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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLOR DESIGNATION SEMANTICS IN KHANTY, MANSI, AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

The paper studies the problem of color designation, which is characterized by both universal and unique features determined by the cultural and ethnic heritage of the carrier nation. The authors study the specifics of color designation for individual objects of animated and inanimate nature, represented in riddles within the three linguistic cultures – Russian, Khanty and Mansi. The study intends to reveal general ethnocultural regularities in the functioning of color terms in the folklore on the basis of semantic and cognitive analysis, experimental study, as well as comparing the specifics of color semantics in these languages, and in Russian. Interlanguage (Russian – Khanty – Mansi) comparison of the content aspect of the words for color terms shows universality of many processes in the studied languages alongside with a different degree of their actualization, and an unequal set of lexical color units, which is due to ethnic, social and cultural factors (*'rainbow'* is seven-colored in Russian and it is golden in Khanty: *'a golden staff'* is put in the sky; in Khanty a bear is *'a golden rattle'*, in Mansi a bear is described as *'silvery rattle'* - a sacred animal, and it is not brown like in Russian).

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1. Introduction

Since ancient times the ability to distinguish colors has been one of the key elements of perception of the outer world. In modern science, the problem of color perception appears to be the subject of many interdisciplinary studies. Color is associated with the philosophical, aesthetic, cultural and historical experience of understanding the world and is a special subject of linguistic studies. Color designation problems are addressed in the works by Berlin & Kay (1969); Jackendoff (2010); Kay et al. (2009); MacLaury (1992); Paulsen et al. (2016); Sutrop (2016); Uusküla & Bimler (2016); Uusküla et al. (2012); Wierzbicka (2006). In Russian linguistics, the works by Vasilevich et al. (2008), Koshkareva et al. (2017) Kulpina (2001), Ufimtseva (2006), Frumkina (2003) are of special scientific interest. Despite the ever increasing attention to this topic, the problem of comparability of color texts, in particular, the Khanty / Mansi and Russian languages, remains underinvestigated.

2. Problem Statement

At present, modern linguistics shows a great interest in the comparative analysis of languages, an anthropocentric paradigm is being formed, the language is considered not only within the framework of its communicative-cognitive function, but as a kind of cultural code for individual linguocultural communities. The relevance of this paper is determined, on the one hand, by the growing interest in national designations of color in different languages, on the other hand, by insufficient knowledge of color categories in Khanty and Mansi, in the languages that are at risk of being lost today. Thus, the research opens up new opportunities for maintaining and developing the languages and cultures.

By comparing languages of different structures on the example of the Ob-Ugric languages and the Russian language, we can elicit the deepest and most complex human relationships and study various aspects of their life, determine general and specific features in linguistic worldviews, thus revealing cognitive and pragmatic factors of how these languages function.

3. Research Questions

Diverse folklore genres contain a lot of words that convey color, with rich semantics and wide co-occurrence. In this paper, we look into the color aspect of riddles, a genre that has preserved both the now familiar and archaicized color designations. The riddle is an integral element of the culture of many peoples and, along with proverbs, sayings, parables, is included as one of the main components in the paremiological foundation of the language, expressing the people's life experience in the form of short cliched sayings. In a more figurative and transparent way, riddle coloronyms characterize the depth of human relationships with the outer reality and are a constituent element of the linguistic worldview.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to perform a comparative analysis of the color designation semantics in the Khanty, Mansi, and Russian languages based on riddles material.

5. Research Methods

The data under study were riddles extracted from different riddle books written in the Khanty and Mansi languages and translated into Russian. With the method of continuous sampling the authors revealed 116 riddles (59 in Khanty, 57 in Mansi), which were then grouped and analyzed according to color by means of semantic and culturological approaches.

6. Findings

Upon the experiment, in Khanty and Mansi riddles, three basic colors predominate – black, white, and red (Figure 1 and Figure 2), as well as color names – golden and silver (Moldanova, 2010; Nemysova & Kajukova, 2007; Nemysova, 2006; Solovar & Morokko, 1997; Saynakhova, 2002; Slinkina, 2002). This fact can be explained by the archaic nature of the basic colors: they are found in almost every culture worldwide. Russian riddles contain twelve basic color designations and a large number of adjectives with a color component, such as bluish grey, brown, silver, golden, coral, ash grey, scarlet, maroon, snow white, ginger, etc.

