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## **Lexical-semantic field and concept of «black color» in cognitive linguistics (on materials of the Azerbaijan language)**

**Abstract.** The article discusses the theory of «semantic field» and the concept of «Black color» from the point of view of cognitive linguistics. The analysis of the concept of «Black color» is also based on linguo-anthropological studies of color (B. Berlin, P. Kay). The interrelations between the semantic field of color and color terms with social, extralinguistic, and historical-geographical factors are noted. A comparative analysis of color terms in Azerbaijani, Russian, and English languages is given. The article concludes that the lexical and semantic field of the concept of "Black color" contains not only color terms, but also lexical units that denote the natural world, psychological condition, social practices, etc.

**Key words:** cognitive linguistics, semantic field, epos, concept of «Black color», lexical units, semantic symbolism, metaphorical meaning.

**W**hat is semantic field?

Scientists have been paying attention to the existence of lexical units since the 19th century. Russian scientist M.M. Pokrovski wrote in his research work in 1895: «*Words and their meanings don't live apart from each another but form different groups regardless of our thinking. The main reason for formation of such groups is either their similarity or dissimilarity*» [12, p. 14].

First of all, the theoretical ideas about the notion «field» were stated by German scientists Y. Trier and G. Ipsen and were called «semantic field». While studying term of «semantic field» theory was developed by Trier and that was met with great interest by linguists. According to the Trier's ideas, it is possible to form new words and word combinations in our minds using them. Only these sets of notions, their similar and changeable inner mechanisms were called «semantic field» by German scientist. In his opinion, whole lexical content of a language

is divided into semantic groups (semantic fields) and their combined elements form lexical-semantic field of a target language. Although such an approach had been criticized for its ideological nature, the typological, syntactical, stylistic and semantic investigations of lexical-semantic field were too productive. Of course, it is impossible not to mention the famous linguist G.S. Shur and his fundamental research work «*Field Theory in Linguistics*», when we talk about «semantic field». In his opinion, traditional combination of lexical units around different groups led to the investigation of linguistic phenomenon in close corporation with the term «field» [14, p. 11]. During the investigation of the term «field» Shur emphasized two main approaches: paradigmatic and syntagmatic. As a special language system «semantic field» has a complex structure. The structural framework of the field is constructed by the set of paradigmatic groupings. Paradigmatic relationships have a very colorful character: they can be represented by different types of lexical units and they

are often characterized with the term «hypocrisy». So, the same word can be a part of different lexical-semantic paradigms that are opposite according to their semantic features. For example, the word group that consists of «*tree, branch, leaf*» forms independent semantic field correlated by the features «body-part» and at the same time enters semantic field named «*Plants*». In this case, the lexeme «*tree*» acts as «hyperonym» for the words *oak, willow, linden* and etc.

It is possible to compare semantic field with conceptual system because both of them show the interpretation of the «digested» information. The adaptation of concepts to the «field» shows the development of elements within a system. During the adaptation of concept the emergence of new signs is considered as one of the mechanisms of their understanding. Famous linguist C. Layons emphasized that cognitivism became an essential part of linguistics both in semantics and in grammar [10, p. 113]. Apparently, when people find out the meaning of any word or a thing, the notion «cognitive model of the field» is too close to the notion «semantic field». Only this way «field» becomes one of the models and methods of information creation and process research [3, p. 67-69]. Approximately all scientists emphasize that it's impossible to form stable relationships between nations and languages without studying the structure of a target language. The obstruction on the way to effective understanding is a difference in thinking. One of the main methods of cognitive linguistics in solving target points is conceptual analysis.

The word «concept» was used for the first time in the article «Concept and a word» by S.A. Askold-Alexeyev in 1928. But it was not used as a linguistic term until the middle of the twentieth century. The author notes in the article that «concepts» or «general notions» have an ancient natural history. According to him, the mental mixture of undefined majority of homogeneous things during the thinking process is called «the concept» [1, p. 30]. This term is being widely used from the 1980-s. Russian lin-

guist Kubryakova defines the word «concept» as «a memory unit» or «a brain language» reflected in human psyche [8, p. 8-16]. But Azerbaijani scientist A. Nazarova explains it this way – «the expressed mental image, general idea or notion» [11, p. 121].

