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Pragmatic Aspects of Color-Expressing Lexemes: A Comparative Study of English and Uzbek

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the pragmatic features of color-expressing lexemes, which play an important role in shaping emotional, cultural, and evaluative meanings within communication. This study examines how color terms in English and Uzbek operate beyond their literal sense and acquire contextual meanings influenced by culture, social norms, and the speaker's intention. Using a qualitative comparative method, the research analyzes examples from literary texts, idioms, proverbs, and humorous discourse. The analysis identifies the emotional, metaphorical, and evaluative roles of color lexemes, revealing how they contribute to meaning-making in specific speech situations. The findings show that English color terms often reflect psychological states and symbolic associations, while Uzbek color lexemes carry strong socio-cultural, moral, and community-based connotations. Despite these differences, both languages demonstrate that colors function as pragmatic tools that shape the listener's perception and guide interpretation. The study concludes that color expressions serve as culturally embedded markers of attitude, evaluation, and identity, offering valuable insight into how linguistic communities conceptualize the world through color.

Keywords: Pragmatics, color-expressing lexemes, speech act, linguoculturology, comparative study, context.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21st century, Uzbek linguistics began placing the human factor at the center of linguistic research. The creation of speech, the propositional structure of its units, and the interpretation of meaning increasingly came to be viewed as inseparable from human cognition, culture, and national worldview. As a result, understanding any utterance or message – its effect, depth, and interpretation–was shown to depend not only on linguistic form but also on situational context, the speaker's psychological state, and broader social relations. This shift revealed the presence of linguistic problems that could not be resolved purely within traditional linguistic frameworks and required interdisciplinary collaboration or the emergence of entirely new subfields. One such field is pragmatics**,** a branch of linguistics that examines how language functions in real-life communicative situations–how linguistic forms operate in interaction, how meaning is shaped by context, and how speech influences interlocutors. Pragmatics studies language use within the communicative environment and considers individual characteristics such as age, gender, social status, and professional background. Functionally, it investigates how language is used to achieve specific communicative purposes, such as influencing the listener or obtaining information. It recognizes that the meaning of an utterance varies according to the speech situation and that listeners interpret meaning not only through linguistic form but also via contextual, cultural, and psychological cues. Since pragmatics consistently highlights the human factor and the speech situation, it is closely connected to psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and stylistics–fields that also explore different aspects of the dynamic relationship between language and human behavior.

Pragmatics plays an important role in effective foreign-language teaching and learning, in translation–particularly in accurately conveying the author's intention–and in intercultural communication, where a proper understanding of the relationship between addresser and addressee is essential.

Pragmatics emerged in the second half of the 20th century as a response to the need to study language not only as a structural system, but also as a tool of communication and influence. Its theoretical foundations were laid by scholars such as Ludwig Wittgenstein**,** J. L. Austin, and Paul Grice. American linguist Charles Morris, regarded as one of the founders of pragmatics, proposed a broad theoretical framework that viewed language as an instrument of communication and action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Western linguistics, the theoretical foundation of pragmatics was shaped by the research of J. L. Austin (1962), J. R. Searle (1969), G. Leech (1983), G. Yule (1996), N. Fairclough (1995), A. Wierzbicka (1996), and G. Lakoff & M. Johnson (1980). The works of these scholars address key issues such as the communicative function of language, speech act theory, metaphorical cognition, and discourse analysis. In Russian linguistics, the studies of M. Yu. Oleshkov and I. Susov have further enriched the theoretical basis of pragmatic analysis. In Uzbek linguistics, significant contributions have been made by A. Nurmonov, N. Mahmudov, Sh. Safarov (2008), M. Hakimov (2001), and N. Qozoqova (2022). Their research explores the pragmatic aspects of Uzbek texts, particularly artistic discourse. Folk oral heritage, especially the *askiya* genre examined by H. Do‘stmatov (2022), is also recognized as a rich source for pragmatic analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative and comparative approach, focusing on how color-expressing lexemes function in real communicative situations in English and Uzbek. The data were collected from literary texts, idioms, proverbs, and humorous discourse, including askiya samples and widely used phraseological units. Color terms identified in these sources were examined according to their contextual roles, emotional and evaluative meanings, and cultural associations. Each

