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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Linguocultural And Cognitive Analysis Of Color-Based Toponyms: A Comparative Study Of English And Uzbek Languages

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Abstract

This article investigates color-based toponyms in English and Uzbek from linguocultural and cognitive perspectives. Toponyms are not only geographical labels but also linguistic signs that preserve historical memory, ethnic experience, environmental perception, and cultural worldview. In Uzbek and English, place names containing color components such as white/oq, black/qora, red/qizil, green/yashil, blue/ko‘k, and yellow/sariq demonstrate how human communities perceive, classify, and conceptualize geographical space.

Keywords: - Color-based toponyms, linguoculturology, cognitive linguistics, English toponyms, Uzbek toponyms, color symbolism, spatial cognition, comparative toponymy.

INTRODUCTION

Toponyms are among the most ancient and stable units of any language. They are created to distinguish one place from another and to organize geographical space in human consciousness. S. Qorayev explains that people give names to rivers, lakes, mountains, hills, villages, cities, roads, fields, and other objects in order to differentiate one geographical object from another [2]. In this sense, toponyms are not random words; they are linguistic signs formed under the influence of social need, geographical perception, historical memory, and cultural experience.

Color-based toponyms are place names formed with color components. In English, examples include Blackpool, Blackburn, Whitehaven, Whitechapel, Redhill, Redbridge, Greenfield, and Bluewater. In Uzbek, similar examples include Oqtepa, Qoratepa, Qiziltepa, Ko‘ktepa, Oqdaryo, Qoradaryo, Qizilqum, and Sariqko‘l. Such names are usually motivated by visible landscape features: soil color, water appearance, mountain surface, vegetation, sand, stone, or settlement structure. However, in many cases, color components also carry symbolic and cultural meanings.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of this study is based mainly on the works of S. Qorayev and N. A. Ergasheva. Qorayev’s Toponimika provides a general theoretical basis for the study of geographical names. He defines toponyms as place names or geographical names and explains that toponymy studies the names of rivers, lakes, seas, mountains, villages, cities, roads, bridges, fields, pastures, and other geographical objects [2]. His classification of toponyms into hydronyms, oronyms, oikonyms, urbanonyms, microtoponyms, ethnotoponyms, and anthropotoponyms is important for the present study because color components can appear in all these groups.

Qorayev also emphasizes that toponyms are long-lived linguistic units and often preserve old forms of words, historical traces, and earlier stages of language development

[2]. This idea is crucial for color-based toponyms because many names containing oq, qora, qizil, ko‘k, and sariq may preserve ancient ways of perceiving and classifying space. For example, a name such as Qiziltepa may originally describe the red color of a hill, but over time it becomes a historical and cultural sign.

Another important idea in Qorayev’s work is that geographical names are not merely addresses. They carry historical, geographical, and linguistic information [1]. This statement supports the cognitive and linguocultural approach of the present article: color-based toponyms are treated not simply as labels but as signs that encode human perception and collective memory.

In addition, Ergasheva explains that many toponyms are formed according to certain patterns and often contain traditional geographical indicators such as obod, qum, tepa, qo‘rg‘on, daryo, suv, and kent [3]. This is particularly relevant for Uzbek color-based toponyms because many of them are formed by the model “color term + geographical indicator”: Oq-tepa, Qora-suv, Qizil-qum, Sariq-ko‘l, and Ko‘k-tepa.

Thus, previous research shows that toponyms must be studied as linguistic, historical, geographical, and cultural units. The present article develops this idea by focusing specifically on color-based toponyms in English and Uzbek.

Materials and Methods

The material of the study consists of selected English and Uzbek toponyms formed with color terms. The English examples include place names with the components white, black, red, green, blue, and yellow. The Uzbek examples include toponyms formed with oq, qora, qizil, yashil, ko‘k, and sariq.

The study uses the following methods: descriptive method that is used to identify the structure and meaning of color-based toponyms. It helps describe how color components combine with geographical indicators such as hill/tepa, water/suv, river/daryo, field, bridge, fortress/qo‘rg‘on, and desert/qum;

The comparative method is used to reveal similarities and differences between English and Uzbek color-based toponyms. This method allows the study to compare the functions of equivalent color terms such as white — oq, black — qora, red — qizil, green — yashil, blue — ko‘k, and yellow — sariq.

Semantic analysis is aalso applied to determine whether a color component expresses direct physical meaning, metaphorical meaning, cultural symbolism, or historical information. Moreover, the linguocultural method interprets color-based toponyms as signs of national culture. This method is based on the idea that toponyms reflect people’s values, traditions, customs, and historical experience [3].

The cognitive method examines how color terms participate in the conceptualization of space. From this perspective, color-based toponyms are mental models that show how speakers perceive, categorize, and remember geographical objects.

