

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning Extension of Color Terms in Persian and English

Habibollah Mashhady

University of Zabol
mashhadyh@uoz.ac.ir

Hossein Salarvand

University of Science and Technology
hosseinsalarvand2009@gmail.com

Nasser Fallah

University of Zabol
nfallah@uoz.ac.ir

Abstract

We deal with a wide range of colors in our daily life. They are such ubiquitous phenomena that is hard and next to impossible to imagine even a single entity (be it an object, place, living creature, etc) devoid of them. This omnipresence of colors around us has also made its way through abstract and less tangible entities via the interaction between culture and cognition. In an attempt to shed further light on the way color meanings could be extended in different languages and cultures, the present study sought to investigate the semantic extension of Persian and English color terms based on cultural data. The findings revealed the existence of both language-idiosyncratic and general tendencies for both Persian and English languages with respect to semantic extension of color terms. It was also shown that Persian and English speakers mostly use the same mechanisms of metonymy, metaphor and sense of opposite relation based on cultural data and their experience of the physical world to develop more and more color meanings. Furthermore, the study suggested that the direction and development of the semantic domain of a color term mainly depends on its already developed semantic properties and is not accidental. Two other accidental points were also found in the study. First, the borrowing, acceptance and the usage of a color expression from another language might depend on the already developed semantic properties of the related color term in the recipient language. Second, it is possible to predict the direction and development of the new connotations and meanings of a color term in a specific language.

Keywords: Color, Semantic Extension, Culture, Cognitive Mechanisms

Received: February 2013; Accepted: December 2013

1. Introduction

Since the pioneering work of Berlin and Kay (1969), color has become a popular area for scholarly research worldwide (e.g., Baxter, 1983; Hardin & Maffi, 1997; Hays, Margolis, Naroll, & Dale, 1972; Kay, 2003; Kay, Berlin, Maffi & Merrifield, 1997; Kay & McDaniel, 1978; Kikuchi & Lichtenberk, 1983; Mitterer, Horschig, Musseler & Majid, 2009; Philip, 2006; Socelia, 2008; Tao, 1994; Uuskula, 2008; Wierzbicka, 1990, 1996, 2008; Xing, 2008, to name a few). In this connection, the two most competitive and controversial accounts have been led by Kay and McDaniel (1978) and Wierzbicka (1990). The former claims that the semantics of basic color terms in all languages is the results of a common set of neurophysiological processes in which differences in wavelengths of light reaching the eye are transformed into response differences in the visual nervous systems, while the latter, which is the concern of the present study, opposes Kay and McDaniel's claim and suggests that color concepts are interwoven in certain universal identifiable human experiences, such as day, night, fire, the sun, vegetation, the sky and the ground. Further, Wierzbicka (2008) believes that semantic universals of color terms can be established only by examining real human speech, in many languages, and trying to pinpoint the commonalities of linguistic usage. Put it another way, the two camps look at color phenomenon from completely different viewpoints, one from a neurophysiological perspective and the other from a cognitive perspective.

On the other hand, according to Wilson and Keil (1999), the study of culture is of high relevance to cognitive science since human cognition takes place in a social and cultural context. It uses tools provided by culture: words, concepts, beliefs, experiences, etc. Moreover, a great deal of cognition is about

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

social and cultural phenomena. Thus, the two potential views, the cultural and cognitive ones, are reasonable and should be parallel (Brown, 2005).

Therefore, taking into account Wierzbicka's cognitive stance on the semantics of color terms and Wilson and Keil's explanation on the importance of including culture in the study of cognitive sciences, the present study seeks to explore the semantics of color terms in Farsi, which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been investigated yet, and compare them with their counterparts in English language so as to show how color terms in these two different languages extend their semantic functions from their original to different meanings based on the cultural data.

As such, this study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. Which kinds of mechanisms are used by English and Persian speakers in extending the semantics of color terms?
2. Is the development of semantic behavior of colors accidental or is that systematically based on the early developed semantic properties of color terms?

The results of this work should provide evidence which supports the view that the meanings of color have accordingly varied based on certain universal identifiable human experience (Wierzbicka, 1990, 2008), which also extends our understanding of why some color terms appear to have different semantic meanings or functions cross-linguistically. It might also shed more light on the further development of the semantic domain of a color term.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Semantics of Color Terms

Since 1969, when Berlin and Kay's theory about color term systems was

published, linguists have more actively paid their attention to color term systems in different languages. According to Berlin and Kay (1969), the type of color term system is defined according to the number of basic color terms in the language.

Berlin and Kay's theory is called Universal Model of Color Categorization and the main idea is that basic color categories are regarded as universal ones. Their universality means the universality of their foci which represents the best sample of the corresponding basic color term.

After analyzing vast language data, the authors established 11 universal basic color categories, i.e., 11 universal foci were pointed out through the color space, and they are the places in the spectrum, where the best samples of English basic color categories of BLACK, WHITE, RED, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, BROWN, ORANGE, PURPLE, PINK, and GREY are found. The foci were defined as primary designates of universal semantic categories.

To identify basic color terms, Berlin and Kay established some criteria consisting of four main and four additional points. The main points are: 1) basic color terms are monolexemic, whose meaning, in Berlin and Kay's view, cannot be derived from the meanings of the parts; 2) basic color terms are not subordinate to other color terms, according to the cited authors, their significance is not contained in the significance of any other color term.; 3) basic color terms have unrestricted referents; 4) basic color terms are psychologically salient. The additional points are: 1) the distributional power of a basic term is the same as that of the already established basic color terms; 2) the state of being basicness for a term is questionable if it is the name of a thing, or hints at a thing whose color is encoded by it; 3) loan words probably are not basic; 4) morphological complexity is probably characteristic of non-

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

basic terms.

Besides the universality of basic color terms, Berlin and Kay established the universal regularity of color categorization that was always felt intuitively. After various linguistic data had been studied, the authors established the following universals:

1. In every language there are basic color terms for BLACK and WHITE.
2. If there are three basic color terms in a certain language, then there is a basic color term for RED there.
3. If there are four basic color terms in a certain language, then there is a basic color term for either YELLOW or GREEN there.
4. If there are five basic color terms in a certain language, then there are basic color terms for both YELLOW and GREEN there.
5. If there are six basic color terms in a certain language, then there is a basic colour term for BLUE there.
6. If there are seven basic color terms in a certain language, then there is a basic color term for BROWN there.
7. If there are eight or more basic color terms in a certain language, then there are basic color terms for PURPLE, PINK, ORANGE, GREY, or for some other combinations of them there.

Although the position of the B &K paradigm seems to be unchallenged, there are a few dissenting voices present; researchers who adamantly reject the theory and the evolution of these terms. These voices suggest that the whole project is doomed to failure and to producing misleading conclusions since it rests on erroneous assumptions.

Wierzbicka (1996), for example, refuses to see neurophysiology as the source of the universality. Rather she points to our shared experience. Thus, she argues that the definition of red, for example, could have the following

appearance:

X is red=

when one sees things like X one can think of fire

when one sees things like X one can think of blood

one can see things like X at times when one cannot see other things.

The difference in extension of color concepts would then be due to differences in reference points. In a similar fashion all ‘early’ color categories are given experiential definitions by Wierzbicka.

