



A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY ON RED COLOR IDIOMS IN
ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN: CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY
IN FOCUS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study of color idioms is a flourishing academic area that has been attracting increasing attention over time. A color idiom or a color metaphor refers to a linguistic expression where a specific color is used symbolically to convey meaning beyond its literal representation, often carrying multiple layers of meaning. Color, as a universal category, encompasses cultural, historical, and ethnographic dimensions, containing psycholinguistic and socio-cultural information (Tali, 2022). Philip (2006) mentions that color plays a crucial role in language and communication, serving as a vehicle for metaphorical expression across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, symbolizing a variety of emotions, concepts, and cultural associations. Despite extensive research on color metaphors in language, there remains a gap in the literature regarding a comprehensive cross-cultural analysis of red color idioms, particularly between English and Russian (Opalin, 2021). In both languages, there are numerous idiomatic expressions featuring the word *red*, as it is one of the primary colors with deep psychological and cultural significance. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980a), different cultures have unique ways of understanding experiences through conceptual metaphors, which can lead to differences in languages. Research shows that the same idea can be expressed in various ways depending on the cultural context.

This study aims to address this gap by investigating the metaphorical usage of red color idioms in these languages through the lens of conceptual metaphor and metonymy theory. Building upon foundational works in cognitive semantics and pragmatics, this research seeks to uncover the underlying cognitive and cultural mechanisms that shape the conceptualization of red in idiomatic expressions (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2005). The application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to analyze these idioms provides a fresh perspective on understanding the cognitive motivations behind them (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Before Lakoff and Johnson's work, discourse on language and thought focused mainly on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, especially in the realm of color perception (Gibbs, 2017).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) originated from the seminal work "*Metaphors We Live By*" by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). It builds upon centuries of scholarship that views metaphor not merely as linguistic decoration but as a fundamental cognitive tool for structuring and interpreting reality. Influential philosophers in this lineage include Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Black, with contemporary overviews provided by Gibbs and Kövecses.

Since Lakoff and Johnson's publication, extensive research has refined, expanded, and sometimes challenged their original concepts, often with input from the authors themselves. It's important to note that modern CMT has evolved beyond the initial framework presented in *"Metaphors We Live By,"* a distinction often overlooked by its critics (Kövecses, 2017). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were also pioneers in highlighting the systematic nature of metonymic concepts, which indirectly refer to an entity by mentioning a related one.

Research Questions:

- How do English and Russian idiomatic expressions utilize the color red to convey abstract concepts?
- What cultural, cognitive and linguistic factors influence the metaphorical associations of red in idiomatic expressions?
- To what extent do similarities and differences exist between red color idioms in English and Russian?

By posing research questions focused on similarities, differences, and cultural influences, this study hypothesizes that despite differences, certain universal metaphorical associations of red will prevail across languages. The corpus for this study consists of idiomatic expressions containing the word "*red*," collected from authentic linguistic sources such as dictionaries, media, and online databases. The methodology involves categorizing and analyzing these expressions based on their metaphorical/metonymical domains and cultural connotations. The paper is structured as follows: beginning with an introduction that poses research questions along with hypothesis, novelty, importance, and theoretical framework; subsequent sections detail the theoretical background, which outlines the significance of red color idiomatic expressions and Conceptual Metaphor Theory; methodology, including how the idioms were selected, translated and analyzed. After that, findings and discussion, concluding with implications and future directions. This structured approach facilitates a systematic investigation of how red-based idioms reflect both universal cognitive patterns and culture-specific conceptualizations (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2006).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Research on Color Terms

Anthropologists have long tried to determine whether humans across different cultures and languages categorize colors in the same way (universalism) or if significant variations exist (relativism) (Steels & Belpaeme, 2005). Kay and McDaniell (1978) argued that perception drives language, particularly in the realm of colors. They suggested that cultural environments influence the cognitive frameworks used to name and categorize colors. This suggests a biological foundation for color categorization that is shared across cultures. This perspective counters the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which suggested that language shapes perception. Instead, it emphasizes the role of perception as foundational to linguistic expression (Kay & Kempton, 1984). Debi Roberson et al. (2005) and Boothroyd et al. (2012) extended this argument by introducing the concept of “*visual diets*,” which highlights the cultural affordances present in different environments. Visual diets refer to the specific visual stimuli that individuals are regularly exposed to within their cultural contexts. For example, cultures that are mostly surrounded by deserts may develop a keen ability to distinguish and name various shades of brown and yellow, while tropical cultures might focus more on differentiating greens and blues due to the prevalence of lush vegetation and water bodies. These environmental factors shape not only perception but also the linguistic categorization of colors, providing a tailored perceptual repertoire that reflects their surroundings. Gibson et al. (2017) further elaborated on this by introducing the concept of “*usefulness*,” describing it as the principal force driving color categorization. The cultural affordances behind color naming are deeply rooted in the visual environments and practical needs of each culture.

Terry Regier et al. (2007) identified three major trends in the literature on color systems:

Universal Basic Color Terms (BCTs): Berlin and Kay (1969) propose a universal pattern in how languages categorize and name colors, suggesting that there are eleven basic color terms that follow an evolutionary sequence. They argue that the number of color terms in a language reflects its cultural and technological development. These basic color terms are organized into six presumed stages of development. This suggests that there are primary color regions, with certain colors being more fundamental than others. For instance, a language wouldn't typically have terms for multiple shades of blue without also distinguishing between red and yellow (Dedrick, 1996). For example, English has 11 basic color terms, including red, yellow, green,

blue, black, white, gray, orange, brown, pink, and purple, while Slavic languages have 12, distinguishing between light blue and dark blue (O'Sullivan, 1993). Kay and McDaniel's (1978) perceptually-driven approach aligns with this universality by emphasizing the foundational role of perception in naming colors.

Relativist View: This perspective allows for cross-linguistic variation in color naming, acknowledging that different cultures may emphasize distinct aspects of the color spectrum based on their environmental and cultural needs (Griber et al., 2018).

Middle-Ground Approach: Proposed by Kimberly Jameson and Roy Goodwin D'Andrade (1997), this view suggests that while all colors are perceptually salient, some are more focal than others. This approach bridges the gap between universalist and relativist perspectives, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between perception and cultural convention.

The study of color systems reveals a complex interplay between perception, language, and culture.

2.2 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Studies on metaphor in Western academia have a rich historical background, with theories falling into two main categories: traditional metaphor theories (including comparison theory, substitution theory, and interaction theory) and a more recent conceptual metaphor theory (Holyoak & Stamenković, 2005). Comparison theory views metaphor as a comparison based on the similarity between two elements. Richards (1936), with the publication of "*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*," is often credited as the pioneer of interaction theory. He claimed that all languages are inherently metaphorical, emphasizing that metaphor isn't just an embellishment but a fundamental aspect of language. Subsequently, Black (1962) further refined this theory into a more structured framework. However, metaphors are still viewed as an stylistic use of language rather than a fundamental matter of thought (Li, 2020).

