

Comparative Linguocultural Analysis Of The Color Concepts “White/Aq” And “Black/Qara” In English And Karakalpak Languages

Gulbakhar Djumamuratova

Nukus State Pedagogical Institute

Annotation

The article explores the conceptual, semantic, and cultural meanings of the color terms “white/aq” and “black/qara” in English and Karakalpak languages. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology, color terms are analyzed as key components of ethnic worldview and mental representation. The study reveals both universal and nationally specific semantic and symbolic values of these colors, showing that while white and black function as universal opposites across cultures, their cultural interpretations reflect deep variations in moral, aesthetic, and spiritual perception.

Key words: color concepts; language and culture; symbolic meaning; cross-linguistic comparison; ethnic mentality; color opposition white–black

Introduction

In modern linguistics, the anthropocentric paradigm emphasizes language as a reflection of national mentality and cultural worldview. Concepts are regarded as cognitive and cultural units that integrate language, consciousness, and culture (Maslova, 2004; Vorkachev, 2002). Among them, color concepts play a special role, as they not only denote visual characteristics but also encode symbolic, emotional, and axiological meanings.

The colors *white* and *black*—or *aq* and *qara* in Karakalpak—represent one of the most ancient binary oppositions in human cognition: light vs. darkness, good vs. evil, life vs. death. However, despite their universal nature, each culture actualizes these concepts differently, reflecting unique historical, religious, and ethical systems. This research aims to compare the linguocultural characteristics of the concepts “*white/aq*” and “*black/qara*” in English and Karakalpak, analyzing their semantic fields, idiomatic realizations, and cultural symbolism.

Materials and Methods

The study uses descriptive, comparative, and cognitive-semantic methods. The

empirical material includes idioms, proverbs, literary texts, and lexical examples from both languages. The semantic fields of *white/aq* and *black/qara* were identified through componential and contextual analysis. Frazological and paremiological units were examined as primary sources of cultural and axiological information.

Following Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin’s model, the conceptual structure of each color term was analyzed according to its *core* (prototype meanings) and *periphery* (symbolic and connotative meanings). The study also considers historical and etymological data (Berlin & Kay, 1969; Wierzbicka, 1992) to trace the evolution of color perception across cultures.

Results

The English *white* derives from Proto-Germanic *hwītaz* (“bright, shining”), while *black* stems from *blakaz* (“burnt, dark”). In Karakalpak and other Turkic languages, *aq* originally meant “light, clean,” and *qara* meant “dark, strong, deep.” Both have extended metaphorical meanings—moral, emotional, and evaluative.

Core meanings of *white/aq*: brightness, purity, goodness, innocence.

Peripheral meanings: peace, honesty, blessing, spiritual cleanliness.

Core meanings of *black/qara*: darkness, sorrow, evil, misfortune.

Peripheral meanings: strength, power, depth, dignity.

In English, *white* symbolizes moral purity and social status:

- *white lie* – harmless deception;
- *white wedding* – ideal marriage;
- *white knight* – savior or moral hero;
- *white-collar* – professional, intellectual class.

Conversely, *black* expresses negativity or secrecy:

- *black sheep* – social outcast;
- *black market* – illegal trade;
- *black magic* – dark forces;
- *black humor* – ironic attitude toward tragedy.

Yet, in modern contexts, *black* may also denote elegance (*black tie event*).

In Karakalpak culture, *aq* is sacred and auspicious:

- *aq tilek* – good wish, blessing;
- *aq jol* – righteous path;
- *aq jawlıq* – bridal purity, womanhood;
- *aq sūt* – maternal devotion.

It denotes moral clarity, peace, and divinity. The term *qara* in Karakalpak possesses duality:

- Negative: *qara kún* (“dark day,” misfortune);
- Positive: *qara kúsh* (“strength, power”);
- Sacred: *qara jer* (“native land”), *qara shańaraq* (“ancestral home”).

Thus, *qara* is both feared and revered—a symbol of endurance and continuity.

Discussion

The findings confirm that the *white–black* opposition functions as a universal semiotic model but is culturally reframed according to each nation’s worldview. In English, rooted in Christian morality and urban social hierarchy, *white* represents ethical perfection and *black* moral corruption. In Karakalpak mentality, influenced by Turkic

cosmology and steppe traditions, *aq* and *qara* form a dynamic pair reflecting balance rather than strict opposition—similar to the Yin–Yang principle.

This dualistic perception shapes the language’s symbolic system. English idioms display categorical contrast (“in black and white” = absolute truth or falsehood), while Karakalpak expressions emphasize harmony and coexistence (“*aq jol*” – “blessed way,” “*qara kúsh*” – “strong force”). Such nuances reveal different cognitive patterns: analytical dualism in English and holistic unity in Karakalpak.

The paremiological corpus also reflects cultural values:

- English: *Every cloud has a silver lining* (hope in adversity);
- Karakalpak: *Aq tilek – jaqsı nátiye* (“good wish brings blessing”).

These proverbs show that moral optimism is encoded through color imagery in both languages, yet realized via distinct metaphoric traditions.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of *white/aq* and *black/qara* demonstrates that color concepts are deeply embedded in cultural consciousness, serving as codes of national mentality. Their semantic opposition mirrors universal human categories of good and evil but acquires specific cultural shades.

In English, *white* and *black* embody moral and social dichotomies, while in Karakalpak they reflect cosmological and spiritual harmony. The study confirms that linguistic color coding constitutes a powerful semiotic system through which each culture expresses its ethical ideals, emotional worldview, and collective identity.

Future research may extend this analysis to other color concepts (*red/qızıl*, *blue/kók*) and explore their metaphorical dynamics across Turkic and Indo-European languages. Such cross-cultural linguistic studies contribute to intercultural

understanding and enrich the field of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology.

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