COLOUR AS ONE OF THE BASIC SPHERES OF COGNITION

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Abstract: The focus of this article is determined by the great interest of modern linguistics for the language world conceptualization research and a special emphasis to colour nomination study as the main marker of national cultures. The problems of discovering common and specific features in different linguistic world images are also important.

Key words: Colour perception, language, psychophysiological effects, cultural picture, linguistic methods.

INTRODUCTION

Being an important factor of man's life and activity the colour is a part of the world image in all the components, marked by Leontyev A.N. in the consciousness structure (material part, meaning and personal sense) [1].

Psychophysiological mechanisms of forming colour perception are mainly common for the mankind, like many other psychophysiological effects of the color.

In comparison of the material level, colour on the personal sense level always has unique meaning, forming during human's life and his activity.

Different colours have different meanings. Even in childhood a child due to his organs of the senses starts to appreciate color and other qualities of objects and denote them with the help of the language, assimilating the ways of phenomena categorization, typical for the cultural picture of the world.

In the course of time personal stable systems of meaning begin to form.

They usually function as verbal-sensitive association complexes.

Luria A.R. in his experiments that took place in Central Asia in 1931-1932, focused on discovery of cultural differences in the man intellectual activity stated

that the ways of categorization and classification of colour are culturally determined[2].

At the same time Luria agreed that colour perception is a universal function[3].

But we should avoid the total opposition of cultural and universal features.

Colour as the component of the world's image can be found in all the features. It's an integral part of the subject image content and is a part of the material. Every person can feel different emotions to one colour according to his personal denotation.

Every colour has its own meaning fixed in culture and the meaning is based on the material (for example red color increases pressure and pulse, a rush of blood, as according to M. Lusher, from the times of primitive man it symbolizes the danger of attack) [4].

The most meaningful colours have their own verbal expressions. The language hasn't got a term for particular colour if this colour is out of importance for this culture.

MAIN PART

There are two the most effective ways of finding out the meaning of each colour. The first one is connected with the usage of linguistic methods. Here we can speak about comparative study of fiction literature and different literary and scientific sources about colour and the comparative analysis of phraseological units with colour naming component. The second one is holding of associative experiment with the representatives of each culture.

According to Vasilevich A.P. "Associative field of a word is a real thing which is closely connected with historical and cultural tradition of this particular nation" [1. C. 97]. An associative experiment the respondents' answers are standard, typical and reflect common cultural realias.

So, the first method permits to find out all the meanings of the colour typical for this culture and to make up the structure of the semantic field of the colour. The

second method allows to specify these meanings and the structure of the semantic field of the colour and to make final reconstruction.

The associative experiment took place in 2004-2009 in Russia, Europe, the USA and some other countries with a help of the sources of the e-mail and different social networks. The test group was asked to name their verbal associations with the particular colours: red, blue and green.

We exposed the results to the procedure of content-analysis and semantic grouping. According to the research several conclusions were made:

1. Blue and green colours were closely connected with the associations of the objects and phenomena of wild life and inanimate nature;

2. Red colour has many associations with emotions in all cultures. This can be explained by the fact that red colour is traditionally connected with the terms of love, passion, anger and so on.

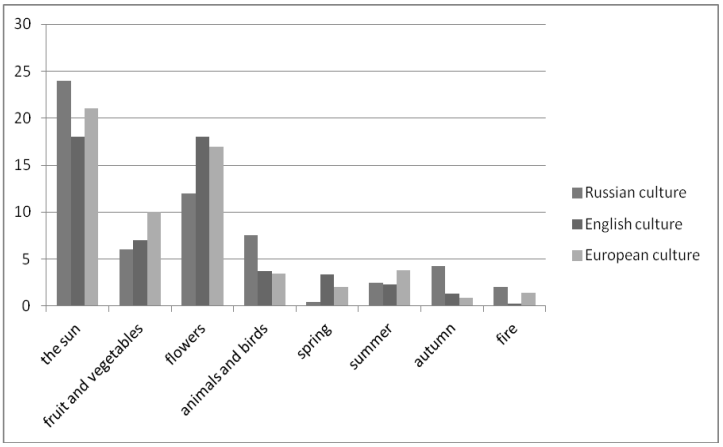
It is interesting to notice that the blue colour has got high percent of emotional associations in the English language. This can be explained by the fact that the semantic field of blue colour in English culture contains the terms of sadness and grief. So, the semantics of blue colour in English culture is mainly negative.

Table 1.1 The results of the associative experiment

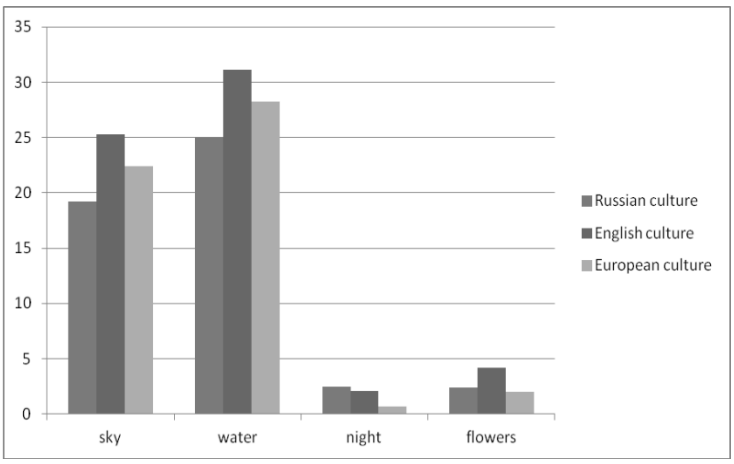
Colour	Total	Associations with the objects and phenomena of wild life and inanimate nature	Associations with the cultural objects	Associations with abstract terms	Associations with the emotional terms
Russian culture, N = 145, total 2849					
red	496	209 (42.1)	177 (35.7)	43 (8.7)	64 (12.9)
green	459	279 (60.8)	88 (19.2)	69 (15.0)	20 (4.4)
blue	481	276 (57.4)	111 (23.1)	85 (17.7)	8 (1.7)
English culture, N = 110, total 2218					
red	387	176 (45.5)	112 (28.9)	45 (11.6)	52 (13.4)