Wierzbicka, (2008) delivered another blow to Berlin and Kay’s Universal Model of Color Categorization. She argued that although it is true to say that we perceptually live in a world full of colors, conceptually this might not be the case. Referring to the fact that there are many languages in which there is no word for ‘color’ or a question such as “what color is it?” she wonders why the powerful theory of Kay and Berlin assumes otherwise. Considering languages that have no word for color-such as in Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Asia-Wierzbicka argued that ‘colour’ could not be at least demonstrably a universal concept though it might be very important in English. From her perspective, asserting that speakers of such languages nonetheless think in terms of colors is to impose a conceptual complexity on them without empirical evidence. She further argues that:

“Even if it is true that the absence of a word does not prove the absence of a concept, how can we prove the *presence* of a concept for which there is no word? And if we want to search for human universals, should we not try to rely, as far as possible, on concepts which *are* lexically recognized in all languages, rather than those which happen to be lexicalized in English?” (Wierzbicka, 2008, p. 409)

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

Referring to the fact that empirical work within the area of natural semantic metalanguage theory of language and thought has shown that while many languages do not have a word for 'colour' all of them have a word for 'seeing', Wierzbicka (2008) suggest that it would make more sense to ask about universals of seeing rather than colors.

2.2. Comparative and Contrastive Studies into the Color Terms of Different Languages

As for the pragmatic and semantic focus of contrastive color research, some studies mainly concentrate on how people in a specific culture and language use colors to convey different meanings. Philip (2006), for example, based on data extracted from general reference corpora as well as traditional reference works, examined the use of color-word metaphors in English and Italian. He maintains that the correspondences between conventional linguistic expressions and the several meanings attributed to colors observed have a dual function in language and culture. On one hand, it is crystal clear that color metaphors are heavily influenced by metonymy, because most of the connotative meanings assigned to colors seem to be grounded, at least to some extent, in reality. On the other hand, the connotative values of colors that are demonstrated in conventional linguistic expressions reinforce and perpetuate folk beliefs about color meaning: the language user can appeal to his or her linguistic knowledge to support a belief such as *red* means *violence*, because he or she can quote linguistic expressions, such as *see red / vedere tutto rosso* and *red* with *anger / rosso di rabbia* as *evidence* (Philip, 2006). A further thesis raised was that "because the colors chosen in conventional linguistic expressions are not selected actively by the speaker, but rather predetermined by the habitual patterns of the language, these language habits subsequently affect the

speaker's, and the language community's, perception of the colour" (Philip, 2006, p. 88).

Moreover, Zhang (2006) in a contrastive study between English and Chinese suggests that different people with different languages and cultures might have their own fondness for colors. 'Green' means a taboo for Brazilians, 'yellow' for Japanese, 'red' for Belgians, 'multicolor' for Turks and 'black' for Europeans. However, Zhang also maintained such different cultures might still have similarities in their thinking and social activities which can lead to similar color connotations as 'white', for instance, has connotations of purity in both Chinese and English (Zhang, 2006).

In another contrastive study between Chinese and English, Xing (2008) provides diachronic and synchronic evidence to show how the meanings of color terms have been extended in Chinese and English cultures through mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy, sense of opposite relation, and pragmatic inference. Xing argues that differences in the extended and abstracted meanings of Chinese and English color terms have their roots in semantic properties that have been developed earlier. In other words, early semantic properties determine the characteristics of new meanings.

Derrig (1978) suggested that there is a universal order in the development of the figurative use of color terms where they no longer specify colors. She examined the figurative use of color terms in four languages: Chinese, Mongoloian, Yucatecan Maya and Zulu. She found that in these languages, black and white had the highest number of figurative meanings, followed by red and yellow in three languages and by green/blue in one language. Brown, pink, orange, purple, and grey had none. She claimed that the universal order of figurative meanings among color terms follows the emergence of basic color terms as proposed by Berlin and Kay (1969). She maintained that "red color"

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

meaning for RED is shared in all four languages; 'ripe', 'angry', and 'chop' meanings for RED are shared in three languages, while 'pertaining to sex' and 'hot' meanings are shared only in two languages. However, Kikuchi and Lichtenberk (1983) provided findings arguing against Derrig's hypothesis. They conducted a cross-linguistic study of figurative use of color terms revealing the existence of both language-idiosyncratic development and general tendencies for 29 languages. They claim that the development of the figurative use of color terms need not follow the development of basic color terms. They argued that common tendencies are based on universal natural phenomena and perception of the world by speakers of languages.

Finally, in an attempt to show how meanings of colors are identified in the different cultures of Arabic and English and the way both languages are similar and different for each color term, Hasan Al-Sammerai, and Kadir (2011) focused on the use of colors throughout the Arabic and English culture. They referred to the etymological meaning of the color terms, and provided six basic Arabic color terms and compared them with six English color terms. Based on the analysis and the results gathered, it was found that the Arabic and English color terms possess more common functions than differences. In line with Xing's (2008) findings, the results also provided evidence which supported that the language etymology of the color terms in neither culture is accidental, as they were found to be systematically developed based on the already existing semantic extensions of these color terms. Further, it was found that the six color terms in both languages can be categorized into two types-positive and negative meanings. Finally, the comparison led the researchers to conclude that the extension of colors is purely cognitive and has been stimulated by the people's own understanding of their real experiences.

Nevertheless, the available literature is admittedly slim on the study of semantics of color terms. Especially, there is a glaring lacuna on how the meaning of color terms changes from their very original meaning to the more abstract ones in Persian. As such, the scarcity of research in this area necessitates undertaking a study into examining the nature of semantic extension of color names in Persian and comparing them to their counterparts in English.

3. Data and Method

Although there are many colors used in Persian language and culture, this study focuses on only six very commonly used colors consisting of black (*siah* or *meshki*), white (*sefid*), red (*ghermez* or *sorkh*), green (*sabz*), yellow (*zard*) and blue (*abi*), so that it would be more suitable for the purpose of comparing and contrasting with their English counterparts. Using the cognitive cultural categorization for each color term, three different color meanings were identified as original meaning, extended meaning and abstract meaning. ‘Original meaning’ refers to the etymological meaning of the color term; ‘extended meaning’ refers to the meaning extended from the original meaning through metaphor, metonymy, or other cognitive means; ‘abstract meaning’ refers to the meaning that has been further abstracted from the extended meaning. Then, attempts are made to present an explanation regarding the cultural points and mechanisms underlying each meaning of the color terms.

As for the data collection, all the data used here comes from three sources: corpus, examples from native speakers, and dictionaries. PLDB (Persian Linguistics Database) (Assi, 2005) was used. This corpus includes more than 56 million words. This database comprises contemporary literary books, articles, magazines, newspapers, laws and regulations, transcriptions of news, reports,

and telephone speeches. We at the same time relied heavily on examples produced by native Persian speakers. Both the Persian and the English dictionaries were also consulted for additional examples and for deciding the meaning.

4. The Categorization of Different Meanings of Persian Color Terms

According to Xing (2008), Tao (1994), Baxter (1983) and Hays et al. (1972), white and black are the two colors which have the longest history among all the color terms in all languages in the world. This is also true in the Persian culture, because they are the two most contrastive and easily identified colors.

