



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

Cognitive Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy of Adjectives Naming Colors in The Albanian Language

Phd Lura Turhani

Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani", Albania

Abstract

Metaphor and metonymy are considered in today's linguistic studies as means of expanding the meaning of the word, which reveal the perception of the unknown and the recognition of the abstract concepts through concrete and familiar ones based in life experience. Through the linguistic data collected from the Albanian National Corpus and the linguistic analysis based on the theories of cognitive linguistics, the theory of metaphor and that of metonymy, this paper investigates the colors of vegetation: *i verdhë* (yellow), *jeshil* (green), *i gjelbër* (green), *i blertë* (green) as an example to analyze the structure cognitive semantics of these adjectives. In our statement, we aim to identify the expressive value of the metaphorical and metonymic use of these adjectives for which the Albanian language has defined designations.

Keywords: metaphor, metonymy, *i verdhë* (yellow), *jeshil* (green), *i gjelbër* (green), *i blertë* (green), Albanian language



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

1. Introduction

Metonymy and metaphor are recognized as rhetorical strategies in traditional studies; they have been around since the time of Aristotle (384–322 BC). However, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) changed the ideas of metonymy and metaphor in their book *Metaphors We Live By*. They found that the only rhetorical means people knew about were metaphor and metonymy. Instead, they serve a purpose in the conceptual framework of individuals and have a significant impact on people's thoughts and behaviours. They are the means by which it is possible to ground our conceptual systems empirically and to reason in a limited but creative way (Johnson, 1992). Since language is closely related to one's thinking, the language-based research they conduct sheds light on how people think and behave. Human conceptual systems are broadly structured by metaphor, metonymy and other types of imaginative structure". Later, Lakoff (1993) adapted the definition of metaphor as a mapping of the interfields in the conceptual system. The two main methods of interpreting speech are metaphor and metonymy. Both metaphor and metonymy function in such a way that something is understood or interpreted in terms of another, which is how they are comparable to one another.

The systematic correspondence between the building blocks of the source and destination domains is known as mapping. The relationship is expressed as "Target domain is source domain". They are stored together in mind (Lan & McGregor, 2009). However, when conceptual mapping is done under diverse cultures, cultural factors are significant.

In light of this, color is significant in conventional metaphorical expressions in people's life. Color words are a subcategory of metaphors frequently employed literally and metaphorically in different languages. They may also represent the cultural identities of language users. Colors can convey uncontrollable resonances in a given society when certain connotative qualities are widely linked with them. Additionally, they have connotative meanings, which might vary across cultures and be specialized to a certain field of life (Phillip, 2006).

In the linguistic literature of the Albanian language and other languages as well, studies of use, frequency, and distribution of the conceptual metaphor of all colors are missing. Therefore, this article examines the conceptual metaphor of the color *i verdhë* (yellow) and *i blertë*, *i gjelbër*, *jeshil* (green) used in corpus by Albanian speakers to know the frequency and the general conceptualization of these colors.

Linguistic data was collected from the Albanian National Corpus with about 31,200,000 word usages. The search was conducted quantitatively for the number of terms that mark the colors *i verdhë* (yellow) and *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* (green) in texts of different discourse styles: journalistic style, literary style, religious style that belong to different periods of time. The expressive significance of these adjectives that name color was then sought after by



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

examining their metonymic and metaphorical realizations. The table below presents the recorded research data.

Table 1

Colours	Outright meaning		Figurative meaning	
	Cases	Per milion	Cases	Per milion
i verdhë	342	10,96	78	2,5
i blertë	45	1,44	98	3,14
i gjelbër	142	4,55	112	3,58
jeshil	72	2,3	17	0,54
TOTAL	601	19,26	297	9,51

1. Language and color

Color terms in cognitive thinking

In the everyday life, colors are considered simple and obvious: the blue of the sky, the red of blood, the yellow of the sun and the moon. Based on estimations, human eyes can perceive no less than 7.5 million visible color differences. (Brown & Lenneberg, 1954).

When discussing the metaphor of color terms, it is clear that the abstract associations do not reflect reality but its emotional perception. Our color sensations occur in our brain, not in the outside world, and their nature is probably determined to a large extent by our human biology (which links us, in some measure, with other primates) but to be able to communicate about these sensations, we project them into something in our shared environment. (Wieżbicka, 1990) Color is a natural occurrence. Color terms are crucial for defining objects, communicating their meanings, and enhancing the influence of languages. They are also rich in cultural connotations. In other words, they can be used metaphorically to convey the associative meanings of distinct hues or literally to relate to certain colors. Associative meanings for colors can vary between languages and cultures.

