

LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF COLOR IN UZBEK AND ITALIAN FAIRY TALES

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Abstract

This article explores the linguocultural interpretation of the concept of color using examples from Uzbek and Italian fairy tales. Colors are analyzed not only as a means of aesthetic expression but also as conceptual units that reflect the mentality, customs, and values of different nations. A linguocultural analysis of the Uzbek fairy tale “*Zumrad and Qimmat*” and the Italian tale “*The Wolf and the Three Girls*” reveals intercultural similarities and differences in the perception of color.

Keywords: color concept, linguoculturology, fairy tale, oral folklore, semantics, metaphor

O‘zbek va italyan ertaklarida rang konseptining lingvokulturologik tahlili

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada rang konseptining lingvokulturologik talqini o‘zbek va italyan ertaklari misolida o‘rganiladi. Ranglar nafaqat estetik ifoda vositasi, balki har bir xalqning mentaliteti, urf-odatlarini va qadriyatlarini ifodalovchi konseptual birlik sifatida tahlil qilinadi. “*Zumrad va Qimmat*” (o‘zbek ertagi) va “*Il lupo e le tre ragazze*” (Bo‘ri va uch qiz) ertaklari asosida amalga oshirilgan lingvokulturologik tahlil rang tushunchasining madaniyatlararo o‘xshash va farqli jihatlarini ochib beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: rang konsepti, lingvokulturologiya, ertak, xalq og‘zaki ijodi, semantika, metafora

Лингвокультурологический анализ концепта цвета в узбекских и итальянских сказках

Аннотация

В данной статье исследуется лингвокультурологическая интерпретация концепта цвета на примере узбекских и итальянских сказок. Цвета анализируются не только как средство эстетического выражения, но и как концептуальная единица, отражающая менталитет, обычаи и ценности каждого народа. Лингвокультурологический анализ, проведенный на основе сказок «Зумрад и Киммат» (узбекская сказка) и «Волк и три девушки» (итальянская сказка), раскрывает межкультурные сходства и различия в понимании цвета.

Ключевые слова: концепт цвета, лингвокультурология, сказка, устное народное творчество, семантика, метафора.

INTRODUCTION

In modern linguistics, color terms are studied not merely as ordinary lexical units but as concepts closely intertwined with culture. Through colors, people perceive the world, express emotions, and shape aesthetic and moral standards. Therefore, the way color concepts are represented in folk tales requires special research at the intersection of linguistics and cultural studies. Fairy tales, as reflections of folk consciousness, convey national worldviews, social values, and aesthetic ideals through their use of color. In this regard, Uzbek and Italian fairy tales serve as valuable material for intercultural analysis.

The aim of this article is to identify the semantic and cultural diversity of color concepts in Uzbek and Italian fairy tales and to conduct a comparative analysis of their linguocultural features. While several studies in Uzbek linguistics have explored the semantics of colors and their roles in

phraseology and paremiology, in-depth analyses within the context of fairy tales from a linguocultural perspective remain relatively limited.

Traditional meanings of colors in Uzbek culture—such as red symbolizing weddings and celebrations, blue associated with mourning (and, in recent cultural developments, blue representing a male child and pink a female child), green standing for nature and hope, and black indicating danger or misfortune—have been studied to some extent. However, their specific functions in fairy tales and their comparison with the use of colors in Italian tales have not yet been fully explored.

In Italian linguistics and within the broader European context, there exists extensive research on the cultural and symbolic meanings of colors and their reflection in literature. In Italian fairy tales, colors often play a crucial role in depicting the traits of characters, the essence of events, and the dichotomy between good and evil.

MAIN PART

In linguoculturology, scholars who have studied the concept of color and worked on this topic can be divided into two main groups: those who have dealt with general linguoculturology and the concept of color, and those who have specifically explored the use of colors within Uzbek or Italian culture.

For instance, the renowned Russian linguist and linguoculturologist V.I. Karasik conducted fundamental research on the theory of concepts, cultural concepts, and their reflection in language. The concept of color features prominently in his studies. His monograph *"The Language Circle: Personality, Concepts, Discourse"* serves as one of the key sources on this topic. Another major scholar, N.I. Tolstoy, focused on the linguistic geography and ethnography of Slavic languages, paying close attention to the interconnection between language and culture. His works such as *"Language and Folk Culture"* and *"Slavic Antiquities: Ethnolinguistic Dictionary"* made a significant contribution to the development of linguoculturology.