It wasn't until the release of "*Metaphors We Live By*" that metaphor was approached from a cognitive viewpoint. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). The standard definition of conceptual metaphors is: *A conceptual metaphor is understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically*

concrete). CMT posits that people understand abstract concepts (target domains) by mapping them onto more concrete and sensorimotor domains (source domains). This mapping allows to grasp abstract ideas by grounding them in our embodied experiences (Gibbs, 2017). For example, LOVE IS A JOURNEY: In this metaphor, the abstract concept of love (target domain) is understood in terms of a physical journey (source domain). We talk about "*being on the same path*" or "*going through rough patches*" in relationships, using spatial and directional concepts from the domain of physical movement to understand the complexities of love. CMT suggests that conceptual metaphors are not arbitrary but systematic and pervasive across languages and cultures. Certain metaphors are so deeply ingrained in our cognitive systems that they shape our thinking and language use in consistent ways (Mácha, 2016).

Kövecses (2020) takes into account the subsequent conceptual metaphors:

ANGER IS FIRE (*He was smouldering with anger.*)

LOVE IS FIRE (*The fire was gone from their relationship.*)

DESIRE IS FIRE (*It was his burning ambition to become a lawyer.*)

IMAGINATION IS FIRE (*The scene set fire to his imagination.*)

ENERGY IS FIRE (*She's burning the candle at both ends.*)

All of these target domains share the aspect of intensity through the application of a single source (HEAT OF FIRE). We can suggest that the FIRE source domain has the "main meaning focus" of intensity (Kövecses, 2000a).

Metaphors play a crucial role in our cognitive processes, helping us comprehend abstract concepts by mapping them onto more tangible or familiar domains. According to their cognitive functions, metaphors can be classified into three main types: structural, orientational, and ontological (Ferrando, 2017).

Structural metaphors establish connections between abstract and concrete concepts by highlighting similarities in their underlying structures or relationships. These metaphors provide a framework for understanding complex ideas by structuring them in terms of simpler or more familiar concepts. For instance: TIME IS MONEY. Meanwhile, orientational metaphors convey abstract concepts by drawing on spatial orientations and directional cues (Yu, 2013). These metaphors orient our understanding of abstract ideas based on our spatial experiences and perceptions. For instance, the metaphor of "*up is good, down is bad*" associates

positive qualities with upward movement and negative qualities with downward movement, reflecting our innate spatial biases. Ontological metaphors conceptualize abstract domains in terms of concrete entities or substances, thereby imbuing them with tangible properties. For example, the metaphor of "THE MIND IS A MACHINE" ontologically transforms the abstract concept of mind into a tangible entity (Vu, 2015).

Conceptual metaphors do not exist in isolation but are part of larger conceptual systems that interconnect with one another. These systems are dynamic and flexible, meaning that conceptual metaphors can have extensions and evolve over time. For instance, metaphors like "PEOPLE ARE PLANTS" or "PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS" are not just individual, isolated mappings but are embedded within broader cognitive frameworks that shape and reflect human experiences (Filipczuk-Rosińska, 2016). These metaphors can also extend to other areas of life, as shown in the example of *PEOPLE ARE LANDSCAPE*, where terms associated with physical landscapes metaphorically extend to describe human behavior, social positions, and even cultural values. This interconnectedness of metaphors demonstrate the complexity and richness of the cognitive processes that underlie human thought and language ("Mapping English Metaphor Through Time," 2016, pp. 25–26).

CMT emphasizes the role of bodily experiences and sensory perceptions in shaping our conceptual systems. Our understanding of abstract concepts is grounded in our bodily interactions with the physical world. While many conceptual metaphors are universal, CMT acknowledges that there can be cultural variation in how abstract concepts are metaphorically understood and expressed. Cultural factors such as language, customs, and historical experiences can influence the specific metaphors used in different communities (Kövecses, 2017).

2.3 Metonymy as a conceptual phenomenon

Metonymy originates from the Greek term "*metonumia*," meaning '*a change of name*.' According to Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1996) metonymy can be defined as: "*The use of the name of one object or concept for that of another to which it is related or of which it is a part, as count heads for count people*." Metonymy serves a referential function, whereby one domain (the target) is partly understood in terms of another experiential

domain (the source) within the same domain (Barcelona, 2003). Metonymy is a "stand-for" relation: We use x to stand for y. For example, a head stands for the person, such as in the phrase head count. Metonymy is not simply a linguistic device but also a conceptual one (Panther & Radden, 1999).

Traditionally, metonymy has been viewed as a trope, solely within the realm of linguistics. However, Lakoff, as discussed in Evans & Green (2006), argued that metonymy is fundamentally conceptual in nature, transcending linguistic boundaries to become a conceptual phenomenon. Kövecses and Radden (1999) offer a definition of metonymy as follows: *Metonymy is a cognitive process in which a conceptual element, or entity (thing, event, property), the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity (thing, event, property), the target, within the same frame, or idealized cognitive model (ICM).* To illustrate, consider the RESTAURANT frame, or idealized cognitive model. In the sentence "*The ham sandwich spilled beer all over himself*," the speaker brings attention to, or enables mental access to, the idea of a PERSON EATING THE HAM SANDWICH (target) by referring to another related concept, HAM SANDWICH (vehicle), within the same frame (Gibbs, 2017). The example provided illustrates how one entity can stand for another, demonstrating the reliance of metonymy on the association between two entities.

There are more examples: "*The White House issued a statement*", "*My motor is parked out the back*" or "*my wheels are outside*". In these sentences, the term "*The White House*" is associated with the President or the administration of the United States, indicating that the entities being referred to are related to people," (Baldick, 2015). Additionally, within the context of the second example, both "wheels" and "motor" are important components. These components can effectively represent the car as a whole.

2.4 Cognitive Mechanism of Idioms

Idioms are traditionally defined as "*multi-word phrases having two principal characteristics: non-compositionality and syntactic frozenness*" (Cruse, 2006, p. 82). Non-compositionality shows that unlike regular phrases, idioms and their meaning cannot be deduced from the meanings of their individual words. For example, in the idiom "*let the cat out of the bag*," the literal meanings of "let," "cat," and "bag" do not explain the idiom's meaning, which is "*to*

reveal a secret unintentionally." The phrase's overall meaning has developed a unique, figurative meaning. Syntactic frozenness refers to the grammatical rigidity of idioms, meaning that they generally cannot be altered or rearranged without losing their meaning (Gibbs & Nayak, 1989). For example, "*the cat was let out of the bag*" might still work but sounds awkward, and other variations like "*release the feline from the sack*" would not carry the idiomatic sense.

The cognitive mechanism of English idioms refers to the mental processes by which we derive the meaning of idiomatic expressions. Unlike literal phrases, idioms require interpretation that goes beyond the meanings of individual words. This process involves interaction between the components of the idiom itself and various cognitive elements, such as context, culture, and prior knowledge, which together shape the overall meaning. Thus, idioms can be seen as a kind of "*mental product*" created from the "*raw material*" of individual words, combined through cognitive processes like metaphor and metonymy (Dirven & Pörings, 2003). Research has extensively examined the metaphorical foundations of idioms. For instance, Sweetser (1990) discusses how the figurative meanings of color idioms arise through metaphorical extension.

