COLOUR COMPONENT IN THE SEMANTICS OF ETHNOPHOBIC TERMS
(the case of non-standard American English)

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The study aimed to identify the semantic and structural characteristics of ethnophobic terms with a colour component, as well as the conceptual basis and extralinguistic factors that have a role in their formation. Ethnophobic terms tend to emerge in the non-standard language, with slang making its core. Although often marked as derogatory or impolite, ethnicity-laden slang expressions form a dynamic and productive part of non-standard vocabulary, largely due to their pragmatic power. Ethnophobic terms used with reference to the largest ethnic minorities in the USA (Black, Latin and Native Americans) became the focus of our research. Given their prototypical nature and a wide spectrum of connotations, basic colour terms have shown the highest potential for integration with the ethnicity concept: an overwhelming number of ethnophobic terms contain explicit or implicit colour components in their semantic structure encoding the following colour categories: black, brown, red, yellow, and white. We have also suggested that in American ethnophobic slang, the universal opposition of black and white may have transformed into a conceptual opposition of "white" vs. "non-white" that has a variety of verbal representations. In addition, semantic configuration and evaluative power of colour categories are determined by the speaker's point of reference affected by the stereotypes dominating their ethnic groups. Data analysis has shown that the morphological means of word formation typical of ethnophobic terms, including suffixation, compounding, blending, and abbreviation, are mainly combined with metonymy, metaphor, or both.

Keywords: ethnophobic terms; slang; colour categories; conceptual opposition; metaphor; metonymy.

Introduction

Over the last decades, international expansion has become conspicuous in many spheres of human activity, with extensive ties being built across the global business, scientific and cultural community. Intensified cross-cultural contacts, on the other hand, tend to expose ethnic and cultural diversity, which may generate a variety of negative response ranging from unconscious bias, or apprehension, to utter hostility. Hence a growing need for raising public awareness of the differences in the language, values, beliefs and other attributes shared by various ethnic groups and cultural communities. Understanding and accepting these will contribute to increasing cross-cultural sensitivity, consequently bringing about change in the social norms and conventions, such as avoiding the use of gender-, race- or ethnicity-laden language.

Given the cooperative principle as a prerequisite of effective conversational communication, language behaviour could be expected to grow more amenable to the policy of respect, mutual acceptance and tolerance to ethnic and cultural diversity, which is an essential attribute of the expanding international environment and cross-cultural communication. Considering its role as a lingua franca, the English language is likely to grow hypersensitive to the changing intercultural contexts of communication. Indeed, there is a growing tendency to include a variety of cultural study findings and notes on the political correctness and cross-cultural aspects of verbal and non-verbal behaviour in the more recent editions of most international English course books and reference materials designed for business and academic communication. However, in less culturally sensitive communicative environments, the tide of derogatory language such as slur words and phrases referring to race and ethnical identity does not seem to ebb. Even if considered politically incorrect, ethnophobic terms remain the part of a substandard stratum of lexis and are widely used by speakers with a less refined repertoire of verbal expression.

Moreover, despite the recent attempts by mass media, academic and business circles to promote the political correctness and cross-cultural sensitivity of verbal interaction, global digital connection, unfortunately, might contribute to "popularising" slur words and phrases that would otherwise be a topic of scholarly interest in studies on lexicology or remain restricted to the use in highly informal contexts, or by

less educated social groups of speakers. Due to a global spread of digital technology, a much wider international audience can gain access to electronic resources. Although the latter include many respectable academic editions of dictionaries compiled by highly professional scholars and containing detailed comments on each entry, with special emphasis on those requiring caution, a number of resources (e.g. urbanthesaurus.org) contain uncensored entries added by ordinary members of the speaking community suggesting their own interpretation or even coinage of crude and often highly offensive language.

Ethnophobic terms (slur words and phrases), normally defined as language units denoting people of different races and nationalities, belong to non-standard language, which includes slang, cant, argot, jargon, taboo words as well as some stylistically pejorative vocabulary of common language. An essential feature of the offensive and derogatory names of ethnic groups is a negative axiological marking (Antonchenko, 1999, p. 96), reflecting a stereotypical view of "strange" peoples in a certain social environment, which may inhibit their communication (Lutianska, 2017, p.103).

