

# Color Linguistics: Khanty riddles

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**Abstract.** From the point of view of physics and physiology, the perception of color should be the same by all people, but the process and associations connected with it have historical and cultural determinants in different nations. The conceptual apparatus of color linguistics is studied in different scientific studies and from different points of view. The material of this study comprises riddles extracted from Khanty folklore by the method of continuous sampling, as well as scientific literature on the description of color words. A common way of creating riddle metaphors is color matching. Therefore, exploring color words in the Khanty riddles allows us to reveal the cognitive, pragmatic and cultural factors of language functioning. The present research highlights the role of color terms in the formation of linguistic worldview, as well as conceptualizes and defines the place of the color vocabulary in the cognitive process. Key words: Khanty riddles, basic color terms, color words.

## 1 Introduction

Language is a mirror of culture reflecting not only the real world of the people, i.e. the native speaker, but also their mentality, character, customs, traditions, as well as perceptual features and color terms. The use of color terms increases significantly the emotional and expressive meaning of the communication process; these linguistic units can express the most subtle relations and aspects of people's life. The system of color terms and color perceptions is marked by ethnic and culturological features [1-4]. Ethnic coloristics is filled with deep philosophical meaning and is a reflection of the people's worldview, their various sacred, mythical, religious, cultural and social strata. The process of initial nomination is always conditioned by some or other factors, the environment primarily. Features of color perception and color use are complementary; they affect the perception and frequency of the use of some or other color terms [3-5]. Thus, the relevance of the color words study consists in perceiving them as vehicles and instruments of national cultures and languages, as well as cognitive, pragmatic and ethnocultural factors of language functioning [6-8].

## 2 Objective of the study

The objective of our study is to identify the semantic and cultural specificity of color terms in the Khanty language. To achieve the goal, we set the following tasks: to identify lexical units that contain color semes in their composition; to analyze the revealed color terms in the language under study.

The data for the research were riddles obtained from the Khanty folklore by the method of continuous sampling, as well as scientific literature on color words. The Khanty people have many riddles that are laconic, metaphorical and figurative, like poetry itself. Riddles contain the digested results of human observations of different natural phenomena, flora, and fauna, objects of labor and life; they also demonstrate important conclusions and illusions of people, and therefore characterize the people themselves. This is one of the oldest forms of folk art passed on by word of mouth to for many generations, so we can assume that the color naming used in the riddles reflects the vocabulary of lexical units, which is more ancient compared with the current state of the language. Meanwhile, metaphor is the spirit of a riddle. This is what makes riddles interesting, and distinguishes them from other types of oral folklore [9]. To solve a riddle is to find a real-life equivalent for metaphoric images. One of the common ways of creating riddle metaphors is color matching. Therefore, exploring color words in the Khanty riddles allows us to reveal the cognitive, pragmatic and cultural factors of the language functioning. The research highlights the role of color terms in the formation of the linguistic worldview, as well as conceptualizes and defines the place of the color vocabulary in the cognitive process.

## 3. Problem statement

In recent decades considerable attention has been devoted to topics related to color linguistics as well as theoretical approaches and practical methods for extracting color terms, resulting in a large number of publications. The wide spectrum of color linguistics approaches represented

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in this paper includes the basic color term theory of Berlin and Kay, the typological evolutionary scale of Kay and Maffi, the Vantage Theory of MacLaury, conceptual semantics of Jackendoff and Nikanne, historical linguistics, ethnolinguistics, the Natural Semantic Metalanguage of Wierzbicka, approaches examining the focal colors across eleven languages affiliated to Uralic and Indo-European languages of Mari Uusküla, David Bimler, philological and etymological analyses of color terms of Nganasan, one of the least documented Uralic languages by Sándor Szeverényi and various graph visualization techniques [10-19].