example was interpreted within the speech situation in which it appears, allowing the study to reveal how pragmatic meaning is shaped by context, intention, and social factors. After identifying and describing these features separately for each language, the findings were compared to determine both common and language-specific patterns. This methodological approach makes it possible to understand color lexemes not only as lexical units but also as culturally influenced tools of communication that reflect the worldview of each linguistic community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Pragmatics is one of the branches of linguistics most closely connected to the human factor. As G. Yule states, "pragmatics studies the relationship between linguistic forms and the users of those forms." In other words, this field analyzes meaning not only from lexical or grammatical perspectives but also in connection with the speaker's intention, purpose, and the social situation in which communication takes place. According to Yule, among the three levels of language–semantics, syntax, and pragmatics–only pragmatics fully incorporates the human factor. Therefore, pragmatics enables us to study not only the dictionary meaning of words but also what the speaker intends to communicate, why the utterance is produced, and what effect it is meant to achieve.

Pragmatics is particularly useful because it reveals the speaker's intentions, assumptions, emotions, and social motivations. At the same time, Yule warns that one of the complexities of this field is the difficulty of objectively analyzing human meanings, as an analyst must often infer the implied meaning (implicature) that the speaker does not explicitly articulate.

The pragmatic nature of linguistic units is one of the most urgent areas of study in contemporary linguistics. According to the speech act theory developed by J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle, every speaker acts with a communicative purpose, and every utterance performs a speech act. Therefore, color-expressing

lexemes also carry specific pragmatic functions in real communicative situations. G. Leech defines the essence of pragmatics as "the study of meaning in relation to the context in which a person communicates." Color expressions likewise change their pragmatic force depending on the context in which they are used.

Consequently, the meaning and communicative function of color-related expressions often extend beyond their literal definitions. Through them, speakers indirectly convey emotional attitudes, evaluations, or communicative intentions. For example, in English, "to feel blue" means "to be sad," and "green with envy" means "to be overcome with jealousy." In Uzbek, expressions such as *ko'ngli qora bo'lish* ("to harbor ill intentions") and *yuzida oq yorug'lik yo'q* ("to lack virtue or honor") express emotional states or moral judgment.

The evaluative and expressive functions of colors are highly active in discourse. This feature becomes especially noticeable in discourse analysis. According to N. Fairclough, language serves as a means of expressing and reinforcing social ideologies and beliefs. Similarly, color expressions encode certain social or cultural connotations and may strengthen ideological impact in context. For instance, English expressions like "black market" or "red alert" carry strong evaluative meanings about social situations. Uzbek equivalents such as *qora bozor* (an illegal or unofficial market) or *oq yo'l* (wishing someone a good journey or success) express social or moral connotations within culturally specific frameworks.

A. Wierzbicka emphasizes that the meaning of linguistic units is directly connected to cultural and communicative context. She argues that shared cultural knowledge between speaker and listener forms an essential part of pragmatic interpretation. From this perspective, the meaning of color-expressing terms is also shaped within culture-specific pragmatic contexts. For example, the English phrase "black humor" can be neutral or even positive in tone, while the Uzbek equivalent *qora hazil* generally carries negative connotations or in Russian *чёрныйюмор*.

The main terminological framework of pragmalinguistics consists of the following key concepts:

Speech act
An action performed through language during communication. Speech acts include declarations, questions, commands, and requests. The participants' relationship, social status, communicative situation, strategies, personality traits, gender features, and internal intentions all contribute to shaping the meaning of a speech act. According to M. Hakimov, a speech act consists of "general meanings arising from discourse or text," while Sh. Safarov defines it as "the speaker's linguistic address to the listener in a particular environment and with a specific purpose."

