

SUMMARY

COLOUR IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH: THE LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

The aim of this dissertation is to carry out a linguistic-cultural analysis of colour expressions used in contemporary Spanish of the Iberian Peninsula. The research material has been collected on the basis of Spanish lexicographical works, including:

- Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española* (DRAE), 22^a ed., Madrid 2001,
- Clave: *Nuevo Diccionario de uso del español actual* (CLAVE), Madrid 1996,
- María Moliner, *Diccionario del uso del español* (DUE), Madrid 2007,
- M. Seco, *Diccionario del Español Actual* (DEA), Madrid 1999.

The dissertation adopts a linguistic-cultural method of description. Colour expressions are analyzed within two groups: expressions with names of achromatic colours (white, black, gray) and expressions with names of chromatic colours (red, yellow, green, blue). Each of the colours is discussed from the point of view of the theory of prototypes in cognitive linguistics and semantics of colour expressions. The cultural approach includes the description of the functions of a given colour in Spanish culture, as well as the outline of the cultural background in the interpretation of linguistic colour expressions.

On the basis of the linguistic and cultural analysis of colour expressions in the Spanish language of the Iberian Peninsula, a number of linguistic and cultural conclusions can be drawn.

Snow, milk and lime are the prototypes of *blanco* ‘white’. In the definitions found in Spanish dictionaries, there is also a reference to sunlight. The prototypes of *negro* ‘black’ are carbon and an entrance to a tunnel; in addition, this colour is explained as lack of colour and in relation to the black race. The prototype of *gris* ‘grey’ is ash, as well as mixing white with black. The prototypes of *rojo* ‘red’ include blood, ripe tomatoes, poppies and red hair. The prototypes of *amarillo* ‘yellow’ are gold, egg yolk, lemon peel or ripe lemon. The prototype of *verde* ‘green’ is vegetation, including fresh grass, foliage, tree crowns and leaves. In addition, *verde* has verdigris and emerald as its prototypes. The prototypes of *azul* ‘blue’ are the sky and water.

The lexeme *blanco* ‘white’ is used in several semantic domains: skin colour (*raza blanca* ‘white race’, *persona blanca* ‘white person’), time of day and weather (*amanecer blanco*

‘white dawn’, *niebla blanca* ‘white fog’), evaluating good and evil (*Dama Blanca* ‘White Lady’, *habito blanco* ‘white habit’), characteristics of people and their actions (*lirio blanco* ‘white lily’, St. Joseph’s lily, flower symbolizing a person or purity, *mirada blanca* ‘white look’), state of health / well-being and medical care (*estar blanco* ‘to be pale, to be white’, *cara blanca* ‘pale face, white face’), food products (*carne blanca* ‘white meat: white poultry or veal’, *pan blanco* ‘white bread’).

For the lexeme *negro* ‘black’, the following semantic domains are distinguished: the skin colour of the human (*negro / negroafricano*, lit. ‘black, blackafrican’, black person), bad mood (*bilis negra* ‘black yellow’ referring to melancholy, sadness, *estar negro* ‘to be black’, extremely sad), names of artifacts (*jamón de pata negra* ‘ham from the Iberian breed pig’, *banderilla negra* ‘black spearhead’), atmospheric and astronomical phenomena (*marea negra* ‘black tide’, *tierra negra* ‘black earth’), humans and their actions (*negro*, lit. ‘black’ meaning ‘person working anonymously for others, especially in literary works’; *trabajar más que un negro / como un negro*, lit. ‘work more than a black person’ or ‘work like a black person’ meaning ‘work very hard’) and evaluation (*magia negra* ‘black magic’, *escopeta negra* ‘black shotgun’ meaning hard work).

The lexeme *gris* ‘grey’ is used in the following semantic domains: human skin (*piel gris* ‘grey skin’, meaning pale skin), time of day and weather (*amanecer gris* ‘grey dawn’ or *atardecer gris* ‘grey twilight’), characteristics of people and their surroundings (*eminencia gris* ‘grey eminence’, *cerebro gris* ‘grey brain’), secret actions (*zona gris* ‘grey zone’, *mercado gris* ‘grey market’), state of health and state of well-being (manos grises ‘grey hands’, *cuerpo gris* ‘grey body’).

For the lexeme *rojo* ‘red’, the following semantic domains are distinguished: skin colour (*piel roja* ‘red skin’, not a politically correct expression nowadays), time of the day and weather (*sol rojo* ‘red sun’, *luna roja* ‘red moon’), characteristics of people and their environment (*maillot rojo* ‘red T-shirt’, *Lista Roja del Patrimonio* ‘Red List of National Heritage’), health and well-being (*granos rojos* ‘red pimples on the skin’, *manchas rojas* ‘red spots on the skin’).

The lexeme *amarillo* ‘yellow’ is used in the following semantic domains: skin colour (*raza amarilla* ‘yellow race’), time of the day and weather (*sol amarillo* ‘yellow sun’, *atardecer amarillo* ‘yellow dusk’), characteristics of people and their environment (*periodista amarillo* ‘yellow journalist’, *prensa amarilla* ‘yellow press’), names of chemical substances (*amarillo de cadmio* ‘cadmium yellow’), politics (*sindicato amarillo* ‘yellow trade union’, *trabajador amarillo* ‘yellow worker’ defending the employer), warning (*alerta amarilla* ‘yellow alert’),

health and well-being (*ojos amarillos* ‘yellow eyes’, *piel amarilla* ‘yellow skin’) and nature (*verano amarillo*) ‘yellow summer’).

The lexeme *verde* ‘green’ is found in the following semantic domains: nature (*árbol verde* ‘green tree’, *planta verde* ‘green plant’), people and their surroundings (*verde* ‘green’ meaning ‘ecologist’, *infancia verde* ‘green childhood’), artifacts (*verde* ‘green’ referring to a former banknote worth 1,000 pesetas, *tapete verde* ‘green cloth’, colloquially a green table for gambling), health and well-being (*ponerse verde en la cara* ‘green in the face’), permission (*la luz verde del semáforo* ‘green traffic light’, *ola verde* ‘green wave’), chemical substances (*ceniza verde* ‘green ash’, *cobre verde* ‘green copper’, i.e. malachite).

For the lexeme *azul* ‘blue’, the following semantic domains are distinguished: origin (*sangre azul* ‘blue blood’, *venas azules* ‘blue veins’), health and well-being (*visión azul* ‘blue vision’, a perception disorder), animals (*pescado azul* ‘blue fish’ meaning fat fish), permission (*zona azul* ‘blue zone’, *bandera azul* ‘blue flag’), religion, polities, army, police, science (*banco azul* ‘blue bench’ in the parliament for the government, *División Azul* ‘Blue Division’), chemical substances (*caparrosa azul* ‘copper sulphate’).

The cultural aspects of colours are broadly described, taking into account the roles of colours in philosophy, religion and psychology as well as in Spanish arts, traditions, rites, dances and national fiestas.

Summing up, despite many similarities in the use of colour terms in Spanish and Polish, there are language- and culture-specific in both languages. In Spanish, the word for red is used in expressions connected with bullfights, the word for yellow in expressions referring to scandals, the word for green in expressions related to the monarchy and power, the word for blue in expressions referring to administration, the word for white in expressions connected with officials, office, and the word for black in expressions naming clothes worn by aristocracy. It should be noted that the set of the presented expressions does not contain all colour expressions used in Spanish.

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