European International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Management Studies (ISSN: 2750-8587)

Received: 20 April 2026 | Accepted: 24 May 2026 | Published: 20 June 2026

DOI: 10.55640/eijmrms-06-06-10

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Similarities and Differences Between Toponyms Formed with Colour Terms in English And Uzbek

Ismatova Nodiraxon Maxmudovna

PhD researcher at Kokand State University, Uzbekistan

VOLUME: Vol.06 Issue06 2026

PAGE: 57-63

Abstract

The present article provides a comparative linguocultural and structural-semantic analysis of English and Uzbek toponyms formed with colour terms. Geographical names constitute an important part of the lexical system of a language because they preserve information about the natural environment, settlement history, ethnic contacts, traditional worldview and cultural memory of a speech community. Colour-based toponyms are particularly significant because colour components may denote not only the visual appearance of a geographical object but also its size, location, physical characteristics, symbolic value or social importance. The study examines English toponyms containing the elements black, white, red, green, blue and yellow and Uzbek geographical names formed with qora, oq, qizil, koʻk and sariq. The research applies descriptive, componential, etymological, comparative and linguocultural methods. The findings demonstrate that both languages employ colour terms as productive modifiers in compound geographical names and use them to describe soil, water, vegetation, relief and settlement characteristics. However,

KEYWORDS

Toponymy, geographical names, colour terms, English toponyms, Uzbek toponyms, linguocultural analysis, semantic motivation, etymology, cultural heritage, compound names.

INTRODUCTION

Toponymy is a branch of onomastics concerned with the origin, development, structure, meaning and use of geographical names. Toponyms identify geographical objects such as settlements, rivers, lakes, mountains, valleys, deserts, streets and administrative territories. At the same time, they function as linguistic records reflecting the history, geography and worldview of the communities that created them.

The position of toponymy within linguistics is interdisciplinary. Toponyms are linguistic units, but their interpretation frequently requires information from history, geography, ethnography, archaeology, sociology and cultural studies. Geographical names are therefore located at the intersection of language and the physical and cultural environment. They perform an identifying and orientational function, but they may also transmit historical, social and symbolic information.

Toponyms are generally stable and may survive substantial changes in population, political administration and language. Even when their original lexical meanings are no longer understood by contemporary speakers, they continue to preserve earlier stages of linguistic and cultural development. For this reason, place names can be treated as an important form of intangible cultural heritage.

Colour terminology occupies a distinctive position in toponymic nomination. A colour word may be selected because of the

visible colour of water, soil, rock, vegetation or buildings. Nevertheless, its function is not always purely chromatic. In many naming traditions, colour terms acquire metaphorical, symbolic, spatial, evaluative and classificatory meanings. Thus, a geographical name containing an element corresponding to white or black cannot automatically be interpreted as referring to an objectively white or black feature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Toponymic research treats geographical names as a special category of proper names characterized by identification, stability and historical continuity. Scholars of English toponymy have traditionally used diachronic and etymological methods to reconstruct the origins of settlement names, hydronyms and urban names. Such research demonstrates that the modern form of a name does not always transparently reveal its original lexical composition.

The linguistic study of toponyms is closely connected with linguocultural analysis. From this perspective, geographical names are not merely labels but culturally marked units reflecting collective perceptions of space. Their semantic structure may preserve information concerning the natural environment, economic activities, migration, ethnic identity, religious beliefs and social organization.

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names emphasizes both the practical and cultural importance of standardized geographical names. Toponyms are essential for georeferencing, mapping, administration, communication and spatial-data infrastructures. At the same time, they are closely connected with the history, language, culture and identity of communities. Etymological research is therefore important not only for linguistic reconstruction but also for establishing and maintaining appropriate standardized forms.

Uzbek toponymic scholarship similarly considers place names to be products of historical development and popular nomination. Uzbek geographical names reflect natural conditions, local dialects, occupations, ethnic composition and the cultural history of particular regions. Regional studies of Bukhara, Sirdarya and other territories demonstrate that the same lexical element may perform different semantic functions in different geographical and historical contexts.

