

Iryna Humeniuk,

*Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor,
Head of the Foreign Languages Department,
State Agrarian and Engineering University in Podilya
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7905-9771>
Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine*

Phraseological units with color names by types of idiomaticity

Фразеологічні одиниці із кольороназвами за ступенями переосмислення

Summary. *In this article, we suggest to consider the phraseological units of modern English, which contain color names, in order to determine the function and role of color names in the formation of connotative meanings of English phraseology. Despite the fact that the vocabulary to denote colors, and their shades is a constant object of experimentation in various linguistic theories, the peculiarities of its use in the phraseological units of the English language are incompletely studied. At the same time, the study of color symbols through the prism of phraseology helps to obtain thorough information about the holistic picture of the world, stereotypes, and values that characterize a particular ethnic group, which in turn helps to clarify linguistic phenomena, their etymology, and semantics.*

The object of this study are the types of phraseological idiomaticity with an element to denote colors in modern English. The subject of the research is phraseological units with a component for color designation (11 basic color names) in modern English.

Since the de-actualization of a word in a phraseological unit is directly related to the idiomaticity of the expression itself, phraseology, which includes the name of the color, should be classified by types of idiomaticity, namely: phraseology-comparison, phraseology-metaphor, and phraseology-metonymy.

In the course of the research we established that the composition of metonymic, periphrastic and euphemistic phraseology includes color names with their primary (color designation) semantics. As a rule, color names carry an attributive content. They not only affect the overall value of idioms, but also perform a semantic function. Also on the material of the research it is established that depending on the type of reinterpretation tokens for color designation have a different degree of deactivation. Thus, in phraseological comparisons, color designations necessarily denote color, in metonymies this component also has a color feature, but in metaphors, where the highest level of reinterpretation, the degree of deactivation of the word is the highest one.

Key words: *phraseological unit, color names, types of idiomaticity, phraseological units-comparison, phraseological units-metonymy, phraseological units-metaphors.*

Анотація. У цій статті ми пропонуємо розглянути фразеологічні одиниці сучасної англійської мови, які містять у своєму складі колороніми, з метою визначення функції та ролі саме назв кольорів у формуванні конотативних значень фразеологізмів англійської мови. Незважаючи на те, що лексика на позначення кольорів та їх відтінків є постійним об'єктом експериментування в різноманітних лінгвістичних теоріях, особливості її вживання у складі фразеологічних одиниць англійської мови досліджені неповністю. У той же час вивчення кольоросимволів крізь призму фразеології допомагає отримувати ґрунтовну інформацію про цілісну картину світу, про стереотипи і цінності, які характеризують той чи інший етнос, що своєю чергою допомагає пряснити мовні явища, їх етимологію та семантику.

Об'єктом цього дослідження є типи переосмислення фразеологізмів з елементом на позначення кольорів у сучасній англійській мові. Предметом дослідження є фразеологічні одиниці з компонентом на позначення кольорів (11 базових кольоропозначень) у сучасній англійській мові.

Оскільки деактуалізація слова у складі фразеологічної одиниці безпосередньо пов'язана з переосмисленням значення самого виразу, фразеологізми, до складу яких входить назва кольору, доцільно класифікувати за типами переосмислення, а саме: фразеологізми-порівняння, фразеологізми-метафори та фразеологізми-метонімії.

У процесі дослідження нами встановлено, що до складу метонімічних, перифразистичних та евфемістичних фразеологізмів кольоропозначення входять зі своєю первинною (на позначення кольору) семантикою. Як правило, назви кольорів несуть атрибутивне навантаження. Вони не лише впливають на загальне значення ФО, а й виконують смислорозрізнавальну функцію. Також на матеріалі дослідження встановлено, що залежно від типу переосмислення лексеми на позначення кольору мають різний ступінь деактуалізації. Так, у фразеологізмах-порівняннях кольоропозначення обов'язково позначають колір, у метоніміях цей компонент також має кольорову ознаку, а ось у метафорах, де найвищий рівень переосмислення, ступінь деактуалізації слова найвищий.