To identify psychologically significant colors, various experiments have been performed and attempts have been made to create a system of basic colors. The classic reference point in the color semantics study was the work by American linguists B. Berlin and P. Kay [10]. Based on the data derived from 98 languages they came to the following conclusions. Despite the fact that different languages in their dictionaries contain a different number of basic color terms, the total universal word-stock consists of the same 11 basic colors: black, white, red, yellow, green, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, grey. Berlin and Kay have also established that even if there are less than 11 basic colors in the language, in this case there are strict rules as to what basic colors exist in this language. All languages have color terms for white and black basic colors. Thus, if there are only three basic color terms in the language, then the third one is necessarily the term for the red color. The researchers have built the following hierarchy of 11 primary colors: the first stage – black, white; the second – red; the third – green, yellow; the fourth – blue; the fifth – brown; the sixth – purple, pink, orange, gray [10]. This proves yet again that there are subjective color perceptions in different languages. Each language segments the reality in different ways, therefore Kasevich notes that ‘some peoples distinguish, for instance, three colors, while others — seven, etc.’ [20].

According to the Khanty language data, there are some papers studying the issues of color symbols in traditional culture, clothing, ornamental patterns, methods of color terms [21-25]. Besides, some aspects of the color symbolism are touched upon by scientists in the studies of other topical issues of Khanty Philology and traditional culture [26-28]. The researchers claim that the Khanty language has plenty of color terms and shades. For instance, the Khanty of the Lower Ob have 17 names for white color, where 16 terms are descriptive, and 10 names out of 11 color terms are descriptive for black and red color [29]. Descriptive terms have many expressions indicating colors of objects, real-world phenomena, for instance, light and sky are *white*; the soil and charcoal are *black*, etc. Reindeer herding is one of the main activities of the Khanty, so it is not surprising that a wide color spectrum emerges for reindeer color terms [30, 31]. For example, A. Shiyanova distinguishes six tints of white color with regard to the reindeer color ranging from deep white to white-gray: *ворча* → *ъарава* → *нави/нөви* → *шовэр хорни* → *хэлэв хорни* → *хяттар*. [25].

According to Sokolova and Taligina, the basic colors in the Khanty language are white, black and red, and the

colors constitute the so-called color triad, which corresponds to the tripartition of the Universe in the Khanty culture [29, 32]. K.P. Cheremisina claims, that *The Upper world*, inhabited by gods, is associated with the *white* color; the World of People or *the Middle world* — with *red*, and the World of the Dead, *the Lower world* — with the *black* color. However, in the recently published ‘Dialectological Atlas of the Uralic languages spoken in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous district’ the authors, who consider the features of the color terms systems organization, come to the conclusion that ‘in fact, only black and white are basic colors in the Khanty language. According to N.B. Koshkareva et. al, other names are mostly based on associations with different objects of the real world, and serve as a reference for following color terms: red for blood, blue for the sky, green for grass, and yellow for autumn leaves or bile [33]. V.I. Spodina also points out that ‘in the Khanty language, there are only two words indicating color, and they have their own independent color naming: white and black’ [23].

## 4 Research methods

The study data are riddles extracted from different riddle books written in the Khanty language and translated into Russian [9, 26, 34-35]. With the method of continuous sampling the authors revealed 59 riddles, which were then grouped according to color. The data in the present study were gathered via questionnaires and interviews complementing each other. Five native Khanty speakers were given a pre-questionnaire to elicit information about their age, gender, the number of languages they spoke, the level of competency in Khanty (minimal, functional, proficient), dialect (see Appendix 1 for pre-questionnaire). Four of five respondents are women and the mean age of the sample is 45 (in years). The level of language proficiency is functional for four people of five (one respondent has a high level of language proficiency), and all interviewees speak Kazym dialect. This study followed a four-step cycle suggested by researchers. At the first stage, we determined the main objectives of the study. At the second stage, we formulated the most appropriate methods, tools and strategies to achieve the goals. The third stage involved data gathering. Khanty native speakers were given riddles to solve. Recipients were expected to identify color words and translate them into Russian. The researchers paid special attention to the way 1) Khanty native speakers managed to translate the color name into Russian; 2) the interviewees solved the riddle; it was important to elicit those associations and metaphors containing the color that facilitated solving the riddle.

