

ISCKMC 2020
International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»
THE COLOURATIVE «GREY» IN RUSSIAN CHROMATIC
WORLD PICTURE

Irina Anatolyevna Makevnina (a)*, Tatiana Vladimirovna Chernicina (b),
Natalia Anatolyevna Starodubtseva (c), Irina Grigorievna Pavlovskaya (d),
Elena Alekseevna Ovechkina (e), Svetlana Sergeevna Vasileva (f)

*Corresponding author

- (a) Volgograd State Technical University, 28, Lenin Ave., Volgograd, 400131, Russia, makevnina_ira@mail.ru
(b) Volgograd State Technical University, 28, Lenin Ave., Volgograd, 400131, Russia, tatyana-chernicina@vstu.ru
(c) Volgograd State University, 100, University Ave., Volgograd, 400062, Russia, na_starodubceva@volsu.ru
(d) Volgograd State Social and Pedagogical University” 27, Lenin Ave., Volgograd, 400066, Russia, irinapav05@ya.ru
(e) Volgograd State University, 100, University Ave., Volgograd, 400062, Russia, ea_ovechkina@volsu.ru
(f) Volgograd State University, 100, University Ave., Volgograd, 400062, Russia, ss_vasileva@volsu.ru

Abstract

The relevance of the research is determined by the intention to create a unique Russian lingual word picture on the base of its fragment description connected with colour nomination. Searching for depictive and expressive potentials of language system of V. Shalamov and V. Shukshin development promotes the solution of the problem. Appealing to the achromatic colour nomination as a subject of scientific research depends on the special semantic and connotative potential of these words semantics. The article undertakes a multiaspectual analysis of semantic content for colourative grey with its derivatives that was done from anthropocentric and linguoculturalogical positions. The colourative grey is considered in the sphere of usage the words denoting this colour; it was also established their surrounds act a hinge for clear understanding primary nomination of colour designation. The main goal of the work is to determine the specificity of colour nomination grey and discover the singularity of aesthetic meanings of this colourative with its derivatives in poetics of Shalamov and Shukshin basing on the analysis of polyvariable functioning the colour lexeme grey in the texts of authors’ novels and stories. This research presents an analysis of semantic and emotional-expressive transformations of the word grey connected with its semantic ambivalence. There was carried out a comparative analysis of using colourative grey in prose of Shalamov and Shukshin. It is shown that choosing of one or another achromatic colour nomination as well as its semantic content connects with themes, problems of researching writings and causes by authors’ world perception.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Linguoculturology, chromatic world picture, achromatic colouratives, colour lexeme grey, semantics



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1. Introduction

The colour concept exists in every culture, it can be associated with significant socio-cultural information accumulated by any ethnic group (Dinislamova, 2017).

Colour plays an important role in men's reality cognition. Due to the primacy of sensual-imaginative method of mastering the world and ability to modulate physical and psycho-emotional condition of a person the colour becomes a constant of culture, the ancient semiotic system and an important part of the conceptual world picture, a kind of moral and aesthetic category. In cultural traditions of different people there came to existence some unconscious associations connected with certain colours and individual images in spite of the relatively human perception similarity of the colours.

The system of colour nominating acquires characteristics relating to the value of world picture clearly displaying the ethnic group's creative energy and keeping large cultural texts in a minimized form thus reflecting the worldview features both of the whole nation and a single person (Shiyanova, 2018; Shlyakhova, 2018).

The colour nomination peculiarity has been studied in linguistics for quite a long time and in various aspects: linguocultural (Dinislamova, 2017; Tarakanova, 2012; Tolochin & Vlasova, 2020) and comparative (Barysheva, 2012; Sokolova, 2018; Spisiakova, 2016), diachronic (Berlin, Kay, 1969), psycholinguistic (Abdullina & Artamonova, 2019; Frumkina, 1984), corpus (Apresjan, 2018) and cognitive. A special place in these studies is occupied by investigation of colour designations in the literary text where they indicate not only the colour objects characteristics of reality drawn by the author but also characterize the peculiarity of writer's worldview and world feelings, his emotional and psychological state, recreate the writer's world poetic picture that includes the experience of many previous generations accumulated by their works, so that any researches in this direction also make it possible to describe some distinctive features of studied traditional culture.

Symbolic and associative saturation of colour semantics, its "unequal" verbalization in different languages makes it difficult to study the phenomenon of colour in consciousness and language. Notwithstanding rather comprehensive linguistic literature on the problem of colour nominating many questions remain still open.

