

# THE CONCEPT OF COLOR IN LINGUISTICS AND CULTURE

Sabirova Nilufar Abdullaevna  
Uzbek State University of World Languages

## Abstract

The article provides a comprehensive description of the concepts of “concept” and “language picture of the world”; an attempt is made to find out how concepts reflect lingua-specific features of mentality; specific features of the structure of color concepts are revealed. The main approaches to the study of color vocabulary are analyzed, including cognitive, linguacultural and psycholinguistic aspects. Particular attention is paid to the role of color in the formation of the linguistic picture of the world, the reflection of cultural values and the influence on cognitive processes. Various theories are considered that explain the universality and specificity of color designations in different languages and cultures. The problem of color designations is constantly under the close attention of many domestic and foreign linguists who used various approaches in its study. Color names were studied from the point of view of their etymology and historical development, systems approach, symbolism, semantic structure, using psycho- and ethnopsycholinguistic approaches. A number of researchers have examined names with color meanings in terms of comparison, studied the features of their functioning in works of art and folklore, as well as in phraseological units.

**Keywords:** Concept, color, color naming, linguistic picture of the world, color vocabulary, linguistic picture of the world, cognitive linguistics, linguacultural studies, psycholinguistics, color universals, cultural connotations, color metaphors, color symbols.

## Introduction

Philological research in the 21st century is characterized by an anthropocentric paradigm, according to which the linguistic personality is perceived as the center of linguistic problems, and language is a tool for understanding mental processes, because it performs not only an informative, communicative, emotive function, but also “records the entire complex of knowledge and ideas of a given linguistic community about the world” [4, p. 4]. Thus, language should be considered as a kind of cultural code of a nation, and not just as a tool of communication and cognition [6, p. 3]. Linguistic-specific features of mentality are most clearly revealed by analyzing its semantic components - concepts that form a kind of conceptual sphere, which is a component of the linguistic picture of the world. Despite the sufficient degree of study of the problem under analysis, scientific interest in the features of the relationship between language and culture does not wane. Evidence of this is a large number of works that have become the theoretical basis for this publication. This study is devoted to identifying semantic-word-formation and morphological patterns of formation of names with the meaning

of color in Russian and Spanish languages, establishing general and specific meanings of color names of the studied languages, as well as color symbolism in the language of poetry.

The choice of the topic is due to the fact that despite a number of interesting works devoted to the comparative study of the vocabulary and semantics of languages with different systems, there have not yet been any special studies that would conduct a comparative study of color names in the Russian and Spanish languages in the context of semantic word formation. For the first time, the description of names with the meaning of color in the language of poetry of the great symbolists Alexander Blok and Antonio Machado is considered in a comparative aspect in the context of their artistic, aesthetic and philosophical concept of poetic language.

### **Review of scientific literature**

Thus, fundamental studies of the language picture were carried out by N. Bakhilina, A. Vezhbitskaya, V. Vorobyov, A. Maslova, Yu. Stepanov, R. Frumkina. The works of N. Boldyrev, S. Vorkachev, A. Zalevskaya, E. Konkova, E. Kubryakova, V. Maslova, M. Nikitin, B. Serebrennikov became fundamental for the development of the concept of “concept”. The studies of A. Vasilevich, I. Kovalskaya, S. Kuznetsova, S. Tsyganova are devoted to the study of semantic, etymological and linguacultural features of color vocabulary. Over the past decade, philological science has been enriched with many in-depth dissertation studies, the purpose of which was to study the basic color concepts presented in various linguistic pictures of the world. Their authors are Ya. Astakhova, I. Beloborodova, L. Golub, K. Dmitrieva, T. Morozova and other scientists. Representatives of cognitive linguistics rightly assert that the concept of a picture of the world (including a linguistic one) is based on the study of human ideas about the world. If the world is a person and the environment in their interaction, then the picture of the world is the result of processing information about the environment and the person. Thus, our conceptual system, reflected in the form of a linguistic picture of the world, depends on physical and cultural experience and is directly connected with it [6, p. 64]. It is known that the first attempts to identify and formalize the concept of "picture of the world" were made by Greek philosophers.

### **Research Method**

Today, after the paradigm shift in linguistics, linguists have managed not only to interpret this term in a variety of ways, but also to detail it. Thus, in his work “Language pictures of the world as derivatives of national mentalities” [4], the famous philologist O. Kornilov emphasizes the need to separate the concepts of “language picture of the world” (the result of the reflection of the objective world by the everyday (linguistic) consciousness of a particular language community), “national language picture of the world” (the result of the reflection of the objective world by the everyday (linguistic) consciousness of a particular language community, a particular ethnic group), “individual national language picture of the world” (the result of the reflection of the objective world by the everyday (linguistic) consciousness of an individual person — a speaker of a particular national language). At the same time, V. Maslova argues that the term “linguistic picture of the world” is nothing more than a metaphor, because in reality the specific features of a national language, which record the unique socio-historical