As listed below, Persian has a wide range of meanings for the white color term:

4.1. Sepid or sefid (white, سفید)

a. Original meaning:

1. white color

Example: *Barfe sefid* (white snow) or *Panire sefid* (white cheese)

b. Extended meanings:

1. Blank or Empty

Example: *Safheye sefid* (white sheet) or *checke sefid* (white cheque)

2. Old:

Example: *rish sefid* (white beard) or *sepid moo* (white hair)

3. Blind:

Example: *chashm sefid* (white eye)

4. Sick:

Example: *mesle gach sefid shodan* (getting white as plaster)

5. Beautiful or handsome:

Example: *Sefid roo* (white face)

c. Abstracted meanings:

1. Pure:

Example: *Ghalbe Sefid* (whiteheart)

2. Having done a lot of good deeds

Example: *Sefid nameh* (white letter)

3. Lucky:

Example: *sefid bakht* (white luck)

4. Famous to be successful and well-behaved:

Example: *roo sefid* (white face)

5. Rude, impertinent and disrespectful:

Example: *Sefid eye* (white eye)

Discussion 1

As explained above, the extended and the abstracted meanings are all derivations of the original meaning. This has been achieved either through metaphoricalization that is “construed as the analogical mapping of more concrete terms from a source domain onto a more abstract term in the target domain” (Traugott & Dasher, 2002, p. 75) or through metonymization which is the semantic process of using a part for the whole. In the first extended meaning, the color white has been metaphorically used to refer to blankness based on the assumption that if something is white it has nothing printed or written on it. *Checke sefid* (white cheque) refers to a cheque with no amount of money written on that, and *safheye sefid* (white sheet) is also a piece of paper with nothing written on that. Number 2 is a direct case of part and whole or metonymy among extended meanings. The white beard or hair of an old man

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

has been used to refer to him. So, white also conveys the meaning of being old. Similarly, in Number 3 *chashm sefid* (white eye), the white taints on the eyes of blind people have been used to refer to them. In other words, we can say those who are blind have white taints on their eyes and this could be used to refer to them. Thus, the meaning of blindness has been created from the meaning of white color of only the taints on the eyes of blind people, a clear case of metonymy. Much the same way, in the fourth extended meaning the white color of the face of the sick people is used to refer to the sickness or emaciation assuming that the people who get sick or emaciated turn white in the face. The fifth extended meaning is, in fact, the extension of the original color white to describe the beauty of the people who are attractive and beautiful supposing that people who have a white complexion are also beautiful or handsome.

Abstracted meanings of the color white are also related to the original and extended meanings. In the first abstracted meaning, positive connotations of *purity* have been developed from the original meaning and extended meaning of *clean*. In other words, it is assumed that if somebody has a heart that is white with no black spot, he/she has a heart that has no such things as sin, grudges or malevolence in it. This might be better explained in terms of the opposite relations. In the Persian culture, like many other cultures, *black* (as it will be explained later) has negative connotations of sinfulness, wickedness and malevolence. So, those who have a white heart have no black spot, sin, malevolence or impurity in their hearts. The second abstracted one *sefid nameh* (white letter) is also very much similar to the previous one which has just been explained. Those with a white heart have no blackness, sin or impurity in their hearts; consequently, those people who have *sefid nameh* (white letters) have lived a life devoid of any sin and full of good deeds. Therefore, white has connotations of *good deeds* besides connotations of *lack of sin*,

malevolence or impurity. The third abstracted meaning is *sefid bakht* (white luck) which could once again be explained through the opposite relations. As it will be explained later, the black color in Persian has connotations of haplessness, malchance and dismalness. So, *sefid bakht* (white luck) could have opposing connotations referring to a person who has good luck and lives a blessed, abundant and prosperous life. Very similar to the second abstracted meaning, the fourth abstracted meaning *sefid roo* (white-faced) refers to a person who is famous among people to have good deeds, to be successful and well-behaved.

Unlike the positive meanings discussed so far, number 5 among the abstracted ones, has an opposing meaning. *Sefid cheshm* (white eye) seems to be very contradictory. It refers to a person who is rude, impertinent, belligerent, and mischievous. One possible interpretation might be that somebody who usually turns up his eyes white or shows the whiteness of his/her eyes has this characteristic. On the whole, we could say that in the case of white color most of the meanings developed through extension or abstraction are positive and to a great extent related. They all have been developed based on human experience and cognitive ability and through mechanisms such as metonymy, metaphor, opposite relations. One contradictory meaning should not make us overlook the huge amount of positive coherent concepts which have developed from the original meaning through extension and abstraction. Interestingly, even the negative meaning has developed based on the application of the same cognitive mechanisms (e.g., metonymy) though it might have a contradictory meaning.

4.2. Siah or Meshki (Black, سیاہ, مشکی)

a. Original meaning

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

1. black color

Example: *mooye siah* (black hair)

- b. Extended meanings:

1. Dark:

Example: *shabe siah* (dark night), *siah chal* (dark well)

- c. Abstract meaning:

1. Berieved:

Example: *siah poosh* (black-dressed)

2. Poor and hapless:

Example: *siah rooz* (black day)

3. Famine and starvation:

Example: *sale siah* (black year)

4. Ominous or having bad luck:

Example: *siah bakht* (black luck)

5. Malevolent:

Example: *siah del* (black heart)

6. Sinful, wicked or criminal:

Example: *siah kerdar* (black deed) or *siah nameh* (black letter)

7. Rude, impertinent and disrespectful:

Example: *siah rooy* or *rooy siah* (black face)

8. To be avoided:

Example: *Liste siah* (black list)

9. Tricky or deceptive:

Example: *siah kar* (black work) or *siah baz*

Discussion 2

The meanings of *siah* or black color are even more clearly related than those of *sefid*. The extended meaning is based on the assumption that darkness is black

and so the original meaning of black could be extended to describe the darkness of the physical world through metonymy. Consequently, *shabe siah* (black night) means dark night. The abstracted meanings are much more various. Black or darkness is mainly used by Iranian people to refer to unfavorable things. For instance, Iranians usually use black clothing and placards as signs for mourning. Bereaved families dress in black for some time even after funeral for a matter of one to three weeks or so. This interrelation between the black color and mourning becomes more evident when we focus on the abstracted meanings of black color in phrases such as *siah poosh* (black-dressed) to refer to bereaved people.