2. Problem Statement

The researchers have repeatedly noted that the semantics of colour nominating has a great associative potential. The ability to form expressive, evaluative connotations in colouronyms determines the possibility of forming their figurative meanings and various semantic transformations. Most colour names are characterized by a certain semantic doubleness, combining the direct meaning and the associated image representation of this colour that in its turn causes almost limitless possibilities of semantic shifts in their meaning, the development of symbolic potential. Throughout the history of the language colour develops associative connections and estimative increment of meaning, reflects national and cultural connotations. The certain ideas of a particular ethnic group moral values are associated with certain colours.

In the modern linguistics the colour linguistics studies the colour lexis functioning and acquires the position of an independent scientific paradigm and has a firm theoretical and methodological base in native and foreign philology (Babina & Moliboga, 2016; Berlin & Kay, 1969; Silvestre et al., 2016; Kulpina, 2001; Urazmetova, 2019; Zhang, 2019; etc). A separate area of this discipline is investigating the problem of the colour nominating in literal texts, in which are revealed the functions of colour terms in literary works, the colour symbolism of specific colour names in the writers' language, colour dominants in the language of the writer, specific features of colour naming functioning, the study of author's colour perception (Azarenko, 2014; Petrov & Petrova, 2016; Potashova, 2019, Sadriyeva, 2016; Selyunina, 2018; etc.).

3. Research Questions

The problem of studying chromatic world picture as a kind of surrounding reality vision determined by the author's personality and verbalized in his textual activity has been and remains relevant at various authors' works. Colour painting is one of the essential elements of the writer's idiosyncrasy expressing the ideological and emotional content of a literary work. Until today, world colour picture of nowadays writers V. Shalamov and V. Shukshin was practically not included in the area of linguists' urgent interest as a general subject of study, so it did not get sufficient coverage in the scientific literature, there are no works devoted to the comparative aspect of their literary work.

Choosing these writers as typical representatives of the "cage" (V. Shalamov) and "rustic" (V. Shukshin) prose is caused by the tendency to get to the studying subject through the contrast diametrically opposed to their aesthetic and ideological principles, that contributes, in our opinion, the objectification of research and fills some gaps in the reconstruction of the entire Russian colour picture of the world, as well as to determine individual authors' principles of colour nominating in the literary heritage of the two writers unified by following realism traditions, a clearly expressed humanistic orientation of their work, love for the ordinary person and faith in his spiritual strength.

Achromatic and chromatic colour lexemes are functioning in the prosaic works of V. Shalamov and V. Shukshin; simple and complex constructions with the colour meaning are characterized by a special contextual organization and grammar expression specificity.

The subject of this work is the polyvariative functioning of lexeme grey and its derivatives in prosaic texts by V. Shalamov and V. Shukshin. The relevance of appealing to the achromatic colour lexeme grey is caused by the interpretational multimeaning and ambiguity of this colourative in native and foreign science and culture, its ability to carry contradicting meanings.

The last statement can be also proved by the dictionary definitions analysis. In lexicographic sources grey has the main meaning "the colour obtained from mixing black and white; the colour of ash" (Dictionary of the modern Russian literary language, 1962), secondary meanings include 1) "murky, cloudy"; 2) the figurative "unremarkable, colourless, impersonal"; 3) the figurative spoken "uneducated, uncultured". In the "Dictionary-thesaurus of adjectives of the Russian language" this very colouronym becomes a part of six different semantic (ideographic) groups: 1) Weather, climate and their characteristics; 2) Peculiarities of the human skin; 3) Intellectual development level; 4) The result of education; 5) Colour; 6) Insignificance (2012).

Some researchers point out that in Russian grey colour referring to calm tones is often associated with mediocrity and everyday routine (cf. "grey days"; "such greyness"), with indifference, boredom, apathy and the darker the shade of grey is, the more depressing associations it can cause. For Russians grey colour muffles and slows down excitement, quenches the tension of emotions, inspires a sense of boredom, longing, hopelessness more than others. Grey is perceived positively when they talk about noble fabrics and fur, bird feathering, clouds, marble and gemstones. In an urban environment with its grey facades, sidewalks, and cloudy skies named colour is overwhelming, depressing, and even irritating to people.

