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**GENDER PECULIARITIES  
OF COLOR TERMS  
IN FRENCH FASHION  
MAGAZINES**

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ABSTRACT

The authors consider different approaches to the matter of color terms in linguistics and psychology. Perception of visual images by language consciousness in different cultures is determined by various factors: a feature of national thinking, originality of nature, culture, and as a consequence – different choice of the most typical prototype of any concept of color space. This article reviews a number of properties that are characteristic of basic and non-standard color terms. The article also considers some gender peculiarities of color terms in French fashion magazines.

**Key words:** color term; gender peculiarities; concept; prototype; feminine / masculine color perception; color space; color psychology.

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## ГЕНДЕРНЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ЦВЕТОНОМИНАЦИЙ ВО ФРАНЦУЗСКИХ МОДНЫХ ЖУРНАЛАХ

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## Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются различные подходы к вопросу цветономинации в лингвистике и психологии. Перцепция визуальных образов языковым сознанием в разных культурах обусловлена особенностями национального мышления, самобытностью природы, культуры и как следствие – неодинаковым выбором наиболее типичных прототипов того или иного концепта цветового пространства. В данной статье также рассматриваются критерии базовых и нестандартных цветономинаций и анализируются гендерные особенности их употребления на страницах женских журналов в сопоставлении с мужскими на материале французского языка.

**Ключевые слова:** цветономинация; гендерные особенности; концепт; прототип; женская / мужская цветовая перцепция; цветовое пространство; психология цвета.

## INTRODUCTION

Color is a powerful communication tool and can be used to signal action, influence mood, and cause physiological and psychological reactions. Color is a matter of interest of different sciences such as linguistics, psychology, sociology etc.

Different languages appear to classify color differently. American linguists and anthropologists believed in the existence of linguistic relativity. They believed that each language codes their individual experiences into sounds (words) in their own individual way. This means that each language is semantically arbitrary (not related in any way to another language.) This would mean that color words in each language have no relation to another and therefore there cannot be Semantic Universals [5, 15].

However, American linguists B. Berlin and P. Kay suggest there are eleven basic color categories (basic color terms: black, white, red, yellow, green, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, grey) and describe the criteria by which a particular word may be included in the group of the main color term:

- a word should be a monolexeme;
- a word should be monosemantic;
- a word should have good compatibility;
- a word should be significant for native speakers;
- recent borrowings should not be included in the structure of main color nominations [1].

It is worth noting that in 1976 a special project «The World Color Survey» was adopted, within which the color terms of more than 110 languages were studied. The results of this study were published in 2009 [6].

These points are developed in the field of Semantics. But within the matter of the article it's necessary to consider the research in the field of psychology. The concept of color psychology has become a hot topic in fashion, design, art and marketing. Though, as the researchers A. Elliot and M. Maier note that little theoretical or empirical work has been conducted to date on the influence of color on psychological functioning, and the work that has been done has been driven mostly by practical concerns, not scientific rigor, researchers and experts have

made a few important discoveries and observations about the psychology of color and the effect it has on moods, feelings, and behaviors. Thus, there are four psychological primary colors – red, blue, yellow and green. They relate respectively to the body, the mind, the emotions and the essential balance between these three [4, 13].

## MAIN PART

The methods of the analysis are defined by the objectives of the research, a theoretical and practical concept, type of the analyzed material. In the work, various types of the analysis are implied: conceptual (structuring and analysis of the main theories on the content of color terms); semantic analysis (studying the semantic structure and distinguishing the non-standard color terms in the analyzed lexical units); contextual and morphological analysis (studying features of the context and morphological structures of color term).

In general, human beings have the biological apparatus to see and distinguish between different colors, and thus we are able to categorise the colors we identify verbally.

While perceptions of color are somewhat subjective, there are some color effects that have a universal meaning. Colors in the red area of the color spectrum are known as warm colors and include red, orange and yellow. These warm colors evoke emotions ranging from feelings of warmth and comfort to feelings of anger and hostility. Colors on the blue side of the spectrum are known as cool colors and include blue, purple and green. These colors are often described as calm, but can also call to mind feelings of sadness or indifference [2].

Different interpretation of visual images perception by language consciousness in different cultures is determined by the peculiarities of national thinking, originality of nature, culture, and as a consequence – the unique selection of the most typical prototypes of a concept. In every language distinction between different semantic spheres and color space in particular, is implemented differently. The difference in the ways of language conceptualization is indicated by the patent example. There are two words –

*siniy* (dark blue) and *goluboy* (light blue) to denote colors of the relevant spectrum in Russian. There is only one lexical unit for this purpose – *bleu* in French. Consequently, the number of basic color terms, for example, in Russian and French, will be different: in Russian – 12, and in French – 11 [14].

Basic terms are the core of color vocabulary, and the terms denoting different shades of color, take its vast periphery. Therefore, the study of the linguistic color world picture and languages' world picture as a whole is possible only with all color shades [11].

In linguistics, the basic color terms and terms of color shades are considered and studied from different points of view: comparative, historical, cognitive, gender.