Colour-based geographical names constitute a productive semantic group within Uzbek toponymy. Research on Sirdarya toponyms records place names formed with oq, qora, qizil, sariq and ko‘k. These elements may express colour, but they may also indicate such qualities as size, openness, height, dryness, significance or the physical properties of land and water. Consequently, an adequate interpretation of a colour toponym requires etymological and contextual analysis.

METHODS

The material for the research consists of selected English and Uzbek toponyms containing lexical elements that synchronically or historically correspond to basic colour terms.

The English material includes names formed with:

- black: Blackpool, Blackburn, Blackwater, Blackheath;
- white: Whitehaven, Whitewater, Whitehill, Whitby;
- red: Redhill, Redbrook, Red River, Redcar;
- green: Greenwich, Greenfield, Green River, Greenford;
- blue: Blue Mountains, Blue River, Blue Lake;
- yellow: Yellowstone, Yellow River and Yellow Creek.

The Uzbek material includes names formed with:

- oq: Oqtepa, Oqyo‘l, Oqquvoq, Oqmachit, Oqrabot;
- qora: Qorako‘l, Qoraqum, Qoraqir, Qoratepa, Qoradaryo;
- qizil: Qizilobod, Qiziltepa, Qizilqum, Qizilchang‘il;
- ko‘k: Ko‘ksaroy, Ko‘ktepa, Ko‘kdala, Ko‘cha or historically related forms where etymologically justified;
- sariq: Sariqtepa, Sariqqum, Sariqbuloq and similar regional names.

The examples are used as a qualitative corpus rather than an exhaustive statistical inventory. The analysis employs the following methods:

Descriptive analysis is used to determine the lexical and structural composition of the names.

Componential analysis identifies the relationship between the colour component and the geographical generic element, such as hill, pool, river, field, tepa, ko‘l, qum, daryo and obod.

Etymological analysis distinguishes synchronically transparent names from historically transformed or

semantically obscured forms.

Comparative analysis establishes structural and semantic correspondences between the English and Uzbek examples.

Linguocultural analysis interprets the symbolic and culturally conditioned meanings of colour components.

Contextual-geographical analysis considers whether the colour designation may have been motivated by soil, rock, vegetation, water, relief or another observable feature.

The study also follows the principle that a modern spelling resemblance is insufficient evidence of common semantic motivation. Historical forms, sound changes, dialectal characteristics and local geographical evidence must be considered before an etymology is accepted.

RESULTS

1. Structural models of colour-based toponyms

Both English and Uzbek commonly form colour-based toponyms according to an attributive compound model:

colour term + geographical element

Examples include:

English model	Uzbek model
Black + pool	Qora + koʻl
Red + hill	Qizil + tepa
Green + field	Koʻk + dala
White + water	Oq + suv
Yellow + stone	Sariq + tosh
Black + heath	Qora + qum

In English, the colour adjective generally precedes the geographical noun: Blackpool, Redhill, Greenfield and Whitewater. Uzbek displays a comparable structure: Qorakoʻl, Qiziltepa, Koʻkdala and Oqtepa.

The close structural similarity results from the attributive function of the colour component in both languages. In each case, the first element classifies or characterizes the object denoted by the second component.

However, the grammatical histories of the compounds are not identical. English toponyms may contain archaic elements whose meanings and pronunciation have changed substantially. Some names that appear to contain modern colour words may have developed from personal names, tribal names or words with unrelated historical meanings. Uzbek compounds are often more synchronically transparent, particularly when their second components remain productive geographical terms such as tepa ‘hill’, koʻl ‘lake’, qum ‘sand or desert’, daryo ‘river’, buloq ‘spring’ and obod ‘settlement or prosperous place’.

2. Reference to natural colour

The most evident common feature is the use of colour terms to describe visible properties of natural objects.

English names such as Redhill and Red River may be motivated by reddish soil, clay, sandstone or sediment. Blackwater may refer to dark water caused by peat, minerals, depth or vegetation. Greenfield may describe a fertile or grass-covered area. Blue Mountains may be connected with the bluish appearance of a mountain range when viewed from a distance.