As a rule, in Russian literary tradition grey colour usually gets negative evaluation. In folklore it was used to describe predatory animals (grey wolf, blue-grey eagle). In Russian literature grey is associated with the motives of longing, fading, fatigue, and uncertainty. For example, in the works of Nikolai Gogol this colour is used for describing the homes of Plyushkin and Manilov, the clothes of the deacon Foma Grigoryevich. In poetry by S. Yesenin grey colour conveys the sadness of the lyric hero. A. Block describing the urban landscape often uses grey for creating a hopelessly tragic atmosphere that depresses the lyric hero.

D. Merezhkovsky has repeatedly highlighted that since the beginning of the XXth century greyness and evil have become synonyms. Describing the grey colour Beliy (2012) notes:

The incarnation from non-existence into being that gives the latter an illusoriness symbolizes the grey colour... The transformation into the unknown future (frightening black) from a white (meaningful) existence is imperceptible and phantasmal as our future. Only a moment ago we were in it, and it is no longer there. (p. 45).

In the XXth century the negative semantic connotation of the word grey is gradually neutralized, this colour is often used in a direct nominative meaning or as in the works of I. Brodsky it means the absence of colour, an appeal to the past.

4. Purpose of the Study

The main goal of our research is giving the description for the fragment of Russian colour world picture basing on the analysis of the achromatic colour lexeme grey in the Russian cultural consciousness and the specifics of its functioning in the texts of V. Shalamov and V. Shukshin as well as to reveal the characteristics of the aesthetic meaning of this colourative and its derivatives in the writers' art world. In the course of the study the following problems were set: 1) identify the colour lexeme grey and its derivatives in the prose of V. Shalamov and V. Shukshin; 2) consider the evaluative connotations of particular colour lexeme; 3) analyze the specificity of polyfunctionally colour lexeme grey and its derivatives in the prosaic space of V. Shalamov and V. Shukshin; 4) correlation of the individual author's using of the colour nominatives with their common and traditional symbolic linguistic meanings.

5. Research Methods

To proceed from the general purpose and features of the studying subject this research used methods of observation, linguistic description, contextual analysis engaging elements of comparative and structural semantic analysis.

6. Findings

The analysis of the language material allowed us to establish that unlike poetry the category of colour in V. Shalamov's prose is graded and usually got muffled monochrome character. The specifics of the implementation world colour picture in V. Shalamov's Kolyma prose characterize with its achromatic sounding.

Greyness, monochromatism in Northern Kolyma landscapes, weather fog-rain metamorphoses, personal experiences and memories can simulate a closed paradox image of V. Shalamov's world. Chromaticity narrows down the concept of grey and dirty making up the main colour background of Shalamov's novels.

The novel "The Dock of the Hell" is based on the contrast of chromatic Far Eastern and achromatic grey Kolyma colours. "After the full-sounding purest Far Eastern colours of life cold drizzle fell on people from a slightly white unclear dark monochrome sky... and shaggy dirty-grey tousled clouds" (Shalamov, 1998, p. 36). The greyish colour of the ship, the sea, the rain and the rocks surrounding Nagaevo Bay artfully performs the colour background of the achromatic Kolyma landscape. "I was looking at the steamer, pushed to the dock, so small and slightly rocking by dark grey waves... Through the grey mesh of rain, the gloomy silhouettes of the rocks surrounding Nagaevo Bay appeared ...The hot autumn colour brightness of sunny Vladivostok remained somewhere there in another real world. Here was a world, unfriendly and gloomy" (Shalamov, 1998, p. 37). The dominant grey colour of Kolyma nature reflects the author's psychological state in an atmosphere of hopelessness, greyness, and the inability to turn time back and change anything. The colour word grey and its derivatives (dark-gloomy) metaphorizes, getting the symbolism of loss, bereavement, fatal hopelessness: "I thought — we were brought here to die" (Shalamov, 1998).

In the novels "Rain" and "The Dry Rations" the grey background is also the colour basis for creating white-grey "graphic" Kolyma landscapes. "It rained for the third day long without ceasing. On the stony ground you can't discover if it's raining for an hour or a month. Cold drizzle... The grey stone beach, the grey mountains, the grey rain, the people in grey ragged clothes – everything was very soft, fully agreed with each other. Everything was in common colour harmony" (Shalamov, 1998, p. 40). Adjectives denoting grey are the basic lexemes which the landscape description in the novel is based on. Lexical repeating of the colourative grey word forms actualizes significant for any writer meanings, who tries to show the unity of a living man with the lifeless world around, their calm and uncomplaining coexistence.

