

Semantic, Symbolic And Metaphorical Aspects Of The Colour “White” In The Uzbek Language

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Abstract: This article examines the semantic, symbolic and metaphorical properties of the lexeme “oq” (“white”) in the Uzbek language. On the basis of historical sources, classical literature and contemporary usage, the cultural, social and aesthetic meanings of constructions with the colour white are revealed. In the course of the study, the word’s metaphorical meanings, historical development and associative features in linguistic consciousness are also analysed. The research findings are illustrated by examples drawn from literary works.

Keywords: White, Uzbek language, colour semantics, symbol, metaphor, historical lexis, linguoculturology, basic colours, explanatory dictionary, linguistic picture of the world.

Introduction: The world around us is inextricably connected with various colours, and a person recognizes everything precisely through its colour. “So, in general, how many kinds of colours are there in the world? Abu Rayhon Beruni, in his work *Kitab al-Javohir – Ma’rifat al-Javohir*, listed the names of more than 200 colours and also wrote about their origins. In the East, scholars, poets, painters, ornamentists and calligraphers were able to distinguish more than a hundred types of colours and knew their names and even the symbolic meaning of each of them. Let us look at some examples that have come down to us: alvon, rahuvon, bargi karam, binafsha, bug’doyrang, bo’z gulgun, jigarrang, zangori, za’faran, zumrad, qahrabo, kulrang, ko’k, lojuvard, lolarang, malla, moviy, moshrang, nafarmon, oq, pistamag’iz, pistaqi, pushti, sariq, safsar samorang, sur, feruza, o’choq kesak, qizil, qirmizi, bayzagul, baqato’ni...

“Although the world’s population exceeds 8 billion,

everyone has their own colour. Do you think people with black hair all have the same hair colour? No... They differ from one another. One is astonished and asks: what a miracle this is! Nature has been created so perfectly. As another proof of the diversity of colours, one can cite the fact that in Japan almost 40 types of eyes are distinguished from each other.”

According to the scholar, “the 7 colours listed above are basic, and the rest are formed by mixing these 7 colours.” Eastern countries associated each of the planets and each day of the week with a particular colour: Black – Saturday – Zuhul (Saturn); Yellow – Sunday – Sun; Green – Monday – Moon; Red – Tuesday – Mirrix (Mars); Blue – Wednesday – Utorid (Mercury); Sandal – Thursday – Mushtariy (Jupiter); White – Friday – Zuhra (Venus).

In ancient China, specific colours were assigned to natural phenomena (elements), the seasons of the year, the planets and other things.

Table 1. Colours assigned to natural phenomena (elements), seasons of the year, planets and other objects.

Colour	Season	Elements / Natural phenomena	Cardinal directions	Planets	Animal symbols

Green (or blue)	Spring	Tree	East	Jupiter	Dragon
Red	Summer	Fire	South	Mars	Phoenix
White	Autumn	Metal	West	Venus	Tiger
Black	Winter	Water	North	Mercury	Tortoise
Yellow	Late summer	Earth	Center	Saturn	Snake

It is known that the world around us consists of a great variety of colours. According to data, a human being is capable of distinguishing about 2 million types of colours, and during their lifetime they perceive almost 80 percent of the information about the surrounding world by means of colours. Nevertheless, in none of the world's languages does the number of colour terms in active use even approach two hundred. Sources note that modern Russian has around 130 colour names, English 154, and German about 120. In Uzbek, the number of colour terms used actively does not even reach 50. Yet in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (OTIL), among adjectives there are more than a hundred definitions of 16 different colour-and-shade words, and nearly 130 colour names are given. However, most of them are almost incomprehensible to the present generation.

In the course of our research, along with studying the explanations given for colour-denoting words, we supplemented them with their new meanings and metaphorical features, illustrating these with examples from literary works.

METHOD

White is the lightest colour and is achromatic (colourless). It is the colour of such things as snow, chalk and milk, and is the opposite of black. White bodies completely reflect and scatter all visible wavelengths of light. On television and computer screens, white is produced by a mixture of red, blue and green light. In Ancient Egypt and Ancient Rome, priests wore white garments as a symbol of purity, and the Romans wore the white toga as a symbol of citizenship. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the white unicorn symbolised purity, and the white lamb stood for sacrifice and innocence.

In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, 11 meanings of the word oq "white" are given. In the linguistic worldview of the Uzbek people, the colour white is used in the following symbolic meanings. Since ancient times, white has denoted such concepts as cleanliness, happiness, purity, innocence, light, clarity, the purity of thoughts and the purity of dreams.

The lexeme oq is found in various written sources. In the Orkhon inscriptions, in particular in the "Great Inscription" (Ulug' bitik), it appears in the forms aq (oq) and boz (bo'z). It may be noted here that the word bo'z is another form of the Arabic bayzā' and likewise means "white". In the "Great Inscription" we read: "...ol tagdukda Bayırqunung aq adg'ıyırıg' udıyqın sıyu urtı – in that attack he struck his white stallion on the back and broke it"; "Kul tigin Boshg'u boz at binip tagdi – Kül Tigin mounted his white horse named Bashg'u and charged."