Emergence of numerous slur names for people of different ethnic groups can be interpreted as a kind of inter-ethnic conflict that may result from ineffective intercultural communication (Habke, 1993). As defined in Political Philosophy studies, "ethnophobia" refers to positions ranging from unease to ethnic cleansing that arises between ethnic groups (Embree, 1997, p. 271). Ethnophobia may be regarded as a form of a wider concept known as xenophobia. Dictionary definitions of **xenophobia** include: "a deep dislike of foreigners" (Thompson, 1998), and "an unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers or of that which is foreign or strange" (M-W, n.d.). The word was formed in the late 19th century from a brace of words found in ancient Greek, *xenos* (which can mean either "stranger" or "guest") and *phobos* (which can mean either "flight" or "fear" (M-W, n.d.).

Resentment against "strangers" is usually associated with stereotypes as a simplified vision of people, which results in appearance and usage of ethnophobic terms and can be regarded as a prejudiced attitude and a display of xenophobia (Sviatiuk, 2015, p. 182). For example, since the late 18th century onwards, American writers have depicted the Arabs as animal-like nomads who were irrational, untrustworthy, anti-American and potential criminals (Altwaiji, 2019, p. 264). Moreover, the negative image of Arabic people as terrorists is fostered by regular news reports portraying Muslims as terrorists, which contributes to Americans' support for public policies harming Muslims domestically and internationally with the aim of supporting military actions in Muslim countries (Saleem, 2015, p. 841). A stereotype tends to distinguish and oppose features that are atypical of a social environment, e.g. appearance and other physical features (Sviatyuk, 2005, p.7), of which colour is a likely candidate.

Stereotypes express the set of values, attitudes and behaviours shared by a group and passed on by learning (Davies, 2003, p. 68), hence the primary role of awareness of the origin and mechanisms behind stereotypes in preventing ethnic prejudice (Bobrovnyk, 2015).

On a larger scale, ethnophobia may be hypothesised to relate to the concept of opposition that has deep psychological roots. The latter has been interpreted in Ethnic Studies as an essential element of "ethnic self-consciousness", which represents even a more universal principle of human self-perception, namely contraposing "we/ours" and "they/theirs/strangers". According to Porshnev (1978), every ethnic group possesses "the property of isolating "ours" from "not ours", from "strangers", who apply a somewhat different set of tools and techniques in their practices" (p. 142).

The concept of "strangers" as a psychological constant, therefore, penetrates the culture and language of any ethnos, thus providing the psychological security of its own ethnic beliefs and values as opposed to "theirs", which may be viewed as different, incomprehensible or even hostile.

One of the most efficient language tools used to make a psychological delineation and create a sense of community, including that based on ethnical self-identification, is slang. Being a very complex phenomenon, slang has been given a variety of linguistic interpretations focusing either on its psychological, social or stylistic aspects. In his integral and multifaceted definition of slang, Widawski (2013) points out that this type of highly informal and unconventional vocabulary is normally employed as an expressive, catchy and undignified alternative to standard vocabulary to convey some extra information of a psychological, social or rhetorical nature (pp. 30-31). Although coined chiefly by members of social, occupational or ethnic groups that are typically separate from mainstream society, slang is often adopted by larger social segments. Wentworth and Flexner (1975) distinguish between general and special slang, the latter associated with different social groups (including jargon, argot, cant etc.). General slang is replenished by words and phrases from special slang (pp. vi-vii) and, in its turn, contributes to widely spoken language.

Slang performs various functions such as encrypting secret information, insulting a person, verbalising the intention of being witty or a desire to create an informal, relaxed atmosphere. The pragmatic effect of using ethnophobic words and phrases can , therefore, vary considerably, depending on the communicative

parameters of a situation. However, the unifying feature of slang is its expressive power that is often produced by conceptual blending. A slang expression may be defined, in this case, as a form of verbal imagery that results from two concepts (source and target) overlapping and giving rise to a blended space that comprises the features referring to both of the interacting concepts. By highlighting features or attributes of a target concept through the lens of a source concept, blended space makes the basis for the non-conventional, creative verbal representation of a concept.

In slang, one of the source concepts involved in figurative verbal representation of other concepts is colour. Being a subset of the conceptual world view, human view of colour comprises relevant chunks of knowledge derived from the generalised perceptual and symbolic experience gained by humans interacting with their biological, social, and cultural habitat.

