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CONCEPTUALIZATION OF EMOTIONS THROUGH COLOR TERMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SPANISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract: The cognitive conceptualization of emotions through color terms represents a significant domain of inquiry within cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics. This comparative study examines the metaphorical and metonymic associations between color vocabulary and emotional states in Spanish and Uzbek. Utilizing a corpus-informed, contrastive analysis framework, the research investigates how cultural models, environmental factors, and historical linguistic developments shape the linguistic categorization of emotions. The primary focus is directed toward the conceptualization of negative emotions such as envy, anger, and sadness. Findings indicate that while Spanish frequently employs green (verde) to denote envy and yellow (amarillo) to denote bile-related anger—deeply rooted in the ancient Greco-Roman humoral theory—Uzbek primarily relies on black (qora) and yellow (sariq) to conceptualize envy (hasad), malice (ichi qoralik), and sorrow (g‘am-gussa), driven by Turkic cultural paradigms and somatological perceptions. The study demonstrates that while basic physiological symptoms provide a universal somatic baseline for color-emotion metaphors, cultural cognitive models dictate the specific lexical choices and semantic extensions in each language.

Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics, Color Terms, Emotion Conceptualization, Contrastive Analysis, Spanish, Uzbek, Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

Introduction

Language serves as a window into human cognition, reflecting how different speech communities categorize, interpret, and conceptualize psychological experiences. Among the various mechanisms used to articulate internal emotional states, color terms occupy a prominent position. The intersection of color categorization and emotion vocabulary offers an empirical testing ground for the debate between linguistic universalism and cultural relativism. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson, posits that metaphors are not merely decorative devices in literature but fundamental cognitive tools that allow humans to understand abstract domains, such as emotions, through concrete source domains, such as physical orientation, temperature, and color [1].

The structural and genealogical differences between Spanish (an Indo-European, Romance language) and Uzbek (a Turkic language) provide an optimal foundation for a comparative cognitive study. While both languages possess rich color vocabularies, the idiomatic mapping of these colors onto emotional states reveals distinct cognitive pathways. In Spanish, expressions such as estar verde de envidia (to be green with envy) or ponerse morado (to become purple/satiated) are deeply embedded in European literary, historical, and medical traditions. Conversely, Uzbek expressions such as ichi qoralik (blackness of the inside/malice) or sariq g‘am (yellow sorrow) reflect specific Turkic cosmological, geographical, and cultural orientations.

Understanding these cross-linguistic variations is essential for modern cognitive linguistics, intercultural communication, and translation studies. This article provides a systematic, comparative analysis of how color terms are structurally and semantically deployed to conceptualize emotions in Spanish and Uzbek, focusing on the underlying cognitive mechanisms that drive these linguistic choices.

Methodology

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This study utilizes a qualitative and quantitative contrastive analysis methodology within the framework of cognitive linguistics. The empirical data for this research were gathered from authoritative lexicographical sources, national linguistic corpora, and idiomatic sub-corpora of both languages.

For Spanish, lexical units and contextual examples were extracted from the Diccionario de la Lengua Española (DLE) managed by the Real Academia Española (RAE) and the Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual (CREA). For Uzbek, data collection relied on the O‘zbek tilining izohli lug‘ati (Annotated Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, 5 volumes) and the available components of the Uzbek National Corpus.

The extraction process targeted phrases, idioms, and collocations where a basic color term—specifically black (negro / qora), white (blanco / oq), red (rojo / qizil), green (verde / yashil), and yellow (amarillo / sariq)—co-occurs with an emotion or psychological state noun, or functions independently as an idiomatic marker of an emotion. A total of 84 Spanish idiomatic structures and 79 Uzbek idiomatic structures met the criteria for deep semantic analysis.

The analytical phase applied the Conceptual Metaphor Mapping framework to determine:

1. The specific source domain (the color).
2. The target domain (the emotional state).
3. The underlying grounding (whether physiological, cultural, or historical).

A structural comparison was then executed to identify absolute equivalents, partial equivalents, and completely language-specific (non-equivalent) color-emotion mappings.

Results

The corpus and lexicographical extraction revealed distinct patterns of distribution for color-emotion conceptualizations across the two languages. The quantitative distribution of dominant color terms associated with major emotional categories is summarized below.

Color Category	Spanish Target Emotion(s)	Uzbek Target Emotion(s)
Black / Qora / Negro	Sadness, Mourning, Terror, Anger	Malice, Envy, Sorrow, Wickedness
White / Oq / Blanco	Fear, Surprise, Purity, Peace	Sincerity, Joy, Kindness
Red / Qizil / Rojo	Anger, Passion, Embarrassment	Shame, Bashfulness, Festivity
Green / Yashil / Verde	Envy, Immature Lasciviousness	Hope, Youthfulness
Yellow / Sariq / Amarillo	Cowardice, Distrust, Sickness	Grief, Melancholy, Envy

The data demonstrate a sharp divergence in the conceptualization of envy (hasad) and malice (ichi qoralik). In Spanish, envy is structurally tied to the color green (verde), appearing in highly frequent combinations such as verde de envidia. In contrast, the Uzbek linguistic worldview maps envy, jealousy, and bad intentions onto the colors black (qora) and yellow (sariq), completely bypassing green for this specific target domain.

Furthermore, the somatic manifestation of anger in Spanish heavily employs red (rojo/colorado) and purple (morado), while Uzbek displays a high frequency of black (qora) and red (qizil) for explosive anger, alongside yellow (sariq) for suppressed, bile-induced resentment or grief.