Conceptual metaphor analysis has frequently been applied to idiomatic expressions. The traditional view of idioms assumes that their meanings stem from historical reasons or cultural customs, resulting in what are known as '*frozen metaphors*.' However, recent research suggests that some idioms may actually arise from metaphorical mappings deeply embedded in our cognitive processes (Li, 2010). For instance, English speakers understand the idiom "*spill the beans*" as it evokes an image of someone accidentally dropping a container of beans, causing them to scatter. This supports a conceptual metaphor like the mind is a container and ideas are physical entities. This example illustrates how a concrete situation can represent an abstract event, such as revealing a secret (Gibbs, 2017).

Wierzbicka's (2005) argues that emotion concepts are not universal but vary across cultures, reflecting the unique experiences and perspectives of different linguistic communities. This view is supported by Wierzbicka's extensive cross-cultural research on emotions. For instance, in her work on Russian emotion concepts, she demonstrates how words like "*duša*" (soul), "*toska*" (yearning), and "*sud'ba*" (fate) are key concepts in Russian language and culture that do not have direct equivalents in English. This highlights the cultural embeddedness of emotion concepts and the challenges in translating them across languages. Boers' (2008) observation

about idioms being rooted in physical experiences provides an interesting counterpoint to Wierzbicka's emphasis on cultural specificity. Boers (2008) suggests that idioms derived from basic physical experiences are more likely to be shared across cultures and thus easier to understand. This is because fundamental physical experiences, such as being hot or cold, sick or well, are largely universal. For example, idioms related to anger being associated with heat (e.g., "*to be boiling with rage*") are often similar across different languages due to the shared physiological experience of increased body temperature during anger. This universality in basic physical experiences can create a common ground for understanding certain idioms across cultures.

However, it's important to note that while some idioms may have a universal basis, their specific expressions and cultural connotations can still vary. Boers (2008) acknowledges that idioms derived from culture-specific domains (e.g., sailing idioms in English) are less likely to be shared across cultures and may be more challenging for non-native speakers to comprehend.

2.5 Cross-Cultural Analysis of Color Idioms

Several studies have explored the similarities and differences in color idioms between English and Russian. Opalin (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of English and Russian idioms containing the colors red and green, revealing both shared and culture-specific conceptual metaphors underlying these idioms. For instance, both languages associate red with anger and danger, but Russian uniquely links red to beauty, reflecting cultural and historical influences. Tali (2022) expanded this cross-cultural analysis to include Hebrew, providing a tripartite comparison of color idioms. The research identified key symbolic meanings and associative chains across the three languages, highlighting culture-specific aspects of color metaphors. This study underscores the importance of considering cultural context in the interpretation of color idioms. Abdullaeva (2024) examined color idioms in English, Russian, and Karakalpak languages, focusing on how each culture utilizes colors to convey specific meanings and emotions. The study also found that while some associations are shared across cultures (e.g., red symbolizing anger), others are unique to specific linguistic communities, reflecting their distinct cultural values and historical experiences. English idioms often reflect a pragmatic and individualistic culture. For instance, "*green with envy*" highlights personal emotions. In

Russian, idioms often reflect communal and historical experiences, such as black representing formality or adversity, tied to the struggles of past eras.

Hastürkoğlu (2017) investigated white color idioms in Turkish and English, applying CMT to analyze their cognitive motivations. The study revealed that despite some similarities in cognitive mappings, the connotations of white color idioms in these genetically unrelated languages vary due to cultural, historical, religious, and customary factors. A comparative study of color idioms in English, German, and Russian by Zaynullina et al. (2024) analyzed the emotional coloring of idioms across these languages. The research partially corroborated the hypothesis that color idioms reflect ethnic mentality, showing some variation in positive and negative connotations evoked by colors, but also revealing a relatively uniform basic pattern of associations across the three languages.

Vasiljevic (2011) found that developing metaphor awareness can enhance learners' figurative competence. Students exposed to CM-grounded instruction showed significant improvement in both receptive and productive use of idioms. Pham and To (2019) reported that the CM-inspired method of instruction exhibits a long-term advantage over rote learning for Vietnamese learners acquiring English idioms.

3. Data and methodology

The study's corpus is about 38 red color idioms (22 English and 16 Russian) from free online resources such as electronic lexical and phraseological sources, electronic dictionaries. The part of the database relating to English was excerpted from the following sources: *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (1998), *Thesaurus of Traditional English Metaphors* (2002), *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* (2009), *The Dictionary of Idioms and Their Origins, Metaphorically Speaking: A dictionary of 3,800 picturesque idiomatic expressions, etc.* The part of the Russian corpus was excerpted from the following sources: *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* (2014), *A Corpus-Based Approach to Lexicography: A new English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary* (2018), etc. Sketch Engine and National Corpus of the Russian Language were also used to collect data and provide accurate examples. This data collection method aligns with the approach used by Hastürkoğlu (2017) in her study of white color idioms in Turkish and English.

Idiomatic expressions are selected based on their relevance to the study's research questions and focus on metaphorical usage of the color red. Priority is given to idioms that are commonly used and well-documented in linguistic sources. Additionally, idioms are chosen to encompass a diverse range of metaphorical domains, including emotions, states, etc. Red color idiomatic expressions are verified for accuracy and authenticity by employing multiple sources and cross-referencing with native speakers to ensure linguistic and cultural relevance. In cases where idiomatic expressions require translation between English and Russian, a combination of literal translation and cultural adaptation is employed to maintain the idiomatic meaning while accounting for linguistic and cultural differences. Combination of various translators and artificial intelligence were used to ensure accuracy and closeness to the original idioms.

The analysis involves categorizing the idioms based on their figurative meanings or conceptual domains (EMOTION IS RED), considering both the source domain (the concrete concept of the color red) and the target domain (the abstract concept). This analytical framework draws on the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as applied by Kalda and Uusküla (2019) in their study of color metaphors. The data are compiled into a structured database for ease of reference and analysis.

This study employs a qualitative methodology to analyze the metaphorical usage of red color idioms in English and Russian. Qualitative analysis allows for in-depth exploration of linguistic and cultural nuances embedded within idiomatic expressions, offering insights into the underlying conceptual frameworks and cultural associations. The methodological approach based on identifying the target domain has been widely used in previous conceptual metaphor research, such as those conducted by Hastürkoğlu (2017) and Kalda and Uusküla (2019).

However, this approach poses potential limitations. The study focuses specifically on red color idioms in English and Russian and may not capture the full spectrum of color metaphors in these languages. Other colors (e.g., blue, green, yellow) also carry rich metaphorical meanings, which could interact with or contrast with those of red. In addition, identifying conceptual metaphors and metonymic principles often requires subjective interpretation. While Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) provides a systematic approach, there remains an element of interpretation, which could vary among researchers.

