The Universal and National-Cultural Specificity of Idioms Incorporating the Component 'Black'

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Abstract: This article analyses idioms incorporating 'Black/Чёрный/Қора', representing universal and culturally specific elements. The author notes no significant distinctions between English and Russian idiomatic units, with many shared features. Universally, 'black' symbolises evil, unhappiness, and mourning, and associates with concepts such as gloominess, negative traits, stubbornness, challenges, and illegality. English idioms highlight cultural specifics like anger-driven violence, mundane aspects, and affiliations with the church or judiciary. The emergence of non-equivalent phrases is linked to historic factors like the invention of printing, cultural realities, slavery, piracy, and geographical elements.

1 INTRODUCTION

The ability to discern various forms, sounds, scents, and tastes is possessed by every individual. Similarly, the capacity to recognize different colours is a crucial aspect of human visual perception. "Because we perceive the colours of objects, we are able to distinguish objects more effectively" (Kravkov S. V. (1951)). However, it is impossible to imagine a human activity without the presence of colour. Moreover, people's moods, emotions, and even physical health are often influenced by colour. Differentiating between colours also provides us with aesthetic experiences; the frequently used association of the words "meaningful" and "pleasant" with the adjective "colourful" expresses our emotional attitude towards a variety of colours. For instance, the adjective "colourful" contrasts with the word "grey" (Kravkov S. V. (1951)).

The same colour is associated differently in the brains of two distinct individuals, leading to diverse modes of expression in words. In Western society, for example, "green" represents security, while in France, it signifies criminality; in Chinese culture, "white" symbolizes mourning and sorrow, whereas in European culture, "black" serves the same functions. Therefore, the language of colour is largely subjective. Meanings are attributed to colours as perceived by humans (Maslova V.A. (2001)).

The innate ability to perceive the environment and the natural world through colour drives people to not only give shape to new creations but also assign them a specific colour. Due to its close connection with philosophical and aesthetic views of the world, colour holds significant cultural importance. Numerous scientific studies in various fields, including philosophy, psychology, ethnology, linguistics, and related disciplines like ethnolinguistics and psychosemantics, explore topics related to colour and chromaticism (Mironova L.N. (1993)).

Linguists have made significant contributions to the study of colour and colour semantics. Concepts such as "linguistics of colour" and "linguocolour picture of the world" are of interest to many researchers in modern science. The study of the theoretical aspects of colour linguistics is associated with this scientific direction (Abdullaeva, C. B. (2022)). It encompasses the "historical study of colour lexicon (evolutionary approach), psycholinguistic component of colour names, cognitive aspects, linguocultural and nominative-terminological aspects of colour lexicon research" (Bairamova L.K. (2001)). Psycholinguistic descriptions have explored the composition of denotative vocabulary related to colour (A.P. Vassilevich), the semantic structure (A.A. Bragina,

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I.V. Mokienko, L.N. Mironova), and the stylistic functions of colour designations (R.V. Alimpiev). Comparative-historical analysis has extensively studied colouronyms (N.B. Bakhilina), while psycholinguistic experiments have been conducted (L.V. Vasilevich, R.M. Frumkin, P.V. Yanshin). T.I. Vendina and A. Vezbitskaya explore linguistic consciousness, the role of colour in human existence, and the ethno-cultural system of the Russian language. V.A. Maslova, S.G. Ter-Minasova, E.F. Arsentyeva, Z.Z. Chanysheva, A.V. Zelenin, M.I. Baeva, and U.N. Fysina address the peculiarities of colour designations within the context of intercultural communication. Various approaches to the study of colour cognition exist, including anthropological (B. Berlin, P. Kay), psychological (I. Roche), gender (R.T. Lakoff, D. Simpson, A. Tarrant), and linguocultural approaches (A. Vezbitskaya, L.I. Isaeva, Sh.K. Zharkynbekova, and others).

2 OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Nearly everyone agrees that the colour "black" connotes negativity and depressing situations. In Christianity, it represents the darkness of death, ignorance, despair, anguish, desire, sorrow, and evil (Satan is known as the Prince of Darkness), as well as the lowest levels or stages of the world (the afterlife, primal chaos, "material prima" in alchemy), gloomy prophecies, gloom, and death. Additionally, the blackbird represents temptation in Christianity. According to beliefs that have become part of modern idiom, black is synonymous with misfortune, as seen in phrases like "black cat" and "қора мушук." Furthermore, in Islam, black is considered the colour of revenge. However, black had more positive connotations in ancient societies, including Egypt. For example, in English linguistic culture, a black cat is considered a sign of good luck (Lokid: Mif, 2000.).

