SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF "BLACK AND WHITE" IDIOMS IN GREEK, POLISH, RUSSIAN AND SERBIAN

Panagiotis ASIMOPOULOS
Hellenic Army Academy

Abstract

The complex nature of color nuances manifested as interactive resultant between the light source, the colored object and the human brain reasonably constitutes an extremely interesting interdisciplinary subject. On the basis of common physiological parameters, appreciable psychospiritual specificities, but also divergent cultural features of their receivers at the linguistic level, the color terms are approached through symbolic naming and conventional codes. The wide range of color names is justified accordingly: the element in question reflects the essential conflation of subjective decoding and metaphorical connection of the visual stimuli. At the same time the polymorphism of semantic representations that are associated with the color vocabulary embodies the sensor order of society, the historical experiences and the fundamental idiosyncratic principles. Within the theoretical framework of contrastive linguistics this paper aims to analyze idioms involving two dominant neutral colors, white and black, since it is based on characteristic examples of colloquial Greek and three modern Slavic languages: Polish, Russian and Serbian.

Drawing upon reliable material excerpted from monolingual and bilingual, general, etymological and phraseological dictionaries we present the semantic approach to their reasonably existing interlingual anisomorphism as arises from autonomous idioms and from combinatorial structures. So on the one hand the intended highlighting of their semantic similarities and differences is achieved, while on the other hand we emphasize the catalytic role of national stereotypes in constructive reception of extralinguistic reality.

Key words: *color, white, black, semantics, phraseologisms*

Résumé

La nature complexe des nuances de couleur qui se manifestent comme résultante interactive entre la source de lumière, l'objet coloré et le cerveau humain constitue raisonnablement un sujet interdisciplinaire extrêmement intéressant. En base des paramètres physiologiques habituels, des particularités psycho-spirituelles qui peuvent être évaluées, mais aussi des caractéristiques culturelles divergentes des récepteurs au niveau linguistique, les termes désignant des couleurs sont approchés par les noms symboliques et les codes conventionnels. La large gamme de noms de couleurs est par conséquent justifiée: l'élément en cause reflète la fusion essentielle de la décodification subjective et de la connexion métaphorique des stimuli visuels. En même temps, le polymorphisme des représentations sémantiques qui sont associées au lexique des couleurs incarne l'ordre sensoriel de la société, les expériences historiques et les principes fondamentaux idiosyncratiques. Dans le contexte théorique de la linguistique contrastive, le travail vise l'analyse des idiomes qui impliquent deux couleurs dominantes neutres, blanc et noir, vu qu'il se fonde sur des exemples spécifiques à la langue grecque colloquiale et aux trois langues slaves modernes: le polonais, le russe et le serbe.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

En base des matériaux fiables extraits des dictionnaires monolingues et bilingues, généraux, étymologiques et phraséologiques, on présente l'approche sémantique de l'anisomorphisme interlinguistique, tel que résulté des idiomes autonomes et des structures combinatoires. Donc, on veut, d'une part, mettre en évidence les similitudes et les différences sémantiques et, d'autre part, accentuer le rôle catalyseur des stéréotypes nationaux dans la réception constructive de la réalité extralinguistique.

Mots-clés: *couleur, blanc, noir*, *sémantique, phraséologie*

1. Introductory remarks

In each time period and social structure colors play a remarkable role in the vivid depiction of universal reality. With their polyhedral semantic structural elements they reflect the emotional fluctuations and the spiritual manifestations of speakers. Indeed this ascertainment is true in spite of the impressively disparate cultural specificities of every nation, since the linguistic homogeneity of colors functions as a common denominator and additionally the colors "everywhere and always continue to be strongholds of symbolic thought"[1].

Since the interpretation of the language expressions serves as "a reflection of the vision and perception of the world"[2], we become aware of the fact that the symbolism of colors exerts a catalytic influence on the formation of the phraseology wealth in each language. Besides, in this way in the considered language codes (Greek, Polish, Russian, Serbian) we should observe the high frequency and exceptional polymorphy of such phrasemes which constitute the main subject of this paper.

Modern dictionaries, descriptive and phraseological, monolingual and bilingual ones are used as the primary bibliographic database. The selection of the most illustrative cases is made according to semantic criteria and aims at the presentation of the basic similarities and the most interesting deviancies. Therefore this attempt can't be identified with a complete four language review of lexical phrases.

2. Comparative analysis of phraseologisms

By the method of contrastive examination we approach the text corpus that includes a total of 310 lexical units, namely 65 Greek; 76 Polish; 67 Russian; 102 Serbian.

Owing to an easier attentive reading we have distinguished all the idioms on the basis of their positive or negative semantic framework, while we accompany them with the necessary explanatory indications: G ⇨ Greek; P ⇨ Polish; R ⇨ Russian; S ⇨ Serbian; C ⇨ connotation; = literal translation; ~ meaning.

2.1. Positive nuance of the color *white* in idiomatic expressions

2.1.1.

