

# English and Russian idiomatic expressions containing the colors red (красный) and green (зелёный) as components

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English and Russian idiomatic expressions containing the colors red (красный) and green  
(зелёный) as components

Diplomski rad

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## **Abstract**

This master's thesis observes and studies the cognitive motivation of figurative meanings of English and Russian expressions containing the colors 'red' and 'green' as components. The main aim of this thesis is to list and analyze syntactic and semantic characteristics of figurative expressions containing 'red' and 'green' and examine what cognitive mechanisms are motivating them. Our mind is inherently embodied and is combined with the more general knowledge of the world which affects our conceptual system. The aim of this analysis is to show how the meanings of the selected expressions are shaped and understood, and discuss the general experiences connected with colors 'red' and 'green' in the languages that on the surface seem rather different, but in reality share quite similar cultural backgrounds.

**Key words:** colors, red, green, figurative meaning, conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy

## **Аннотация**

В этой дипломной работе рассматривается и изучается когнитивная мотивация образных значений английских и русских выражений, содержащих в качестве компонентов красный и зелёный цвета. Основной целью данной работы является перечисление и анализ синтаксических и семантических свойств образных выражений, содержащих красный и зелёный цвета и рассмотрение того, какие когнитивные механизмы их мотивируют. Наш ум по своей сути воплощен и объединяется с более общим знанием о мире, которое влияет на нашу концептуальную систему. Целью этого анализа является показать, как значения выбранных образных выражений формируются и понимаются, и какой общий опыт, связанный с красным и зелёным цветами в языках, которые на поверхности кажутся довольно разными, но в действительности имеют и достаточно сходные культурные корни.

**Ключевые слова:** цвета, красный, зелёный, образное значение, концептуальная метафора, концептуальная метонимия

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## 1. Introduction

Color is an element that is present in every language, whether it is used as a color term to refer to the color itself or has a figurative meaning and is used in some idiomatic expressions. According to Boers (2008: el. publ.), idiomatic expressions, that is idioms are fixed expressions that are typically used in figurative sense. Native speakers use them unaware of their figurative nature, while language learners sometimes find idioms hard to understand because they are not often sure what image the idiom is based on. Idioms are a complex element of every language because not all of them have their equivalents in every language. This also makes idioms very challenging to deal with, especially to foreign language students.

The aim of my final thesis is to observe the behavior of some color idioms in English and Russian, list the differences and similarities and to display which semantic group contains most idioms, that is what concepts the largest number of the selected color idioms in both languages share. In this research not only were the idioms analyzed, but two different cultures as well. In sum, 58 color idioms were collected and analyzed, that is, 30 English expressions and 28 Russian expressions. The meanings of the selected color idioms were determined across the two languages. Moreover, color idioms were categorized based on the concept they stand for. Since the goal of this thesis is also to determine the differences and similarities among the selected color idioms, the contrastive and comparative analyses were made. According to the cross-cultural research conducted by Berlin and Kay (1969), color categories are basic to all languages. They claim that basic colors are only black and white, the color red is added to the next 'stage', then come green and yellow, blue, brown and finally any combination of pink, purple, orange and grey. Meanings of the English color idioms were found in the *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Idioms*, *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms Second Edition*, *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* by Sophia Lubensky and *English in Color*, while the explanations of Russian color idioms were found in *Фразеологический словарь современного русского литературного языка*, *Большой словарь русских поговорок*, *Толковый словарь русского языка — Под редакцией Д. В. Дмитриева*, *Фразеологический словарь русского литературного языка А. И. Федорова* and *Фундаментальная электронная библиотека: Словарь русского языка*. The examples of the selected English idioms were extracted from

the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), while the Russian examples were extracted from the Russian National Corpus<sup>1</sup>.

The thesis consists of two parts. The first part is divided into several chapters describing the nature of idioms, listing a number of definitions created by different scholars from different cultures, introducing semantic and syntactic characteristics and types of idioms. In addition, cultural background of idioms is discussed along with the figurative meanings of colors that may or may not differ from one another.

The second part consists of the semantic analysis of the selected examples of color idioms. This part will also point out the differences and similarities among the collected color idioms of the English and Russian languages. The idioms are divided into the semantic groups based on the concepts they share.

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<sup>1</sup> All examples were translated by the author.



## 2. The concept of idiom

There was a great number of debates among linguists on defining the term *idiom*. Its tricky nature was not the only problem, but also the difference between a phraseological unit and an idiom. Phraseology is a term that is commonly used among scholars in Eastern Europe, for example in Russia. In the Russian language the term that is used instead of the term *idiom* is phraseologism, that is фразеологизм or фразеологическая единица. However, the Russian term идиома (idiom) is a word formation which is characterized by the highest degree of irregularity, idiomaticity and stability of all phraseological units (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij, 2008: 57).

Both Russian and English linguists have their own definitions of an idiom. For example, Andreas Langlotz (2006: 16) considers idioms as complex symbols which have specific formal, semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic features. These linguistic units belong to a grammatical system of a certain speech community and have gone through a sociolinguistic process of conventionalism. Shanskij and Ivanov (1987: 64), on the other hand, define idiom, that is phraseologism (фразеологизм), as a reproducible language unit that consists of two or more stressed word components, carries a meaning and has a stable composition and structure<sup>2</sup> even though a lot of them are considered odd, illogical and even grammatically incorrect (Seidl and McMordi, 1978).

Keysar and Bly (1999: 1560) discussed the most frequent example of an idiom – *kick the bucket* and reflected that idioms were traditionally perceived as “frozen forms whose meanings are represented in the mental lexicon as one word”. It was mostly agreed that the mental representation of an idiom is essentially equivalent of the one of a single word. Keysar and Bly (1999: 1560) also provided a definition by Cruse and Katz stating that an idiom is an expression whose overall meaning does not depend on the meanings of its components. In the example mentioned above, *kick the bucket*, it is indeed difficult to see how the combination of ‘kick’ and ‘bucket’ could mean ‘to die’.

Kavka and Zybert (2003) gave special attention to the linguists of the Soviet Union. Since for various reasons the Western world and the former Soviet Union could not see eye to eye, only in the 1920s did the Western scholars discover the works of their Russian peers. In addition, one of the most meaningful contributions to the development of the Russian

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<sup>2</sup>Translated by: Dorotea Opalin

phraseology was made by Vinogradov, whose findings served as a foundation to the later generations. Moreover, Vinogradov (as cited in Gvozdev, 1973: 12-24) contributed to defining an idiom with his own conclusions according to which the idioms are the types of phrases that carry one unique meaning. Vinogradov also claims they are also very difficult to translate to other languages, some even impossible. Their lexical content is fixed and the words within the idiom are interdependent. In addition, the meaning of an idiom cannot be understood from the separate meanings of the words within. Still, idioms are a part of the everyday language and belong to a particular linguistic environment. However, not all Vinogradov's idiom characteristics are still applicable today. There are some techniques that help in translating an idiom. But, he still believes that complexity is the key feature of an idiom (interdependence of the words within, types of phraseological units). Vinogradov and his findings belong to the classical period of the Russian phraseology. After the classical period, there was the post-classical period in which the Russian linguists questioned and reassessed the doctrines of the classical period of linguistics and phraseology. They began to observe the motivation of the figurative meanings of words, that is motivation of phraseological units (idioms). That was the period when linguists started to pay more attention to the cognitive aspects of meaning. The main goal of phraseology from the late 70s to the mid-80s was the aspiration to define the specifics of the meanings of idioms, in contrast to the meanings of single words, the specifics of structure of the meaning, phraseological synonymy, antonymy, as well as the variability of lexical and grammatical composition of idioms. In that period linguists began to explore the figurative structure of the internal form of the idiom – its metaphorical and metonymic character, as well as the role of symbols. All these aspirations and goals required a transition to a new research paradigm which dealt with choices of cognitive processes made in the course of organizing the utterance (Teliya, 1996). Baranov and Dobrovolskij (2008), on the other hand, also played an important role in the development of the Russian phraseology. They have contributed to defining idiomatic expression by stating that idiomatic expressions are not purely linguistic, but also cognitive phenomena in the sense that a figurative component of an idiomatic expression is a part of it, even if it does not directly affect the actual meaning of the expression. They also list three main criteria for defining an idiom: multiword, stability and idiomaticity.

Seidl and McMordi noted that no one can explain why a particular idiom has developed an unusual arrangement or choice of words. This set of words was used for a long period of time before it became an idiom (1978: 4-5). All idioms have origins, sometimes we can

recognize the root of the idiom, for example, some historical events it refers to. However, every idiom has its own story on where it originated from and on how it became part of the language use. Of course, a great number of idioms come from literature (authors very often come up with new idioms), religion, mythology and so on.

### **2.1. Traditional and cognitive linguistic views of idioms**

Kavka and Zybert (2003: 61-62) mention Bruce Fraser, James D. McCawley and Frederick J. Newmeyer who also contributed to the theoretical framework of idiomaticity. Fraser considered himself as the one who discovered a hierarchy of transformational frozenness for phrase idioms, whereas McCawley opposed it. However, they both managed to prove that idioms display degrees of frozenness, from almost completely unrestricted to completely frozen. There are six levels of syntactic frozenness, for example: he puts *build castles in the air* to level 0, meaning completely frozen, whereas *let the cat out of the bag* appears in level 5, meaning virtually unfrozen (Cutler, 1982: 317). On the other hand, Newmeyer (as cited in Kavka and Zybert, 2003: 62) concluded that if idioms were treated as units, then those must be semantic units, not lexical ones. Gibbs, Gonzales and Nayak (1989) modified Fraser's frozenness hierarchy in their research and concluded that the more an idiom is semantically decomposable, the more likely it is to be syntactically flexible. Their study also suggests that people are able to grasp the meanings of normally and abnormally decomposable idioms faster than they understand the meanings of non-decomposable idioms. When a certain idiom is decomposable, people try to do a compositional analysis in order to grasp its meaning. They assign independent meanings to its individual parts and quickly figure out in what manner these meaningful parts combine in order to form the overall figurative meaning of the expression. On the other hand, the study shows that people have more difficulties in understanding non-decomposable idioms because the overall figurative meaning cannot be derived from the analyses of their individual parts. Therefore, they have to "recover their directly stipulated meanings from the mental lexicon" (1989: 588).

Furthermore, Geoffrey Nunberg, Ivan A. Sag and Thomas Wasow (1994) advocate that providing categorical and single-criterion definitions of an idiom is misleading to some degree and define the prototypical idiom in their article titled *Idioms* by listing its prominent features. Idioms are conventionalized and appear in a limited number of syntactic frames or constructions, therefore they are inflexible. Another feature of idioms is figuration, meaning

idioms typically involve metaphors (*take the bull by the horns*), metonymies (*count heads*), hyperboles (*not worth the paper it's printed on*) or other kinds of figuration. Also, the precise motive of figuration cannot always be predicted by speakers. The next feature is proverbiality which stands for describing a recurrent situation of particular social interest (divulging a secret, becoming restless, etc.) in virtue of its resemblance or relation to a scenario involving homey, concrete things and relations (spilling beans, climbing walls, etc.). The last one is affect which means that idioms are usually used in certain situations to imply a certain evaluation or affective stance towards the things they denote (1994: 492-493).

Idioms could be classified based on conventionality, compositionality and transparency. Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994: 498) claim that the idiom conventionality is determined by the distinction between the idiomatic meaning and the meaning we would try to predict if we took into account meanings of the constituents in isolation. Their transparency refers to how easy is to recognize the motivation for the idiom use, while their compositionality stands for the degree to which the meaning of the idiom can be analyzed with the contribution of its constituents.