As a conceptual phenomenon, colour is unique: the multiple paradoxes of colour include its being both objective and subjective (as a transient property of light), its being discrete and continuous (as a spectrum), being both abstract and concrete (object-bound), and being universal and specific (to a certain culture) at the same time. The complexity of its nature accounts for a marked diversity of paradigms in understanding, conceptualising, and verbalising colour. It is still a debated issue if colour terms belong to the category of linguistic universals (Jones, 2013, p. 13), which derive from the evolutionary view of colour terms suggested by Berlin & Kay (1969) and later transformed into the ideas of semantic primes, conceptual primitives and semantic universals (Rosch, 1975; Wierzbicka, 1996). The central idea of The Berlin-Kay theory was that "the referents for the basic colour terms of all languages appear to be drawn from a set of eleven universal perceptual categories" (Berlin & Kay, 1969, pp. 4-5). The initial stages of the colour term evolution comprise two achromatic categories (white and black) and one chromatic category (red), which form the conceptual basis for any colour term inventory. Indeed, of all the basic ones, the colours black, red and white seem to show the highest degree of semantic and symbolic affinity across languages and cultures. Turner (1975, p. 151) attributes the universal nature of the three basic colours to the fact that their perception has experiential basis and derives from the most powerful concepts based on universally human physiology: *black* = decay or faeces ("death"), *red* = blood ("death/life"), and *white* = milk or semen ("life"). Taking a cognitive perspective, the system of colour terms is shaped by the way it is embodied in the conceptual system of a natural language (Lakoff, 2012, p. 774); so language may be said to reflect our embodied experience of colour perception, which is a reflection of our human selves.

As has been shown above, the issues of slang as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, the psychological background of ethnophobia and its encoding by means of language semantics, as well as the correlation between the conceptual system of colour and its lingual representation, have equally been given due attention. However, the mechanisms of encoding ethnophobic attitudes by incorporating a colour component in the semantic structure of slang expressions still remain unclear.

The **aim** of this paper is to identify the role of the colour component in shaping the semantic configuration of ethnophobic terms in non-standard American vocabulary.

Our original hypothesis was that the colour component incorporated in the semantics of slang expressions and acquiring an "ethnophobic tint" is a result of semantic change, with the speaking community stereotypes playing a major role.

2. Methodology

The study is based on the data from both online and paper dictionaries of slang language units in American English. Ethnophobic terms were first selected according to two criteria: 1) reference to an ethnic / racial group and 2) the presence of a colour component. Ethnophobic terms can also be referred to as ethnic slurs, or ethnophobic slang words and phrases.

The words and phrases that have made up the bulk of our language material predominantly refer to general slang vocabulary that is easily understood across American society due to their semantic transparency. Only some of the ethnophobic terms under analysis refer to the so-called taboo words, which are more expressive. Their connotative meaning being most salient, taboo words are typically used for the emotional expression of frustration, derogation and are much more abusive in comparison with slur words (Jay & Jay, 2015, pp. 251-259). The scope of our study was limited to ethnophobic terms denoting the most numerous ethnic and racial minorities in the USA, which are still clearly identified due to their anthropological features.

The methods applied in this study were chosen in accordance with the aim, objectives, and material of the research and included the analysis of dictionary definitions, structural, semantic, conceptual, comparative, and linguocultural analyses of ethnophobic terms.

The ethnophobic slang units were first divided into groups in accordance with the race or ethnic group they refer to; for each of the colour components singled out, the mode of its expression was then identified and described. The structural and semantic peculiarities of the selected ethnobobic terms denoting people of different races and ethnic groups were analysed, described, and interpreted. The conceptual analysis revealed the basis of blending the concepts of ethnicity and colour in mental space. The comparative analysis allowed us to show similarities and differences in the etymology, structure, and semantics of ethnophobic terms, as well as the role of the colour component employed in the word-building.

Key extralinguistic factors in coining ethnophobic terms in American slang previously explored by Honta (2018, pp. 31-36) were interpreted with the aim of thorough understanding the semantics and pragmatics of the ethnophobic terms under study.

