

**SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT OF COLORISTIC COMPONENTS OF IDIOMS IN GERMAN DISCOURSE**

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**Abstract.** The article deals with description of versatile characteristic of color descriptions of idioms and sociocultural aspect of their use in German discourse. The idioms under research were taken from idiomatic, stylistic and explanatory dictionaries of the German language. The method of investigation is complex study of German idioms containing color designations in their sociocultural aspects that includes etymological, semantic and cultural analysis. The aim of research is to describe various forms of representation of color meanings in German idiomatic layer and correct use of such idioms in discourse. We outlined 221 units from German dictionaries with the following components: red, green, blue, grey, black and white. Idioms were analyzed with the use of etymological analysis, component analysis and socio-cultural analysis. The socio-cultural aspect of idioms with coloristic component relates to the subjective evaluation of color symbolism, differences in associative perception of the surrounding world, differences in the combining abilities of word-components of idiomatic units and many extra linguistic factors.

**Keywords:** idioms, sociocultural aspect, color semantics, color symbolism, German discourse, idiom coloristic component.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Each culture and language has its own color representation. For L2 learners it is difficult sometimes to correlate word denoting color to its physical characteristics. Although, each culture and language formulate a certain negative or positive connotation to each color. Idiomatic layer of each language represents cultural background and history of the language. On this intersection of color meaning and idioms we may observe how coloristic component of the idiom may affect the meaning of unit and its connotation.

Color-coded words are widely used, multivalued, have a great combination potential and a special semantic productivity. By their semantic nature, they can bring emotional and expressive quality and imagery to phraseological units, which is conditioned by the objective reality given to a person in color perception, and also by similar features of artistic thinking (Kudrina, 2010).

The socio-cultural aspect of idioms with coloristic component relates to the subjective evaluation of color symbolism, differences in associative perception of the surrounding world, differences in the combining abilities of word-components of idiomatic units and many extra linguistic factors (the presence of specific geographical, historical or other realities, customs and traditions).

We outlined the following pattern in idiomatic units: the more emotionally expressive the effect of color component, the richer its semantics and the wider range of associative meanings it has and the color-referencing words have great combining abilities.

A lot of attention is paid to the study of the sociocultural aspect of the problem of color identification and idioms in the works of scientists of different countries and languages (Arsenteva, & Arsenyeva, 2016) (Davletbayeva, Arsenyeva, & Ayupova, 2016), (Davletbaeva, Ivanova, & Kozlova, 2015) (Burger, Dobrovol'skij, Kühn, & Norrick, 2007) (Burger, 2010), (Bennett, 1988), (Rozen, 2000) (Ter-Minasova, 2007).

Idioms, represented in the linguistic and cultural aspect, can give new background knowledge, such as historical and cultural information, which are necessary for L2 learners, for its understanding, as well as for the correct translation of its idioms. Knowledge of idiomatic layer of the language under study, as well as the history of their origin, is of great assistance in understanding their meaning.

## 2. METHODS

Analyzing idioms containing color-coding in their composition, we can conclude that the role of color in the consciousness of each people has its own special imagery. Colors affect the human psyche, cause certain associations in it, so in languages and cultures many color symbols have symbolic meaning. This also contributed to the fact that the color perception of the world found its reflection in the idioms relating to a certain language. By keeping in mind these characteristics of idioms we used the following methods to collect and analyze idioms with coloristic components: method of direct sampling from dictionaries by Binovich, Duden and online dictionaries.

The following data was analyzed with the use of etymological analysis, since etymology may affect the connotation of idiomatic unit, component analysis, color components rarely act as nuclear components of idiom, thus they can be omitted or substituted in modifications of the idioms in discourse and definitional analysis that helps us to find out connotation of the idiom and its sociocultural role in the language.

## 3. RESULTS

In the presented study, we examined 221 stable idiomatic expressions that contain the most commonly used colors in German idiomatic layer, such as rot – red (36 units), grün – green (35 units), blau - blue (37 units), grau – gray (18 units), schwarz – black (65 units) and weiß – white (30 units). We studied all possible etymological variants of the origin of those units and established stylistic coloring and connotation of each unit.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The first group of units under study has red coloristic components. In the culture of the German people, red color has positive and negative associations. Among positive connotations we observe associations of red with celebration, freedom and devotion. Concerning negative meaning red carries the following associations: threat or danger, fire and revolution, embarrassment, anger or fury. In this connection, there is an urgent need to disassemble the meanings of such idiomatic units in their sociocultural aspects. Further we provide an analysis of several expressions.