Ключові слова: фразеологічна одиниця, колоронім, типи переосмислення, фразеологізми-порівняння, фразеологізми-метонімії, фразеологізми-метафори.

Introduction. Researchers today pay special attention to one of the important “components” of the linguistic picture of the world – phraseological one. Phraseological level is a rather complex language formation. Its place in the system of language levels (between lexical and syntactic ones) demonstrates this complexity and specificity. The complexity of the semantics of phraseological units and the specificity of phraseological meaning are associated with the peculiar nature of the designation of reality, which lies in the fact that the phraseological unit conveys a particular concept through a specific image using semantic mechanisms of rethinking, that is, through a metaphor, simile, metonymy, etc.

Thus, if we consider language as a semiotic system, which includes a system of symbols and syntax, then we must take into account both

symbolism and complexity in phraseology. It should be noted that we consider the division of the linguistic picture of the world, and accordingly the conceptual one, into components (lexical, phraseological, etc.) to be rather conditional.

The unresolved issues of modern phraseological science include the uncertainty of the term “phraseological unit” itself and the subject of phraseology. The theory of equivalence, the problem of component confluence, and the like remain unclear. Therefore, the scientific search in these areas continues.

Our attention will be focused on the components of phraseological units, namely those lexemes for which the denotative meaning is a sign of color. We will stick to the term “color name” in the research.

The perception of color by different peoples and its interpretation is not the same. Therefore, the richness of the colors of the surrounding world is reflected in a peculiar way in different languages. This means that the attitude to colors is entirely determined by the cultural and historical traditions and customs of a nation, that is, its history, culture, way of life, etc. [4, p. 28].

It is the study of phraseological units with a component for designating colors, covering a significant layer in the phraseology of the English language, that allows you to study the language most deeply and comprehensively and get acquainted with the culture, traditions and mentality of the native people.

The urgency of the research is stipulated by the need to determine the theoretical and practical significance of phraseological units with color names that reflect the characteristics of national apperception, and the study of their place in the linguistic picture of the world.

The scientific novelty of the paper is based on the fact that the lexical and semantic (including conotative) features of phraseological units with color names in the English language are comprehensively studied; the types of idiomaticity are described and analysed. The paper is based on the original glossary of phraseological units with color names which had been compiled by the author.

Methods. The main research methods are determined by the purpose, objectives and material of the study. To establish the semantics of the units of analysis, the method of dictionary definitions was used. In order to inventory and classify the units of analysis, as well as to interpret the results of this analysis, a descriptive method was used.

Results and Discussions. Phraseology is a fairly young linguistic science, which is the subject of scientific research of many modern linguists both in Ukraine and abroad. So, the study of the etymology of phraseological units was covered by C. Bally, V. Kunin, K. Barantsev; the

functions of phraseological units was studied by V. Kunin, V. Vynogradov, N. Amosov, Z. Zagirov; the phraseological meaning was analyzed by V. Lebedynska, S. Heorhieva, D. Maltseva; the structure of phraseological units was described in the papers of N. Amosov, V. Vynogradov; the issues of pragmatics were studied by A. Koroliou, etc.

Linguists who deal with the problems of modern English phraseology (for example, A.M. Baranov, D.O. Dobrovolskyi, V.A. Maslova [2; 4; 6]) are increasingly emphasizing the national and cultural specifics of phraseological units of a particular languages, as they reflect the traditions, customs, realities associated with legends, historical facts, literary sources, and so on.

Many researchers of phraseology distinguish three aspects of phraseological meaning: significant (information about the denoted object of reality), denotative (correlation of phraseology with the denoted object of reality) and connotative (attitude to the denoted, its subjective assessment) [5]. We share the opinion of O.V. Kunin that the ratio of components of phraseological meaning (significant, denotative and connotative) may diverse in different phraseological units [6, c. 219].

