

<https://doi.org/10.37816/2073-9567-2023-70-86-96>

УДК 304.2

ББК 71.4

Научная статья / Research article



This is an open access article distributed under
the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International (CC BY 4.0)

© 2023. Ekaterina V. Sklizkova
Moscow, Russia

SEMIOTIC QUINTESSENCE OF COLOUR

Abstract: Colour is a universal phenomenon of cognitive space, mixed with semiotic hierarchy, and existential constructions. Being a very dynamic cognitive category, it forms a complex system of meanings, images, linguistic formulae.

The modern European languages have lost many of the ancient Indo-European terms of colour. Some of them have changed semantics, or have been substituted by borrowed words. Nevertheless, linguistic parallels in the sphere of colour nomination are quite obvious. Semiotically, colours have retained the elements of intuitive symbolism in their semantics, which is especially noticeable in phraseological or similar phrases.

Idioms are linguistic symbols, represented the figurative component of the language, and function as a separate sign system. Colour terms, being a semiotic and linguistic unit, are inserted as one of the components into a phrase, forming the specific meaning and reflecting the historical and cultural aspect of the idiom.

In contrast to the word with its semantic certainty, colour due to the associative perception, being a powerful causative agent of the sphere of the extra-consciousness, turns out to be an important gnoseological factor.

Keywords: Archetype, Cognitive, Collocability, Colour, Culture, Derivative, Etymology, Indo-European, Phraseology, Semantics, Semiotics, Sign, Terminology.

Information about the author: Ekaterina V. Sklizkova — PhD in Culturology, Associate Professor, Institute of Slavic Culture, A. N. Kosygin Russian State University, Khibinsky Dir. 6, 129337 Moscow, Russia.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0135-8616>

E-mail: katunyas@yandex.ru

Received: March 03, 2023

Approved after reviewing: May 12, 2023

Date of publication: December 25, 2023

For citation: Sklizkova, E. V. "Semiotic Quintessence of Colour." *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, vol. 70, 2023, pp. 86–00. (In English)

<https://doi.org/10.37816/2073-9567-2023-70-86-96>

© 2023 г. Е. В. Склизкова
г. Москва, Россия

СЕМИОТИЧЕСКАЯ КВИНТЭССЕНЦИЯ ЦВЕТА

Аннотация: Цвет — универсальный феномен когнитивного пространства, построенный на семиотической иерархии и экзистенциальных конструкциях. Будучи очень динамичной познавательной категорией, он образует сложную систему значений, образов, языковых формул.

Современные языки Европы потеряли многие из древних индоевропейских терминов цвета. Некоторые из них поменяли семантику, или были вытеснены заимствованными словами. Тем не менее, языковые параллели в области цвето-наименования вполне очевидны. Семиотически цвета сохранили элементы интуитивного символизма в своей семантике, что особенно хорошо заметно во фразеологических или близких к ним оборотах.

Идиомы являются языковыми символами, представляют собой образный компонент языка и функционируют как отдельная знаковая система. Цветообозначение, будучи семиотическим и лингвистическим образованием, встраивается одним из компонентов в структурно оформленную фразу, определяя смысл и отражая историко-культурный колорит идиомы.

В отличие от слова с его относительной определенностью значения, цвет благодаря ассоциациям, является мощным двигателем сферы внесознательного и важным гносеологическим аспектом.

Ключевые слова: праформа, когнитивный, сочетаемость, цвет, культура, производная, этимология, Индоевропейский, фразеология, семантика, семиотика, знак, терминология.

Информация об авторе: Екатерина Владимировна Склизкова — кандидат культурологии, доцент, Институт славянской культуры, Российский государственный университет им. А. Н. Косыгина (Технологии. Дизайн. Искусство), Хибинский пр., д. 6, 129227 г. Москва, Россия.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0135-8616>

E-mail: katunyas@yandex.ru

Дата поступления статьи: 03.03.2023

Дата одобрения рецензентами: 12.05.2023

Дата публикации: 25.12.2023

Для цитирования: Склизкова Е. В. Семиотическая квинтэссенция цвета // Вестник славянских культур. 2023. Т. 70. С. 86–96.

