

Semantic Extensions of *Green/ Зелений* Colour Terms in Contemporary English and Ukrainian Fiction

Halyna Lukianets

PhD, Associate Professor

National University of Food Technologies (Kyiv, Ukraine)

Abstract

The analysis of semantic properties of green/зелений colour in the English and Ukrainian languages conducted on the basis of dictionary entries and linguistic corpora data shows how colour categorization is shaped in language and fiction by both nation's common cognitive universals and their socio-cultural evolutionary processes. Corpora data analysis shows semantic extensions of green colour terms in fiction, which are explained in terms of individual authors' cognitive shifts within universal physiological parameters. Expressing personal emotions and implied pragmatic aims writers either create new colours or makes semantic shifts in the existing ones. Metaphors, metonymies, and similes serve basis to create extended *green/зелений* colour meanings. Synaesthetic shifts of colour perception also enrich colour semantics. Structural extensions of green colour are the combinations of colour term with quality or quantity modifier, which not only denote physical properties of colour, but also show colour emotional and psychological value for the speaker or writer.

Keywords: colour terms, semantic structure, corpus research, semantic extensions.

Semantic extension of colour terms is the linguistic process of widening words range of meanings by means of semantic shifts and semantic transference, which lead to polysemy [3, p.112]. In fiction semantic changes are carried forward by specific individuals (writers) who think in particular ways, although they can be constrained by physiology and guided by social values. The measurement of colour categories in literary texts provides a close look at the various propelling incentives in the domain that is probably universal [4, p. 34].

The semantic extensions of green colour term in English and Ukrainian fiction are not yet studied in details which determine the **aim** of our research. The key **method** used in the study is newly refined descriptive methods, bases on the data from corpus [5]. Corpus-based research of *green/зелений* usage in both languages provides objectivity, reliability and accuracy of the received data, presenting not simply quantitative findings, but also exploring the importance of these findings for semantic structure of green colour.

Measurable change of colour meaning progresses through diverse trajectories in closely related languages whose social milieus are radically distinct. Thus, variations in colour terms in the English and Ukrainian languages can be explained in terms of individual cognitive shifts within universal physiological parameters. Still sometimes a socially enforced conservatism creates tension between the preservation of traditional colour categories and the

addition of new ones, which results in the creation of deep semantic structure of colour terms in language. While the model of individual author cognition explains how colour categories change at the basic level, a social model accounts for differences between communities. Cognitive and structural shifts of colours meanings introduced by writers in fiction gradually become common and generally accepted in society, extending the semantic structure of colour terms.

Existing research in colour naming and categorization primarily reflects two opposing views: according to a *Cultural Relativist view* (F.Boaz, E.Sapir, B.L.Whorf, L.Wittgenstein) colour perception is greatly shaped by culturally specific language associations and perceptual learning, and a *Universalist view* (E.Rosch, A.Wierzbicka) [6, p. 23–45] emphasizes pan-human shared colour processing as the basis for colour naming similarities within and across cultures. Our research presents an alternate view that specifies how colour categorization is shaped by both common cognitive universals and socio-cultural evolutionary processes. The research of dictionaries entries and corpus-based analysis reveal differences, as well as similarities between English and Ukrainian *green/зелений* colour semantics and its extensions in fiction.

Semantic changes of colour terms always result in colour semantic shifts, due to bilateral character of linguistic sign. Combining expression side and content side, colour meaning changes with every change of its form and thus extends semantic structure of the word.

Whereas any colour term can be used for description and identification in literary texts, it appears that only the most basic terms are regularly employed for structural type modification [1, p. 176]. Thus in fiction basic colour terms are often accompanied by additional attributes or value characteristics of different quality.

Extended colour terms modification is common in ordinary language use. Structural extensions of colour terms can be understood as sets or semantic and lexical fields of one particular colour. According to the semantic properties of colour modifiers, structurally extended colour terms in English and Ukrainian fiction can be grouped into such classes: colours with light-darkness, intensity and emotional value, temperature, texture and material display and basic colours and hues combination.

Any given colour can be described in terms of its *quantity* or *value*. Value is defined as the relative lightness or darkness of a colour. It is an important psychological characteristic of colour as light hues are often associated with positive emotions, while black with negative ones. Such colour perception peculiarities are based on the archaic stereotypes of world perception, and originate from the day-night opposition, in which day is associated with light, familiar, well-known things, and night is treated as dark, unknown, strange and dangerous. For example, Eng. *dark horse* is ‘a competitor in a race or contest about whom little is known’, and Ukr. *світлиця* is ‘well-lighted room in the house, which is used only during holidays and religious celebrations’.