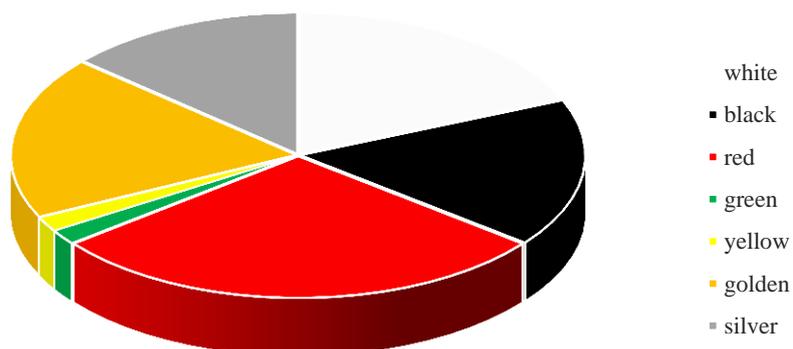


Figure 1. Color frequency chart (Khanty riddles)

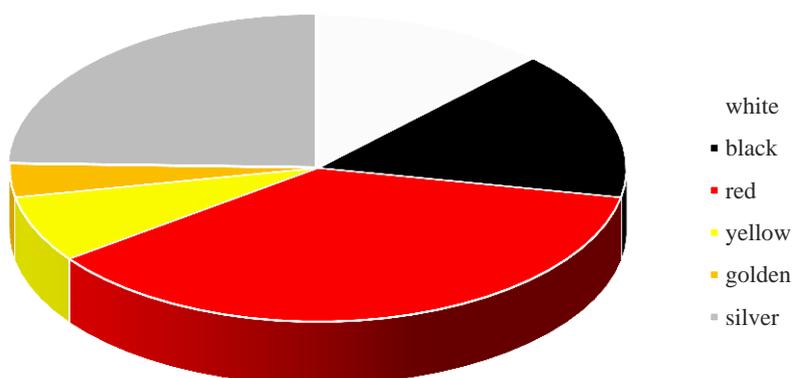


Figure 2. Color frequency chart (Mansi riddles)

6.1. The color name — ‘black’

In Russian riddles, the color ‘black’ is used to convey images of smoke, soot, dark-colored metals, and the color of certain animals and vegetation: *a black horse jumps into the fire (a poker)* (Sadovnikov, 1995); *it is black and split, and it gives drawing-mouth (bird cherry)* (Sadovnikov, 1995).

In Russian riddles, an ancient co-occurrence of the black color with the word ‘bear’ remained: *little Ivan, where have you been? / In Tula. / What have you seen? / A bishop / What did he have on? / A black fur coat and a ring on the lip (a bear)* (Sadovnikov, 1995). Connection remnants between these words remained in dialects, where the bear is named a ‘black beast’ (Dahl, 1881). The coloronym ‘black’ might have been used to convey dark colors in general, and due to the missing coloronym ‘brown’ at that period time. In modern Russian riddles, the bear is described with the adjective brown: *it is brown, shaggy. Guess what, guys; who built a warm house and sleeps in there all winter long?* (Sadovnikov, 1995).

In the Khanty language, the color name ‘black’ means *ниты* (Solovar, 2014). In riddle collections, this word is always translated as ‘black’, but native speakers in most cases translate it as ‘dark’, because one cannot call the skin of an animal black, e.g., a bear, it is dark: *ниты нўнэп молэници вэнт хўват хэтыўэж. (нўну)* – a dark deerskin parka wobbles in the forest, and also *ниты вой* ‘a dark beast’ – a sable or other fur animals. In the Mansi language, a bear is a silver chair, a silver rattle, a silver stick, and in the Khanty language, it is also a golden blob, which demonstrates first of all evaluative, not color semantics, due to the sacredness of this animal in the culture of these peoples.

In the riddle collections we studied, the word *сэ̄мыл* is used to refer to the black color in the Mansi language (Rombandeeva, 2005). The elk in Mansi: *сэ̄мыл нуйиу хум* – a mister in a black cloth parka, *сэ̄мыл охсар* – a silver fox. *Сэ̄мыл нуйиу хум с̄ат я̄ талях хўлы* – a man in a black caftan hears through seven rivers (wood grouse) (Saynakhova, 2002).