Structurally, ethnophobic terms based on the colour component in their semantics can range from morphologically simple words and phrases to compounds, blends and abbreviations. Morphological word-building is often combined with metonymy, as the nominations are based on reference to a colour feature, which is metonymy per se.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1. Ethnophobic Terms and Colour Reference

Our research results show that the colour component can be expressed by ethnic slurs either directly or indirectly. The direct type of colour reference is based on the use of colour terms, i.e. names of colour categories, or their fragments in expressions designating ethnic groups or their representatives. Numerous examples illustrate the use of colour terms, explicitly naming the corresponding colour categories, as structural parts of ethnophobic words and phrases: e.g., *blackie, black Barbie, Blacky Chan, BAP* (*Black American Princess*)*, red skin, red bone, high yellow, brown tractor, wellow* (white + yellow), where the colour component metonymically refers to a certain race or ethnic group (typically, pointing to their skin colour). Direct colour reference may also involve cross-linguistic transcoding, i.e. borrowing colour terms from other languages: "black" is most commonly transcoded as *nigger* (and other variations of the Spanish *negro*), or sometimes as *mavro* (Greek) or *shvartze* (Yiddish) / *die schwartze* (German); "yellow" may be transcoded as *gelb* (German). Using some of these "alien" colour terms may compensate for the originally bright metonymic image going slightly trite. By contrast, indirect colour reference results from encoding the colour component into the semantics of ethnophobic expressions by means of conceptual blending. The name of an object that typically serves, or is creatively chosen, as a colour template, i.e. a typical or representative exemplar of a colour category, triggers the corresponding colour associations, thereby foregrounding the colour component in the semantics of an ethnophobic expression (e.g., *chocolate, caramel, eggplant, ink-face, ebony, yolk*).

Indirect colour reference, which is largely based on figuration, tends to involve metaphor as the most universal instrument of conceptualisation. The blended space, where the target concept of ethnicity overlaps another source concept to result in their conceptual integration, highlights a colour feature, or a colour pattern, shared by both. An association with the insect's colour pattern and rather large size, for example, gave rise to a metaphorical conceptual integration exemplified by the term *bumble bee* – a large black woman wearing highlighter yellow clothing (UT, n.d.). Many ethnophobic terms, though, demonstrate a combination of metonymy or/ and metaphor with morphological word-formation (suffixation, compounding, reduplication). Metonymic shifts have previously been observed to accompany most word-formation (Brdar & Brdar-Szabo, 2013, p. 40).

Both metonymy and metaphor are logical ways of cognitive perception of extralinguistic realities (Popov, 2016, p. 31); however, this perception may be superficial (p. 40). It should be noted that semantic change underlies even the colour terms that are routinely described as the most conventional means of metonymic reference to races of particular skin colour (black, white, yellow, and red). The prototypical exemplars of these colour categories (e.g., the colour of coal, snow, yolk, or blood) are evidently much brighter and / or more saturated than the actual wide range of skin tones people of a certain race may have. This colour hyperbole, however, has dimmed and transformed into an attribute of the ethnicity concept.

Another finding is that the colour category inventory associated with ethnophobic expressions is limited to a small number of basic colour terms. The colours black, white, brown, yellow and red form the nucleus of the colour categories associated with races and ethnic groups, with purple, blue and grey making up the peripheral zone. Gradation of skin tone, as interpreted by non-standard vocabulary, may be expressed by a number of fixed attributes (*high*, *low*, and *dark*) or by indirect metaphoric reference (e.g., *caramel*, *ash*) to the saturation or lightness of colour. The major extralinguistic factor in using only the basic colour terms in

ethnicity-laden non-standard vocabulary might be their prototypical nature, which provides a well-defined designatum and, thus, allows for conceptual integration.

In our opinion, it is also the property of being bright and catchy that accounts for the wide use of colour terms in slang expressions; the foregrounding of a colour component simulates a visual effect, i.e. creates a linguo-conceptual equivalent of a sensory response to a visual stimulus, thereby appealing to emotion and providing a certain pragmatic impact.

3.2. Colour Component and Conceptual Opposition

The once revolutionary idea of colour universals put forward by Berlin & Kay in their 1969 classic on the linguistic perspective of colour evolution as perceived by humans has sometimes been put into question. Colour universals, for instance, have been described as stretching the original notion by some researchers in their attempt to support the data that are only relevant to the English language by those from other languages, which gives a certain bias to their findings (Jones, 2014, p. 15). However, some semantic features of colour terms do seem to be shared by different languages, including those spoken in the Far East, where colour connotations based on cultural and symbolic traditions are very different from the connotations derived from the Western tradition of colour symbolism. The most common colour opposition of black and white, universally conceptualised as night contrasted to daylight, has been found to have a similar representation in a number of Taiwanese languages, with black typically accounting for negative connotations and white developing mostly positive shades of meaning in different expressions respectively (Lai & Chung, 2018, p. 119).