Speech acts include several components:

1. **Actant** (speaker)
2. **Remark** (the uttered statement)
3. **Addressee** (listener)
4. **Illocutionary aim**
5. **Form of act** (linguistic realization)

Speech acts can be locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, direct or indirect, and socially conventional.

Implicature
The hidden meaning conveyed indirectly through linguistic units within a speech act. The interpretation of implicature is tightly linked to context and the communicative situation.

The degree of **politeness** expressed during a speech act significantly influences the relationship between the interlocutors. Standards of politeness differ across languages and cultures, and violating these norms may lead to misunderstanding or conflict. The table below illustrates Uzbek phraseological units containing color terms and their pragmatic connotations.

Table 1. *Semantic-pragmatic interpretation of color expressions in context*

No.	Color term	Expression	Context (pragmatic situation)	Meaning (connotation)
1	White	*Oq niyat*	Opening a conversation, offering good wishes	Good intention, purity
2	Black	*Qora kunlar*	Describing difficult life circumstances	Hardship, grief, suffering
3	Black	*Qora ko‘zli*	Used in traditional Uzbek poetic imagery	Beautiful, charming (usually referring to a woman)
4	Green	*Yashil hayot, yashil tabiat, yashil olam*	Ecological or environmental texts	Vitality, renewal, nature
5	Red	*Qizil chiroq yoqildi*	Warning situations, signals of danger	Stop, caution
6	White	*Oq yuvib, oq tarash*	Defensive speech, justifying someone	To defend, to present as innocent
7	Black	*Qora ko‘ngil*	Negative evaluative contexts	Arrogant, spiteful, ill-intentioned person
8	Blue	*Ko‘kka sapchimoq*	Sarcastic or ironic speech	Showing off, acting superior
9	Red	*Qizil galstuk*	Soviet-era or official contexts	Ideological/educational symbol
10	Golden	*Oltin qo‘l*	Widespread Uzbek idiom	Masterful, highly skilled person
11	Blue	*Ko‘kdan tushganday bo‘ldi*	Expressing sudden surprise	Amazement, unexpectedness
12	Black	*Qora ro‘yxatga tushmoq*	Official or disciplinary contexts	Blacklisting, punishment
13	Golden	*Oltin vaqt / oltin davr*	Literary or formal style	Most precious or ideal time

In many cases, speakers employ color terms within speech acts to achieve specific pragmatic goals. The following examples, drawn from *Askia* performances – a traditional Uzbek genre of humorous dialogue – illustrate how color lexemes acquire context-dependent meaning and serve as tools of implicit evaluation and wordplay.

Example 1. *Uzum* (grapes)

Ibrohimjon: *Tagida oftob ko'rinmaydi desam, haliyam xomtok qildirmagan ekansiz-da.*

Sotvoldi aka: *Toklaringiz pala-partish desam, kuzda xodalatmagan ekansiz-da.*

Ibrohimjon aka: *Uzumga nega shira tushibdi desam, bahorda yarmigacha oqlatmagan ekansiz-da.*

("Grapes" payrovi, Askiya, p. 36)

Ibrohimjon jokes that there is no sunlight under the vines, hinting that they are still "raw." Sotvoldi counters that the vines are disordered, while Ibrohimjon adds that the grapes were not "whitened" properly in spring.The humor revolves around agricultural vocabulary (*tok*, *xomtok*, *oqartirmoq* "to whiten") which metaphorically points to the speakers' nicknames and personal traits. The verb *oqartirmoq* ("to whiten") evokes *oq* ("white"), which through metonymic transfer refers to *pes* ("leper"), sometimes contrasted with *qora* ("black"). The color imagery thus performs an illocutionary function of teasing known only to insiders familiar with the speakers' identities.

