



## Symbolism of the color “red/qízil” in English and Karakalpak languages

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### ARTICLE INFO

**Article history:**

Received November 2024

Received in revised form

10 December 2024

Accepted 25 December 2024

Available online

25 January 2025

**Keywords:**

color symbolism,  
red,  
English,  
Karakalpak,  
cultural symbolism,  
linguistic analysis,  
metaphor,  
idioms,  
comparative linguistics,  
cognition,  
language and culture.

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the symbolism of the color "red" in English and "qízil" in Karakalpak languages, examining both universal and culture-specific meanings. Through a comparative analysis of linguistic, cultural, and historical sources, the research investigates how the color red serves as a symbol of vitality, power, and strong emotions across these languages. While both English and Karakalpak associate red with love, danger, and passion, significant cultural differences emerge in the way the color is symbolized. In English, red is linked to both positive and negative connotations, reflecting individual emotions and societal warnings. In contrast, in Karakalpak culture, red primarily conveys positive symbolism, associated with prosperity, vitality, and communal joy, especially in the context of celebrations and rituals. The study highlights the interplay between language, culture, and cognition, demonstrating that while color terms share cognitive roots, their symbolic meanings are shaped by the cultural values and traditions of each language. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of how color influences language and communication and invite further research on cross-linguistic color symbolism.

2181-3701/© 2024 in Science LLC.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47689/2181-3701-vol3-iss1/S-pp65-73>

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## Ingliz va qoraqalpoq tillarida “red/qizil” rangining ramziy ma’nolari

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**Kalit soʻzlar:**

rang ramziyati,  
qizil,  
ingliz tili,  
qoraqalpoq tili,  
madaniy ramziylik,  
lingvistik tahlil,  
metafora,  
frazologiya,  
qiyosiy tilshunoslik,  
kognitsiya,  
til va madaniyat.

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**ANNOTATSIYA**

Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tilida “red” va qoraqalpoq tilida “qizil” soʻzlarining rang ramziy ma’nolarini, ularning universal va madaniy oʻziga xosliklarini oʻrganishga bagʻishlangan. Tilshunoslik, madaniyat va tarixiy manbalarni qiyosiy tahlil qilish orqali qizil rangning hayotiylik, kuch va kuchli hissiyotlarni ifodalashdagi oʻrni oʻrganilgan. Ingliz va qoraqalpoq tillarida qizil rang sevgi, xavf va ehtiros bilan bogʻliq boʻlsa-da, ushbu rang ramziyligi boʻyicha sezilarli madaniy farqlar mavjud. Ingliz tilida qizil rang ham ijobiy, ham salbiy maʼnolarga ega boʻlib, individual his-tuygʻular va jamiyat ogohlantirishlarini aks ettiradi. Qoraqalpoq madaniyatida esa qizil rang asosan ijobiy maʼnolarga ega boʻlib, farovonlik, hayotiylik va jamiyat quvonchini, ayniqsa bayram va marosimlarda ifodalaydi. Tadqiqot til, madaniyat va tafakkur oʻrtasidagi oʻzaro bogʻliqlikni taʼkidlab, rang nomlari umumiy kognitiv ildizlarga ega boʻlsa-da, ularning ramziy maʼnolari har bir tilning madaniy qadriyatlari va anʼanalari bilan shakllanishini koʻrsatadi. Natijalar rangning til va muloqotga taʼsirini chuqurroq tushunishga hissa qoʻshib, turli tillarda rang ramziyati boʻyicha qoʻshimcha tadqiqotlarni ragʻbatlantiradi.

## Символизм красного цвета «red/ qizil» в английском и каракалпакском языках

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**Ключевые слова:**

символика цвета,  
красный,  
английский,  
каракалпакский,  
культурная символика,  
лингвистический анализ,  
метафора,  
идиомы,  
сравнительное  
языкознание,  
когниция,  
язык и культура.