The theoretical basis of the study is grounded in S. Qorayev’s view that toponymy is located at the intersection of linguistics, geography, and history, and that place names carry linguistic, historical, and geographical information [1], [2]. The article also relies on the idea that toponyms reflect people’s history, values, traditions, customs, and ethno-cultural processes [3]. The study applies descriptive, comparative, semantic, linguocultural, and cognitive methods. The results show that English color-based toponyms are often motivated by visible geographical features such as soil, water, vegetation, cliffs, hills, and settlements. Uzbek color-based toponyms, while also based on physical features, reveal deeper cultural-symbolic meanings connected with ancient Turkic worldview, sacredness, directionality, ethnic memory, and traditional classification of space. The article concludes that color-based toponyms are cognitive-cultural models through which national perception of space and historical experience are encoded.

Results and Analysis

The color white in English and oq in Uzbek often functions as a marker of brightness, clearness, purity, or light-colored landscape. In English toponyms such as Whitehaven, Whitechapel, Whitehill, and Whitefield, the component white may refer to a light-colored building, chalky soil, pale stone, or visible brightness of the landscape. In such cases, the color component primarily performs a descriptive function.

In Uzbek toponyms, oq is one of the most productive color components. It appears in names such as Oqtepa “white hill”, Oqqo‘rg‘on “white fortress”, Oqdaryo “white river”, Oqsuv “white water”, and Oqmachit “white mosque”. Structurally, these names often follow the model “color term + geographical indicator”, which corresponds to Ergasheva’s

observation that many Uzbek toponyms contain geographical indicators such as tepa, qo‘rg‘on, daryo, and suv [3].

From a cognitive viewpoint, oq helps speakers identify a place through a visually salient feature. From a linguocultural viewpoint, however, oq has broader symbolic meanings in Uzbek culture. It may be associated with purity, blessing, goodness, sacredness, and positive evaluation. Therefore, Oqtepa may originally refer to the physical color of a hill, but the component oq may also create a positive cultural association.

Thus, the English white is often more descriptive, while Uzbek oq combines descriptive and symbolic meanings.

The color black in English toponyms often refers to dark water, black soil, peatland, shadowed places, or dark natural objects. Examples include Blackpool, Blackburn, Blackwater, and Blackheath. In these names, black usually describes a visible feature of the geographical environment.

The Uzbek component qora appears in toponyms such as Qoratepa “black hill”, Qorasuv “black water”, Qoradaryo “black river”, Qorako‘l “black lake”, and Qoraqalpoq. Like English black, Uzbek qora may denote dark color, dark water, dark soil, or shadowed land. However, in Uzbek toponymy, qora often carries additional historical and cultural associations.

Qorayev’s approach is useful here because he states that toponyms preserve information about the past and must be interpreted with linguistic, historical, and geographical materials [1], [2]. Therefore, qora in Uzbek toponyms should not always be understood only as a color. In some cases, it may be connected with ethnic names, old territorial divisions, symbolic classification, or traditional worldview.

For example, Qoradaryo may literally mean “black river”, but its meaning can also depend on water color, river depth, local perception, or historical naming tradition. Similarly, Qoraqalpoq contains qora as part of an ethnonym, showing that color components may participate not only in physical description but also in ethnic and historical naming.

The color red in English toponyms is often associated with red soil, clay, brick buildings, sandstone, or reddish hills. Examples include Redhill, Redbridge, Redcar, and Redruth. In these names, the red component identifies a visible natural or cultural feature.

In Uzbek, the component qizil is also highly significant. It appears in names such as Qiziltepa “red hill”, Qizilqum “red sand/desert”, Qizilsuv “red water”, and Qiziljar “red cliff”. The toponym Qiziltepa is especially important because Qorayev mentions Qiziltepa — Ko‘ktepa as examples of more complex place names that emerged when people needed to distinguish one hill or locality from another [2]. This example directly demonstrates the cognitive function of color: color is used as a distinguishing feature in spatial categorization.

In both English and Uzbek, red/qizil usually has a strong connection with visible landscape features. However, in Uzbek, qizil may also be associated with historical, emotional, or symbolic meanings, depending on the context. For example, red can be linked with intensity, danger, life, fire, blood, or political history. Nevertheless, in most traditional toponyms, the first motivation is usually geographical: the color of soil, sand, cliff, or water.

The English color green frequently occurs in toponyms connected with fields, meadows, vegetation, agriculture, and open land. Examples include Greenfield, Greenwich, Greenhill, and Greendale. In these cases, green is mostly associated with vegetation and fertility.

In Uzbek, the direct equivalent of green is yashil, but traditional toponyms more often contain ko‘k. The word ko‘k is semantically complex because it may refer to blue, green, sky, freshness, vegetation, or sacred celestial space. Examples include Ko‘ktepa, Ko‘ksaroy, Ko‘kcha, and Ko‘kko‘l. Qorayev’s example Qiziltepa — Ko‘ktepa shows that ko‘k functions as a color marker in Uzbek place naming [2].

The difference between English green/blue and Uzbek ko‘k is cognitively important. English normally separates green and blue as two distinct color categories. Uzbek, however, especially in older and culturally marked usage, allows ko‘k to cover a wider semantic field. Therefore, Ko‘ktepa should not always be translated mechanically as “Blue Hill”; depending on context, it may mean a hill associated with bluish color, greenish vegetation, or sky-related imagery.