Thus, the original meaning of black color has been first extended to darkness through metonymy and then multiple abstracted meanings have developed. The second abstracted meaning is number 2. *Siah rooz* (black day) could be based on the assumption that somebody who is *siah rooz* (black day) has a dark life with no light or ray of hope. So the abstracted meaning of haplessness or mischance is created. The case of number 3 is also very similar to this. *Saale Siah* (black year) has been metaphorically developed to refer to a year full of famine and starvation and devoid of God's blessings. So a black year is dark because it is devoid of blessing and prosperity. Similarly, in number 4, *siah bakht* (black luck) is used to describe a person who brings bad luck with him. In number 5, *siah del* (black heart) is used to describe another kind of negative or unfavorable characteristic. It refers to a person who has a heart filled with malevolence. More directly related is number 6 *siah kerdar* (black deeds) or *siah name* (black letter) both of which refer to a person whose deeds are dark or black. In fact, they refer to a person who has done many unfavourable acts or sins. Number 7 also develops a related meaning. *Siah rooy* or *rooy siah* (black- faced) is used to refer to a person who has the unfavorable

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

characteristic of rudeness, impertinence and disrespect towards others. Number *Sliste siah* (black list) is most probably a borrowing from English. However, it should be noted that this is to a great extent in congruence with the semantic properties of *siah* and that is why it has been easily borrowed and accepted in Persian culture and language. This might give insights to one more point posited in this paper that color expressions could be more easily accepted in a new culture and language if they are in congruence with the semantic properties of the related color term in that culture and language. Number 9, however, describes a person with the unfavourable characteristic of tricking people. This derived meaning could not be considered as irrelevant to the previous negative meanings either.

On the whole, we could say that from the original meaning of black color (*siah*) or its extended meaning that is *darkness* or *lack of any light* many other various abstracted meanings have been derived. Meanings with negative connotations of bereavement, haplessness, famine, sinfulness, malevolence and disrespect are all unfavorable and refer to terrible conditions or unacceptable characteristics. More interestingly, there is the evident contrast between the connotations of white and black in Persian. Apparently, Iranians mainly use white to refer to favorable things while they use black to refer to the unfavorable. The meanings such as clarity, purity, good luck, good deeds, benevolence and beauty conveyed through white are in sharp contrast with connotations such as darkness, haplessness, poverty, famine, bad luck, sin and so on conveyed through black. This is indicative of how the sense of relation can strongly make the color terms develop opposing and contrastive meanings in a specific culture and language. Surely, in some cases, which are very few, the meanings conveyed through white and black might even be in line. For instance, White eye (*sefid cheshm*) and black eye (*siah cheshm*) have very

congruent meanings, both referring to a rude and disrespectful person. As mentioned before, the whiteness of eyes systematically does create negative connotations, though in most cases the color white leads to favorable meanings. Nevertheless, the huge amount of positive connotations made through white and negative ones created through black make us suggest that Persian native speakers attribute favorable things to white color and unfavorable things to black color contrastively as a result of the existing opposing sense relations.

4.3. Sabz (green, سبز)

As in other cultures and languages, the green color is meaningful in Persian culture and language. Besides, it is symbolic in Persian. In fact it has much to do with Persian customs and traditions. One of the most important and traditional Persian customs is *Nowrooz* feast. This feast which starts at the very beginning of each New Year is interwoven with green color. *Nowrooz* feast starts at the beginning of spring when the nature starts to grow and get green after a long sleep in the winter and fall. Based on this tradition, people should notice how the nature changes and take lessons from the nature in order to live a happy life and change for the better. A special kind of plant that Iranians grow and symbolically use at the beginning of the New Year is indicative of the importance they attach to the green part of the nature. In fact, green color has always been a symbol of liveliness, growth, happiness and change in Persian.

a. Original meaning:

1. green color

Example: *Tabiate sabz* (green nature)

b. Extended meanings:

1. unripe and green;

Example: *Gojeye sabz* (unripe tomato)

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

2. Covered with plants

Example: *Jangale sabz* (green jungle) or *Tabiatesabze shomal* (green nature of the north)

3. Living and not dry

Example: *Derakhte sabz* (green tree) vs. *derakhte zard* (yellow tree)

c. Abstracted meanings:

1. Happy and lively;

Example: *khanevadeye sabz* (green family) or *Zendegie sabz* (green life)

2. Leading to grow and change;

Example: *Moje sabz* (green wave)

Discussion 3

Paying closer attention to the original meaning, extended meaning and abstracted ones, we can find that the same procedures are involved in the expansion of meaning. First, the original meaning has been developed to include extended meanings such as unripe in *Gojeye sabz* (green tomato) based on the assumption that unripe fruits and crops are still green. Thus, etonymically the greenness of the unripe fruits or crops could be used to refer to them. The second extension of the original meaning is based on the assumption that the fields or jungles which are overfilled with plant and trees look greener. So, *Jangalaye sabs* (green jungles) or *tabiate sabze shomal* (green nature of the north) are overfilled with plants or trees, look greener than other jungles or fields and that is why they are particularly called *sabz* (green). The third extension of the original meaning is based on the general assumption that living (and not dry) plants and trees are green while dry plants and trees are yellow.

Therefore, the green color, contrary to the yellow one, has been extended to include the meaning of living through metaphor. Consequently, *derakhte sabz* (green tree) is living and green while *derakhte zard* (yellow tree) is dry. The abstractions of the color green in Persian are also directly related to the extended meanings. The first abstraction is based on the assumption that the meanings of liveliness and happiness could be metaphorically derived from the greenness or living state of the nature. Thus, *khanevadeye sabz* (green family) and *zendegie sabz* (green life) refer to families who are happy and lively. Similarly, in the second abstraction *Moje sabz* (green wave) is a recent meaning expansion in Persian culture. It is assumed that green trees or plants are living and so they grow, move and change. Therefore, *moje sabz* (green wave) metaphorically refers to a political orientation claiming to have the goal of moving and growing and finally leading to changes for the better. Once again, for the green color the same procedures have been gradually taken to first derive the extended meanings and finally develop the abstracted meanings.

4.4. Ghermez or Sorkh (red, قرمز, سرخ)

a. Original meaning:

1. color red

Examples: *khoone sorkh* (Red blood) or *cheraghe ghermez* (red traffic light)

b. Extended meanings:

1. Flamy and glazy or too shiny:

Example: *Zoghale sorkh*: Red charcoal or *aftabe sorkh* (red sun)

2. Blushed or embarrassed:

Example: *ghermez shodan* (getting red)

3. Angry

Example: *ghermez shodan* (getting red)

c. Abstracted meanings

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

1. Banned, prohibited or dangerous:

Example: *khate ghermez* (Red line) or *mantagheye ghermez* (red region)

2. Emergent:

Example: *mogheiate ghermez* (Emergent condition)

3. State of having a flamy tongue in a way that jeopardizes you:

Example: *zabane sorkh* (red tongue)

Discussion 4

The expansion of *ghermez* (red) also follows a similar process. The original meaning has been developed to include extended meanings such as flamy, blaze, glazy and shiny. So, *zoghale sorkh* (red charcoal) is a piece of charcoal so much burning that it has turned red. In a similar fashion, *aftabe sorkh* (red sun) is used when the sun is very shiny and burning. In other words, the red color has been metaphorically extended to describe something which is too burning or shiny or blaze that it can no longer be called yellow. The second and third extended meanings *ghermez shodan* (getting red) are also based on the assumption that somebody who is very embarrassed or angry turns red in the face. Thus, the original meaning of red has been extended to refer to anger and embarrassment. The abstracted meanings are also closely related to the original and extended meanings. A close look at original meanings reveals that red color has to do with things which are dangerous (blood) or prohibited (red traffic light). Thus, the abstracted meanings have also developed from such connotations. The first abstracted meaning which is *khate ghermez* (red line) is used to describe a condition or stage beyond which is dangerous or not allowed. Similarly, in the second abstracted case that is *mogheiate ghermez* (red condition), red color has been expanded to describe emergent conditions. This expansion of the red color to dangerous, prohibited or emergent situation

becomes crystal clear when we consider the third abstracted meaning which is *zabane sorkh* (red tongue), describing a kind of language or speech habit that is dangerous and might jeopardize the speaker's social status or life. So, as can be seen, once again we have the original meaning from which more comprehensive meanings could be extended or abstracted.