Example 2. *Imorat* (construction)

Olimjon aka: *Chalaligi uchun usta Ibrohimjonga arz qilgan edik, lekin u kishi o'zi qurgan devorga suyanib o'zini oqlaganicha ketaverdi, oqibatda siri ko'chgani qoldi.*

Qodirjon aka: *Qoyilman, sarkor, gaplaringiz binoyi;*

("Imorat" payrov, Askia, p. 47)

Olimjon remarks that master Ibrohimjon defended himself against criticism "by leaning on the wall he built," leaving "the plaster peeled off." Qodirjon responds admiringly. Lexemes such as *oqlamoq* ("to justify"/"to whitewash"), *devor* ("wall"), and *siri ko'chmoq* ("the plaster peels") belong to a single semantic field of construction, yet simultaneously convey moral evaluation – "to whitewash oneself." The color white acquires an evaluative-pragmatic dimension, merging technical and ethical meanings.

Example 3. *Chorvachilik* (dairy farming)

Abdullajon aka: *Planni bajarmading, deb ayblashga siz ham ustasiz, bultur aytmovdimmi, qo‘l bo‘lmayapti, separator olib beringlar deb. Shunaqa bo‘laversa, gaplaringizda ham jir qolmaydi.*

Rahmatqul aka: *Gap yog‘lashga qolganda ayroningiz achimaydi, ferma ishiga mudir ham aralashadi-da, uvib o‘tirasizmi oqlik solingan qattiqqa o‘xshab.*

(“Chorvachilik” payrov, Askia, p. 27)

Abdullajon reproaches his colleague for inefficiency, while Rahmatqul replies sarcastically, comparing him to “solid yogurt whitened too much.” The word *oqlik* (“whiteness”) simultaneously denotes a dairy product and rhetorical purity, enabling double meaning**.** The play between literal and figurative whiteness produces humor and conveys pragmatic criticism.

Example 4. Football teams as color wordplay

Muhammadtohir: *Sho‘r tanni nima qilaman. Undan ko‘ra, sho‘rpeshonasi yaxshi-da. Sho‘r tanli o‘yinchilar bir qarasangiz o‘z jamoasida o‘ynaydi, bir qarasangiz na safda ko‘rinadi.*

Alijon aka: *Na safda ko‘rinsa ham Bunyodkor mehnat otryadida mehnat qilayotgandir-da, suvog‘iga qum topolmay, oxiri qizil qumga boraman deb.*

Muhammadtohir: *Nima ham deymiz, axir jamoasida tartib qattiq bo‘lsa, qo‘lida metall, urgisi keladi-da.*

The dialogue refers humorously to football clubs “Sho‘rtan,” “Nasaf,” and “Bunyodkor.” The phrase *qizil qumga* can mean either “to the red sand” or the team *Qizilqum*, depending on pronunciation.

Phonetic similarity creates a pun: when pronounced with a pause (*qizil qumga*), it means “to the red sand”; pronounced together (*Qizilqumga*), it denotes the football team. The color “red” thus serves a phonosemantic trigger for humor**.**

Example 5. *Qushlar* (Birds)

Tursunbuva: *Nega Olimjon akaning patlarini yulib olyapsiz? U musichadan ham uvol-ku!*
Qodirjon aka: *G‘urraki chiqib qoldi!*
Olimjon aka: *Qodirjon aka bo‘lar-bo‘lmasga shunaqa chittak otaveradilar-u, o‘zlari boy o‘g‘liga o‘xshab qizil ishton kiyib yuradilar.*
(“Qushlar” payrov, Askia, p. 31; Do‘stmatov)

Tursunbuva scolds others for mocking Olimjon, calling him “innocent as a dove.” Qodirjon responds irritably, and Olimjon jokes that Qodirjon himself behaves “like a rich man’s son wearing red trousers.”Terms such as *musicha* (dove), *chittak* (finch), and *qizil ishton* (“red trousers”) build a metaphorical chain. The color “red” functions as a cultural marker of boldness or shamelessness, reinforcing the humorous tone.

