

## Manifestation of the Phraseological Units with Colors in English and Albanian

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Doi:10.5901/ajis.2013.v2n2p217

### Abstract

Phraseology can be defined as "the study of the structure, meaning and use of word combinations" (Cowie 1994). It embraces the view of language that lexis and grammar are inseparable". The basic units of analysis in phraseology are often referred to as phrasemes or phraseological units. Phraseological units are (according to Prof. Kunin A.V.) stable word-groups with partially or fully transferred meanings ("to kick the bucket", "Greek gift", "drink till all's blue", "drunk as a fiddler (drunk as a lord, as a boiled owl)", "as mad as a hatter (as a March hare)"). While according to Rosemarie Gläser, a phraseological unit is a lexicalized, reproducible billexemic or polylexemic words. We can find the meaning of a phraseological unit by one of its components (when it is motivated). In cognitive linguistics tradition, idioms are claimed to have conceptual motivation (cf. Lakoff 1987), on the other hand there are many phraseological units, the meaning of which cannot be found by knowing the meaning of one of its components (when it is not motivated). Its meaning should be traced by using the compositional analysis method. This method helps in need to discover the semantic meaning in the semantic field. In English as well as in Albanian language we have many phraseological units which have one of their components a word with colors. Learning with colors was a leitmotif of Learning English recently.

**Keywords:** Phraseological units, color idioms, conceptual motivation, compositional analysis method

### 1. Language, Phraseology and Culture

Beyond languages and linguistics, and the central role they play in the process of communication, nowadays it seems to be widely known among linguists and researchers that communication seems impossible if the speaker and the hearer do not share some basic knowledge and have at least a common referential framework (Austin 1955). Language and culture are thus seen as two similar interdependent systems (Nida 1999: 2-7), this means they influence each other. Culture represents a very important element in the communication process. At this respect, according to Luque & Manjón (1998), phraseology seems to be the discipline which best interprets and reflects the cultural framework of a whole society in the language, therefore it is also the field of study which can attempt to provide an explanation about stable expressions containing words loaded with a cultural meaning. Phraseological units play an important role in the language foundation and as such they need a special attention due to the fact that their meaning cannot be found if they are not motivated. We know that the motivation of the phraseological units is crucial to find their meaning, or when we want an explanation about the changes in meaning, or the process that a word group goes through before it becomes a phraseological unit. The motivation of the phraseological units is related to the historical and etymological traces, following the development stages of the words meanings.

The level of idiomaticity is the main characteristic which distinguishes the phraseological units ranging from transparent ones to the unmotivated or opaque phraseological units. People communicate with each other by using the language. A language cannot exist if it is not rooted in a cultural context. The way in which a language is organized defines the way of perceiving the world. Johnson (1981) claims that "cultural inheritance can make the reader misunderstand due to the cultural images related to the words or to the partial syntactical meaning of a context. There are many problems and difficulties especially when translating. According to Yowell and Lataiwish (2000:107) the bigger the cultural gap between the original language and the target language the more serious will be the difficulties. The translations from English into Albanian or vice-versa help understand the differences better as these countries possess different cultures and different past and background. Cultural problems comprise geographical elements, religious, historical, linguistic etc. For example in English we have 'kill the goose that lays the golden eggs' originates from the ESOPs' fable, in Albanian we would have 'Ngordhi ajo pulë që bënte atë vezë' so as we see we do not have a goose but

a chicken. To know a language it is important to know the culture, traditions, customs etc of the people where this language is spoken. Some scholars suggest that there are various channels through which is penetrated by culture. One is the cultural 'seme' (or semantic component), the cultural element constitutes part of the total meaning of the word or word-combination. The second channel is the cultural concepts. Cultural connotation can arise from the interpretation of concepts and sub -concepts. There is a close link between culture and phraseology. This is best revealed by proverbs and fully idiomatic set phrases, because they tend to rely heavily on images, traditions or habits, which are characteristic of a given culture.