Analysis and Discussion

The Conceptualization of Envy and Malice

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The Spanish metaphor **ENVY IS GREEN** (La envidia es verde) is a well-documented cognitive pattern within Western European languages. Phrases like quedarse verde de envidia (to turn green with envy) or verlo todo verde indicate a state of covetousness that alters the subject's perception. This mapping is grounded historically in the Hippocratic-Galenic humoral theory, which dictated that an excess of green or yellow bile (bilis) caused by negative psychological states resulted in a visible, pale-greenish skin discoloration [2]. Thus, the physiological effect of a medical condition became metaphorically extended to represent the psychological state of envy itself.

In the Uzbek language, envy and malice are structured through completely different cognitive domains: **MALICE IS BLACKNESS INSIDE THE BODY** and **ENVY IS YELLOW**. The core Uzbek concept of bad intentions, jealousy, and malicious envy is lexicalized as ichi qoralik (literally, "black-inside-ness"). The phrase ichi qora refers to a person who cannot tolerate another's success.

[Target: Malice/Envy] <--- mapped from ---> [Source: Internal Blackness (Qora)]

This mapping relies on the conceptual metaphor **BAD IS BLACK**, combined with the metonymic localization of emotions within internal organs (ich / yurak / baqir). Unlike Spanish, where negro represents external gloomy circumstances or deep grief (ver el panorama negro), Uzbek uses qora to directly characterize the moral-emotional quality of the individual's soul [3].

Additionally, envy in Uzbek can manifest as yellow (sariq), linked to the phrase hasadidan sarg‘aymoq (to turn yellow from envy), which reflects the somatic observation of a person losing physical vitality and developing a sallow complexion due to internal distress [4].

Anger and Rage

Both languages utilize physiological changes—such as increased blood pressure and body temperature—as the baseline for anger metaphors, yet their lexical realizations differ. Spanish frequently employs the metaphor **ANGER IS RED**:

Ponerse rojo como un tomate (To turn red like a tomato)

Ponerse colorado (To blush/turn red from anger or embarrassment)

This relies on the bodily metonymy **FLUSHING OF FACE FOR ANGER** [5]. If the anger intensifies to the point of asphyxiation or extreme cardiovascular pressure, Spanish shifts to purple: ponerse morado de rabia (to turn purple with rage).

Uzbek also captures this physiological baseline via the color red, as seen in g‘azabdan qizarmoq (to turn red from rage) or yuzi qon bo‘lmoq (the face becoming bloody/flushed) [6]. However, Uzbek introduces a secondary cognitive model for extreme, destructive rage using black: ko‘zi qoraymoq (one's eyes turning black). This idiom describes a state where anger or fury blinds a person's reason, causing temporary cognitive darkness. Here, the physical symptom of tunnel vision or fainting due to high emotional distress is captured through the color term qora [7].

Sadness, Grief, and Melancholy

The conceptualization of sadness in Spanish is characterized by the metaphors **SADNESS IS BLACK** and **SADNESS IS GREY**:

Tener un día negro (To have a black day)

Verlo todo negro (To see everything black / extreme pessimism)

Una perspectiva gris (A grey perspective)

These expressions align with Western cultural associations where black and grey denote the absence of light, vitality, and hope, directly corresponding to mourning and depression [8].

In Uzbek literature and colloquial speech, deep sorrow and melancholy are frequently conceptualized through the color yellow (sariq), formulating the metaphor **SORROW IS YELLOW**. The expressions sariq g‘am (yellow grief) and hasratidan sarg‘aymoq (to wither/turn yellow from longing) are highly prevalent [9]. In Turkic cultural paradigms, yellow is the color

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of autumn, fading nature, dryness, and depletion. Therefore, when an individual suffers from prolonged grief, psychological depression, or unrequited love, their emotional state is systematically mapped onto the characteristics of a yellow, fading leaf [10].

While a Spanish speaker experiences sadness in a "black" or "grey" cognitive space, an Uzbek speaker experiences it in a "yellow" space, highlighting the powerful role of environmental and cultural models in structural linguistics.

White and Oq: The Positive Dichotomy

In both linguistic systems, the color white (blanco / oq) serves as the primary structural counterpart to black, carrying overwhelmingly positive emotional and moral values. Spanish utilizes blanco to conceptualize peace, innocence, and cognitive clarity, though it can metonymically signify fear or shock due to facial paleness (quedarse en blanco, quedarse blanco de susto) [11].

In Uzbek, oq is highly productive in conceptualizing positive psychological traits and emotional purity. Phrases like oq ko‘ngil (white-hearted / sincere, kind) and oq yo‘l (white path / wishing well-being and peace) demonstrate that white represents the ideal emotional and moral state of a human being [12]. The contrast between ichi qora (malicious) and ko‘ngli oq (pure-hearted) forms the central axis of emotional-evaluative categorization in the Uzbek language, a structural configuration that lacks a direct lexicalized equivalent in Spanish color idioms.

Conclusion

This comparative study reveals that the conceptualization of emotions through color terms in Spanish and Uzbek operates on a dual plane of somatic universality and cultural specificity. Both languages utilize the physiological changes of the human body—such as facial flushing or paleness—to construct basic metonymic metaphors for anger, fear, and shame.

However, when mapping complex internal emotional states like envy, malice, and deep melancholy, the cognitive pathways diverge significantly. Spanish colors are heavily influenced by classical Greco-Roman philosophical-medical traditions (humoral theory), leading to the entrenched association of green with envy. Uzbek color-emotion terms are structurally driven by internal moral localization (the black-inside paradigm) and environmental-cosmological models (yellow as fading, sorrowful energy), rooted in ancient Turkic cognitive structures.

Ultimately, this contrastive analysis demonstrates that color terms are not arbitrary labels but complex cognitive categories that encode the unique cultural, historical, and psychological realities of their respective speech communities.

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