

## COLOUR AS A SEMIOTIC MODE: NOTES FOR A COLOUR OF NATURE

## ЦВЕТ КАК ВИД СЕМИОТИКИ: ЦВЕТОВЫЕ ОБРАЗЫ ПРИРОДЫ

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**Аннотациясы:** Бул макалада жаратылыш жонундогу он- туз создор такталып, турмуш жана маданият туура тушундурулуп берилиши ыкиалары жонундо талкууланат. Жаратылыштын турдуу тусто суроттолушу эл аралык байланышта, коммуникацияда тура которулуусуна мумкунчулукторду берет. Он- тус бул семиотика илиминде коп функционалдуу белгилердин бири. Ар турдуу мисалдардын негизинде жаратылыштын турдуу он-туз менен берилген маанилерин тактоодо теориялык жана практикалык ойлордун негизинде анализделет. Жаратылыштын ар турдуу он-туз менен суроттолушун ошол суроттолгон элдин маданиятына жана урп-адатына жараша туура тушундурмо беруу керек.

**Негизги сөздөр:** тус, жаратылыш, маданияттар ортосундагы байланыш.

**Аннотация:** Рассказывается восприятия цветовых образов к изучению языков различной природы в рамках семиотики. Теоретически и практически рассматривается восприятие и интерпретация цветовых образов природы также как и другие знаки семиотики, знаком многофункциональным, связанные с изучением проблем цветовых образов, в человеко- природном взаимодействии и культуре, как источник правильной интерпретации коммуникации.

**Ключевые слова:** цвет, природа, межкультурная коммуникация,

**Abstract:** This article presents a brief review of differences of nature, as the basis for a discussion of culturally produced regularities in the uses of colour in translation; that is, the possibility of extending the use of 'nature' to colour as a communicational resource. Colour is discussed as a semiotic resource – a mode, which, like other modes, is multifunctional in its uses in the culturally located making of signs. The article demonstrates its theoretical and practical points through the analysis of several examples and links notions of colour harmony into the social and cultural concept of nature colour in the more traditional sense in interpretation.

**Key words:** color, nature, intercultural communication.

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The main purpose of this paper is an attempt to extend the scope of color terms so as to arouse the interest of color semiotics. There are many ways to study color, Nature color terms can be used to achieve this goal. *Semiotics is an investigation into how meaning is created and how meaning is communicated. It is a way of seeing the world and of understanding how the landscape and culture in which we live has a massive impact on all of us unconsciously.*

Semiotics and that branch of linguistics known as semantics have a common concern with the meaning of signs, but John Sturrock argues that whereas semantics focuses on what words mean, semiotics is concerned with how signs mean (Sturrock 1986, 22). For C W Morris (deriving this threefold classification from Peirce), semiotics embraced semantics, along with the other traditional branches of linguistics: semantics: the relationship of signs to what they stand

for; syntactics (or syntax) : the formal or structural relations between signs; pragmatics: the relation of signs to interpreters (Morris 1938, 6-7) . *In other words, we need to understand the context in which a sign is communicated in order to comprehend its real meaning, and hence act appropriately. What is going on around the sign is usually as important for us to know as the sign itself in order to interpret its meaning.* Color is the fundamental building block of visual symbols. Most fundamental color symbolism was drawn from nature. Nature was revealed to them in symbols, and early people symbolized everything that appealed to the human mind. Accordingly, early people tried to associate the different colors with divinities, the elements, directions, and planets. **1) Divinity** In several cosmologies, colors display a cosmic symbolism and mediate as divinities. For example, the white blue was spread for morning, and on the blue, yellow for sunset, and next was black, representing night. **(2) Element** The elements were believed by the ancients to be the essential energy forces that sustain the world. In the West they are four in number: fire, water, air, and earth, but in the fundamental concept of Taoism, there are five elements including water, fire, wood, metal, and earth in China. However, they have no equivalence to the four elements of the ancient Greeks, which were thought to be the basic constituents of all matter. Ancient Chinese thinkers used the elements as symbols to denote **(3) Direction** In Mesoamerican cosmology, colors were frequently associated with particular directions. The identification of colors with directions is most fully documented among the ancient Maya, who had specific glyphs for the colors red, white, black, yellow, and green. In the Yucatec Maya codices, these colors are associated with east, north, west, south and center, respectively. In Chinese thought, the world is divided into five parts: the centre (colored yellow), the south (red), the north (black), the west (white), and the east (blue) . Upon these five elements or perpetually active principles of Nature the whole scheme of color philosophy is based. Thus, green symbolized potency in arid regions but a sacred color in Islam. Blue stood for the sky, and also for the spirit and truth. Interpretations of color may differ and the symbolism varies with the cultural environment. The color black and the color white clearly stand for duality and antithesis. However, in some traditions, black is the color of death and mourning; in others, white. Red, the color of blood, is usually linked with living, but it repre-