In Ob-Ugric riddles, the color ‘black’ is used to convey images of the night, the sky, animal color, clouds, air, birch fungus, some household items: *исум витуп сярсь у́лтта сэ̄мыл охсар сўлинты* – a silver fox runs through the boiling sea (a cauldron's handle) (Saynakhova, 2002).

Despite the fact that the linguistic worldview of the three studied linguistic cultures contains almost identical set of cosmology ‘elements’ – the earth, the sky, the sun, the crescent/moon, stars, still there are variations in their imaginative and coloristic representation. Thus, similar to the Russian language, in which the night is figuratively represented as a black blanket, velvet, a shawl, in the Khanty and Mansi languages, the night is also metaphorically described as a black fabric. In Russian riddles though, the night is a black wolf, and a cat, and a sheep, and a cow, and a bird: *a black cat jumped through the window* (Mitrofanova, 1968).

In the Khanty language, the sky is a black pasture with golden deer. In Russian, the sky is an element of the universe of light blue, blue, or black color. It is velvet, bed curtains, a field, sea, a shawl, a carpet, a sieve, a sack, etc. Stars are likened to some small objects of golden color being scattered along the velvet worldwide. And no one can collect and count them. These are peas, grain, charcoals, millet, sheep, cattle, gold, flowers, beads, nails: golden charcoals scattered across the sky; millet spilled on a black shawl; golden nails nailed the sky (Mitrofanova, 1968). In Khanty, a cloud is a woman in black fur coat carrying water, rain. In Russian, the cloud is characterized chiefly not by color, but by a beast or bird

flying in the sky, driven by the wind and covering the sun: an eaglet, a bird, geese, dun horses, ash grey rams: an eaglet flies in the blue sky, wings spread, covers the sun (Mitrofanova, 1968).

It is interesting to observe that in some riddles two colors are found in parallel, indicating a contrast between black and white, for example, in Khanty: *нуви сухэл җырнийэл, ниты сухэл юварцийэл* – white fabric unfolds, black fabric folds (day and night) (Slinkina, 2002); in Mansi: *Войкан тӓр акв пӓлэ тӓрамлы, акв пӓлэ сӓхтаве* – the white shawl has one half open and the other half folded (either day or night) (Slinkina, 2002). Similar parallelisms also occur in Russian: *either black canvas or white canvas covers the window* (Rybnikova, 1932).

6.2. The color name — ‘white’

In Russian riddles, the adjective ‘white’ has two meanings: 1) light, shiny (fire, water, the sun, the moon, goods made of light-colored wood, wax and metal): a white cat crawls in the window (sunbeam) (Sadovnikov, 1995; 2) snow color: as white as snow, in favor of everyone (sugar) (Sadovnikov, 1995).

In the Khanty riddles collections, the word ‘*нуви*’ is used to denote white (Solovar, 2014). Interviewers translate it as lightsome and white when referring to the animal color, the color of fabric, thread and clothing: *аснган-лорнган шопи нуви сухум лэр таласмал* – a white thread winds across the water (ice cracked on the river); *нуви сӓхеп хо карты цоркана, вух шоркана титмај* – a man in a white sakh (fur coat) fell into an iron snare, (ermine); a snow-covered stump in Khanty – a woman in a white shawl sits; *пӓтлам хотэн хотхэр хӓват нуви пӓл хӓтӓј* – a lightsome thing moves on the floor in a dark house (crescent); a hare in Khanty – a man in a white fur coat. In addition, the coloronym *нуви* is used to mean ‘light’ and is contrasted with the word *пӓтлам* – ‘dark’.

In Mansi, two color names are used for the adjective white: *войкан/вуйкан* and *я̄ӓк* (Balandin & Vakhrusheva, 1958). According to Dinislamova (2017), they differ in stylistic connotation, and the terms are used for their limited range of concepts. The author considers that *войкан* is used to denote not so much white as when describing light shades (Dinislamova, 2017). In the riddles, both coloronyms are used to mean ‘white’ (Nemysova, 2006; Nemysova & Kajukova, 2007; Solovar & Morokko, 1997): *войкан тӓрыг сӓт тӯр̄ ӯлтта луйги* – a white crane's clang can be heard behind the seven lakes (church and the ringing of bells) (Slinkina, 2002); *я̄ӓк лув ӓвихӓп ӓлы пӓлна сунсы* – a white horse is in the doorway (the moon) (Slinkina, 2002).