P_1: w **biały** dzień = on the **white** day ~ apparent, obvious
P_2: do **białego** dnia = until the **white** day ~ until dawn
P_3: **biały** mazur = the **white** mazurka ~ the last dance performed at dawn
R: как **беый** день = like a **white** day ~ comprehensibly
S_1: у по (усред) **бела** дана = in the middle of the **white** day ~ evidently
S_2: изнети на **бели** дан = take out on the **white** day ~ publish, notify

[1] Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1997, p. 62.
[2] Ivanetić, 2002, p. 67.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

S_3: бели **дан** = the **white** day ~ obviously
C: brightness, transparency

2.1.2.

G: **άσπρος** σαν το χιόνι (γάλα, αλάβαστρο, περιστέρι) = **white** as snow (milk, alabaster, pigeon) ~ very white
P: **biały** jak śnieg (mleko, alabaster, gołąb) = **white** as snow (milk, alabaster, pigeon)
R: **белый** как снег (молоко, алебастр, голубь) = **white** as snow (milk, alabaster, pigeon)
S: **бео** као снег (млеко, алабастер) = **white** as snow (milk, alabaster)
C: purity, chastity

2.1.3.

G_1: τα **άσπρα** μαλλιά = the **white** hair
G_2: οι **άσπρες** τρίχες = the **white** hair
P: aż do **białej** skroni = until the **white** temple ~ to the old age[3]
R: **белые** волосы = the **white** hair
S_1: **бела** брада = the **white** beard
S_2: **беле** године = the **white** years
S_3: **бела** глава = the **white** head
S_4: плести **беле** власи = knit **white** hairs ~ get old
C: the experience of old age

2.1.4.

G_1: το **λευκό** προσωπικό = the **white** staff ~ the professional medical personnel who provide care to patients
G_2: η **λευκή** ρόμπα = the **white** robe ~ the medical staff
P_1: **biały** personel = the **white** staff ~ the licensed physicians and healthcare providers
P_2: **biała** niedziela = the **white** week ~ the week when doctors visit residents of isolated areas
P_3: **biały** marsz = the **white** parade ~ the strike of medical manpower[4]
R: **белые** халаты = the **white** bathrobes ~ the doctors and the nurses
C: the employees in health institutions

2.1.5.

P: **białe** kołnierzyki = the **white** collars ~ the salaried professionals
R: **белые** воротнички = the **white** collars ~ the workers in an office
S: **бели** оковратник = the **white** collar ~ the professional worker whose job doesn't involve manual labor
C: the educated workers who perform semi-professional office, administrative tasks

2.1.6.

G: οι **λευκές** συσκευές = the **white** appliances
P: **białka** technical = the **white** technique
R: **белая** техника = the **white** technique
S: **бела** техника = the **white** technique
C: the household electrical appliances (stove, refrigerator, washing machine)

2.1.7.

G: ο πρίγκιπας με το **άσπρο** άλογο = the prince with the **white** horse

[3] Pietrzak, Porwisz, 2006, p. 143.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 141.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

P: książę na **białym** koniu = the prince on the **white** horse
R: принц на **белом** коне = the prince on the **white** horse
S: принц на **белом** коњу[5] = the prince on the **white** horse
C: the perfect male partner

2.1.8.
G: ο **Λευκός** Οίκος = the **White** House
P: **Biały** Dom = the **White** House
R: **Белый** Дом = the **White** House
S: **Бела** Кућа = the **White** House
C: the official residence of the President of the United States

2.1.9.
P: w **białych** rękawiczkach = in **white** gloves
R: в **белых** перчатках = in **white** gloves
S: у **белим** рукавицама = in **white** gloves
C: discreetly, diplomatically

2.1.10.
G: οι **λευκοί** άνθρωποι = the **white** people
P: **biali** ludzie = the **white** people
R: **белые** люди = the **white** people
S: **бели** људи = the **white** people
C: people of the white race

2.1.11.
G: η **λευκή** σημαία = the **white** flag
P: **biała** flaga (chorągiew) = the **white** flag
R: **белый** флаг = the **white** flag
S: **бела** застава = the **white** flag
C: acceptance of defeat and willingness for negotiations

2.1.12.
G: η **λευκή** μαγεία = the **white** magic
P: **biała** magia = the **white** magic
R: **белая** магия = the **white** magic
S: **бела** магија = the **white** magic
C: the use of supernatural powers for good purposes

2.1.13.
G: η **λευκή** νύχτα = the **white** night
P: **biała** noc = the **white** night
R: **белая** ночь = the **white** night
S: **бела** ноћ = the **white** night
C_1: a night without sexual intercourse between husband and wife
C_2: a sleepless night
C_3: a night at the Arctic Circle

2.1.14.
P: **biały** sport = the **white** sport

[5] In folk tales the girls expect the ideal partner who will appear on a white horse (Vidović – Bolt, 2011, p. 58). Furthermore the white horse symbolizes goodness, while the prince indicates wealth (Pintarić, 2010, p. 47).

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

R: **белый** спорт = the **white** sport
S: **бели** спорт = the **white** sport
C: tennis

2.1.15.