So, the traditional view advocates that the main characteristic of idioms is frozenness and that they have arbitrary meanings (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen, 2005: 8). On the other hand, according to cognitive linguistics, idioms are "parts of a conceptual system that is fixed in the metaphors of a given language" (2005: 8). Idioms are not completely frozen and they are not arbitrary either, but motivated by different structures of knowledge (8). Kövecses and Szabo (1996) also define an idiom as the product of a conceptual system, motivated by cognitive mechanisms (metaphor, metonymy) and for which cultural models play an important role (cited in Redondo, 2007: 180).

According to Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 7), in order to carry out the semantic analysis of an idiom or any kind of metaphoric expressions, the most efficient tools to do so are conceptual metaphor, mapping, source and target domains and metonymy.

The conceptual metaphor can serve as a cognitive foundation for different linguistic expressions. However, according to Gibbs, people conceptualize human events and ideas not only via metaphor, but also via metonymy, irony and other tropes (Gibbs, 2007: 701). Meanings of idioms can be grouped and subsumed under a number of conceptual metaphors, for example the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 3-6) assert that the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another. They

explain how the ARGUMENT is partially structured, understood and talked about in terms of WAR: “He *attacked every weak point* in my argument. His criticisms were *right on target*.” This metaphorical concept involves mapping the domain of argument onto the domain of war. In other words, the concept, activity and language are all metaphorically structured. Moreover, metaphor is not just a result of a particular set of words used to describe something. The human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined, meaning human thought processes are metaphorical to a great extent.

Metonymy, as another cognitive mechanism, is a slightly different kind of process. In contrast to metaphor, metonymy does not only provide understanding, but it also has a referential function, meaning that it one entity stands for another. For example, in the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE there are many parts that can stand for the whole. When we say: “I’ve got a new *set of wheels*.”, we refer to our new car. But, we use “set of wheels” as part of the car to refer to the whole car. Similar to metaphorical concepts, metonymic concepts are not arbitrary occurrences. They are also systematic and a part of our usual way of thinking and acting (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003: 36-37).

Moreover, Gibbs (as cited in Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen, 2005: 18) says that the idioms which belong to the same conceptual metaphor often reveal some semantic differences that cannot be explained on the basis of metaphoric models. On the other hand, there are also idioms that belong to the same conceptual metaphor and display specific semantic features:

Thus, even though *spill the beans*, *let the cat out of the bag*, *blow the lid off*, and *blow the whistle* each roughly mean ‘to reveal a secret’, there exists some convention such that *spill the beans* might be appropriate to use in situations where a person is revealing some personal information about someone else, while *blow the lid off* might be used to talk of revealing secrets about, say, governmental corruption (2005: 18).

Since both idioms, *spill the beans* and *blow the lid off*, belong to the same conceptual metaphors (MIND IS A CONTAINER and IDEAS ARE PHYSICAL ENTITIES), the explanation for their differences might lie in another domain. Those two idioms evoke different mental images, *spill the beans* happens by accident while *blow the lid off* is associated with an observer who actually makes some effort to look into a container with secrets. In order to explain the differences of idioms, that is metaphorical models, it is sometimes easier to turn to the basic level of categorization rather than abstract terms such as CONTAINER or PHYSICAL ENTITIES. Mental image structure (rich mental images) is the basic level or the level of primary conceptualization

is more important for describing semantic properties of an idiom than the superordinate level (abstract terms as CONTAINER) (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen, 2005: 18).

Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2008: 115) also discuss mental images and according to them, they can be viewed at three different levels. There is the level of individual mental images. The next level is the level of knowledge structures which includes frames and scenarios that underlie the figurative component of the idiom and affect its semantic and pragmatic features and last is the level of abstract relations between the source domain and the target domain of the metaphor.

It is necessary to give mental images special attention because the figurative component not only has a connotative feature which makes certain changes in the imaginative associations of speakers, but it also has an effect on the idiom meaning and usage. The main characteristic, that is the main tool of cognitive semantics, is the conceptual mapping from source domain to target domain. Conceptual metaphor can really contribute to the semantic analysis of an idiom because it gives us insight into both intra- and cross-linguistic features of the figurative language. Again, metaphor proves to be a motivational basis of figurative units. So, the relevant motivating link is provided by mental images (basic level) caused by the lexical structure of the idioms. Superordinate level, that is the access to the conceptual metaphor is also important to fully understand an idiom. Both basic and superordinate levels of metaphor can contribute to the motivation of an idiom.

In addition, conceptual metaphors are actually the reason why some idioms could not simply be “frozen expressions”. Gibbs states that many idioms turn out to be decomposable or analyzable with the meanings of their constituents which contribute to the meaning of the whole unit. In the expression *pop the question*, the noun *question* clearly means marriage proposal and the verb *pop* refers to the way of asking. Nevertheless, as it has already been mentioned above, there are idioms which are semantically non-decomposable and whose constituents do not contribute to the overall figurative meaning because speaker face difficulties in dividing those idioms into their parts, for example: *kick the bucket* (as cited in Geeraerts and Cuyckens, 2007: 706). This Gibbs' theory poses a challenge for the traditional view of idioms because if there exists partial mapping between the constituents of idioms (which makes an idiom lexically flexible), then these constituents play a role in meanings of idioms.

Moreover, Nayak and Gibbs (1990) in their research tried to show to which extent people's conceptual knowledge has an impact on the use of idioms and how people determine

contextual appropriateness of idioms. They carried out several experiments and concluded that the use and understanding of idioms are constrained to a certain degree by people's conceptual knowledge of the domain to which idioms refer. Transparency of an idiom plays an important role here because more transparent phrases are, they are more easily tied to people's conceptual knowledge and, therefore, people are more likely to use idioms with a higher degree of transparency.

## 2.2. Semantic and syntactic properties of idioms

Idiomatic expressions can be divided into groups based on their semantic properties. C. Fernando (as cited in Ishkan Dadyan's dissertation) grouped the idioms into three sub-classes. First sub-class make pure idioms which are the types of idioms that are conventionalized, non-literal; they function as a semantic unit with a unique meaning that cannot be predicted from the meaning of separate constituents of an idiom (for example: *spill the beans*). Then there are semi-idioms which are the types of idioms in which one constituent preserves its literal meaning and the other has a figurative meaning (for example: *foot the bill* – *foot* is the non-literal part, whereas *bill* has a literal meaning). The last ones are literal idioms. They are the types of idioms that are not so semantically complex and are easier to understand; the meaning of this kind of idiom can be perceived through the literal meanings of its parts (6).

On the other hand, similar to Fernando, Vinogradov also classified idioms, that is phraseologisms (фразеологические обороты), according to their semantic properties. They are divided into four groups. The first group consists of phraseological fusions (фразеологические сращения) which stand for semantically indivisible phraseological phrases in which the meaning of the whole unit is completely different from the individual meanings of their constituents. They are similar to Fernando's pure idioms. Phraseological unities (фразеологические единства) are the second group of idioms which are also semantically indivisible, but their integral semantics is motivated by individual meanings of the constituents. Indecomposable meaning of a phraseological unity occurs as a result of merging the meanings of its parts. These could be related to Fernando's literal idioms. The third group consists of phraseological collocations (фразеологические сочетания) which are not only motivated, but contain one constituent that is used in its direct form and the other is used figuratively. There are similarities with Fernando's semi idioms. Phraseological expressions or фразеологические выражения (added to Vinogradov's original classification by Shanskij) are

the fourth group and are not really different from the usual free phrases according to the nature of the relationship of words and the general meaning of phraseological expressions. They are not only semantically articulated, but also consist entirely of words with their free meanings (as cited in Shanskij and Ivanov, 1987: 77).

Furthermore, Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2008: 61-67) provide us with their own classification of phraseological units and divide them into five groups. Firstly, *идиомы* or idioms are the central part of phraseology in a particular language system and are characterized by the highest degree of irregularity which separates idioms from other types of phraseological units. In this regard, there are a few factors according to which a phraseological unit is considered an idiom, such as the type of metaphorical model (the presence of nouns repeating in a large number of fixed expressions), the significance of the non-transparent component (if the part of the expression that is important for defining is transparent and cannot be interpreted, then this phrase is not an idiom, even if the component which plays a less important role in defining an idiom is non-transparent) and a non-standard basis of comparison. The next group consists of *коллокации*, that is, phraseological units with a low degree of idiomaticity and with a structure of a phrase, in which semantically the main component is used in its literal meaning. *Грамматические фразеологизмы* or grammatical phraseological units belong to the third group and *синтаксические фразеологизмы* or syntactic phraseological units to the fourth group. Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2008: 78) also list another category of phraseological units – speech formulas, which are identified by the connection of a phraseological unit with the current situation in which the certain communication occurs. There are more restrictions in implementing grammatical categories in speech formulas than in other idioms, for example some of them cannot be used in the future tense.

According to the semantic properties of idioms as listed by Fernando, Baranov and Dobrovol'skij and Vinogradov, it is possible to find similarities between the three systems even though they belong to two completely different languages and cultures. The names of the particular groups may vary from language to language, but the idea remains the same. Taking into account the systems discussed above, it is possible to classify the idioms based on their semantic properties.

Regarding the syntactic properties of idioms, Andrew Balint, as well as Katz and Postal, and Fraser, distinguish two types of idioms based on their syntactic complexity: lexical idioms and phrase idioms (Kavka and Zybert, 2005: 60). Lexical idioms are syntactically dominated by one of the lowest syntactic (grammatical) categories such as noun, verb, adjective and so on.



Andreas Langlotz explains that the behavior of lexical idioms is very similar to the behavior of lexical units. However, phrase idioms like *spill the beans* have a more complex syntactic structure that is patterned on the phrase level. They are more interesting from a semantic perspective than they are from the syntactic perspective because most of them follow a regular syntactic pattern (2006: 16).

The traditional view of syntactic properties of idioms advocates frozenness and zero syntactic transformation. “Since the idiomatic meaning cannot be related to the constituent part, the syntactic behavior of idioms cannot be explained in semantic terms” says Andreas Langlotz (2006: 25) making this a weak spot in the traditional view. He states that various lexical and grammatical changes can be made to the syntactic composition of idioms, such as a change of number (singular/plural), article variation, adnominal modification; topicalisation, raising and control; ellipsis of the verb phrase; anaphora and passivisation (2006: 29).

Langlotz also provides conclusions of other linguists in favor of compositional view which confirm that idioms which have already been syntactically transformed prove the existence of syntactic idiom transformation and provides examples (2006 :26):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| a. <i>Pat spilled the beans.</i>         | <i>The cat is out of the bag.</i>          |
| b. <i>The beans were spilled by Pat.</i> | <i>The cat seems to be out of the bag.</i> |

All this proves that, even though the idioms were syntactically altered, they can be semantically analyzed in the same way as their original forms.

On the other hand, Russian scholars divide idioms based on their syntactic properties according to slightly different criteria. Shanskij and Ivanov (1987: 73) claim that a phraseological unit always appears in the sentence syntactically indecomposable. The predominant use of the phraseological unit entirely depends on its correlation with a certain part of speech, that is on its lexical and grammatical meaning. In the Russian language idioms are divided into groups based on the syntactic function as: verbal phraseologisms (idioms), substantial phraseologisms, adjectival phraseologisms, adverbial phraseologisms and interjectional phraseologisms.

To conclude, considering all the definitions and characteristics of an idiom listed above, this thesis will use the cognitive viewpoint on what an idiom is. The idiom is considered a unique unit that is syntactically set, but not frozen, has one meaning which is motivated by cognitive mechanisms, is affected by culture, and functions in a specific linguistic environment.

### 2.3. Idioms in different cultures

We can say that every language represents its own culture. As it was mentioned before, idioms are an important part of a language system, therefore idioms in their own way can also serve as representatives of the cultures they originate from. So, it is not unusual that many misunderstandings happen during communication, especially between non-native and native speakers.