Example 6. *Olma-anor* (Fruits)

Komil qori: *Nariga qochma, behi kel, Buxorjon.*
Aka Buxor: *Bor-yey. Ariqqa tushib ketdim, kerak bo‘lsam, o‘zing kelib yig‘ishtirib ol mani.*
Komil qori: *Tezroq kela qolgin, sen o‘zing qip-qizil anorimsan…*

Komil qori affectionately calls his interlocutor “my bright-red pomegranate,” implying that he is overly emotional. The adjective *qip-qizil* (“bright red”) conveys emotional excess and mild sarcasm. The color red pragmatically signals passion and instability within playful teasing.

Example 7. *Kimyoxon* (Chemistry)

Maxsum aka: *Xayriyat, kimyo bizga juda o‘g‘it bo‘lib qoldi. Kimyoxonning qo‘liga tushsak, biz ham ko‘karadiganga o‘xshaymiz.*
Kimyoxon: *Kimyoga ishingiz tushmapti, qarab turing, boshingiz osmongaham yetadi. Oziq-ovqatlarni kimyoxon ko‘paytirib qo‘ydi, deb maqtanavering.*
(“Kimyoxon” payrov, Askia, p. 41)

Maxsum jokes that chemistry has become so useful that if the chemist handles them, they too will "turn green." Kimyoxon responds that chemistry can make even their heads "reach the sky."

The verb *ko'karmoq* ("to turn green/blue") contains two contrasting meanings:"to flourish, to grow" (positive, linked to *green*);"to be beaten black-and-blue" (negative). This duality enables pragmatic humor through semantic ambiguity. Although color terms do not alw ays carry the central implicit meaning, they actively participate in the creation of wordplay, irony, and pragmatic inference in *askia* performances. Their use demonstrates how color imagery functions beyond description, revealing emotional stance, social evaluation, and humor through cultural conventions deeply embedded in the Uzbek communicative tradition.

In the next stage of the analysis, it is necessary to move from the pragmatic behavior of color lexemes to the broader associative networks that stand behind them. Each color term evokes a set of culturally familiar objects, natural phenomena, and symbolic references that speakers automatically rely on during communication. These associations shape the way a color word functions pragmatically: they influence emotional reactions, guide metaphorical meanings, and help explain why certain expressions become conventional in one language but not in another. By identifying these associative nominative fields, we gain a clearer understanding of the cultural foundations that support the pragmatic uses described earlier. The following table presents these associative fields for the main color terms in Uzbek and English and highlights the semantic features that tend to be most prominent in each culture.

Table 2. *Associative nominative fields of color terms*

Color Term	**Associative Nominatives (Uzbek)**	**Associative nominatives (Eng)**	**Active semantic feature**
Blue (*Ko'k*)	*osmon, suv, dengiz, okean*	sky, water, sea, ocean	sublimity, serenity
Red (*Qizil*)	anor (va boshqa meva-sabzavotlar), olov, qon	pomegranate (and other fruits/vegetables), fire, blood	ripeness, intensity

Green (*Yashil*)	*daraxt, bog‘, maysa, barg, bodring, brokoli, petrushka (va boshqa ko‘katlar)*	tree, garden, grass, leaf, cucumber, broccoli, parsley (and other greens)	life, renewal, nature
Yellow (*Sariq*)	*quyosh, bug‘doy, limon, asal, banan, oltin*	sun, wheat, lemon, honey, banana, gold	warmth, prosperity
White (*Oq*)	*qor, sut, paxta, shakar, qatiq, oy*	snow, milk, cotton, sugar, yoghurt, moon	purity, innocence
Black (*Qora*)	*ko‘mir, tun, neft*	coal, night, petroleum	mystery, darkness, negativity
Brown (*Jigarrang*)	*yong‘oq, qahva, daraxt qobig‘i, yer*	nut, coffee, tree bark, earth	stability, solidity
Gray (*Kulrang*)	*kumush, kul*	silver, ash	neutrality, melancholy
Pink (*Pushti*)	*flamingo, yangi pishgan olcha*	flamingo, freshly riped cherry	delicacy, grace

Color lexemes in English literary discourse frequently serve pragmatic functions beyond mere description. They often reveal emotional states, moral attitudes, or social values embedded in the context of communication. The following examples demonstrate how English authors have used color terms to convey such meanings.