It should be noted that the moon being one of the main components of the universe has been devoted many riddles in the studied linguistic cultures. The metaphorical comparison of the moon with a white horse, a stallion is of particular interest. Perhaps this is due to the mythological representation of the sky among the Siberian peoples, being the abode of gods, the starry steppe where the nomad camps stretch, with their flocks and pastures. According to the Siberian peoples' myths, every evening the moon-horse is born in the East and begins galloping westward (Kulemzin, 1983). The image of a stallion or a horse may be a metaphor for the moon in the Russian linguistic culture, because it is borrowed from the Turkic peoples in Siberia, therefore it is rare in the collections of Russian riddles.

The crescent in the riddles is a shepherd (if the stars are sheep or cattle), and in Russian it also holds ‘bread’ images (a hunk of bread, a calach, a pie, a round loaf, a curd tart with cottage cheese). We can assume that an external similarity in shape and color is the reason for metaphorical transfer in this

case. There are other similarities in the riddles about the crescent: the crescent – a bull, a stallion, an ash-grey horse, a cauldron, a trough, a chock, a plate, a stone.

6.3. The color name — ‘red’

According to modern research, the Russian color designation adjectives ‘red’ and ‘black’ are etymologically related words that root back to the Indo-European root *-*ker* that means ‘burn, blaze, flare, stoke’ (Voevoda, 2012). The object standard that reflects the color meaning is fire as a substance with different color features – red, yellow, blue, black.

Adjectives with the meaning ‘red’ in Khanty ‘*вӱрты*’, and in Mansi ‘*выгыр*’ riddles also associate with fire and burning (Balandin & Vakhrusheva, 1958; Rombandeeva, 2005; Solovar, 2014): *Ӏӱх сӱм хӱват вӱрты вухсар хӱхӱ* – the red fox runs along the tree heart (fire in the hearth); *ки вӱрыу йи в хосыт вы гӱр охсар хӱху* (fire) (Saynakhova, 2002). The burn-out fire place in Khanty is a place where a beautiful red horse used to stand, similar to Russian, it is *the land where a red cow, goat, red ox or bull used to graze* (Mitrofanova, 1968).

In Russian, fire also has a metaphorical animalistic image with the red color designation: *a red cat bites a tree; a red horse lives in the stove, and its name is ...; a scarlet rooster extinguished in water; a red cat walks along a pole* (Mitrofanova, 1968). The comparison of fire with a rooster has become colloquial: *let the red rooster out* means to set on fire.

In Khanty riddles, the adjective red ‘*вӱрты*’ has two meanings: ‘red’ and ‘ginger’ (Solovar, 2014). The color designation ‘red’ is found in riddles about fire, dawn (red silk sheet); berries (cloudberry – *a woman in a red or red-yellow shawl – вӱрты / вӱцӱрэм*), mushrooms (a mushroom – a man in a red hat / *вӱрты милли* or a woman in a red shawl) (Solovar & Morokko, 1997). The color designation ‘red’ is used chiefly to describe the birch fungus (a man in a white parka, with a dark-red beard) and the color of fox.

In Mansi, two color names are used for the adjective ‘red’: *выгыр* and *кӱлт*. In the materials studied, the word *выгыр* is translated into Russian as red, while ginger chiefly is to describe the color of a perch (a woman in a red shawl), berries, pine cones (red basket), mushrooms, and birch fungus (Balandin & Vakhrusheva, 1958; Rombandeeva, 2005). *Выгыр нуйыу хум сӱр мор вӱр сӱмт лю ли* – a young man in a red cloth coat stands in a distant unknown dark forest, in the far corner (a birch without bark) (Nemysova & Kajukova, 2007).

When the birch is peeled its bark, the bark underneath looks ginger red, and this color semantics is quite logical, but the association of the ‘birch’ tree with a man (in yellow clothes on) or a lad in red clothes looks quite odd, because according to informants, the birch is feminine – beautiful divine woman in a burgundy cloth coat (in Khanty). In Russian, the image of the birch tree is more poetic and affectionate: a beauty in a green blouse/small shawl, in a white sundress/shirt, a white-trunk beauty, etc. (Mitrofanova, 1968; Rybnikova, 1932; Sadovnikov, 1995). Perhaps the image of the masculine gender in the Ob-Ugric languages relates to the loss of natural beauty of the tree, when the Northerners remove the bark for their traditional birch crafts, either due to a metaphorical transfer when comparing the birch fungus with a red beard, and the beard is a masculine feature.

