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CULTURAL CODE OF COLOR TERMS IN CHINESE AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article presents the research of the semantics of units denoting three basic colors - red, white, yellow. The choice of these colors as an object of study was reasoned by the fact that it is possible to trace the universal principles of nomination in languages of different origin and structure on the material of basic colors. It was significant to identify the similarities and differences in the semantics of color terms in multi-structured languages and to explain the semantic fullness of color codes in Chinese and Russian.

The study focused on color codes in Chinese and Russian linguo-cultures. The objectives of the analysis are to identify the area of coincidence of color semantics in Chinese and Russian languages; to explain the misalignment of the color code in indicated languages, which is implied by cultural reasons and the lexical-grammatical structure of Chinese and Russian languages.

The study was conducted on the material of color-nominating vocabulary and phraseological units, which include color terms in Chinese and Russian languages. It was important for the authors to trace the presence of color terms in two investigated linguo-cultures, which is the most semantically, cognitively, axiologically extensive, and color terms, which demonstrate a smaller semantic extent. In addition, red color is abstract in origin in the languages of the Indo-European family, and yellow color is of subject origin. In the isolating Chinese language, primary colors reveal a greater subject correlation than in Russian language.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, a comparative consideration of the linguistic picture of the world of two or several peoples is undoubtedly a relevant interdisciplinary study. Comparative study of color terms on the material of multi-structural and unrelated Russian and Chinese languages is of particular interest. The scientific significance of this study is determined by the following reasons: 1) the representation in the studied languages of units nominating a color, on the one hand; 2) metaphorical use of color terms, on the other hand. Metaphorical nomination on the basis of color designations is an integral feature of most languages of the world, which, apparently, is explained by the physiological characteristics of a person, i.e. his ability to see the world in color.

2. Problem Statement

Cognitive semantics does not remain unchanged, since the process of cognition necessitates the development of conceptual content. "The universality of mental processes leads to the appearance of similar symbolic meanings in differently structured languages." (Krasina & Perfilieva, 2018).

3. Research Questions

The object of the study is the units that nominate color in compared Chinese and Russian languages, namely, red and yellow. The subject of the research is presented by similar and cultural specific color terms in Chinese and Russian languages. Similar meanings, according to the authors of the article, are explained by universal cognitive processes.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to trace the coincidence of the initial meanings of units denoting colors in Chinese and Russian languages, as well as to identify similarities and differences in the metaphorical understanding of the world with the help of vocabulary nominating color. The hypothesis of the research is the assumption that the greatest similarity in Russian and Chinese is achieved in vocabulary in the original meanings of units nominating color, which according to the authors, is explained by the universality of cognition and the biological properties of a person.

5. Research Methods

The main method used by the authors is a method of contrastive analysis of language material, the choice of which was determined by the purpose of the study.

6. Findings

6.1. Direct and metaphorical nomination of yellow and red colors

Red and yellow colors chosen for the contrasting description belong to the group of primary colors along with white, black, blue, green and brown. B. Berlin and P. Kay (Berlin & Kay, 1969) proved the universal nature of the division of color vocabulary into primary and minor colors, and the presence of lexemes nominating them in most known languages.

Metaphorical nomination on the basis of color terms is an integral feature of each language, thus, Amosova (2015) says that "colors play a big role in the formation of linguistic picture of the world, since with each color in different linguistic and cultural communities there are certain associations and color preferences".

Red color in Chinese language is represented by a set of 47 hieroglyphic characters. Let us represent in more detail some meanings of red:

1. 赤 scarlet, red color – цвет огня. The hieroglyph belongs to the hieroglyphs of the ideographic category and consists of two parts – 人 a man and 火 fire.

2. 丹 red, red paint, red iron. Hieroglyph refers to the iconic hieroglyphs and consists of two parts. – 井 a well and 一 the horizontal line in the hieroglyphic sign denotes red paint in ancient China.

3. 彤 bright red, crimson. The hieroglyph belongs to the hieroglyphs of the ideographic category and consists of two parts – 丹 red paint and 彡 woolen decoration, i.e. denotes a red woolen decoration.