The existing experimental data support the hypothesis that women use a larger set of color nominations in their speech since their active color vocabulary is much richer than men's. And such fractional nominations as *mauve*, *magenta*, *cognac* are more typical for women's speech [8, 9, 7].

Such differences of using color terms are explained, first of all, by the sphere of social occupation and capabilities of the perception apparatus of men and women.

Men talk about color if it's important in a particular situation. In other words, masculine perception of color is of rational character; color in their understanding exists as an additional attribute of an object they are interested in. Feminine color perception is more aesthetic in nature, so it's considered that they are endowed with the ability to "enjoy" color.

Of course, social conditions and perception peculiarities of both sexes determine the fact that women use more specific names of colors in their speech, and men limit their speech using only basic colors.

Among the non-standard color terms used in women's magazines we can identify:

1. The color terms composed of two generally accepted standard color words: *gris-noir*, *beige-rose*, *bleu-noir* and others.
2. Color terms in the form of a noun or a phrase denoting an object, color of which is associated with a characterized color: *coraille*,

*cerise*, *beurre frais*, *pistache*, *carotte*, *noisette*, *miel*, *argent*, *acajou*, *lavande*, *mandarine*, *ciel*, *lavande-prune*, *feuille morte*, *grenat*.

3. Color term in the form of a noun plus standard color term: *blond-cendre*, *vert tilleul*, *jaune sable*, *rose bouton*, *vert émeraude*, *beige-chocolat*, *gris souris*, *chocolat kaki*, *rose poudre*, *bleu marine*.

4. Color terms, consisting of one color terms and intensive affix *ultra* in a postposition: *violet ultra*, *rouge ultra* and others.

Thus, the functions of color terms on pages of women's magazines are as follows:

1. Non-standard color terms perform aesthetic function. Their use contributes to the world of familiar things beauty, elegance and originality and allows readers to enjoy the inexhaustible color shades:

- *Trois looks pour l'automne: beige-chocolat, gris-noir, lavande-prune* [16]

Use of the expression "sky blue", "chocolate-hacks", "grey mouse color" promises women the same unusual elegance as these words have:

- *Teint ciel, chocolat kaki, rose poudre ou gris souris ce basique est une promesse de chic souple* [16]

2. The use of non-standard color terms has a practical function: unusual, original and refined nomination of colors can provoke readers to buy, for example, certain cosmetics. As you know, women would rather buy a lipstick of "ripe plum color" or "cherry gloss" than just red:

- *Rouge à lèvres invincible prune certaine* [3]

- *La bouche seule s'habille d'un gloss cerise pour un effet mouillé maxi-sexy* [16]

The specific use of non-standard color terms is that this vocabulary is more typical when discussing predominantly "women's" topics: makeup, clothing, accessories, perfumes, cosmetics, for example:

- *En halo frais un rose ou un corail donne un effet souriant* [10]

- *Teint singulier - blond cendré* [16]

- *Fard à lèvres beige rose* [10]

Men, describing the color of objects, mostly use standard color terms in men's magazines:

- *Large portefeuille en crocodile noir, idéal si vous avez beaucoup d'argent* [12]

- *La beige assorti au bleu ou orange pour une touche colorée* [12]

To see the difference in the use of color terms by both sexes in fashion magazines, the authors carried out a comparative analysis of color

terms, most commonly found in women's and men's magazines. The analysis results are given in Table 1.

Table 1

### Non-standard color terms

<i>gris-noir, beige-rose, bleu-noir, coraille, cerise, prune, lavande, mandarine, ciel, lavande-prune, beige-chocolat, gris souris, chocolat kaki, rose poudre, bleu marine, blond-cendre, violet ultra.</i>	
<b>Number of non-standard color terms in women's and men's magazines</b>	
<b>Women's magazines</b>	<b>Men's magazines</b>
<i>gris-noir (14), beige-rose (16), bleu-noir (19), coraille (11), cerise (14), prune (13), lavande (9), mandarine (4), ciel (14), lavande-prune (5), beige-chocolat (9), gris souris (3) chocolat kaki (1), rose poudre (4), bleu marine (7), blond-cendre (2), violet ultra (3) = 148</i>	<i>bleu-noir (3), violet ultra (1) = 4</i>

### CONCLUSION

The situation in men's lifestyle is changing. Fashion and cosmetic industry for men is growing wider. But as we see, the episodic evidences registered in the course of this study, do not allow to speak of a stable trend to use non-standard color terms in the language in the men's magazines. All of the above allow us to speak only about the distinctive features of the women's magazines language and pay attention not only to the inexhaustible nuances of color, but also to those aspects of the reality around us, which only woman is able to observe and characterize.

This is interesting in terms of semantics because it suggests that an increase in basic color terms could be explained as part of a general increase in vocabulary of a language as a response to a culture with a richer information environment. Therefore, languages change in order to help speakers communicate more effectively.

Thus, attention to details in the description of various phenomena and objects by means of non-standard color terms is the hallmark of French women's magazines. The use of these terms brings to modern French language beauty and grace, without which linguistic reality is impossible.

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