In linguistics, the problem of color names is considered in several aspects. The names of colors are the subject of scientific studies in the field of comparative linguistics (O. Koval-Kostynska, N. Pelevina), ethnolinguistics (A. Verbytska, H. Yavorska), psycholinguistics (L. Lysychenko, T. Kovaliova, S. Hryhoruk, R. Frumkina, I. Humeniuk), translation studies (R. Zorivchak, I. Kovalska), historical and descriptive lexicology (M. Chikalo, N. Bahilina, O. Panchenko, V. Murianov), semasiology (R. Alimpiyeva, O. Verbytska, A. Vysotskyi, L. Hrybova, O. Dziwak, A. Kyrychenko, V. Moskvych, Zh. Sokolovska, V. Frydrak), etc.

However, phraseological units of which color designation is an integral part, the topic is little known, and in our opinion it requires detailed study.

The purpose of the article is to identify and analyze certain patterns within the same type of phraseme, with a structural component of color name.

The research material was obtained by the method of continuous sampling from phraseological dictionaries of the English language.

The relevance of our research is due to the fact that, within the framework of modern linguistic science, the theoretical and practical meaning of phraseological units from color names, which reflect the peculiarities of national consciousness, has not yet been determined, and their place in the linguistic picture of the world has not been studied properly.

Color names, expressing vital concepts, play an important role in the emergence of phraseological units, and, consequently, in the development of the entire phraseological system of any language. Having significant

aesthetic capabilities (semantic richness and the ability to form new, expressive-figurative meanings), color names are actively used in the process of phraseological nomination.

Since the deactualization of the word in the composition of the phraseological units is directly related to the rethinking of the meaning of the expression itself, it is advisable to classify the phraseological units that include the name of the color according to the types of idiomaticity. We highlight phraseological units-simile, phraseological units-metaphors and phraseological units-metonymy.

Phraseological units-simile. In our work, we add 96 phraseological units-simile, which is 8% of the entire sample.

As noted by A.V. Kunin, in the sphere of phraseology, structural and semantic models of phraseological units can be used. This type of simulation is available in set comparisons, also called comparative revolutions. Adjective comparatives with the following structure “*as + adjective + as + noun (or phrase)*” are one of the most essential for the English language [6, p. 76–77].

Phraseologisms-simile include those based on partial idiomaticity. As V.M. Mokienko notes, the content of phraseological units is expressed almost explicitly in simile [10, p. 167].

This group contains such phraseological units as *as black as night, as black as a crow, as green as a grass, as blue as a badger, as red as a rose, as red as a lobster, as white as snow, as white as sheet, as white as death, as yellow as gold* etc.

As for such phraseological units, the first significant component (color name), as a rule, is used in the literal sense. According to the classification of types of lexemes proposed by A.V. Kunin, the name of the color in this case refers to real words [6, p. 71]. In phraseological units-simile, it is possible to single out the direct meaning of each component. For example:

Black: 1) black color – *as black as a crow’s wing, as black as a raven, as black as a coal, as black as ink*; 2) dark color – *as black as hell, as black as my hat, as black as pitch*; 3) gloomy, sad (about a man) – *as black as a thunder cloud, as black as sin, as black as thunder* – *хмара – хмарю* etc.

Among phraseological units-simile with the constituent *black* there is an expression *to work like a black* – *to work very hard*. Here the component *black* emphasizes the literal meaning of the first component.

Blue: Although the number of phrasemes that include the *blue* component is quite significant, there are only two phraseological simile with this component: *as blue as a badger* – *very blue* та *like blue murder* – *very fast*.

We can distinguish the meaning of *blue* color in the phraseological unit *as blue as a badger*. The component *blue* became part of this phrase due to the similarity of *blue* and *gray* colors.

But in the simile *like blue murder*, it is impossible to distinguish the semantics of any component. The general meaning of a phraseological unit has an emotional and intensifying connotation (compare: *to cry blue murder – to shout, to cry violently*).

