PUNJABI COLOR CATEGORIES: AN ANALYSIS OF WORLDVIEW OF RURAL COMMUNITY IN GUJRAT, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Keeping in view the dominantly prevailing Universalists and Relativists' perspectives in anthropology, present research aims at understanding Punjabi color terms. 11colors have already been identified by Berlin and Key [1] in their monumental work which was shown to the respondents on a color chart and their responses were measured. The following selection criterion was likewise adopted: i) Punjabi speaking natives; ii) having age between 30 to 50 years; and iii) illiterate; for the inclusion of the respondents. Keeping in view this criterion Punjabi speaking rural people were selected through purposive sampling. On the basis of the responses of the respondents two major color groups emerged, the group-I represents 7 basic colors with Punjabi names while group-II shows 4 remaining colors which have no specific native color terms either respondents take it from the physical objects or from the other languages. Present community resides at sixth stage with seven color term.

Keyword: Punjabi language; Color terms; Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis; Universalists' Perspective; Relativists' Perspective;

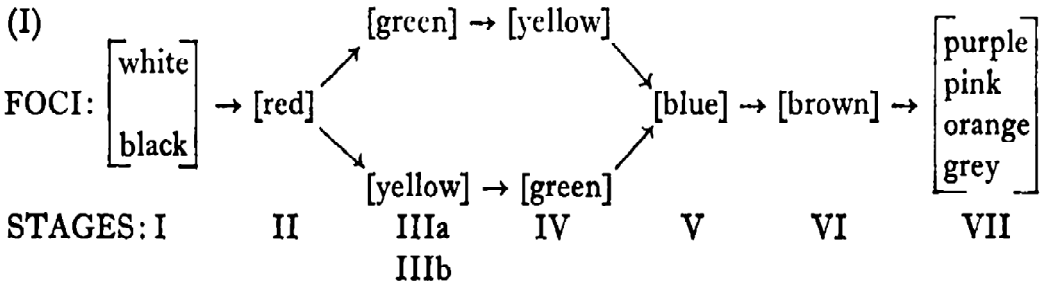
INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists throughout the twentieth century have been focusing on the issues of color categories. There are different perspectives on the study of color categories. Among others two are more influential. First, there is the Universalist Theory. Its practitioners are of the opinion that color cognition is an innate, physiological process, rather than a cultural one. It was initiated by Berlin and Kay (1969) in a study "Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution." The study was mainly focused on the existing theory of linguistic relativity; set forth by renowned linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf in their Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. They found that the number of basic color terms that a language can have are universally restricted by the ways in which that language can employ these terms. Further to elaborate the universalists' perspective on the color terms Foley (1997) asserts that undoubtedly the most influential and possibly the most robust claim of universal innate constraints on the semantic structure of certain cognitive domains have been made in the area of color terminologies, starting with the landmark study of Berlin and Kay (1969) and extended with subsequent work by them and associates vis-à-vis Berlin and Berlin (1975); Kay (1975); Kay, Berlin, and Merrifield (1991); Kay and McDaniel (1978); and MacLaury (1987, 1991, 1992).

The systems of color terminologies among the language of the world present a promising case of the establishment of universals in human categorization, due to panhuman neurophysiology of human vision. The thrust of the work stemming from Berlin and Kay (1969) has been to prove exactly this

claim, locating established universals in the system of basic color terminologies in the mechanisms of human color vision and arguing further that cultural interests and practices play no role (Foley, 1997). The study of Berlin and Kay included data, collected from speakers of twenty different languages selected from a variety of language families. They identified eleven possible basic color categories: white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, and grey. They lay down a criterion for color categorization vis-a-vis: i). It is monomorphemic; ii). It is monolexemic (for example, blue, but not bluish); iii). Its signification is not included in that of any other color term (for example, crimson is a type of red); iv). Its application must not be restricted to a narrow class of objects (for example, blonde is restricted to hair, wood); v). It must be psychologically salient for informants (for example, "the color of grandma's freezer" is not psychologically salient for all speakers). In case of doubt, they also set the following subsidiary criteria: i). The doubtful form should have the same distributional potential as the previously established basic color terms (for example, you can say reddish but not salmonish); ii). Color terms that are also the name of an object, characteristically having that color are suspect, for example, gold, silver and ash; iii). Recent foreign loan words may be suspect; iv). In cases where lexemic status is difficult to assess, morphological complexity is given some weight as a secondary criterion (for example, red-orange might be questionable) (Broch, 1974).