The colour "black" also has positive symbolism in Egypt and other ancient cultures, representing the colour of the earth and rain clouds, the darkness of the mother's womb, and the maternal beginning (Kadirova, K. B., & Abdullaeva, C. B. (2020)). Black reflects the initial "embryonic stage" of all processes. Jung emphasized that carbon, the predominant element in the human body, is black in the form of coal or graphite. When coal is in the form of a diamond, it is pure and transparent like water. Jung believed that black represents stages corresponding to

the "descent into hell" as a redemption of all previous stages (Kunin A. V. 1984.).

Black was the colour associated with the ancient Egyptian gods Anubis (who conveyed souls to the afterlife) and Minus, the god of the harvest. The Greek goddess of hunting, Artemis of Ephesus (known as Diana of Ephesus in Roman mythology and Mother Earth), was sometimes depicted with black palms and a black face (Kadirova, K. B., & Abdullaeva, C. B. (2020)).

Moreover, black is the symbolic equivalent of white and the absolute, as it can express both absolute wholeness and absolute emptiness. Black often denotes gloom, chaos, and death, and it can be associated with the inner or underground realm. In paganism, black animals were sacrificed to the underground gods. Additionally, black represents the colour of the night (Tresidder J. (1999).). The primary meaning of black is darkness and the birth of darkness. Furthermore, the symbolic range of black includes a variety of ideas: motherhood, fertility, mystery, and death. Black is also associated with original black occult or unconscious wisdom originating from a hidden source (Telia V. N. (1996)). Black symbolizes time in contrast to white, which represents eternity and ecstasy.

It is worth mentioning that in other languages, there are numerous idiomatic meanings incorporating the component "black" /черный/қора, similar to those described in the languages outlined in this study.

In all linguistic cultures, this colour designation is seen as a symbol of evil and misfortune. Examples include phrases like "gentleman in black," "black Friday," "black art," "black ball," "black belt," "black magic," "black hole," "black man," "things look black," "black bottle," "black magician" (Eng.); "черная магия," "черный маг," "чёрная кошка," "черный шар" (Rus.); "бахти қора," "қора пешона," "қора мушук йўлини тусди," "қора курси," "қора хабар," "ораларидан қора мушук ўтди" (Uzb.). It is also seen as a symbol of mourning, as in phrases like "to be dressed in black" (Eng.), "черный канал" (Rus.) or "қора киймок" (Uzb.).

Due to the symbolic meaning of the colour black as a representation of evil and the fact that night is a dark time of day, various phrases have emerged in legends of the supernatural that connote night and express concepts associated with darkness and gloom: eng.: black as hell, black as night, black as midnight, black

as pitch, black as my hat, black as your hat; rus.: черная ночь.

Furthermore, English also features idioms that convey the idea that not everything black is a sign of evil: eng.: be not so black as one is painted, black hen lays a white egg, paint smb black, prove that black is white and white black.

Based on the analysis, idioms incorporating the component black/чёрный/қора express features linked to the psychological state of a person. However, the majority of idioms with the colour black/чёрный/қора represent negative human characteristics and possess a negative emotional value: a) gloomy, depressed state: eng.: ride the black donkey (to be in a bad condition, slang), black as ink, black dog, black dog is on his back, look black, things look black, see (or present) something in black, black as coal, black as a crow, black as a raven's wing, black as sloe, black as sin, black as soot, black as the ace of spades, black as thunder, black looks, as a thunder cloud; rus.: чернее ночи (someone very gloomy, sullen); uzb.: қора хаёллар. b) negative qualities of a human being, idleness, and depravity: eng.: black ingratitude (expressing evil or deceit instead of gratitude), a black soul (a cunning person capable of low actions), black jack; rus.: черная душа (condemnable deeds, actions), черная неблагодарность за добро (ingratitude for kindness), почерневший от злости (blacked out from anger), черная клевета (baseless slander), черное пятно (stain); uzb.: қора ният. c) violence in a state of anger and rage: eng.: give smb a black eye, beat somebody black and blue, black in the face; d) obstinacy: eng.: make white black, turn white into black, swear black is white; rus.: называть белое чёрным, а чёрное белым; uzb.: Қорани оқ, оқни қора демоқ.