Ethnophobic slang expressions whose semantic structure includes the colour component tend to refer to "people of colour". For instance, the major conceptual relation between colour and ethnicity pertaining to the German language has been described as the contrast between "black" and "white", which reflects negative attitudes to ethnic-cultural differences; these go as far back as the age of nationalism and colonialism, historically responsible for the evaluatively laden categorisation by skin colour (Jones 2013, p. 79). Ethnophobic stereotypes, however, have a much more universal nature, being typically associated with various "non-white" racial and ethnic groups with whom white Europeans and Americans of European descent have had cross-cultural contacts. In American ethnophobic slang, the opposition of black and white seems to transform into a conceptual opposition of "white" vs. "non-white", which may be interpreted as a variation of the deeper psycho-conceptual opposition of "we/ours" vs. "they/strangers'/theirs".

By contrast, in Afro-American slang, the opposition of "black" and "white" acquires a reversed interpretation, which reflects Afro-Americans' negative evaluation of "white dominance". The phrase *white trash*, for example, is marked as "disparaging and offensive" and defined as "a member of an inferior or underprivileged white social group", with its first known use dating back to 1821 (M-W, n.d.). If interpreted without an ethnic or racial bias, however, the "black vs. white" opposition may be partly neutralised. The idiomatic expressions *salt and pepper* "interracial, including black and white" (Spears, 1991, p. 317) and *ebony and ivory* may sound humorous or even approving when referring to a "mixed-colour" company. We may, therefore, hypothesise that the ontologically universal "black / dark vs. white / light" opposition is prone to semantic change and evaluative shift, depending on the stereotypes behind cross-cultural communication.

We have also found that a rather typical conceptual model used to express the idea of "betrayed" ethnical self-identification is a dichromatic contrast represented by a variety of verbal colour images based on metaphors and allusions. The basic conceptual model rests on the contrast between the outside and the inside colour characteristics of an object whose name is metaphorically used to refer to a representative of an ethnic group who tries to assume the thinking and behaviour patterns typical of the white community. The model may be represented as the [WHITE / LIGHT INSIDE] contrasted to the [BLACK / DARK / CHROMATIC OUTSIDE]. Data on the dichromatic contrast model of cross-ethnic reference and its verbal representation are summarised in Table 1.

The black / brown vs. white contrast, for instance, is exemplified by a number of slang words: *banana* "an Asian American who has lost his/her heritage" (Dalzell, 2018) and *peeled bananas* "Americanised Asians who are trying to adapt to the culture of whites, yellow on the outside and white on the inside" (RSDB, n.d.); *Oreo (cookie)* "a chocolate biscuit with a white cream filling" – used as a *derogatory, informal* reference to a black American who is seen, especially by other black people, as wishing to be part of the white establishment (OxD, n.d.); *Bounty bar* – used as an insult to black people who "act white", for example, black police officers (RSDB, n.d.); *coconut*, which is brown on the inside and white on the inside – used as an ethnic slur to refer to a Hispanic, dark-skinned or black person who acts and thinks "white" (YDcom, n.d.; RSDB, n.d.); *potato* (brown on the outside and white on the inside) – used as a derogatory term for those Latinos who have lost their heritage (RSDB, n.d.); and, finally, *apple* or *radish* referring to

those Native Americans who have accustomed to the life with White Americans and adapted to their culture (red on the outside, white on the inside) (RSDB, n.d.).

The same dichromatic contrast model is verbalised by the coinage *banana bread* used by Afro-Americans with reference to a representative of their own ethnic group who is studious or fond of anime (UT, n.d.), i.e. showing personality traits that correspond to the stereotype of an Asian person; *pineapple* – a black who acts like Asians, or is very into Asian culture, i.e. black on the outside, yellow on the inside (RSDB, n.d.).