G: **τα λευκά** αιμοσφαίρια = the **white** blood cells
P: krwinka **biała** = the **white** blood cells
R: **белые** кровяные клетки = the **white** blood cells
S: **бела** крвна зрнца = the **white** blood cells
C: the leucocytes that protect the body against infectious diseases

2.1.16.

G: η **λευκή** απεργία = the **white** strike
P: **biały** strajk = the **white** strike
R: **белая** забастовка = the **white** strike
S: **бели** штрајк = the **white** strike
C: the employees refuse to work during breaks or unpaid extended hours

2.1.17.

G: ο **λευκός** (**άσπρος**) νάνος = the **white** dwarf
P: **biały** karzeł = the **white** dwarf
R: **белый** карлик = the **white** dwarf
S: **бели** патуљак = the **white** dwarf
C: a stellar core remnant with low or medium mass

2.1.18.

G: η **Λευκή** Ολυμπιάδα = the **white** Olympics
R: **Белая** Олимпиада = the **white** Olympics
C: the Winter Olympic Games

2.2. The color *white* as a negative phraseological component

2.2.1.

P: **białe** plamy = the **white** point ~ the unexplored place
R: **белое** пятно = the **white** spot ~ the unclear element
S_1: **бели** свет = the **white** world ~ the unknown region
S_2: бежати (ићи) преко **белог** света = run away (go) through the **white** world
C: the undiscovered area[6]

2.2.2.

G: δε βλέπω **άσπρη** ημέρα = don't see a **white** day ~ never have a moment's peace
R: не видеть **белого** света = don't see a **white** light ~ suffer
S: не видети **бела** дана = don't see a **white** day ~ know no rest
C: experience constant failures

2.2.3.

P: rozbój w **biały** dzień = a robbery in the **white** day ~ daylight robbery
R: грабёж среди **бела** дня = a robbery in the middle of the **white** day ~ highway robbery
S: пљачка у сред **бела** дана = a robbery in the middle of the **white** day ~ something is too expensive

[6] The white color in idioms appears as a symbol of the unknown, the unexplored or even of the non-existent or unclear, provided that it is connected with its experiential treatment as a non-color (Colin, 2004, p. 37).

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

C: blatant injustice, unfair overcharging

2.2.4.

G: **άσπρος** σαν κιμωλία (πανί, χιόνι) = **white** as chalk (cloth, snow)

P: ktoś jest **biały** jak kreda (ściana, papier, płótno, chusta, śmierć) = somebody is as **white** as chalk (wall, canvas, cloth, death)

R: **белый** как мел (бумага, снег, смерть, лунь) = **white** as chalk (paper, snow, death, harrier)

S: **бео** као креда (зид, платно, крпа, смрт, иње) = **white** as chalk (wall, canvas, cloth, death, hoar)

C: the paleness of a patient or a physically – emotionally exhausted person

2.2.5.

G: ο **λευκός** θάνατος = the **white** death

P: **biała** śmierć = the **white** death

R: **белая** смерть = the **white** death

S: **бела** смрт = the **white** death

C: the death from drugs or excessive cold

2.2.6.

G: η **λευκή** σκόνη = the **white** powder

P: **biały** proszek = the **white** powder

R: **белый** порошок (враг) = the **white** powder (enemy)

S: **бели** прашак = the **white** powder

C: heroin

2.2.7.

P: **biała** gorączka = the **white** fever

R: **белая** горячка = the **white** fever

S: **бела** грозница = the **white** fever

C: the delirium tremens caused by withdrawal from alcohol

2.2.8.

P: widzieć **białe** myszki = see the **white** mouse

S_1: видети **беле** мишеве = see the **white** mice

S_2: ни **беле** не види = don't see even the **white**

C: have hallucinations due to intoxication

2.2.9.

G: όταν **ασπρίσει** ο κόρακας και γίνει περιστέρι = when the crow becomes white and turns into a pigeon

P: **biały** kruk = the **white** crow

R_1: **белая** ворона = the **white** crow

R_2: **белая** надежда = the **white** hope

S: **бела** врана = the **white** crow

C: the great rarity, something extremely unusual

2.2.10.

P: doprowadzać kogoś do **białej** gorączki = lead somebody to a **white** baking

R: довести до **белого** каления = bring to a **white** heat

S: доспети до **белог** усијања = arrive to the **white**-hot

C: enrage, bring to frenzy, exasperate

2.2.11.

G: μην του δείχνεις **άσπρο** δόντι = don't show him a **white** tooth

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

S: не помолити ни бела **зуба** = don't show even a **white** tooth
C: deliberate concealment

2.2.12.

G: ο **λευκός** γάμος = the **white** wedding
P: **biały** ślub = the **white** wedding
R: **белая** свадьба = the **white** wedding
S: **бели** брак = the **white** wedding
C: a typical marriage

2.2.13.