4.5. Zard (yellow, زرد)

a. The original meaning:

1. the yellow color

Example: *talayezard* (yellow gold) or *shole zard* (a traditional Persian food which is yellow)

b. Extended meanings:

1. Shiny:

Example: *khorshide zard* (yellow sun)

2. Withered and dry:

Example: *barge zard* (yellow leaf)

3. Sick and emaciated:

Example: *zard rooy* (yellow face)

4. Embarrassed: *sorkho va zard shodan*: (getting red and yellow)

c. Abstracted meaning:

1. Getting too old and about to die

Example: *be sar residane zardie omr* (getting to the yellowness of life)

Discussion 5

Zard has also undergone the same processes in the expansion of meaning. First, the original meaning has been extended to include the meaning of shiny, *khorshide zard* (yellow sun) based on the assumption that yellow things like

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

gold or sun are also shiny. In the second extended meaning, the yellowness of the falling and withered leaves or trees has been metaphorically used to refer to them. In fact, it has been assumed that withered leaves and trees are yellow and so yellow could also mean *withered*. The third extended meaning, *zard rooy* (yellow-faced) is based on metonymy assuming that the yellowness of face of the sick and emaciated people could be developed to refer to them. Similarly, number 4, *zard va sorkh shodan* (getting red and yellow) has been developed to include the meaning of embarrassment. The abstracted meaning has also developed based on metaphoricalization. Green leaves get yellow and finally fall down, similarly, people live to be old and finally pass away. Thus, getting to yellowness of the life (*be sar residane zardie omr*) metaphorically means getting very old and close to death. The opposite sense relations between *sabz* (green) and *zard* (yellow) should not be overlooked. While *sabz* is used to refer to the fields, lands and tree covered with trees and plants, *zard* refers to the falling of withered leaves of trees or drought lands. Additionally, while the *sabz* refers to happiness and liveliness the *zard* refers to sickness, old age and death. Such opposing relations play a significant role in the development and expansion of the semantic properties of colors.

4.6. Blue (abi, آبی)

a. Original meaning:

1. The blue color

Examples: *asmane abi* (blue sky), *pirahane abi* (blue shirt)

b. Extended meaning: No extension

c. Abstracted meaning: No abstracted meaning expression

Discussion 6

Generally speaking, color blue is natural as the color of sea, sky and twilight. As for the semantic extension, it bifurcates in the Persian culture into light blue (*abi rowshan*) and dark blue (*abi tireh*). The connotative meanings of these two hues vary from negative to positive along a continuum with *abi rowshan* and *abi tire* has the two poles. Put it another way, the lighter the color, the more positive connotations (e.g., serenity, peace, happiness and optimism) it evokes in Persian, on the contrary, the darker the color, the more negative connotations (e.g., sadness, depression, sickness and death) come to mind. This sharply contradictory conceptual development of *abi*'s hues might be a plausible reason why there is no color expression, and lexicalized concept for the extended and abstracted meanings of *abi* in Persian as the data obtained through our sources- the corpus, interview with Persian native speakers and dictionaries also suggested. Another reason for the lack of *abi* expressions might be that since both black and green have developed the connotations of *abi tireh* and *abi rowshan* respectively, the present existence of the previously-mentioned connotations in these colors precludes the color *abi* (as a basic color in Persian) to develop such connotations and have expressions indicating the extended and abstracted meanings of this color.

So far, we have discussed the semantic functions of six color terms in Persian and the processes of the development of their extended and abstract meanings. In what follows, we will compare these six Persian color terms with their English counterparts to see if Persian color terms possess any unique characteristics in their development or if they follow the same or similar paths in extending their meanings.

5 .Comparing and Contrasting the Semantic Extension of Color Terms in Persian and English

Tables I-VI include semantic expansion of Persian and English color terms. It should be noted that the examples given are not meant to be exhaustive, especially for those in English. Efforts have been made to first include almost all representative Persian examples and their English equivalents, then to find representative functions of color terms that only exist in English. By doing so, we hope to achieve two goals: 1) to find the similarities between Persian and English, and 2) to find the semantic function of color terms unique to either Persian or English. The comparison of the functions of Persian and English color terms reveals the following results:

The color white (*sefid*) is of much interest in this analysis. The metaphorical extension of the meaning of white to blankness is evident in both languages, assuming that everything that is white has no black in it and so it has nothing printed or written on that. In Persian, it has particularly been more extended to refer to a cheque with no amount of money written on that. The extension of the color white in both Persian and English is also congruent in the case of sickness. The apparent changes in the skin color as a result of sickness, fear, and so on seem to be a great force behind the existence of color expressions. The expressions *as white as a sheet* in English and *mesle gach sefid shodan* (getting as white as plaster) in Persian are indicative of this fact as you see the color white has been extended through metaphor to include the connotations of sickness in both languages. It should be noted that a sick person might even turn black as a result of sickness; however, in both languages the color white plays this role. So, the present existence of the connotations of sickness in the color white precludes the color black to develop such

connotations. The abstraction of the color white to meanings of purity and innocence is very similar, too. *Ghalbe sefid* (white heart) in Persian and *the white flag of truth* or *whiter than white* in English have close connotations. Considering the fact that the color black has similar negative connotations of malevolence and evilness in both languages (as it will be discussed later), it would be clear that white color can develop to positive connotations such as purity, honesty and benevolence in both languages through opposite sense relations. In other words, it has been assumed that if something is white it can be devoid of dishonesty, evilness, malevolence and impurity. The case of *sefid bakht* (white luck) to refer to a person who is lucky and lives a happy life in Persian and *white hope* in English to refer to a person who is believed to bring success with him are also similar, though there might be some differences in their exact meaning. Both of them are abstractions of the color white (*sefid*) to positive and related connotations of good luck and success respectively. However, the last two items seem to be very much deviating. The use of *sefid cheshm* (white eye) in Persian to refer to a person who is rude and disrespectful towards others, on one hand, and the use of *white elephant* to describe something costly and useless in English on the other do not seem to be based on the expansion of the previous extended meanings. Nevertheless, once again, it should be reiterated that the existence of such cases cannot invalidate the huge amount of positive and highly related connotations of the color white or *sefid* which have developed one out of the other systematically (see Table1)

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

Table 1. Semantic Functions of White Color in Persian and English

| Color | Persian | English |
|---------------|--|---|
| Sefid (White) | *Sefid: <i>barfe sefid</i> (white snow) | *White snow |
| | *Blank: <i>safheye sefid</i> (white sheet) <i>Cheke sefid</i> (white check) | *Blank: white sheet |
| | *Sick or frightened: <i>mesle gach sefid</i> (as white as plaster) | *Sick: as white as sheet |
| | *Pure and innocent: <i>ghalbe sefid</i> (white heart) | *Pure and innocent: white flag of truth |
| | *Lucky: <i>sefid bakht</i> (white luck) | |
| | | *Bringing success: white hope |
| | *Rude, impertinent and disrespectful: <i>Sefid cheshm</i> (white eye) | |
| | *uselessness: white elephant | |