Ordinary language can be used for developing a system of colour modifying structures. The elements of these are adjectives and colour terms, the adverb/intensifiers Eng. *very, extremely, almost, completely*; Ukr. *дуже, абсолютно, надзвичайно* and adjectives which refer to colour or shade of colour. In literary texts colours with intensity display are used to describe setting and characters. At the same time high intensities of green colour attract and give feelings of activity, as for instance, in Eng. *dark olive, dark spring green, dark turquoise* and Ukr. *яскраво зелений, темно-весняно-зелений*. Low intensities are quiet and subdued and are seldom noticed (Eng. *pastel green, medium sea green*; Ukr. *пастельно-зелений*). Compare the following examples:

(1) *Charles dropped into a deep sleep where lumbering Thurber cartoon figures with guns in their hands chased him through a landscape of pastel green, dotted with red flowers* (S. Brett *Cast in order of disappearance*);

(2) *Ice-brightness and the rare intense green flare of ocean sunsets; lightning's tongues fields furred under a harvest moon all the honey-strokes of colour* (C. Evans *Cometary phases*).

The modified colour terms of emotional value are also formed by combinations of adjectives and colour terms [6, p. 103]. Still unlike colour terms with intensity display, this group is unique for every writer, as he expresses his own vision of world and gives his personal evaluative characteristic of colour. For example, *green / зелений* can be Eng. *strong, luxury, precious*; Ukr. *щедрий, багатий, приємний оку*:

Завдяки щедрій зелені, вишнякам та соняшникам, а слізьми загорьована осінь, безніжна зима або холодна несмілива провесінь начеви валяють, дужче підкреслюють усі злидні, убогство, безпросвітність життя (О.Іваненко Марія).

Some adjectives, which are added to colour terms to intensity colour, are already common in everyday language and are not perceived by readers and writers as figurative [2, p.41]. For example, *deep green* in the following citation sounds common comparing to other metaphors in the verse:

Apples Where are the old apples, the conical, uneven apples, obscurely ribbed, ripening to deeper yellow, the crimson-cheeked apples, marbled and washed with clear red, the deep green apples (F. Pitt-Kethley Sky ray lolly).

Temperature affects peoples' eyes interpretation of the colour tints in art, but in fiction it creates additional evaluative connotations. Warm hues suggest aggression, sunlight, heat, stimulation, cheerfulness, heaviness, and dryness. Cool hues imply sky, water, distance, shadows, quiet, lightness and wetness. Green hues can be both warm (Eng. *golden green, sunny green*; Ukr. *хакі, жовто-зелений*) and they will create positive light atmosphere, or they may be cool (Eng. *neon green, iceberg lettuce*; Ukr. *колір замороженої м'яти, аквамариновий*), which depress, irritate readers or even make them be afraid:

Ну й літо ж видалось! Таке на Волині рідко буває. Сонця того, зелені тенплої, співів (М. Олійник Леся).

Texture or material of which coloured things are done let readers easier imagine specific features of colour in this or that situation. This quality is natural still it often implies evaluative connotations. The term *texture of the colour* means, the change in the colour because of the application of texture of the surface. However implication of texture of colour is more meaningful than the usage of colour alone. Colour connotative meanings are added to those of the texture or material. For instance, such modifiers as Ukr. *оксамитовий, шовковий, атласний* denote beauty and tenderness of green grass.

Combinations of different colours and hues make separate category of structurally modified colour terms. As far as colour combinations are used in fiction for nature description, green is often modified by other basic colours, especially by yellow, blue and red. *Yellow-green / жовто-зелений*, scientifically called *chartreuse*, is typical colour of grass and the sky in the evening. This combination occurs very often in natural conditions, because

green and yellow are neighbouring colours of spectrum. Such structural colour modification can also be explained by the natural process of fruits and crop plants ripening, when for example, green apples gradually become yellow. In this case colour of apple makes one colour category, no matter whether it is green or ripe. Contemporary writers base their green-yellow colour characteristics on personal perception of physical air conditions. For example, in Ukrainian and English prose texts forest or step can be of green-yellow colour.

Structural extensions of green colour add new connotative meanings to its semantic structure. Not only physical features of colour, such as light-darkness, intensity, temperature, texture are characterized, but their emotional value as well. Combinations of colours and hues result in new symbolic and associative meanings, which are based on writers' and speakers' perceptual experience and cultural knowledge. Further research can be held to systematically analyze evolution in colour meanings in a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective.

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