4. Findings

In the English language, according to the Oxford University Press (2022), the color red holds profound linguistic and cognitive significance, extending far beyond its basic denotative meaning as "*the color of blood*." Its semantic complexity encompasses multiple layers of meaning, reflecting deep cultural and psychological associations that manifest in both literal and metaphorical usage. Thus, in J. Tressider's (2005) dictionary of symbols the following interpretation of the color red is given: "*active, masculine, color of life, fire, war, energy, aggression, danger, revolution, impulse, emotions, passion, love, joy, festivity, vitality, health, physical strength and youth*". As far as we can see, the symbolism of the color red contains a huge variety of meanings, carrying various connotations, both positive and negative.

Analyzing different idioms with the word "red" using conceptual metaphor theory can provide insights into how abstract concepts are structured and understood through metaphorical mappings.

Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the conceptual metaphor/metonymy in English and Russian red colour idioms:

Table 1(English):

Category	Idioms	Meaning	Example	Conceptual Metaphor or Conceptual Metonymy
Anger	<i>Seeing red</i>	Feeling intense anger or frustration	<i>Whenever he's criticized, he sees red.</i>	ANGER IS RED + general metonymic principle, THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION.

	<i>Red mist</i>	a feeling of extreme anger	<i>A red mist descended and he punched the other player in the face.</i>	ANGER IS RED + general metonymic principle, THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION.
	<i>Like a red rag to a bull</i>	Provokes anger or aggression. To be something which makes a person very angry (refers to the erroneous belief that the color red, rather than the motion of waving, excites a bull)	<i>Criticizing his work is like a red rag to a bull.</i>	ANGER IS A RED + INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION + ACTION FOR PURPOSE is still quite transparent, mainly for those with knowledge about bullfighting.
Embarrassment	<i>Red-faced (have a red face, to give someone a red face, go/turn beetroot (red), go as red as a beet, one's ears are red.</i>	Visibly embarrassed or ashamed	<i>He turned red-faced when caught in the lie</i>	EMBARRASSMENT IS RED + THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION.

Aggression	<i>Red in tooth and claw</i>	Having, involving, or employing merciless and possibly cruel tactics during conflict or competition	<i>In the competitive world of business, companies are often red in tooth and claw, engaging in aggressive tactics to dominate the market.</i>	AGGRESSION IS RED. The phrase embodies two interconnected conceptual metaphors: "ECONOMIC COMPETITION IS RACING" and "AGGRESSION IS RED".
Debt	<i>In the red</i>	In debt or financial trouble	<i>The company is in the red after the loss</i>	DEBT/FINANCIAL STATE IS RED
	<i>Red ink</i>	Financial loss or debt	<i>The parent company has been falling apart for several months, bleeding red ink, and losing clients.</i>	DEBT IS RED + Instrument for PURPOSE
Bureaucracy	<i>Red tape</i>	Bureaucratic obstacles or regulations	<i>The project was delayed due to red tape.</i>	BUREAUCRACY IS RED - also metonymic principle can be applied OBJECT for CONSEQUENCES OF OBJECT MANIPULATION
Warning, Danger	<i>Red flag</i>	Warning sign or indication of danger	<i>The drop in sales was a red flag for the company.</i>	WARNING IS RED
	<i>Code red</i>	A very serious security warning or threat;	<i>A code red alert was issued for the areas closest to the center of the cyclone.</i>	WARNING IS RED

	<i>Red alert</i>	a warning that there is great danger	<i>A red alert was sounded on the island as the storm approached.</i>	WARNING IS RED
Communism	<i>Better dead than red</i>	Prefer death over communism	<i>He believes it's better dead than red.</i>	COMMUNISM IS RED
	<i>Reds under the bed</i>	An insidious communist presence; a communist who has infiltrated capitalist society.	<i>Even after the Cold War ended, some individuals continued to harbor fears of 'reds under the bed,' suspecting communist infiltration in various sectors of society.</i>	COMMUNISM IS RED
Importance	<i>Red-letter day</i>	A significant or memorable day	<i>Graduating from college was a red-letter day.</i>	IMPORTANCE IS RED
Celebration	<i>Paint the town red</i>	Have a great time, party	<i>Let's paint the town red for my birthday.</i>	CELEBRATION IS RED
Special treatment	<i>Red carpet treatment</i>	VIP treatment or special attention	<i>The celebrity received the red carpet treatment.</i>	SPECIAL TREATMENT IS RED , ACTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTION
Distraction	<i>Red herring</i>	to be something designed to divert attention away from the main question	<i>The irrelevant evidence was a red herring.</i>	DISTRACTION IS RED
Prostitution	<i>Red light area/district</i>	an area or district in a city in which many houses of prostitution are located.	<i>The red light area of this city is one of the highly popular amongst the travelers coming here.</i>	PROSTITUTION IS RED LIGHT + ORIGIN IS METONIMIC PART OF THE place FOR

				THE WHOLE place OR ESTABLISHMENT
Wrong- doing	<i>To catch someone red- handed</i>	to apprehend a person in the course of committing a crime	<i>He was caught red- handed taking money from the till.</i>	the RESULT OF PERFORMING AN ACTION stands for THE ACTION. + RED STANDS FOR THE BLOOD. WRONGDOING IS RED.

(Renton, 1992), (Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, 2025).

Table 2 (Russian Red color idioms)

Category	Russian Idiom	Meaning	Example	Conceptual Metaphor
Anger or embarrassment	<i>Краснеть до корней</i>	To blush deeply or become angry	<i>Она покраснела до корней, когда ей сказали комплимент (She blushed to the roots when they complimented her)</i>	EMBARRASS MENT IS RED OR ANGER IS RED + THE PHYSIOLOGIC AL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION.
	<i>Краснеть как рак</i>	(to be, grow) very red in the face because of emotions.	<i>Я сидела в этой нелепой позорной позе, и уже успела покраснеть как рак. (I sat in this ridiculous, shameful position, and had already turned red as a lobster/cancer.)</i>	EMBARRASS MENT IS RED + THE PHYSIOLOGIC AL EFFECTS OF AN

				EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION.
Cheap	<i>Красная цена</i>	Discounted price	<i>Этот товар имеет красную цену на распродаже (This item has a red sale price.)</i>	CHEAP IS RED, COLOR RED (AS A PART) IS USED TO STAND FOR THE PURPOSE.
Danger	<i>Красная тревога</i>	State of emergency	<i>Политики объявили красную тревогу из-за наводнения (Politicians issue red alert over flooding).</i>	DANGER IS RED
Anger	<i>Как красная тряпка для быка</i>	Provokes anger or aggression	<i>Критика его работы как красная тряпка для быка (Criticism of his work is like a red rag for a bull)</i>	ANGER/PROV OCATION IS RED
Importance	<i>Красные дни календаря</i>	Public or national holidays	<i>Хотелось бы не просто поздравить вас с Днём международной солидарности трудящихся/ хотелось бы вместе с вами подумать о том/ в каких условиях мы встречаем в этом году красный день календаря. (I would like not only to congratulate you on International Workers' Day, but also to think together with you about the conditions in which we</i>	IMPORTANT IS RED