Comparable motivations occur in Uzbek toponymy. Qiziltepa may denote a hill characterized by reddish earth or rock. Qizilqum literally combines qizil ‘red’ and qum ‘sand’, reflecting the perceived colour of desert terrain. Qorakoʻl may in certain contexts refer to a lake whose water appears dark because of depth, mud, vegetation or lighting conditions. Sariqqum may describe yellowish sand, while Koʻkdala may refer to green vegetation or a flourishing open field.

Thus, in both traditions, colour nomination represents an economical method of distinguishing one feature from neighbouring objects of the same category. A red hill is distinguished from other hills; a dark lake is separated conceptually from lighter or clearer bodies of water.

3. Colour terms as environmental classifiers

Colour components may classify geographical objects according to qualities indirectly associated with colour. In English, green is regularly associated with vegetation, fertility and cultivated or inhabited space. It can consequently describe an area not because it possesses one fixed green colour but because it is grassy, fertile or covered with plants.

In Uzbek, koʻk has a broad semantic range. It may mean ‘blue’, ‘green’, ‘sky-coloured’, ‘young vegetation’ or ‘fresh grass’, depending on the context. Therefore, an Uzbek

toponym containing ko‘k cannot always be translated mechanically as blue. In names connected with fields, valleys or vegetation, green may be the contextually appropriate interpretation. In names relating to the sky, water, tiles or distant relief, blue may be more suitable.

The same semantic complexity is observed in oq and qora. Although their basic meanings are ‘white’ and ‘black’, these elements can classify places according to brightness, clarity, openness, size, status or other culturally established associations.

4. Secondary meanings of the Uzbek element oq

The Uzbek colour term oq is particularly productive in geographical names. Its direct meaning is ‘white’, but in toponymic contexts it may also express:

- brightness or visual lightness;
- clear or transparent water;
- openness or lack of vegetation;
- large size or spatial extent;
- purity or sacredness;
- prosperity and good fortune;
- a favourable or safe condition.

For example, Oqyo‘l literally appears to mean ‘white road’. Nevertheless, the expression oq yo‘l in Uzbek culture is also a formula expressing a wish for a safe and successful journey. Therefore, the place name may contain both a descriptive and a positive symbolic meaning.

In names such as Oqtepa, the component oq may refer to the colour of soil, stone, salt, buildings or archaeological remains. In other cases, scholars have interpreted it as indicating a large, prominent or open hill. Similarly, Oqrabot may historically represent not merely a ‘white rabat’ but a large or important fortified settlement or caravan station.

English white may also acquire extended meanings, including brightness, chalk, snow, limestone, purity or visibility. Nevertheless, its use in English geographical names is generally less connected with an established system of meanings such as ‘large’ or ‘socially important’ than Uzbek oq.

5. Secondary meanings of the Uzbek element qora

The element qora demonstrates an even wider semantic range. In addition to ‘black’ or ‘dark’, it may convey meanings such as:

- large or powerful;
- dense or abundant;
- ordinary or common;
- uncultivated or uninhabited;
- land or earth;
- a low elevation, mound or ridge;
- difficult, severe or dangerous;
- northern or spatially differentiated, in some historical naming systems.

Consequently, the name Qoraqum may refer to dark sand, but its interpretation may also involve the physical character, density or extent of the desert landscape. Qoraqir may denote a dark ridge, yet historical usage of qora in Turkic and related naming traditions may associate it with a landform, elevation or prominent geographical mass. Qorako‘l may describe dark-looking water, a large lake or an object distinguished from another lake by a traditional classificatory opposition.

English black likewise extends beyond literal colour. It may refer to deep water, peat, shadow, dense woodland, dark soil, industrial pollution or a dangerous and inhospitable place. However, the semantic development of English black is normally interpreted locally rather than as part of a broad traditional spatial and classificatory system.

The same warning applies to English names. Apparent colour components may sometimes result from phonetic convergence with a modern colour word. Modern transparency should not replace historical evidence.

DISCUSSION

Similarities between English and Uzbek colour-based toponyms

The analysis reveals several important similarities.

First, both languages employ colour terms productively in compound geographical names. The dominant structural pattern is an attributive colour element followed by a geographical generic element.