The word *кѣлн* in Mansi riddles is used to describe the birch fungus and the fox color, and is translated into Russian as red (Balandin & Vakhrusheva, 1958): *сэ̄р̄ мор̄ вѣр̄ с̄амт̄ кѣлн тусыу хум̄ лю̄ лӣ* – in the taiga wilderness, in a secluded place stands a handsome man with a red beard (birch fungus); *кврыӯ йӣ в̄ хосыт̄ кѣлн охсар̄ х̄аӯхсы̄* – a redfox crawls inside a hollow tree (Slinkina, 2002).

In Russian, the colonym 'red' is often used to create an image of the sun. In Russian riddles, the sun is a red girl, a whirligig, a golden bobbin, a golden/red apple or ball, a red bun, etc. (Mitrofanova, 1968; Rybnikova, 1932; Sadovnikov, 1995).

In Khanty, the sun is a girl, i.e., it appears primarily as a female image, not of red but of gold color. According to the mythical beliefs of the Siberian peoples, the sun and the moon are born in the sky every day. The nascent sun was especially revered. Khanty people believe that the Sun is a woman, and the Moon is a man, and people are descended from their marriage (Moldanova, 2010).

6.4. The color name — 'golden'

The color name 'golden' is the third (behind red and white) frequent in Khanty riddles 'сорни, сорнеу' and the sixth following the four main colors and the colonym 'silver' in the Mansi language 'сѳрнну' (Balandin & Vakhrusheva, 1958; Rombandeeva, 2005; Solovar, 2014). Khanty people rank the golden color at the top of the color hierarchy in the spiritual world, as it symbolizes the highest sacredness and value. It characterizes the heroes of the divine pantheon and their zoomorphic incarnations (Moldanova, 2010). In Russian riddles, the color designation 'golden' is also used more often than 'yellow', since its semantics do meet the needs of this genre, but in Russian this colonym mainly expresses the semantics of 'fire' or 'sparkling/glittering' surface: a golden log from window to window, (sunbeam) (Sadovnikov, 1995); golden host – in the field; silver shepherd – out of the field (the sun and the moon) (Sadovnikov, 1995).

In the languages of Ob Ugrians, the colonym 'golden' has an evaluative semantics. In these languages, the color term is used to convey images: the horizon (in Khanty – golden birch-bark road); the stars – golden deer; the sunbeam – a woman with golden rings in Mansi; a sacred bear – 'golden ball': *юхан хонэуэн сорнеу сеукеп д̄яр̄ий̄э̄л̄* – a golden rattle rolls along the riverbank (answer: a bear). Referring to the bear, the word 'golden' implies the highest value, divinity.

The image of the rainbow is particularly noteworthy in both Russian and Ob-Ugric languages. In Khanty riddles, a rainbow – a shoulder-yoke with golden patterns, *лапат̄ йитти сорнег̄ сув̄ торма лос̄ла, торма ан̄ лэл̄ на̄ иллы̄ менлал̄, кусы̄ лак̄ иты, (нул̄ юх)* – put the seven-colored golden pole vertically, so the sky is not enough that it bends like an arc. Such examples indicate first of all the evaluative semantics of the sacredness and importance of this phenomenon for Ob Ugrians.

In Russian riddles, the color metaphors to describe the rainbow are as follows: red shoulder-yoke, red sword, and colored, multi-colored or seven-color bridge/gate, red shoulder-yokes descended in the river; red shoulder-yoke hangs over the river (Mitrofanova, 1968).

6.5. The color name – 'silver'

In Khanty, the word combination *цел̄ вух̄*, just *цел̄*, or *вух̄*, and *олн* in Mansi, are translated into Russian as silver, grey if referring to the color of individual animals, and also mean something valuable

and sacred (Balandin & Vakhrusheva, 1958; Rombandeeva, 2005; Solovar, 2014). In the riddles, this color name conveys the image of a window (silver deer skin in Khanty), icicles (silver coin in Khanty), moonbeams, the color of a wood grouse's beak in Mansi, *a woman with a silver ring (sits) in a dark corner and sews (a moonbeam)* (Slinkina, 2002), etc. The color naming *олн* is used both to convey images of certain animals appealing to color semantics: a beaver (a silver bowl), an elk cow (a silver ladder), a seal (a silver herd), and to convey a metaphorical image of a sacred and divine animal – a bear (a silver chair, a silver rattle, a silver stick) (Slinkina, 2002).