Table 1. Dichromatic contrast model of covert ethnic reference

		Ethnic Groups Contrasted		Colour Categories Contrasted		Verbal Representation
		by origin / appearance	*by behaviour*	*outside*	*inside*	
Conceptual Dichromatic Contrast Model	[NON-WHITE] vs. [WHITE]	Afro-American	White American	black / brown / dark	white	*Oreo (cookie) Bounty bar coconut Kinder egg*
		Asian	White American	yellow	white	*banana peeled banana twinkie*
		Arabic	White American	brown / dark	white	**coconut*
		Hispanic	White American	dark	white	*coconut*
		Native American	White American	red	white	*(red) apple radish*
	[WHITE] vs. [NON-WHITE]	White American	Asian	white	yellow	*egg hard-boiled egg*
		White American	Afro-American	white	black / brown/ dark	*reverse Oreo Christmas Oreo white chocolate*
	[NON-WHITE] vs. [NON-WHITE]	Afro-American	Asian	black/ brown/ dark	yellow	*banana bread pineapple*
		Asian	Afro-American	yellow	black / brown / dark	*rotten banana*

Interestingly, the otherwise positively marked dark or chromatic component only acquires a negative evaluation if concealed inside or contrasted to another colour category, i.e. when referring to the idea of "betrayed" ethnical self-identification. Similarly, although the "brown" component in the semantic structure of most ethnophobic slang expressions produces a derogatory effect, the positive connotation that the same colour component acquires in African American slang is, most likely, associated with the colour brown as a self-identifying ethnic feature of Afro-Americans. Although used by Widawski (2013, p. 33) to illustrate the "arcane" function of slang, the metaphoric expression *Chocolate City* also demonstrates a vivid positive self-evaluation as an attribute of the ethnicity concept: *While it is no longer **Chocolate City** [= city with a predominantly African American population] statistically, its spirit protects you.*

This leads us to believe that semantic configuration, including the evaluative power, of the colour categories is determined by the speaker's point of reference, which is, most likely, imposed by the stereotypes shared by their ethnic group.

3.3. Distribution of the Colour Component among Ethnic/ Racial Groups

Black people are the most numerous ethnic minority in the USA, which has a history starting from the period of slave trade between 1525 and 1866. Of 12.5 million Africans transported to the New World from Africa as slaves, only about 450,000 were transported to the US. Among the descendants of this seemingly insignificant number of those originally transported, the USA has now about 42 million African American

community members (Gates, 2014). This huge number of Afro-Americans explains the great number of words and collocations denoting people of the race. The negative attitude towards Black people of the USA is also influenced by mass media (in particular TV), where they are frequently depicted as perpetrators or victims (Dixon, 2015, p. 775.)

Many slur words and phrases contain a colour component. The main colours denoting Afro-American are *black* and *brown*. The black colour is represented by words from different languages. The word *negro* and the highly offensive word *nigger* originate from the Spanish and Portuguese word *negro* (black), which referred to the first slave traders. The words *negro* and *nigger* contain a dominating derogatory connotation in their semantic structure, still preserving the slightly trite colour component. The words *negro* and *nigger* have high derivative potential, especially in creating compounds, blends, abbreviations, and words with suffixes. These form new language units not just denoting black people, but particularising and differentiating them: *field niggers, farm niggers* – blacks who do not want to identify themselves with whites (RSDB, n.d.). The word with the opposite meaning is *house niggers* – the blacks who try to maintain favour with the white (RSDB, n.d.); *nigger shit* – an African American baby (UT, n.d.); *niggerbite* – a black computer geek (RSDB, n.d.); *niggerpopotamus* – an extremely fat nigger (RSDB, n.d.). The last word is a typical blend (*nigger + hippopotamus*) combined with metaphor (a fat person is compared to an awkward African mammal). The same combination of metonymy and metaphor can be observed in: *niggerrachi* "a black person who acts Hispanic" (RSDB, n.d.) with a borrowed Spanish word *cucarracha* (cockroach) as the second component. Suffixation can be observed in *niggerette* – a black woman; *niggerino* – a little nigger (*ino* is a derivational suffix borrowed from Italian); *niggeroid* – a light-skinned mixed breed of black (RSDB, n.d.). The suffix *-oid* is used in English to express resemblance. The following words exemplify a combination of blending and metaphor: *nigglet* – a black child: *nigger + piglet* (RSDB, n.d.); *nignorant* – *nigger + ignorant* (RSDB, n.d.); *nitch* – a female (*nigger + bitch*) (RSDB, n.d.); *niggerella* – a black female who imitates a white girl style (*nigger + Cinderella*). Morphological blends proper can be found in the words *tigger* (typical + nigger) and *canigger* – a black Canadian (*Canadian + nigger*) (RSDB, n.d.).