There are valid justifications for delineating color terminology and metaphors. The color domain is one of the "basic domains" that Ronald Langacker (2008) referred to as bodily-based ideas that allow for further structuring of our perception of the universe and are not reducible to other, i.e., more primitive cognitive structures.



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

Berlin and Kay (1969) concluded that there are eleven basic categories of perceptual colors, which serve as psychophysical referents of eleven or less basic color terms in any language. A color term can be defined as a base if it meets the following criteria: it must be monolexemic; its meaning must not be included in another term; it should not be used to refer to only particular objects, either within a narrow field or to a specialized referral; and it must be prominent, i.e. relatively frequent in its general language use. (Berlin/Kay 1969) The basic colors are black and white, and the main colors are red, blue, yellow and green.

2. The terms of the colors of nature in the Albanian language

Additionally, it is likely that some fundamental color concepts in some or all languages do not have to share a lexeme. It is possible to define the idea of a fundamental hue in a way that eliminates this variety, but it would be more productive to leave the door open. For instance, in the Albanian language, the lexemes *i blertë*, *i gjelbër* and *jeshil* (green) refer to the fundamental colors and are not mutually exclusive.

Due to the nature of words—their origin and age—color perception may vary between different languages. Albanian language recognizes the following seven primary hues: white, black, red, yellow, blue, green, and brown. The colors of nature relate to the relationship of the earth and sky or the color scheme of the plants and the sky. Three lexical units—*i blertë*, *i gjelbër*, and *jeshil*—in the Albanian language designate the primary colors of green. This is the case of the words coming from several origins.

"Today's word blue derives from the suffix -të (common in the adjectives forming) from the theme bler-, which must convey an early root *blar, comparable with the Latin flor and the Greek chloros. Many etymologists have argued about the inheritance of the word from common Indo-European origins" (Çabej, 1976).

As for the terms of the colors yellow and green, we have this etymological explanation: "An interesting fact is that we have two words borrowed from the Latin: yellow - green. As in latin, these words show literal colors in the Albanian language, but by creating a synonym with each other (blue - green), they become a clear evidence of the fact that at the time of the relations with latin, pre-Albanian had begun to expand the spectrum of its color shades." (Demiraj, 2013). Let's see the scheme:

Latin viridis (green) – Albanian yellow

Latin galbinus (yellow) – Albanian green

"Besides these, to mark colors and shades of colors in the Albanian language, there are also used a bunch of indeclinable adjectives. These are all new adjectives that are either borrowed from other languages as words that indicate color, or were formed as such within the



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

Albanian language, through metaphor linguistics. So green must be a borrowed word from Turkish." (Riska, 2011).

It is not by chance that a concept, a color, is named by three different terms. It occurs that one language can have synonyms from lexemes of many sources. It would be expected to see semantic distinctions. However, because these three lexemes refer to the same unchanging, unevolved world, we lack the cognitive foundation to create semantic distinctions in the instance of the color words *i verdhë* and *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil*. In our research, we have found some distinctions between the emotional tones of words that begin with the word *i verdhë* and include *i blertë, i gjelbërt dhe jeshil*, and more.

In the dictionary of the Albanian language (FGjSSH, 2006) the lemmas *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* are given as synonyms for each other. Accordingly: *i verdhë* is the color of straw, lemon, sulfur or gold" and *jeshil* is "the color of grass and wet leaves". Hence, if in etymology, the words *i verdhë* and *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* refer to a specific color, in cognitive linguistics the meaning of the archetype of each of them belongs to the range of colors. The relation between the terms of colors and synonyms is supported even nowadays. This also appears in toponymy. "For the semantic fields, it is characteristic that the meaning of each lexeme is fully dependent by its place in relation to other words. For instance, yellow - green in Albanian constitute an inversion of the meaning they have in Latin, from which we have borrowed them. However, in the northeastern areas, this inversion has not happened, as yellow preserves the meaning of the Latin, therefore, *Lugjet e Verdha* (The Yellow Valleys) of the Kreshnik Epos means Valleys are in the color of grass and not lemon. The adjective green (from lat. *galbinus*) is missing in spoken words, hence, the color of lemon is used: *i luls*, meaning, the color of the petals of a yellow mountain flower." (Lloshi, 2005)

3. The prototype of the terms "yellow" and "green".

The idea of literal meaning is highly troublesome when it comes to color terms because the authentic literal meaning of the term color is located in its iconic ability. When used in this context, color terms have no further meaning than to denote hue. For example, the sky is blue, the sun is yellow, and the blood is crimson. Consider the archetypal meaning, which permits more flexibility in the range of applications, as that which constitutes interest and utility for the study of color terms. Instead of calling the wine a blend of yellow/golden tones, as a winemaker might, we are more inclined to characterize it as just white.