White: 1) white color – *as white as a lily, as white as chalk, as white as ivory, as white as milk, as white as wool*; 2) pale – *as white as a ghost, as white as ashes*.

Phraseological units with the first meaning of the component *white* are positively colored. This is evidenced by another component (*a lily, ivory, milk*). The same phrases, which include the color name *white* in the meaning of “pale” have a negative connotation, which is also due to the comparative token (*ghost, ashes*).

Red: 1) red color – *as red as a poppy, as red as a beetroot, as red as a turkey-cock, as red as a lobster, as red as fire, as red as blood*; 2) red-faced, bluishful – *as red as a cherry, as red as a rose, milk and rose*.

Green: phrasemes *as green as a gooseberry* and *as green as grass* have the meaning “inexperienced”, “fresher”, due to the metaphoric use of the component *green*. If in the above-mentioned idioms one of the meanings necessarily indicated the color, then in the case of *green* in English it is not observed.

Brown: with this color name, there are only two phraseological simile recorded in phraseological dictionaries. *As brown as a berry – very dark, very tanned, of chocolate color* and *no such things as good small beer, good brown bread*. In the first example, the word *brown* from the etymological point of view retains its old meaning – “dark”.

The lexemes for designating color in comparative expressions necessarily have their original meaning (color). Only in two cases (*green, brown*) color names are used in a figurative sense. Comparative expressions are motivated idioms. They have a connection with the semantics of prototypes.

As for the structure of comparative idioms, as we see, it can be different. The most common is usually the pattern «*as + adjective + as + noun (or phrase)*», also such expressions can be used with a token *like*, there is a negative expression with the structure *neither ... nor (neither fish, nor a red herring)* and the degrees of comparison of adjectives are also used, which is especially interesting in the case of primary colors (*blue and better blue, grass is greener on the other side of the fence*), which, as is well known, are not used in English in degrees of comparison.

Phraseologisms-metaphors. According to many phraseologists, the most common type of phraseological reinterpretation is metaphorical. According to O. V. Kunin, this type of reinterpretation is “the transfer of a name from one denotation to another, which is associated with it on the basis of real or imaginary similarity.” [6, p. 124]. Phraseologisms-metaphors

are quite figurative, and due to V. M. Mokienko, the metaphor is “the factor of creating imagery” [10, p. 167]. This group of idioms is the largest in the English language. In our study, there are 834 phraseological units-metaphors, accounting for 78% of the entire card index.

In order to clarify the meaning of color in the composition of metaphorical phraseological units, it is worth considering these phrasemes as free phrases. After all, “most of the phraseological units were at first free phrases, the replacement of components was natural for them” [10, p. 16].

Black: *black year, black books, the black dog is on one's back, there's a black sheep in every flock, black frost, black in the face, black will take no other hue etc.*

The lexeme *black* was included in some free phrases in a figurative sense. In the reinterpreted sense of phraseology, this semantics of the component was taken as a basis. The following values of the lexeme *black* are clearly visible: 1) bad, horrible – *to depict in black colours – to present in a bad light, to paint smth. black – show in the worst tones*; 2) unhappy, complicated – *a black year – unhappy year, a black day – complicated, hard day*; 3) gloomy, bad – *black looks – gloomy, disapproving looks, to look black – have a gloomy, evil look etc.*

There is a group of idioms, which are united by the meanings “fall out of favor”. The phrase *the black book – the book where the names of persons subject to punishment are listed*. Such phrases as *black books – disfavor, to be in one's black books – to be despised by someone* connected to it. The negative value of this idiom is produced by the color *black* itself.

This color name in some phrases can mean «dishonesty», for example: *black conscience – unclean conscience, black market – unfair, speculative market*.

In the indicated phraseological units, the lexeme *black* provides expressions of negative connotation. In this case, the psychological interpretation of *black* plays a role, which always bears the imprint of death, grief, destruction.

In some set expressions, *black* is reduced to the meaning of “melancholy”. For example: *the black dog – melancholy, boredom and the black dog is on one's back – to be bored*.