G: το εμπόριο **λευκής** σαρκός = the trade of **white** flesh ~ the human trafficking
P: **biała** niewolnica = the **white** slave girl
R: **белое** рабство = the **white** slavery
S: **бело** робље = the **white** slaves
C: the forced prostitution and the sexual exploitation of women and children

2.2.14.

G: η **λευκή** πανούκλα (πανώλη) = the **white** plague
P: **biała** zaraza = the **white** plague
R: **белая** чума = the **white** plague
S: **бела** куга = the **white** plague
C_1: tuberculosis
C_2: reduction in birth rates

2.3. The positive sign of the color *black* in phraseologisms

2.3.1.

G: η **Μαύρη** Ήπειρος = the **Black** Continent
P: **Czarny** Kontynent = the **Black** Continent
R: **чёрный** континент = the **Black** Continent
S: **црни** континент = the **Black** Continent
C: Africa

2.3.2.

G: η **μαύρη** ζώνη = the **black** belt
P: **czarny** pas = the **black** belt
R: **чёрный** пояс = the **black** belt
S: **црни** појас = the **black** belt
C: in the martial arts the black belt is the highest prize

2.3.3.

G: το **μαύρο** κουτί = the **black** box
P: **czarna** skrzynka = the **black** box
R: **чёрный** ящик = the **black** box
S: **црна** кутија = the **black** box
C: the black box is an airplane device that records the operation, the navigation and the communication of the crew with the control tower during the flights

2.4. The "dark" semantic side of the color *black*

2.4.1.

G: με τρώει το **μαύρο** χώμα = the **black** soil eats me
R: удар по-**черному** = a hit on the **black** soil
S_1: бити под **црном** земљом = be under the **black** soil

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

S_2: отићи под **црну** земљу = go under the **black** soil
S_3: покрила кога **црна** земља = the **black** soil covered somebody
S_4: помирити (саставити, сложити) кога са **црном** земљом = reconcile (assemble, set) somebody with the **black** soil ~ cause death
S_5: отерати (послати) кога у (под) **црну** земљу = drive away (send) somebody to (under) the **black** soil
C_1: the inevitability of death[7]
C_2: the place of the last residence[8]

2.4.2.

R: **чёрный** ворон = the **black** crow
S: **црна** Марица = **black** Marica
C: the police paddy wagon

2.4.3.

G: το **μαύρο** πουκάμισο = the **black** shirt
P: **czarna** koszulka = the **black** shirt
R: **чёрная** рубашка = the **black** shirt
S: **црна** кошуља = the **black** shirt
C: a supporter of Fascism

2.4.4.

G_1: η **μαύρη** σημαία = the **black** flag
G_2: τα **μαύρα** μαντάτα = the **black** news
P: **czarna** flaga = the **black** flag
R: **чёрный** флаг = the **black** flag of pirates
S_1: **црни** барјак (**црна** застава) = the **black** flag
S_2: **црна** звона = the **black** bells
S_3: **црна** птица = the **black** bird
S_4: **црне** вести = the **black** news
C: the herald of misery or the indication of death

2.4.5.

G_1: ντύνω στα **μαύρα =** put **black** clothes on somebody
G_2: φοράω **μαύρα =** wear **black** clothes
P: nosić się na **czarno**[9] = wear **black** clothes
R: одеваться в **чёрное** = be dressed in **black**
S_1: завити у **црно** кога = wreathe somebody in **black** ~ cause the death of somebody
S_2: обући се (завити се) у **црно** = get dressed (be shrouded) in black ~ feel grief because of death
S_3: бити у **црнини** = be in **black** clothes
S_4: носити **црнину** = wear **black** clothes
C: sadness because of somebody's death

2.4.6.

P: **czarna** msza = the **black** Mass ~ the lunch in honor of Satan
S: **црна** миса = the **black** Mass ~ the lunch in honor of Satan
C: the indication of the opposition to the Divine will

[7] Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1997, p. 87.
[8] Turk, Opašić, 2012, p. 268; Opašić, Gregorović, 2010, p. 11.
[9] Szczęk, 2013, p. 288.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