sents death in the Celtic world. In spite of individual differences in the interpretation of colors, ancient civilizations worked out conventionally determined forms of color symbolism, usually as part of a search for basic principles with which to organize a world of multiplicities. Thus, the primary colors were frequently associated with divinities, the elements and the directions. For the ancient Mayas of Central America, the directions east, north, west, and south were associated with red, white, black, and yellow, while in ancient China east, south, west, north, and center, with blue, red, white, black, and yellow.

As we see there are many colors, but this paper concentrates on five primary colors: red, yellow, blue, white, and black. Right now the five basic colors have been identified by the world through many generations and the development of communication. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, a founder of modern semiotics, sign consists of positive and negative connotations. Saussure emphasized in particular negative, oppositional differences between signs, and the key relationships in structuralist analysis are binary oppositions (such as nature/culture, life/death) . Saussure argued that ‘concepts... are defined not positively, in terms of their content, but negatively by contrast with other items in the same system. What characterizes each most exactly is being whatever the others are not’ (Saussure 1983, 115; Saussure 1974, 117; my emphasis) . a) **Positive Connotations** are universally, the color of plant life, green, and can stand for awakenings, new beginnings, and growth. In China and in Central Asia cultures it relates to spring. In Celtic folklore, the green man is an important vegetation and fertility god. In ancient Egypt, the green of the god Osiris symbolized resurrection and immortality. Chinese people wish to live long and remain strong just as pine and fir trees. Its spiritual symbolism was most important in the Islamic world, where it was the sacred color of the Prophet and of divine providence. Green is also the emblematic color of Ireland, the “Emerald Isle”. The color symbolizes the struggle for Irish independence from Great Britain. Green has become a symbol of environmentalism. Someone who works well with plants is said to have a “green thumb”. Green is used to describe unripe or immature fruit; a “greenhorn” also refers to an inexperienced person. **(b) Negative Connotations** There is a darker side to the natural world as well. Green has represented danger and death. Chinese do not have separate terms for “blue” from “green,” instead covers both terms. There are

both positive and negative connotations for these words. The blue of the sky has been associated with the male principle, distance, and the gods. Kyrgyz people do not have separate terms for “blue” from “green,” too, and covers both of terms. It brings only positive connotations whether celestial or oceanic, blue evokes wide, open spaces and is linked with infinity and primordial emptiness. But in South part of Kyrgyzstan “blue” represents death or the color of mourning. Deep water, on the other hand, also associate blue with the female principle. As a symbol of peace and purity, it is the color of the Virgin Mary. Blue, the symbol of the truth and the eternity of God, will always remain the symbol of human immortality. Blue amulets in some cultures are supposed to neutralize the evil eye. White based on the definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary, It is a pigment of the color of milk or snow, due to the reflection of all visible rays of light. Like colors, white has positive and negative connotations. (a) Positive Connotations White can be defined as the absolute color of light. The Anglo-Saxons were the first to start using the word “white” as a surname for a person who had light hair or a fair complexion. In China, white is the color of “the autumn,” or the emblem of “old age”. (2003), p. 67. The association of white with purity and peace is used by many religions. The “white dove” originates from the story of Noah as a symbol of the end of the great flood. The “white elephant” is sacred in Buddhism because the Buddha is said to have entered his mother’s womb in this form. In English, the term is described “of little use and that is costly to maintain”. The white horse (ak boz at) stands for purity and loyalty for Kyrgyz people (Ak-Kula, Ak-tulpar). (b) Negative Connotations On the other hand, white is associated with paleness, bloodlessness, lack of vigor, and death. In ancient Egypt, white symbolized the lifeless desert that covered much of the country. In several cultures, the soul is thought to leave the body in the shape of a white butterfly or a white bird. Christian angels are depicted as being dressed in white, while ghosts are described as emitting a white light. In English, the phrase “white lie” is to a harmless or trivial lie, especially one told to avoid hurting someone’s feelings. In Kyrgyz language, the same phrase is translated as “кызылдай калп”. Positive Connotations The absence of light, rather than a color itself, black is a complex symbol. Almost all cultures recognize the duality and opposition between black and white. In Egypt the blackness of earth and of rainclouds