Second, the names frequently originate in direct observation. Soil, sand, rock, water, vegetation, atmospheric appearance

and constructed objects provide the principal physical motivations for colour naming.

Third, colour components perform a differentiating function. When several objects belong to the same geographical category, colour terminology helps distinguish one hill, river, lake, field or settlement from another.

Fourth, colour-based toponyms in both languages may undergo semantic opacity. Changes in pronunciation, spelling, population and environmental conditions can weaken the connection between a name and its original motivation.

Fifth, English and Uzbek colour toponyms function as carriers of cultural memory. They may preserve historical perceptions of landscapes that no longer exist in their earlier form. A place once known for dark woodland, clear water, red soil or green fields may retain its name after the physical feature has changed.

Sixth, both systems contain names in which colours possess symbolic rather than purely visual meanings. White may be connected with purity or prominence, black with severity or power, green with fertility, red with political or emotional symbolism and blue with water, distance or the sky.

Differences between the two systems

Despite these similarities, several differences are evident.

The first difference concerns the breadth of secondary meanings. Uzbek oq and qora have highly developed non-colour meanings in Turkic toponymy. They may express size, importance, spatial classification, social status, terrain type or symbolic evaluation. English white and black also develop metaphorical meanings, but these are often more locally conditioned and less systematically classificatory.

The second difference involves colour categorization. English commonly distinguishes green from blue, whereas Uzbek ko‘k can refer to both areas of the spectrum and may additionally denote sky, vegetation, freshness or youth. As a result, Uzbek ko‘k-toponyms are semantically more dependent on contextual interpretation.

The third difference is related to historical linguistic layering. English toponyms have been influenced by Celtic, Old English, Old Norse, Norman French and Latin. Their modern forms may therefore conceal older lexical elements. Uzbek toponyms contain Turkic, Iranian, Arabic, Mongolian and Russian layers, but many colour compounds remain morphologically transparent to modern Uzbek speakers.

The fourth difference concerns ideological naming. Uzbek toponymy includes a noticeable group of names formed or reinterpreted during the Soviet period, when qizil could symbolize revolutionary ideology. Although English-speaking societies also contain ideologically motivated names, the historical role of ‘red’ in twentieth-century Central Asian official naming was more systematic.

The fifth difference is visible in translation practice. English colour compounds are often translated semantically only when they occur in explanatory texts; as standardized geographical names, they are normally retained in their official form. Uzbek toponyms are transliterated into the Roman script, but interpreters may be tempted to provide literal English translations. Such translations can be misleading when a colour element has lost its direct chromatic meaning.

Colour terms as cultural codes

Colour terms in toponymy operate as cultural codes through which communities categorize geographical space. They convert visual impressions and culturally significant concepts into stable proper names.

In the English tradition, names such as Greenfield, Blackwater and Redhill present the landscape through relatively concrete descriptive categories. The colour term commonly emphasizes the dominant visual characteristic of the named feature, although this characteristic may be seasonally variable or historically altered.

In the Uzbek tradition, a name such as Oqtepa or Qorako‘l may simultaneously encode physical description, size, value and cultural opposition. The elements oq and qora can function as members of a classificatory pair, distinguishing two related objects according to location, quality or social significance rather than literal colour.

This does not imply that English naming is exclusively descriptive or that Uzbek naming is exclusively symbolic. Both traditions combine physical observation and cultural interpretation. The difference lies primarily in the degree to which particular colour lexemes have developed conventional secondary functions within the toponymic system.

Importance for the standardization of geographical names

The findings are relevant to the collection, standardization and

international use of geographical names. Standardization requires the accurate recording of spelling, pronunciation, location, feature type, language and historical variants. Colour-based names present particular difficulties because a seemingly transparent form may encourage an inaccurate folk etymology.

For example, a researcher should not assume that every Uzbek name beginning with oq refers to a white geographical object. Likewise, an English name beginning with Whit- may not necessarily contain the modern adjective white. Documentary sources, historical maps, local pronunciation and field interviews should be examined.

In international communication, the official name should normally be preserved through an approved Romanized form rather than replaced by a literal translation. An explanatory translation may be added in linguistic or geographical research, but it should be clearly distinguished from the standardized name.