## 2. Phraseological units with colors and the theory of the linguistic field

Phraseological units, or idioms, as they are called by most western scholars, represent what can probably be described as the most picturesque, colorful and expressive part of the language's vocabulary. While reading different papers I really liked the comparison in the sentence as below: "If synonyms can be figuratively referred to as the tints and colors of the vocabulary, then phraseology is a kind of picture gallery in which are collected vivid and amusing sketches of the nation's customs, traditions and prejudices, recollections of its past history, scraps of folk songs and fairy-tales. Phraseological units, (also called idiom), is a word group with a fixed lexical composition and grammatical structure; its meaning, which is familiar to native speakers of the given language, is generally figurative and cannot be derived from the meanings of the phraseological unit's component parts. The meanings of phraseological units are the result of the given language's historical development. There are several types of phraseological units, as follows. In phraseological concretions the literal and figurative meanings are totally unrelated, as in *u bë spec i kuq* ("he turned as red as a red pepper"; figuratively, "embarrassed") or *u bë dyll i verdhë* ("he turned green around the gills "; literally, "he became as yellow as the wax"). In this case we can have a translation of the phraseological units by a phraseological units. *U bë dyll i verdhë* which means 'one is ill' corresponds with the English equivalent he turned green around the gills which also means 'he is ill'. Other phraseological units have a meaning that is derived from the meaning of the component parts, as in 'me zemër të bardhë' ("with a kind heart"). The translation from Albanian into English is done by a non- idiomatic phrase. Other classifications of phraseological units according to type exist as well. They include classifications based on the restrictions in the selection of variable structural elements, those based on the fixed or variable composition of the word components, and those based on the degree to which the phraseological unit's structure and components are fixed. The aggregate of phraseological units differing in terms of meaning and structure constitutes a language's stock of idioms.

Analysis, linguistic descriptions or proper studies are done today through linguistics fields. In our paper which belong to a descriptive and comparison level it becomes more direct and necessary, as the connection between conceptual field – lexical field – semantic field more than anywhere is displayed on the meaning of language.

The theory of lexical and conceptual fields emerged in the years 20-30 of the XX century. The fundamental principle of this theory is that the meaning of the word can only be determined within the scope of all the meaningful words, denoting objects of the same gender. In our paper we are focused on lexical, conceptual fields of phraseological units denoting color. According to this theory, the meaning of the red could be determined within the scope of all words denoting color: green, yellow, white, black, orange etc...

Setting the borders of the lexical field in the phraseological units denoting color is simple, because the connection between them is clear. So all the concepts that make up the color spectrum form a conceptual field, the conceptual field of the colors like red, green, yellow, black, blue etc... However a conceptual field may cover a single lexeme, hence the noun red covers all the concepts of this color nuances: scarlet, cream, etc...

Thus, the red color for the Albanians symbolizes the flag and the blood of the martyrs who died for freedom. Even when you see an explanation in the dictionary, the illustration given in the examples is: the red flag.

It is known that phraseology is mainly seen as a creation of the people and history and as such it carries indication of the psychology and the mentality of the people, as well as its history and culture. Phraseological units, as a figurative transformation of free compounds brings enrichment and expansion in the means of expression, but also the great values in the expressive connotations, brings nuances and subtle meanings of the words used, the peoples' judgment about the things and people. We see that phraseological units denoting color contain information about people ideas, life, customs, rituals, ethics, behavior, culture, history, etc. They can provide information about the essential characteristics of people, groups, also of certain ethnicities.

### 3. Colors in phraseological units, and emotions from one culture to another.

Colors are present everywhere in our world. By the use of our eyes we are able to distinguish a great range of colors. They play an important part in our life. Everywhere we look we see colors and very often we ask each-other 'Which is your favorite color' etc... Colors do not only name physical objects; we give them a meaning and a certain connotation which is different in different cultures. The word is beautiful because it is colorful and that's why we say "a life full of colors" Anders Steinvall has conducted an interesting research on colors and emotions in the English language. By using the corpus bank of English he discovered 50 color phrases and 153 phrases which express emotion. He studied "which color categories are visible and clear from emotional point of view and vice-versa" (348). According to Steinvall 'english speaking people have a preference system on which they relate colors and emotions' (350).