In the short story "The First Death" V. Shalamov skillfully "draws" Kolyma landscape realities, made in accordance with the law of achromatic contrast (to make the light spot seem even lighter the dark background is necessary). "In the black sky we saw a small light-grey moon surrounded by a rainbow

nimbus lighting up in the severe frosts” (Shalamov, 1998, p. 42). The light-grey moon in the dark Kolyma sky serves as a forerunner and frame of tragic event. Landscape drawing with a predominance of grey colour in the novella “The First Death” indicates the time and place of action, conveys the characters’ psychological state and becomes an important compositional component of a prose text. In the analyzed story the landscape background moon description gives action some tension.

The lexeme grey in V. Shalamov’s prose is represented not only by the focal colour categories and their shades (dirty, foggy) but also by the words fog, mud that implicitly contain the seme ‘grey’. In some novels the grey lexeme undergoes semantic reinterpretation associated with atmosphere metamorphoses. Among nouns there are the lexemes fog, rain, downpour, river. In the short story “The Carpenters” the image of fog frames the story and contains doubled symbolic subtext. Thick fog is bad weather, unfreedom, external and internal restraint: “Round the clock there was a white fog of such density that you could not see a person two steps away. However, it was no necessity to walk alone. Just few directions – the canteen, the hospital, the watch – were guessed by an instinct acquired without the knowledge relating to the sense of direction that animals fully possess and that wakes up in a person under suitable conditions” (Shalamov, 1998, p. 47). The short story conflict nature is expressed by the antithesis “fog” – “will”. But the theme of “will” is also inextricably linked with a fog image. It is anticipated at the very beginning by the epithet “white fog” contrasting with “mud” and “greyness”. The metaphorical definition of “foggy” as “obscure, dim, indeterminate” fully matches the achromatic lexeme colour characteristics. The image of the fog as a kind of cover over the world hiding the irrational, something out of the reason control was actualized at the Silver Age and remained a symbol of this era for a long time. This image is a means of expressing the psychological state of a person deprived of tomorrow in V. Shalamov’s prose. The colour of Kolyma tragedy transforms by fog, twilight, leveling borders of the world immersed in an anabiosis state of semi-existence.

Studying of colour meanings used by V. Shukshin in his prose showed a variety of both achromatic and chromatic colours. At the same time the author distinguishes colour nuances absolutely.

As a colour lexeme that conveys the characters inner psychological emotions the word grey and its shades are often found in V. Shukshin’s stories for describing his characters’ eyes, for example, in the stories “The Cool Driver”: “In spring, at the beginning of sowing in Bystrjanka there appeared a new guy – the driver Pasha Kholmanskii. Slim, veiny, easy on the foot. With round yellow-grey courageous eyes, with a straight thin nose, a bit pockmarked, with an abrupt broken eyebrow, either very angry or beautiful” (Shukshin, 1992); “Gogol and Raika”: “Turning her head Raika looks at us with smoky-wet eyes – she is also waiting for a calf...” (Shukshin, 1992); “The Eternally Annoyed Yakovlev”: “– Boris, Boris... – Yakovlev said condescendingly giving hand to an old friend and his wife, a fat woman with grey bulging eyes” (Shukshin, 1992); “Friends of Games and Fun”: “Their son Kostya, a twenty-three year old mechanic, nervous as well, often worried, but then says – not only says – tries to find the words strong, accurate, doesn’t detect them immediately and looks with dark-grey eyes at whom he wants to find those words” (Shukshin, 1992); “Cuckoo’s tears”: “She looked at him. Her eyes are grey and clear” (Shukshin, 1998, p. 372).

In the short stories “And the Horses Played out in the Field”, “At Night in the Boiler Room”, “Rural People”, “The Sun, the Old Man and the Girl” the semantics of grey hair concept is associated

with the category of grey. Grey-haired means not only lived to grey hair but also having life experience, worldly wisdom: “For a long time Min’ka was walking next to the window, looked at father. His father was looking at him, too. He was sitting pulled at the small table without moving. He was grey-haired, frowning, looks still the same – carefully and strictly” (Shukshin, 1992); “A strong man Pilipenko came in first. He was grey-haired, well-fed, and smelled of cologne and expensive cigarettes” (Shukshin, 1992); “Yegor took off his sheepskincoat and hat, and smoothed his greying sweaty hair with corny palms” (Shukshin, 1992); “the old man was sitting still... The neck is thin, the head is small, grey” (Shukshin, 1998, p. 382). As a rule the derivative lexeme *grey* is used in the nominative meaning in the analyzed novels.

