

COLOUR IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: THEIR MEANING AND COLOUR ASSOCIATIONS

Shakhzod Turaev

A master student of Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy

sh.turayev@dpi.uz <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1082-5459>

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore differences in idiomatic expressions related to color in English and Uzbek cultures. It also sought to identify the challenges faced by language learners in comprehending these idioms in both languages, given their shared meanings and distinct associations. Both languages extensively use colour idioms, with various examples provided and explained. While the meanings of some idioms are straightforward, others, more obscure, might perplex foreign learners due to different cultural associations. Cross-cultural comparisons were made to uncover universal color associations and highlight significant differences between the two cultures. The study also revealed that many colour idioms originated from historical events, enriching languages as long as their intended meanings are clear. English teachers and Uzbek learners of English are encouraged to acknowledge these cross-cultural differences, recognizing them as both a potential challenge and an opportunity for improved learning outcomes.

Keywords: Idioms, colour idioms, semantic association, culture.

INTRODUCTION

In our contemporary world it is common to use various idiomatic expressions involving colours. These expressions, stemming from both artistic and popular origins, are widely used in English and Uzbek by native speakers. As non-native English speakers, we have encountered these idioms frequently and have sought to compare their meanings and usage with our own language. This study aims to focus specifically on these colour-related idioms. Idioms, as unique forms of speech or expression, cannot be understood solely from the literal meanings of their parts. Culture significantly influences the interpretation of idioms, necessitating a solid understanding of the target language's cultural context.

Understanding idiomatic expressions, especially colour-related ones, poses a significant challenge for many individuals worldwide, particularly when dealing with two diverse languages like English and Uzbek, which differ linguistically and culturally. Guessing or finding equivalent expressions related to colour in idioms is not straightforward,



making it difficult to comprehend these phrases. Consequently, the researcher aims to explore the difficulties people face in understanding colour-related idioms in both languages mentioned earlier. Additionally, the researcher intends to compare and contrast colour idioms in Uzbek and English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Langlotz (2006) explained that "idioms have been described as conventional multi-word units that are semantically opaque and structurally fixed". Healey (1968) similarly defined an idiom as "any group of words whose meaning cannot be deduced from the meaning of the individual words". This study aims to uncover the specific meanings associated with colours in these idioms, essentially how these colours express certain meanings. Davidson (1996) also described idioms as "a combined word or phrase whose meaning is not deducible from the meaning of the words of which it is composed". In this paper, 'colour idiom' refers to an idiom that includes one or more words related to a specific colour.

As idioms are often unclear in their meanings unless you know them, it is valuable to explore how colours in idioms relate to their intended meanings. Finding patterns here could help understand these meanings better. When there is some clarity, it's easier to guess the whole meaning from the parts. Learning about the origins of these uses and why certain colours are linked to specific meanings, as well as how this varies across languages, provides fascinating insights. Both English and Uzbek share the use of colours in idioms, but the meanings might differ slightly between these languages. Idiomatic expressions are therefore unusual compared to ordinary language because they convey a sense of feeling that is often unique to particular cultures (Dumitrascu, 2007).

Idioms can pose challenges for language learners because their meanings are not obvious unless you are familiar with them. This lack of clarity might lead to misunderstandings, as someone unfamiliar with the intended meaning might take the words literally. The flexibility of some idioms, the need to know when to use them formally or informally, and differences in usage between languages further add to the complexity. Native English speakers frequently use idioms, sometimes to simplify complex ideas or to be more creative with language.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

Colour idioms in English

English employs a wide array of colour-related idioms, offering diverse expressions. While some, like 'green light,' are



easily understood, many others are quite challenging for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners due to their unclear or partially clear meanings. Appendix A presents a collection of popular colour idioms and expressions in English, highlighting the colour-related word or phrase and its main association in each entry. Idioms related to the same colour are grouped together.

Black is commonly used in English idioms, typically carrying negative connotations except for phrases like 'in the black.' Its primary association revolves around darkness, often linked to historical events. For instance, 'blackout' initially referred to darkening theaters or windows during World Wars to avoid detection by enemy aircraft during air raids. However, black still signifies something dark or tainted in phrases like 'black market' and 'blacklist.' The term 'blackboard,' once merely a classroom fixture, now also refers to commercial online learning software, showcasing how words can transition into idiomatic usage over time, similar to 'blackout.'

Red is often linked with naturally red things. For instance, in the idiom 'caught red-handed,' red symbolizes blood, hinting at the idea of a person committing murder and having blood on their hands. Red also represents emotions like embarrassment in 'red-faced' and love in general. People might get red cheeks when embarrassed, explaining the connection between embarrassment and being 'red-faced.' Many idioms have explanations rooted in reality. Some, like 'red letter day,' originated from events, like marking Saint's days in red in Christian tradition. According to Steinvall's research, 'red' is a prominent term in compound phrases, occurring more frequently than other colour terms in both literal and non-literal uses. The Oxford English Dictionary defines red as having the colour of blood or fire. Additionally, 'red' is used in non-literal meanings such as describing people with reddish skin, or associating with concepts like anarchy, revolution, and communism.