			<i>celebrate this red-letter day this year.)</i>	
Honor	<i>Красный угол</i>	a place in a peasant hut where icons are hung and a table is placed for honored guests: icon corner; sacred corner; place of honor.	<i>У нас в комнате красный угол был/ иконы там. (We had a "red corner" in our room, where the icons were kept.)</i>	HONORABLE IS RED
Special treatment	<i>Красная дорожка</i>	Special treatment or a ceremony to meet participants in a show.	<i>На красной дорожке было много гостей (There were many guests on the red carpet)</i>	A part of the place for a place + SPECIAL TREATMENT IS RED
Central	<i>Красная нить</i>	Central theme or common element; for example, the main idea in a text.	<i>Эта любовь красной нитью вплетена в его поэзию. (This love is woven into his poetry like a red thread.)</i>	CENTRAL IS RED
Excellence	<i>Красный диплом</i>	Diploma with honors	<i>Он закончил университет с красным дипломом (He graduated from the university with red diploma "with honors")</i>	EXCELLENCE IS RED + OBJECT FOR PURPOSE
Communism	<i>Красная Армия, Красный Флот etc.</i>	Soviet military forces and related phrases	<i>Во время отступления, а также во время продвижения вперед Красной армии минометные батареи успешно</i>	COMMUNISM IS RED

			<i>применялись в сочетании с обычной ствольной артиллерией. (During the retreat and throughout the resurgence of the Red Army batteries of mortars were successfully mixed with conventional tubed artillery.)</i>	
Purity	<i>Красная девица</i>	a very shy and timid young man: shrinking violet; (be) like a shy girl (maiden); (be) like a blushing virgin.	<i>А покажи, как красная девица перед зеркалом прихоращивается! ("Come on, show me how a red maiden primps in front of the mirror!")</i>	PURITY IS RED or BEAUTY IS RED
Arson	<i>Пустить (красного) петуха</i>	to commit arson. X set fire to Y's house;	<i>Ночью пустили красного петуха – наказали врагов народа. (At night they let out a red rooster - they punished the enemies)</i>	ARSON IS RED, RED IS FIRE, FIRE IS HEAT.
Wit	<i>для красного словца</i>	a witty word or phrase that produces an effect on the listeners: clever remark; apt remark; [lim.] flash of wit; quip; one- liner; [usu. disapprov]	<i>Я говорила о том/ что вы публикуете лживые неподтверждённые посты и даже не стесняетесь того/ что вы врёте ради красного словца в своих постах. (I was talking about how you publish false, unverified posts and don't even feel ashamed of lying just for the sake of sensationalism in your content.)</i>	WIT IS RED

		(mere) rhetoric.		
Beginning	<i>красная строка</i>	To highlight a paragraph, in addition to a new line, it is printed from the red line, that is, a paragraph indent is made.	<i>Важно начать с красной строки абзац. (It is important to start the paragraph with a red line.)</i>	BEGINNING IS RED

Similarities:

1) Red color as emotion

Different emotions are conceptualized as “red”. In English and Russian, red color indicates the physiological manifestation of such strong emotions as embarrassment or anger. “See red”, “Red mist” etc. and “Краснеть до корней” (ANGER IS RED) idioms metaphorically refer to becoming very angry or enraged. In terms of CMT, the metaphorical mapping here might be from the physiological experience of blushing or becoming flushed when angry, which manifests as the color red on the face. The metaphorical link between the physical redness and the emotional state of anger is a reflection of the broader conceptual metaphor that ANGER IS HEAT, where redness symbolizes intense emotional arousal (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987). Two significant metaphors in this context are: THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS and ANGER IS HEAT. Additionally, Kövecses' general metonymic principle (1986) is observed here: THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION REPRESENT THE EMOTION (Table 3). These effects encompass bodily sensations such as heat, changes in blood pressure, and facial redness (Maalej, 2004). Similarly, the idioms “to be red-faced”, “have a red face, to give someone a red face”, “go/turn beetroot (red)”, “go as red as a beet, one’s ears are red”(CM: EMBARASSMET IS RED) in English and “Краснеть как рак” in Russian further exemplify this metaphorical journey. The physical act of blushing serves for the expression of embarrassment or shame.

Table 3 The conceptual keys for “to sees red”.

THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTION
ANGER IS A FLUID IN THE CONTAINER
INCREASE IN TEMPERATURE STANDS FOR ANGER
THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION REPRESENT THE EMOTION
BECOMING ANGRY IS BEING RED IN COMPLEXION
COLOR FOR EMOTION
EMOTION IS COLOR

(Rasekh, 2021).

The metaphors ANGER IS RED OR EMBARRASMET IS RED can extend to a broader conceptual metaphor, EMOTION IS COLOR, where colors represent different emotional states. This metaphor captures how we associate specific colors with various feelings, using them as symbols of emotional experience. Here are some examples for different emotions within this broader metaphor: HAPPINESS/JOY IS YELLOW, SADNESS IS BLUE, ENVY/JEALOUSY IS GREEN, etc.

The idioms "*Waving a red rag to a bull*" and "*Like a red rag to a bull*" exemplify the conceptual metaphor PROVOCATION or ANGER IS RED RAG, which is present in both English and Russian cultures. These expressions vividly illustrate the act of deliberate provocation and the resulting intense emotional reaction. The metonymic principal ACTION FOR RESULT is indeed at play in these idioms, where the action of waving a red rag represents the consequent anger or provoked reaction (Kövecses, 2005). This metonymy allows speakers to conceptualize the cause-effect relationship between provocation and anger in a concrete, easily visualizable manner. Additionally, the idiom evokes a vivid conceptual image: it allows people to picture a scene where one person is likened to an animal (the bull) being deliberately provoked by another person (the matador). This vivid mental picture emphasizes the intentional nature of the provocation and the intensity of the emotional response. The imagery is particularly effective because it draws on the widely recognized cultural symbol of bullfighting, even in cultures where the practice is not traditional (Gage, 1999). In Russian, the equivalent idiom "*Как красная тряпка для быка*" (*like a red rag to a bull*) carries a similar meaning and evokes the same conceptual metaphor. The vividness of this concept for Russian speakers is likely influenced by popular media, including films and cultural portrayals of bullfighting scenes,

even though bullfighting is not a traditional part of Russian culture (Ulyanov, 2018). This cross-cultural adoption of the imagery and metaphor demonstrates the power of media in shaping linguistic expressions and conceptual understanding across different cultures.

Table 4 The conceptual key for “Waving a red rag to a bull”.

ACTION FOR RESULT (PROVOCATION)
RED FOR ANGER
ANGER IS ANIMALISTIC RESPONSE: The idiom likens the angered person to a bull, highlighting a primal or instinctual reaction.

2) Red color as danger and warning

The idioms "*Red flag*" in English and "*Красная тревога*" (*Krasnaya trevoga*) or "*Красный флаг*" in Russian both utilize the color red to convey warning or potential danger, exemplifying the conceptual metaphor WARNING IS RED. This metaphorical mapping is deeply rooted in both cultures, drawing from the physiological and psychological associations of the color red with alertness and caution (Elliot & Maier, 2014). The use of red as a warning signal has a long history in both Western and Russian cultures. In Western tradition, red flags have been used since the Middle Ages to signal danger, particularly in maritime contexts (Gage, 1999). In Russian culture, the color red has had various symbolic meanings, including danger and revolution (Ulyanov, 2018). English expressions such as "*red flag*," "*code red*," and "*red alert*" all indicate varying degrees of warning or danger. Similarly, the Russian expression "*Красная тревога*" (*Krasnaya trevoga*) literally translates to "red alarm," conveying a sense of urgent warning or danger.