Many German phraseological units containing the color marking rot (red) have a negative value, since this color is unbridled emotions, aggression. They all describe the state of a person. Examples are such phraseological units as:

- Rot anlaufen - blush from embarrassment;
- Rot sehen - to fall into a rage;
- Auf jeden wie ein rotes Tuch wirken - act on someone like a red rag on a bull;

The meaning of these idiomatic units is primarily due to the physiological response of the body, as many people blush when experiencing emotions such as embarrassment, anger or envy. Such expressions are present practically in all languages of the world. Germans associate these expressions with something unworthy, indecent and immoral. They use this color to show how strong a person's negative emotions are.

The next expression with red color component is associated with life in German discourse. It relates to direct physiological processes blood always flows in a living person. In this connection, the following expression appeared in German:

- Heute rot, morgen tot - today is alive, tomorrow is dead.

This idiom was used when one wants to say about a person who died unexpectedly. This expression also has its origin from a long time, when social and cultural life in Germany was on initial position of development. Now they use it when they want to say that we should not hope for tomorrow.

Red color in German, however, has a positive value. Since ancient times, German people had a red symbol of Christmas. To emphasize the importance of the event, the Germans use the following stable phrases:

- Den Tag im Kalender rot anstreichen - remember some important day;
- Sich wie ein roter Faden - go by the red thread.

The next color component under study was green. This color in idiomatic layer of the German language denotes nature and youth. This can be clearly seen in the expression:

- Bei Mutter Grün schlafen - to sleep in the bosom of nature.

Therefore, when the Germans want to emphasize the inexperience and youth of a person, they use such units as:

- Grüner Junge is an inexperienced young man;
- Grünschnabel is a "sucker", a young kid;

These expressions refer to conversational style, and they have ironic stylistic coloring. There is also idiomatic layer that denotes information that is known theoretically, but has not been proven practically:

- Vom grünen Tisch aus - from the green table.

The color designation "grün" also shows that the information is still new, not proven by experience or time.

But not all idiomatic units containing a green color symbolize youth in Germany and lack of experience and wisdom. In some of them, the color adjective "grün" performs an expressive function, giving the expression a sharply negative meaning. Examples are the following:

- Sich grün und blau ärgern - strongly angry;

In these expressions, the colors are combined in pairs, since the Germans believe that they combine well in nature, and they also strengthen the meanings of the verbs, giving them even more expressiveness.

If the Germans want to say about the lack of success, they use the expression:

- Auf keinen grünen Zweig kommen - come without green branch.

This expression takes its origin from the pagan custom that existed when buying land. The former owner handed the buyer along with the earth a branch of an evergreen tree - a symbol of fertility. It was believed that good spirits that live in the trees move in the new house with this branch. The Germans believed that those who could not afford to buy land and a house did not receive a branch, and

because of this they lost the support of a good spirit bringing success and happiness. Now this expression has a more general meaning and means "not to have success".

In modern German, the following expression appeared, which became an idiom: Die grüne Witwe – green widow.

This is the name of a non-working woman in Germany living outside the city, who sits at home all day, and her husband is lost at work. This unit has comic meaning and is an expression of humor in speech.

Blue color in German discourse symbolizes infinity, faith, purity and wisdom. These associations originated in ancient cultures, they express the idea that blue is the color of the sky, which means tranquility. In majority of European countries it symbolizes loyalty and mercy.

Previously in German discourse blue color was considered a color of deceit and lies. From this symbol originated such expressions as:

- Mit einem blauen Auge davonkommen - close your blue eyes to anything;
- Jedem blauen Dunst vormachen - dust in the eyes;

All these idioms units symbolize lies, uncertainty, pretense. Their origin is associated with old beliefs, when blue was regarded as a bad, unfortunate phenomenon.

In the German culture, there are expressions that contain a blue color and denote a pass of work:

- Blau machen – to work blue, skip a working day;
- Blauer Montag machen - walk away from work, do not go to work.

These idioms arose as impressions of the national history of Germany. Initially, the word "der blaue Montag" was the last day of the carnival and nobody worked at that day. The color designation "blau" was explained by the fact that in the following days the church fasts were decorated with blue cloth.

The last day on the eve of fasting in Germany passed in a special fun, and many townspeople were in a state of intoxication. In this regard, German language began to emerge idioms in which blue

color was used to mean "drunk". These expressions include the following stable phrases:

- Blau sein - to be drunk;
- Blauveilchen - drunkard.