## 5. Findings

Upon the experiment, the following names of colors were revealed in the Khanty riddles: ‘*нуви*’ white – 11, ‘*ниты*’ black – 10, ‘*вўрты*’ red – 13, ‘*ниты вўрты*’ dark red – 2, ‘*вўрты вўцлэм*’ literally red-and-yellow – 2, ‘*вусты*’ green – 1, ‘*вўцлэм*’ yellow – 1, ‘*сорни, сорнең*’

gold/goldish – 11, ‘*ицл вух*’ silver – 8. Based on the results of the revealed colors, we plotted a color frequency chart (see Figure 1.) as well as a number of tables containing examples of riddles, color words and associations that helped the speakers to solve the riddle (see Tables 1-7). In some riddles, one comes across two colors simultaneously, for instance: ‘*нуви сухэл дэрниийэл, питы сухэл ювэрицийэл. (хятэл на ат)*’ - White cloth opens up, black cloth curls up. Answer to the riddle - day and night.

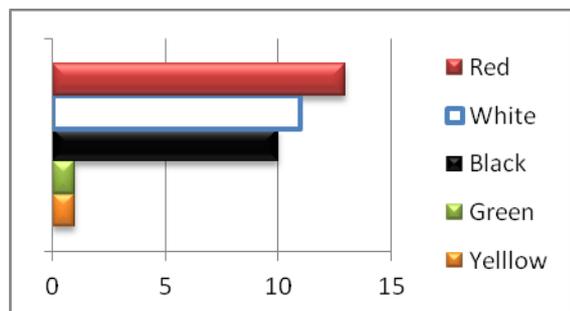


Fig. 1. A color frequency chart.

### 5.1 Питы/Black

The adjective ‘*питы*’ is translated into Russian as *black, dark* [36]. In the collections of riddles, this word is always translated as *black*, but native speakers translate it as *dark* in most cases.

Table 1. *Питы/Black*

Riddle	Comment
1. <i>Питы милпи хэт яу хө и лыпийән вөдлэт. (цйраька)</i> Sixty men in black hats live in one house. (matches)	‘ <i>Питы милпи</i> ’ means a black hat.
2. <i>Питы нүнәп моләпици вөнт хұват хътыйәл. (нүпи)</i> Black fur coat in the wood hangs around. (bear)	‘ <i>Питы</i> ’ means dark, since one cannot call fur <i>black</i>
3. <i>Нуви сухэл дэрниийәл, питы сухэл ювэрицийәл. (хятэл на ат)</i> White cloth opens up, black cloth curls up. (day and night)	‘ <i>нуви</i> ’ means light, ‘ <i>питы</i> ’ means dark
4. <i>Питы цйхэрән и хө сорни вўлылад дўнәтәл. (тыләци)</i> At the black cemetery, a reindeer herdsman counts his golden deer. (crescent)	
5. <i>Шума долъты сйухәм хуца кашәдү кўрәм вўтән дўнты</i>	‘ <i>Питы вой - вўрты вой</i> ’ means parallelism, often used in speech; ‘ <i>питы</i>