<https://doi.org/10.37816/2073-9567-2023-70-86-96>

Colour is a universal phenomenon of cognitive space, based on semiotic hierarchy and existential constructions. As a physical phenomenon, it affects perception and emotional state of a person. It is reflected in the formation of the component of the world view and linguistic elements in their cohesion. The semantics of colour is accumulated under the influence of mental impact, aesthetic and associative aspect. Thus, colour forms a complex hierarchy of meanings, images, linguistic formulae.

The main object of the research is colour as a linguo-semiotic system within the semiosphere. Colour is studied in cultural, semiotic and linguistic aspects. Complex approach to this phenomenon gives the opportunity to systematic study of language algorithms in a broad sense, semiotics in general, parallels in various sign systems. The category of colour, being a very dynamic cognitive and gnoseological one, is the object of various scientific disciplines, making the study of the mechanisms of perception and manifestation of colour in a language still relevant. The paper is focused on the colour terms in synchronic and diachronic aspects, their semantics, pragmatics both in the European languages and cultures.

Colour reveals its full potential in the case of its transference to the sphere of symbolism and hidden meanings. The basis for the formation of colour symbolism was a religious and philosophical context, although the initial point was associations with the various phenomena and objects. Then, with the structurization and sophistication of the philosophical worldview, the colour acquires the hierarchy of meanings, which is very distantly related to the primary ones.

The genesis of colour terminology reflects the dynamics of the socio-cultural aspect of society, the algorithms for the development of languages. It belongs to the basic vocabulary and is practically common for the Indo-European languages. There is a certain set of derivational formulae for colour nomination, reflecting the semantic component. Accent on any colour or shade reflects the mentality and the degree of development of the language. There is no absolute algorithm for the development of colour coding for all the languages, especially dead ones fall out of this set [11].

Associative thinking and comparative verbal expression of various phenomena of antiquity is universal. The focus here is on the primary colour terms in the European languages. In the ancient languages, as a rule, there were three terms of colour, which can be considered basic, reflected the most ancient existential ideas, possible to be apparently explained by dualism in the perception of the world and the importance of the concept of “blood-sun-fire” [6]. Even in ancient era “black” and “white” were already completely abstract, in the sense that they are connected neither with a specific subject, nor with shades, or with a sphere of usage. “Red” was getting close to it. On the other hand, there were still several terms for those colours. However, besides often the terms referred mostly to light-darkness and brilliance rather than colour as such [4].

“Blue” and “green” are very different in all their characteristics. Although, in many aspects, their fate is similar and significantly different from the triad of the basic colours. The fact was connected with the problems of fabric dyeing as well as fashion and language. Those colours were quite common in the East and the Mediterranean, though they did not play a significant role. But with the end of the Antique era they had almost disappeared and became semiotically full-fledged colours in the 11th-12th centuries. These colours are quite ambivalent in semantics, tint also plays an important role, and the etymology makes them truly “natural colours” [8, 9]. “Yellow” is close to “green” and either to “blue” or “grey”.

“White” and “black” is a special semiotic and linguistic category. On the one hand, they are achromatic and, as a result, seem to be uninformative, psychologically neutral and obvious in semantics. On the other hand, despite all, they have ambivalent semantics, variety of meaning and a rather mysterious etymology.

“Black” has mostly negative semantics, and several spheres of meaning can be distinguished. The first type is characterized by irrational fear associated with omnipotent evil, cruelty; the second — with misfortune, anxiety, death, manifested in the phenomena connected with funerals, illness, etc. The third is associated with something incomprehensible,

vague, blurred, implicit and mysterious, for example, with black magic. The fourth option is associated with the absence of fullness, emptiness, silence, abyss. Here also can be included “the lack of order”, i.e. “chaos”, or “disobedience to authority”, for example, among pirates.

A positive semantics is can include “wisdom”, “beginning”, “rebirth from the ashes”, “nobility”, “compliance with norms”.

The terms for “black” reveal surprisingly few parallels in the Indo-European languages, in fact, they do not have a direct chain of development. The roots *dhergo-*, *kieə-*, *mélə-* are found in many languages with partial or complete loss of basic semantics (*dark*, *сивый*, *малина*). The descendant languages are represented by a fairly large variety of words associated with the archetype only semantically. The negative connotation reveals in mostly all the terms.