4. 蜜红色 red, the color of honey, the first hieroglyph means honey, the second - red, the third - the color.

5. 酒糟红 red as the color of the sediment in wine, the first two hieroglyphs indicate the wine sediment, the third - red.

6. 宝石红 ruby-red, the first two hieroglyphs designate a precious gem, the third - red.

7. 茶红色 red is the color of red tea, the first hieroglyph is tea, the second is red, and the third is color.

8. 玛瑙色 the color of agate, the first two hieroglyphs denote agate, and the third - color.

9. 鸡血红 the color of chicken blood, the first two hieroglyphs indicate the blood of chicken, and the third - red.

10. 樱桃红 the color of cherry, the first two hieroglyphs denote cherry, and the third is red.

11. 洋红 carmine, the first hieroglyph denotes a country abroad; the second hieroglyph is red.

12. 荷红 the first hieroglyph means lotus; the second is red;

13. 檀红色 the color of sandalwood, the first hieroglyph denotes sandalwood; the second is red, the third is color.

14. 桃红色 peach color, the first denotes a peach; the second is red, the third is color.

15. 水红 dark pink color, the first hieroglyph denotes water, the second - red.

16. 玫瑰红 the color of rose, the first two hieroglyphs denote roses, the second - red.

17. 血红 blood red, scarlet; crimson, purple, the first character means blood, the second - red

18. 杜鹃花红 azalea color, the first three characters mean azalea flowers, and the last means red

19. 椒红色 the color of red pepper, the first hieroglyph is pepper, the second is red, and the third is color

20. 红漆色 the color of red paint, the first character - red, the second - the paint, the third - the color

21. 红珊瑚色 the color of red coral, the first three hieroglyphs - red coral, the last - color

22. 枣红色 brown-red, dark red, date-red; the first character means Chinese date, the second - red, the third - color.

23. 砖红色 brick color, color of brick, the first hieroglyph means red brick, the second - red, the third - color.

24. 酱油色 color of soy sauce; the first two hieroglyphs mean soy sauce, the third - color

25. 酱色 dark brown, the first hieroglyph means table soy sauce, the second - color

26. 猩红 the color is like a macaque, purple-red, the first hieroglyph means a macaque, and the second is red

27. 胭脂红 the color of blush, the first two characters mean blush; carmine, the third - red

Thus, out of 47 hieroglyphic signs denoting red and its shades, more than 30 hieroglyphic signs convey the meaning of red with the help of color schemes of objects that have certain shades of red, such as the color of fire or the color of chicken blood. The original meaning of red in Chinese language is the color of fire, i.e. the meaning of red in Chinese language has a subject correlation in contrast to Russian language. It is known that in Indo-European languages red, black and white colors are considered abstract by origin.

Note the perception of red in Chinese linguistic culture. For example, a light red color can be conveyed by a combination of the following characters:

淡红 light red color, the first hieroglyph designates weak, liquid; thin; easy, the second hieroglyph is red;

妃红 light red color, the first hieroglyph denotes the imperial concubine, the second hieroglyph - red;

浅红 light red color, the first hieroglyph denotes light, pale, light-, pale- (in front of the color name), and the second hieroglyph - red;

嫩红 light red color, the first hieroglyph designates gentle, light (about color), the second hieroglyph - red

娇红 light red color, the first hieroglyph denotes evanescent (fragile, painful); weak; delicate, subtle; the thin, second hieroglyph is red.

For Chinese language, the transmission of a visual image of a light shade of red is possible with the help of names denoting the physical condition of an object - evanescence, fragile, weak, liquid, thin, etc., which is not acceptable for Russian language. This meaning is expressed in Russian using models of *gentle* plus color and *light* plus color.

The peculiarity of color transmission using the objects of the world in Chinese language is a feature of the simulation system of the world of native Chinese speaker.

6.2. Concept of cultural code

The concept of cultural code was introduced by U. Eco, who described cultural code as a kind of algorithm that allows decoding texts in foreign languages. A cultural code is a way to decipher the cultural unconscious, which is hidden from understanding; it is a certain type of culture in which features and unique social information are encoded.