The name of the color expresses something sinister associated with the dark forces in such phrasemes as *black art, black magic – diabolism, witchery and black sheep – villain, idler etc.* With the similar meaning the phrase *a black sheep* becomes a component of the following proverbs: *it is not a small flock that has not a black sheep and there is a black sheep in every flock*, which means “not without a freak in the family”. Due to O. V. Kunin, according to the old English belief, a black sheep is marked with the seal of the devil [6, p. 184].

Other phraseological units-metaphors with the component *black* will also contain “dark”, “sad” origin in their meanings. For example: *black beast – hated man*, *black ox has trod on his foot – he was in trouble*, *to look at the black side of things – look pessimistic*, etc. The metaphorical idiomaticity of some other phraseological units is based on the similarity both in color and in the characteristic feature of another component. The semantics of such idioms will not necessarily have a negative connotation. In the idiom *black eye – niðbume oko* the lexeme *eye* means not the eye itself, but some place around it, and *black* specifies its colouring (the area around the eye becomes dark). The phraseological unit *black wax* is similarly formed (the earth that becomes sticky after rain). The component *wax* means “sticky thing”, while the color name specifies the coloring of this substance.

Such phrasemes as *black-letter day – weekday*, *ordinary, unremarkable day*, *black flag – pirate flag*, *black in the face – crimson from anger*, *tension* got the color lexeme in its original meaning, however, the statements were figurative in general.

In phrasemes *black lie – deliberate lie* and *black ingratitude – complete ungratefulness* the color name brings some emotional touch to the meaning.

In the considered idioms there is a phraseological figurativeness, but this phenomenon is not characteristic of all phrases. For example, in the phrase *a black cap – a court cap worn by a judge at the time of sentencing* not figurate semantic transformation occurs by narrowing the value of the prototype [6, p. 133]. Narrowing of semantics is also observed in the phrase *a black swan – a rare phenomenon*, so the idiom indicates an anomaly. Thus, phraseological metaphors, which include the color name *black*, are mostly negative in their semantics. This token is meaningful for these phraseological units.

There is a certain percentage of idioms that contain two or more color names. The most common colors that occur simultaneously in phraseological metaphors are *black* and *white*.

Most often you can find such phrases in which color names came in their original meaning, denoting color. For example: *black hen lays a white egg*, *black and white*, *in black and white*, *to call white black; to beat somebody black and blue*, *the Red, White and Blue – English official flag* (due to its colors).

We can observe psychological interpretation of color names in the following phraseme *every white has its black, and every sweet sour – everything has its downside* (one can find some kind of evil (black) in everything that is pure, unblemished (white)).

Thus, in metaphorical phraseology, due to the highest degree of idiomaticity of the components, the meaning is expressed implicitly. But

there are trends in the use of color in both direct and figurative (including psychological) meanings.

The semantics of color names is either meaningful, or significantly affects the general interpretation of idioms in all cases of the formation of the meanings of phraseological units. The exception is single phrasemes with the component *blue*.

Among all groups of phraseological metaphors with tokens denoting color, the largest number are those in which the name of the color is included in the literal sense. The meanings associated with the interpretation of color are found in the idioms with the following color names: *black, green, rosy (pink), brown, purple, partially white*. And the phrasemes with the lexemes *blue, yellow* and *gray* do not contain psychological semantics. As for *red*, its psychological interpretation is directly related to the color feature.

Phraseological units-metonymy. Phrases of this type are based on metonymic interpretation, which according to O.V. Kunin is the transfer of “a name from one denotation to another, which is associated with it by contiguity” [6, p. 124]. Since metonymy is based on the real connection of the object of nomination with the object it denotes, the reinterpreted meaning of such phraseologies is associatively connected with the literal meaning of the components. Within metonymy, we will consider periphrases and euphemisms. Although the boundary between them is quite blurred. Thus, in our card index there are 150 phraseologies-metonymies, which is 14% of the whole sample.