Μέλας in ancient Greek was used without restrictions, possessed an aspect of the semantics of “evil, bad”, had no connotation of meaning associated with brilliance and was originally connected with “darkness”. The word probably goes back to the Indo-European root *méal-* *mélə-* with the meaning close to “blue”. Gradually, the term was being replaced by *μαύρος* and retained with the semantic change only as a part of complex language units. *Ἐρεμνός* (*regw-*), *Κελαινός* with the sense of “dark” were mainly used in poetry, therefore there are difficulties in determining the connotative part of the meaning [3].

In Latin, there was an opposition for “black”: *Āter* (matte black) and *niger* (shiny black). Although it was not overarching division, as both words had wide collocation, often with the same words. Being also stylistic equivalent, they had some diachronic differences: the first was more ancient and was gradually being replaced by the second. The etymology of both terms is not entirely clear, but probably *āter* correlates with the Avestan *ātarš* — “fire”, reconstructing the meaning “burned with fire”.

There are several words in Italian that mean “black”, “dark”: *nero*, *corvino*, *ebano*, *scuro*, *buio*, *fosco* [13]. *Nero* is the main term for colour, goes back to *niger* and has the semantics of “black”, “dark”, “darker”, “dirty”, “bad”, “forbidden”. It can be used in a wide variety of spheres: *pane nero* (black bread), *nero come l'inchostro* (as black as thunder, gloomy), *nero destino* (evil fate), *giorni neri* (hard days), *pecore nera* (black sheep), *portare il nero* (to be in mourning). *Corvino* is actually connected with the plumage, hair colour or coat of the horse. *Ebano* refers to “ebony” and is a derivative term close to *lemon*. *Buio* is associated with obscurity, darkness and is used in connection with the complexity of visual perception or understanding (*fa buio pesto*, *essere al buio di qc*). *Fosco* has a “sad-dull” semantics. “Dark” is also expressed by *scuro*, *cupo*. The term *oscuro* is a more formal variant, also reflecting the absence of light, or evil (*forze oscure*). *Cupo* takes on additional meanings of “deep”, “dark”, “dull”.

In Spanish, there is a similar pattern with related words *negro* (*pensamientos negros*), *éban*, possibly *buho* with the meaning “owl”, “nocturnal bird”, “hermit”, *oscuro* — “dark”.

In the Germanic languages, the roots *swarts* (*sweart swarz*), *dunkel*, *sal* with a wide compatibility and semantics approximate to “dirty”, “foggy”, “dark” are used [3]. Their descendants are *schwarz* in German, *dark* in English, *зола* in Russian. There were *sweart*, *deorc*, *blæc*, *mirce* etc in Old English. The first two had the meaning of “obscure”, “filthy” and “evil” and were used as an attributive of “night”, “will”, “hair”, “plumage”, etc. *Blæc* went back to *bhleg* — “to shine”, which made it closer to *white*. *Mirce* (*ie mer-*) corresponds to “blink”, *моргать* in Russian, with the semantics of “gloomy”, “dark”.

In Russian, *черный*, going back to Old Indian *kṛṣṇás*, also has a wide semantics, as in other languages, is a frequent component of fixed phrases and phraseological units: *черная тоска*, *черная зависть*, *черный ход*, *в черном свете*.

In other languages, phraseological units with a component “black” are also used to a greater extent with a negative meaning: *black sheep*; *not so black as it is painted*; *black money*; *as black as thunder*, *Er ist ein Schwarzfahrer* (fare-dodger), *nero come l'inferno* (dreadful), *anima nera* (black soul), *vedere tutto nero* (see everything black), *essere allo scuro di tutto* (to know almost nothing). The positive meaning goes into the sphere of nobility and correctness: *to be in black*, *Ins Schwarze treffen* (hit the bull's eye).

In general, it can be stated that “black” has predominantly negative semantics, correlating with something implicit, incomprehensible, obscure in the literal and figurative sense, there are also intersections with “blue”.

“White” means “surrender”, “truce”, “goodwill”, “luminosity”, connection with divine light, this is the colour of the “eternal silence” [2]. Also the colour can have the semantics of mourning, e.g. in the East, in Ancient Greece and Rome. “White”, as the opposite to “black”, is the colour of undifferentiation, emptiness, air, light, innocence, spirituality, holiness, transcendental perfection.