According to Redondo and Plaza (2007), the stigmatization of prostitution has contributed to the use of euphemisms such as "*red light district*" to describe areas where sex work is openly practiced. This term serves to soften the negative connotations associated with prostitution, offering a more neutral or less judgmental way of referring to these areas. The phrase "*red light district*" likely originates from the use of red lights outside brothels, which became a symbol of such activities (Symanski, 2017). However, its etymology is disputed by some historians. In "*red light district*," the metonymic principle at work is PART OF THE PLACE FOR THE

ESTABLISHMENT LOCATED THERE. Meanwhile, the phrase “*red light district*” can operate within the conceptual metaphor WARNING IS RED, where the color red symbolizes caution or restricted areas. In Russian, the borrowed phrase “*красный фонарь*” or “*район красных фонарей*” serves a similar purpose as in English, carrying the connotation of a designated area for adult or illicit activities.

[1] “*Even its ' red light ' district was festooned with red, white, and blue bunting, as dancing elephants were placed in the windows of ...*”

Table 5 *The conceptual keys for “red light district”.*

PART OF THE PLACE STANDS FOR THE PLACE: The “red light” is metonymic for the entire district.
COLOR FOR ADULT OR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES
WARNING IS RED

3) Red color as communism

Red can also represent a political ideology, most notably communism and socialism. The two idioms in which the colour red stands for communism in English (COMMUNISM IS RED) are *better dead than red* and *reds under the bed*. The color red became the official symbol of the Soviet Union when a new flag was adopted by the Bolsheviks. In the West, communism was seen unfavorably. The phrases “*better dead than red*”, “*reds under the bed*.” originated during the Cold War era. The idioms utilize a metaphorical comparison between the color red and the ideology of communism (Ayto, 2020), carrying negative connotations. IDEOLOGY IS WAR: The use of such idioms also reflects the negative framing of ideology, similar to a battle or war where one side’s victory is unacceptable, so the sacrifice like death seems better than a perceived ideological defeat.

In Russian, red is also associated with communism. The color red, as interpreted by the Bolsheviks, is the color of the blood shed by the working people in the fight against the exploiters. After the Great October Revolution (1917), the color red was finally established as a symbol of communism. During this period, such stable expressions as *the Red Army*, *the Red*

Navy, the red commander, etc. appeared (Матвеева, 2020). Research has shown that complex metaphors like that tend to be more influenced by cultural context than basic, primary metaphors such as THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTION or KNOWING IS SEEING. These primary metaphors are more universally recognized across languages due to their grounding in shared human experiences. However, cognitive linguistic studies suggest that while two languages may utilize similar conceptual metaphors, the way these metaphors are expressed linguistically can vary, reflecting distinct cultural and ideological nuances (Gibbs, 2017).

4) Red color as something important

“*Red-letter day*” (CM: IMPORTANT IS RED): In this idiom, a “*red-letter day*” metaphorically represents a special or significant occasion marked or highlighted in red (Redondo & Plaza, 2007). The conceptual metaphor suggests that such days stand out prominently, as if visually emphasized with the color red, indicating their importance. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (Ayto, 2020), this idiom was derived from the custom of highlighting saint’s-days or church festivals in the calendar by red letters. The equivalent Russian expression *красные дни календаря* also refer to occasions that are particularly special; however, the name of the term comes from the tradition in the USSR of coloring red the sheets with holidays in tear-off calendars. In modern “*tabular*” calendars, such days are highlighted in red (Шульга, 2018). The COLOR FOR PURPOSE metonymy reflects the practical role of red as an attention-grabbing color that immediately indicates importance. Furthermore, we can identify the conceptual key DISTINCTION BY COLOR STANDS FOR SPECIAL OCCASION. This reflects a more complex cognitive operation that combines metaphor and metonymy. The act of distinguishing something by color (a concrete, physical action) is mapped onto the abstract concept of marking an occasion as special. This mapping is facilitated by the metonymic relationship between the color red and importance.

Table 6 The conceptual keys for "red-letter day".

IMPORTANT EVENTS ARE RED: Significant or celebratory occasions are marked by red, highlighting their importance.
COLOR FOR PURPOSE: Red is used to visually mark special days, helping them stand out as noteworthy.

DISTINCTION BY COLOR STANDS FOR SPECIAL OCCASION: The practice of using red letters for significant days marks these days as exceptional and memorable.

"Red carpet treatment" or "*расстелить красную дорожку*" (SPECIAL TREATMENT IS RED) - special treatment or hospitality extended to someone of importance or prestige, often associated with VIPs or celebrities. In CMT, the metaphorical mapping may originate from the association of the color red with royalty and importance. In both cultures, the activity of "*rolling out a red carpet*" takes place when important events occur, to welcome people in a special way. The metonymic relationship between the activity and the purpose of that activity is lexicalized in these idioms. The idioms "*red carpet treatment*" in English and "*расстелить красную дорожку*" (*rasstelit' krasnuyu dorozhku*) in Russian both exemplify the conceptual metaphor SPECIAL TREATMENT IS A RED CARPET. This metaphor is grounded in the cultural practice of using red carpets to honor important guests or mark significant events, reflecting the embodied nature of conceptual metaphors as described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The conceptual basis for these idioms involves mapping from the source domain of a physical red carpet to the target domain of special treatment. This mapping includes associations of luxury, importance, and special attention from the red-carpet domain onto the abstract concept of exceptional care and hospitality (Kövecses, 2010). The idioms also invoke metonymy, with the red carpet standing for the entire event or treatment, demonstrating the PART FOR WHOLE relationship often observed in cognitive linguistics (Radden & Kövecses, 1999). The cross-cultural presence of this metaphor in both English and Russian suggests a shared conceptual basis, likely influenced by global media and the internationalization of celebrity culture. However, in Russian this idiom is less common and used mostly in news articles.

Красный диплом ("*Red Diploma*") in Russian is awarded to students who have achieved outstanding academic results, symbolizing excellence and honor. The underlying conceptual metaphor for "*красный диплом*" can be identified as EXCELLENCE/HONORS IS RED. This metaphor is grounded in the cultural practice of using red ink or red covers to distinguish outstanding academic achievements. The source domain of color (red) is mapped onto the target domain of academic excellence, creating a vivid conceptual link between the visual experience of seeing the color red and the abstract notion of superior academic performance. In this case, the Russian educational tradition of using red to signify excellence has given rise

to a widely understood metaphorical expression. OBJECT FOR PURPOSE: The physical "*red diploma*" serves as a metonym for the purpose it represents—academic excellence. Here, the diploma not only acknowledges a student's achievements but also functions as a formal indicator of success. This metaphorical concept aligns with the broader notion that IMPORTANCE IS RED.