stands for the mothering darkness of germination. The black was the color of “rebirth” and “resurrection”. In Greek, it is the color of Cronos/ Saturn, which symbolizes time. The Hindu Kali can appear as black goddess, suggesting the light-dark duality necessary to the continuation of life. (b) Negative Connotations in the Western world, black carries a lot of negative connotations, many of them centered on fear and the unknown. Death and mourning are symbolized in the West by black. Black is used for evil purposes. Black animals are regarded as unlucky, such as black raven, black dogs, black cats and black sheep. In English, the color terms such as “Black Monday” (or Friday is not a lucky day) because on this day, many terrible events have taken place. The difference of the meaning of colors of nature in different languages and in different cultures has been actually originated from translation. If the meaning of the color can directly correspond in translation equivalence, it is easy to interpret. For example: the Black Country, Greenpeace, Blue blood – It has the same meaning in Kyrgyz language, but we say “Ак коок” (White Bone). Colors come from light, while the sun is the mother of light. No light, then no colors appear. Under the sun, colors not only beautify the great nature but also beautify human life, for instance, white cloud in the sky, green sea in the earth, white snow in the winter, and green field in the summer. So far, we have found that various colors appear in many poems, and many artists prefer to use various colors to describe the nature. Without intercultural communication, what may be a positive meaning of a color to one culture may mean something negative or entirely different to another. Above all, color terms require an understanding of cultural traditions, concepts of value and local customs. This paper has not only presented different meanings for colors but also provided intercultural communication for each color.

The world view of the Kyrgyz people, their attitude towards nature, their historical events, and their life style, were captured in the remarkable customs and traditions that have preserved to today. Centuries and centuries of rich oral tradition carried the history, culture, and tradition of our nation. The Kyrgyz language was enriched by nameless creators who also kept alive the memory of our nation’s remarkable sayings, poems and prose.

Visual literacy explains the ability to read and interpret symbols; as a result, visual aids play an essential role in grasping ideas. To the human mind,

symbols are cultural representations of reality. As we said above, every culture has its own set of symbols associated with different experiences and perceptions where the culture's members interpret and over time, reinterpret the symbol. Kyrgyz language scientist Kubatbek Samatov studied the lexical and semantic meanings of colors in his doctoral dissertation. According to his work, the study of colors has philosophical meaning. Researching colors, he uses Kyrgyz novels, historical works and national folklore. Samatov points out that white, green, red and blue have creative qualities. White represents peace, purity, pleasure, and joy, green and blue mean life, red is for blood, sun shine, and strength, and green means youth (Samatov, p.34) . Reference to nature always appears in the works of Ch. Aitmatov as evidence that it has always occupied the imagination of reader. On the bases of deep analyses of Aitmatov's works we determine different forms of narration of the natural phenomenon and symbols of nature. In his works we can analyze two types of connotations, positive-the natural essence of the symbol and negative – the mystery of symbols in the artistic work.

Used positive connotations (as the blue, calm night, rose-willow and young poplars, the ripe, yellow ash-wheat, the warm, milk-like scent of flowering maize, smoky-blue clouds of spring, wild black fire in eyes, white foaming water blinding the brightest edge of life, salty grey flakes of sun ) we recognize the importance of nature color that enhance to interpret create visual messages. Using negative connotations (the dark, dim fields, the muddy, foaming water, blackened steppe, light-blue flashes of lightning, the cloud-darkened sky, the dry, darkened steppe and etc.), Chingiz Aitmatov endured all the hardships of war and national traditions. He also shows the combination of the nature truth with the truth of life. It is, also, shown how the conditional character depends on the changes of the nature and

its content. Consequently, colour in this work plays a role in imparting war and piece information, creating lasting identity and suggesting imagery and symbolic value.

Nature has been the first to teach us about colour semiotics. So instantly, different meanings are communicated through colors. All in all, in the process of learning languages and understanding culture, we should recognize the importance of nature color that enhance readers to interpret visual images and create visual messages through the use of visual imagery on nature.

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