Within the sphere of the white colour some structural-semantic parallels can be distinguished, e. g. in Russian — *луч*, Old English — *lēoht*, Latin — *lūx* and *lūna*, Ancient Greek — *λευκός*. The last term went back to the Indo-European root *leuk* — “to shine”. In Greek it had the semantics of “radiant”, “light”, “happy” (happy day — *λευκή ημέρα*) along with “white” and wide collocability, however was rather used in prose of a “formal style”. The term competed with the subsequent and colloquial *άσπρος* [5].

In Latin, there was an opposition between “shiny white” (*candidus*) referred mostly to poetry and “matte white” (*albus*) used in combinations with snow, sun and other “sparkling” words, but in less formal aspect. *Albus*, as *άσπρος* went back to the Indo-European *albho* — “white”. There is no direct archetype for *candidus*, although it is apparently related to the Indo-European *cand / scand / scend* — “to shine” and can be distinguished in Italian — *accendere*, English — *candle*, *incandesce* (to heat) (for English the words are borrowed, or at least not Anglo-Saxon), probably *shine*, *sky*, Russian — *сиять* [5].

As most Romanic languages, modern Italian has lost Latin terms and the opposition connected with shininess. However there were such Latin terms as *candido* — “white”, “pure”, *albo* — “white” which are used in stylistically marked texts of the poetic sphere [10]. *Candido* also meant “innocent”, “sincere”.

The Indo-European *bhleg*, *bhl-* and *kueid* were the prototypes to terms in many European languages.

Thus, the modern term *bianco* in Italian is a Germanic borrowing of probably the 5th–8th centuries or a later period. It goes back to the Germanic *blank* — “brilliant”. *Bianco* is used with objects, that can be of different colours and have a characteristic of a lighter shade, for example, *uva bianca*, *frati bianchi*, as well as in Old Italian to describe light objects, e.g. women's skin and hair. In the modern language, the word has a wide collocability and semantics, indirectly related to the ambivalent symbolism of “white”, for example, *matrimonio bianco*, *voce bianca*, *omicidio bianco*.

In German, there is the main colour term *Weiss*, which has the same origin as English *white*, in Old English *hwīt* — from the semantically close Indo-European *kueid* — “light”, “brilliance” [14]. The Germanic word *blank* with the meaning of “brilliance” can be found in the Germanic languages, such as Old English — *blanca* — “white” and *blāc* — “bright”, “sparkling”. The last word was semantically influenced by Old English *blæc* — “black”, also paronymous.

The Russian word *свет* has the same origin as terms mentioned above. Russian *белый* comes from Old Indian *bhālam* — “shine” and, possibly, Indo-European *bhleg / bhl-*.

Specific approach to “luminosity” is typical for the ancient languages. In the very beginning there were comparative constructions such as *like snow* developed into the terms formed from the corresponding object: *молочный*, *milchfarben*, *niveo*, *ebúrneo*, *ivory*. Abstract terms for primary colours appeared with the development of abstract thinking, some terms denoted several colours, and then were assigned to one or replaced by a new one.

So in the languages presented, one of the main aspects of meaning was the “brilliance”. The modern languages have lost this component, sometimes along with the lexical units themselves. There are some controversial parallels in terms beyond the main colour terminology, e.g. *λευκός* — *luna* — *light* — *луч*, *candiduos* — *accendere* — *sky* — *сиять*, *blank* — *bianco* — *black* — *белый* [5].

In general, the semantics of this colour, both positive and negative, coincide for Indo-European linguacultures. It is represented in phraseological units, e. g. *white lie*, *white envy*, *anima candida*, *vedere tutto in bianco*, *lily-white reputation* — “*impeccable reputation*”; however, there are also specific meanings, or meanings the opposite to general, such as: *white as a ghost* — *white as a sheet* — *bianco come un panno lavato*, *white night* — *notte bianca* — “*sleepless night*”, *Weißbluten* — “*to pull seven skins*”.

The terms of white colours are used in the meaning of: “white”, “light”, “pale”, “shiny”, “silver”, “good”, “kind”, “empty”, etc.

“Red” is complex in semantics: the “sun”, “fire”, “energy”, and “love”, “passion”, “courage”, “fertility”, “beauty”, and “war”, “aggression”, “rage”, “revenge”, “destruction”. Since ancient times, solar deities, deities of war, blacksmiths have been associated with red. The colour is connected with blood, genetic (and cultural) transmission, health and life. Therefore, in protective artifacts, magical practices, along with real blood, red objects were often used as its substitution. It is also the colour of fertility and marriage, that manifests itself in the massive use of the colour in the matrimonial rites.