2.4.7.
G: η **μαύρη** μαγεία = the **black** magic
P: **czarna** magia = the **black** magic
R: **черная** магия = the **black** magic
S: **црна** магија = the **black** magic
C: a malicious result or an evil purpose is pursued with the help of demonic spirits
2.4.8.
G: ο **μαύρος** άγγελος = the **black** angel
P: **czarny** anioł = the **black** angel
R: **чёрный** ангел = the **black** angel
S: **црни** анђео = the **black** angel
C: Satan
2.4.9.
G_1: το **μαύρο** έτος (η **μαύρη** χρονιά) = the **black** year ~ the infelicitous year
G_2: η **μαύρη** μέρα = the **black** day ~ the bad day
G_3: η **μαύρη** Τρίτη (Πέμπτη) = the **black** Tuesday (Thursday) ~ the economic crash
G_4: η **μαύρη** Παρασκευή = the **black** Friday ~ the day of large discounts in shops
P_1: **czarny** czwartek = the **black** Thursday ~ the Stock Market Crash of 1929
P_2: **czarny** piątek = the **black** Friday ~ the day following Thanksgiving Day and the beginning of the Christmas shopping season
P_3: **czarna** godzina = the **black** year ~ the unlucky year
P_4: zostawić (odłożyć) coś na **czarną** godzinę = leave (put) something for the **black** year ~ put anything aside for a rainy day
R_1: **чёрный** день = the **black** day ~ the bad day
R_2: **чёрный** день наступил для кого = a **black** day has come for somebody ~ a bad day happens to somebody
S_1: **црни** петак = the **black** Friday ~ the Good Friday[10]
S_2: **црни** дан = the **black** day ~ a fatal day
S_3: **црни** дани = the **black** days ~ the days of economic inactivity
S_4: оставити за **црне** дане = leave for the **black** days ~ leave it for a rainy day
C: a difficult period, upcoming misery[11]
2.4.10.
G_1: τα **μαύρα** σύννεφα μαζεύονται = the **black** clouds are gathered ~ a threat or a danger is approaching
G_2: με ζώνουν τα **μαύρα** φίδια = the **black** snakes surround me ~ have a bad feeling
P: nad kimś gromadzą (pojawiły, zawisły) się **czarne** chmury = the **black** clouds gather (appear, hang down) over somebody ~ an ominous event comes
R: видеть (представлять) в **чёрном** свете = see (present) in the **black** light ~ be pessimistic, evaluate negatively
S_1: **црно** се пише коме = for somebody it writes **black** ~ somebody lacks distinguishing characteristics
S_2: **црни** облаци скупљају се над ким[12] = the **black** clouds are gathered over somebody

[10] The Holy (Great, Easter) Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Turk, Opašić, 2012, p. 271).
[11] Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1997, p. 89.
[12] Opašić, Gregorović, 2010, p. 271.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

~ something bad will happen to somebody
S_3: грануло коме **црно** сунце = the **black** sun has risen to somebody ~ an unhappy day is near
S_4: бити **црне** среће = be of **black** fortune ~ be unlucky
C: a feeling about misfortunes

2.4.11.

G_1: δουλεύω σαν τον **μαύρο** = work as a **black** man ~ work endlessly
G_2: δουλεύω στη **μαύρη** = work in **black** ~ work without insurance
P_1: **czarna** praca (robota) = the **black** labor ~ the uninsured work
P_2: **czarny** robotnik = the **black** worker ~ the hard worker
P_3: **czarny** chleb = the **black** bread ~ the laborious livelihood
P_4: pracować na **czarno** = work in **black** ~ be employed without insurance
P_5: zatrudniać kogoś na **czarno** = employ somebody in **black** ~ offer uninsured work
R: работать как **негр** = work like a **nigger**~ work very hard
S_1: **црни** хлеб = the **black** bread ~ the harsh working conditions
S_2: радити на **црно** = work in **black** ~ work in unsuitable conditions
S_3: запослити кога на **црно** = employ somebody in **black** ~ hire somebody illegally
C_1: extremely low income
C_2: degraded professional environment (exhausting working hours, uninsured labor)

2.4.12.

G_1: η **μαύρη** καρδιά = the **black** heart ~ the great distress
G_2: η **μαύρη** ψυχή = the **black** soul ~ the sneaky man
P_1: **czarny** character = the **black** character ~ the malevolent behavior
P_2: **czarne** podniebienie = the **black** palate ~ the dangerous and spiteful man
P_3: malować (przedstawiać, widzieć) coś w **czarnych** barwach (kolorach) = paint (present, see) something in black colors ~ tend to see the worst aspect of things
R_1: **чёрное** сердце = the **black** heart ~ the envious and wicked man
R_2: **чёрная** душа = the **black** soul ~ the insidious man
R_3: изобразить (рисовать) в **чёрных** красках (тонах) = present (paint) in **black** colors (tones) ~ present in a negative way
S_1: човек **црног** образа = the man of **black** cheek (honor) ~ somebody with bad reputation
S_2: бити **црн** пред очима = be **black** in front of the eyes ~ be infamous
S_3: метнути (увалити) коме **црн** комад (колач) у торбу = put (wrap) a **black** piece (sweet) in the bag ~ speak ill of
S_4: приказати (насликати) у **црним** бојама = display (paint) in **black** colors ~ demonstrate only the negative sides
C_1: malignant intentions
C_2: pessimistic attitude
C_3: disreputable man

2.4.13.