The way of understanding the world for people living in different time periods is closely connected with the analysis of linguistic concept. M.A. Krongauz notes that different lexemes, word combinations, sentences, texts and even whole works become the subject of conceptual analysis. We can understand the structure and components of the concept with the help of lexical and functional meanings of units that form concept and its etymology and methods of use [9, p. 85].

In linguistics, the approach to the field model in the context of conceptual analysis is currently considered as the most productive. Prof. L.M. Vasiliev gives two proofs to this thesis:

1. The relationships between the lexical-semantic field and the units included in it is considered as a basic knowledge for each person. It also proves that the difference in composition and structure of language units is one of the factors influencing on the differentiation of «the linguistic picture of the world».

2. Presence of mistakes in speech proves the objectivity of the field structure: when a person mixes an element of one micro field with the units of another one, he makes a slip of the tongue [15, p. 45-83].

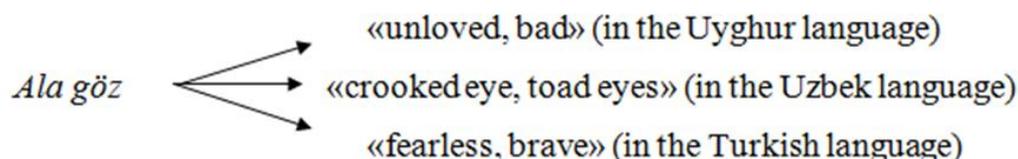
The cooperation of the semantic field and the conceptual system is possible, because both the semantic field and the conceptual system are the results of special assimilation of information in any society. So, conceptual field stands on the base of semantic field.

#### *Concept of «Black color»*

Colors play an important role in human perception of the world. From the linguistic point of view it is an interesting aspect that in people's mind the meaning of main colors and their shades may be sometimes the same or completely different. In 1969 anthropolo-

gist B. Berlin and linguist P. Key investigated basic colors and had a talk of the universality of colors in their book «Basic Color Terms». They compared different language groups with English and as a result stated the fact that not all the languages in the world have those eleven terms (colors) – *white, black, red, yellow, green, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange* and *grey* [2]. For example, in Bernimo tribe (New Guinea) *blue* and *green* are used interchangeably or there are no clear boundaries between *red, yellow* and *orange* in Vietnamese. The researchers attribute this shortcoming as a lag in development comparing with western languages. But in general, «the theory of basic colors» is accepted by people as universality, regardless of how color terms are developed in different languages.

Color terms have been formed in the lexical system of the Azerbaijani language in close connection with social, linguistic, extra linguistic and historical-geographical facts for a long time. That's why they can symbolize a lot of things in our mind as a concept. Color symbolism is a special language that allows you to create «picture of the world» more accurately. Even in psycho-



«Black» is considered as the most mysterious color in the modern world. This color really attracts peoples' attention with its mystique. It is no coincidence that «Black Square» painted by Kazimir Malevich in 1915 is believed as a mystery not only by art critics but also by all people. From this point of view we think that it'll be very productive to turn to term «black» for explaining the features of concept «color» in Azerbaijani. Let's start with turning to our folklore first.

In our language this color has always been considered as an opposite to «white» and their joint tandem have often been compared with life – *Həyat ağ-qaradır* (Live is black and white \ Черно-белая жизнь). If we pay attention to the development of

linguistics, it is believed that similar and different features of the same class objects and processes depend on color perception. For example, English sees one color – *blue*, Azeris and Russians at the same time name two colors – *mavi\göy* (Az.); *синий\голубой* (Rus.). However, the color «*cəhrayı*» in our language can be equated with two English terms – *pink\rosy*.

Concept «color» can be shown as a classic example of a semantic field. It consists of several color lines (*red-pink-crimson; blue-bluish* etc.). The word «color» acts as a common semantic component here. At the same time if we take a concept of a specific color as a common semantic component then the semantic field will be built around it. For example, the concept «White color» – *paint, light, snow, tidiness, wedding*, etc. Let's have a look at another example where the same color can be even used and understood differently inside one language group (Turkish) – in Azerbaijani the expression «*ala gözlər*» (light-blue eyes \ светло-голубые глаза) has a positive meaning «*big\charming*» but unfortunately, in some other Turkish languages it has different semantic symbolism:

«black» in the epos «Book of Dede Gorgud», we'll see that it is used both in positive and negative semantic symbolism. For example, the expressions «*qara göz, qara saç*» (black eyed, black haired \ черно-глазый, черноволосый) were widely used in describing charming appearance of Oghuz men and women. These facts allow us to distinguish the anthropological features of the Oghuz people.

