

Cultural and emotional meanings of color in English and Uzbek: a comparative study

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Abstract: Colors are not only visual elements but also carry cultural and emotional meanings in language. This article compares the meanings of common color terms in English and Uzbek, analyzing dictionaries, idioms, proverbs, and literary sources. The study introduces a Color Meaning Matrix that categorizes emotional, cultural, and idiomatic meanings for each color in both languages. The analysis shows both similarities and differences, highlighting the influence of culture on language and the importance of context in translation. The matrix provides a practical tool for educators, translators, and language learners, contributing to both linguistic research and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: color meanings, cultural symbolism, emotional associations, idioms, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics, Color Meaning Matrix

Introduction

Color is not only a visual phenomenon but also a part of human language and culture. Every society gives special meanings to colors, which are reflected in language, traditions, and daily life. In English, colors are used not only to describe objects but also to express feelings, emotions, and social ideas. For example, the word “*red*” can show love, anger, or danger, while “*blue*” often represents sadness or calm.

Similarly, in Uzbek culture, colors carry specific cultural and emotional meanings. The color green (“*yashil*”) is often associated with nature and spiritual growth, while white (“*oq*”) represents purity and peace. However, the emotional or symbolic meanings of colors can differ between English and Uzbek. Understanding these differences is important for translators, language learners, and anyone interested in cross-cultural communication.

This article aims to explore how colors carry emotional and cultural meanings in English and Uzbek, to compare similarities and differences, and to show how language reflects culture. The study focuses on key color terms, their idiomatic uses, and cultural symbolism in both languages.

In recent years, many linguists have paid attention to the study of color terms and their cultural meanings in language. Research shows that color words are not only lexical units but also carry cultural, emotional, and cognitive information. For example, Umarqulova’s study examines *phraseological units expressing color* in English and

Uzbek, highlighting how both languages embed cultural connotations in expressions containing color terms. The author shows that colors in idioms reflect national thinking and cultural perception of the world.

Another significant contribution was made by Khakimova, who conducted a *conceptual analysis of idioms with color components* in English and Uzbek. Her research demonstrates that color idioms help shape the national worldview and cultural archetypes, revealing how languages use colors metaphorically to convey collective meanings.

Mamaniyazova and her colleagues extended the discussion by exploring *color-related proverbs* in English, Kazakh, and Uzbek languages. Their work highlights that proverbs contain color symbols that communicate moral values and cultural experience, showing both similarities and differences across languages.

Similarly, comparative studies of color-based proverbs emphasize how cultural characteristics influence the use of colors in traditional sayings, demonstrating that English proverbs often utilize flexible context-driven symbolism, while Uzbek proverbs tend to reflect deeply rooted cultural associations.

In addition, semasiological analysis of color terms in Uzbek and English shows that cultural worldview and traditional symbolism shape the semantic values of colors in both languages, contributing to cross-linguistic understanding and language teaching.

Finally, research on *interpretation of color symbols in Uzbek folk proverbs* reveals that colors convey emotional and cultural meanings based on historical beliefs and collective memory. This highlights the depth of cultural knowledge embedded in simple words for color.

In this study, a comparative approach was used to analyze the cultural and emotional meanings of color in English and Uzbek. First, a list of the most common color terms in English was selected, including red, blue, green, yellow, black, and white. The Uzbek equivalents of these colors were identified: *qizil, ko'k, yashil, sariq, qora, oq*.

Second, sources of data were collected. These included English dictionaries, phrasebooks, proverbs, idioms, and literature, as well as Uzbek dictionaries, folk proverbs, and contemporary texts. The study focused on how colors are used in daily speech, literature, and cultural expressions.

Third, a semantic and cultural analysis was carried out. For each color, its basic meaning, emotional associations, and cultural symbolism were described. For example, the word *red* in English can symbolize love, anger, or danger, while in Uzbek, *qizil* is often associated with happiness, life, and festivity. The meanings were compared to identify similarities and differences.

Finally, the results were categorized into three main aspects:

Emotional meaning - how colors express feelings or moods.

Cultural meaning - what colors represent in traditions and society.

Idiomatic and figurative use - how colors appear in sayings, proverbs, and metaphors.

This method allows a clear comparison between English and Uzbek, showing both universal tendencies in color symbolism and language-specific differences. The approach is qualitative, focusing on understanding meanings rather than numerical measurement, which is typical for linguistic and cultural studies.

The analysis of color meanings in English and Uzbek shows both similarities and differences in how colors are perceived and used. For example, white in English often represents purity, peace, or sometimes emptiness, while in Uzbek (*oq*), it symbolizes purity, celebration, and sacredness. Red in English can indicate love, danger, or anger, while in Uzbek (*qizil*), it is strongly associated with happiness, festivity, and positive energy.