In general, it was a symbol of divine energy, sometimes transmitted to people through the healing process, fire or fertility rituals. “Red” is a psychologically aggressive colour that attracts attention, that is used to indicate danger, prohibition, etc. In Christianity, it also appears in two hypostases: divine love and the innocent blood of Christ. For Russian culture, red is associated with beauty, being the main national colour. The second semantic level can be considered as the meaning of victory, the blood shed for it, a challenge to mortal combat for a high idea.

There are no variety of proto-forms in the sphere of “red”, but they are more stable and manifested everywhere in almost all European languages (*roudh-*) [14].

In ancient Greek, *έρυθρός* functioned as the main colour term for “red”. Although that term was not very widely used, it had wide collocability and was perceived unambiguously. Perhaps due to the fact it survived in the modern language in scientific and poetic speech. Besides, there were terms, one of which is easily recognizable: *πορφύρρεος* and *φοινός*. Later, a new term *κόκκινος* appeared, fully corresponding to the demands of the main term for colour [3].

In Latin, “red” is represented by variations of a term that appears in the other Indo-European languages: *ruber*, *rūfus*, *russus*, which went back to *reudh* [10]. The term related to red, ginger, and fiery objects and had a neutral semantics. The modern Romanic languages traced back the term “red” to *rubeus*, *russus*, which are based on *rudh*, and used other word-formation patterns.

The heir to these variations of the term in Italian is *rosso* (*rojo* in Spanish), a word with general meaning and wide collocability. There are also a number of words for tints

and with very specific connotations: *porpora* (purple), *robbio, roggio* (rusty red), *rubicondo* (purple), *rubro, scarlatto* (bright red), *vermiglio* (scarlet) [13].

In the majority of the European languages, terms with the meaning of “red” as well represent “ginger”.

In Italian, *rosso* has the meaning of “red”, “ginger”, “golden yellowish”, probably reminiscent of the colour of flame. Other varieties of “red” have a diverse etymology that go back to different languages: *rubicondo, vermiglio, scarlatto, porpora*. The words have shades of meaning and less collocations than *rosso*.

In the Germanic languages, the root *rot* had the semantics of “luminous golden-reddish”, “crimson”, as well as the meaning of “ginger”. The latter variant has developed into the additional meaning of “deceitful”, “insidious”. *Rēad* in Old English could express both the direct meaning of colour and the figurative, related to material, substance, etc. English *red* also goes back to Indo-European *roudho*, which is reflected in such Russian words as *рыжий, рудмяный*.

Russian *красный* as a colour term began to be used late in the 15th–16th centuries. The etymology of this term is quite surprising, has parallels in all the Slavonic languages, and is traced back to Proto-Slavic *красьнь*. The same root is observed in ancient Greek word *κόσμος*. The original meaning was “beautiful”.

“Red” is a signal colour, it tinctures what is worth paying attention to (positive and negative), for example: *to be in red, essere in rosso; red letter day; красный день календаря; красная линия; красный угол*; has “annoying” semantics: *like a red rag (to a bull); красная тряпка для быка*; corresponds to emotionality (*vedere rosso, rot sehen, red as a beet, to be red in the face, as red as a turkey-cock — красный, как рак*), to beauty (for the Russian language): *красна-девица; красно-солнышко*; misleading and dangerous: *a red herring; to see the red light*. The last shade of meaning, however, also presents in Russian culture, but is not reflected in phraseological units.

Semantics of “green” is “youth”, “blossom”. The Middle Ages was an era with a strict hierarchy, colour including. The rules of courtesy determined the wearing of colours by knights. “Hugo de Sancto Victore praises green as the most beautiful of all — it symbolizes spring, it is the image of the coming revival: the mystical meaning does not exclude the possibility of receiving sensual pleasure from green. Guillaume Auvergne deepens this approach in psychology: green, he says, lies in the midst between white, expanding vision, and black, narrowing it” [7, p. 61]. “Green” was the colour of knight errant and symbolized youthful love and hope.