The word *black* can be used directly or with metaphorical reference to the objects of black colour: *black* – Afro-American, African (RSDB, n.d.); *blackie*; *black Barbie* – a black woman who wears hair and makeup in the same way as white women (RSDB, n.d.); *Blacky Chan* – a black who practices martial arts (RSDB, n.d.). Antonomasia in *Chan* and the diminutive suffix *-ie* in *Blacky* contribute to the bright connotation of the term. The diminutive suffix *-ie* is also employed in *blackie*.

The following ethnophobic terms denoting Black people are borrowings from other languages: *kala* – an Indian word for the colour *black* (RSDB, n.d.); *mavro* – a Greek word for *black* (RSDB, n.d.); *meshky* – translated into Farsi, which means *black*. The word is used among white boys instead of saying *nigger* (RSDB, n.d.); *Shwartza* stems from the Yiddish *schvartz*, or *black* (RSDB, n.d.).

The words *black* and *nigger* can be found in a number of acronyms: *YBM – young black male* (RSDB, n.d.); *TNB – typical nigger behaviour* (RSDB, n.d.); *BAP – black American princess* (an arrogant female black who demands the finest things in life); *BDN – big dummy nigger* (RSDB, n.d.); *BEAR – black, educated and rich* (RSDB, n.d.). Due to their complex morphological structure, the above-mentioned ethnophobic terms imply abundant extra-linguistic information and/ or conceal information from "strangers".

The following examples of compound, phrasal and simple ethnophobic terms denote black people metaphorically: *Ace-of-spades* – a very dark-skinned black man (RSDB, n.d.)*; angus,* which refers to a black breed of cattle (RSDB, n.d.); *burnt toast, burnt match, smokestack, stovelid, stovepipe, tar baby,* and *skillet smoke* stem from the similarity between the skin colour and the colour associated with the source concepts. The Blacks were said to be able to sneak quietly, entering "like smoke": *smoke foot; smokey* (RSDB, n.d.). The term *ink-face* combines a metaphor *ink* and a metonymy *face*.

The *brown* colour is also widely used in denoting Afro-Americans and can indicate them either metonymically only or metaphorically: *Bourbon* originates from brown cream-filled biscuits or a dark alcoholic drink (RSDB, n.d.); *brown trumpets* – Black American jazz musicians (RSDB, n.d.); *brownie* – a black (RSDB, n.d.); *suntan* also refers to the skin colour (RSDB, n.d.).

Other colours are less represented in denoting Africans as they are not so evident in their physiological or other features: *yellow* or *high yellow* – a light-skinned black person. *Yellow* can also be found in an acronym *YEN – Yellow Eyed Nigger*. The acronym is metaphorically associated with the period of slavery when some Blacks, usually male, due to a hard life had the whites of their eyes turned hepatitis yellow (RSDB, n.d.). In this acronym, a combination of two colours is observed (yellow and black).

The *yellow* colour is found in a compound word and metaphorically denotes intrinsic features of some blacks: *pineapple* – a black who acts like Asians, i.e. black on the outside, yellow on the inside (RSDB, n.d.). *Yellow rose* originates from the traditional folk song of the Southern US, "The Yellow Rose of Texas". The

Yellow Rose was a mulatto girl Emily West Morgan. The term *High Yellow* was used to describe non-Caucasian people whose skin colour was so light that they could pass for the whites.

Other colours denoting Blacks are seldom used, as they are atypical of the people of the race or conceal more intrinsic information. The *blue* colour: *blue gums* refers to an old myth according to which a person turns blue and dies if bitten by an African (RSDB, n.d.). The *purple* colour in a word *eggplant* is a slur used mainly by Italians and *papolo* – a Hawaiian word for *purple*. The *red* colour: *redbone* – used by darker-coloured Blacks to refer to Blacks with a light complexion (RSDB, n.d.). The *white* colour: *Cheshire Cat,* referring to Alice In Wonderland, implies that the only way to see black people in the dark is when they open their eyes and/or smile. The word *ashy* is motivated by the fact that if a Black person gets dry, his/her skin looks ashy (RSDB, n.d.).

Thus *black, brown, yellow, purple, blue, red* and *white* are the colours engaged in coining ethnophobic terms to denote Black people. *Black* and *brown* are the most productive as they are motivated by a conspicuous anthropological feature associated with the race. The high productivity of the word *nigger* is explained by the negative connotation rather than colour, which is transferred into newly coined words.