Differences

"*Red herring*" (DISCTRACTION IS RED HERRING): This expression exemplifies how metaphorical meaning can evolve through various historical circumstances. The literal meaning of "*red herring*" originated in the medieval period, referring to heavily smoked and brined fish that acquired a distinctive reddish-brown coloration (Quinion, 2004). While traditional etymological accounts often link the idiom's origin to hunting practices, historical evidence suggests a more nuanced development (Hendrickson, 2008). The contemporary figurative meaning can be traced to William Cobbett's 1807 publication in the *Weekly Political Register*, where he employed the red herring as a metaphor to critique journalistic practices (Quinion, 2004). This pivotal usage established the modern metaphorical sense of deliberate distraction or misleading information (Speake & Simpson, 2015). The expression operates through the conceptual metaphor DISTRACTION IS RED HERRING, where the source domain of a strong-smelling fish maps onto the target domain of misleading information or argumentation (Kövecses, 2010). The idiom also exhibits metonymic relationships, particularly INSTRUMENT STANDS FOR PURPOSE, where the physical object (herring) represents its function as a distracting device (Barcelona, 2012).

[2] "*Lots outside the boundary, then Metro's plan will accelerate, not slow, urbanization. The open-space question is a **red herring** in any case. Only about a third of the Portland-area is residential, and allowing people to build on bigger lots*"

"*In the red*" idiom associates financial trouble or debt with the color red. The expression operates through multiple conceptual metaphors, primarily DEFICIT IS RED, DANGER IS RED, and FINANCIAL LOSS IS RED, where the source domain (RED) systematically maps onto the target domain (FINANCIAL STATUS) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This metaphorical mapping builds on the fundamental association of red with danger and warning, providing a

cognitive foundation for understanding financial peril (Barcelona, 2003). From a metonymic perspective, the idiom exhibits several significant relationships. The expression demonstrates INSTRUMENT STANDS FOR ACTION, where red ink represents the recording of losses, and COLOR STANDS FOR STATE, where red represents negative financial status (Radden & Kövecses, 1999). The idiom also invokes the conceptual metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS, as being "*in the red*" implies a financial state conceptualized as a physical location (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This spatial metaphor allows speakers to conceptualize abstract financial conditions as if they were physical spaces one can enter or be in.

Table 7 The conceptual keys for "to be in the red".

RED FOR DANGER (FINANCIAL): Red signifies danger or risk, specifically in the context of financial trouble.
DEFICIT IS RED: A financial loss or deficit is represented by red.
COLOR FOR DEBT
WRITING COLOR STANDS FOR FINANCIAL STATUS

"*Red ink*" – is another metaphorical representation of financial loss or deficit. In our corpus, the metonymic idiom is based on a common habit of business clerks to write or mark debts with red ink, but there is no equivalent in Russian. In this case, there is also a metonymic principle as the use of red ink as a writing instrument in accounting or record-keeping is substituted for the action of recording financial transactions. The red ink represents the process of recording negative amounts or losses in financial documents.

"*Red tape*" (Conceptual Metaphor: BUREAUCRACY IS RED): The idiom metaphorically represents bureaucratic procedures and administrative barriers as literal red-colored adhesive tape. This conceptual metaphor suggests that bureaucratic processes are seen as cumbersome and potentially frustrating, being entangled by physical red tape. From physical instruments used in certain activities, the idiom has a metonymic origin. The red ribbons or "tapes" that tied together official documents in Great Britain stand for this kind of documents (PART FOR THE WHOLE) (Quinion, 2004). Nowadays, it has broadened its meaning to "*delays caused by bureaucratic complexity*" although it is still used to refer to bureaucratic papers. In this second sense, a relationship is established between the object and the actions carried out with the

papers, which is linked to the action-consequence experience. Hence, the metonymy CHARACTERISTIC OF OBJECT for CONSEQUENCES OF OBJECT MANIPULATION.

[2] *“to build and maintain a singular platform that enables vets to connect, access services, navigate complex government **red tape**, avoid fraudulent organizations, and foster dialogue and planning to give back to their local communities.”*

“Caught red-handed” (Conceptual Metaphor: CRIME IS RED): the abstract concept of committing a crime is metaphorically linked to the concrete image of having red marks on one's hands. The *“red-handed”* aspect suggests a direct, tangible connection to the act of wrongdoing, implying that the perpetrator has been caught in the act with unmistakable evidence, much like having literal red marks on their hands. In CMT, the metaphorical mapping might derive from the association of the color red with danger or warning signals. Just as red traffic lights signal stop or danger, being caught *“red-handed”* signifies being caught in a situation where one's guilt is unmistakable. There can also be traced metonymy as the RESULT OF PERFORMING AN ACTION stand for THE ACTION. Besides, there is a metonymic relation between the colour and the blood, where RED STANDS FOR THE BLOOD.

“Paint the town red” (CELEBRATION IS RED): This idiom means to go out and have a wild, enjoyable time, often involving excessive drinking or partying. In terms of CMT, the metaphorical mapping could stem from the association of the color red with passion, excitement, and intensity (Deignan, 2005). The source domain of painting (a physical action) is mapped onto the target domain of celebration (an abstract concept), creating a conceptual link between the visual experience of covering something in vibrant red paint and the abstract notion of engaging in exuberant activities.

Russian idioms:

The word *“red”* in Russian, *“красный”* (krasniy), has its origins in Old East Slavic and shares roots with other Slavic languages. It stems from the Proto-Slavic a word which originally meant *“beautiful”* or *“fine.”* Over time, its meaning expanded to include the color red as well. In Russian, *“красный”* refers to the color red, but it also carries broader connotations beyond just the hue. For instance, *“красна девица”* (krasna devitsa) refers to a beautiful maide (BEAUTY OR PURITY IS RED), while *“красное слово”* (krasnoe slovo) describes an aptly spoken word

(Langacker, 2008). These expressions preserve the original semantic connection between beauty and the color red, demonstrating how deeply this association is rooted in Russian cultural consciousness. The linguistic connection between beauty and red in Russian is further evidenced by related words such as "*красивый*" (*krasiviy*, *beautiful*) and "*краса*" (*krasa*, *beauty*), all sharing the same etymological root (Арапова et al., 2014).

The idiom "*Пустить (красного) петуха*" (*pustit' krasnogo petukha*), which literally translates to "*let loose a red rooster*," has deep roots in Slavic mythology and folklore. This expression metaphorically means to set fire or commit arson, reflecting the conceptual metaphor FIRE IS RED ROOSTER. Among the Slavs, the idiom "*Пустить (красного) петуха*" or "*let a red rooster in*" was originated from the fact that the rooster was a symbol of flame: the god of fire was often depicted as a fiery red rooster (FIRE IS RED). It is difficult to say where this came from: perhaps because this particular bird greets the dawn and sunrise with its singing. However, there was also a belief that during a thunderstorm, red roosters, together with lightning, jump from a cloud and cause fire (Матвеева, 2020).

Table 8 The conceptual keys for "*Пустить (красного) петуха*".