<i>питы вой өуха, вўрты вой өуха ликәмләп. (хөнтәп тосәт күт).</i> On a steep hill, you cannot make a step without getting into a hole of a black beast, a hole of a red beast. (gaps in the stairs)	<i>вой’ dark beast</i> often means a sable or other fur-bearing animals. ‘ <i>Вўрты вой</i> ’ - <i>red animal</i> , means a fox, a squirrel.
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Riddle no. 5: the answer is gaps in the stairs. Patterns on traditional fabrics (fur, suede, birch bark) are, first of all, an alternation of dark-light areas; light-dark patterns that are typical for Ob Ugrians’ ornaments. For instance, fur boots decorated with alternating dark and white stripes are called ‘*хәләп вей*’ (literally: boots with chinks), ‘*вей*’ means footwear with a boot top. The light-dark alteration, in turn, is associated with the profile wood and bone carving (thickly – empty, chink – wood is ripple, steps). Thus, there appeared the riddles about the stairs, the hole means chink. In general, ripples and steps in all kinds of figurative expressions are very important in the Khanty traditional culture. For instance, in folklore, the river banks is compared to the back of a lizard or mythical creature – ‘*vesy*’: with a lizard back, rippled river bank, rippled river banks with ‘*vesys*’ backs?’ ‘*Сәрен(ә) шйшпи(йә) шйшпәу(ә) репан(ә)*’ is a typical formula in which the adjective ‘*сәрен(ә)*’ has two meanings: on the one hand, it is a boot top of footwear meaning the high river bank, like the boot top; on the other hand, it is the alteration of dark and white stripes on winter shoes made of reindeer skin, resembling a stepped river bank [26].

### 5.2 Нуви, нэви/white

The adjective ‘*нуви*’ is translated into Russian as *white, light, colorless, light gray, clear, pale, lunar, silver* [36]. In books of riddles this word is always translated as *white*. Interviewees translated it as *light* and *white* when referring to coat pattern, color of fabric, thread, clothing.

Table 2. *Нуви, нэви/white*.

Riddle	Comment
6. <i>Аснган-лорнган шопи нуви сухум лэр таласмал. (Енгк лонгхемум хол)</i> White thread winds across the river-lake. (ice cracked on the river)	‘ <i>Нуви</i> ’ means white (thread).
7. <i>Нуви сәхәп хо карты шоркана, вух шоркана питмад. (Сос)</i> A man in white sakha (fur coat) got into an iron snare, silver snare. (ermine)	‘ <i>Нуви</i> ’ means white, because it refers to fur color.
8. <i>Пәтләм хотән хотхәр хұват нуви нўл хятәл. (тыләци)</i> A white piece is moving on	‘ <i>Нуви</i> ’ means light, which is opposed to ‘ <i>нәтләм</i> ’ meaning dark.

the floor of a dark house. (crescent)	
9. Пӱвэр вӱхи, нэви вӱхи ляль ях эй ланӱтат ӱпӱтлат рӱтькӱмтӱлат. (кӱнчӱт) Bronze-faced, silver-faced warriors cut their hair every week. (nails)	In this case, the phrase ‘нэви вӱхи’ is translated as silver.

### 5.3 Вӱрты/Red

The adjective ‘вӱрты’ is translated into Russian as *red, ginger, rosy* [36]. In most cases, it is translated into Russian as *red*. In two examples, a combination of ‘ниты вӱрты’ (literally, *dark red*) is used, which translates as *dark red* in one case, in the other – *burgundy*. In two examples, a combination of ‘вӱрты вӱцлӱм’ is used (literally, *reddish yellow*), which is translated into Russian as *red-and-yellow* in one case, in the other as *scarlet*. In one example, ‘вӱрты’ translates as *ginger* when the riddle means a fox.

**Table 3.** Вӱрты/Red.

Riddle	Comment
10. Сер вӱнт, мур вӱнт сӱнӱн лӱйнау пӱлат вӱрты милли ай икилеуки лӱль. (тулӱх) In the heart of the forest, there is a small man as tall as a finger wearing a red hat. (a mushroom)	If a woman or man wearing a red kerchief/hat is sitting in the middle of the forest, then it is a mushroom; if a woman wearing a red (reddish yellow) kerchief is sitting in the middle of a swamp, then it is a cloudberry. This association is transmitted through the color itself, though they do not describe cloudberry as red or yellow in the Khanty language, but it is ‘цэна’х – unripe, raw and ‘лулау’ – ripe, literally, molten.
11. Нӱрум кӱтупн вӱрты ухиамӱн ими омӱсӱ (мӱрӱх) A woman with a red kerchief is sitting in the middle of the swamp. (a cloudberry)	The respondents failed to solve this riddle, as it is uncommon for a tree to be referred to with color; perhaps, it is a loan translation from Russian; this riddle may be asked about mushrooms, as respondents do not associate red with such berries as raspberry or rose hip.
12. Вӱнт лӱтийӱн вӱрты ухиамӱн нӱ лӱль. (хон йӱх) A woman with a red kerchief is standing in the forest. (an aspen)	
13. Йӱх сӱм хӱват вӱрты вухсар хӱхӱл. (цухал тӱт) A red fox is running along the tree pith. (a burning fireplace)	‘Вӱрты’ literally means red although it is translated into Russian as ginger, because a fox is supposed to be red in the Russian lingual culture.
14. Хушанӱн йӱх	In this case, ‘вӱрты’ is