Several groups can be distinguished among the actual phrasemes-metonymy:

1) phraseological units for denoting persons through the element of clothing:

– outerwear (coat, jacket, shirt): *black coat – priest, red coat English soldier, blue-coat boy – student of a noble school, black shirt – fascist, blue jacket – sailor of the British Navy, black gown – Catholic priest;*

– hats: *red hat – cardinal, blue bonnet, blue cap – Scotsman;*

– accessories: *red tab – staff officer.*

All of these expressions are related to the wearer of a particular garment. Clothing in this case is an element that stands for the whole.

Color names here act as meaning-forming components, due to which the semantics of these idioms is distinguished (compare: *black coat, red coat* – both idioms possess the lexeme *coat*, therefore, it is the token to denote color that is semantic).

2) idioms denoting people, which include color, which means the color of clothing in general: *the light blues – Cambridge students at sports competitions, the dark blues – Oxford students at sports competitions, gray friar – Franciscan monk, black friar – Dominican monk* etc.

Like the previous group, the names of colors have their original meaning here and are used as an integral part of a holistic concept.

3) expressions that denote non-beings; their components are part of the object that, as a result of idiomaticity, has become in the center of the semantic core of this phraseological unit: *the green cloth – billiard table, green room – artistic dressing room – their walls used to be green, black bottle – poison – the name of the vessel is used instead of the contents, black letter – Old English Gothic font, black letter book – books with Gothic font, white letter – Latin font* etc.

Periphrasis is a stylistic figure that consists in replacing the name of an object (or phenomenon) with a description of its most essential features or pointing to their characteristics [9, p. 455]. Color name, as an integral part of the phraseology, mostly indicates a characteristic feature of the subject and is therefore used literally. The following paraphrases occur with the names of colors: *yellow metal – gold, white fuel – hydro-power, black gold – oil, black diamonds – coal, grey matter – brain* etc. These expressions mean substances. There are also those that mean the animal world: *the little gentleman in black velvet – mole, the gentleman in brown – bug*. There are also periphrases to denote objects and phenomena: *the long green – money, green stuff, green meat – vegetables, greenery, the blue blanket – sky*. Some idioms denote people *priest of the blue bag – attorney, knight of the green cloth – gamester, black-coated workers, white-collared workers – labor intelligentsia, the red-coated gentry – British soldiers* etc.

We came across the Shakespeare's own periphrasis – *green-eyed monster – jealousy*.

As for euphemisms, it is a linguosocial phenomenon due to the conditions and nature of communication. They can be considered from a psychological point of view. Such phrasemes as *the black man* and *the gentleman in black* name the devil. In such idioms, *black* symbolizes the world of darkness, where Satan reigns.

So, color names are included to the composition of metonymy, periphrastic and euphemistic phraseological units with their primary (denoting color) semantics. As a rule, color names are attributive. They not only affect the overall meaning of idioms, but also perform a semantic differentiating function.

Conclusions. The analysis of phraseological units by types of idiomaticity allowed to reveal certain regularities of semantics of color names within one type. They are as follows:

1) to the vast majority of phrases with tokens to denote colors, these tokens came in their original meaning, denoting color;

2) a certain percentage is made up of such phraseological units containing the color names that have a psychological sense. But in some

cases, the psychological interpretation is not taken into account at all, the color name can have a literal or figurative meaning;

3) depending on the type of idiomaticity, lexemes for denoting color have a different degree of deactualization. In phraseological units-simile, color names necessarily denote color, in metonymy this component also has a color feature, but in metaphors, where the highest level of idiomaticity is observed, the degree of deactualization of the word is the highest;

4) the names of colors not only affect the general meaning of the idiom, which is quite natural, but also in some cases perform a semantic differentiating function.

The problem of studying the features of phraseological units with color names remains relevant. We see prospects for further research in comparative and cognitive-lexicographic studies of phraseological units with color names names in several unrelated languages; individual-authorial and gender peculiarities of coloured idioms, etc.

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