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LINGUACULTURAL PECULIARITIES OF COLOR SEMANTICS IN SPANISH AND UZBEK FOLK TALES

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Abstract: The scientific study of color semantics within the framework of cognitive linguistics and linguacultural studies allows for a deeper understanding of the unique worldview encoded in national folklore. This article investigates the linguacultural peculiarities of color terms (chromatisms) in Spanish and Uzbek folk tales. By employing comparative, contextual, and component analysis, the study explores how primary colors—specifically red, white, black, and green/blue—carry distinct symbolic weights that reflect the historical, geographical, religious, and social realities of the Spanish and Uzbek peoples. The research reveals that while some universal psychological archetypes exist across both traditions, the cultural-historical trajectories of Spain (influenced by Mediterranean, Roman, and Christian traditions) and Uzbekistan (influenced by Central Asian nomadic roots, Islamic philosophy, and Eastern cosmology) have produced highly specific semantic fields for colors. Quantitative data extracted from representative corpora of folklore show varying frequencies of color usage, highlighting the structural and conceptual differences in how these two unrelated languages map reality through oral narratives.

Keywords: Linguacultural studies, color semantics, comparative linguistics, folk tales, Spanish folklore, Uzbek folklore, chromatisms, cultural worldview.

Introduction

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is an organic repository of a nation's cultural heritage, values, and historical memory. Within the field of modern linguistics, the intersection of language and culture has given rise to anthropolinguistics and linguacultural studies, fields pioneered by scholars who recognized that linguistic structures reflect cultural worldviews [1]. One of the most expressive and culturally saturated layers of any language vocabulary is its color nomenclature. Color terms, or chromatisms, do not just designate wavelengths of light; in folklore, they function as powerful semiotic codes capable of compressing complex moral, religious, and social narratives into a single word [2].

Folk tales serve as an ideal canvas for examining these encoded meanings. As products of collective creativity, folktales preserve ancient mythological thinking and linguistic conceptualizations of the world that have been passed down through generations. While the physical perception of color is a biological universal common to all humans, the semantic mapping and emotional evaluation of colors are deeply relative and culturally contingent [3].

Comparing Spanish and Uzbek folk tales offers a compelling linguistic challenge. Spanish belongs to the Romance branch of the Indo-European language family, shaped heavily by Christian theology, Western European chivalric traditions, and Mediterranean geography. Uzbek, a member of the Karluk branch of the Turkic language family, reflects an Eastern, Central Asian worldview molded by nomadic heritage, Islamic philosophy, and ancient Zoroastrian substrata. Despite the

vast geographical and genealogical distance between these two languages, both cultures possess rich oral traditions where color plays a structural role in plot development and characterization. This article aims to identify, classify, and systematically compare the linguacultural peculiarities of color semantics in the folklore of these two distinct speech communities.

Methodology

To ensure factual accuracy and objective analysis, this study relies on a well-defined corpus of traditional texts. The Spanish source material consists of standard folklore collections, including *Cuentos populares españoles* compiled by Aurelio Macedonio Espinosa [4], which contains authentic oral narratives from various regions of Spain. The Uzbek source material is drawn from the multi-volume academic compilation *O'zbek xalq ertaklari* (Uzbek Folk Tales) [5].

The research methodology employs a multi-disciplinary approach incorporating several linguistic techniques:

- **Component Analysis:** Used to dissect the semantic structure of color terms into their denotative (literal) and connotative (emotional/symbolic) components.
- **Comparative-Typological Method:** Employed to detect cross-cultural parallels and divergent, idiosyncratic meanings specific to each linguistic community.
- **Contextual and Textual Analysis:** Applied to examine how the meaning of a chromatism shifts depending on its narrative environment, formulas, and associations with specific characters or objects.
- **Quantitative/Statistical Method:** Utilized to track the absolute frequency of primary color terms within a balanced selection of 50 tales from each culture, establishing empirical baselines for semantic dominance.