U. Eco identifies the following types of cultural codes: 1) etiquette; 2) world modeling systems, including myths, legends, theological systems that create a single picture that reflects the global vision of the world from the point of view of a community; 3) models of social organization of society (Eco, 2004).

Languages as a semiotic system that stores and transmits information and is closely interconnected with culture, cultural codes are revealed in various types of proverbs, in etiquette vocabulary, etc. A cultural code, according to Flier (2000) has the following characteristics:

1) self-sufficiency for the production, transmission and preservation of human culture;

2) openness to change;

3) versatility

Cultural codes are found in ideological, national, gender, class traditions and stereotypes that have been formed in a person since childhood.

In the article, the authors analyze the semantics of color terms in multi-structural languages, as well as individual Russian and Chinese cultural components, which are coded in nominations with units of color. It is known that the code is an algorithm for interpreting specific messages that can be read differently depending on the degree of decoding. Cultural codes are transformed, but they are always based on language structures in which knowledge is accumulated, based on perceptual experience gained as a result of sensory and visual perception, transmitted from generation to generation. B. Berlin and P. Kay discovered the universal evolutionary law for the development of color terms in languages. However, even in the languages of one Indo-European family, there are significant misalignments in the color meaning (Rakhilina, 2007). For example, the meanings of color terms in languages do not coincide, for example, in English language; "blue" is frightened; depressed, sad; in Russian language blue means drunkenness. That is why the researchers emphasize that "an analysis of culture can acquire new ideas from linguistics, in particular, from linguistic semantics" (Vezhbitskaya, 1999). Color designation, like every word, is imbued with "a multitude of fluid, changing ideological meanings" that condition reinforces various sociocultural ideas and a system of "value-semantic relation to reality" (Barthes, 2007).

B. Berlin and P. Kay identify several stages in the development of color terminology and emphasize the strict sequence of the appearance of each color designation. In the first stage (1), there are two basic color terms in the languages nominating white and black. At the next stage (2), a lexical unit denoting red is added to two colors, as noted by researchers, who consider the triad white-black-red to be universal and primary. Most of the terms of color have an objective origin, with the exception of black, white and red names: they were originally abstract (Shemyakin, 1960; Turner, 1983). In the following stages (2–5), one word out of three is added each time — blue, green, yellow. The seventh word (6) is always brown, and the highest stage (7) is characterized by the appearance of four at once - pink, orange, purple and gray. The following statement agrees with this result: "Many sources convincingly show the primacy of the binary opposition of white and black: human life was initially regulated by two factors - daylight and night

darkness. Light was associated with active life and sun heat, and the darkness of night - with passivity, cold and mystery. Hence, a complex of positive meanings of white, whiteness, light and negative — black, darkness, dark — is stable for most cultures" (Vasilevich, 1987).

The study of the problem of cultural codes and color terms showed that the category of color is determined simultaneously by the objective material world, the characteristics of human physiology, its cognitive functions and cultural factors (Lakoff, 2005).

Color codes allow revealing the features of the functioning of the linguistic consciousness of representatives of different linguistic cultures, who are usually not understood by native speakers and are not detected by other methods of research. It is necessary to consider these aspects in more details.

6.3. Cultural code of color in the simulation of the world

The greater misalignments are found in languages belonging to different language families, in particular, in Chinese and Russian languages. The authors provide an example, so in modern Chinese there are 20 symbols of white color and its shades. It is important to note that in Chinese, the combination of hieroglyphs is structurally consistent with a single word.

White:

1. 涅白 milky white;

2. 莹白 brilliant; light, white, transparent; glossy;

3. 雪花白 snow color;

4. 皎皎 sparkling, brilliant, clear;

5. 刷白 pale (e.g. about face);

6. 精白 clean; selective;

7. 洁白 white, clean;

8. 粹白 snow white;

9. 纯白 snow white;

10. 白皑皑 pure, snow-white, dazzling white;

11. 珍珠白 pearl color;

12. 银白 silvery white [color];

13. 白金色 the color of white gold;

14. 皎洁 clean, clear, bright;

15. 白亮 dazzling white, bright, brilliant;

16. 盐白色 salt color;

17. 白玉色 the color of white jade;

18. 霜白 snow white; gray-haired

19. 乳白 milky white, milky;

20. 白茫茫 – unlimited white (about white spaces); whitish (about clouds, snow, fog, etc.)