green	366	233 (63.7)	59 (16.1)	48 (13.1)	25 (6.8)
blue	366	240 (65.6)	65 (17.8)	41 (11.2)	19 (5.2)
Mixed European culture (answers in English), N = 65, total 1303					
red	226	93 (41.6)	33 (14.6)	40 (17.7)	58 (25.7)
green	214	122 (57.0)	30 (14.0)	39 (18.2)	19 (8.9)
blue	213	127 (59.6)	28 (13.2)	52 (24.4)	5 (2.4)

The highest percent of the answers in the regarded groups took the meanings of the so-called "prototypical referents" of the colour, as they are the names of the objects and phenomenon of the wild life and inanimate nature that surrounded a man since the very beginning of his cultural and historical development. So, they are the nuclear of the semantic field of the colour. Some meanings with low percent but pointing to the prototypical referents of the colour can be also included to the nuclear of the semantic field of colour, that means that objects and phenomena of the nature which are closely connected with the person's consciousness speaking this or that language and which are defined by the climate, nature, geographical position of the country.



Picture 1.1 The nuclear meanings of the semantic field of the red colour



Picture 1.2 The nuclear meanings of the semantic field of the blue colour

According to the results of the first stage of the research the hypothesis was made: the nucleuses of the semantic field of the same colour in different cultures usually contain similar meanings presented by the prototypical referents of the colour (thus there can be little differences because of the difference in geographical position and climate). The peripherical meanings can be marked as culturally-specific, appeared in the nation's consciousness in a course of it cultural and historical development.

In the table below you can see all the nuclear meanings of the semantic fields of the basic colours for Russian, English and European cultures.

From this table you can see that in the nuclear of the semantic field of meaning there are some coincidences except for the animals, birds and flowers, because they are representatives of the sample colour for each culture.

But some meanings are unique. For example, only in the English culture birds (robins) are prototypical referents of the red colour and they play an important role in folklore and literature. So, we have got a confirmation of our hypothesis that the prototypical referents of the colour, forming a nuclear of the semantic field, may differ in different countries because of different climatic and geographical conditions.

Table 1.2 Nuclear meanings of the semantic field of the main colours

Colour	Russian culture	English culture	Mixed European culture

Red	blood, fire, the sun, flowers, berries, fruit and vegetables, wine, ruddiness.	blood, fire, the sun, flowers, berries, fruit and vegetables, wine.	blood, fire, the sun, flowers, berries, fruit and vegetables.
Green	Nature, plants, animals, green eyes, fruit and vegetables, sea, spring, summer, precious gems.	Nature, plants, animals, green eyes, fruit and vegetables, spring, summer, precious gems.	Nature, plants, animals.
Blue	Water, sea, ocean, rain, lake, river, sky, eyes, night, flowers, sapphire.	Sky, water, sea, ocean, rain, flowers, eyes, night.	Sky, water, sea, ocean.

Therefore, research helps us to determine the colour meanings unique for each country, that were formed as the result of its cultural and historical development and that they have no parallels even in closely connected cultures.

CONCLUSION

Among the all physical qualities colour is one of the most important, most obvious and the brightest characteristics of the objects of the world.

Colour derives from the spectrum of light (distribution of light power versus wavelength) interacting in the eye with the spectral sensitivities of the light receptors. Colour categories and physical specifications of colour are also associated with objects, materials, light sources, etc., based on their physical properties such as light absorption, reflection, or emission spectra. By defining a colour space, colours can be identified numerically by their coordinates.

Colour is the most important characteristic of an object. It makes the object brighter and gives it an emotional expression.

According to the research made by Eleanor Rosch several conclusions were made:

Focus colours are appreciated better than the others;

1) Focus colours are kept in the recent memory longer than the others;
2) The names of focus colours are produced faster by the children.

3) The names of focus colours are produced faster by the children.

Psychophysiological mechanisms of forming color perception are mainly common for the mankind, like many other psychophysiological effects of the color.

Unlike the material level, colour on personal level always has unique meanings, which are formed exactly during the process of man's life and activity.

The research of the semantic field of the main colours in three cultures permits to find out the structure of the semantic field of each colour and its meaning, particular for the representatives of each culture on the present level of their cultural and historical development.

The nuclear of the semantic field includes the meanings expressed by the prototypical referents of the colour. These meanings are usually common for different cultures, but in addition they have specific meanings influenced by the geographical position and the climate.

The pheripherical units contain meanings that can be derived from the psychological features of the colour and its prototypical referents, that are the meanings of the nuclear of the semantic field. These meanings are similar in different cultures but not identic. So, we can conclude that the pheripherical meanings of the semantic field are represented by the culturally-specific meaning of a colour that was formed in each culture in the process of its cultural and historical development.

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