Similar to how the color red can refer to a variety of subtle variations despite being the color of blood in its most basic sense. The same is true for all primary colors: although human skin colors range from pink to all shades of brown and only very rarely reach extremes, black and



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

white are used to describe race. Yellow and red are even less accurate indicators of skin color, but they are still used and understood. Studying comparative structures in which a genuine word item is compared to a color is one technique to determine the range of hues to which the prototypical color can be extended. "In canonical similes, including white as leaf, red as blood, green as grass, the relationship of colors to objects and phenomena are fixed in the normal repertoire of language users; however, other non-standard collocations and one shot they provide a more complete indication of the chromatic range that color terms can encompass." (Philip, 2006)

We may divide the meanings of the color terms described above into two categories based on the examination of the linguistic information gathered in the Albanian National Corpus:

a. The color "yellow" is typically associated with the sun and the moon, whereas "green" is associated with greenery and rebirth.

b. Prototype-based extended meanings: *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* (green) and *i verdhë* (yellow) are further divided into two groups, namely metonymic extension and metaphorical extension.

The prototypical use of "green" and "yellow" is not related to a single object, but to the environment, to nature. The color *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* for Albanians symbolizes nature renewal, vegetation, power, faith, revival, peace of mind, and general well-being, so it is not by chance that it has been adopted as the basic color of the Bektashi Muslim faith.

E.g.:

Lumi shndërrohet në qilim të gjelbër. (The river turns into a green carpet.)

Më magjepsi plepi plot shpirt të blertë me gjethet e praruara si copa dielli. (I was fascinated by the green poplar with gilded leaves like the pieces of sun.)

Yellow is a warm color that is mostly connected to happiness. It also symbolizes sunlight, which boosts self-assurance and self-worth. It has the hue of gold and creative thought. The relationship between the colors *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* and *i verdhë*, which are both natural hues, appears to be difficult because they frequently contradict one another and occasionally serve as synonyms. The predominant hue of spring is green, which symbolizes nature and the return of the life cycle, as well as life, vigor, and wetness. It represents vegetation. In the autumn, yellow is the most common color. It stands for dryness and the passing of life.

However, yellow and green are obviously two sides of the same coin and contend with one another for the main status since yellow is a prime color when it comes to coloring paints or other materials, while green is a prime color, when it comes to optics and light refraction.



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

Due to the lack of a noticeable differentiation between these two hues in expressive and metaphorical usage in Albanian, they are frequently considered as one and the same color contributing to a significant portion of their shared significance.

2. Figurative meaning in color-word expression

2.1. Metonymy in *i verdhë* (yellow) and *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* (green). Emotional metonymy.

A person's facial expressions might reveal information about them in addition to their words. Yellow and green might imply sickness, fear, or terror. When shocked or afraid, a person's skin turns yellow or green. An example of a type metonymy is the causal relationship. Only the adjectives *i verdhë* and *jeshil* are used in this way in the Albanian language. The phrases *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* designate the same color, but their expressive uses differ.

Hippocratic medicine assigns yellow to the choleric personality, characterized by bile, which is yellowish-green in color (cf. Phillip, 2006). The metonymic connection between green, yellow and bile give rise to a set of expressions in Albanian, as well as in other languages. The conflict between green and yellow is not particularly surprising, as both of these colors correspond to the color of bile, and this metonymical connection gives rise to another set of expressions present in Albanian. Green is the color used in Albanian to describe the pallor of a person's face caused by nausea, shock, fear and illness. In the "Phraseological dictionary of the Albanian language" (Thomai, 2010) for the unit "...u bë *jeshil* (*në fytyrë*) (He turned green (on the face)) the given explanation is: *He became pale or bruised* from fear or from an illness. He got angry cause of anger, he doesn't know what to do because of anger. Green is a color associated with sickness, even people's skin takes on a slightly yellow/green tinge when they are seriously ill, scared or angry. Yet, the expression "...u bë *dyllë i verdhë* (*në fytyrë*) (he turned yellow (on the face) is generally interpreted as an expression of illness, also fear and shame, adhering to some general physiological manifestation in the complexion.

E.g.:

Shoku ynë ishte bërë dyllë i verdhë dhe tregonte me gisht në tokë. (Our friend had turned yellow and was pointing at the ground.)