The color black is even much more interesting and informative in this regard. The most obvious extension of the meaning of black color to describe darkness is clear and the same in both languages. Darkness is black, so black can be used to refer to darkness through metonymy resulting in *shabe siah* (dark night) in Persian and *black as night* in English. The abstract meanings are also very similar considering the fact that in both cultures, unlike color white (as it was mentioned before), black color has metaphorically developed to meanings such as being malevolent, sinful or evilness. *Siah del* (black heart) in Persian refers to a person who has a heart with no emotion and full of sin or malevolence. This also goes for the English expression *a heart as black as coal*. Additionally, in Persian *siah bakht* (black luck) against *sefid bakht*, which was

explained in the previous section, is used metaphorically to refer to a person with no luck. In a similar fashion, the colour black in English has developed similar connotations of hopelessness and depression which could be used in phrases such as *another black day*. The development of the negative connotations of hopelessness, bad luck, depression and so on seem to be more logical when we consider the fact that in both cultures this color is a sign of mourning. Iranian and English people for instance dress in black in funerals as a sign of mourning and respect for the soul of the person who has passed away. This has also been realized in *siah poosh* (dressed in black) to describe a person who is bereaved. *Siah baz* (black work) in Persian and *black art* have also been developed to convey other different but still negative connotations. This should not be considered as odd, because it is usually in the dark that many things can go unseen. So, such abstracted meanings are also based on the extended meaning of black that is darkness. The last item which is *black list* has been transferred to Persian as well. It refers to a list of people, companies, products and so on which have been considered as unacceptable by the authority and must be avoided. This is also in line with other unfavorable connotations of black in English. However, the point is that this borrowed item has become very much commonplace in Persian. As an additional point put forward in this paper, one reason for the ease of acceptance and usage of this expression in Persian might be its congruence with the other connotations of the color black in Persian (see Table 2).

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

Table 2. Semantic Functions of Black Color in Persian and English

| Color | Persian | English |
|--------------|---|--|
| Siah (Black) | *Siah: <i>mooye siah</i> (black hair) | *Black: Black hair |
| | *Dark: <i>shabe siah</i> (dark night) | *Dark: black as night |
| | *Malevolent, sinful or emotionless: <i>siah del</i> (black heart) | *Malevolent or evil: a heart as black as coal |
| | *Ominous or having bad luck: <i>siah bakht</i> (black luck) | |
| | *Berieved: <i>siah poosh</i> (dressed in black) | *A sign of mourning: everybody was dressed in black at the funeral |
| | *Trickery or deceptive: <i>siah baz</i> (black work) | |
| | | *depressing and without hope: another black day |
| | | *Of devil: black art (black magic) |
| | *To be avoided: <i>liste siah</i> (black list) | *To be avoided: black list |

The color *sabz* (green), developed through the same mechanisms, conveys many connotations. The extension of this color to describe the jungles, fields and lands which are filled with plants, grasses and trees and look quite green (as it was explained before) is similar in both languages. The second extended meaning which is the same in both languages is also based on the assumption that unripe fruits and crops are still green and so we could metonymically use their greenness to refer to them. Interestingly, such an extended meaning develops into different abstracted meanings in Persian and English. In Persian, the green color is mainly expanded to abstracted meanings of liveliness and happiness. In other words, since green plants and trees are

living and growing, *khanevadeye sabz* (green family) or *zendegie sabz* (green life) are also lively and happy. Nevertheless, the extended meaning of being unripe and green has been developed into the abstracted meaning of *being inexperienced* in English resulting in sentences such as *the new trainees are still green* or *she is green at her job*. What is more, it can have a reverse meaning in phrases such as *green fingers* which means skillful at growing plants. We should consider the fact that an expression such as *green trainees* is totally absent in Persian, but it might not be unlikely that Persian speakers also start using the color *sabz* (green) for such purposes because they are, in fact, abstractions from the first extended meanings of green that is the state of being unripe. Another expression such as *green-eyed monster* was first used by Shakespeare and it has become prevalent since then to describe jealousy. On the contrary, the Persian speakers seem to be less likely to develop such an expression since it is not particularly a development from the previous basic extended meanings (see Table 3).

Table 3. Semantic Functions of Green Color in Persian and English

| Color | Persian | English |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Sabz (Green) | *Sabz: <i>chamane sabz</i> (green grass) | *Green: green grass |
| | *Covered with grass or other plants: <i>jangle sabz</i> (green jungle) | *Covered with grass or other plants: green fields or hills |
| | *Not yet eatable, unripe: <i>gojeye sabz</i> (green tomato) | *Not yet eatable, unripe: green tomato |
| | *Happy and lively: <i>khanevadeye sabz</i> (green family) or <i>zendegie sabz</i> (green life) | |
| | | *Inexperienced: the new trainees are still very green |
| | *Related to a political party claiming growth and change: <i>moje sabz</i> (green wave) | *Related to a party whose aim is to protect the environment |
| | | *Dexterity at growing plants: green fingers |
| | | *Jealous: green-eyed, green with envy |

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

English and Iranian speakers use the same mechanisms of metaphor, metonymy to develop and extend various meanings from the color red which is *ghermez* or *sorkh* in Persian. First, it develops the meanings of being too hot in both languages resulting in *red-hot coal* in English and *zoghale sorkh* (red charcoal) in Persian through metaphor. Then, again through the same process leading to red-faced (embarrassed) in English and *ghermez shodan az khejalat* (getting red out of embarrassment) in Persian. Similarly, as you see in the table it could also be used to describe anger in both languages. The rest of the abstracted meanings which are similar in both languages are also justifiable. Usually the red color is used internationally to show emergencies, danger such other things because of its explicitness and its relation to dangerous things such as fire and blood. This feature has led to the development of many different but related meanings. So, it is used similarly in Persian in *khate ghermez* (red line) and in English in *red flag* or *red alert* with similar connotations of danger. It is probable that this Persian expression be under the influence of English. However, the existence of an old expression such as *zabane sorkh* referring to a language or speech habit that is dangerous indicates that Persian has always had such connotations of danger. In other words, Persian speakers have always had such connotations of danger through metaphorically deriving them from the relation of red with dangerous things (e.g., fire, blood) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Semantic Functions of Red Color in Persian and English

| Color | Persian | English |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Ghermez or Sorkh (Red) | *Ghermez: <i>khoone ghermez</i> (red blood) | *Ghermez: red blood |
| | *Too hot and flamy: <i>zoghale sorkh</i> (red charcoal) | * So hot that it looks red: red hot coals glowed in the fire |
| | *Embarrassed: <i>sorkh shodan az khejalat</i> (getting red out of embarrassment) | *Embarrassed: red faced |
| | *Angry: <i>sorkh shodan az asabaniat</i> (getting red out of anger) | *Angry: see red |
| | *Warming of danger or something perilous or prohibited: <i>khate ghermez</i> (red line) | *Warming of danger or something perilous or prohibited: red flag or red alert |
| | *Raging or furious language or speech habit: <i>zabane sorkh</i> (red tongue) | |
| | | *Pleasant and unforgettable event: red-letter day |
| | | *Complicated official rules and procedures: red tape |