Kay (1975) asserted that the major data on which the revisions of the basic color term theory are based are contained in four detailed studies of the color term systems of individual speech communities which have been undertaken since I969 Berlin and Berlin (1974); Dougherty [12]; Hage and Hawkes (1975); and Heider (1972a, 1972b)."



Further he added that "the original Berlin and Kay hypothesis was that the basic color terms of all languages encode some subset of a set of eleven fixed perceptual foci and that there is a partially fixed temporal order in which these foci are encoded, shown in figure (I)." While the second major perspective on color categories which emerged as a critique of the Berlin and Kay is Relativism. Among others, Barbara Saunders and John Lucy are prominent who critically surveyed the Berlin and Kay theory. Saunders believes that Berlin and Kay's theory of basic color terminology contains several unspoken assumptions and have significant flaws in research methodology. Lucy also criticized Berlin and Kay theory on the same lines. In this context Foley (1997) opines that the relativist response to this imposing body of work and how do they account for the universal constraints on basic color terminologies. It is perhaps best articulated in Sahlin (1976), but also see Lucy (1996a, 1996b), Saundres (1995), and Tornay (1978). The basic point, of course, is that cultural practices are a crucial mediating force in color naming and the system of basic color terms. They argued that culture must be a crucial autonomous intermediary between any innate and hence universal neurological perception of color stimuli and cognitive understanding of these. This is echoed linguistically by Wierzbicka (1990) who notes that meaning of the color term in a language

cannot possibly be neural response to a color chip, but rather the cognitive understanding the native speaker of the language, has of that term: "language reflects what happens in the mind, not what happens in the brain."

Describing the Universalists' and Relativists' perspective, Rahman (2010) opines that "the idea was that color terms is a universal phenomenon and is predictable, so that if there are three terms you can be sure that this implies they would be black, white, and red, and not blue, purple, and orange. This implies that the human mind is programmed to think in this manner and that the stronger version of the Sapir-Whorf is wrong. Our perception is not determined by our language alone. It is also determined by some common human ways or abilities of understanding reality (cognitive universals). However speakers do characterize what they see in color terms they possess. Human beings see the same colors but refer to them the words of classification they posses. This supports the weaker version of the of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language does influence perception. To understand the Universalists and Relativists' perspectives on the basic color terms, present study was conducted in the rural settings of Gujrat. The main purpose was to identify the color terms used by the Punjabi-speaking indigenous people of the village *Ikhlasgarh* and to find the connection of the present community color terms in the stages given by Berlin and Kay. Keeping in view the above mentioned rules of classification of specific color terms present study was conducted.

According to Malik (2010) "the Punjabi language is a member of the Indo-Aryan subdivision of the Indo-European language family. It is spoken by more than 100 million people in Punjab (in Pakistan and north western India). Over 44% of Pakistanis acquire it as their first language and about 70% of Pakistanis can understand it.