More example of functioning the colour lexeme grey meets in the story “The Cool driver”: “Your greyness astonishes me, – said Pashka, putting an expressive tender eyeview to Nastya’s dark mysterious eyes deep well” (Shukshin, 1992). The metaphorical expression “your greyness” with its ironic meaning is antonymous to the lexeme grey. It is not about worldly wisdom but about ignorance, worldly naivety, stupidity.

In V. Shukshin’s stories another shade of grey – silver – is quite common. In the figurative meaning this colour lexeme is found in the description of bird singing in the story *The Cuckoo’s Tears*: “Twisted silver trills of larks flow from the sky” (Shukshin, 1992). And in the direct meaning “of silver colour” we meet this colour-lexeme in the story “Grin’ka Malyugin”: “The gasoline storage is a whole town, strict, regular, monotonous, even beautiful in its monotony. On the area of about two hectares there stand neat rows of huge silver-white tanks – cylindrical, round, square” (Shukshin, 1992). In the story “The Internal Content” silver as a shade of grey plays a contrasting role with the blue colour demonstrating brightness, luxury, external flashiness and attractiveness: “A girl dressed in a beautiful, silver-tinged white dress entered the scene” (Shukshin, 1992); “A girl in a silver dress left” (Shukshin, 1992); “A plump, white girl in a blue simple dress came out” (Shukshin, 1992).

The metaphorical meaning of grey in the sense of “cold tools, insensitive and lifeless” is marked in the story “The Faraway Winter Evenings”: “The birch tree shudders quietly and sprinkles sparkling spangles. The axe steel splashes with cold flame biting into the white elastic trunk deeper and deeper” (Shukshin, 1992). The analyzed colour lexeme appears and manifests in the expression of mind state – fear, insecurity in the story “Friends of Games and Fun”: “Kostya got up... He took the pestle out of his pocket. And without words immediately went to the man. Suddenly the man’s face turned grey...” (Shukshin, 1992, p. 381).

It should be noticed that in V. Shukshin’s prose the colour lexeme grey occurs in opposite semantic variants. Thus, describing a person’s appearance (hair, eyes) allows to reveal the characters’ inner state it can be both evidence of life experience and an indicator of its absence. This colourative and its derivatives can be found in the description of nature, surrounding objects, etc., but more often – in the portrait characteristics of main heroes.

7. Conclusion

In the V. Shalamov’s and V. Shukshin’s world picture the grey lexeme and its derivatives are used in different ways. Analysis of the landscape language sketches and characters’ psychological states in

V. Shalamov's short stories showed that grey is one of the dominant colours in Kolyma prose. In V. Shalamov's novels the following objects of literal world get a grey colour characteristic: the Kolyma landscape; the prisoners' life attributes, their clothing; Kolyma buildings. V. Shalamov actively uses such derivatives of grey as dirty, foggy; the main semantic get nouns, adjectives, verbs that indicate a change in colour. The research also showed that there became widespread the lexemes with abstract semantics that convey the impression of a person from the Kolyma realities: greyness, dirt, darkness, etc.

In V. Shukshin's prose the colour lexeme grey and its derivatives are characterized by an increased frequency in describing nature, surrounding objects, and in portraying characters.

In V. Shalamov's novels ascetic grey is one of the main colours that is determined by the problematic and the author's attitude to pictured (Makevnina, 2019). The tragical is one of the components of both V. Shalamov's and V. Shukshin's literal system. But V. Shukshin's prose is more multicoloured, the lexeme grey is not dominant but used in equal proportions with chromatic colour words.

"The authors' worldview forming at certain language and cultural surrounding lets them intuitively fill and make objective in the text all potential meaning and syntagmatic links of lexical units according to the authors' conception" (Starodubtseva et al., 2020, p. 163).

Thus, colour is an important category of cognition and one of the capacious carriers of cultural information accumulated by an ethnic group, and colour denotes are a kind of "semiotic condensers" of cultural memory. Studying the specifics of colour nominating in the works of certain countries representatives and cultures allows to characterize not only the general laws of colour perception, typical for the ethno-cultural (ethno-linguistic) viewpoint as associative and semantic forms representation of the value-cognitive space of any community but also to identify expressive semantic potential colouronyms as a unique product of aesthetic world modeling, new artistic interpretation of reality by a person which is part of his poetic world picture.

Linguistic understanding of colouratives helps not only expand and deep the understanding of colour as a category of culture, but also opens up wide outlooks for studying colour meanings that have not been scientifically reflected in other science branches.

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