The color name 'silver' in Russian riddles is way too rare than 'grey', 'ash grey', 'bluish gray': a beaver – silver-brown, stars – a blue field strewn with silver (Mitrofanova, 1968); the sun – a golden apple rolls on a silver plate (Rybnikova, 1932); the sun and the moon – the golden one goes away, the silver one comes; an icicle – a silver carrot clung deftly to the roof. Thus, in Russian riddles, the coloronym 'silver' is used mainly to convey the image of 'sparkling, glittering', and therefore occurs when describing icicles, stars, and rarely the moon.

6.6. The color name – 'green'

The coloronym 'green' is used in Russian riddles with the common meaning 'color of grass or vegetation': *Egor lies under the hedge, covered with a green veil (a cucumber)* (Sadovnikov, 1995); a black horse, the red one sits, the green one whips (bath broom) (Sadovnikov, 1995).

In Khanty, the word '*вусты*' is used to denote both blue and green colors, which first of all shows both the ancient nature of the language in which the blue color originated much later (after yellow and green) and a feature of the 'riddles' genre that distinguishes from other forms of folklore by its archaic nature and a large number of obsolete lexemes.

The coloronym 'green' in the form of the word *вусты* conveys the semantics of the green-color vegetation – grass and shrubs: '*вусты пӓсты йирӓн ут ёи эвӓтӓл, кӓр ваньцл*' – a green object with sharp edges cuts the hand, cuts the leg (sedge), *вусты турн* – green grass (Moldanova, 2010).

6.7. The color name – 'blue'

The coloronym 'blue' in Russian riddles has preserved both ancient meanings – 'glittering', 'sparkling', e.g. a barn on the street, a chest in the barn, a blue cloth in the chest, gold in the blue cloth (a hut, a stove, a stoking hole, heat) (Sadovnikov, 1995), and the modern meaning in the form of common epithets for the sea, the sky, clouds, a whale, bells: an eaglet flies across the blue sky with her wings spread, covered the sun (a cloud) (Sadovnikov, 1995), etc.

The blue color is quite rare in riddles and is mainly used when describing the sky: a blue sheet covers the whole world (the sky), a blue tent covers the whole world (the sky), etc. Russian riddles keep an ancient co-occurrence of the coloronym 'blue' to refer to grey as an animal color i.e. mice and rats: a blue cow, dislike houses, not purchased at the market (a rat) (Sadovnikov, 1995); a blue horse, guided to the market – will not be sold (a mouse) (Sadovnikov, 1995).

The coloronyms 'blue' and 'light blue' in Ob-Ugric riddles are completely absent, which may be due to living conditions of these ethnic groups. Perhaps due to long-term darkness and foul weather trees do not acquire rich green color in the riddles and the folklore of these peoples that is typical of most

cultures, and as a result, Khanty and Mansi native speakers are more likely to call the tree and forest dark than green.

6.8. The color name – ‘yellow’

In Khanty, the adjective yellow is translated as *вўцлэм* and in riddles is mainly used to create the image of an autumn forest and autumn leaves: *сер вөнт, мур вөнт сўнэн вўцлэм нөйән хө лоль* – a man in a yellow cloth on stands in the heart of the forest (yellow birch leaves) (Nemysova, 2006; Solovar, 2014). The semantics of the color term ‘*вўцлэм*’ is more diverse, it is not only of color, but also evaluative, determining the state of a leaf or a cloudberry – ripe/unripe. In Russian, the cloudberry is a yellow or orange berry: born in a swamp, hidden in soft grass, yellow brooch–berry (Mitrofanova, 1968).

According to the dictionaries, in Mansi, the words ‘*восьрам*’, ‘*восьрамхарн(а)*’ (Rombandeeva, 2005) are used to name the yellow color. Sipöcz notes that the word *kasm* ‘yellow’ is also used in folklore texts. According to the informants, *кассм* is used to mean ‘sunburned’, the meaning ‘yellow’ is not used in speech. In Mansi riddles we considered, the word *кассм* is used in all the cases, which is translated into Russian as ‘yellow, orange, red’, for example: *сэ р̄ в̄ор, мор в̄ор с̄амта кассм т̄орыл пантым нэ̄ к̄вет ӯнлантэ̄ г̄ыт* – in a remote, unknown forest, beautiful women sit covered with yellow (orange) shawls, (a cloudberry) (Slinkina, 2002). Perhaps the coloronym ‘*кассм*’ is more archaic, so it was commonly used in such an ancient genre of folk art as the riddle, having lost the meaning ‘yellow’ in modern language. This fact once again emphasizes a thorough and detailed study of this genre, which has preserved many ancient, now lost color lexemes in order to develop and preserve the language as a whole.