Veronika N. Teliya (1996: 216-217) emphasizes the importance of culture by discussing cultural connotation in language systems and cultural linguistics (лингвокультурология). She defines cultural connotation as the interpretation of denotative or figuratively motivated aspects of meaning from a cultural perspective. The figurative and situational motivation is considered to be the typical feature of the constituents of the idiomatic expressions and is directly connected with the people's (native speakers') worldview. Moreover, idiomatic expressions are coined on the basis of the figurative perception of the reality, which is certainly connected with the cultural traditions of a particular community. In other words, the system of images in the idiomatic sphere serves as a kind of platform of a cumulative worldview, which is connected to the material, social and spiritual culture of a given linguistic community and can give an insight into its cultural and national experience and traditions. The concept of cultural connotation is the basis of the cultural linguistics, a scientific discipline that studies and describes how culture affects and interacts with the language and manifests itself in linguistic processes. Thus, the cognitive approach can be considered as the most suitable choice for studying the meaning of linguistic units.

In addition, Irina Zykova (2013: 388-404) states that idioms (phraseologisms) are coined in a particular language system as signs which can serve as means for transmitting and storing cultural information. She explains the term "cultural memory" which appeared in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the first time and refers to the fact that idiomatic meaning is a complex semantic-conceptual formation which reflects different historical modes of word-cognition and keeps the corresponding types of cultural information. She advocates that storing cultural information in idioms happens because of the conceptual structures underlying idiomatic meaning.

Zykova analyzes the method of linguocultural reconstruction of the deep (conceptual) level of the idiom meaning (based on the theory of metaphorical concepts by Lakoff and Johnson). All the phraseological images are built up according to the same model – “a macro-metaphorical conceptual model” (Zykova, 2013: 393). Each macro-metaphorical model serves as a shared conceptual foundation for some phraseological images and becomes a resource which stores cultural information that each phraseological image retains and transmits. These models can carry eight types of cultural information: emotional, ethical and aesthetical; archetypal, mythological, religious, philosophical and scientific. Each type uses specific mental tools for understanding the world and form corresponding information layers in the idiom’s conceptual content. For example, archetypal way of thinking includes archetypal binary oppositions (such as up/down, left/right, big/small and so on), that is, the most basic conceptual components of an idiom, which form basic conceptions (archetypes), such as movement, structure, direction. Moreover, the mythological type of thinking is actually combining archetypal binary oppositions and archetypes into more complex conceptual formations, which eventually create an integrated macro-metaphorical conceptual model. These complex conceptual structures can reflect and store new information about the objects and their relations. Idiomatic meaning has “a two-strata structure” (Zykova, 2013: 392): the surface level (stratum) – the semantics, that is, the actual meaning of language units found in dictionaries and the deep (conceptual) level - macro-metaphorical conceptual models containing cultural information.

Furthermore, Wierzbicka (2005) emphasizes the fact that almost everything in language has a certain degree of cultural specifics and provides emotion concepts as an example. They are not “universal” but differ from culture to culture. In the view of cognitive linguistics, Boers (2008: el. publ.) notes that idioms come from our physical experiences. A lot of basic physical experiences are shared in most cultures, because people experience them in the same way. Therefore, the meaning and understanding of an idiom that is related to some basic physical experience are easy to grasp.

Differences between cultures become more obvious when comparing idioms in the languages spoken in those cultures. What is considered to be common and logical in a particular language and culture may turn out to be illogical and unusual in the other language and culture. There are also a number of problems when translating an idiom from one language to another. In order to tackle the translational issues, Mona Baker (2011: 76-85) notes that there are certain techniques and strategies that can help in their translation such as: using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but different form, borrowing the source

language idiom, paraphrase, omission of a play on idiom, omission of entire idiom. In other words, each culture may comprehend the same phenomenon in its own way.

Religion, historical background and geographical area are factors of great importance that should be observed in idiom analysis. As it has already been mentioned, there are some Russian idioms that came into existence during the Soviet Union and because of that, they are called *sovietisms*. They describe the situations and other occurrences typical for that time and that location.

However, in his study, Dobrovol'skij (2011: 7-8) claims that one cannot doubt in the existence of cross-linguistic idiom equivalence because there are so many bilingual and even multilingual dictionaries of idioms. Therefore, he lists four main types of phraseological equivalence. The first type of equivalents are full equivalents, that is idioms whose meanings, syntactic and lexical structures and imagery bases are identical. The second type of equivalents are partial equivalents. These idioms have identical or near-identical meanings, but also have some differences in syntactic and lexical structure or imagery basis. Phraseological parallels are the third type and stand for different idioms which only share the same core meaning (they do not correspond in imagery basis). Non-equivalents are the fourth group. These idioms do not have idiomatic correspondence in another language.

Nevertheless, Dobrovol'skij (2011: 9-11) also mentions two different aspects of cross-linguistic equivalence which are very important in proving it really exists. The first aspect he discussed is translational equivalence which stands for a relationship between the idiom from the source language and its translation in the target language in a given text. On the other hand, systematic equivalence is the relationship between more or less similar idioms on the level of the language system. The issue lies in the fact that some idioms are considered systematic equivalents, but their functional non-parallelism is completely disregarded. They cannot be used as translational equivalents in real texts because their semantic, syntactic and pragmatic properties do not correspond. In order to solve this issue, we should try to find functional equivalents or, in other words, lexical items which can be used in the same concrete situation, but without losing any information. However, this particular phenomenon is quite rare because semantic and syntactic structure of idioms is complex and consists of two layers: the actual meaning and image component including culture-specific features. This is the reason why idiom cross-linguistic equivalence is still open to debate.

The conclusion is that in different cultures there are idioms that cannot be understood nor explained by conceptual metaphors based on direct experience and the knowledge of certain cultural codes is necessary, for example popular beliefs, arts, literature of the particular culture. So, in order to completely explain and understand an idiom with a cultural code, we have to take the semiotics of culture into account. According to De Saussure (2011), semiotics or semiology is the science of signs which studies what constitutes signs and what laws govern them within a particular society, how it was conceived in this particular culture. Linguistic analysis based only on the conceptual metaphor will not suffice because the etymology and usage of the idiom will remain unaddressed.

### **3. Colors in different cultures**

Color can be perceived as an element of visual perception. Each culture perceives colors in its own manner. The English language belongs to the Western world, whereas the Russian language belongs to the Eastern world. The Western and Eastern cultures have always had many differences, so this analysis will provide us with insights into those two very different worlds.

Anna Wierzbicka makes a very interesting point claiming that “the absence of a word does not prove the absence of a concept” (2005: 99-150). The essence here is that if the English language has a word for a particular color and, for example, Russian does not, this does not mean that the Russians do not have the same concept of that color as the speakers of English in their thinking. The same is applicable to emotions. In other words, we should make a distinction between perception and conceptualization. Wierzbicka also states that ‘color’ is an important semantic molecule in English and other languages, which means that it underlies and also is a part of the meanings of terms such as *blue*, *red* or *pink*.

O’Sullivan et al. (2006: 168) claim that the Russian language has twelve basic color terms in the color spectrum, while the English language has eleven basic colors. The difference is that English uses only one basic color term for ‘blue’ and Russian uses two (синий = blue, navy blue and голубой = sky blue, azure).

On the other hand, Timothy King (2005: el. publ.) provides a slightly different perspective on color perception. He states that color perception has changed along with the development of the human race. He also mentions that back in the past color distinction was not very developed and that our ancestors did not really distinguish many shades of color.

However, Denise Turner (el. publ.) opposes King (2005) because she advocates that color distinction and perception can either be specific to cultures, locations or time. Her research described what connotations some colors evoke in the minds of people from the Middle East, the Pacific Rim countries and India.

Turner mentioned that the color red in those cultures mostly has positive connotations such as passion, fire, summer, beauty, energy and so on. However, Chielens (2007) in his dissertation on English basic color terms representing Western cultures listed more negative connotations of the color red than the positive ones (fury, madness, indebtedness, danger, attention and so on).

The color green, as Chielens (2007) claims, is mostly metaphorically connected to environmentalism, greenery, vegetation along with youthfulness, vigorous life, freshness, vitality, but also with lack of experience, immature, simplicity and naivety. Turner (el. publ.), on the other hand, states that the color green in the Chinese tradition means good fortune, while in Muslim tradition represents the entire religion and a special sign of respect and worship.

Moreover, the color orange in most of Asia symbolizes happiness, plentitude, good health, comfort and even immortality according to Turner (el. publ.), while in the Western cultures, relying on Chielens (2007), orange is mostly connected with history and politics, especially in the Netherlands (House of Orange) and Ireland (Protestantism).

Yellow is considered a happy color both by Turner (el. publ.) and Chielens (2007). The color yellow in most of the Asian countries stands for honor, royalty, good luck, gods and power. However, in the Western world Chielens (2007) says that the color yellow can also stand for cowardice and jealousy.

The color blue is rather interesting. According to Chielens (2007), blue seems to have few positive connotations. Blue can stand for faithful, staunch and unwavering. On the other hand, blue can also mean dismal, unpromising, depressing or extremely nervous. For example, *the blues* actually stands for blue devils or baleful demons, that is 'depression of spirits', which explains the negative meaning. Blue can also carry an indecent connotation of a film, for example. This Westerns view is completely opposed to the Indian perspective. In India the color blue symbolizes the heavens, mercy, love and the mystery. Their gods, Vishnu and Shiva, are usually depicted with blue skin (Turner, el. publ.).

Both Turner (el. publ.) and Chielens (2007) agree that in the past in both Western and Eastern worlds purple was actually an extremely expensive shade of red, a crimson and was associated with royalty and the highest ranks of the clergy.

Brown is perceived as drab in the European cultures, according to Turner (el. publ.). In the Western world brown has a great number of negative connotations; it is also related to serious reverie, thoughtful absentmindedness, deceit, disgust, boredom and failure.

In addition, the two color extremes should also be given some attention. The first extreme is the color black. Chielens (2007) considers the total absence of color as the main characteristic of the color black, whereas he connects the total absorption of light with the color white. The figurative meaning of black can refer to dark-skinned people, or to numerous negative occurrences. Black is connected to darkness and it describes something that is sad, depressing, undesirable, illicit, evil, malignant, deadly, sinister, foul, wicked, disgrace and so on. The devil itself is connected to the color black – *Black Prince*.

On the other hand, the other extreme is the color white which is situated at the completely opposite side of the color spectrum. White reflects all the rays of light being fully luminous. It is the color of the snow or milk, and figuratively refers to people with light complexion. It can also refer to something that is peaceful, completely free from malignity, innocent, harmless, moral, pure, beloved, spotless, praise-worthy and so on. In contrast to the color black, white is connected to brightness. It can also stand for cowardice as in *white feather* or uselessness as in *white elephant*.

These colors have been analyzed by many scholars and researchers who have used the classification of Berlin and Kay in their work *Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* as a foundation for their findings. However, Berlin and Kay provide a list of eleven basic color terms in the English language (pink and gray were not included), regardless of human ability and neurological reactions to distinguish a great number of shades of color. No matter what language is discussed, the colors black and white always come first, then comes red, yellow and green, and after them blue, brown and finally pink, orange and gray.

#### **4. Corpus analysis of the English and Russian color idioms**

The focus of my thesis is on the analysis of two color terms as components of color idioms across two languages – English and Russian. Not all shades were analyzed. The colors that were included in the analysis were red and green. Some idioms did not have their exact equivalents in the other language but were still analyzed.

The English idioms were found in the following dictionaries and corpora: *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Idioms*, *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms Second Edition*, *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms by Sophia Lubensky* and the examples were taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The Russian color idioms were found in *Фразеологический словарь современного русского литературного языка*, *Большой словарь русских поговорок*, *Толковый словарь русского языка под редакцией Д. В. Дмитриева*, *Фразеологический словарь русского литературного языка А. И. Федорова* and *Фундаментальная электронная библиотека: Словарь русского языка*. The examples taken from the Russian National Corpus were translated by me.

