components of color designation

Negative connotation		Positive connotation	
English	Russian	English	Russian
To be like a red rag to a bull	Быть как красная тряпка для быка	Red letter day	Красный день в календаре
As red as blood	Кроваво-красный	As red as a rose	Прекрасна, как роза
		Get the green light	Дать зеленый свет
		See through rose-coloured glasses	Смотреть сквозь розовые очки

Based on the cosmetic catalog, which was taken as the material under study, 329 color values were identified in Russian and English. According to this study, all examples (except one) in English consist

of complex color values, and in Russian complex ones are 97 units, and simple ones are 22.

Examples of color designations in English were divided into the following categories:



4 color designations belonging to the category “inanimate nature”: *Electric Pink, Eternal Flame*. 10 units corresponding to the “flora” category: *Coral Charisma, Coral Ideal, Pearly Coral, Shimmering Coral, Soft Coral, Coral Craze*; not a single example was assigned to the “fauna” category; 26 color values included in the category “fruits and vegetables”. Garnet attraction is one of the most interesting examples, since “*Garnet*” in Russian means not only “dark red”, but also “*garnet*”. However, for the Russian version of the catalog, the translators have chosen the definition of “*lingonberry*” for this shade.

Of course, the study of the color picture of the world is of interest in the linguistic and cultural aspect, since color is one of the most important means of emotional impact on the reader, color meanings express the author’s view of the world, and are also important for constructing a national picture of the world.

According to research, there are 11 basic colors (but in Russian there are 12 because there are 2 designations for the color “blue” – “*blue*” and “*dark blue*”). There are also some patterns that link color values in different cultures of the world. It is worth noting that there are differences in color symbols in different languages. It depends on the historical past of the people, its geographical location, etc. Despite this, we trace some similarities using examples of phraseological units with elements of color designations. An important factor is that color has a psychophysiological effect on a person.

Our goal is to study color meanings in the linguistic picture of the world. This was done based on the material, which was the cosmetic catalog “Oriflame”. To begin with, the task was performed to identify terminological and nominative aspects in the study of color designations. We chose “color designation” as the term used, because it is quite capacious and includes various ways of word formation.

It was interesting to find out that in Russian and English, the color red has a positive connotation to a greater extent. This is their common feature, although in both languages there are more or less negative characteristics of this color. The similarity can also be seen in phraseological units with the color component. There are quite a lot of equivalents in both Russian and English. Along with the common symbolic features that still prevail, there are also distinctive features that are associated with Russian and English history and culture.

The next task was the classification of color values. In this paper, several classifications are presented, but it was the classification of A. V. Vassilevich that was taken as the basis, since it

includes the largest number of categories that are interesting from the point of view of linguistics. In total, 238 color values were found in Russian and English. In the course of the study, it became clear that some color values do not fit any classification group. In this regard, such adjectives have been allocated to a separate category, which surpasses all other categories in number. This applies to both English and Russian languages.

The study showed that the color values in English and Russian are different. This is due to the different worldviews of the two cultures. Therefore, in English, color designations are more figurative and abstract, some of them are based on fictional objects, and in Russian colors are called, guided by our taste, tactile sensations, etc., in other words, they are based on the perception of our senses. Accordingly, color designations in Russian are close to the perception of a Russian-speaking person.

Despite this, we can say that the color naming of the same color in English and Russian, in some cases, coincides. Modifiers are used more often in English than in Russian. This is another distinctive feature. Speaking about the general features in the color values of the two languages under study, we can add that the coloratives are stylistically neutral, do not have a negative connotation, and are also not motivated.

Thus, we can say that color meanings play an important role in the linguistic picture of the world, and different peoples have common symbolic characteristics of individual colors, which convinces us of the similarity of understanding and perception of some color meanings.

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Поступила в редакцию 05.09.2022; одобрена после рецензирования 21.10.2022; принята к публикации 30.11.2022
The article was submitted 05.09.2022; approved after reviewing 21.10.2022; accepted for publication 30.11.2022