**Table 1**

colors	love	happiness	surprise	Anger	sadness	fear	total
Black	0.65	0.65	0.00	16.13	<b>75.48</b>	7.10	100
White	2.53	18.99	0.00	<b>39.24</b>	5.06	34.18	100
Red	7.23	12.72	0.00	<b>55.49</b>	19.94	4.62	100
Yellow	3.70	<b>81.48</b>	0.00	3.70	7.41	3.70	100
Green	0.50	5.97	0.00	<b>88.06</b>	5.47	0.00	100
Blue	0.00	<b>54.90</b>	0.00	3.92	37.25	3.92	100
Brown	0.00	7.14	0.00	<b>50.00</b>	42.86	0.00	100
Grey	0.00	1.00	0.00	4.00	<b>75.00</b>	20.00	100
Pink	30.43	<b>43.48</b>	0.00	11.59	8.70	5.80	100
Orange	8.70	<b>73.91</b>	0.00	13.04	4.35	0.00	100
Purple	12.96	5.56	0.00	<b>57.41</b>	18.52	5.56	100

### 4. Colors Semiotic and the phraseological units.

#### 4.1 Black

The phrases with black are related to sadness, Steinvall explains that this color is the color of death and mourning in the European culture, American culture and I can say that it is the same in the Albanian culture. An example would be that the same expression where the word black is present has the same meaning in English and Albanian. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary of English idioms - a black day (for sb) means "a day when sth sad, unpleasant, disastrous happens to someone. Apart from this, the black color refers to break the law and illegibility e.g. black market, black economy, and blackmail. Illegible things bring these phraseological units like: blackball, a blackleg, and the black sheep of the family. This color prescribes the human feelings like: be in a black humor/mood, paint things in black color. The phraseological unit- give sb a black look is used to refer to anger. In Albanian according to the "Fjalor frazeologjik I gjuhës shqipe" we have a word for word translation of a black day and the meaning is the same "ditë e zezë" "black day" whose meaning is "a bad moment, sad times, disastrous situation, misfortune. Some Albanian phraseological units involving the black color are: e ka zemrën të zezë, e ka shpirtin të zi, e bën të bardhën të zezë, all these three phraseological units refer to someone who doesn't have a kind heart. while e piu e zeza, mori të zezën means that something ended up too badly or that someone is too sick. What is obvious from the table above it seems that the black color is not used to express positive connotation. However, there are some phraseological units which are neutral and do not suggest any negative connotation like: put something in black and white, black tie, he is not as black as he is painted.

#### 4.2 White

The white color is considered to be the opposite of the black which has the ability to transform something bad into something good. Lies, witches, magicians, all these have negative association but connected to the word white, they become harmless as in the examples shown: white lie, a white witch, white magic. There are some phraseological units with the white color, the meaning of which is negative, but they are a few in number for example show the white feathers, white livered. The white color also represents fear, anger and this is motivated by the color of the face when someone is

afraid shocked or ill. Some English expressions involving the white color are a white elephant- something expensive but useless and unwanted, a white Christmas – a Christmas when it snows, or white nights. To refer to the same meanings in Albanian there is an expression involving color to express that someone is sick in as white as a sheet, however the color is yellow, *u bë dyllë i verdhë* – which means he is pale. While many phraseological phrases involving the white color refer to good things like: *e ka shpirtin të bardhë* – he is a good person with a kind heart, *e ka zemrën të bardhë*- he is kind hearted, *të ha të bardhën e syrit*- when a person is brave and successful. As we can notice in Albanian language the meaning that the white color denotes are mainly positive and they refer to kindness.

#### 4.3 Green

It typically represents the greenness. Currently the most popular decorating color as green symbolizes nature. It is the easiest color on the eye and can improve vision. It is a calming, refreshing color. People waiting to appear on TV sit in "green rooms" to relax. Hospitals often use green because it relaxes patients. The word green is closely related to the Old English verb *growan*, "to grow". It is used to describe plants or the ocean. e.g *he/she has green fingers* –skilled as a gardener.

Green (Emotion): Sometimes it can also describe someone who is envious- green with envy, jealousy – the green-eyed monster (humorous) from Shakespeare's play *Othello*, or sick- green about the gills. The last phraseological units is the same even in Albanian, *u bë jeshil (në fytyrë)*, he/she turned green in his face- *u zbeh a u mavijos nga frika ose nga një sëmundje*, *u irnos nga inati*, *s'di c'të bëjë nga zemërimi*.