хӱват вӱрты вухсар нух хӱхӱл. (цухал тӱт) Up the hollow tree, a red fox is running. (fire in the hearth).	translated as red (fox), where red color is associated with fire and burning.
15. Сер вӱнт, мур вӱнт сӱнӱн вӱрты вӱцлӱм ухиам пунӱм ими омӱсӱ. (мӱрӱх) In the heart of the forest, a woman wearing a red and yellow kerchief is sitting. (a cloudberry)	‘Вӱрты’ – red, ‘вӱцлӱм’ – yellow; it turns out that a compound adjective ‘вӱрты вӱцлӱм’ – reddish-yellow is translated in different ways in various collections of Khanty riddles: in one case, as <i>red-and-yellow color</i> , in another – <i>scarlet color</i> (referring to cloudberry in both cases).
16. Ёхам кӱтӱпӱн нуви порхайӱн, ниты вӱрты тӱшиӱн ики лӱль. (сӱмӱт вӱш) In the midst of the pine forest, a man with a beard wearing a dark red reindeer skin overcoat is standing. (birch fungus)	‘Ниты вӱрты’ literally translates as dark red, and the Khanty-Russian dictionary defines it as burgundy [36]. One of the interviewees said that “they say ‘нитышак вурты’ referring to dark red, where ‘нитышак’ means slightly dark, in songs it is abbreviated to ‘нитышак’ or ‘нитышан’”. Interviewees failed to solve this riddle, as they had associations with fly agaric (white with red spots), white moss with red berries growing on it; they commented that ‘there is no birch in the pine forest’.

### 5.4 Вусты/blue and green

In the Khanty language, just one word is used to denote *blue* and *green* colors, it is ‘вусты’.

**Table 4.** Вусты/blue and green.

Riddle	Comment
17. Вусты пӱсты йирӱн ут ёш эвӱтӱл, кӱр ваньцӱ. (Песлы). A green thing with sharp edges cuts a hand and leg. (a sedge)	When speaking about the grass, they use ‘вусты’, for instance, ‘вусты турн’ means green grass. Speaking of trees, they usually do not refer to colors but shapes, e.g., a straight tree, a crooked tree, though there is an expression ‘ниты вӱнт’ for dark forest. This riddle was solved with the help of the color term (green, color of grass) and quality of grass-cutting.

In the folklore, the expressions are typical: ‘Вурна(йә) нюлы хәнишан(ә) вәнтсәв(ә), Вурна(йә) нюлы(йә) эляң(ә) вәнтсәв(ә)’. Т.А. Moldanova says that ‘our forest is motley like a crow's beak’, which reproduces an image of the Urals foothill with boulders covered with lichen, and is compared to a crow's beak, which is framed by a fluff, and at the same time with the dark grey color of the bird [26]. Speaking of the river, they do not refer to colors either; there is an established folklore epithet ‘ювра йиукуп’, that may be translated into Russian as *with winding waters*, but there are expressions ‘нуви йиукуп’ – light water, ‘вурты йиукуп’ in folk texts – literally, red water, i.e., blood-red water. In some cases, the informants believe that the water is red, as it flows from the swamps (that is, saturated with iron, swamp ore i.e. limonite).

### 5.5 Вүцлэм/Yellow

The adjective ‘вүцлэм’ is translated as *yellow* [36].