The color yellow first develops into the extended state of getting withered and dry in both languages once again through metaphor. The withered leaves and trees have a yellow color so their yellowness could be used to refer to them resulting in *barge zard* in Persian equating with *yellow leaf* in English. Similarly and again through metaphor the apparent changes into the color of the skin or complexion result in *zard rooy* describing the states of sickness and emaciation in Persian and *yellow flag* as warning of an infectious disease in English. The

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

connotations of fear and being frightened have been also developed in a similar fashion in both. However, there are two abstracted meanings in the table which are very different in Persian and English. In Persian we have *be sa residane zardie omr* (getting to the yellowness of the life) meaning getting to age close to death which is absent in English though its meaning might be understood literally. The development of this metaphorical expression is quite clear and it is based on the extended meaning of withering. On the other hand, the English expression *yellow journalism* conveys the abstracted meaning of being exaggerated and shocking which is not present in Persian. This has its roots in a comic strip *The Yellow Kid* which was printed in yellow to get the attention of the readers (see Table 5).

Table 5. Semantic Functions of Yellow Color in Persian and English

| Color | Persian | English |
|------------------|--|--|
| Zard (Yellow) | *Zard: <i>talaye zard</i> (yellow gold) | *Yellow: yellow gold |
| | *Withered and dry: <i>barge zard</i> (yellow leaf) | *Withered and dry: yellow leaf |
| | *Sick and emaciated: <i>zard rooy</i> (yellow faced) | *Warning of an infectious disease: yellow flag |
| | *Frightened: <i>az tars zard shodan</i> (getting yellow out of fear) | *Easily frightened: yellow bellied |
| | *Getting too old and about to die: <i>be sar residane zardie omr</i> (getting to the yellowness of life) | |
| | | |

Finally, *Abi* in Persian has much fewer semantic functions than blue in English. Although both *Abi* and blue can be used to refer to the sky, sea, etc., blue in English also conveys the meaning of “royal” as in *blue-blooded*, “faithful/genuine” as in *true blue*, and “discomfort/sadness” as in *feel blue*, all

of which the Persian *abi* is not used for. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the “royal” meaning was derived from the color of the veins; the “persistent/faithful” meaning was arguably derived from the persistent color of the sky; and the “discomfort/sadness” meaning was derived from the color of skin after death or a blow, cases of metaphoricalization. Since these abstract meanings do not contradict any of *abi*'s (light and dark, as discussed before) existing connotations, this study suggests that they could be developed in Persian as well. However, the expressions like *blue ribbon* (something as being of the highest quality), *out of the blue* (unexpected), *blue collar* (working class) seem to be unlikely to come to Persian since these meanings are not based on the connotations of *abi* (light and dark) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Semantic Functions of Blue Color in Persian and English

| Color | Persian | English |
|------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Abi (Blue) | *Abi: <i>asmane abi</i> (blue sky) | *Blue: blue sky |
| | | *Royalty: blue-blooded |
| | | *Faithful: true blue |
| | | *Sadness: feel blue |
| | | *Of high quality: blue ribbon |
| | | *Abrupt and unexpected: out of the blue |
| | | *Working class: blue collar |

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The present study was done contrastively between Persian and English with its focus on semantics and pragmatics of color terms. The study included the analysis of some very common color terms in Persian and English including: *siah* (black), *sefid* (white), *sabz* (green), *ghermez* or *sorkh* (red), *zard* (yellow)

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

and finally *abi* (blue). Different levels of original, extended and abstracted meaning have been identified for such color terms. The findings revealed the existence of both language-idiosyncratic and general tendencies with respect to semantic extension of color terms for these languages. It was shown that, unlike English, Persian has more than one term for colors like red (*ghermez* and *sorkh*) and black (*meshki* and *siah*). More interestingly, Persian *abi* (comparable to English blue), has no symbolic meaning or extension. On the other hand, it was shown that Persian and English speakers use their earthly experience and mechanisms such as metonymization and metaphoricalization to develop abundant new connotations and meanings from the original meanings of color terms.

The case of color *zard* (yellow), for example, extending into the meaning of *withering* and resulting in the abstract meaning of *getting old and close to death* through metaphor in Persian is only one example among the various ones provided in this paper. Additionally, as it was shown, the extended meaning of the color black referring to darkness has developed into connotations concerning hopelessness, haplessness, mourning, sinfulness and malevolence in both Persian and English. No doubt, there are deviations in the exact meanings of Persian and English color terms and the way they are used; nevertheless, they have been developed systematically and out of the same mechanisms over time except for color blue (*abi*) for which no Persian expression was found as far as the extended and abstract meanings are concerned. As it was discussed before, since green as the color of nature and black as the color of darkness cover most of the characteristics attached to light blue (*abi rowshan*) and dark blue (*abi tireh*) respectively, the color *abli* itself is precluded to develop any connotation.

The connotations of white are no exception. The development of the extended meanings of *clean* and *blank* from the original meaning has led to various abstract meanings. In both, for instance, it has been expanded to include meanings such as purity and innocence. Other examples provided in the paper include the development of meanings of happiness and liveliness from the living and growing states of plants and trees described by the color *sabz* (green) in Persian. Color green in English goes the same process, too. In English the meaning of *being inexperienced* are developed from the extended meanings of *being green and unripe*. More evidence is provided by analysis of the color *ghermez* (red). The color red expands into the meaning of being too hot and flamy in both languages through metaphor. What is more, this color having to do with dangerous things such as blood and fire has metaphorically developed the meanings of *dangerous* in both English and Persian.

Sense of opposite relation, as it was discussed, also plays a very important role in the expansion of the semantic domain of color terms. The cases of black and white colors and the opposition in their semantic properties, for example, have led to the development of many negative meanings through the semantic properties of black and their counterparts through the positive connotations of white. In fact, sense of opposition is like a driving force behind the expansion of the semantic meanings.

As it was shown, all the meanings of a color seem to be based on the original meanings. Furthermore, the present paper shows that extended meanings are much more similar in both languages than the abstract meanings. In other words, the abstract meanings which were based on the same extended meanings were different at times. A good example would be the expansion of the color *sabz* (green). As it was shown, the extended meaning of this color is the same in both languages, and it conveys the meaning of *being green and*

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

unripe. However, the abstraction is different in English and Persian. In English it describes the state of being *inexperienced* in sentences such as *the new trainees are green* while in Persian it describes happiness, liveliness, moving and growth in phrases such as *zendegie sabz* (green family) meaning a happy and lively life or *moje sabz* (green wave) referring to a political orientation claiming to grow and finally leading to changes for the better. This shows that the farther we get from the original meaning and the more abstract meanings we make from the color terms, the more the degree of similarity between the meanings of the color terms in different languages decreases. However, we should not overlook the fact that they have also been systematically developed based on the same extended meanings and through the same cognitive mechanisms.