#### 4.4 Red

The color red is associated with heat, energy and blood, and emotions that stir the blood, including anger (a red rag to a bull, see red), embarrassment (as red as a beetroot, a red face) passion, and love. Fire is also strongly connected. associated with lust, passion, love, and having a great time as well (paint the town red, a red letter day). Red is also used when you do not have enough money (in the red, not have a red cent), or when it is about a special welcome (the red carpet), bureaucracies (red tape). In Albanian this color represent the martyr's sacrifice and the national flag. However the phraseological unit *u bë si spec i kuq* means the same as in English a red face, as red as a beetroot.

#### 4.5 Grey

Apart from the phraseological unit grey matter, where the color grey is used because of the neurons color in the brain, the ph units with this color suggest situations which are somehow gloomy, dark, and immoral. Grey area – it refers to a situation where the rules are not clear and it is difficult or impossible to say what is right or not. grey eminence – is used to describe a figure that stays backstage and invisible but has the power and influences in the decisions; it could also mean – a person who conspires. In the Albanian language I could not find any idiom with the word grey.

#### 4.6 Yellow

Yellow is a color that easily attracts attention and is regarded as a positive color, the color of the sun and the flowers. However it can be rather overpowering and irritating. A yellow streak – means cowardice; being afraid. In the Albanian language is the same when we say *u bë dyll i verdhë*; it means he is sick or afraid of sth. *Ta jep vezën pa të verdhë* it means that someone is very cunning and he can achieve what he wants. Another important field related to the yellow color are emotions like jealousy, envy, and hate. The idiom yellow journalism is the term used for the sensational articles and headlines in the newspapers. This expression originates in the 1890 to describe the tactics used by the two newspapers New York and The Journal in their competitions. The source of this term comes from a famous cartoon called yellow kid.

#### 4.7 Blue

It is a color which represents the sky, air, cold and the spiritual emotional distance. It can be associated with the suffering from the cold or from the lack of air like in the black and blue. The phraseological units out of the blue, out of the clear

blue sky, a bolt out of the blue, all the three of them mean unexpectedly something which happens suddenly and their motivation is clear. Feel blue means I feel in a bad mood. The only phraseological unit in Albanian is ka gjak blu which is translated by word for word blue blood which means aristocratic.

#### 4.8 Pink

This color is more related to the female gender as it is one of their favorite colors.

Tickle someone pink- Entertain someone very much

A pink slip- A letter that tells you, you are fired.

Pink collar jobs - Jobs popular among women (fashion designer, fashion blogger, model, nurse, cleaner etc.)

See pink elephants- see things that are not really there, because you are drunk

Have a pink/blue fit (informal) –be very angry

#### 4.9 Brown

Brown says stability, reliability, and approachability. It is the color of our earth and is associated with all things natural or organic. However the meaning in the following phraseological units is not as such.

Brown out - partial loss of electricity

Brown nose - slightly vulgar, refers to flattering someone in a position of power in order to obtain favors

In a brown study - seriously contemplating something

Browned off –when someone is very tired and fed up

Brown as a berry- for someone who is sun tanned

As we can notice there are colors as pink, brown, orange, purple which in Albanian language we cannot find any phraseological unit and we can say that the English language has a larger number of phraseological units where colors are one of the constituent part of an idiom. In Albanian language in the "Phraseological Dictionary of the Albanian Language" of the well-known academic Jani Thomai we cannot find any phraseological unit with the brown, purple, pink, orange.

### 5. Conclusion

Color concepts reflect both objective, inherent color characteristics and relationships, and the knowledge of color which is subjective and very often depends upon the peculiarities of a nation. The notion of color contains a complex of substantial information, accumulated by the language bearers. In their consciousness there exist a range of basic prototypical referents used while naming colors. Each language has its own prototypes as each nation bears peculiar stereotypes.

Different attitudes towards a color are reflected in the figurative expression, idioms, and proverbs of the language. Since they accumulate social-historical, intellectual, emotional information of a distinct national character. In addition, color terms provide abundant material for creating vivid visual images based on epithets, similes, metaphors, metonymies and hyperboles. Therefore should be integrated in the teaching and the learning process of a foreign language.

In fiction, color does no more function as a mere objective reality, but as an artistic category. In other words it becomes symbolical as it serves to indirectly denote a certain phenomenon, as it becomes a rich source of associations.

The major problem in reproducing the meaning of color terms is the necessity to render, as far as it is possible, a combination of visual denotative semes, serving as basis for associations, and the connotative meanings.

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