CONCLUSION

Colour-based toponyms in English and Uzbek demonstrate that geographical naming is based on both universal cognitive principles and language-specific cultural experience. The universal principle is the human tendency to identify and differentiate places through visible characteristics. Colour is an easily recognized feature and therefore becomes a productive source of geographical names.

The two languages show substantial structural similarity. English and Uzbek commonly use compounds in which the colour term precedes a geographical element. Both systems employ colour words to describe soil, water, vegetation, rock, sand, relief and settlements. Both also preserve historical information through names whose original environmental motivation may no longer be visible.

The principal differences are semantic and linguocultural. English colour components generally maintain a relatively direct relationship with observable landscape features, although etymological changes can obscure this relationship. Uzbek colour components, particularly oq, qora and ko‘k, possess broader polysemantic functions. They can indicate not only colour but also size, openness, importance, prosperity, spatial classification, vegetation and other culturally determined characteristics.

The comparison of green/blue with ko‘k illustrates that languages divide and conceptualize the colour spectrum differently. Similarly, the interpretation of oq and qora shows that literal colour equivalents are insufficient for explaining many Uzbek place names.

The study therefore supports the following conclusions:

1. Colour-based toponyms must be analysed as historical and cultural units rather than as ordinary adjective–noun combinations.

2. Structural similarity does not necessarily imply semantic equivalence.

3. The original meaning of a colour component should be established through linguistic, historical and geographical evidence.

4. Uzbek colour toponyms display a particularly high degree of semantic extension and cultural coding.

5. Literal translation may result in inaccurate interpretations and should not replace the standardized geographical name.

6. Colour-based toponyms constitute an important component of intangible cultural heritage because they preserve traditional perceptions of the natural and social environment.

Further research should create larger electronic corpora of English and Uzbek colour-based toponyms and classify them according to feature type, historical period, semantic motivation and geographical distribution. Field studies involving local pronunciation, oral history and physical landscape observation would also help distinguish authentic etymologies from later folk interpretations.

REFERENCES

1. Ermatov, I. (2024). Sirdaryo toponimlari. Tashkent: Innovatsiya-Ziyo.
2. Helleland, B. (2017). Geographical names as cultural heritage. In UNGEGN Toponymy Training Manual. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
3. Kerfoot, H. (2017). Geographical names, their standardization, and their value as part of geospatial data infrastructures. In UNGEGN Toponymy Training Manual. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

4. Qorayev, S. (2005). O‘zbekiston viloyatlari toponimlari. Tashkent: O‘zbekiston Milliy Ensiklopediyasi.
5. Safarova, D. A. (n.d.). The place of toponyms in linguistics. Termez State Pedagogical Institute.
6. To‘rayev, H. (2021). Buxoro toponimikasi. Bukhara: Durdona.
7. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. (2017). Toponymy Training Manual. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
8. 8, Ochildiyeva, H. (2023). Modern foreign language perspectives on creativity. Web of Scientist: International Scientific Research Journal, 4(1).
9. Ochildiyeva, H. (2023). Nutqni aloqa vositasi sifatida rivojlantirish. Scientific Bulletin of NamSU--NamDU ilmiy axborotnomasi.
10. Ochildiyeva, H. (2022). System of work on use information and communication technologies at the classes of russian language and literature for the purpose development of russian speech of youth students.
11. Ohildiyeva, H. (2022). Lexical and grammatical categories of nouns. International journal of Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Research.
12. Ochildiyeva, H. (2022). The importance of innovative educational technologies in teaching the subject of the russian language. asia pacific journal of marketing & management review.
13. Ochildiyeva, H. (2022). Lexical and Phraseological Means of Expressing Ethical Evaluation of a Person in Russian and Uzbek Languages. MIDDLE EUROPEAN 120 SCIENTIFIC BULLETIN.
14. G'ulomovna, O. H. (2022). THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING THE SUBJECT OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE. ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MARKETING & MANAGEMENT REVIEW ISSN: 2319-2836 Impact Factor: 8.071, 11(12), 8-10.