(Perfilieva, Novospasskaya, & Arsenyeva, 2017).

Some of the listed shades of white also exist in Russian language, but these nominations are often not equal to the word and the meanings of white are transmitted descriptively, for example, a white + *milky-white shade* or a comparison with the subject with word combinations. In Russian there are lexemes that contain the seme of white color: *snow-white, whitish, poor,* etc.

Non-primary colors in Chinese language represent an even more extensive nominations paradigm.

6.4. Metaphorical understanding of color terms in Chinese and Russian languages

The greater misalignments are observed in metaphorical or metonymic translations.

In the emotive use of color terms, Chinese and Russian languages show similarities, which is explained, apparently, by the physiological nature of emotions, since basic emotions themselves are universal, for example:

The coincidence in the Russian and Chinese linguo-cultures: *turn red with joy, turn red with anger, turn green with surprise;*

In Chinese language: *turn yellow with anger, turn white with sadness, and turn white with surprise, turn blue with joy.*

Thus, the very transmission of emotions through color is a universal feature in the studied languages but the color distribution is often not the same.

6.4.1. Phraseological units with component of color terms

Chinese phraseological units often use color terms in a metaphorical form. They are formed by historical allusions, may have a poetic origin or be associated with the mythological foundations of ancient Chinese culture. Color terms, being an integral part of a phraseological unit, cover all the aspects of life, the typology proposed below is based on a formal sign - the presence and quantity of hieroglyphs in color phraseological units.

1. 红杏出墙:

红杏 red apricot, 出墙 to go out of the walls, literally red apricot sprouted through the wall, the metaphorical meaning is betrayal by a woman to her husband;

2. 红颜薄命:

红颜 red face, 薄命 unfortunate fate, grave fate, the meaning of a phraseological unit: beautiful women suffer from an unfortunate fate;

3. 红装素裹:

红装 red clothes, 素裹 white surroundings, the meaning of a phraseological unit: an elegantly dressed woman.

4. 面红耳赤:

面红 red face, 耳赤 red years, meaning of idiom: to get red to hair roots; turn purple-red; flush red with paint, blush red to the ears, flush. Excited state due to agitation or shame;

5. 披红挂彩:

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披红 wear red, the meaning of a phraseological unit: congratulations or joy.

6. 飞黄腾达:

飞 fly, 黄 yellow, 腾 fly, 达 career, Fenghuang (legendary horse), meaning idiom: make a fast-moving career; quickly go up the hill; get an important position, succeed, quickly climb the corporate ladder; go uphill fast;

7. 黄袍加身:

黄袍 yellow robe, 加身 to dress, put on a yellow robe, the meaning of a phraseological unit: proclaim the emperor; become emperor; to win, to win the first; prize to take the throne; come to power;

8. 明日黄花:

明日 tomorrow, 黄ђ花 yellow flower, thing that survived its time; chrysanthemums the next day; the meaning of a phraseological unit: a relic of the past; relive yourself;

6.4.2. Phraseological units with two hieroglyphic color-coded hieroglyphs

9. 唇红齿白:

唇红 beautiful lips, 齿白 white teeth, the meaning of the idiom: beautiful face, beautiful appearance;

10. 白发红颜 :

白发 white hair, 红颜 red face, despite the fact that elderly people have white hair, their faces are still ruddy, the meaning of a phraseological unit: they are vigorous, look younger; look good;

11. 万紫千红:

万 ten thousand, 紫 violet, 千 thousand, 红 red, the meaning of the idiom: multicolor, multicolored, colorful, bloom with all colors; sea of colors and paints, variety of colors and shades;

12. 红男绿女:

红 red', 男 a man, 绿 green, 女 a woman, the meaning of a phraseological unit: a group of smart men and women; boys and girls. The history of this idiom is related to the tradition in China: in ancient times a man who was an official wore red clothes, which indicated his status. The woman had to wear green clothes on the way out, it was considered as a sign of grooming and beauty;

13. 灯红酒绿:

灯红 red faces, 酒绿 green alcoholics, the meaning of the idiom: night party. Later it was used to describe the luxurious, indecent life.