From a linguocultural perspective, ko‘k is one of the richest Uzbek color terms. It is connected not only with visual perception but also with the sky, spirituality, freshness, youth, and natural vitality. Therefore, Uzbek ko‘k-based toponyms require deeper cultural interpretation than many English blue or green place names.

English blue appears in place names such as Bluewater, Blue

Mountains, and Blue Hill. It usually refers to water, distant mountains, atmospheric color, or visual perception of landscape. The blue component often expresses distance, depth, or the appearance of natural objects under light.

Uzbek ko‘k, as noted above, is broader than English blue. It may indicate the color of water, vegetation, sky, or a sacred/celestial association. For this reason, Uzbek ko‘k is not only a chromatic category but also a cultural concept. In cognitive terms, ko‘k shows how one lexical unit can organize several related domains of experience: sky, water, plants, freshness, and sacredness.

This distinction shows that color-based toponyms are not always directly translatable. A comparative analysis must take into account the cultural semantics of each color term. Mechanical translation may distort the original cognitive and cultural meaning.

The color yellow is less frequent in English toponyms than black, white, red, or green. When it appears, it may refer to yellow soil, sand, flowers, clay, or dried vegetation. English examples may include local names formed with yellow hill, yellow brook, or yellow field.

In Uzbek, sariq appears in toponyms such as Sariqko‘l “yellow lake”, Sariqtepa “yellow hill”, Sariqsuv “yellow water”, and Sariqsoy “yellow stream”. These names are usually motivated by yellowish soil, sand, water, dry grass, or steppe landscape. Since many Uzbek geographical names are formed with indicators such as ko‘l, tepa, suv, and soy, sariq-based toponyms also follow traditional Uzbek toponymic models [3].

Linguoculturally, sariq may be associated with dryness, autumn, desert, maturity, or sometimes weakness and illness. However, in toponyms, its primary function is usually descriptive: it indicates the visible color of the natural environment.

Discussion

The comparative analysis shows that English and Uzbek color-based toponyms have both common and specific features. The common feature is that both languages use color terms to distinguish geographical objects. This supports Qorayev’s idea that names are created because people need to differentiate one object from another [2]. Color is one of the most convenient cognitive tools for such differentiation because it is visually salient and easily remembered.

Another common feature is the combination of color terms with geographical indicators. English toponyms combine colors with elements such as hill, field, water, bridge, and pool. Uzbek toponyms combine color components with indicators such as tepa, suv, daryo, ko‘l, qum, qo‘rg‘on, and kent. Ergasheva’s observation that toponyms are formed according to patterns and often include traditional geographical indicators is especially relevant to Uzbek examples [3].

However, there are also important differences. English color-based toponyms tend to be more directly connected with visible physical features. For example, Redhill may denote a hill with red soil, Greenfield a green field, and Blackwater dark water. Uzbek toponyms also have such descriptive meanings, but they often include deeper cultural and symbolic layers.

Uzbek oq may express purity and sacredness; qora may indicate darkness but also ethnic or historical association; ko‘k may refer to blue, green, sky, freshness, and spirituality; qizil may denote red landscape but also intensity or historical symbolism; sariq may reflect sand, dryness, or steppe imagery. These meanings show that Uzbek color-based toponyms are deeply connected with national worldview and traditional spatial perception. From the cognitive perspective, color-based toponyms demonstrate how people transform visual perception into linguistic categories. A hill is not simply a hill; it becomes Qiziltepa if redness is the most salient feature, or Ko‘ktepa if green/blue/sky-related perception dominates. Similarly, a river may become Oqdaryo or Qoradaryo depending on water color, flow, depth, or local perception. From the linguocultural perspective, such names preserve cultural memory. Ergasheva emphasizes that toponyms reflect the people’s past, customs, and socio-cultural processes [3]. Therefore, color-based toponyms should be studied not only as geographical names but also as cultural texts.

Conclusion

Color-based toponyms in English and Uzbek represent an important object of linguocultural and cognitive analysis. They reveal how people perceive the environment, classify geographical objects, and encode cultural meanings in language. The study shows that color components in toponyms perform descriptive, classificatory, symbolic, historical, and cognitive functions.

In both English and Uzbek, colors are used to identify visible

features of the landscape: soil, water, hills, fields, deserts, stones, vegetation, and settlements. However, Uzbek color-based toponyms demonstrate stronger symbolic and cultural depth. Components such as oq, qora, qizil, ko‘k, and sariq are connected not only with physical color but also with national worldview, ancient Turkic traditions, sacredness, ethnic memory, and historical experience.

English color-based toponyms are also culturally meaningful, but they often function more directly as landscape descriptors. Uzbek toponyms, by contrast, frequently combine geographical description with cultural symbolism. This difference confirms that toponyms are not neutral labels; they are cognitive-cultural signs that reflect how each linguistic community conceptualizes space.

The article confirms Qorayev’s view that toponymy should be studied through linguistic, geographical, and historical materials [1], [2], and Ergasheva’s position that toponyms preserve the history, values, customs, and ethno-cultural processes of a people [3]. Further research may expand the corpus of English and Uzbek color-based toponyms and examine them quantitatively according to frequency, region, semantic model, and historical layer.

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