In Dīwān lughāt at-Turk the lexeme in question occurs in the forms aq/ak/ag. In addition, we also find in this work the form ap aq ("very white, pure white"). In general, in the work Qutadg'u bilig colour adjectives are often used to describe natural and social phenomena by referring to the surrounding animal world. This is, on the one hand, the influence of oral folklore, and on the other, an expression of existing traditions:

Listen to what the white-haired man says,

The man who has seen much work and lived long:

Strive, and choose a good name for yourself,

For Fortune will not be faithful; it will make you a stranger.

(Yusuf Khass Hajib, Qutadg'u bilig, p. 181)

In this passage, the phrase "oppoq boshli er" ("the white-haired man") is used in the next line to convey the meaning "Ko'p ishlarni ko'rgan, uzun yoshli er" ("a man who has seen much and lived long"). In other words, the whiteness of his hair is given in order to emphasize that he is a person with rich life experience. In addition, in this work the phrase "o'runq sachli", i.e. "white-haired", is also used to express the same idea.

RESULTS

In Uzbek, the lexemes oq and oppoq ("white") are used not only for the colour of the face but also for the complexion of the body. With regard to a pale or fair facial colour, words such as oq, oppoq, oqish, oppoqqina, oqimtir, oydin, tiniq, nurli ("white, very white, whitish, rather white, somewhat white, bright,

clear, radiant”) are employed. Among these, oppoq, oydin, and nurli are derived metaphorical meanings. It is known that there are hypotheses that the word oq (“white”) is derived from oy (“moon”); one of the scholars who advanced this hypothesis is H. Vambéry. The use of the word oydin (“bright, moonlike”) with reference to the colour white may be considered evidence of this:

You were so graceful, how beautiful you were,

Sometimes pass by my street,\

My heart rejoices more each time I see you.

I will not forget your bright face.

(E. Vohidov, “Unutmayaman” [“I Will Not Forget”])

O flower-bodied one, O gazelle-eyed one,

Granddaughters of my Uzbek land –

Bright girls, moon-faced girls,

Girls in white scarves fallen from the moon.

(M. Yusuf, Selected Works, p. 288)

When describing the face, colour-semantics words are widely used; along with adjectives, metaphorical verbs with this semantics such as oqarmoq, bo’zarmoq, qum (quv) o’chmoq (“to turn white, to grow pale, to lose colour”) are also frequently employed.

Suddenly we pounced on Ali. Ali’s colour drained, and he threw himself from the swing to the ground. (Oybek, Bolalik [Childhood], p. 131)

The woman standing on the threshold had a faded face, as white as gauze; tears glittered in her eyes. (Oybek, Bolalik, p. 175)

In our literature and in colloquial style, certain words are also used to indicate the whiteness of fruits, melons and gourds, or of fabrics. In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language it is noted that the words balx and surf in earlier times were used in the meaning “white”:

In the yard there were two big Balx mulberry trees, apple and pear trees, a wide flower bed and a fairly large pool. (Z. Saidnosirova, Oybegim mening, p. 8)

The colour white is also used to generalise and liken products that have this colour.

Thanks to such a healthy cow given to the family, many people, especially children, will be able to taste “oq” – milk and yoghurt.

Whether it be beer, whether it be cognac, or whether it be oq,

I shall drink and go home, my feet will barely touch the ground.

(from a newspaper)

In the example above, oq is used in the meaning “vodka”; the transfer of meaning is based on its white, clear colour.

The colour white also serves to express purity, cleanliness and innocence in blessings and good wishes:

Realising that he was powerless to dissuade them, the white-bearded elder fell silent. “Before we set off, give us your oq fотиha (pure blessing),” said Alijon.

(Oybek, Bolalik, p. 201)

The use of white in clothing can in fact be viewed as a reflection of a person’s inner purity and neatness, as well as of their thoroughness and pleasant appearance.

Ochil aka was a large, imposing man with a white beard, expressive eyes and thick eyebrows. He wore a white shirt with a light waistcoat over it and a moshrang duxoba skullcap on his head. He was speaking weightily, picking his words carefully and supporting them with various examples and proverbs.

(Oybek, Bolalik, p. 187)

CONCLUSION

The lexeme “oq” occupies an important place in the Uzbek language and cultural worldview. Its meanings extend far beyond the visual sphere, encompassing historical, symbolic, ethical and figurative dimensions. Over the centuries, the evolution of this concept has reflected how deeply the colour white has become integrated into cultural practices, rituals, literature and emotional expression. In our future research we intend to compare the semantic development of the colour white in Turkic languages and to analyse its functions in other branches of cultural semiotics.

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