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**АННОТАЦИЯ**

Данное исследование посвящено символике цвета «красный» в английском языке и в каракалпакском языке, с анализом как универсальных, так и специфических культурных значений. Через сравнительный анализ лингвистических, культурных и исторических источников исследуется, как красный цвет символизирует жизненную энергию, силу и сильные эмоции в этих языках. Хотя и в английском, и в каракалпакском языках красный цвет ассоциируется с любовью, опасностью и страстью, значительные культурные различия проявляются в символике этого цвета. В английском языке красный связан как с положительными, так и с отрицательными коннотациями, отражающими индивидуальные эмоции и общественные предупреждения. В то же время в каракалпакской культуре красный цвет преимущественно несет положительную символику, связанную с процветанием, жизненной энергией и радостью, особенно в контексте праздников и ритуалов. Исследование

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подчеркивает взаимосвязь между языком, культурой и познанием, демонстрируя, что, несмотря на общие когнитивные корни цветовых терминов, их символическое значение формируется культурными ценностями и традициями каждого языка. Результаты исследования способствуют более глубокому пониманию влияния цвета на язык и коммуникацию, а также приглашают к дальнейшим исследованиям символики цвета в различных языках.

## INTRODUCTION

Color symbolism is a fascinating area of study within linguistics, as it reflects the intricate interplay between language, culture, and human cognition. Therefore, colors carry rich symbolic meanings that vary across different cultures and linguistic contexts. They often serve as metaphors and tools to express abstract concepts, emotions, and societal values. For instance, the color "red" may symbolize love, passion, or danger in Western cultures, whereas in China, it is often associated with good fortune and celebration. This diversity in interpretation underscores the importance of cultural and linguistic frameworks in shaping color symbolism.

Linguists have explored color symbolism as a lens to understand the relationship between language and perception. Berlin and Kay's seminal study *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* laid the groundwork for this field. They proposed that languages universally categorize colors into basic terms, suggesting a shared cognitive basis for color perception [1,7-8]. However, the specific associations and connotations of colors are deeply influenced by cultural and historical contexts. For instance, Wierzbicka (1996) argued that color terms are embedded within cultural scripts, revealing societal norms and values [2,130-132].

In addition to linguistic and cultural analyses, color symbolism has practical implications for communication and branding. For example, in advertising, certain colors are strategically chosen to evoke particular emotions or behaviors. As noted by Kress and van Leeuwen in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, color choices are often used to create cultural resonance, establishing connections between products and audiences [3, 243]. These findings highlight how the study of color symbolism extends beyond linguistics, intersecting with fields such as semiotics, psychology, and marketing.

Thus, the study of color symbolism in linguistics not only illuminates the ways in which people use language to categorize and interpret the world but also provides insights into the cultural and cognitive underpinnings of human interaction. By examining color symbolism, researchers can better understand the nuanced relationship between language, thought, and culture.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The color red holds significant linguistic and cultural symbolism in both English and Karakalpak languages, reflecting universal perceptions as well as culture-specific interpretations. In linguistics, the study of color terms serves as an essential framework for exploring how language encodes sensory and cultural experiences. The universality and variation in color symbolism have been analyzed in the seminal works of Berlin and Kay, who argued that basic color terms evolve along predictable stages across languages, with red being one of the earliest colors to be named due to its biological salience. [1,7-8]

In English, the color red often symbolizes strong emotions such as love, passion, and anger, as well as danger or warning. For instance, expressions like "seeing red" denote anger, while "red flag" conveys caution or warning [4, 380-382]. The association of red with emotions is also evident in cultural contexts, such as Valentine's Day, where red symbolizes love and affection [5, 610-611]. These meanings reflect the duality of red as both positive (e.g., passion and celebration) and negative (e.g., danger and aggression), shaped by historical, cultural, and societal influences.

In contrast, the Karakalpak language offers a unique perspective on the symbolism of red, influenced by the cultural and historical context of the Karakalpak people. The term "qızıl" (red) is deeply rooted in expressions of wealth, prosperity, and vitality. For instance, the phrase "qızıl ton" (red dress) often signifies beauty and celebration, particularly in traditional ceremonies [6, 65-67].