G_1: τα βάφω **μαύρα** = paint them in **black** ~ get frustrated, be disappointed
G_2: τα βλέπει όλα **μαύρα** και άραχνα ~ he sees everything **black** and unfortunate ~ be pessimistic
G_3: το **μαύρο** σενάριο = the **black** scenario ~ the worst version of a case
G_4: χύνω (ρίχνω, κλαίω με) **μαύρο** δάκρυ = pour (throw, cry with) **black** tear ~ sob uncontrollably

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

G_5: είμαι στις (έχω τις) **μαύρες** μου = be in (have) my **black** ~ have a face like a fiddle
G_6: έχω τα **μαύρα** μου τα χάλια = have my **black** mess ~ feel bad, look like hell
P_1: **czarna** melancholia (rozpacz) = the **black** melancholy (sadness) ~ the feeling of extreme dispair
P_2: **czarny** scenariusz = the **black** scenario ~ the adverse development of an event
P_3: patrzeć **czarno** na świat = see the world **black** ~ deal with the situation pessimistically
P_4: patrzeć przez **czarne okulary** = see through **black** glasses ~ be in despair
P_5: **czarne** myśli = the black thoughts ~ the negative mood dominates
R_1: **чёрные** думы (мысли) = the **black** thoughts ~ be in a bad mood
R_2: иметь **чёрного** осла = have a **black** donkey ~ be in trouble
S_1: бавити се (предати се) **црним** мислима = deal with (be given to) **black** thoughts ~ be down in the dumps
S_2: гледати **црно** = see **black** ~ have ominous premonitions
S_3: видети све **црно** = see everything **black** ~ be distressed
S_4: гледати на што кроз **црне** наочаре = see something through **black** glasses ~ have negative thoughts
S_5: приказати **црним** бојама = present with **black** colors ~ describe something unpleasant
S_6: **црне** мисли (слутње) = the **black** thoughts (suspicions) ~ bad state of mind or feeling
C: negativity, melancholic attitude[13]

2.4.14.

G: αγοράζω στη **μαύρη** (αγορά) = buy on the **black** (market) ~ buy in the illegal trade
P_1: **czarna** giełda = the **black** trade ~ the unlawful commercial activity
P_2: **czarny** rynek = the **black** market ~ the outlawed form of trade
R: **чёрный** рынок = the **black** market ~ the purchase or sale of prohibited or high taxed products
S_1: **црна** бурза = the **black** trade ~ the smuggling
S_2: **црно** тржиште = the **black** trade ~ the secret trade in goods or currencies
S_3: **црни** фонд = the **black** stock[14] ~ the money supply of unknown origin
C: illegitimate commercial business

2.4.15.

G_1: είμαι γραμμένος στη **μαύρη** λίστα = be written on the **black** list ~ somebody is being denied a privilege, service, recognition
G_2: είμαι γραμμένος στα **μαύρα** κιτάπια (κατάστιχα) = be written in the **black** casebook (ledgers) ~ be classified among somebody's enemies
P: **czarna** lista (księga) = the **black** list (book) ~ the list of people who are considered undesirable
R: находится в **чёрном** списке = be in the **black** list ~ be enlisted as a banned individual
S_1: **црна** листа (књига) = the **black** list (book) ~ the list of persons, organizations, institutions to which the compiler of the list intends to apply stricter criteria and measures
S_2: бити записан (уписан) у **црној** књизи (у **црну** књигу) = be registered in the **black** book ~ be disapproved
S_3: бити на **црној** листи = be on the **black** list ~ be not allowed to do something
C_1: opponents, rivals

[13] Colin, 2004, p. 90
[14] Pintarić, 2007, p. 180

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

C_2: financial defaulting customers[15]

2.4.16.

G: το **μαύρο** χιούμορ = the **black** humor ~ the humor that considers human existence as ironic and pointless, but somehow comic

P: **czarny** humor = the **black** humor ~ the humor that presents sad or tragic things in a funny way

R: **чёрный** юмор = the **black** humor ~ the distorted satire

S: **црни** хумор = the **black** humor ~ the sardonic humor

C: the snide sense of humor

2.4.17.

G: το **μαύρο** πρόβατο = the **black** sheep ~ the disreputable member of a group

P: **czarna** owca = the **black** sheep ~ somebody who stands out negatively from his environment and brings shame

R: **чёрная** овца = the **black** sheep ~ the person who causes embarrassment because of deviation from the accepted parameters

S: **црна** овца = the **black** sheep ~ somebody who differs from his environment

C: the individual who is stigmatized because of non-compliance with the social group norms

2.4.18.

G: η **μαύρη** σελίδα = the **black** page ~ the distressing occasion

P: **czarna** stronica = the **black** page ~ the disgraceful point of life or history

R: **чёрная** страница = the **black** page ~ the unfortunate event

S: **црна** страница = the **black** page ~ the bad timing of a case

C: the negative moment, the moral misconduct that stigmatizes somebody's ideal life or the success history of a nation

2.4.19.

G: ο **μαύρος** θάνατος = the **black** death ~ the devastating pandemics of plague

P: **czarna** śmierć = the **black** death ~ the deadly bubonic plague

R: **чёрная** смерть= the **black** death ~ the disastrous mortal disease (1347 – 1353)

S: **црна** смрт = the **black** death ~ the bubonic plague

C: a pestilence happened in the 14th century and ravaged Europe and Asia

2.4.20.