If we pay attention to the usage of word «black» with proper names in the epos, we'll face to one of the main characters – «*Qaraca Çoban*» (Black shepherd \ Черный пастух). It was used in positive meaning – as *senior* or *courageous*. According to the

researchers' thoughts, interpretation of «black» in epos differs:

A.N. Kononov – «leader, senior» [7, p. 162]

A. Dzapharoglu – «fearlessness, power» [4, p. 72]

M. Kashgary– «title» for the khans [6, p. 221]

One of examples of usage of «black» in the negative meaning in the epos is a chapter where one of the leaders of the Oghuz tribe – Bayandur khan orders to build «a black tent» for those who have no child and «a white tent» for those who have a son or a daughter. Considering this fact we can say that the word «black» symbolizes «childless, hopelessness» here.

When we talk about colors in Azerbaijani, their semantic meanings and lexical-semantic field, it is impossible not to mention the poem «Colors» by Rasul Rza, one of the famous folk poets of Azerbaijan. This work is his individual view on the color understanding. He started his poem with the explanation of «white» and ended with «black» from the ethno-linguistic, philosophical, social and ethic points of view and did it in an extraordinary way. In his opinion «black» can be characterized this way:

*A treacherous enemy.*

*Fear which has hidden itself from consciousness.*

*The pain for eternal separation.*

*An outrageous lie.*

*Spiteful words.*

*Hair and eyebrows [13]*

The poet also compared his political views and injustices he had faced to during the Soviet period with «black» and he had masterfully hid them between the lines:

*The dead that should be alive.*

*The alive that should be dead.*

*Fettered tribes and nations,*

*whose languages have been driven out of the highest assemblies. [13]*

The figurative meanings of a word can be combined in one or more types in Azerbaijani depending on the type of semantic similarity. As metaphorical meanings of color terms express close, similar features of

the notion, they gather in one metaphorical line and correlate with specific nouns independently. Metaphorical meanings of color names express either positive or negative features of the events. For example, although the word «black» denotes *color* in nominal, it means *heavy, bad, mournful, terrible* in the combination «*qarafikir*» (black thought \ черные мысли) and *hypocritical, criminal, damned* in the combination «*qaraməslək*» (black aim \ черная цель). The listed metaphorical meanings show that the events are *bad, sad* and they are linked in one metaphorical line.

And now let's have a look at the definitions of word «black» in the new «Explanatory Dictionary of the Azerbaijani Language»:

1. the darkest of all colors
2. race in plural – *blacks*
3. chess figures in plural – *blacks*
4. dirty, filthy
5. inscription, letter
6. draft, rough copy, sketch
7. bad, dangerous, sorrowful
8. criminal, felonious
9. mourning
10. ordinary, stupid (person)
11. illiterate, inexperienced  
*qara fəhlə - black (illiterate \ inexperienced) worker*
12. unimportant, valueless
13. as a part of fruit and plant names  
*qaragavalı – plum*  
*qara istiot – pepper*
14. negativeness
15. ground
16. *sause* for the national dish «Plov» [5, p.45-47]

Besides, the word «black» can denote extra meanings in some other expressions. For example:

*qara torpaq* – black (prolific) ground – чернозем

*qara qəpik* – black (copper) coin – медная монета

*qara qızıl* – black gold (petrol) – черное золото (нефть)

*qara su* – black water (glaucoma) – глаукома

*qara məktub* – black letter (death notice)  
- похоронка

*qara bazar* – black (illegal) market –  
черный рынок

*qara yumor* – black humor – черный  
юмор

*qarabulud* – dark (thunder) cloud – гро-  
зовая туча

*qara yaxmaq* – to denigrate – очернить

Taking into consideration facts men-  
tioned above we can easily notice that some  
expressions remain unchanged in Russian

and English. Once again this proves that  
there is something common in languages.

Summarizing all given examples and  
explanations we can state that not only color  
terms but also: a) words indicating *race, un-  
sanitary conditions, appearance, poor quali-  
ty, psychological state, sterility, weather*; b)  
words defining *board games, education, en-  
gineering, law*; c) names of *natural re-  
sources, dishes, diseases, plants and fruits*  
have been gathered in the lexical-semantic  
field of the concept of «Black color».

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