FIRE IS RED
RED AS CAUSE OF DESTRUCTION: The "red rooster" is metonymic for fire, representing potential destruction.
FIRE AS ANIMALISTIC FORCE: The "rooster" as fire evokes a natural, uncontrollable force, illustrating the wild nature of fire.
COLOR FOR DANGER

The idiom "*red line*" or "*красная строка*" as used to denote the beginning of a paragraph exemplifies the conceptual metaphor BEGINNING IS RED, which is rooted in ancient writing practices and continues to influence modern text formatting (Кузьмин, 1999). This metaphorical concept aligns with the broader notion that IMPORTANCE IS RED, where red serves as a symbolic color of noteworthiness (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The metaphorical mapping of RED to NOTABILITY extends beyond paragraph formatting. In various contexts, red is used to signify importance, urgency, or attention-worthiness. This is evident in expressions like "*red-letter day*" for important dates or "*red flag*" for warning signs (Opalin,

2021). The consistent use of red across these domains reinforces the conceptual link between the color and notions of significance.

Table 9 The conceptual keys for "с красной строки".

BEGINNING IS RED: Red is associated with marking a new beginning or an important section, drawing attention to the start.
COLOR FOR STRUCTURE: The red line functions as an organizing tool in writing, distinguishing the beginning of a new paragraph.

Historically, the expression “red price” means “maximum price”: *the red price is two rubles on market day (that is, “you won’t give it anymore”)*. However, in contemporary usage, particularly in retail contexts, the conceptual mapping has shifted to CHEAP IS RED or DISCOUNT IS RED. This transformation reflects changes in marketing practices and consumer culture. The use of red price tags or red numbers on price tags to indicate discounts has created a new visual and conceptual association between the color red and reduced prices. This shift demonstrates the flexibility of conceptual metaphors and their susceptibility to cultural and economic influences. The evolution of "red price" also exemplifies the metonymic principle of COLOR FOR PURPOSE, where the color red stands for the purpose of indicating a discount. This aligns with Radden and Kövecses' (1999) observations on the interplay between metaphor and metonymy in conceptual systems.

These categories encompass a wide range of contexts in which the word "red" is used in English and Russian phrases, reflecting its versatility and significance in language and culture.

5. Discussion

In this study, we analyzed 38 idioms related to the color red across English and Russian, identifying 22 conceptual metaphors where red functions as the source domain. The analysis reveals a hierarchical structure of conceptual metaphors, with certain mappings demonstrating higher frequency and broader application across both languages. The most prevalent metaphorical mappings - ANGER IS RED, EMBARRASSMENT IS RED, WARNING IS RED, COMMUNISM IS RED and IMPORTANCE IS RED - emerged consistently in both

languages, supported by numerous idiomatic expressions and frequent usage patterns (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Some of these primary mappings appear to be deeply rooted in universal human experiences (EMOTION IS RED), particularly physiological responses such as blushing during emotional states (Gibbs, 2017). The universal nature of these physiological responses explains the cross-cultural similarities in these metaphors, providing evidence for the embodied nature of metaphorical thinking, though their specific manifestations can reflect distinct cultural contexts (Barcelona, 2003). English-speaking cultures use various shades of red to express different intensities of anger. This ranges from "*flushed*" or "*pink*" for mild irritation to "*scarlet*" for extreme anger, as discussed by Sirvydė (2007) and further explored by Soriano and Valenzuela (2009).

The study also revealed culture-specific metaphors and variations in connotations, particularly evident in the COMMUNISM IS RED metaphor. While both languages associate red with communism, the valence differs significantly. English expressions like "*better dead than red*" reflect a negative stance common during the Cold War era, whereas Russian usage of "*красный*" (red) carries positive connotations of unity and revolution. This divergence underscores Boers' (2008) assertion that while conceptual metaphors may have universal bases, their manifestations can vary substantially across cultures due to historical and political factors.

Secondary conceptual metaphors demonstrate more varied distribution and cultural specificity. These include FINANCIAL STATE IS RED, DISTRACTION IS RED HERRING, BUREAUCRACY IS RED, WRONGDOING IS RED etc. The study highlights unique expressions in each language, such as "*red tape*" in English and "*красный угол*" (red corner) in Russian, further illustrating how cultural specificity can lead to divergent metaphorical extensions of color terms.

The color red exhibits ambivalence in both languages. In English idioms, red often connotes danger, aggression, and negativity (e.g., "*in the red*" for financial loss, "*red-handed*" for guilt). Conversely, in Russian, red often carries positive connotations, symbolizing beauty, warmth, and honor, as evident in expressions like "*красный угол*" (*place of honor*) or "*красавица*" (beautiful woman). This contrast suggests that cultural perceptions of colors can influence metaphorical meanings, shaping how red is used to convey both positive and negative ideas across languages.

The analysis of red color idioms in English and Russian reveals that both languages indeed rely heavily on metonymy as well as a strategy for naming and creating idiomatic expressions. This cognitive approach allows for efficient and evocative communication of complex concepts through color associations.

CONCLUSIONS

Color plays an important role in human perception of the world. This study, through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2000), shows the ways in which English and Russian idiomatic expressions utilize the color red to convey a variety of abstract concepts, shaped by both universal cognitive mappings and culturally specific meanings. The findings supported this hypothesis, red serves as a versatile source domain in both languages, embodying states and ideas such as anger, danger, provocation, significance, and political ideology, etc. The findings reveal that red frequently symbolizes emotions (such as anger or embarrassment) and cultural markers (such as communism or special treatment), demonstrating how language uses color as a tool for representing diverse meanings. However, analysis of metaphors and metonymies remains largely interpretive.

Cultural and historical experiences deeply shape the metaphorical associations of red. Soviet communism has imbued red with positive connotations in Russian, as in "*Красная Армия*" (Red Army), whereas Cold War anti-communism influenced English idioms like "*better dead than red*" (Душенко, 2015). These distinct histories underscore how social and ideological factors influence metaphor. Meanwhile, physiological responses such as blushing when angry or embarrassed form a cognitive basis for metaphors like ANGER IS RED in both languages, showing how human experiences of color in emotion go beyond cultural differences.

The findings of this study reveal that there are 7 common and typical conceptual metaphors for red in both languages. Accordingly, the source domain RED is used to explain abstract target domains (ANGER IS RED, EMBARRASSMENT IS RED, WARNING IS RED, WARNING IS RED, COMMUNISM IS RED, IMPORTANTANCE IS RED, SPECIAL TREATMENT IS RED). In conclusion, the study highlights the significant role of color in shaping human perception and cultural symbolism. While English and Russian share some common ground in their use of red idioms, particularly for negative emotions and physical states, Russian demonstrates a broader and more positive range of associations, especially concerning beauty and honor. This reflects the importance of cultural context in shaping

idiomatic language and highlights the need for careful consideration when translating or interpreting color idioms across these languages.

Moving forward, future research could expand this approach to other colors and languages, potentially revealing broader patterns in color-based conceptual metaphors across cultures. Additionally, diachronic studies could provide insights into how color metaphors evolve over time in response to changing cultural and historical contexts. Regarding the educational sector, developing materials that highlight the cognitive motivations behind idioms can make them more accessible to Russian learners of English.

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