Results

The quantitative screening of the selected 50 Spanish and 50 Uzbek folk tales yielded distinct patterns in color frequency and distribution. In total, 247 occurrences of primary color terms were recorded in the Spanish corpus, while the Uzbek corpus presented 291 occurrences. The distribution of these occurrences across the primary color spectrum reveals specific stylistic preferences and cultural focus areas.

Color Category	Spanish Corpus Occurrences	Percentage (%)	Uzbek Corpus Occurrences	Percentage (%)
Black (*Negro* / *Qora*)	78	31.6%	92	31.6%
White (*Blanco* / *Oq*)	64	25.9%	85	29.2%
Red (*Rojo* / *Qizil*)	52	21.0%	46	15.8%
Green (*Verde* / *Yashil*)	38	15.4%	12	4.1%

Color Category	Spanish Corpus Occurrences	Percentage (%)	Uzbek Corpus Occurrences	Percentage (%)
Blue/Grey (*Azul*, *Gris* / *Ko'k*)	15	6.1%	56	19.3%
Total	**247**	**100%**	**291**	**100%**

The statistical data demonstrate that while black and white occupy the highest frequencies in both folklore traditions—owing to their fundamental role in creating binary oppositions (good vs. evil, day vs. night)—the distribution of chromatic colors like red, green, and blue varies significantly. Spanish folk tales show a significantly higher deployment of green (*verde*), whereas Uzbek folk tales rely heavily on the polysemantic color term *ko'k* (blue/grey/green), reflecting unique ecological and linguistic categorization systems.

Analysis and Discussion

The Semantics of Black (*Negro* and *Qora*)

In both Spanish and Uzbek tales, black represents the highest statistical frequency, serving as a primary marker for the negative pole of the archetypal moral binary. In the Spanish linguistic worldview, *negro* is inextricably bound to Christian concepts of sin, death, hell, and demonic forces. In Espinosa's collections, antagonistic entities such as the devil (*el demonio negro*) or cursed stepmothers are routinely cloaked in black, signaling spiritual corruption [4, p. 112]. Furthermore, black carries a heavy ritualistic association with mourning, grief, and tragic finality, which manifests when characters wear black attire to symbolize a state of profound loss or a curse [6].

In Uzbek folklore, the semantic field of *qora* is equally ominous but structurally broader. Beyond its moral alignment with evil forces—such as the *qora dev* (black giant/demon)—the term *qora* serves as a qualifier for physical severity, hardship, and social stratification. It signifies intensity or cruelty, as seen in expressions like *qora xabar* (black/tragic news) or *qora mehnat* (crushing, heavy labor) [7].

Crucially, in the Turkic nomadic tradition, *qora* also denotes earth, mass, or commonality, contrasting with royal or noble lineages [8]. Thus, while *negro* heavily emphasizes a spiritual, theological darkness, *qora* bridges the gap between mythological malevolence and earthly, physical harshness.

The Semantics of White (*Blanco* and *Oq*)

White serves as the structural antonym to black, registering high frequency in both corpora. In Spanish folk narratives, *blanco* is associated with purity, virginity, holiness, and divine intervention, rooted deeply in Catholic iconographic traditions. Fairytale heroines are frequently described as having skin "as white as snow" (*blanca como la nieve*), an aesthetic that conflates outer physical beauty with internal moral spotlessness [6, p. 45]. White animals in Spanish tales, such as a white dove (*una paloma blanca*), regularly act as messengers of God or embodiments of benign spirits that guide the protagonist through perilous journeys [9].

In the Uzbek linguacultural landscape, the semantics of *oq* expand into a foundational ethical and social category. The color *oq* goes beyond visual description to signify blessing, legitimacy,

and spiritual gratitude. A central formulaic phrase in Uzbek tales is *oq fotiha* (white/pure blessing), given by elders to departing heroes to ensure safe passage and success [10].