G: η **μαύρη** τρύπα = the **black** hole ~ (i) a massive object formed at the beginning of the universe; (ii) a thing that absorbs effort or money

P: **czarna** dziura = the **black** hole ~ (i) emptiness; (ii) an object in space with a very strong gravitational field; (iii) a difficult psychical situation

R: **чёрная** дыра = the **black** hole ~ the collapsed star, the black hole

S: **црна** рупа = the **black** hole ~ the celestial body whose second escape velocity is greater than the speed of light

C_1: the celestial body with large gravitational force

C_2: the budget deficit

2.4.21.

G: η **μαύρη** κωμωδία = the **black** comedy

P: **czarna** komedia = the **black** comedy

R: **чёрная** комедия = the **black** comedy

[15] Turk, Opašić, 2012, p. 273.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

S: **црна** комедија = the **black** comedy
C: the comedy that employs morbid situations in its plot, the comic style that makes light of serious subjects or taboo facts

2.4.22.

G: **μαύρος** σαν νύχτα (άνθρακας, κοράκι, πίσσα, κατράμι, φούμο, έβενος) = **black** as night (coal, raven, pitch, tar, lampblack, ebony)
P: **czarny** jak noc (węgiel, kruk, sadza, smoła, heban) = **black** as night (coal, raven, soot, tar, ebony)[16]
R: **чёрный** как ночь (уголь, вороново крыло, смоль) = **black** as night (coal, feather of hawk, tar)
S: **црн** као ноћ (угљен, гавран, гар, катран) = **black** as night (coal, raven, soot, tar)
C: very black, pitch dark

2.4.23.

R: **чёрная** кость = the **black** bone ~ the poor citizen in Russia in the 19th century
S_1: ни колико је **црно** под ноктом (испод нокта, иза нокта) = not as much is **black** under the nail (beneath the nail, behind the nail) ~ not at all, nothing[17]
S_2: бити дужан и **црно** иза нокта = owe even the **black** behind the nail ~ have exorbitant debts
S_3: **црни** циганин = the **black** gypsy ~ very poor man
C: the indigent man, the pauper person

2.4.24.

P: **czarny** koń = the **black** horse
R_1: **тёмная** лошадка = the **dark** mare
R_2: ставить на **тёмную** (**чёрную)** лошадку = put (wager on) the **black** (dark) mare ~ pin my hopes on something that apparently doesn't fulfill my expectations
R_3: делать ставку на **тёмную** (**чёрную**) лошадку = bet on the **black** (dark) mare
S: **црни** (**тамни**) коњ = the **black** (dark) horse
C: the person or the thing that unexpectedly won the rivals who initially were considered to have a better chance of winning

2.4.25.

P: **czarne** bractwo = the **black** fraternity ~ the Conventual Franciscans
S: **црни** фратри = the **black** brothers ~ the Greyfriars
C: The Order of Friars Minor Conventual

2.4.26.

G: ο **μαύρος** χρυσός = the **black** gold ~ the petroleum
P: **czarne** złoto = the **black** gold ~ the coal
R: **чёрное** золото = the **black** gold ~ the petroleum
S: **црно** злато = the **black** gold ~ the petroleum
C: the oily, flammable liquid mixture of various hydrocarbons used as fuel, benzene.

2.5. The colors white and black in phraseologisms

The two colors which are achromatic in the human perception often coexist in phrasemes, in spite of their function as characteristic carriers of intense contrast (white is mainly equated with the positive good, while black is the principal identification of the negative evil):

[16] Nowakowska, 2010, p. 123.
[17] "The phraseologism reminds the gesture with the nail of the thumb at which we touch the inside of the nail of the thumb, when we clean the dirt under this fingernail" (Pintarić, 2007, p. 180).

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

2.5.1.
G: **άσπρο** – **μαύρο**: **white** – **black** ~ the extreme contrasts, without intermediate states
P: ani **czarno** ani **biało** = neither **black** nor **white**
S: ни **бело** ни **црно** = neither **white** nor **black**
C: a detached attitude
2.5.2.
P: **czarno** na **białym** = **black** on **white** ~ admittedly
R: **чёрным** по **белому** = with **black** on **white** ~ precisely, definitely
S: **црно** на **бело** = **black** on **white** ~ intelligibly, explicitly
C: clearly, comprehensibly
2.5.3.
G: κάνω το **άσπρο μαύρο** = make the **white black** ~ portray truth inaccurately
P: (z)robić z **czarnego białe** = make the **white** from the **black** ~ prevaricate the events
R_1: принять **белое** за **чёрное** (**чёрное** за **белое**) = accept the **white** for **black** (the **black** for **white**) ~ interpret and perceive something as the opposite of what it really is
R_2: называть **белое чёрным** (**чёрное белым**) = call the **white black** (the **black white**) ~ present in a biased way
S: прогласити **црно** за **бело** = declare the **black** for **white** ~ distort the meaning
C: speak or act in an evasive way, bend the truth

3. Conclusions

The conducted contrastive analysis of phraseologisms containing the colors white and black in Modern Greek and three Slavic languages (Polish, Russian, Serbian) reveals an admirable identity in their conceptual manifestations.