Example:

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock. The meat it feeds on.

(William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 3, Scene 3, Line 165)

In this well-known metaphor, green pragmatically expresses **jealousy** rather than a physical color. Shakespeare uses the cultural association of green with envy and sickness to personify an emotion that destroys love and trust.

Example:

Come, thick night, And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell.

(William Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* Act 1, Scene 5, lines 48-49)

Here, "blackness" represents evil, secrecy, and guilt. Lady Macbeth's invocation shows the pragmatic use of color to conceal moral corruption. The darkness she calls for symbolizes both literal night and inner wickedness.

Example:

Her skin was white as leprosy.

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 1798, Part IV)

Coleridge subverts the usual association of "white" with purity. The comparison with leprosy gives the color a pragmatic meaning of spiritual decay and horror, proving that the meaning of color depends on the communicative context.

Example:

The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread.

(Nathaniel Hawthorne*, The Scarlet Letter,* 1850, Chapter 18)

In Hawthorne's novel, "scarlet" symbolizes both sin and strength**.** It pragmatically conveys the public stigma of Hester Prynne's adultery while also representing her personal courage and moral resilience. The comparative analysis presented in this section shows that color lexemes in both English and Uzbek function as far more than simple descriptors of visual reality. In each language, colors develop expressive, evaluative, and culture-bound meanings that speakers actively draw upon in communication. The Uzbek data, especially from idioms and *askiya* discourse, illustrate how colors encode moral judgment, social attitude, and interpersonal evaluation. The English literary examples demonstrate a similar pattern, where color imagery shapes psychological depth and symbolic interpretation. These findings provide the analytical foundation for the broader implications, forming a bridge between linguistic form and cultural worldview.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of color-expressing lexemes in English and Uzbek reveals that color terms are not merely descriptive linguistic units, but highly functional tools of pragmatic and cultural communication. Their meanings are shaped by the context of discourse, the speaker's intention, and the national worldview of each linguistic community. The study demonstrates that the same color may convey different, even opposite, pragmatic values depending on cultural perception – for instance, "white" in English often symbolizes purity or innocence, while in Uzbek it may also carry the connotation of moral nobility or good fortune. Similarly, "black" may indicate grief and misfortune in both languages, but in some English idioms it is associated with mystery or rebellion.

Through the analysis of literary texts, idioms, and *askiya* discourse, it becomes evident that color lexemes frequently perform expressive, evaluative, and implicative functions, thereby enriching communicative interaction and revealing the emotional and moral stance of the speaker. These findings confirm the theoretical claims of G. Yule, G. Leech, and J. R. Searle that meaning in language cannot be understood apart from its use in real communicative situations. Moreover, the research highlights that pragmalinguistic and linguocultural approaches complement each other in interpreting color terms. The pragmatic dimension focuses on speaker intent and contextual factors, while the linguocultural dimension uncovers how each society encodes its traditions, beliefs, and values into color-related vocabulary. The intersection of these approaches allows us to see language as a mirror of human cognition and culture, supporting G. Lakoff and M. Johnson's view that language reflects the conceptual metaphors through which people perceive the world.

Therefore, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how color lexemes operate across languages as carriers of emotion, evaluation, and identity, bridging linguistic form with cultural meaning. Such insights are essential not only for linguistic theory but also for translation studies, intercultural

communication, and foreign-language teaching, where recognizing the pragmatic and cultural depth of color expressions can significantly enhance interpretative accuracy and communicative competence.

In summary, the pragmatic features of color-expressing lexemes emerge through their interaction with semantic, contextual, cultural, and social factors. Colors in language function not only as lexical items, but also as social signals that reflect human emotion and evaluation. This observation aligns with G. Lakoff and M. Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, which asserts that language is formed as an embodiment of human experience. A comparative analysis of color terms reveals both the similarities and differences between English and Uzbek linguistic cultures, providing deeper insight into the linguistic worldview of each society and enhancing our understanding of how speakers conceptualize reality through color.

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