**Table 5.** Вүцлэм/Yellow.

Riddle	Comment
18. Сәр вәнт, мур вәнт сүңән <b>вүцлэм</b> нөйән хә ләль. (сүмәт лыпәт хойса) In the heart of the forest, a man in yellow woolen clothes is standing. (yellow birch leaves)	‘сүмәт лыпәт хойса’ – literally, <i>birch leaves slightly touched by frost</i> , therefore, yellow. The riddle was solved by color (yellow) – birch in autumn is yellow. The yellow color is also found in folklore texts to describe the forest: ‘вүцлүм(ә) нәйи(йә) хәлаң(ә) ям тәл(ә)’. ‘Мүя(йә) йувант(ә)лүмәл(ә) ици(йә)?’ [26].

### 5.6 Сорни, сорнеу

The adjective ‘сорни (сорнеу)’ is translated as *golden* [36]. The golden color is at the top of the color hierarchy related to the spiritual world, as it symbolizes the highest sacredness and value. It characterizes the characters of the divine pantheon and their zoomorphic incarnations. Speaking about variation in the use of words ‘сорни’ and ‘сорнеу’ some informants noted that ‘сорни’ is used when value or the highest status is meant, for example: ‘Сорни Торум’ (literally – gold Torum), ‘Сорни най’ (literally – gold goddess), that is, he (she) himself (herself) is gold, absolute value, one cannot say ‘сорнеу Торум’ or ‘сорнеу най’, but they say ‘сорнеу әңг’ – golden girl, ‘сорнеу ләйт’ – golden ring. In most examples, ‘сорни (сорнеу)’ is translated as *gold*, and in one case as *divine*.

**Table 6.** Сорни, сорнеу.

Riddle	Comment
19. <b>Сорни</b> хәнишан йицк аҗты йухан	‘хәнишан’ means motley, multicolor, so ‘сорни’ cannot

шәни, ас шәни мәнтәм. (нүл йүх) A yoke with gold patterns is laid down across rivers (a rainbow). 20. Ланат йитни <b>сорнең</b> сув торма лосла, торма ан ләпл на иллы менлал, кусы лак иты. (нул юх) If one puts a seven-color golden trochee vertically, then there is not enough space in the sky, and it will bend like an arc. (a rainbow)	be translated as <i>golden</i> but <i>valued, divine</i> . The riddle is solved by the shape (yoke) and place (across the river). ‘Сорнең’ means valuable, sacred staff, i.e. it is not associated with color, but with shape: a bent sacred staff.
21. Торум кимл <b>сорнең</b> вух тунты йош. (хосъл) – At the edge of the sky, there is a golden birch bark road. (horizon.)	
22. Сәмн ан ныты вән лор кимәл сәй панәт <b>сорнеу</b> пернайт. There are golden crosses on the sandy stretch of the vast lake. (footprints of a crane)	‘Сорнеу’ means valuable, divine; the crane is the incarnation of a god.
23. Юхан хонәүән <b>сорнеу</b> сәукеп ләрийәл. (нүпи пухие). A golden rattle is rolling along the river bank. (a bear.)	The riddle uses the expression ‘сорнеу сәукеп’ – golden rattle. Here the word golden means the highest value, divinity.

Riddle no. 23 (about the bear) is closely related to a mythological motif, according to which the supreme god Torum sends Pelym God son, whom the former affectionately calls: ‘Мәшак(ә) луват(ә) сорни(йә) пухем(ә), Мәшак(ә) луват(ә) сорни(йә) похләм(ә)’ – fist-sized golden son, fist-sized golden clew. This “golden clew” is called in other tender words: ‘сорни(йә) күвал(ә)’ – “golden bell”, ‘сорни(йә) пүтал(ә)’ – “golden clod”, ‘сорнеу(ә) сәлпи(йә) айла(йә) пушах(ә)’ – “little nestling looking like gold”, ‘мәшак(ә) луват(ә) айла(йә) шуци(йә)’ – “fist-sized little baby” [26].