In Russian riddles, the coloronym ‘yellow’ is way less rare than ‘golden’ and is found in modern riddles to convey images of fruit, vegetables, certain types of flowers (a mimosa, a camomile, a dandelion, etc.), pancakes, less commonly the moon and plants (a sunflower): it is yellow, round, fragrant and tastes so good (a pancake), yellow citrus fruit (a lemon), *a yellow ball is in the garden but it does not bounce (a pumpkin), yellow fluffy fragrant balls (a mimosa), yellow Antoshka turns on his leg (a sunflower), yellow goat grazes in the sky (the moon)* (Mitrofanova, 1968; Rybnikova, 1932; Sadovnikov, 1995). Based on the examples, it is evident that the color semantics is primarily expressed.

Besides the above color designations, Russian riddles reveal the color terms ‘brown’, ‘orange’, ‘purple’, ‘grey’ and the rest that are completely missing in the Ob-Ugric riddles, except for the color word ‘*цорам*’ – brown, which is rare in Mansi riddles meaning ‘sooty (smoky)’: *таңкыр нёл, цорам нёл колтырнэ тахсы* – a mouse’s nose, the brown nose rolls (a comb) (Solovar & Morokko, 1997).

7. Conclusion

In Russian riddles, the color range is more diverse compared to the Ob-Ugric languages. We can notice cases of semantic matching in color designations. For example, ‘a red horse, a red cat, a red rooster’– fire in Russian and ‘a red fox’ in Mansi, ‘a man in a red hat’ – a mushroom, ‘a girl in a red shawl’ – a berry, both in Russian and in Khanty, and Mansi languages. However, when comparing the color designation of the studied languages, numerous semantic divergences are also revealed. The innermost differences in the semantic layer of color designations are observed when analyzing the riddles

about the birch, the moon, the bear, etc. So, the birch in Russian – a beautiful girl in a white sundress, a sweater, or a dress, does not have a similar description in the Mansi and Khanty languages. This reminds us that language has a ‘creative nature’ and its own unique path of development, determined by natural, cultural and historical factors. Thus, in traditional Mansi birch bark crafts, the birch is peeled and the trunk looks ‘ginger or red’, and the word ‘trunk’ is grammatically relevant to the masculine gender – ‘a man/a lad’. In addition, the Ob-Ugric languages have their own colors favored by native speakers, with both dominance and ethnic priority features serving to convey ethnic sentiments when it comes to the most intimate feeling for a person/people, i.e. the color becomes idealized, e.g. ‘golden crosses – crane’s footprints’ (the crane is a hypostasis of one of Khanty gods), ‘the bear – a golden rattle’ (sacred animal) in Khanty, and a ‘silver rattle’ in Mansi.

In the Khanty and Mansi riddles, the set of color terms with the names of animals is quite limited. White and black (often in contrast) are found in abundance and the coloronym ‘red’ is rare, which translates as ‘red’ if referring to the color of the fox. This relative tenuity of color range largely reflects the set of color terms for the color designation of natural colors in primary animal species. At the same time, the color designation can be detached from the real color of the animal to some extent, it becomes abstracted from it in Mansi riddles as follows: a beaver – a silver bowl, an elk cow – a silver ladder, a bear – a silver chair, etc. This suggests certain differences in the lexicographic tradition of animalistic objects. Color designation of nature demonstrates its connection with an evaluation category — it serves to aestheticize the reality, the emotional evaluation of natural objects.

The comparison of color designations in Russian and in Ob-Ugric riddles allowed finding both semantic and cultural similarities, despite the fact that the images used in the riddles of the studied linguistic cultures are often different, and the common features underlying the metaphor cannot always be elicited by the semantics analysis. Therefore, within the color worldview of any language, one can identify both universal and ethnic-specific features: the world is common for all the peoples, but its empirical cognition is different, the life of each people is based on legends and beliefs prevailing among them, i.e., the specificity of color samples is defined by culturally determined worldview features of the people, which are reflected in a linguistic shape of a riddle.

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