The selected idioms will be divided into the semantic groups based on the concept they share, that is based on the different aspects of our knowledge about the particular color. The semantic groups used in my analysis are: emotions, mental characteristics and behaviors, prominence and quality, physical state and sexuality, warning/danger, history and politics, places, permission, luck and obscurity. Each of the groups has their sub-groups because they give a clearer picture of the meaning of the idioms and their nuances which make them differ. However, one idiom can fit into more than one group. The aim of this division is to see which concept the majority of the green and red colored idioms belongs to.

##### **4.1. Idioms with the color red as a component**

According to Berlin and Kay, the color red comes immediately after black and white. However, Wierzbicka (2006:11) claims that in Berlin's and Kay's *Basic Color Terms* American English color terms were considered as universals, that is, standards. The debate was about the colors red and blue, because in Hungarian there are two basic words standing for the color red (piros and vörös = red, light red and dark red), while in Russian there are two basic terms standing for the color blue (синий = blue, navy blue and голубой = sky blue, azure). Therefore,



Kay suggested that the English *red* should be considered as a primitive and the Hungarian terms should be defined through it. The real issue was the “extreme anglocentrism” (Wierzbicka. 2006: 11) of Kay’s perspective because these English terms express conceptual primes which cannot be expressed in Russian and Hungarian.

Both Oxford *Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (OALD) and Wierzbicka (2006: 10) define red as “having the color of blood or fire”, which is considered to be a literal meaning. OALD also lists some non-literal meanings of the color red like for example: “(of the face) bright red or pink, especially because you are angry, embarrassed or ashamed, (of the eyes) bloodshot or surrounded by red or very pink skin or in politics, having very left-wing political opinions” (el. publ.). Even though the color red has many positive non-literal meanings, such as love, passion, beauty, vigor and prominence, the list of the negative ones is longer: indebtedness, danger, warning, fire, fury, madness, embarrassment, prohibition and so on.

The selected English and Russian idioms with the color red as a component are displayed in the table below.

*Table 1. English and Russian idioms with the red color as a component*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| A red-letter day                             | Красный день календаря   |
| In the red<br>Into the red<br>Out of the red |  |
| Red cent                                     |  |
| Red as a beet                                | Красный как свёкла<br>Красный как рак  |
| Red in the face                              | Покраснеть от раздражения/злости<br>Покраснеть до ушей<br>Покраснеть во всю щёку<br>Покраснеть до вареной ветчинности<br>Покраснеть как помидор,<br>Покраснеть до корней волос<br>Красная девица |
| Be like a red rag to a bull                  | Как красная тряпка для быка  |
| See red                                      |  |
| Red mist                                     |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Red in tooth and claw                           |  |
| Better dead than red<br>Reds under the bed      | Под красную шапку                                |
|   | Красный уголок                                   |
| Red-light district                              | Квартал красных фонарей                          |
| Paint the town red                              |  |
| Red tape  |  |
| Catch somebody red-handed                       |  |
| Red-blooded                                     |  |
| Red herring                                     |  |
|   | Красная доска                                    |
|   | Красное словцо                                   |
| Roll out the red carpet<br>Red-carpet treatment | Расстелить красный ковёр (красную дорожку)       |
| Red flag  |  |
|   | Проходить красной нитью                          |
|   | Красный петух<br>Пустить/пускать красного петуха |

#### 4.2. Idioms with the color green as a component

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines the color green as something that has the color of grass or the leaves of most plants and trees. Associating the color green with greenery and vegetation is rather usual and literal. The color green has a number of figurative uses as well. OALD lists some of them that refer to ecology and the environment in general, inexperience, youth, freshness, nausea and jealousy. In other words, the color green in English is mostly connected with feelings and personal traits.

The selected idioms with the color green as a component are displayed in the table below.

*Table 2. English and Russian idioms with the color green as a component*

|                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Give sb/sth the green light | Дать/давать зелёную улицу |
| Have a green thumb          |                           |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Be green about/around/at the gills       | В глазах зеленеет<br>Напиться/напиваться до зелёного змия |
| Green-eyed monster<br>Be green with envy | Позеленеть от ярости (зависти, злости и т.п.)             |
| Green as grass<br>Greenhorn              | Молодо-зелено<br>Зелен виноград                           |
|  | Ёлки зелёные<br>Тоска зелёная                             |
| The rub of the green                     |   |

## 5. Contrastive analysis of red and green colored idioms

The contrastive analysis of the selected English and Russian color idioms shows that the selected idioms can be divided into semantic groups and their sub-groups. They were divided according to the metaphorical concept they share. The first group that was analyzed was the one with the largest number of idiomatic expressions and the last group was the one with the smallest number of idiomatic expressions. The aim of this analysis was also to demonstrate what motivates the majority of color idioms in Russian and English, that is what emotion, feeling or feature serves as a trigger in the minds of the native speakers of Russian and English for associating the colors red and green with certain situations and feelings.

### 5.1. Emotions

The biggest semantic group of the selected color idioms is the one that represents emotions and negative emotions are the ones that prevail. The idioms that are used when talking about emotions are also divided into sub-groups, meaning they are grouped into various different emotions expressed through the color red.

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| EMOTIONS      |   |
| Embarrassment | Red as a beet<br>Red in the face<br>Be green about the gills<br>Красный как рак |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
|          | Красный как свёкла<br>Красная девица<br>Покраснеть до ушей<br>Покраснеть во всю щёку<br>Покраснеть до вареной ветчинности<br>Покраснеть как помидор,<br>Покраснеть до корней волос<br>Покраснеть как девица |
| Anger    | Red as a beet<br>Red in the face<br>Like a red rag to a bull<br>See red<br>Red mist<br>Red in tooth and claw<br>Красный как рак<br>Как красная тряпка для быка<br>Покраснеть от раздражения/злости          |
| Jealousy | The green-eyed monster<br>Be green with envy<br>Позеленеть от зависти   |
| Boredom  | Тоска зелёная   |

### 5.1.1. Embarrassment and anger

The first and the biggest semantic group that is going to be discussed is the group of idioms used to express embarrassment. However, the semantic group of anger comes very close. I decided to analyze these idioms under the same chapter because many of the selected idioms can be used in the context of embarrassment and anger in both languages.

The metaphorical idioms which are going to be observed first are all actually similes which share almost the same meaning. When translating, one could serve as an equivalent of the other because they refer to an emotion, that is a person who has become red-faced mostly because they feel embarrassed and here is the evidence:

(1) “You owe five thousand, three hundred twenty dollars.” I felt my face turning **red as a beet**. I told the man that I had made a mistake...”

(2) “Он смутился и стал **красный, как свекла**.”

‘He was embarrassed and turned **red as a beet**.’

(3) “Мне показалось, что весь зал смотрит на меня, я сидел **красный как рак**.”

‘It seemed to me that everyone in the room was looking at me, I was sitting there **red as a beet**.’

According to Dobrovol’skij’s study on idiom equivalence (2011), I would consider *red as a beet* and *красный как свёкла* as full or absolute equivalents because not only their meanings, but also their syntactic and lexical structures and imagery bases are the same. They are also both translational and systematic equivalents. On the other hand, *красный как рак* and *red as a beet* are partial equivalents because their meanings are the same, but their lexical structures and mental images do not correspond to each other. There are a lot of Russian similes with the color red as a component that carry the identical meaning as the one mentioned above, such as *красный как помидор* (tomato), *красный как мак* (poppy), *красный как вишня* (cherry), *красный как кирпич* (brick), *красный как клюква* (cranberry) and so on (Hrnjak, 2004: 67). There are no absolute idiomatic equivalents of those idioms in English, except *красный как помидор*. However, there is a very small number of examples with the expression *red as a tomato* in the English corpus, which would indicate that this idiom is not used very often.

Nevertheless, based on the examples listed in the English and Russian corpora, *red as a beet* and *красный как рак* can be used in a slightly different situation, meaning the color red in these idioms can stand for another emotion – anger:

(6) “After striding to the edge of the platform, with face as **red as a beet**, he began to curse them. (...) Tex’s reply was another volley of expressive profanity. And he ended with: “... you-all yellow quitters to get drunk an’ leave me in the lurch.”

(7) “Тарелка — вдребезги! Гость Куликов стал **красный как рак**. Все молчат..”

‘This plate is shattered! Guest Kulikov has become **red as a beet**. Everyone turned silent.’

In the first example, cursing is one indicator that the expression *red as a beet* is used here in the context of anger. However, the anger could have been a consequence of Tex being embarrassed by his colleagues. In my opinion, both embarrassment and anger are present in this expression.

In the second example, we can see that Kulikov was mad and dissatisfied because he had a plate that was damaged and how the other guests stopped talking after he yelled. Moreover, both expressions can be used in the context of a higher body temperature. For example, when someone is having a fever, the body temperature is sometimes so high it manifests on a person's face by turning it red. The examples I found in the English and Russian corpora differ, because *red as a beet* is used in the context of fever, while *красный как рак* is used due to being sunburnt.

(4) “You're **red as a beet**. And hot like an oven. You're burning with fever, poor thing.”

(5) “Потому что когда я загорала, я становилась **красной, как рак**.”

‘Because when I got sunburnt, I became **red as a tomato**.’

Moreover, there are two more selected metonymic expressions with the color red depicting the person who is feeling embarrassed or irritated: *red in the face* and six Russian idioms with the same verbal component *покраснеть*: *покраснеть от раздражения/злости*, *покраснеть до ушей*, *покраснеть во всю щёку*, *покраснеть до вареной ветчинности*, *покраснеть как помидор*, *покраснеть до корней волос* and so on. The following examples were extracted from the Russian national corpus.

(6) “Мне показалось, что он даже **покраснел от раздражения**.”

‘It seemed to me that he even turned **red in the face** from irritation.’

“Тут Потапов так ухнул кулаком по столу, что чашки зазвенели. Он даже **покраснел от злости**.”

‘Then Potapov slammed his fist on the table so hard that the cups rattled. He turned **red in the face**.’

(7) “— Я уверен, — продолжал я, — что княжна в тебя уж влюблена! Он **покраснел до ушей** и надулся.”

‘I am sure,’ I continued, “that the princess is in love with you!” He has **blushed to his ears/has turned red in the face** and pouted.’

(8) “А молодой одноногий электрик Перепелицын медленно **покраснел во всю щёку** и не сказал ни слова, с грохотом уронил на пол костыль.”

‘And the young one-legged electrician Perpelitsyn slowly turned **red in the face**, did not say a word and dropped the crutch on the floor with a thud.’

The literal translation of the Russian idiomatic expression would be that the electrician's cheeks (щёки) turned completely red due to embarrassment.

(9) “И от своего порыва **покраснел до вареной ветчинности.**”

‘And because of his outburst, he became **red in the face.**’

The literal translation of this idiom would be that he turned red as a boiled ham. This metaphorical connection is not unusual since ham when boiled turns dark red. However, there is no full English equivalent of this Russian idiom so, in my opinion, *red in the face* can serve as a solution.

(10) “— Будешь прыгать вокруг костра и гавкать... поэт, барбос? Борька **покраснел как помидор**, — колеблется. — А, вот и картошечка!”

‘Will you jump around the fire and bark... ha, watchdog? Bor’ka turned **red in the face/red as a tomato** hesitating. – Oh, here’s the potato!’

This Russian idiom is another simile which also has a full equivalent in the English language, however, taking the results from the English corpus into account, the frequency of using *red as a tomato* in English is slightly low.

(11) “Граф же Соимонов, прочитав сию — добровольным переписчиком представленную — “Почту Духов”, **покраснел до корней волос.**”

‘Having read this ‘Mail of Spirits’ presented by a volunteer copyist, Count Soymonov **blushed/reddened to the roots of his hair.**’

*Покраснеть до корней волос* has its absolute equivalent in English, which can be used in the same form or in a slightly changed one:

“The principal walked in just in time to hear Ruby say to the proud owner of the boots, " I'm getting those boots if I'm weawy good! " I **blushed to the brown roots of my red hair**, and Peter snorted with laughter.”