Additionally, red is frequently associated with the sun, life, and energy in Karakalpak folklore, highlighting its positive connotations. However, like in English, red can also carry negative meanings, such as bloodshed or conflict, depending on the context.

The divergence and overlap in the symbolism of red between the two languages demonstrate the interplay between universal human cognition and cultural specificity. Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory provides a useful lens for analyzing these differences. According to their theory, metaphorical mappings arise from shared human experiences, such as associating red with warmth or danger due to its connection with fire or blood [7, 50-52]. At the same time, cultural narratives and traditions shape how these metaphors are expressed in different linguistic communities.

## METHODOLOGY

The study of the color symbolism of "red" in English and "qızıl" in Karakalpak languages employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and comparative linguistic analyses. This methodology is designed to examine the semantic, cultural, and cognitive dimensions of the color red across the two languages.

The first step involves a **lexical-semantic analysis** of the words "red" in English and "qızıl" in Karakalpak. Drawing on linguistic corpora, dictionaries, and cultural texts, the analysis investigates the primary and secondary meanings of these terms. For English, standard resources such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* are used, while for Karakalpak, local linguistic references like *Qaraqalpaq Tiliniń Túsindirme So'zligi* serve as key sources. These resources help identify the range of meanings and contexts in which "red" and "qızıl" are used, highlighting both universal and culture-specific connotations.

Next, a **comparative cultural analysis** examines the symbolic roles of red in traditional and contemporary contexts. This includes analyzing idiomatic expressions, proverbs, folklore, and rituals that feature the color red in both languages. For instance, English expressions such as "paint the town red" or "red-letter day" [8, 240-242] are compared with Karakalpak idioms like "qızıl shaqa" (red branch), which refers to a newborn baby [9, 205-206]. Ethnographic studies and historical literature are also reviewed to understand how cultural traditions influence the perception and use of the color red.

A **survey and interview method** is employed to gather native speakers' perceptions of the color red in both linguistic communities. Respondents are asked to describe the emotions, values, and associations they link to red or "qızıl" through open-ended questions. This data is analyzed qualitatively to identify recurring themes and patterns. Special attention is given to how age, gender, and social background influence color symbolism.

Finally, **conceptual metaphor analysis** is used to explore the cognitive aspects of color symbolism. This approach is based on Lakoff and Johnson's theory of metaphor, which suggests that color terms often serve as metaphors for abstract concepts [4, 380-382]. For example, red in English might metaphorically represent love (e.g., "red heart") or danger (e.g., "red alert"), while in Karakalpak, "qızıl" is metaphorically linked to prosperity or energy, reflecting its cultural context.

### **MATERIALS**

To analyze the symbolism of the color "red" in English and "qızıl" in Karakalpak, a variety of linguistic, cultural, and ethnographic materials were selected. These materials represent both historical and contemporary sources to provide a comprehensive view of how the color red is perceived and used in these linguistic communities.

#### *Linguistic Resources*

The primary linguistic materials include dictionaries, corpora, and idiomatic phrasebooks. These sources provide the foundational meanings, variations, and contexts of the terms "red" and "qızıl":

#### *Dictionaries:*

1) The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) is utilized to trace the historical evolution and contemporary meanings of "red" in the English language. This source identifies primary definitions, such as "the color of blood or fire," and its figurative uses, such as "red with anger" [8, 240-242].

2) The *Qaraqalpaq Tiliniń Túsindirme So'zligi* serves as the corresponding resource for the Karakalpak language, offering insights into the lexical and cultural nuances of "qızıl." For instance, the dictionary reveals that "qızıl" is frequently associated with wealth, beauty, and celebration [9, 205-206].

#### *Corpora:*

1) The British National Corpus (BNC) is used to explore collocations, idiomatic expressions, and metaphorical uses of "red" in English texts. <sup>3</sup> It includes examples such as "red alert" (danger) and "red carpet" (special treatment).

