

Categorization of color expressions across languages

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Although adjectival structure and meaning have been widely studied, there have been relatively few formal investigations of color adjectives. An examination of color expressions is warranted because they differ from other adjectives (such as, *expensive, tall*) in at least two ways. First, color adjectives have both gradable (e.g. *The leaves are green, but they aren't green enough*) and non-gradable meanings (e.g. *The traffic light is green. #It is greener than the traffic light in Minneapolis*). Second, color adjectives can appear in nominal positions (e.g. *Green suits you*), unlike other adjectives (e.g. *#Short suits you*). In this talk, I investigate color expressions from five seemingly unrelated languages, Malayalam, Korean, Spanish, Potawatomi, Tamazight, and provide a decomposition analysis that takes color expressions in these languages as property concept expressions that need to combine with a variety of functional heads to provide meaning. The analysis relies on the morphosyntax of possession below (encoded into the functional head) and above the word level (often realized as a copula). The source of variability in the behavior of property-concept expressions, within these languages, and likely cross-linguistically as well, is morpho-syntactic variation, a consequence of structure building processes, and not variability encoded in the lexicon. This account thereby provides insights into the universality and variation in the cross-linguistic grammar of color expressions.