In this way it is emphatically justified that "in the human consciousness the black color is burdened with negative connotation"[18], seeing that, with its symbolic background, it has a powerful influence either on the auspicious or the brooding nuance of the created lexical formations.

Provided that in the traditional interpersonal perceptions white reflects an affirmative semantic quality, the unpropitious experiences expressed through it are presented as an unexpected coincidence. Moreover, the almost equalized presence of positive and negative concepts based on that color variation arises as a common component.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Бирих, Александр, Мокиенко, Валерий, Степанова, Людмила, *Словарь фразеологических синонимов русского языка*, Ростов – на – Дону, Феникс, 1997.
Бирих, Александр, Мокиенко, Валерий, Степанова, Людмила, *Словарь Русской фразеологии: Историко-этимологический справочник*, Санкт – Петербург, Фолио – Пресс, 1998.
Вујанић, Милица et al., *Речник Српскога Језика*, Нови Сад, Матица Српска, 2007.
Новиков, Андрей, *Словарь перифраз русского языка*, Москва, Русский язык, 2004.
Ожегов, Сергей, Шведова, Наталия, *Толковый словарь русского языка*, Москва, Азъ, 1992.
Стевановић, Михаило et al., *Речник Српскохрватскога Књижевног Језика, књига прва* (А – Е), Нови Сад – Загреб, Матица Српска – Матица Хрватска, 1967.

[18] Hrnjak, 2002, p. 205.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)

Шанский, Николай, *Фразеология современного русского языка*, Москва, Высшая школа, 1985.

Αναστασιάδη-Συμεωνίδη, Άννα, *Αντίστροφο Λεξικό της Νέας Ελληνικής*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Ινστιτούτο Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών, 2002.

Μπαμπινιώτης, Γεώργιος, *Λεξικό της Νέας Ελληνικής Γλώσσας*, Αθήνα, Κέντρο Λεξικολογίας, 2002.

Bąba, Stanisław, Liberek, Jarosław, *Słownik frazeologiczny współczesnej polszczyzny*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002.

Boryś, Wiesław, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo literackie, 2005.

Chevalier, Jean, Gheerbrant, Alain, *Dictionary of Symbols*, London, Penguin Books, 1997.

Colin, Didier, *Rječnik simbola, mitova i legend,* Zagreb, Naklada Ljevak, 2004.

Drabik, Lidia et al., *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006.

Hrnjak, Anita *Crno-bijeli svijet frazeologije (na materijalu hrvatskih i ruskih frazema)*, in "Primijenjena lingvistika u Hrvatskoj – izazovi na početku XXI. stoljeća", 2002, Zagreb, Hrvatsko društvo za primijenjenu lingvistiku, p. 203-209.

Ivanetić, Nada, *More u frazeologiji*, in "Fluminensia", nr. 1/2002, Rijeka, Filozofski Fakultet, p. 67 – 84.

Kłosińska, Anna, Sobol, Elżbieta, Stankiewicz, Anna, *Wielki słownik frazeologiczny PWN z przysłowiami*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2005.

Matešić, Josip, *Frazeološki rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika*, Zagreb, Školska knjiga, 1982.

Menac, Antica, Pintarić, Neda, *Hrvatskosrpsko-poljski frazeološki rječnik*, Zagreb, Zavod za lingvistiku Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1986.

Menac, Antica, *Hrvatska frazeologija*, Zagreb, Knjigra, 2006.

Nowakowska, Alicja, *Relacja przeciwieństwa w porównaniach frazeologicznych*, in "Rozprawy Komisji Językowej", nr. 37/2010, Wroclaw, Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, p. 119 – 125.

Opašić, Maja, Gregorović, Maja, *Smrt u hrvatskoj frazeologiji*, in "Croatica et Slavica Iadertina", nr. 6/2010, Zadar, Odjel za kroatistiku i slavistiku, p. 55 – 72.

Pietrzak-Porwisz, Grażyna, *Semantyka bieli w języku polskim i szwedzkim*, in "Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis", nr. 123/2006, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, p. 135 – 154.

Pintarić, Neda, *Pragmatična značenja crne boje i njezinih nijansa u poljskome i hrvatskome jeziku,* in "Slavenska frazeologija i pragmatika", 2007, Zagreb, Knjigra, p. 178-182.

Pintarić, Neda, *Pragmatični svijet osjetilnosti (poljsko-hrvatska komparativna studija),* Zagreb, FF press, 2010.

Vidović – Bolt, Ivana, *Životinjski svijet u hrvatskoj i poljskoj frazeologiji I*, Zagreb, Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2011.

Vrgoč, Dalibor, Fink - Arsovski, Željka, *Hrvatsko – Engleski Frazeološki Rječnik*, Zagreb, Naklada Ljevak, 2008.

Wierzbicka, Anna, *The meaning of colour terms: semantics, culture and cognition,* in "Cognitive Linguistics", 1/1990, Berlin, De Gruyter, p. 99 – 150.

BDD-A27585 © 2017 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:26 UTC)