METHODOLOGY

Present study was conducted in a village *Ikhlasgarh*, some 13 kilometers in east of Gujrat city. The village was selected through convenient sampling. The major rationale behind the selection of this village was that majority of its inhabitants were Punjabi speaking. 20 respondents were selected through purposive sampling under the following selection criteria: i) they speak Punjabi language; ii) have no formal education and ii) have age between 30 to 50 years. A chart containing 11 major colors were shown to selected respondents and their responses were carefully recorded and presented in two main color groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For present study a chart of 11 basic colors were used as identified by Berlin and Kay. These include black, white, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, and grey. After showing these colors, their responses were measured. A list of Punjabi color terms being identified by these respondents are given below in the form of group-I

Table 1. Basic Punjabi Color Terms

S. No	Color Terms in English	Color Terms in Punjabi	Responses Frequency (out of 20)	Responses Percentage (out of 20)
1	Black	*Kala*	20	100 %
2	White	*Chitta*	20	100%
3	Red	*Sooaa*	19	95%
4	Yellow	*Peela*	18	90%
5	Green	*Harra*	18	90%
6	Blue	*Neela*	17	85%
7	Brown	*Bhoora*	17	85%

The above mentioned color terms were identified in the light of criterion of Berlin and Kay. One can easily identify that the color mentioned in the group-I (black, white, red, yellow, green, blue, and brown) are to some extent relevant to the color theory of Berlin and Kay by fulfilling the key criteria-I of the colors. The debate was not restricted to this description only. There was still some confusion regarding the categorization of the blue and brown colors. For instance, blue can be assumed as respondents resembled it with the color of sky and to some extent in view of some respondents it resembled water color which in indigenous terms is *aabi* (color of water) where as on other hand in the case of brown, it remained the same as of blue. It also resembled the color of soil, and wood. The Punjabi terms denoted to the basic 7 colors are purely indigenous. Further respondents identified 4 color terms in resemblance of the different geo-cultural objects from their environment.

The remaining four color terminologies are presented below in the form of group-II

Table 2. Alternative Punjabi Color Terms

S. No	Color Terms in English	Color Terms in Punjabi	Responses Frequency (out of 20)	Responses Percentage (out of 20)
1	Purple	*Jaammnee*	20	100 %
2	Pink	*Ghulabi*	20	100%
3	Orange	*Khatta*; *Malta*	19	95%
4	Grey	*Saletti*	18	90%

While the colors presented in group-II are having no specific color terms in the Punjabi language. These colors resembled the items like in the case of purple, it resembled a fruit *jaamman* (Jambolan), pink is associated to a flower ghulab (rose). Orange is identified in resemblance of a fruit-*malta* (citrus) while grey color is resembled as *saleeti* (grey). The colors presented in group-II are not fulfilling either the major or subsidiary criteria of the Berlin and Kay. So, on the basis of the criteria,

we might exclude this group-II from the major colors of the local community. Keeping in view Berlin and Kay's 11 color categories we shall identify the community's position. Berlin and Key (1969) said that the colors found in these languages followed a specific evolutionary pattern. This pattern is as followed:

1. All languages contain terms for black and white.
2. If a language contains three terms, then it also contains a term for red.
3. If a language contains four terms, then it also contains a term for either green or yellow (but not both).
4. If a language contains five terms, then it contains terms for both green and yellow.
5. If a language contains six terms, then it also contains a term for blue.
6. If a language contains seven terms, then it also contains a term for brown.
7. If a language contains eight or more terms, then it contains a term for purple, pink, orange, and/or grey.

If we are not interpreting the data wrong, this community in the reference of the color categorization do exists in the stage-VI because it includes all the colors before brown but not beyond it.

CONCLUSION

For the present study of the Punjabi color terms interesting findings came out. Keeping in view the stages of the Berlin and Kay, present community can be categorized in the stage-VI (with seven terms) same as Leach (1974) identifies Urdu and Hindi. There might be a possibility of adaptation of these color terms for these languages through extensive interaction of the speakers. In the end present study's findings on one side authenticate the theory of Berlin and Kay. But the descriptions made by the indigenous dwellers cannot be restricted only to the theory of Universalists. The Eurocentric framework and technological relation with the color categorization can not be considered as true. Keeping in view the indigenous terms, their categorization has nothing to do with the technological advancement. These are purely indigenous in origin and description. So, the color categorization stages cannot determine the ranking of the native community within the framework of Berlin and Kay rather such an attempt help loosen the essence of the native construction of language.

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