To make these observations more systematic, we proposed a Color Meaning Matrix, which categorizes each color according to three aspects:

Emotional associations - the feelings that colors evoke.

Cultural symbolism - how society and traditions interpret the color.

Idiomatic usage - how colors appear in idioms, proverbs, or expressions.

This simple model allows researchers, language learners, and translators to understand the overlap and divergence of color meanings between the two languages. It can also help predict possible misunderstandings in translation or cross-cultural communication.

Our approach contributes to the field by combining linguistic analysis with a clear, visual comparison tool. Previous studies mainly described color meanings individually in each language, but this matrix provides a structured method to compare and apply the results practically. It can be extended to other languages and even adapted for educational purposes in schools, making the study more applicable and innovative.

After analyzing the data and filling in the Color Meaning Matrix, several important patterns became clear. First, some colors have similar meanings in English and Uzbek, while others are quite different. For example, white is generally associated with purity in both languages, but in Uzbek culture, it also has strong links to celebration and sacred rituals, which is less common in English. This shows that even if a color has a universal meaning, cultural context changes its emotional or symbolic use.

Second, the analysis showed that red is very interesting. In English, it often signals strong emotions like love or danger, but in Uzbek, *qizil* is mostly connected with happiness, joy, and positive events. This difference is very important for translation, because a direct translation of an idiom or expression might confuse people who don't

know the culture. For example, an English phrase like "*seeing red*" means anger, but if translated literally into Uzbek without explanation, it may not make sense.

Third, blue / ko'k was also notable. In English, it is often linked to sadness (*feeling blue*), while in Uzbek, ko'k mainly reflects calm, sky, or water. This shows that emotional associations of colors can be language-specific, and learning these associations is useful for understanding literature, proverbs, and everyday speech.

Finally, our study also suggested a simple model that can be applied to other languages. By using the matrix, we can visually compare emotional, cultural, and idiomatic meanings of colors. This is useful not only for linguists but also for students, teachers, and translators. It gives a practical tool to understand and teach color meanings, which has not been systematically done in previous studies.

Overall, what was most noticeable is that language and culture are deeply connected in color perception. Colors are not just words; they carry feelings, cultural values, and social messages. Using this matrix, we can clearly see where English and Uzbek are similar, where they differ, and why these differences matter in communication.

Conclusion

This study examined the cultural and emotional meanings of color in English and Uzbek, using a comparative approach and a Color Meaning Matrix. By analyzing dictionaries, idioms, proverbs, and literary sources, the research revealed both similarities and differences between the two languages. Colors like white show universal meanings, such as purity, but in Uzbek culture, they also have strong connections to celebration and sacredness. Meanwhile, red demonstrates significant cultural variation: English associates it with love or danger, while Uzbek emphasizes happiness and joy.

Through the analysis, it became clear that many previous studies have described color meanings individually, without comparing languages systematically. For example, the works of Umarqulova and Khakimova provide valuable insights into idioms and proverbs, but they often focus on a single language or type of expression. This study addresses that gap by using the matrix, which organizes emotional, cultural, and idiomatic meanings side by side, allowing for a clearer comparison and practical application.

Another observation is that English tends to use colors in figurative and metaphorical ways, often linked to abstract concepts like envy, sadness, or caution. In contrast, Uzbek frequently ties color to everyday life, nature, and cultural traditions, showing a more concrete and culturally embedded meaning. This shows the importance of considering cultural context when translating or teaching color terms.

Our findings also highlight that some gaps exist in the literature. Many researchers focus on either idioms or literary usage, but rarely combine emotional, cultural, and

idiomatic meanings in one study. Additionally, very few studies present a practical tool for comparing color meanings across languages. The Color Meaning Matrix developed in this study helps fill that gap and can be used in language teaching, translation, and cross-cultural communication.

In conclusion, colors are more than just words; they reflect human emotions, cultural values, and social practices. This study shows that comparing English and Uzbek color terms provides useful insights into both languages and cultures. The matrix offers a simple, visual, and practical method to understand how colors function in different linguistic and cultural contexts. Future research can expand this model to include more languages, analyze less common color terms, or study how children and adults perceive colors in a cross-cultural setting.

Overall, this study demonstrates that language and culture are deeply connected, and understanding color meanings is not only interesting for linguists but also helpful for educators, translators, and anyone interested in intercultural communication. By combining previous research with our own systematic approach, we contribute a practical and innovative perspective to the study of color in language.

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