In ancient Greek, there was a quite stable term to denote “yellow-green” — *χλωρός* linked to vegetation and honey, which later was fixed to “green” and obtained negative semantics. The word went back to the Indo-European reflex *ghel-* — “yellow”, “green”.

In Latin, the colour terms of “green” was coherent with vegetation: *viridis*. It comes from the Indo-European *weis* — “to sprout”.

Verde from *viridis* in Italian means “green” in relation to vegetation, or pallor of the face, as in Russian.

Green (English), *grün* (German) go back to the Indo-European *ghrē* — “to grow, turn green”, in Old English: *grēne* [14]. In English, there is an extensive list of indirect colour designations: *olive, emerald, jade, etc.*

The word *зеленый* is related to *золотой* and goes back to the ancient Indian *hīranyam*. In Russian, there are number of comparative terms that are not related to the main ones: *болотный, бутылочный, изумрудный, салатový, гороховый* etc.

From a phraseological point of view, “green” corresponds to “youth” in Russian, English, German and Italian: *зеленый юнец, молодо-зелено, a green hand, ein grüner Junge, anni verdi*; or permission for something: *давать зеленый свет — give a green light to smb — luce verde*; “anger” in Russian, German and Italian: *turning green with anger — ganz grün vor Wut aussehen — verde dalla rabbia*; Russian and Italian have the semantics of “longing / bitterness”: *тоска зеленая — ridere verde*; or “envy” in Russian and English: *позеленеть от зависти — green with envy*; “green” in English has also the meaning of closeness to nature, the ability to grow plants: *have (got) a green thumb (green fingers)*; “fear” in Italian: *verde dalla paura — to yellow*; “grave” in German: *der grüne Rasen*.

“Light blue” — has the meaning of uncreated light energy, transcendental Tabor light, transmitting incomprehensible information about the superior truth; “dark blue” — the colour of incomprehensible secrets, associated with the Heaven. In Eastern Christian culture, it is a symbol of the transcendence of being, eternal divine truth [1]. The blue colour in the Middle Ages in the clothes of a lover testifies to his loyalty in love.

The blue colour in ancient Greek causes fierce debates. A term that can be associated with “blue”, *γλαυκός* (possibly from *gwhei- / gwhai-*), represented shades from “steel” to “dark blue” and “green”, and was used mainly in poetry. That colour term had quite definite collocations with eyes, sea, an owl (possibly in connection with Athena and her eyes), some fruits, i.e. it cannot be called the major colour term. Another term close to it, *κρῆνός*, meant “dark” rather than “blue”.

In Latin, “blue” was coherent with the sky / sea: *caeruleus, liuidus*. The first comes from *caelum* — “sky” from the Indo-European *kaid-slo* — “bright”, the second — from the Indo-European reflex *lai-* [3].

The terms for “blue”, as well as “green”, in the Slavic, Germanic and Romanic languages have different origins.

“Blue” and “light blue” in Italian are represented as *indaco* and *azzurro* accordingly, although the former is rare and corresponds semantically and pragmatically to the term “indigo” in Russian and English and comes from the name of the plant. The second is apparently of Persian origin, *la zurd*. Besides, as in other languages there are various terms for different shades: *celeste, turchino, blu, biavo, ceruleo*. They are all borrowed. The latter is also observed in Latin. *Blu, biavo* from Frankish *blao* goes back to the Germanic root and has the semantics of “intense blue”. *Turchino* — Turkish stone — is the name of turquoise, and *celeste* refers to the sky.

Blue (English) is cogenetic to *bhle-wo*, close in meaning to “yellow”, supplemented by a lot of minor terms: *indigo, turquoise, azure* etc. They are derived and borrowed and mostly the same as, for example, in Italian. Old English had three terms for “blue”: *blæ, hæwen, wæden*, only the first of which is typical of the other Germanic languages (*blau* — German). The second came from the Indo-European *kei-ro- / koi-ro-*, meaning rather “dark” or “grey”. The third was the name of the woad, dye plant, from Old English *wād*. For German, the shade range is achieved by a composition with elements *grün, blau*.

Синий in Russian is approximate to “shine” and goes back to *çyātās* — “black”. *Голубой* also refers to the main vocabulary and comes from *golqbbь*, the etymology of this word is controversial, perhaps it is connected with *ghel-*. In addition, *лазоревый, васильковый, бирюзовый, индиго* etc. are used, related to specific objects.