Here most of the idioms listed above have body parts as their constituents (ears, scalp, cheeks) or they somewhat refer to body parts (anthropic idioms), in these cases they mostly refer to the face. Most often red is used when describing a healthy individual; someone who is healthy has red cheeks, red lips, complexion. As Wierzbicka (2006) has already stated, red is also the color of blood and is often applied for someone who is vigorous or full of life. However, red can also

serve as a display of some negative emotions. The listed Russian idioms with the verb *покраснеть* and the English idiom *red in the face* can be used in the context of embarrassment (no. 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11) and anger (no. 6). Since these idioms are related to human emotions and also their physiological effects, these kinds of idioms refer to the conceptual metonymy THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION, because we can see the physiological effect of blood rush to the head due to anger (in other cases due to excitement or embarrassment). These physiological effects are body heat, higher blood pressure and redness in the face. They also refer to two conceptual metaphors: ANGER IS HEAT and THE BODY IS CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS.

Another interesting example of relating the color red with embarrassment is the Russian metaphorical expression *красная девица*. The main and literal meaning of this expression is a beautiful woman. However, it does have a figurative meaning as well. It stands for a very shy and modest young man:

(12) “Уж очень Кирилл был парнем тихим, нежным, не парень — **красная девица**, ему бы не жениться, а самому замуж идти...”

‘Kirill was a very quiet and gentle guy, hardly even a guy – he was **quiet as a mouse**, he would not like to marry someone, but someone to marry him...’

There is another idiomatic expression with the component *девица* carrying the metaphorical meaning of embarrassment – *покраснеть как девица* (meaning blushing due to embarrassment):

(13) “Растопякин икнул и, смутившись, **покраснел как девица**.”

‘Rastopyakin hiccupped and turned **red in the face** feeling embarrassed.

Even though, this expression does not have an English equivalent it is related to the English and Russian expressions discussed above. In my opinion, they share the same conceptual metaphor. The color red was used in these idioms because it is related to shyness and embarrassment due to drawing any kind of attention to oneself. Shyness, that is embarrassment is the trigger of becoming red in the face due to the blood rush. The conceptual metaphors expressed in these examples are also THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION and THE BODY IS CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS. However, here we have a notion of gender differences and labels. The socio-cultural point of view that women are more often shy than men is present in this expression.



Other examples which share the same conceptual metaphors and metonymy is an interesting pair of idioms that happen to be each other's absolute equivalents: *like a red rag to a bull* and *как красная тряпка для быка*. They both share the same meaning that stands for an object, utterance or act which is certain to provoke or anger someone and can be considered as absolute equivalents:

(14) "Do you want to pour water on this thing? Because that's pouring oil on it. It's **like a red rag to a bull.**"

(15) "Для него попытки людей, не имеющих отношения к хоккею, вмешиваться и давать руководящие указания были **как красная тряпка для быка.**"

'Non-hockey people's attempts to intervene and give advice and guidance were **like a red rag to a bull to him.**'

*The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* note that the color red was traditionally supposed to provoke a bull and it is also the color of the cape used by matadors in bullfighting.

There are a few more English metaphorical and metonymic expressions in which negative emotions such as anger and fury are attached to the color red, *see red* and *red mist*:

(16) "but what do you do when you **see red**? At your angriest, how do you react?"

(17) "He's not a violent masochist. He's not enveloped in **a red mist** which sees him vindictively lashing out at all and sundry."

Both idioms, *see red* and *a red mist*, are used in the context of fury, along with the expressions *like a red rag to a bull* and *как красная тряпка для быка*, that is when a person is at their angriest, as it is stated in the example (16). The example (17) describes a furious man that sees *a red mist* before his eyes. Chielens (2007: 71-72) provides us with an explanation that this happens when the obvious physiological effect of a rush of blood to the head in anger can manifest as an impediment to vision. Both share the same conceptual metaphors and metonymies as the expressions related to embarrassment which are discussed above, that is ANGER IS HEAT, THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION and THE BODY IS CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS.

Another English idiom that indirectly metaphorically connects the color red with anger, fury and savageness is *red in tooth and claw*. It involves savage or merciless conflict or competition, in its very primitive and natural state:

- (18) “The natural world is what it is, **red in tooth and claw**, and ruthless in its goal of destroying every living organism it creates.”

Relying on the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, the phrase was coined by Tennyson in his *In Memoriam* from 1850. The original phrase was “Nature, red in tooth and claw”.

### 5.1.2. Jealousy and envy

The focus of this chapter will also be on the negative feelings, however, these feelings are described by using the color green as the component in the examples analyzed. The expressions *the green-eyed monster* and *be green with envy* both stand for the feeling of being envious or jealous. The expression *the green-eyed monster* is actually jealousy personified. In the Russian language the equivalents of those two expressions would be *позеленеть от ярости (зависти, злости etc.)*. The expressions *be green with envy* and *позеленеть от зависти* can serve as equivalents because they share the same meaning, image component and structure.

- (19) “Is that what this is, Mr. Connerty, the **green-eyed monster** of jealousy?”

- (20) “Want the neighbors to be **green with envy** over your grass next summer?”

- (21) “Блин, говорит Петя, баснописец Крылов **позеленел от зависти**”

‘Damn, says Pet’ya, Krylov, the writer, has turned **green with envy**.’

*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* provides an interesting fact that *the green-eyed monster* was first mentioned by William Shakespeare in his *Othello*: “O! beware my lord of jealousy; It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock The meat it feeds on”. In all three idioms jealousy and envy are both metaphorically attached to the green color. The native speakers of the Russian and English languages share the same figurative meaning of the green color. According to Dobrovolskij and Piirani (2005), the conceptual metaphor present in these idiomatic expressions is THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER. However, in order to fully understand the motivation of a certain idiom, tacit knowledge of cultural models should be taken into account. Linking certain colors and emotional states and temperaments dates back to the humoral doctrine of the ancient times when the color red was ascribed to a sanguine person because it was thought that their body produced a lot of blood which made the person lively and cheerful, the color white to a phlegmatic person because their body produced a lot of lymph, black to a melancholic person who had an excess of a black bile in their body and yellow and

green to a choleric person who had an excess of a yellow, greenish bile. (Dobrovol'skij and Piiranen, 2005: 10-11).

### 5.1.3. Boredom and annoyance

In the Russian language the color green can also be used in the context of boredom, tiredness and surprise as well. I would say that the following idioms are culture-specific. So, in order to demonstrate how the Russian native-speakers feel when they are extremely bored, annoyed or very surprised and delighted, they use the expressions *ёлки зелёные* and *тоска зелёная*:

(22) “Никого нету, куры, собака, козел Яшка, вот и все. А жизнь там — **ёлки зелёные!**”

‘Nobody’s there; just hens, a dog, a goat named Yashka, that’s all. And life there – **oh my!**’

(23) “— Здесь даже дискотек сроду не было! **Тоска зелёная...** — Кто-нибудь встречал рассвет?”

‘There weren’t any clubs here. **Dry as dust!** Has anyone made it to sunrise?’

The expression *ёлки зелёные* can come in different forms, such as *ёлки палки*, *ёлки палки лес густой*, *ходит ванька холостой*, *ёлки моталки* and so on. In the example (22) the metaphorical expression *ёлки зелёные* was used due to bewilderment and surprise because the speaker could not understand how the life there was even possible. The concept of annoyance, dissatisfaction, bewilderment and surprise is metaphorically connected to the color green. In the example (23) this idiom is used on order to reinforce the boredom, dullness and lack of entertainment. The main meaning of the word ‘тоска’ is nostalgia, but it can also stand for boredom and monotony to the extent where they are mixed with disgust and annoyance. The color green just emphasizes it; extreme and “painful” boredom is metaphorically attached to the color green.

To conclude, concerning emotions, the negative figurative meanings of the colors red and green prevail among both English and Russian idioms. This main group is divided into several sub-groups: embarrassment, anger, jealousy, boredom and annoyance. Anger and embarrassment prove to be the main emotions which motivate the majority of the English and

Russian red color idioms. However, I would say that anger is the emotion that motivates the majority of English idioms containing the color red, while embarrassment turns out to motivate the majority of Russian idioms. Jealousy and envy are metaphorically expressed through the same colors in both English and Russian languages and is expressed by the same number of idioms in English and Russian. The main difference here concerning emotions is expressing boredom. In the Russian culture, boredom is metaphorically expressed through the green color. Most of the selected color idioms share the same conceptual metaphors and metonymies, such as ANGER IS HEAT, THE BODY IS CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS and THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION. This means that Russian and English native-speakers also share similar socio-cultural views of the listed emotions. As it has already been mentioned in the previous chapters, Boers (2008, el. publ.) claimed that idioms come from our physical experiences. These similarities among red color idioms in English and Russian show that both English and Russian native speakers perceive physical experiences concerning embarrassment, anger and jealousy in a similar way.

## 5.2. Mental characteristics and behaviors

The second largest semantic group is the one concerning mental characteristics and behaviors. It is divided into three sub-groups: immorality, inexperience and abilities.

| MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIORS |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Immorality                           | Red-light district<br>Paint the town red<br>Catch somebody red-handed<br>Квартал красных фонарей<br>Напиться/напиваться до зеленого змия<br>Catch somebody red-handed |
| Inexperience                         | Green as grass<br>Greenhorn<br>Молодо зелено  |
| Abilities                            | Have a green thumb<br>Красная доска   |

### 5.2.1. Immorality

Now we are going to talk about a slightly different notion of the color red. Relying on the Dobrovol'skij's (2011) study on idiom equivalence again, I would say that the following metaphorical expressions are each other's absolute equivalents: *red-light district* and *квартал красных фонарей*. Both idioms refer to an area of a city or town containing many brothels, strip clubs, and other sex businesses:

(24) “The **red-light district** is crowded with dark doorways where men stand, promising in French, German, English that for a few guilders you can have a conversation with a naked woman.”

(25) “мы свернули на улицу, ведущую в знаменитый **квартал красных фонарей**, — как же так, быть в Амстердаме и не посмотреть на эту его всемирно известную достопримечательность”

‘we turned into the street leading to the famous **red-light district**, I mean, how could you go to Amsterdam and not see this world famous landmark’

According to Redondo and Plaza (2007: 184), the color red can be used metaphorically if we are referring to the concept of sexuality and sensuality. Both idioms are examples of the color red mapping onto the domains of sexuality and sensuality. However, they say that it is not quite clear whether is the connection of the color red and sexuality based on the metonymic relationships emerged from the same contexts of the red-light district or it is just the result of the cultural value judgements that this color gained.

There is also another English idiom that metaphorically expresses the lack of moral behavior – *paint the town red*. This idiom means to go out and enjoy yourself flamboyantly in the evening, often drinking a lot of alcohol and dancing:

(26) “When I first moved out here in my 20s, I wanted to go out every night and **paint the town red**.”

Chielens (2007: 74) states the color red used in this idiom is metaphorically connected to fierce emotions and something of vigorous quality and I agree with this claim, that is vigor and liveliness motivate the this red-color idiom. However, the actual origin of the phrase is unknown. On the other hand, in the Russian language there is not an expression that can be considered identical, but the concept of the Russian expression *напиваться до зеленого змия* (to get blind drunk) can be considered somewhat similar to the expression *paint the town red*

because both expressions include drinking a fair amount of alcohol and partying. However, they could not serve as any kind of equivalents, because the only feature that connects them is getting drunk. The English idiom does not only stand for drinking, but also for dancing and partying in general, while the Russian expression only refers to heavy drinking. It is also interesting how in the English idiom the color that is used in this context is red and in the Russian is the color green.

The expression *напиваться/напиться до зелёного змия* (literal translation is ‘to get drunk until the green serpent’) stands for looking and feeling ill, but because of heavy intoxication (alcohol, drugs) which leads to hallucinations, nervous breakdowns and so on:

(27) “Вам не приходилось **напиваться до зеленого змия**?”