Moreover, the classification of the six color terms in both languages was further categorized into two types - positive and negative meanings, and this was done based on the researchers' understanding of the cognition between language and experience. Obviously, it is human's nature which relates a descriptive linguistic symbol (e.g., yellow) to something which is in the physical world (e.g., yellow leaf), and then express an opinion about the described object in the world (e.g., the tree is shedding its yellow leaves since they are no longer alive). Due to the fact that the yellow leaf is universally believed to be withered and lifeless, it is natural for yellow to extend its meaning to negative connotations. This also explains why the six color terms in Persian discussed in this study have many of the same or similar semantic functions as their English counterparts. Ultimately, people in the world, regardless of what language they speak, perceive and interpret the world mostly in a similar way if not the same.

Two other points were also found in this study. First, borrowing of the new color expressions in Persian could be determined through the established

semantic properties of color terms. For example, expression such as *black list* entered into Persian from English has been easily accepted and used because, as it was explained, it is in accordance with the semantic domain of the color *siah* (black) in Persian. The second point is that we might predict the direction of the development of the semantic domain of color terms through the already developed semantic domain. For example, we could predict that Iranians might also start using the color *sabz* (green) to refer to *lack of skill* as the English do since the extended meaning which is *the state of being green and unripe* is the same in both languages. On the contrary, it is much less likely that Iranians start using *green-eyed monster* or *yellow journalism* to describe jealousy or shocking news, respectively, because they are not based on the common extended meanings.

On the whole, in line with the study done by Xing (2008), in the current study, the comparison led the researchers to conclude that the extension of color meaning is mainly cognitive and has been stimulated by the people's own understanding of their real experiences. It could be also inferred from this study that the development and extension of positive and negative meanings is based on the people's understanding throughout their cultures. In other words, culture can exert an impact on the way people attach further meanings to different names, say color terms. According to Tyler (1969), culture is that complex whole which embraces knowledge, art, beliefs, morals, customs, law, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Put it another way, it could support the idea that color meanings and color expressions seem to be directly related to peoples' experience and understanding of the world. People have understanding and experience of the physical world around them and so they can use mechanisms such as metaphors, metonymy and so on to develop more and more meanings and

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

color expressions. That is why the extended and abstracted meanings of color terms have much more similarities than differences in Persian and English though there are some language-idiosyncratic tendencies, too. People have, at least to some extent, similar understanding and perception of the physical world despite the differences in their culture and language.

References

- Assi, S. M. (2005). *PLDB: Persian linguistics database*. Pazuheshgaran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies Newsletter.
- Baxter, W. (1983). A look at the history of Chinese color terminology. *Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association*, 18(2), 1-25.
- Berlin, B., & Kay, P. (1969). *Basic colour terms: their universality and evolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brown, K. (2005). *Encyclopaedia of language and linguistics* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Bybee, J. L., & Pagliuca, W. (1985). Cross-linguistic comparison and the development of grammatical meaning. In Fisiak, J. (ed), *Historical semantics, historical word formation* (pp. 59-83). Berlin: Mouton.
- Derrig, S. (1978). Metaphor in the color lexicon. In Farkas, D., W. M. Jacobsen & K. W. Torys (Eds.), *Papers from the Parasession on the Lexicon* (pp. 85-96). Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Heine, B., Claudi, U., & Hunnemeyer, F. (1991). *Grammaticalization: A conceptual framework*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hardin, C. L. & Maffi, L. (1997). *Color categories in thought and language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hasan, A. A., Al-Sammerai, N. S., & Kadir, F. A. (2011). How colours are semantically construed in the Arabic and English culture: A comparative study. *English Language Teaching*, 4(3), 206-213.

- Hays, D., Margolis, E., Naroll, R. & Perkins, D. R. (1972). Color term salience. *American Anthropologist*, 74, 1107-1121.
- Hopper, P. J., & Traugott, E. C. (1993). *Grammaticalization*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Kay, P. (2003). NSM and the meaning of color words. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 29, 237-245.
- Kay, P., Berlin, B., Maffi, L., & Merrifield, W. (1997). Colour naming across languages. In C. L., Hardin, & L. Maffi, (Eds). *Colour categories in thought and language* (pp. 21-56). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kay, P. & C. K. McDaniel. (1978). The linguistic significance of the meanings of basic color terms. *Language*, 54, 611-646.
- Kikuchi, A. & F. Lichtenberk. (1983). Semantic extension in the colour lexicon. *Studies in Language*, 7(1), 35-64.
- Koch, P. (2004). Metonymy between pragmatics, reference, and diachrony. *Metaphorik*, 7, 6-54.
- Mitterer, H., Horschig, J. M., Müsseler, J., & Majid, A. (2009). The influence of memory on perception: It's not what things look like, it's what you call them. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 35 (6), 1557-1562.
- Philip, G. (2006). Connotative meaning in English and Italian colour-word metaphors. *Metaphorik*, 10, 59-93.
- Riemer, N. (2001). Interpreting semantic extension: metaphor and metonymy on different levels of lexical categorization. *Proceedings of the Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society*, 1-10.
- Ruiz, J. H., (2005). The role of metaphor and metonymy as tools of lexical creation: The case of Spanish informal speech. *Odisea*, 6, 97-118.
- Soselia, E. (2008). Universal model of colour categorization and Georgian basic colour terms. *Journal of Linguistics*, 2(1), 129-134.

A Comparative and Contrastive Study on the Meaning...

- Sweetser, E. E. (1986). Polysemy vs. abstraction: Mutually exclusive or complementary? *Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 12, 528-538.
- Sweetser, E. E. (1990). *From etymology to pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tao, W. (1994). Colour terms in Shang oracle bone inscriptions. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Languages*, 59(1), 63-101.
- Taylor, J. R. (1995). *Linguistic categorization: Prototypes in linguistic theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thibodeau, P. H., & Boroditsky, L. (2011). Metaphors we think with: The role of metaphor in reasoning. *PLoS ONE* 6(2), 1-11. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.001678
- Traugott, E. C., & Dasher, R. (2002). *Regularity in semantic change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Traugott, E. C., & König, E. (1991). The semantics-pragmatics of grammaticalization revisited. In E. C. Traugott & Heine, B. (eds). *Approaches to grammaticalization: Focus on theoretical and methodological issues*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Tyler, A. S. (1969). *Cognitive Anthropology*, edited volume.
- Uuskula, M. (2008). The basic colour terms of Czech. *Tráims Journal*. 1, 3-28.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1990). The meaning of colour terms: Semantic, culture and cognition. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 1, 99-150.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1996). *Semantics: Primes and universals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wierzbicka, A. (2008). Why there are no colour universals in language and thought. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14, 407-425.
- Wilson, R. & Keil F. (1999). *MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

- Xing, J. Z. (1994). Diachronic change of object markers in Mandarin Chinese.
Language Variation and Change, 6, 201-222.
- Xing, J. Z. (2008) (Ed). *Semantics and pragmatics of colour terms in Chinese*.
Studies of Chinese Linguistics: Functional Approaches. Hong Kong: HKUP.
- Zhang, D. (2006). A cultural comparison of colour terms and their translation.
US-China Foreign Language, 4(5), 29-32.

