

**COMPLEX COLOR ADJECTIVES IN B. PASTERNAK'S EARLY POETRY:
STRUCTURAL, SEMANTIC, AND COGNITIVE FEATURES**

Akifeva Olesya Olegovna,
Karshi State University
akifevaolesya990@gmail.com

Abstract

The article examines complex color adjectives in the early poetry of Boris Pasternak. The aim of the study is to identify their structural, semantic, and cognitive features in poetic discourse. The material includes poems from *Over the Barriers* and *My Sister Life*. The study applies structural-semantic, contextual, and distributional methods. The empirical basis consists of 226 instances of color terms identified through continuous sampling. The results show that complex color adjectives constitute approximately 4% of all color terms, indicating low frequency but high functional significance. These units are characterized by semantic diffusion, metaphorization, and synesthetic interaction. Unlike traditional symbolic systems, color in Pasternak's poetics functions as a dynamic element of cognitive representation.

Keywords

color terms, compound adjectives, Pasternak, cognitive semantics, poetic language, idiostyle

Introduction

Color terms in poetic discourse represent a complex semantic category that reflects not only perceptual experience but also cognitive and cultural models of reality. In linguistic research, color is treated as a universal yet culturally shaped domain that structures the linguistic worldview (Wierzbicka, 1996). In poetry, however, color acquires additional functions and becomes a carrier of emotional, symbolic, and associative meanings (Kulpina, 2002).

Particular attention should be paid to complex color adjectives, which combine multiple semantic features within a single lexical unit. Their analysis makes it possible to reveal mechanisms of semantic transformation and conceptual structuring in poetic language. In the early poetry of Boris Pasternak, color terms demonstrate instability, contextual variability, and a lack of fixed symbolic associations.

Despite extensive research on color semantics, the specific role of complex color adjectives in Pasternak's idiostyle remains insufficiently explored. This determines the relevance of the present study.

The aim of the study is to identify the structural, semantic, and cognitive features of complex color adjectives in Pasternak's early poetry.

Materials and Methods

The material of the study includes poetic texts by Boris Pasternak from the collections *Over the Barriers* and *My Sister Life*. The corpus consists of early lyrical works dated approximately 1914–1917, which ensures stylistic consistency.

The empirical basis comprises 226 instances of color terms, identified through continuous sampling, including both simple and complex forms. Within this dataset, complex color adjectives account for approximately 4% of all occurrences.

The selection includes lexical units that explicitly or contextually express color semantics, including metaphorical and syncretic uses. The corpus was compiled using a qualitative-

quantitative approach: all color-related units were extracted, classified according to structural type, and analyzed in context.

The methodological framework is based on lexical semantics and cognitive linguistics (Apresyan, 1995; Kubryakova, 2004). The study employs structural-semantic analysis, contextual analysis, and distributional analysis.

Results

The analysis demonstrates that complex color adjectives are relatively infrequent in Pasternak's poetry, constituting about 4% of all color terms. However, their functional role is disproportionately significant.

Several structural types of complex color adjectives can be identified. These include constructions indicating color intensity (e.g., light blue), hybrid color combinations (e.g., gray-blue), multi-component formations (e.g., equivalents of yellowish-bluish), and forms combining color with referential features (e.g., fair-haired).

In contexts where color retains its direct perceptual meaning, it contributes to visual imagery. For example:

*"Look around, and you will see
Before dawn, all day, everywhere,
Moscow, like Kitezh, submerged
In light-blue water."*

(author's translation)

Here, the compound adjective light-blue functions descriptively, preserving its denotative meaning.

However, Pasternak frequently disrupts conventional associations. In another example:

*"On a July night the suburbs—
Strangely fair-haired,
The sky full of reasons
For mischief."*

(author's translation)

The adjective fair-haired applied to stars produces a semantic shift, transforming color into an anthropomorphic and metaphorical feature.

A particularly complex case is the compound adjective corresponding to yellowish-bluish:

*"Autumn. Yellowish-bluish beads are threading,
Ah, as for you, decay, so for me—death,
How wearisome it is to live!"*

(author's translation)

Here, the color term integrates multiple оттенков and functions within an extended metaphor, representing raindrops, decay, and emotional tension.

The analysis also reveals expansion of combinatory properties. For example:

*"The forest hung in leaden strands,
Grey and dim the burdock stood..."*

(author's translation)

The adjective grey is transferred from human features to landscape elements, demonstrating metaphorical resemanticization.

Overall, complex color adjectives exhibit semantic diffusion and function as elements of a broader figurative system.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Pasternak's color system differs fundamentally from traditional symbolic models. Unlike Symbolist poetics, where colors have fixed meanings, Pasternak's

usage is context-dependent and dynamic. This supports the idea that meaning in poetic language emerges through contextual interaction (Vinogradov, 1963).

From a cognitive perspective, color terms function as tools of conceptualization. They reflect subjective perception rather than objective properties of reality, integrating emotional, sensory, and associative components. This aligns with the view that language encodes human experience and mental representation (Kubryakova, 2004).

The data also correspond to cross-linguistic research on color semantics, which shows that color categories are universal but flexible (Berlin & Kay, 1969). In Pasternak's poetry, this flexibility reaches an individual level, forming a highly personalized system.

The synesthetic nature of these constructions further supports cognitive linguistic theories, according to which metaphor and sensory blending are central mechanisms of meaning construction (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Thus, complex color adjectives in Pasternak's poetry function not as fixed symbolic markers but as dynamic elements of a perceptual and cognitive system.

Conclusion

Complex color adjectives in Pasternak's early poetry are characterized by low frequency and high functional significance. They demonstrate structural variability, semantic diffusion, and a strong tendency toward metaphorization.

Color in Pasternak's poetic system functions as a dynamic element of cognitive and emotional representation rather than a fixed symbolic category. These findings highlight the importance of color terms as a key component of the poet's idiosyncrasy.

Future research may focus on comparative analysis of color systems in other Silver Age poets and on expanding the corpus.

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