experience of a certain national community of people, create for the speakers of this language not some other, unique picture of the world, different from the objectively existing one, but only a specific coloring of this world, conditioned by the national significance of objects, phenomena, processes, a selective attitude towards them, which is generated by the specifics of the activities, way of life and national culture of a given people [6, p. 66]. In modern linguistics, several definitions of the concept analyzed in this work are used. It is noteworthy that different researchers, based on their scientific interests and goals, can fill the concept of “linguistic picture of the world” with different content, implying something different from other interpretations, nevertheless, each scientist must explicate the meaning he puts into such a figurative and frequently used definition. In relation to linguistics, the picture of the world in any case should be a systematization of the language content plan, designed in one way or another [4, p. 4]. As already noted, a distinctive feature of modern linguistics is the tendency to study the specifics of a national worldview by identifying individual concepts with the study of the information accumulated in them. In the context of this article, it is necessary to clarify the meaning contained in this concept. It is worth emphasizing here that the term “concept”, which was originally part of the conceptual apparatus of mathematical disciplines, has recently been widely used by linguists. As an analysis of scientific literature shows, it is especially widespread today in linguacultural studies, one of the most actively developing areas of modern philology. It is important to understand that, by studying color names in their basic, denotative meaning, it is impossible to display the richness of their semantic and stylistic shades. At the same time, speaking about color as a concept, we take into account not only its basic, “primitive” meaning, but a whole system of additional connotations, concepts, associations, variations that form a kind of semantic field, displaying the entire palette of shades of one neutral color, which is essentially a concept of one color or another.

### Analysis and Results

There are various approaches to understanding the term “concept”: linguacognitive, linguacultural, psychological, psycholinguistic; semantic, logical-conceptual. Interpretations of the analyzed concept depend on them. Thus, according to E. Kubryakova, a concept is a term that serves to explain units of mental and psychological resources of our consciousness and the information structure that reflects human knowledge and experience; an operational substantive unit of memory, mental lexicon, conceptual system and language of the brain (*lingua mentalis*), the whole picture of the world reflected in the human psyche [5, p. 90]. S. Askoldov believes that a concept should be considered as a general concept that replaces for us in the process of thought an indefinite set of objects of the same kind [2, p. 269]. Yu. Stepanov considers a concept as the main cell of culture in the mental world of a person, a clot of culture in the consciousness of a person, it is not so much thought as experienced [7]. In our opinion, it is the last definition that most succinctly reflects the essence of the concept of “concept” as applied to the layer of vocabulary consisting of color names. In modern science, color has long been studied not only as a physical phenomenon, but also as a psychological, philosophical, and cultural category. It is noteworthy that the concept of “color” is not considered in linguistic dictionaries, that is, it is rightly not perceived as an element of the linguistic conceptual

apparatus. However, in linguacultural reference books, the concept of “color” is given special attention, since it contains historical, cultural, intellectual, and emotional information. If we consider the phenomenon of interest to us from a linguacultural perspective, then color is undoubtedly a concept, because it has an analogue in objective reality, influences the physical and psycho-emotional state of a person, contains resources for logical and sensory-figurative knowledge of the world, is an aesthetic and moral category and an element of myth, cult, and is realized in color designations, phrases, and idioms [2, p. 27].

The formation of the concept of a separately analyzed color is influenced by several factors: the frequency of use of the coloronym in speech; the sum of the main meanings that native speakers attach to a specific color name; and the presence or absence of figurative connotation. Each language is characterized by a different number of color concepts. The content of the concept with synonymous coloronyms or their structural variants will also be different. The common thing for color concepts of different linguistic pictures of the world will be their structure: a core with a center that forms the main name of the color, and a periphery (which is divided into near and far) with the entire palette of color variations of the base color. It is in the peripheral zone that those adjectives with color semantics are located that can be considered the most significant in displaying the linguistic picture of the world. For example, if the core of the concept “red color” is considered to be the word “red”, then the word form “krasnenky” will be placed in the near periphery and will differ from the main coloronym to a small degree in semantic terms. But the lexeme “kumachevy” should be placed in the far periphery and it will have a national-specific coloring, carrying specific historical and cultural information. The concept “color” plays a special role in artistic text. Here we are talking not so much about the color characteristics common to a certain ethnic group, but about the individual author’s perception of reality, which is embodied in the writer’s own artistic and figurative picture of the world - idiostyle. By using certain color names, the author of a work of art can convey the mood of the main characters, their emotions and feelings more deeply, designate a conflict, etc. Thus, color became a kind of leitmotif of Stendhal's work "The Red and the Black" and, of course, we are not talking about just color names, but about a concept with all the associative connections and connotative accretions characteristic primarily of the historical milestone described by the author, and therefore not always and not fully understandable to representatives of another ethnic group with a different historical and religious past. A. Wierzbicka asserts the following: despite the fact that color perception is the same for all groups of people, but linguistic conceptualization is different in different cultures, although there are striking elements of similarity [3, p. 238]. Thus, color perception is associated with certain "universal elements of human experience" that are conceptualized differently in different languages.

## CONCLUSION

S. Yesenin, E. M. Remarque, F. Fitzgerald and many other authors have their own color picture of the world, consisting of a certain set of color concepts, characteristic only of these creators. It is important to note here that each writer has a special semantic content of the concept of “color”, therefore, for example, the concept of “black color” will be individual for writers from



different countries and historical eras. It is indisputable that a comprehensive analysis of the writer's idiosyncrasy and the creation of a conceptual model of the author are impossible without a thorough study of the color concepts that appear in his work. Thus, taking into account all the above facts, we can draw the following conclusion: the concept of "color" is a component of the linguistic picture of the world, which is a complex multi-level formation that displays a voluminous semantic spectrum of shades and variants of the main color name, which is the core of the concept and represents the deep layers of the information base about this color, which presents distinctive national-specific features of the mentality of a certain ethnic group. In view of the prospects of this problem, in subsequent studies it is necessary to pay special attention to the analysis of factors influencing the formation of concepts of individual color nominations; identifying differences in the semantic fillings of the concept of the same color by different ethnic groups; the implementation of the concept of "color" in works of art. Our further scientific research will be aimed at an in-depth study of one of the above problems.

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