The semantics of “blue” is sophisticated. The Russian language does not have many specific phraseological units with this term, *блюдечко с голубой каемочкой*. The English language gives it a rather negative meaning: *to be in blue* — “sad”; *out of the blue* —

“suddenly”; *once in a blue moon* — “rare”; *blue stocking* — “mannish, absorbed in a science woman”. Phraseology in Italian has units that are quite clear to a Russian-speaking person: *bas-blu* — “a blue stocking”, *principe azzurro* — “wild dream”, “a knight in shining armor”. In German, also different negative meanings are presented: “drunkenness” — *blau sein*; “lies” — *blau reden*; “nonsense” — *na, so blau*; “anger” — *er ärgerte sich grün und blau*. Certainly, here are just some examples presented and not a complete list of the varieties.

“Yellow” or “gold” is associated with solar, divine aspect, although with power and wealth.

As it was already mentioned ancient Greek had terms with mixed semantics of “green” and “yellow” — *χλωρός*. Later that word began to be used only for “green”. Besides there were two more productive terms for “yellow”: *ξανθός*, *ώχρός*. Still it is impossible to speak about them as main and fixed terms.

In Latin “yellow” was not distinguished as separate colour but mostly as a part of some colour range. In some way it was *flāvus* with not very direct meaning. Etymologically it is connected with Germanic *blāu* — “blue”, as well as “yellow”. Besides there were some more words although also not of quite direct meaning.

Old English *geolo*, as well as modern English *yellow*, German *gelb*, Italian *giallo* and Russian *желтый*, cogenetic to *χόλος* went back to *ghel-* (“yellow”, “green”, “blue”, “grey”).

As for phraseology there are less examples than within the other colours. Along with the meaning of colour it has the meaning of “youth” in Russian (*желторотый*), “danger” (*yellow flag*); “cowardice” in Russian, English and Italian (*пожелтеть от страха*, *to have a yellow streak*, *yellow dog*, *giallo di paura*); “low level” or “connection with criminal” in Russian, English, Italian and Spanish (*желтая пресса*, *the yellow press*, *stampa gialla*, *prensa amarilla*); “envy” in Russian, English, German and Spanish (*пожелтеть от зависти*, *yellow look*, *Gelb vor Neid*, *se puso amarillo de la envidia*); of “fierce” in German and Italian (*sich gelb und grün ärgern*, *giallo dalla rabbia*); “interjection of astonishment” in German (*ein gelbes Wunder*).

The perception of colour and formation of linguistic units for its representation in different historical periods and for different types of cultures are quite different, as each language is an aspect of culture, its base, an amalgam of its values and characteristics. Colour terms of different peoples are a curious linguistic phenomenon that reflects the linguacultural characteristics of the people and their picture of the world. Human is inextricably connected with colour as a social and humanistic necessity. In each linguistic community, in the process of historical development, a special type of thinking is formed. Colour terminology turns to specialization of shades and abstractness as being detached from concrete objects, without complete loss the associative subtext. “Blue”, “green” and “yellow” do not have such clear parallels in etymology as it is in the triad of primary colours.

The modern European languages have lost many of the ancient Indo-European terms. Some of them have changed semantics, or have been replaced by borrowed words. Nevertheless, linguistic parallels in the sphere of colour are quite obvious, sometimes they are found in rather distant languages, and in cogenetic languages different roots exist. Semiotically “black”, “white”, “red”, “green”, “blue”, “yellow” retained the elements of intuitive symbolism in their semantics, which is especially noticeable in phraseological units or something of the kind.

Idioms are linguistic symbols, represent the figurative component of the language and function as a separate sign system. Like other symbolic formations, they are able

to represent various information in a concise and fixed form. Phraseologisms have both a semiotic and a linguistic aspects. The colour term is embedded by one of the components into a structurally formed phrase, defining the meaning and reflecting the historical and cultural side of the idiom. Many phraseological units are practically identical in the European languages, which is explained by the same source, or by some common human associations caused by a specific colour.

Opposite to the word with its semantic certainty, colour, due to the associativity of its perception, being a powerful causative agent of the sphere of the extra-consciousness, turns out to be an important gnoseological factor. The language of colour is in many ways a symbolic language used by both ancient and modern peoples. Colour and its use represent culture, mood and position in society. It is no coincidence that it so actively manifests itself as a component of various sign systems.