This process is linked to the optical influence of colour on the human body and the associations formed at the mental level. Absolute black affects a person, evoking feelings of hopelessness, depression, or pessimism (Kunin A.V. (2005).).

Another example is describing a person's appearance: eng.: black (blue) in the face - purple (due to effort or irritation); (as) black as coals - black as embers (describing eyes); black eye; black and blue - with bruises, a black eye, etc.; rus.: black as a negro; black as a chimney sweep (referring to a person's body, face, or hands). Furthermore, there are phrases in English associated with aging: black ox has trod on

one's fat. Phrases denoting attributes related to specific concepts exist in every language:
a) a difficult period of life, a time of hardship and poverty: eng.: black season; rus.: черный день; uzb.: қора кун;
b) illegal, unofficial: eng.: black market; rus.: черный рынок; uzb.: qora bozor;
c) to be in the black list; eng.: Be in the black books of smb.; Black list, Black book, Black Marn; rus.: быть в чёрном списке;
d) minerals: eng.: black diamonds, Black Country, black gang; black gold; rus.: чёрное золото; uzb.: қора олтин.

Considering that oil production is a significant element in the economic systems of the three linguistic cultures, idioms like қора олтин - чёрное золото - black gold represent the equivalent and connote the same attributes. However, the coal industry holds equal importance to the oil industry in English culture, which is reflected in the existence of a larger number of phrases related to this sphere: Black Country, black diamonds, black gang.

It is worth noting that the phrases in the languages under investigation have connotations of similar features, but their semantic content differs: eng.: black frost; rus.: чёрная буря; uzb.: қора совуқ.

The analysis of idioms incorporating the component black/чёрный/қора in English, Uzbek, and Russian languages has revealed that these phrases contain both universal and national-cultural characteristics. Generally, these idioms encompass several conceptual zones and can be used to describe a person's: 1) psychological characteristics; 2) external features; 3) social affiliation; 4) professional affiliation. The semantic range and quantity of idioms in each conceptual zone vary depending on the language being considered (E.F.Rogov. (2000)).

Therefore, phrases incorporating the color component black/чёрный/қора represent both universal and national-cultural specific features. It is noteworthy that no significant differences have been identified between the idioms in English and Russian, as they share common characteristics.

The universal specificity includes:
1) the perception of black as a symbol of evil, unhappiness, and mourning;
2) signs associated with concepts such as a) gloomy, depressed state; b) negative qualities of a person, idleness, and viciousness; c) stubbornness; e)

physical characteristics of a person; f) difficult periods of life, times of deprivation and poverty; g) illegal, unofficial; h) being in disrepute; i) minerals.

The national-cultural specificity includes concepts expressing:

1) violence in a state of anger and rage;

2) something ordinary, mundane, not festive;

3) professional affiliation with the church or judiciary.

The majority of non-equivalent and distinctive phrases emerge due to extra-linguistic factors of historical nature, including:

a) the invention of printing;

b) historical realities of English linguistic culture;

c) everyday life realities;

d) slavery;

e) piracy;

f) natural phenomena and geographical factors.

Figure 1 illustrates the continuous selection approach used in analyzing 116 idioms in English, Russian, and Uzbek languages incorporating the color component black/чёрный/қора. Furthermore, the figure demonstrates that universal specificity is more prevalent across all languages compared to national-cultural specificity. According to this analysis, 70% of idioms exhibit rich semantic attributes and are exclusive to the English language.

3 CONCLUSION

According to the Uzbek language, the color қора in idioms serves as a substitute for the third person, carrying a negative meaning and often used as a curse. The national-cultural specificity of Uzbek idioms also reveals the presence of attributes such as a) hard and unrewarded work; b) poverty and social belonging to lower classes; c) value; d) wisdom.

Regarding axiological marking, it is worth noting that the evaluation of black color designations in these three languages is polar in nature. This topic has garnered significant attention and is being investigated by numerous linguistic scholars as an important concept in linguistic cultures that assess color cognition, encompassing both positive and negative meanings.

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