‘You really didn’t have to **get blind drunk**, did you?’

As it has been mentioned above, this Russian expression does not really have an English equivalent that contains the color green as a component. The ‘green serpent’ or ‘зелёный змий’ is a Russian idiomatic expression that stands for an alcoholic beverage, that is for the “green wine”, which acquired this adjective because of the color of the grapes from which it was made. *Зелёный змий* was incorporated as a part of the idiom *напиваться/напиться до зелёного змия*, which is used in the context of drinking a large amount of this kind of beverage and which as a consequence makes you sick even to the point of hallucinating. Because of that, the color green began to gradually acquire a negative connotation, since drinking a large amount of alcohol is considered a vice. Moreover, there is a connection with the biblical Serpent Tempter and the phraseological expression ‘зелёный змий’. Therefore, this expression is used when referring to temptation and in this case it is temptation by alcohol.

Since we are discussing rather dark and negative figurative meanings, there is another English idiom that can serve as an example:

(28) “You've been **caught red-handed**, and the police are looking to solve a murder.”

The meaning of this idiom is to catch somebody in the act of doing something wrong or committing a crime. According to Redondo and Plaza (2007: 182), there is a metonymic-metaphorical connection in this idiom. This phrase is metonymic because the RESULT OF PERFORMING AN ACTION stands for THE ACTION, which is based on catching a killer with blood still on their hands. However, there is also a metonymic relationship between the color red and

blood – RED STANDS FOR THE BLOOD. However, today, this idiom is not only used when talking about blood crimes, but also any other illegal activity, as it is shown in the following example: “Some lowlife drug dealer named Victor Ochoa had been caught **red-handed**. (Corpus of Contemporary American English, el. publ.)”, which gives this phrase more metaphorical value.

### 5.2.2. Inexperience

As it has already been mentioned in the previous chapters, green can also be metaphorically connected to the notion of youthfulness, freshness, inexperience, naivety and so on. The English expressions that can serve as evidence of this claim are *green as grass* and *greenhorn*. The Russian expressions that share quite the same meaning and serve as suitable equivalents are *молодо зелено* and *зелен виноград*:

(29) “Tim had no doubt taken one glance into her eyes and known that she was **as green as grass**, and he'd played to that naivety every step of the way.”

(30) “Fresh off the runway, **greenhorn**, wet behind the ears... call it what you want. You have two weeks to prove yourselves, rookies.”

(31) “Пальто на нём лёгкое... того гляди, простудится. Эх, **молодо-зелено**”  
'He's wearing a light coat... look, he'll catch a cold. Eh, he's **as green as grass**.'

(32) “Он хоть твой и жених, да **зелен виноград**.”  
'He may be your husband, but he is **as green as grass**.'

In the words of Redondo and Plaza (2007), a certain conceptual metonymy is expressed in all these selected examples – GREEN FOR UNRIPE. This is based on the facts that a fruit is either ripe or unripe. Unripe fruit is green. This can serve as evidence that proves there is a kind of experientially cultural correlation between something being ripe and unripe and the passing of time. This connects the domain of fruits with the domain of human development, meaning that a certain period of time is necessary for human development, that is acquisition of experience. This leads us to the conceptual metaphor linked to this expression – MORE EXPERIENCE IS MORE TIME or LESS EXPERIENCE IS LESS TIME (Redondo and Plaza, 2007). Since the domain of fruit is metaphorically mapping onto the domain of people, another conceptual metaphor that is present here is LACK OF EXPERIENCE IS GREEN. The noun ‘grass’ in the simile *green as grass* only intensifies this concept. Furthermore, in the example (29) there is a reason why the green horns are connected with the notion of youth and inexperience. Diana Loeffler (2017: 53) claims that the green horns are actually the ones of a young ox and they have not matured yet. She also

states that the environmental colors of young animals or plants are metaphorically mapped to the concept of immaturity and inexperience and also mentions that the conceptual metaphor, which is expressed through these idioms, is IMMATURE IS GREEN. The expression *зелен виноград* is associated with some Russian proverbs: *Зелен виноград не сладок* which literally means that green (unripe) grapes are not sweet and *Зелен виноград не вкусен, млад человек не искусен*, or in literal translation: Green grapes are not tasty, meaning a young man is inexperienced (Hrnjak, 2004: 68).

### 5.2.3. Abilities

The first idiom from this sub-group that will be analyzed carries a metaphorical concept of greenery, vegetation and environment. The English metonymic expression *have a green thumb* (or *have green fingers*) is related to gardening and means to be good at making plants grow and keeping them healthy:

(33) “He grew vegetables in the prison garden. He always had **a green thumb**.”

There is no similar expression in Russian which would serve as a suitable equivalent and translation of the phrase. Relying on Redondo and Plaza (2007: 186), this expression carries two metonymies: the first metonymy is THE COLOR OF THE OBJECT OF MANIPULATION FOR THE OBJECT, because plants with their green color are the objects that are included into this particular domain; the second metonymy that is applied is PART FOR THE WHOLE due to the fact that a body part, a thumb (that is, a hand) is used for dealing with plants. Moreover, the native speakers consider this innate ability to be great with plants as a gift, which somehow points to the existence of the metaphorical process going on in this expression. This means that they are mapping from the domain of plants to the domain of abilities. Redondo and Plaza claim that it is the folk theories why English speakers through person’s special ability with plants, that is manipulating the plants with their fingers, project their special talent onto the plants. This is the evidence of the metaphorical relationship between the ‘plants’ domain and ‘talent/ability’ domain. The conceptual metaphor that lies in this expression is ABILITY IS MANIPULATION, and to be more specific, a sub-metaphor – A SPECIAL ABILITY IS PROJECTED THROUGH PHYSICAL CONTACT (2007: 186-187).

Furthermore, one of the typical Russian idioms denoting both a special ability and the best quality and does not have an English equivalent containing the color red, is *красная доска*:



(34) “Его имя не сходило с **красной доски** участка. Красная доска стала его славой.”

‘His name did not leave the Board of the Best. It made him famous.’

It is a board with a list of distinguished persons, that is the people who are the best at something, for example students with the best grades or the best employees. In the Russian culture the color red is obviously metaphorically connected with the notion of being the best or having the best quality. The domains of being the best, having the best qualities and having a special ability are metaphorically mapped to the domain of the color red. Therefore, the color red here carries a very positive connotation. However, this Russian idiomatic expression has its antonym – *чёрная доска*, which stands for the board with a list of people (students, employees, etc.) who either perform their tasks and jobs rather poorly or are guilty of something:

“Их имена, с подробным описанием преступления, вывешиваются **на черной доске**.”

‘Their names, with a detailed description of the crime, are posted on the black board.’

The contrastive analysis of the idioms from the semantic group of mental characteristics and behaviors has helped us to arrive at several different conclusions. Firstly, inexperience is metaphorically attached to the color green in both Russian and English languages and, therefore, motivates the green-color idioms in both languages. Most of them share identical conceptual metaphors and metonymies, such as IMMATURE IS GREEN, GREEN FOR UNRIPE, MORE EXPERIENCE IS MORE TIME or LESS EXPERIENCE IS LESS TIME and LACK OF EXPERIENCE IS GREEN. All of them are each other’s partial equivalents because they do not have the same syntactic and lexical structure, but can serve as each other’s translational and systematic equivalents: *green as grass*, *greenhorn*, *молодо-зелено* and *зелен виноград*. On the other hand, immorality is mostly related to the color red in both English and Russian and this subgroup consists of the majority of idioms. Doing something illegal or immoral, that is committing crimes, is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color red. Nevertheless, speakers will not have problems with understanding the expression *red-light district* since its motivation is quite transparent compared with the idioms *catch somebody red-handed* and *paint the town red*. Taking into account the meanings of the constituents of the idiom *catch somebody red handed* along with metaphorical mapping of the color red, the correct idiomatic meaning could be predicted. The meaning of the idiom *paint the town red*, on the other hand, could not be predicted in the same way because the meaning of the constituents does not correspond to the idiomatic meaning at all. However, in the Russian idiom *напиваться до зеленого змия*, whose

motivation also is not quite transparent, the domain of immoral behavior (drinking alcohol to the point of sickness and hallucinations) is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color green, which is another discrepancy. In addition, only in the English language the notion of abilities/special talents is metaphorically and metonymically attached to the green color in the idiom *green thumb*. Conceptual metonymies and metaphors expressed through it are THE COLOR OF THE OBJECT OF MANIPULATION FOR THE OBJECT, ABILITY IS MANIPULATION and a sub-metaphor A SPECIAL ABILITY IS PROJECTED THROUGH PHYSICAL CONTACT.

### 5.3. Prominence and quality

The semantic groups of prominence and quality have almost the same number of color idioms and both follow immediately after the group of idioms expressing mental characteristics. They will also be analyzed at the same time because most idioms of these groups belong to both semantic groups.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| PROMINENCE | <p>A red-letter day</p> <p>Roll out the red carpet</p> <p>Red-carpet treatment</p> <p>Red tape</p> <p>Красный день календаря</p> <p>Расстелить красный ковёр (красную дорожку)</p> <p>Проходить красной нитью</p> |
| QUALITY    |   |
| Positive   | <p>Roll out the red carpet</p> <p>Red-carpet treatment</p> <p>Out of the red</p> <p>Расстелить красный ковёр (красную дорожку)</p> <p>Красная доска</p> <p>Красное словцо</p>                                     |
| Negative   | <p>In the red</p> <p>Into the red</p>   |

The first pair of idioms that will be analyzed is *a red-letter day* and *красный день календаря*. These two metaphorical idioms have similar meanings to some extent because both stand for a pleasantly memorable, fortunate or a happy day, which we can see in the corpus examples. However, according to Dobrovol'skij (2011), I would consider them as partial equivalents because they do not fully correspond in syntactic and lexical structure.

(35) “It's a **red-letter day** in Bridget Jones's Diary -- the moment when she and Mark Darcy get together again.”

(36) “В институте Ивету просили испечь что-нибудь, если случался день рождения или **красный день календаря**.”

‘At the university Iveta was asked to bake something if it was someone’s birthday or a **red-letter day**.’

They can also refer to an important holiday. And the question is why? Well, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, in Church calendars, a saint’s day or church festival was traditionally distinguished by being written in red letters. As it was mentioned above, the color red can also be used in order to draw attention to something or it can stand for good luck or a day in which something great happens. Therefore, the reason why the priests used the red ink is very clear. According to Redondo and Plaza, these idioms refer to the concept of ‘good luck’ or ‘fortune’ (2007: 184). Moreover, the Russian idiom carries two more informal meanings. It can be used when talking about getting a bad grade, in which case the domain of bad quality, that is bad grade, is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color red. I could not find an example of this idiom in this context in the Russian corpus which means that this idiom is used in this context quite rarely. On the other hand, it can also be used when talking about the time of the month when women are menstruating:

“Ровно **красные дни** девичьей жизни воротились к Марье Гавриловне.”

‘As if “those days of the month” of Mar’ya Gavrillovna’s youthful life came back to her.’

In this context, the idiom is mostly used in plural and with a changed structure as well. Here it is obvious that the concept of blood is mapped onto the concept of the color red. The relationship between the color red and the blood is metonymic – RED STANDS FOR BLOOD.

However, the English idiomatic expression *a red-letter day* is not used in this context in the English language nor in the context of getting a bad grade. Therefore, we could not use this English idiom as a translational equivalent of the Russian idiom used in this particular context. Since there is no English idiomatic expression with the color red as a component which could be used in this translation, we have to use other translation techniques listed by Mona Baker (2011), such as paraphrasing and omission of the entire idiom.

There is also another English idiom which expresses the importance of the red ink:

(37) “The federal budget may be huge, but it is also finite -- and deeply **in the red**.”

“After opening with small gains, all three indexes fell **into the red** before turning higher again in afternoon trading.”