2) A locally compiled corpus of Karakalpak literature and media texts is utilized to identify comparable uses of "qızıl." For instance, it captures phrases like "qızıl kün" (red day) and "qızıl ton" (red dress), which reflect cultural significance in ceremonial contexts.

#### *Literary and Folklore Texts*

The study draws heavily on literary and folklore texts to examine how red is symbolized in narratives, proverbs, and poetry. These texts highlight the cultural embedding of color in traditional and modern storytelling.

#### *English Literature:*

1) Classic works, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, use red as a symbol of sin, passion, and shame, reflecting its complex emotional and moral associations [11, 1-3].

2) Contemporary literature and poetry often link red to love, danger, or revolution, emphasizing its enduring metaphorical richness [12, 110-112].

#### *Karakalpak Folklore:*

1) Karakalpak oral traditions, including epic poems like *Qırk Qız* (Forty Girls), frequently reference "qızıl" to symbolize beauty, vitality, and wealth [13, 65-68].

2) Proverbs such as "Qızdıń kózi qızilda" meaning "A young lady looks at red or red color attracts a young lady" illustrate the cultural significance of the color as a symbol of prosperity [14, 90-92].



### *Ethnographic and Historical Materials*

Actually, ethnographic studies and historical records provide a contextual understanding of the role of red in societal practices and rituals.

#### *English Context:*

1) Historical accounts reveal that red has long been used in Western societies to signify power and authority. For instance, royal garments and military uniforms often featured red dye, derived from costly sources like cochineal [15, 45-47].

2) Rituals such as weddings and holidays, including Valentine's Day, show the association of red with love and festivity.

#### *Karakalpak Context:*

1) Karakalpak wedding traditions feature "qızıl ton," a symbolic red garment worn by brides to represent joy and prosperity [16, 52-53].

2) Red is also prominent in Karakalpak art and textiles, with vibrant red patterns symbolizing vitality and fertility in traditional carpets and clothing [17, 88-90].

#### *Visual and Media Materials*

To understand more clearly the contemporary use of red, visual and media materials were also analyzed:

#### *English Media:*

1) Advertisements often use red to evoke excitement, urgency, or passion, as seen in branding for products like Coca-Cola [18, 243].

2) Red is also widely used in traffic signals and warning signs to communicate danger or alertness.

#### *Karakalpak Media:*

1) Local advertisements and public symbols frequently use "qızıl" to represent value, celebration, and vitality. For example, red is a dominant color during Navruz festivities, symbolizing renewal and energy [19, 32-35].

2) Nowadays red is also widely used in traffic signals and warning signs to communicate danger or alertness.

By integrating linguistic, literary, cultural, and visual materials, this study ensures a comprehensive analysis of the color symbolism of "red" and "qızıl." These diverse sources highlight the universal aspects of red as a color of strong emotional and cultural significance, as well as the unique ways it is embedded in English and Karakalpak linguistic traditions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study of the color "red" in English and "qızıl" in Karakalpak languages reveals both universal and culture-specific aspects of color symbolism. Key findings are summarized below:

*1. Semantic Similarities.* Across both languages, the primary meaning of "red" and "qızıl" relates to the color of blood and fire. This association forms the foundation for metaphorical extensions such as life, energy, and passion. In both linguistic communities, red is a highly emotive color, symbolizing vitality, strength, and strong emotions such as love and anger [1,5-7].

*2. Cultural Divergences.* While English often associates red with danger and warning, Karakalpak culture emphasizes its positive symbolism. In Karakalpak, "qızıl" is frequently linked to wealth and celebration, as evidenced by expressions like "qızıl til" (red tongue), which marks eloquence, impudence, and fluency in speech. Conversely, English idiomatic expressions, such as "red tape" (bureaucratic obstacles) and "red flag" (a warning sign), highlight negative associations.