Список литературы

Исследования

- 1 Бычков В. В. Византийская эстетика. М.: Искусство, 1977. 199 с.
- 2 Купер Дж. Энциклопедия символов. М.: Золотой век, 1995. 397 с.
- 3 Наименование цвета в индоевропейских языках: Системный и исторический анализ. М.: Ком Книга, 2007. 320 с.
- 4 Роу К. Концепции цвета и цветовой символизм в древнем мире // Психология цвета. М.: Рефл-бук, Ваклер, 1996. С. 7–46.
- 5 Склизкова Е. В. Genesis of the white colour terminology in the Indo-European languages // Вестник славянских культур. М.: Ин-т славянской культуры, Российский государственный ун-т им. А.Н. Косыгина, 2018. Т. 47. С. 129–134.
- 6 Berlin B., Kay P. Basic color terms, their universality and evolution. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969. 178 p.
- 7 Eco U. Arte y belleza en la estética Medieval. Barcelona: Lumen, 1999. 215 p.
- 8 Pastoureau M. Bleu. Histoire d'une couleur. Paris: Le Seuil, 2000. 216 p.
- 9 Pastoureau M. Vert. Histoire d'une couleur. Paris: Le Seuil, 2013. 240 p.
- 10 Silvestre J. P., Cardeira E., Villalva A. Colour and colour naming: crosslinguistic approaches. Lisboa: Centro de linguística da universidade de Lisboa, Universidade Aveiro, 2016. 160 p.

Источники

- 11 Норманская Ю. В. Этимология цветообозначений // Генезис и развитие систем цветообозначений в древних индоевропейских языках. М.: Изд-во Института языкознания РАН, 2005. С.277-321.
- 12 An etymological dictionary of the Romance languages. London: Williams, 1864. 500 p.
- 13 Grossmann M. Colori e lessico. Studi sulla struttura semantica degli aggettivi di colore in catalano, italiano, romeno, latino ed ungherese. Tübingen: Narr, 1988. 413 p.
- 14 The Concise Oxford dictionary of English Etymology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 552 p.

References

- 1 Bychkov, V. V. *Vizantiiskaia estetika [Byzantine Aesthetics]*. Moscow, Iskusstvo Publ., 1977. 200 p. (In Russ.)

- 2 Kuper, Dzh. *Entsiklopediia simvolov* [*Encyclopedia of Symbols*]. Moscow, Zolotoi vek Publ., 1995. 397 p. (In Russ.)
- 3 *Naimenovanie tsveta v indoevropskikh iazykakh: Sistemnyi i istoricheskii analiz* [*Colours Terms in the Indo-European Languages: Systemic and Historical Analysis*]. Moscow, Kom Kniga Publ., 2007. 320 p. (In Russ.)
- 4 Rou, K. “Kontseptsii tsveta i tsvetovoi simbolizm v drevnem mire” [“Colour Conception and Colour Symbolism in Ancient World”]. *Psikhologiya tsveta* [*Psychology of Colour*]. Moscow, Refl-buk Publ., Vakler Publ., 1996, pp. 7–46. (In Russ.)
- 5 Sklizkova, E. V. “Genesis of the White Colour Terminology in the Indo-European Languages”. *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, vol. 47, 2018, pp. 129–134. (In English)
- 6 Berlin, B., Kay, P. *Basic Color Terms, their Universality and Evolution*. Berkeley, L-A. University of California Press, 1969. 178 p. (In English)
- 7 Eco, U. *Arte y belleza en la estética Medieval*. Barcelona, Lumen Publ., 1999. 215 p. (In Spanish)
- 8 Pastoureau, M. Bleu. *Histoire d'une couleur*. Paris, Le Seuil Publ., 2000. 216 p. (In French)
- 9 Pastoureau, M. Vert. *Histoire d'une couleur*. Paris, Le Seuil Publ., 2013. 240 p. (In French)
- 10 Silvestre, J. P., Cardeira, E., Villalva, A. *Colour and Colour Naming: Crosslinguistic Approaches*. Lisboa, Centro de linguística da universidade de Lisboa, Universidade Aveir Publ., 2016. 160 p. (In English)