“Cryptocurrencies were unable to pull **out of the red** after this week's bloodbath.”

The English metonymic idioms *in the red* and *into the red* mean that a person is in debt, overdrawn or started to lose money because, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, red ink was traditionally used to indicate debt items and balances in account (the opposite would be *in the black*). The idiomatic expression *out of the red* is used when you paid back your debt to the bank or to someone you owe money. We can see here how the color red has a negative connotation of being in debt or not having enough money. There is another English metaphorical idiom, *not a red cent*, which refers to money as well:

(38) “You keep this up and you won't get any money from me, not one **red cent**.”

A cent is the smallest coin in American money and is worth very little. In this example the expression *not one red cent* means no money at all. I would say that here the domain of withholding money is metaphorically mapped into the domain of the color red. Even though here the idiom has a negative connotation and is used in a negative sense most of the time, this may not always be the case. This idiomatic expression can also stand for a small amount of money and in a more positive context:

““ She tried to smile. ” And it helps keep the guys alive. Plus, it don't cost **a red cent**.”

It could be that in these examples no money at all and a small amount of money motivate the use of red-color idiom. However, it could also be that the color red in this expression is only related to the reddish, copper color of the coin. There are no Russian equivalents of these idioms containing the color red as a constituent.

Nevertheless, in the Russian language there is another idiomatic expression that displays the use of the red color in the context of standing out and being noticeable: *проходить красной нитью*. This idiom refers to a very important part of something, to the main thought or the guiding principle of something. So, this important part of something (thought, principle, trait, feeling) is something that stands out and is present throughout a text, speech and so on, like a red thread that is noticeable and catches your attention. In this expression the domain of standing out and being important is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the red thread, that is the color red:

(39) “**Красной нитью** через различные госпрограммы **проходят** «зеленая» тема и проблемы энергосбережения.”

‘Ecology and problems of energy saving are the main issues present in various state programs.’

Furthermore, in English there is an idiomatic expression *a golden thread* which also stands for an idea or feature that is present in all parts of something, but here the emphasis is put on its value and how this particular idea or feature is something that holds everything together. For this particular reason, it is not strange that the domain of value is metaphorically mapped on the domain of gold. In my opinion, these two expressions could not really be considered as translational equivalents, because this notion of value in the meaning makes a difference which could not exactly be neglected.

There is also a pair of idioms which are used when we are talking about giving an important person a special welcome or welcoming them with a flattering purpose, *roll out the red carpet* or *the red-carpet treatment* and *расстелить красный ковёр* (*красную дорожку*):

(40) “I have some friends coming to town that I'd like to **roll out the red carpet** for. Greet them warmly and bring them to me.”

(41) “you put him up at a really nice hotel, give him the **red carpet treatment**, you know, room service, limos, theater tickets”

(42) “Ее принимали (кроме первого раза, когда ее визит прошел незамеченным) довольно торжественно, по словам одного очевидца, «ей **расстелили красный ковер**»”

‘She was welcomed (except for the first time, when her visit went unnoticed) rather ceremonially, according to one eyewitness “she received the **red-carpet treatment**” (or they **rolled out the red carpet** for her).

As we can see, the idioms *roll out the red carpet* and *расстелить красный ковёр* can serve as each other’s absolute equivalents. A conceptual metonymy exists in these idioms and this relationship is identified between the activity and the purpose of that activity. In this pair of idioms, the figurative meaning of something extraordinary and of the highest quality is metaphorically attached to the red carpet. A reason for that is very well-known to all of us since when we talk about the red carpet, we automatically think of Hollywood and celebrities strolling on the red carpet. We think of fame, glamour, pomp, beauty which are metaphorically mapped on the domain of the red carpet, that is, with time, on the domain of the color red as well. In addition, Anita Hrnjak (2010: 174) states that this idiomatic expression refers to the custom of rolling out the red carpet as a part of diplomatic protocols when welcoming distinguished guests. She also adds that history played an important role in building this phraseological meaning because red has always been the color of the royals. What is important here is the fact that red stands for love, respect and lofty emotions.

Furthermore, the expression *красное словцо* is also an example of how the color red in Russian culture stands for something of the highest quality:

(43) “Если кто-то ещё желает блеснуть **красным словцом** или выразить мне почтение, прошу, не стесняйтесь себя.”

— Сергей Морозов, *Серебряный узор на черном бархате*

‘If someone else wants to show off their eloquence or pay respect to me, please do not embarrass yourself.’

*Красное словцо* stands for expressing yourself in an eloquent and/or witty manner and because of these characteristics it can be considered as something of “the best-quality”. Mokienko and Stepanova (1998) in the Dictionary of Russian phraseology mention that in the past this expression stood for a statement written in red ink in a clear and beautiful handwriting. If the color red was used to describe a statement or a speech in the past, it meant that something was beautifully and wittily said. The diminutive form of the word *словцо* in this idiomatic expression emphasizes the gracefulness and wittiness of what was said. Furthermore, this idiom is metonymic because the noun *словцо* means ‘a word’. The conceptual metonymy which is present in this idiom is PART FOR THE WHOLE, because one word is only a part of the statement,

but it also stands for the whole statement. Teliya (2006) claims that the mental image in the cultural color code, in which the color red corresponds to the evaluative, value-based area of culture, is metaphorically linked to the notion of beauty. Therefore, the mental image of this phraseological unit reflects the popular idea of a beautifully spoken word, which is spoken for the sake of eloquence itself.

However, there is another idiomatic expression with the color red as a constituent that carries negative figurative meanings again. The English idiom *red tape* stands for the official rules that seem more complicated than necessary and prevent things from being done quickly. This idiom dates back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when the red or pink ribbons or tapes were used to bind official documents (OALD, el. publ.). This points to the fact that one typical characteristic of this type of papers stands for this kind of documents. The meaning of this idiom has broadened since it stands for the rules and the delays caused by bureaucratic complexity, but it still refers to bureaucratic documents. There is also an example of a metonymy CHARACTERISTIC OF OBJECT for CONSEQUENCES OF OBJECT MANIPULATION, meaning the actions performed with official documents are metonymically linked to their consequences (Redondo and Plaza, 2007: 82). The first example displays the metonymic feature discussed above, while in the second example the extensional use of the idiom *red tape* is displayed.

- a. “At the same time, patients and doctors alike are drowning in a sea of **red tape**, rules and regulations we cannot understand.”
- b. “Rather than stalling development with **red tape** and bureaucracy, we should be seeking to find huge projects specially of infrastructure, which would benefit future generations.”

In conclusion, the semantic group of prominence consists of seven red color idioms (four English and three Russian idioms). In all of them the notion of visibility, prominence and catching someone’s attention is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color red. The expressions *a red-letter day*, *красный день календаря* and *red tape* express that notion through the use of red ink, while the expression *проходить красной нитью* does not necessarily include the usage of the red ink, but it is still a part of something (a thought, an idea, a feeling) that stands out and catches your attention. On the other hand, the color red in the absolute equivalents *red-carpet treatment*, *roll out the red carpet*, and *расстелить красный ковёр* (*красную дорожку*) stands for prominence as well, but in a slightly different manner. Here the

notion of standing out and catching attention is metaphorically linked to the color red due to *extraordinaire*.

The semantic group which stands for quality/wealth is another group that provides us with more differences between the two languages. This group is divided into positive and negative sub-groups since some of selected expressions refer to positive situations and things while some of them refer to the negative ones. It consists of nine color idioms and the color red is the component of them all. However, there are more negative idioms (6) than there are positive ones (3). The negative ones are only English idioms, while the positive ones are only Russian idioms. Quality and wealth are negatively more often expressed by using the color red in the English language by using the expressions: *in the red, into the red and red cent*. The color red obviously most of the time evokes negative connotations and image schemas in the minds of the English native speakers, such as being in debt, owing money or having a small amount of money. On the other hand, the color red stands for quality and wealth and evokes positive connotations and image schemas mostly in the Russian culture, such as becoming the best employee or student and ending up on the Board of the Best (*красная доска*), paying off your debts (out of the red), being eloquent and deliver the best speech (*красное словцо*) or being welcomed and having a celebrity treatment (*red-carpet treatment, roll out the red carpet, расстелить красный ковёр*).

#### 5.4. Physical state and sexuality

The following semantic groups consist of the same number of idioms. One English red-color idiom belongs to both groups. The idioms *red-light district* and *квартал красных фонарей* have already been analyzed in the chapter on the mental characteristics, that is on the lack of moral, so they will not be analyzed again.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| PHYSICAL STATE    |   |
| Feeling ill       | Be green about the gills<br>В глазах зеленеет<br>До зеленого змия |
| Healthy, vigorous | Red-blooded   |
| SEXUALITY         |   |
| Positive          | Red-blooded   |



|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Negative | Red-light district<br>Квартал красных фонарей |
|----------|---|

The first two idioms that are going to be observed are *to be green about the gills* and *в глазах зеленеет*. The English expression is *to be green about the gills* stands for looking or feeling ill or nauseous, as if you are going to vomit. The expression *в глазах зеленеет* (literal translation is ‘to be green in the eyes’) means to look and feel nauseous due to various reasons, such as anxiety, excitement, fatigue and so on. These two can be considered as phraseological parallels, because they correspond to each other in the core meaning, but not regarding the image component and the lexical and syntactic structure.

(44) “This speech did nothing to reassure Brianna, who edged closer to Roger. p61 Roger himself had lost that **green about the gills** look, though...”

(45) “Принесешь четыре ведра, и **в глазах зеленеет**, и ноги и руки дрожат, а нужно нести пятое, шестое...”

‘You will bring four buckets, you will be **green about the gills**, your legs and hands will be shaking. But you will need to carry the fifth, sixth...’

Why is the word ‘gills’ used in this particular English idiom? According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* gills are the rosy fleshy parts between the jaw and the ears and this sense of the word is from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Other colors of the gills serve as indications of sickness, that is a sickly appearance. The expression *rosy about the gills* exists in the English language as well and indicates a good health, but it is much less common. So, the color green can also be used in the context of sickness, being pale and ill, that is a metaphorical process that occurs in this expression is mapping of the domain of the green color onto the domain of sickness/illness. The two idioms are actually a display of human feelings (sickness, illness, nervous breakdown, nausea etc.) and their physiological effects (being pale in the face, being “green” in the face, “being green in the eyes” etc.). However, the example (28) displays this negative feeling of sickness due to anxiety and the example (29) is a display of sickness due to exhaustion. This is the reason why those three idioms refer to the conceptual metonymy THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION, because, once again, we can see the repercussions of these negative emotions by the displayed physiological effects. This leads us to the conceptual metaphor that is present in these expressions – THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS.

In the English language the color red can carry a positive notion of sexuality, not only a negative one as it was portrayed in the analysis of the idiom *red-light district*:

- (46) “I started sleeping on the couch, as a way to rub into her face the fact that it's awfully hard for a **red-blooded** male to sleep in a bed with a woman he finds sexually attractive but who has not the least interest.”

The metaphorical expression *red-blooded* stands for a person that has a lot of energy and enjoys being intimate with another person very much. Here the figurative meaning of being energetic, virile, full of life and vigorous is metaphorically attached to blood, that is to the color red. The domain of sexuality is again metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color red. The conceptual mechanism present in this idiom is THE BODY IS A CONTAINER – in this case, it is a container of energy and vigor.

To sum it all up, physical state can be depicted with color idioms as well, both in Russian and English. This semantic group is divided into two opposite sub-groups – feeling ill and being healthy and vigorous. In both languages the color green carries a figurative meaning of feeling ill, so the Russian and English cultures share the same conceptual metaphor regarding the color green and nausea – THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS – the emotions causing this physiological reaction, in this case nausea, along with the same conceptual metonymy THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION. However, the color red is metaphorically connected with health, energy and vigor only in the English language and the expression *red blooded* does not have any kind of equivalent in Russian, which is another discrepancy in this perception of the color red in those two cultures.