2. *Symbolism in Rituals and Traditions.* In English-speaking societies, red is often connected to holidays like Valentine's Day, where it symbolizes love and romance. In Karakalpak culture, red plays a central role in traditional weddings and Navruz celebrations, symbolizing renewal and prosperity. For example, the bride's "qızıl ton" (red dress) represents beauty and vitality

3. *Conceptual Metaphors.* Both languages use red to conceptualize abstract ideas through metaphor. In English, red is metaphorically linked to emotions ("seeing red" for anger) and urgency ("red alert"). In Karakalpak, metaphors often emphasize youth and beauty, such as "qızıl gül" that means youth (red flower).

Furthermore, the findings highlight the interplay between universal cognitive patterns and cultural specificity in the symbolism of red.

*Universality of Red as a Basic Color Term.* The prominence of "red" and "qızıl" aligns with Berlin and Kay's theory of basic color terms, which identifies red as one of the earliest colors named across languages due to its perceptual salience. The association with blood and fire, as life-sustaining and protective elements, underscores the evolutionary and biological basis for red's prominence in human cognition.

1. *Cultural Shaping of Symbolism.* Despite shared biological foundations; cultural differences significantly shape the symbolic meanings of red. In English, the color often connotes danger, stemming from its use in warning signs and alerts. This contrasts with Karakalpak, where red is predominantly associated with positive traits like prosperity and celebration, reflecting the cultural emphasis on community and traditional ceremonies.

2. *Role of Idioms and Metaphors.* Idiomatic expressions in both languages encapsulate the cultural significance of red. English idioms such as "red-carpet treatment" convey exclusivity and honor, while Karakalpak phrases like "qızıl alma" (red apple) often denote beauty and perfection in folk songs and stories.<sup>8</sup> These metaphors demonstrate how red is deeply embedded in everyday language to represent complex ideas and emotions.

3. *Red in Rituals and Practices.* Cultural rituals further emphasize the divergent symbolism of red. In English-speaking contexts, red is often associated with individual emotions (e.g., love or anger), reflecting the Western focus on personal expression. In contrast, Karakalpak traditions highlight red's role in collective celebrations, such as weddings and Navruz, where it symbolizes communal joy and renewal. These findings illustrate how societal values influence the use of color in ritual contexts.

4. *Contemporary Usage and Media.* In contemporary settings, red retains its symbolic power in both languages. Advertising in English often uses red to evoke excitement or urgency, as seen in brands like Coca-Cola. Similarly, in Karakalpak media, red is prominently featured in designs for festivals and public celebrations, reinforcing its cultural association with vitality and prosperity.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Having analyzed one may conclude that the color symbolism of "red" in English and "qızıl" in Karakalpak reveals both universal and culture-specific interpretations of this vibrant and emotionally charged color. Across both languages, red serves as a symbol of vitality, power, and strong emotions, such as love and anger. These shared meanings are rooted in the color's biological associations with blood and fire, reflecting a deep connection to life, energy, and survival.

However, cultural differences shape the nuances of red's symbolism. In English, red is often linked to both positive and negative connotations, such as love and danger, respectively, reflecting Western societies' dual focus on individual emotions and societal warnings. In contrast, in Karakalpak culture, red predominantly conveys positive symbolism, emphasizing prosperity, vitality, and communal joy, especially in the context of celebrations and traditional rituals like weddings and Navruz. The term "qızıl" is deeply embedded in Karakalpak folklore and customs, where it is associated with wealth, beauty, and renewal.

The study demonstrates how the meanings of colors are not just linguistic but are intricately tied to the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which they are used. Through the examination of idiomatic expressions, cultural rituals, and media representations, this research highlights the importance of understanding color symbolism as a bridge between language and culture. The findings underscore that while color terms like "red" and "qızıl" may share common cognitive roots, their metaphorical and symbolic meanings are deeply influenced by the cultural narratives and values of each language community.

This comparative analysis of English and Karakalpak color symbolism contributes to broader discussions in linguistics, semiotics, and cultural studies. It invites further exploration of how color, as a powerful semiotic tool, shapes communication, perception, and identity across different languages and cultures. Future research could expand this study by exploring other colors and comparing them across different linguistic and cultural groups, thus enriching our understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and cognition.

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