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ВОСПРИЯТИЕ ЦВЕТА В РАЗНЫХ КУЛЬТУРАХ

Проблема восприятия цвета в разных культурах является очень обширной. Мы попытаемся затронуть некоторые аспекты этой проблемы, являющиеся показательными примерами культурных различий: различия в психологическом восприятии цвета, значение цвета в государственных символах – флагах и т.д. Цвета непосредственно влияют на нашу жизнь, эмоциональное состояние и поэтому наделяются особыми значениями.

Colours are all around and yet most people take the impact of their significance for granted. Colour can alert people to danger, express emotions, be a way of identifying and organizing the environment. Therefore, people attach particular meanings to colours. For example: *orange* may suggest fire, vitality, warmth and energy, all lovely associations, it is the colour most-detested by Americans (it is more popular in Europe and has particularly strong appeal in Latino and French cultures).

This topic is immense. We can examine this issue in different aspects: semantics, colours of national costumes, religious meanings of colours, word formation. Of course, we can't investigate the question from all sides. We are going to examine some interesting facts of this problem.

One cannot escape colour, as much as death and taxes. It is ubiquitous. Colours often have different symbolic meanings in different cultures.

The black is the colour of mourning in the West (in the United States, *the black* has also come to suggest sophistication and formality), while in the East the colour of mourning is *the white*. In China it also symbolizes age, autumn, misfortune, virginity and purity, children, helpful people, marriage; *the black* symbolizes career, evil influences, knowledge, penance, self-cultivation.

In Western cultures people consider *the black* colour to be something unpleasant or evil even in different word combinations: "black sheep", "black market", "blackmail", "black soul".

On the contrary, *the white* is a colour of peace, for example, "white dove". Even when *the white* is combined with nouns, which mean something bad or malicious, it softens, ennobles the negative meaning of the noun: "white lie" – ложь во спасение. Compare Russian word combinations: "чёрная зависть" – "белая зависть".

In general, metaphorical meanings of *the white* and *the black* in Russian and English are similar, but there is an interesting cultural difference, caused, may be, by climate. We say: "отложить на чёрный день", but the English people say: "to save against a rainy day".

The red colour is an exciting thing to speak about. It means excitement, drama, urgent passion, strength, assertiveness and it is an appetite stimulant. It is the colour of the Valentine's Day heart and the fire engine. *The red* of Coca-Cola can promise excitement and good times. It is also the colour of the Devil. Lots of casinos combine red with yellow. *The red* is associated with rage in America but with happiness in China. In Hindu the spirit of red cloth, or redness itself, could combine with a person's moral substance and transform it, so that a "red man" might be a sorcerer. Soldiers wore *red* turbans in battle, women wore *red* clothes and reddened their hands and hair during marriage or fertility festivals.

Evidence of colour associations have also been found in political and social representations of various countries such as in the colours of their flags or modes of dress.

Speaking about the colours of the American flag, we can say, that they appeal to patriotism of the Americans. *The red* represents valor and hardiness, with *the blue* Americans associate trust and stability, *the white* stands for purity and innocence. However, the same colours in Russian flag

represent different meanings. According to the ancient explanation, *the red* means the material world, *the blue* - the sky and *the white* – the divine world. From ancient times in Russia the three colours have had a special symbolic meaning: *the white* stands for nobility and sincerity, *the blue* stands for truthfulness, commitment and purity, and *the red* represents bravery, valor and love. Later it began to symbolize the unity of the three Eastern Slavic Nations - Belorussia, Ukraine and Russia.

The traditions of dress are also revealing examples. Wedding dress in western cultures is considered to be *white*, whereas in Japan a wedding dress is *red*. In American fashion and decoration, *blue* is for boys, while *pink* is for girls, which is a symbolic use of colour that are not shared by many cultures.

In Yoruba cultures (nation in Nigeria), there are three main categories of colour. One is Fun-Fun which consists of *the white* or *the icy*, cold colours. This category of colour expresses cool, aloof, sort of cold personalities. Pupa is another colour category and consists of hot fiery colours like *the orange*, *the gold*, *the black-yellow*, and *reds*. These are colours that have passionate hot characteristics. Dudu is the final colour category. It consists of down to earth colours like *the brown*, *the green*, and *the moss green*.

What is more, languages are selective when deciding which hues are split into different colours on the basis of how light or dark they are. Apart from the *black-grey-white* continuum, English splits one hue – *the red* – into two colours according to lightness: *the red* and *the pink*. To English speakers, these two colours appear to be totally different, but *light green* and *dark green* are no more different. An Italian will make the same *red-pink* distinction, but will also make a further distinction between *the blu* and *the azzurro*, which English speakers would simply call *dark* and *light blue*. To Italian speakers, *the blu* and *the azzurro* are as separate as *the red* and *the pink*.

Moreover colours are not just *black*, *white*, *red* or *blue*. There are colours you would never imagine they existed. *The Vandyke brown*, for example, is the dark brown colour that the famous 17th century Flemish painter Sir Anthony Van Dyke liked to use.

Colours are rich in hidden meanings and symbolism. Some of them, such as “feeling blue” or “green with envy”, associate colours with specific human emotions. Others, such as “blue blood”, “blue collar”, “white collar” show us the status of people in society. And still others, among them “yellow journalism”, “Purple Heart”, “Black Market”.

Of course, this is only a brief review of this issue. Though, colour is the eye's perception of light, it plays a crucial role in cross-cultural communication. As there are a lot of different colours in the spectrum, there are many different meanings for these colours in various cultures. We should learn more about them, in order not to wear *the white* if you are attending an Asian wedding. We should avoid such mistakes in our business and personal contacts with people of different nationalities.