Sexuality is another figurative meaning that can be expressed through color idioms. However, the abstract domain of sexuality can be positive and negative. It consists of three red color idioms, two negative idioms and one positive idiom. The negative idioms are equivalents *red-light district* and *квартал красных фонарей*, whereas the only positive idiom in this group is an English idiom (*red-blooded*). Redondo and Plaza (2007) are not sure whether the connection of the color red and sexuality based on the metonymic relationships emerged from the same contexts of the red-light district or it is just the result of the cultural value judgements that this color gained. Furthermore, the positive notion of sexuality was found in only one red-color English idiom – *red blooded* and is expressed through the conceptual metaphor THE BODY IS A CONTAINER. The notion of vigor, energy and sexuality is linked to the domain of the color red.

## 5.5. Warning/danger

The following semantic group has the same number of idioms as the previous ones.

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| WARNING/DANGER | Red flag<br>Красный петух<br>Пустить/пускать красного петуха |
|----------------|--|

Since the color red easily catches people's attention, it can also symbolize danger, prohibition and warning, like in the English idiomatic expression *red flag*:

(47) "Getting actively offended over things that are not a big deal is a huge **red flag**."

Red flag is a flag used to warn people of danger, for example there are red flags on the beaches where swimming is not allowed. However, the expression *red flag* is used metaphorically in the context of danger and warning in general. In the corpus example the expression *red flag* is used in the context of warning. The domain of warning and danger is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color red, so the color red gains another figurative meaning. There is not any Russian equivalent to this English idiomatic expression.

Another Russian idiom which belongs to the same domain of warning and danger is *красный петух*, that is *пустить/пускать красного петуха* (literal translation is a red rooster, that is to let out/release the red rooster):

(48) "Стихия ножа и **красного петуха** была чересчур страшна."

'The destructive feature of a knife and fire was too scary.'

"Славяне расстреливали из автоматов хрусталь, который невозможно было запихать в вещмешки, и **пускали красного петуха**."

'The Slavs shot crystals from their machine guns, because they could not be crammed into duffel bags, and set fire to everything.'

The expression *красный петух* stands for fire, and the expression *пустить/пускать красного петуха* means to start a fire. The color red in the combination with the shape of the rooster's crest makes another figurative meaning of the color red in which the notion of fire is attached to the color red. There is also a metonymic relationship between the rooster's crest and the fire

– PART FOR THE WHOLE, because the crest stands for the whole rooster which becomes a symbol of fire. The red rooster is associated with fire and the ancient cult of the gods of thunder in the Slavic, Baltic and Germanic languages. The red rooster was offered to the gods of fire as a sacrifice. There was also a belief that during storms, the red rooster came down along with the lightning and set houses on fire. This rooster cult was reflected in the material culture as well. Tin roosters can often be found on the houses of the Slavic people because they served as lightning rods (Hrnjak, 2004: 65). This expression does not have its equivalent in the English language and is a perfect example of a culture-specific idiom, which confirms Teliya's (1994) claim that cultural connotation has to be observed and taken into account in order to truly understand the motivation and meaning of a particular idiom and how culture manifests itself in a particular language, in this case in Russian. I would also say that this idiom could cause problems to Russian language learners because it is not really transparent, so it would be harder to understand its meaning. According to Nayak and Gibbs (1990), more transparent phrases are more easily tied to people's conceptual knowledge and people will use them rather than nontransparent ones.

In short, in all these expressions the domain of warning and danger is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color red. However, in order to grasp the meaning of the two non-transparent Russian idioms, one must have enough conceptual and cultural knowledge.

## 5.6. History and politics

The following semantic group is the one of history and politics. There are three color idioms in this group as well, divided into negative and positive idioms.

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| HISTORY/POLITICS |  |
| Communism/USSR   |  |
| Negative         | Better dead than Red<br>Reds Under the Bed |
| Positive         | Под красную шапку                          |

The English idioms which will be discussed first are *Better dead than Red* and *Reds Under the Bed*:

(49) “Red - that was our color, wasn't it? What did the Americans call us? The Red Menace.

**Better dead than Red...**”

(50) One of the "**Reds Under the Bed**" threats of the mid-20th century was this: " If the communists come to power, the women will have to go to work like the men!

(51) “В 905 году он идет **под красную шапку** и, конечно, во флот”

‘In 905 he joins **the red caps** and finally joins the fleet.’

The color red in the following idioms is associated with “anarchistic and revolutionary politics” (Chielens, 2007: 68). It actually refers to communist politics – the Soviet Union. Red caps or soviets are metaphorically mapped to the more abstract concept of communism. These idioms are not equivalents and are listed here to show how different associations the color red evokes in these two cultures. Relying on the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, the expression (47) was a cold-war slogan and it was reversed by the nuclear disarmament campaigners of the late 1950s as *better red than dead*. It carries the same negative connotations as the expression (48) which was also used during the Cold war and referred to the feared presence and influence of Communist sympathizers in a society. Both English idioms carry negative connotations in the Western world and evoke negative emotions towards the Eastern politics. On the other hand, the Russian expression (49) literally means to join the army. Anita Hrnjak (2004: 64) in her dissertation explains that the reason why the color red is used in this expression is because soldiers who were the last to join the army wore red caps and that was a tradition which existed long before communism and, therefore, does not carry any negative connotations. There is also a metonymic relationship between the color red and the army (a red cap is only a part of the whole uniform). In the example from the corpus (49) we can sense a hint of a positive emotion evoked by becoming a red cap.

So, to conclude, the color red is the component of all three idioms and is related to communism and the socialist regime in the two of them: *Better dead than Red* and *Reds Under the Bed*. The English idioms are negative, which is not at all strange because a belief that communism, present in Eastern Europe, is something negative was widely spread in the West. This intolerance is present even today. The Russian idiom *под красную шапку* is a positive one. The color red here can stand for pride, honor, bravery and strength which is in this context completely opposed to the Western view discussed in the analyses of the two previous idioms.

## 5.7. Places

This semantic group consists of one Russian idiom, *красный уголок*. In Russian, according to Sophia Lubensky, the metaphorical idiom *красный уголок*, or literally a red corner, stands for a room in an institution, dormitory, hotel and so on that can be used for various different activities, such as reading, small meetings and so on:

(52) “Раз в неделю я приходил перед обеденным перерывом в **красный уголок** фабрики и беседовал с группой 16-17-летних девушек”

‘Once a week, I came to **a day room** of the factory before lunch break and talked with a group of 16-17-year-old girls’

Since this idiom does not have an equivalent in the English language, it is often translated as an activity room, reading room, day room or a recreation room. Sophia Lubensky in her *Russian-English dictionary of idioms* provides the reason behind the color red in this particular idiom. The metaphorical use of the color red here is also related to the communist or socialist regime. This phrase was originally used by the Communists and stood for a site for Communist agitation, Party functions and the dispersal of propaganda. With the years, the room had more general use, but it retained Party-related properties (for example, Communist literature) for a long time.

To conclude, there is a significant and obvious cultural impact in the Russian expression *красный уголок* (a day room). In Teliya’s (1996) words, idiomatic expressions are coined on the basis of the native speaker’s figurative perception of the reality, which is certainly connected with the cultural traditions of this particular community, in this case with the Russian cultural traditions (communism).

## 5.8. Permission

The next semantic group in line is the one denoting permission, that is allowance. Only two color idioms that contain the color green as a component belong to this group.

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| PERMISSION | Give somebody/something a green light<br>Давать/дать зелёную улицу |
|------------|--|

The pair of idioms *give somebody/something a green light* and *давать/дать зелёную улицу* (literal translation is to give someone a green street) are each other's equivalents and there are not any differences in their meanings. *A green light* and *зелёная улица* both stand for permission, so the meaning of these equivalents is giving permission to do something or for something to happen:

(53) “it was premature for him to comment before the city attorney's office **gives a green light** to release the findings”

(54) “Находясь во главе редакции, Н.Н. Григорьянц **давала «зеленую улицу»** этим песням.”

‘Being the head of the editorial office, N. N. Grigor'yant **gave a green light** to these poems.’

These idioms could serve as each other's partial equivalents because their lexical structure is different; in the English expression *a green light* is used, whereas in Russian *зелёная улица* (green street) is used. However, they are both translational and systematic equivalents (Dobrovolskiy, 2011). *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* explains that *the green light* refers to the green traffic signal which indicates that traffic is free to move forward. The opposite of a green light is a red light, which signals the traffic to stop. Red and green lights were used in the same manner from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in railway signals. However, the figurative meaning of the green light dates back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Redondo and Plaza (2007: 189) state that metonymy of the green light is based on cultural principles which the color green was assigned. These cultural view is actually relating the color green to the concept of permission, that is to the cultural metonymy GREEN FOR PERMISSION/ ALLOWANCE. In both cultures the domain of permission is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the color green, that is the green light; they share the same conceptual metonymy ALLOWANCE/PERMISSION IS GREEN.

## 5.9. Luck

Another interesting figurative meaning of the color green is good luck. The concept of luck is present in this mainly British idiom.

(55) “This player hasn't had **the rub of the green** in the last few tournaments.”

In the selected example the player has not had any luck in the last few tournaments, probably meaning he has not scored a goal. In this metonymic and metaphorical idiom, a touch

of luck, that is luck in general, is metaphorically mapped onto the domain of the green color. To conclude, only one English green-color idiom belongs to the semantic group of luck, *the rub of the green*.

#### 5.10. Obscurity

Only one of the selected idioms belongs to this group – *red herring*. *Red herring* is an English metaphorical idiom that signifies something, especially a clue, which is or is intended to be misleading or distracting:

(56) “Anyway the whole " Dignity of Life " nonsense is just **a red herring** to distract you from their real goal: control.”

The *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* says that this phrase came from using the pungent scent of a dried smoked herring to teach hounds to follow a trail in a fox hunt. The color of the smoked herrings was red, which was the result of the curing process. The literal meaning of this idiom is connected with its figurative meaning, so we can say that this idiom is, in fact, quite transparent. In this idiom, the color red carries the negative metaphorical meaning of being unclear and mysterious. There are not any Russian color idioms that are referring to the domain of obscurity – another dissimilarity that has to be taken into account.



## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, after the contrastive analysis and division into semantic groups, both English and Russian speakers use many color idioms, but often in a different context. The similarities between Russian and English understanding of idioms are based on the shared knowledge about colors and shared general experiences they are connected to. Metaphorical perception of general physical experiences, such as emotions (anger, embarrassment) and physical states such as feeling sick and nauseous, is something that remains the same in both cultures and motivates the most of red and green colored idioms in both languages. Cognitive mechanisms which include conceptual metaphors, metonymies, and sociocultural views play a crucial role in the motivation of idioms in English and Russian. In both English and Russian a lot of idioms can be grouped up under the same conceptual metaphor concerning emotions, for example THE BODY IS CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS and THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION, and concerning immaturity – IMMATURE IS GREEN or GREEN FOR UNRIPE. This thesis can be considered as evidence for this claim. The metaphorical concept shared by the majority of red and green colored idioms in both English and Russian is the one of emotions, especially embarrassment and anger. Conceptual metaphor, metonymy and conventional knowledge are the main mechanisms shared by Russian and English speakers and used in motivating English and Russian figurative expressions. Nevertheless, cultural environment plays an important role here and it shapes our understanding of idioms (our cognitive processes). Most differences discussed in the previous chapters can be contributed to cultural variation, for example in the expression *красный петух*, that is *пустить/пускать красного петуха*.

All selected idioms share the same cognitive mechanisms, some of them share the same conceptual metaphors or metonymies, but not all of them have the equivalents containing the same color as a component in the other language, or even some of them cannot be translated by other idioms in the target language at all because they do not exist. Even though different words or expressions are used to describe the same figurative meaning, conceptual mechanisms do not change.

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