Gray is a mixture of black and white colors. It is not so bright and expressive, it does not attract attention, therefore it is used in German idiomatic units to denote something invisible, for example:

- Eine graue Maus - gray mouse. In this way, Germans call a nondescript person, a person who behaves so quietly that it's hard to notice.

Gray in German symbolically indicates sadness, lack of joy. It includes the meaning of gloomy. It can characterize not only the weather, but also the mood, everyday life, the emotional state of a person. In this regard, German language has such expressions as:

- Der graue Alltag – gray routine;
- Alles grau in grau sehen - see everything in gloomy tones;
- Das graue Elend kriegen - to be in a depressed mood.

In the social life of the German people, gray color also means something illegal. This can be traced in the following expressions:

- Grauer Markt - semi-legal market;
- Grauer Händler - a person engaged in semi-legal business;
- Bei Nacht sind alle Katzen grau - at night all cats are gray.

The expression "Bei Nacht sind alle Katzen grau" shows that since it is difficult to recognize anything at night because of the dark, it is therefore possible to commit a crime and it can go unpunished.

Black color in German, as in many other cultures, is a symbol of misfortune, grief. However, being component of idioms its meaning can be different. But all of them, as a rule, carry a negative function, denoting a pessimistic mood, meanness, unhappiness and even illegality.

In the culture of German people there are set expressions that show a pessimistic attitude to life:

- Ein schwarzer Tag - a bad day;

There are also phraseological units that show bad qualities of a person. These include the following expressions:

- Schwarzes Herz haben - to be angry, callous;
- Eine schwarze Seele haben - to have a bad character, to be evil;
- Das schwarze Schaf - black sheep in the herd.

The idiom "Das schwarze Schaf" came in German from the Bible. It denotes a person who has a bad name, stands out as something negative in society. This meaning is associated with the old belief that a black sheep personifies dark forces and carries evil.

For the figurative transmission of emotions and human condition in the German language, the following expressions exist:

- Warten, bis man schwarz wird - wait until become unconscious;

Alongside with the previous meanings, black color is associated with something illegal, illegal, for example:

- Der Schwarzfahrer - free rider;
- Die Schwarzarbeit - illegal work.

White color in German culture is associated with tenderness, innocence, purity, so it is considered a traditional wedding day. It is also a symbol of peace and friendship. But idioms that have a white color in their composition can have different meanings, among them there are both positive and negative.

Idioms that have a positive meaning include the following expressions:

- Weiß wie Schnee - snow-white;
- Eine weiße Weste haben - to have an unblemished reputation;

The idiomatic unit "Weiß wie Schnee" indicates something very clean, white, beautiful. The expression "Eine weiße Weste haben" in German is used to indicate that a person has a good reputation

in society. In German discourse, there are also units in which white color in the general context loses its positive meaning. These include the following stable expressions:

- Jeden bis zur Weißglut bringen - bring to a white heat;
- Weiße Mäuse sehen - get drunk to the devil;

The expression "Jeden bis zur Weißglut bringen" arose in German culture because of the appearance of the following associations: when the metal burns in fire, it turns red, gradually comes to white heat and turns white. This expression defines irritation. The idiom "Weiße Mäuse sehen" is used to say that there are hallucinations in connection with alcoholic intoxication. The expression "Sich weiß waschen wollen" indicates that the person wants to "whiten" his reputation, find an excuse.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Having studied the meaning of the German language, which includes colors, we conclude that they show their originality. Such expressions contain imagery and expressiveness, as well as reflect cultural and social characteristics. They have a definite meaning, which can be understood only by getting acquainted with the sociocultural aspect of their use.

Thus, during our research, we analyzed 221 idioms of the German language, containing in their composition color designations. The results showed that the largest group in the German discourse are expressions with the color component "schwarz"/ "black" - 65 units and the smallest group with component "grau"/ "grey" -18 units. Also, having considered the meanings of phraseological units containing color-coding, it was revealed that most of them (70%) have a negative meaning, expressions with positive meaning make up a smaller group. This result was achieved using etymological analysis of these units. Since idioms have historic or cultural events and customs of nation, many images put in the base of idioms with color-components were negative. Each color has a certain preset of cognitive recognizability that arises some certain associations within one language. Although, in German language some idioms with coloristic components have some deviations from the norms of such patterns. This can lead to misinterpretation of such idioms among L2 students studying idiomatic layer of German. The interpretation of results and analysis of color

components of such idioms are given in the discussion part of the article.

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