Golden often implies something valuable because of its association with gold, a precious metal. For instance, a 'golden opportunity' signifies a valuable chance, while a 'golden handshake' represents a valuable parting gift from a workplace.

Silver apart from the 'silver screen' also carries connotations of value. The phrase 'born with a silver spoon in one's mouth,' denoting being born into wealth, likely originated from the English tradition of godparents using a silver spoon during a child's christening.

White holds various complex meanings in English idioms. According to Carter (1998, p. 22), "even a very ordinary and widely used word can have a complex relationship with its 'referents' and with other words with which it exists in a structural semantic network".

Understanding 'white' in phrases like 'white elephant' implies a sense of emptiness, often linked to the elephant's large size, portraying something seemingly impressive but actually useless. In 'whitewash,' white serves to hide something, although it might not be advisable.

Table 1: Selection of colour idioms in English

Colour	Idiom	Actual meaning
Black	In the black	Successful or profitable
	Blackout	Power failure; to lose consciousness
	Black market	A market where illegal buying, selling occurs, or trading of goods, services, or commodities in violation of regulations, often involving prohibited or restricted items
	Blacklist	A list of disapproved people, targets or suspects
	Blackboard	Commercial online learning software
Red	Caught red-handed	Caught in the act of committing a crime or other wrongdoing, usually theft
	Red-faced	Embarrassed
	Red letter day	A memorable day due to some significant event
Golden	Golden opportunity	A special or perfect chance (with all the right conditions)
	Golden handshake	a valuable parting gift from a workplace
Silver	Silver screen	The cinema
	born with a silver spoon in one's mouth	Born into a wealthy family
White	White elephant	A useless possession (expensive but of no value)
	Whitewash	Hide information to protect someone

Colour idioms in Uzbek

There are more idioms with the colours black and white compared to other colours in Uzbek language. The colour white has connotations such as cleanliness, freshness, goodness, purity, peace and so on, while the colour black has bad connotations like darkness, illegal, sadness and much more. Below, we will see several idioms with different colours:

Table 2: Selection of colour idioms in Uzbek

Colour	Idiom	Actual meaning	English equivalent
Black	Ichi qora	Evil person	-
	Qora bozor	A market where illegal buying, selling occurs, or trading of goods, services, or commodities in violation of regulations, often involving prohibited or restricted items	Black market
	Oq-qorani tanimoq	To have a simple view of what is right and wrong, or good and bad	see things in black and white
White	Oq ko`ngil	Kind	-
	Oq oltin	Cotton	White gold (sugar and salt)
silver	Zangori ekran	TV/the cinema	Silver screen

Colour associations

Both languages have shared meanings associated with certain colours, particularly positive and negative connotations for white and black respectively. However, there are exceptions, like the English phrase "in the black," signifying profitability, contrasting with "in the red," indicating liability. Another example is the phrase 'white lie,' which holds the same meaning in both languages. The expression 'to see things in black and white' likely signifies 'To have a simple view of what is right and wrong, or good and bad' in both languages. This contrast ability applies universally across languages.

Both languages share similarities in the meanings associated with gray, pink, gold, and silver. For instance, gold and silver connote value, as seen in phrases like 'golden opportunity'. However, there's limited common ground for red, yellow, and blue, except that 'excessive' and 'anger' have some similarities in relation to red.

The basic reasons behind the associations of black and white are quite clear: darkness of the night corresponds to black, while the light of day relates to white. Black can also symbolize emptiness, while white often represents purity. Fire, earth, and sky naturally take on the colours red, green, and blue. Nearly all colour sayings can be linked, to some extent, to these fundamental associations. The positive and negative meanings of colours can also be explained. For instance, fire provides warmth positively but burns negatively. Expressions like 'red carpet treatment' convey positivity, while 'red herring' indicates something negative. The connection between colours and emotions in idioms reflects different mood aspects.

Similarly, being 'in the red' might figuratively imply being burned, while someone 'in the black' is probably safe, although this contradicts black's association with misfortune in other sayings. Expressions like 'out of the blue' or 'once in a blue moon' might not initially seem connected to the sky, but they are. People historically gazed at the sky (since that's where it's located physically), so anything appearing in the sky before modern inventions like airplanes would have been seen as surprising or uncommon.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, colour idioms are remarkable expressions that convey distinct cultural sentiments. Understanding these idioms encountered is crucial to grasp their intended meanings, which can be challenging, especially for foreign speakers when dealing with more complex or culturally specific idioms. This analysis delved into various English and Uzbek idioms, examining their intended meanings and specific colour

associations. It also involved cross-cultural comparisons, emphasizing both similarities and differences, ultimately revealing universal colour associations that transcend languages. Some idioms were further explained in light of these associations. Additionally, apart from natural associations, many idioms are rooted in historical events, exemplified by the explanation of 'blackout.' These idioms contribute depth to languages, provided they are used judiciously to ensure their intended meanings are conveyed accurately.

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