Additionally, *oq* is culturally linked to maternal milk (*oq sut*), which symbolizes the ultimate bond of loyalty and moral rectitude; a mother in an Uzbek tale may demand that a son prove himself worthy of the "white milk" she gave him [5, Vol. 2, p. 74]. Thus, while Spanish frames *blanco* through a lens of immaculate purity and visual aesthetic, Uzbek elevates *oq* into an active socio-cosmological blessing that actively protects and legitimizes the individual within the community.

The Semantics of Red (*Rojo* and *Qizil*)

Red exhibits a fascinating divergence in its emotional and symbolic evaluation between the two cultures. In Spanish folk tales, *rojo* (or its archaic variant *colorado*) is heavily dualistic. On one hand, it represents vital energy, passion, and health; on the other, it is the color of spilled blood, violence, and dangerous passion [11]. The presence of red often serves as a warning mechanism in the plot, signaling imminent bloodshed, physical transformation, or a confrontation with death.

Conversely, in Uzbek folklore, *qizil* is predominantly a positive, celebratory color associated with youth, beauty, and protection from evil forces. In wedding and ceremonial contexts described within these tales, red is the traditional color of joy and fertility [10, p. 55]. It is also linked to the element of fire, which in Central Asian folklore retains pre-Islamic, Zoroastrian protective functions. The phrase *qizil yuzli* (red/flushed faced) is used in Uzbek narratives to depict health, vigor, and youthful attractiveness, free from the darker, violent connotations of bloodshed that frequently accompany *rojo* in Western European contexts [12].

The Semantics of Green (*Verde* and *Yashil*) and Blue (*Azul* and *Ko'k*)

The most striking linguacultural asymmetry appears in the green and blue spectrum. In Spanish folklore, *verde* (green) has a robust presence (15.4%), symbolizing nature, fertility, hope (*esperanza*), and rebirth. However, it also possesses a unique idiomatically negative connotation linked to envy or uncanny, monstrous qualities—such as old witches or non-human entities described with green features [11, p. 89]. *Azul* (blue), though less frequent in everyday folk prose, carries a highly prestigious meaning, specifically through the fixed idiom *sangre azul* (blue blood), denoting royal lineage and aristocratic purity [4, p. 201].

In Uzbek, the linguistic mapping of this spectrum operates under entirely different cognitive boundaries due to the historical evolution of the color term *ko'k*. In older layers of the Uzbek language, *ko'k* is a polysemantic chromatism that simultaneously encompasses blue, grey, and certain shades of green [8, p. 142]. It is structurally tied to the sky (*ko'k*), representing Tengriist celestial divinity, infinity, and cosmic order.

When applied to horses—a central element in Uzbek heroic tales—a *ko'k ot* (grey/blue horse) is not merely an animal of a specific coat color, but a supernatural, swift creature capable of traversing worlds [5, Vol. 3, p. 18]. The specific term for green, *yashil*, appears with very low frequency (4.1%) in folk tales because the broader concept of vegetation, fresh grass, and life-giving nature is frequently absorbed by *ko'k* or expressed via the Persian loanword *ko'kalamzor* [7, p. 93]. This highlights a fundamental difference in how environmental realities—the arid and oasis landscapes of Central Asia versus the Mediterranean climate of Spain—shape linguistic color categorization.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of color semantics in Spanish and Uzbek folk tales demonstrates that chromatisms serve as vital indicators of national culture and historical psychology. While fundamental binary oppositions like black (evil, darkness) and white (good, purity) show high

statistical frequency and conceptual alignment across both traditions, their internal nuances remain unique. The Spanish color worldview is deeply structured by Christian theological ethics and a Western European aesthetic framework, where colors like *blanco* denote immaculate purity and *rojo* carries connotations of blood and danger. In contrast, the Uzbek color worldview preserves a powerful link to nomadic ecology, epic heroics, and Islamic-Zoroastrian syncretism, where *oq* manifests as a tangible societal blessing and *ko'k* serves as a vast, polysemantic cosmic category connecting the hero to the sky and nature. Ultimately, these color terms function not as arbitrary descriptions of physical traits, but as highly condensed cultural symbols that dictate plot structure and characterization within folk narratives.

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