Yu.A. Sorokin and I.Yu. Markovina are also recognized for their studies on the relationship between cultural stereotypes and language. They investigated the national and cultural characteristics of colors. B. Berlin and P. Kay, in their seminal work *"Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution"* (1969), explored the universal and culture-specific features of color terms in various languages. They proposed an evolutionary model of color terminology.

In Italian linguistics, several scholars have also studied the linguistic and cultural aspects of colors, often from the perspective of semantics, semiotics, and cultural studies. One such scholar is Umberto Eco, a renowned Italian semiotician. Although he did not focus directly on color concepts, his theoretical work in semiotics and culture is fundamentally important for understanding the symbolic meanings of colors.

Research on the semantics of colors in Italian is often found in academic journals of local universities and in doctoral dissertations. In Uzbek linguistics, there are also scholars who have explored the semantics and linguocultural aspects of color lexicon, though their work is typically presented in the form of monographs or dissertations. Among them, N. Mahmudov is considered one of the key scholars who studied the cultural-linguistic characteristics of the Uzbek language. His works are important for understanding the connection between language and culture. Sh. Abdullaeva has also conducted research on the linguocultural features of color-expressing units in the Uzbek language. Her work sheds light on the role of colors in Uzbek culture.

This article analyzes the linguocultural features in Italian and Uzbek fairy tales, with particular emphasis on the concept of color. As a case study, we focus on the Uzbek folk tale *"Zumrad and Qimmat"*. The central theme of the tale is the triumph of goodness and kindness, the reward of hard work, and the value of honesty. The tale contains numerous linguistic units reflecting national and cultural views, some of which will be analyzed in detail.

“My white daughter, my sweet girl! My little dumpling, my precious one!” — said the mother, stroking her daughter’s head with affection. These words were addressed to Qimmat by her mother, and the term *“white”* here (in Uzbek: *oppoq*) indicates an intensified form of the color white, symbolizing the girl’s innocence, purity, and beauty. In Uzbek culture, the color white often represents peace, happiness, new beginnings, purity, and cleanliness. For example, newborns are wrapped in white swaddles, and the deceased are washed and covered in white cloth before burial. Moreover, expressions such as *“raised with white milk”* emphasize the purity and sanctity of a mother’s nurturing.

“There is a white chest and a red chest on the roof. Leave the white one and bring down the red one!” — the woman said before disappearing into the forest. This sentence foreshadows the conclusion of the tale, where the differently colored chests symbolize rewards reflecting different personalities and behaviors. Interestingly, in this context, white does not denote a positive meaning but rather refers to the chest containing punishment or disappointment, granted for bad behavior. This suggests that in some contexts, white may carry negative connotations. Conversely, the red chest is portrayed as the reward for Zumrad’s politeness, diligence, and kind-heartedness, and thus the red color here has a positive value. In Uzbek, red can symbolize youth, courage, strength, shame, or even anger, depending on the context.

“After that, Zumrad and her kind-hearted father lived peacefully and fulfilled their dreams.” The phrase *“kind-hearted”* (*oq ko’ngil*) in Uzbek is used to describe someone with a pure heart and no ill intentions. This expression is culturally specific and cannot be replaced by another word or color. It represents a distinct element of Uzbek cultural worldview. Its antonym is not expressed as *“black-hearted”* (*qorako’ngil*), but rather commonly as *“ichi qora”* (“black inside”) in spoken Uzbek, indicating a malicious or spiteful person.

“The dark forest appeared even more frightening to her.” In this sentence, the forest being described as *“dark”* (*qora*) implies both the onset of night and a symbol of fear or danger. In Uzbek, black carries a wide range of meanings: it can denote mourning or sorrow, luxury and wealth among certain groups, or grief and misfortune, depending on the context. Its semantic field is rich and widely used in various discourses.

Turning to Italian linguistics, color symbolism plays a notable role in Italian culture as well. For instance, during *Natale* (Christmas), which is a major religious holiday in Italy, every family member traditionally wears or carries at least one red-colored item. Red decorations are also placed on the table. This color is considered a symbol of the holiday, believed to bring good fortune. Furthermore, red represents vitality, love, and power in Italian culture.