### 5.7 Щәл вух (сәлән)

The phrase ‘щәл вух’, or just ‘щәл’ and ‘вух’ are translated into Russian as *silver*. According to the Khanty-Russian dictionary ‘щәл вух’ means a silver coin, ‘вух’ – money, silver. In the dictionary, the expression is

translated as *silver* ‘*цел вух елэн*’, but it is not used in the riddles [36]. The informants translated it as *with a silver surface*. Informants report that ‘*цел вух*’ translates literally as *liquid money*. It is supposed that the word ‘*вух* (*вах*)’ used to denote metal meaning *value*. In the riddles, there is a comparison to silver (window, icicles, moonlight rays).

**Table 7.** *Цел вух (елэн).*

Riddle	Comment
24. <i>Ишнн илти цел вух.</i> Silver coin is hanging in front of the window. (an icicle)	‘ <i>Цел вух</i> ’ means liquid money, this is how silver is described.
25. <i>Хот нунэл цел вух тэхты. (ишнн)</i> There is silver deerskin on the house wall. (a window)	‘ <i>цел вух</i> ’ means shiny, ‘ <i>тэхты</i> ’ means deerskin.
26. <i>Пятлам хот сунэн карты лөйтэу не, вух лөйтэу не ёнтэсэл. (Тылэи, ёи, хатэл ёи)</i> A woman with iron, silver rings is sewing in a dark corner of the house. (moon and sun rays)	‘ <i>Вух</i> ’ means iron, and an addition of ‘ <i>цел</i> ’ makes it silver.

## 6. Conclusion

The main findings of the study include the following:

1. The concept of color linguistics as an independent scientific paradigm in modern linguistics is acquiring more and more distinct features. A circle of scientists has been formed who regularly discuss the problems of color names in various aspects and directions, a sufficient amount of scientific literature has been accumulated on the description of color in various languages, there is constant discussion of these problems at relevant scientific events.
2. The considered linguocultural characteristics of color terms and color perception confirm that in the Khanty riddles there are more color terms that go beyond the 3 basic colors. The secondary nomination of the mentioned units has such a developed structure that it cannot be covered by the framework of one research work. Reconsideration of meanings in the cognitive process proceeds in accordance with the associative nature of human thinking and the logical form of functional transfer of names according to similarity of external or internal features, namely color (the mushroom and berry are red), color and shape (golden, valuable means divine rainbow i.e. yoke), as well as color and place (red man in the forest, red woman in the swamp).
3. In the future, a study of lexical properties of color terms seems appropriate to be conducted in the framework of the activity approach to the language, including a study of the location of color vocabulary in cognitive processes and the role of color terms in shaping the linguistic worldview in adults and children.

4. Interlanguage (Russian – Khanty) comparison of the content aspect of the words for color terms shows universality (*red hat, man* means *mushroom*) of many processes in the studied languages alongside with a different degree of their actualization and an unequal set of lexical color units, which is primarily due to ethnic, social and cultural factors (‘*rainbow*’ means golden - ‘*a golden staff*’ is put in the sky).

5. The Khanty language has its own ethnically preferred colors, possessing the quality of dominance and ethnic priority, which serve to convey ethnic feelings when it comes to things most sacred for a person/people, i.e. idealization takes place in color, for example, a bear is a golden rattle (sacred animal), golden crosses mean crane footprints (a crane is the incarnation of a god). The present study is an attempt at developing a hypothesis that certain color terms are extremely important for this ethnic group; in the Khanty culture, it is *gold* meaning *valuable, sacred*.

Thus, the conducted study shows that color terms are complex lexical units of language and speech, whose meanings are determined to a large extent by the historical and cultural experience of certain linguistic groups.

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#### **Appendix 1. Pre-questionnaire for native Khanty speakers.**

*Instruction: Please write down your responses to the following questions:*

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender? (Male/female)
3. What languages do you speak?
4. What is your level of competency of the Khanty language? (minimal, functional, proficient)
5. What is your dialect?