Hispanics is a term denominating people who are historically linked to Spain; nowadays it encompasses representatives of Latin American nations. Ethnophobic terms denoting Latin Americans often reflect the problem of their illegal immigration. The words *border negro, migger (Mexican+ Nigger), river nigger* and *taco-nigger* have the onomaseological basis (second component) with an obliterated meaning of the black colour, mainly rendering a negative axiological meaning and reflecting a derogatory, ironic, even hostile attitude of White Americans towards Hispanics. As for the first component (onomasiological characteristics), it conveys additional information related to illegal immigration, when Latinos illegally crossed Mexican border – the Rio Grande (*border negro, river nigger*), gastronomic preferences (*taco nigger*). The collocation *cabezita negra* (*little black head*) is a transliteration from the Spanish language, which is also a metonymy regarding both colour and a part of the body. *Blue collar* and *brown tractor* specify manual work in which Mexicans are engaged, while *potato* is motivated metaphorically and metonymically, indicating the Latinos who have lost their heritage (brown on the outside and white on the inside) (RSDB, n.d.).

The *black* colour has been found to dominate in reference to Latin Americans, rendering a negative attitude to them in the component *negro/nigger*, while *brown, yellow* and *blue* colours are scarce. All the ethnophobic terms referring to Latin Americans oppose them to White Americans by their skin colour, with the only exception of *blue collar*, where the contrast is based on the colour of clothes.

Structurally, the terms are predominantly compounds and phrases (the only exception is *potato*), the word *migger* is a blend. *Blue collar* is a metonymy (the phrase traditionally refers to manual unskilled workers); in *brown tractor* the second component is a metaphor associating hard labour in the field with a tractor, while *brown* specifies the skin colour of Latinos.

The major Native American stereotype created by the white Americans is that "all indigenous people are the same, perceived as masses, not individuals" (Owczarek, 2015, p. 98). There have been found 12 ethnic slurs; the semantic structure of six slurs contains the colour component "dark/ black" expressed by the slang word *nigger*, which indicates a derogatory and ironic attitude towards them, rather than their skin colour: *bushnigger, cherrynigger, prairie nigger, salmon nigger, trail nigger, tundra nigger* (RSDB, n.d.). The colour category associated with the skin colour of the ethnic group is *red*, showing both their swarthy complexion and suntan: *big red, red nigger, red, red skin* (RSDB, n.d.). The words *apple* and *radish* attribute intrinsic characteristics to those Native Americans who have accustomed to the culture of the white (red on the outside, white on the inside) (RSDB, n.d.).

Conclusions

Major extralinguistic mechanisms behind the persistent coinage of slur words and expressions of ethnic reference most likely include a prejudiced conception of racial and ethnic inequality shared by some people of the English-speaking community based on its "superior imperial history", or, vice versa, stemming from the disapproval of "white dominance", as well as a desire to make a psychological delineation and create a sense of community deriving from the deeper psycho-conceptual opposition of "we/ ours" vs. "they/ strangers'/ theirs". Unfortunately, although often politically incorrect, ethnic slurs make up a productive stratum of non-standard vocabulary, with ethnophobia persisting as a social phenomenon and penetrating the globally connected community.

The property of being bright and catchy probably accounts for the wide use of colour terms in slang expressions; the foregrounding of a colour component simulates a visual effect, i.e. creates a linguo-conceptual equivalent of a sensory response to a visual stimulus, thereby appealing to emotion and providing a certain pragmatic impact. Due to their prototypical nature and a wide spectrum of connotations, basic

colour terms have shown the highest potential for integration with the ethnicity concept: explicit and implicit colour components in the semantic structure of ethnophobic terms most often encode the colour categories: *black, brown, red, yellow, and white.*

A thorough study of numerous examples of ethnophobic terms has shown that the colour component is highly prolific, encoding a wide range of cultural, historical, and social information about ethnic groups, both visible and recondite. The colour component can be represented by metonymy, metaphor, or both employed either independently or simultaneously with morphological word formation (compounding, blending, abbreviation, and affixation). The colour category *black* (most often verbalised as *negro/ nigger*) is overwhelmingly productive. The slur word *nigger* is often used to coin ethnophobic terms denoting not only black people, but Latinos and Native Americans as well. Although *negro/ nigger* mostly renders a derogatory or even abusive connotation, the significative meaning of the colour category "black" associated with the word has been partially erased over the long period of its usage.

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