

THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF COLOR TERMS AND ITS HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE

Yusupova Nafisa Komiljon qizi

A second-year master's student at Fergana State University

Abstract: Color terms occupy a significant place in human cognition, culture, and language. They function not only as indicators of visual perception but also as carriers of symbolic, emotional, and cultural meanings. This article analyzes the semantic field and hierarchical structure of color terms in the Uzbek language from cognitive and linguosynergetic perspectives. The study examines the classification of basic and secondary color names, their semantic development, metaphorical meanings, and cultural symbolism. The research also highlights the role of attractors, bifurcation, and emergence in the evolution of color semantics. The findings demonstrate that color terms represent an open and dynamic lexical-semantic system closely connected with national worldview and cultural consciousness.

Keywords: color terms, semantic field, linguosynergetics, cognitive linguistics, hierarchy, metaphor, Uzbek language, color symbolism, attractor, bifurcation.

Introduction. It is difficult to imagine any sphere of human life without the phenomenon of color. In everyday communication, expressions such as “colorful life,” “black day,” “green light,” and “white heart” illustrate that colors possess not only visual but also semantic and cognitive significance. Therefore, color terms have become one of the most actively studied phenomena in modern linguistics.

In world linguistics, the term coloronym is widely used to denote color names. This term derives from the Latin word color and the Greek word onyma meaning “name.” Another related term, chromatonym, has also been introduced into scientific discourse. In Uzbek linguistics, however, the concept is generally expressed through the phrase “color names” or “color terms.”

The scientific study of color terminology intensified during the twentieth century. One of the most influential theories belongs to Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, who proposed the universality theory of basic color terms. According to their theory, languages develop color terminology in a certain evolutionary sequence. Their research demonstrated that color categorization reflects universal cognitive mechanisms shared by humanity.

Color as a phenomenon is investigated at the intersection of several disciplines, including physiology, psychology, ethnology, cultural studies, and linguistics. In linguistics, color terms are regarded as a complex lexical-semantic system reflecting the interaction between language, thought, and culture.

Semantic Nature of Color Terms

Color terms form specific visual and emotional associations in human consciousness. For example, the word “red” is often associated with blood, fire, passion, danger, and revolution, whereas “white” symbolizes purity, peace, and light. Consequently, color names function not merely as indicators of physical properties but also as carriers of symbolic meanings.

Psycholinguistic studies show that color perception is based on individual experience and long-term visual cognition. Therefore, the same object may be perceived differently by different individuals. This phenomenon can clearly be observed in art, where painters depict the same



reality through different color combinations and emotional interpretations.

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, George Lakoff emphasizes that color categories are not entirely subjective phenomena. Instead, they are conceptual categories shaped by human experience and interaction with objective reality. Thus, color terms reflect the mechanisms by which humans categorize and interpret the surrounding world.

Linguosynergetic Features of Color Terms

In Uzbek linguistics, color terms are considered an open and dynamic system from the standpoint of linguosynergetics. Linguosynergetics studies language as a self-organizing system developing between chaos and order. The foundations of this theory were established by Hermann Haken and Ilya Prigogine, who introduced such concepts as attractor, bifurcation, and emergence. These principles can also be observed in the semantic development of color terms. Basic color names serve as semantic attractors around which additional meanings and associative layers emerge. Under the influence of social, cultural, and cognitive factors, color terms gradually develop metaphorical and symbolic meanings.

The linguosynergetic interpretation of color semantics includes the following processes:

Attractor – the stable central meaning of a color term;

Bifurcation – semantic branching and development of new meanings;

Emergence – the appearance of new metaphorical and conceptual properties. For example, the Uzbek color term ko'k originally referred to the sky but later acquired meanings connected with green vegetation, blue shades, and even grayish tones. This semantic diversification represents a vivid example of bifurcation in lexical development.

Hierarchical Structure of the Semantic Field of Color Terms

The semantic field of Uzbek color terms possesses a hierarchical structure consisting of several interconnected levels.

1. Basic Color Terms as Universal Attractors

According to Berlin and Kay's classification, Uzbek belongs to the seventh stage of color-term development and possesses eleven basic color terms.

Black (Qora)

The term qora originates from the Proto-Turkic root qara. It symbolizes darkness, sorrow, evil, and mourning. However, in some contexts it may also represent power and strength. Expressions such as "black day" and "black force" illustrate its negative connotations.

White (Oq)

The color oq represents purity, peace, honesty, and light. In some ritual contexts, however, it may also symbolize mourning. Phrases like "white road" and "white heart" demonstrate its positive semantic orientation.

Red (Qizil)



The term qizil is associated with blood, fire, passion, love, danger, and revolution. During the Soviet period, red also acquired political symbolism. Consequently, this color possesses one of the richest metaphorical structures in Uzbek semantics.

Green (Yashil)

Green symbolizes life, nature, youth, and fertility. In Islamic culture, it is considered a sacred color associated with spirituality and paradise. Expressions such as “green world” and “green light” reflect its positive semantic load.

Yellow (Sariq)

The color yellow demonstrates semantic duality. On the one hand, it symbolizes gold, sunlight, and wealth; on the other hand, it may denote illness, betrayal, or separation.

Blue (Ko‘k)

The Uzbek term ko‘k is one of the most semantically complex color names. It may refer to blue, green, or even gray shades depending on context. This phenomenon reflects the ancient Turkic “grue” category, where blue and green were conceptualized as a single semantic field.

Secondary and Derived Color Terms

The next level of the semantic hierarchy consists of derived and compound color names formed through associative and metaphorical nomination.

Among them are:

moviy (light blue),

zangori (azure),

pushti (pink),

kulrang (gray),

jigarrang (brown),

nilrang (indigo-colored),

firuzarang (turquoise),

aslang (honey-colored). These terms are often derived from natural objects, minerals, plants, or materials. Semantic bifurcation is especially active at this stage because the primary meaning of a color expands into new associative domains. Borrowings from Persian and Arabic languages, such as gulrang, gulnor, and shafaq, have also enriched the Uzbek color vocabulary and broadened its semantic field.

Metaphorical and Phraseological Layer

The highest level of the semantic hierarchy is represented by metaphorical and phraseological meanings. At this stage, color terms become linguocultural concepts reflecting collective worldview and national mentality.

Examples include:



- “white heart” — sincerity and purity;
“black day” — sorrow and hardship;
“red flower” — love and beauty;
“green light” — permission or freedom;
“raise to the sky” — excessive praise.

In Turkic mythology, the concept of “Blue Sky God” (Ko‘k Tangri) symbolized divine power and celestial eternity. In Islamic culture, green became associated with holiness and paradise, while during the Soviet period red symbolized revolutionary ideology. Phraseological units containing color terms preserve historical memory, cultural traditions, and social values. Therefore, color terms represent an important source for linguocultural and cognitive analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the semantic field of color terms in the Uzbek language represents a complex hierarchical system closely connected with cognition, culture, and national worldview. Color terms function not only as lexical indicators of visual perception but also as symbolic and conceptual categories reflecting historical and cultural experience.

From the linguosynergetic perspective, color terminology constitutes an open and self-organizing system. Basic color terms serve as semantic attractors, while derived and metaphorical meanings emerge through processes of bifurcation and semantic expansion. The study of color terms from cognitive, linguocultural, and linguosynergetic perspectives contributes significantly to modern Uzbek linguistics and deepens our understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and culture.

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