14. 七青八黄:

七 seven, 青 blue, 八 eight, 黄 yellow, the meaning of a phraseological unit: 1) gold, 2) money, 3) property;

15. 白纸黑字:

白纸 white paper, 黑字 black hieroglyph, the meaning of a phraseological unit: quite obvious, clearly, black and white;

16. 黑白不分:

黑 black, 白 white, 不分 do not distinguish, the meaning of the idiom: do not understand the obvious things;

17. 脱白挂绿:

脱白 to take off white clothes, 挂绿 to put on green clothes, the meaning of the idiom: career growth at the beginning of life, the first promotion.

18. 近朱者赤:

近 near, 朱 cinnabar (red paint in Ancient China), 者 a man, 赤 red, a person who is near a cinnabar, the meaning of a phraseological unit: being close to good people can make people better; The environment has a big impact on people.

6.4.3. Phraseological units with multiple colors

19. 不分青红皂白:

不分 do not distinguish, 青 blue, 红 red, 皂 black, 白 white, do not distinguish white from black; the meaning of the idiom: do not understand what is what; do not understand who is right and who is wrong; do not delve into the essence of the matter.

In Russian language, the meaning of this idiom is transmitted through two colors: black and white: *not to distinguish white from black.*

The analysis of the material convincingly proves that Chinese language demonstrates archaic forms of modeling the world, in which color was characterized indirectly through the indication of the color of objects or objects of nature, for example, white as nephrite, because it is white. It should be noted that stones are of great symbolic importance to Chinese culture; therefore it is not by chance that mineral names are present in all color categories. For example, a rich red color is transmitted through the name of a gemstone ruby, and a calmer darker shade of red is indicated by a semi-precious mineral - agate, a pale shade of red color is transmitted through a correspondingly colored stone - coral.

Also the frequent hieroglyph denoting color is the hieroglyph of *blood*: the blood of chicken conveys a dark red, a bluish tinge of red; the saturated blood-red shade of red is transmitted without additional hieroglyphs, only with the help of a combination of hieroglyphs red and blood.

Subsequently, special abstract words appear to indicate color. In this function, adjectives appear in Russian, English and French: белый / white / blanc, черный / black / noir, красный / red / rouge. Then the words that perform the function of naming colors, derived from the relevant items appeared: as a salad — green as a salad — lettuce. Extremely often, "it took from 100 to 500 years between the appearance of the name of the object in the language and the use of this name as the basis for naming colors" (Vasilevich, 1987).

The analysis of the data also confirms the universality of the phenomenon of lexical synesthesia, which according to the authors is reasoned by its psychophysiological basis, which affects the formation of synesthetic images and is universal, that is, peculiar to all people, regardless of the language they speak.

7. Conclusion

Encoded cultural information can be correctly decoded only within the framework of semiotic systems of languages. Color terms are relevant for the investigation in modern studies, as they are, on the one hand, universal phenomena, therefore language facts using colors are widely represented in languages of different structures for the nomination of various objects and phenomena, and, on the other hand, the peculiar perception of the world and surrounding reality found its expression by means of color terms as one of the ancient layers of the vocabulary of all languages.

The interpretation of symbolic cultural codes is impossible without the correct interpretation of units that nominate colors. The color code allows penetrating the meaning of cultural phenomena and objects that contain units of color terms in their nomination. Thus, Chinese language demonstrates the archaic forms of modeling the world, in which color is characterized indirectly through the indication of an object or object of nature of corresponding color.

Russian language demonstrates a shift away from the transmission of color through an object or phenomenon of the surrounding world of a certain coloristic. Thus, in the lexemes of red, white and other color terms of Russian language there are no objects or phenomena directly indicating the color, however, the authors note that in the Russian lexeme yellow initially contained a substantive meaning, namely *bile*. The speakers of the modern Russian language quite easily restore this objective correlation.

Thus, the study of vocabulary, nominating color, is an important direction of cognitive linguistics and allows submitting features of the linguistic pictures of the world of studied languages.

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