The color blue is commonly associated with calmness, trust, and loyalty. In the Italian fairy tale *“The Wolf and the Three Girls,”* color symbolism also appears prominently. The plot of this tale echoes the famous *Little Red Riding Hood* story. Upon hearing of their mother’s illness, the three sisters decide to travel to the town of Borgoforte to check on her. The eldest daughter bakes sweets and sets off, only to encounter a cunning wolf in the forest, who steals all her food. She returns home empty-handed. The second daughter meets the same fate. Only the youngest manages to trick the wolf and continue on her journey, but upon arrival, discovers the wolf has already devoured her mother.

In this tale, colors again serve as symbolic cues. Consider the following line:

“Arrivò la bambina, vide la mamma che faceva appena capolino dalle lenzuola, e le disse: — Come sei diventata nera, mamma.”

(The girl arrived and saw her mother’s face barely showing from under the covers and said, “Mother, how black you’ve become!”)

“Sono stati tutti i mali che ho avuto, bambina,” — disse il lupo.
(“It’s because of all the suffering I’ve endured, my child,” said the wolf.)

This exchange highlights how the child, not recognizing her mother, comments on her darkened appearance. The wolf attributes this to the suffering and hardship “she” (really he) has experienced. Here, black represents pain, illness, and perhaps even death — similar to how it is used metaphorically in Uzbek.

This clearly shows that in Italian, the color black is also used in meanings such as “dark days,” “grief,” and “sorrow.” In addition, black conveys meanings like “mysterious” and “unknown” (*mistero e ignoto*), as seen in the expression “*un futuro nero*”—which refers to an uncertain or threatening future. It is also associated with mourning and death (*lutto e morte*), as in the phrase “*vestirsi di nero*”—the traditional practice of wearing black to honor the deceased.

The color white, which is considered the opposite of black, holds positive connotations in Italian culture such as purity, cleanliness, light, and beginnings. For instance, the “white flag” (*bandiera bianca*) is a symbol of truce and peace. In religious and philosophical contexts, white is used to represent divinity and eternal truth.

As we can see, colors function as widely used components in both literary texts and spoken language. They are employed not only in their literal sense but also as expressive units. For example, in Uzbek, the idiom “*his face turned as white as milk (or flour)*” describes someone whose face turns pale due to fear or anxiety. The Italian equivalent is “*diventare bianco per la paura*” (“to turn white with fear”). Similarly, in Italian, the idiom “*diventare rosso come un pomodoro*” (“to turn as red as a tomato”) is widely used to describe a person blushing out of embarrassment or nervousness. In Uzbek, a similar concept is expressed with the idiom “*turned as red as a beet*” (*sholg‘omday qizarib ketdi*).

In Italian, the color green also carries specific meanings. It symbolizes nature and life, as in “*il verde dei campi*”—“the green of the fields,” representing natural landscapes and fertility. Green also connotes hope, as in the widely used saying “*La speranza è verde*”—“hope is green,” which is common in Italian culture. Furthermore, it can refer to youth and inexperience, as in “*un ragazzo ancora verde*”—“a boy still green,” meaning young and lacking experience.

To conclude, colors serve as important linguistic tools to express human emotions and internal states, as well as to describe objects and events. Although Uzbek and Italian belong to distinct language families, both make rich use of words at an artistic level. This article has explored the concept of color in Uzbek and Italian fairy tales from a linguocultural perspective.

The findings of the study demonstrate that colors are not only aesthetic or descriptive elements, but also essential linguistic units expressing deep symbolic meanings within language and culture. In both Uzbek and Italian cultures, colors have specific meanings and contextual uses that reflect national worldviews and cultural stereotypes.

The linguocultural aspects analyzed in this article reveal that colors represent a unique link between language and culture and play a significant role in expressing culture through language. The lexical items related to color in Uzbek and Italian, as well as the differences in their use, are crucial for understanding the cultural context embedded in each language.

Moreover, this article shows that analyzing the concept of color in the context of folk tales offers a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between language and culture. This research may serve as a foundation for further linguocultural studies on color symbolism in the future.

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