*Balli i xha Martinin u bë **jeshil**, ndërsa një gulç i bllokoi fytyrën. (Uncle Martin's forehead turned green as a gasp clogged his throat.)*

Metaphorical expressions find abundant use in discourse. Color terms under study express a wide range of feelings. It is interesting to note that the term "Blue" always appears with a

07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

positive connotation. This term represents eternity, hope, liberation. We find that it is used in such meaning in the translations of the Bible.

The table below reflects emotional states encoded with these colors.

Table 2

i verdhë	i blertë	i gjelbër	jeshil
Illness (16)	Eternity (6)	Calmness (3)	Illness (9)
Fear (9)	Hope(5)	Joy (6)	Outrage (5)
Outrage(5)	Purity (3)	Uncertainty (2)	Anxiety (3)
Shame(3)	Euphoria (2)	Outrage (3)	Vivacity (4)
Fatigue (3)	Renewal (6)	Vivacity (8)	

2.1.1. The metonymy of things

The metonyms derived from the use of the color yellow exist in distinct contexts and different meanings.

Yellow book: An exclusive metonymic use has taken the term of the color "yellow" in Albania totalitarian referring to those publications with religious or erotic content that did not circulate in the market, censored and forbidden to read. The cover of such books was removed and the front page would become old and yellow. The relationship between the yellow color of the book and that of the leaves of the trees in autumn, obsolete the mechanism of creation of this metonymic use.

E.g.:

*Meanwhile, more and more often we hear about banned books, **yellow books**.*

The yellow novel expresses the connection of the color yellow with detective literature. In Albanian culture, based on the Italian culture, the yellow color has been associated with detective stories, due to the connection of the color of a book, that has been assigned to the genre as a whole. Therefore, a yellow book is specifically a detective story, as well as a yellow film is the relevant type of film, with the general use of the term yellow, which is synonymous with an unsolved mystery (whether fictitious or factual), usually involving murder.



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

E.g.:

*But in **the yellow press**, which in Serbia as a rule is chauvinist, there was no shortage of derogatory headlines, such as "The Betaret of Thaci in the South of Serbia", to create the idea that the Kosovar Prime Minister is taking the courage to tear something in there.*

The yellow house is specifically referring to a mystery that may involve murder or criminal activity.

E.g.:

*Kushneri he would feel, quite rightly, blackmailed by a Serbian journalist who would remind him of the **yellow house** and would accuse him of organ trafficking.*

The environmental and ecological meaning of green is based on the most transparent relationship and immediate between the color of plant life and nature in general. Although a relatively recent creation (dating to 1972 in the OED), this metonymic use does not stand out (only 7 times) in the Albanian corpus. The reason may be the limited environmental culture of Albanians.

E.g.:

*While **the green deputy**, Filiz Polat, sees this as violation against the basic principle of equality among people.*

2.1.2. Racial metonymy

In the objective world, people of different races have their own distinctive features, which can always be easily perceived and memorized. People in the Orient are mostly yellow or brown, so people use yellow race to name them, as they in the west are mostly white, so we call them white people.

E.g.:

*But it was not easy to arrive at the land of **yellow people** with small eyes, who looked like gold hurray from any other planet.*

2.1. Metaphor in "yellow""green".

Feeling metaphor.

In the Corpus, there are many metaphorical uses of the colors *i verdhë* and *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* that bring the expressed meaning to life. They have the ability to elicit both



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

positive and negative emotions depending on the situation. Given the similarity of hues, it is important to note any distinctions that might be present. The majority of these emotional states are linked to nausea, both literally and figuratively, and a sudden change in them can be seen as a reflection of how people feel internally about the outside world, e.g. *yellow despair*, *green walk*, *blue spirit* etc.

Political-and-Economic Metaphor

People commit illicit acts, which are usually hidden from view. Green may represent freedom and liberty, however in this context, the metaphorical motivation relates to a forbidden, unlawful conduct. This projection gives us a clear understanding of the black market from the perspective of resources to the political and economic spheres.

E.g.: *Ka informacione se ka mallra që i shfrytëzojnë rrugët ilegale, që ne i quajmë kufi i gjelbër dhe futen në Kosovë.* (There is information that there are goods that use illegal routes, which we call *the green border*, and enter Kosova.)

3. Results

In our research we found 345 cases of the use of color metonymy, which prevail to those of the metaphor. It is evident that color metaphors are heavily influenced by metonymy, for most of the connotative meanings assigned to colors seem to be grounded, of at least to some extent, in reality. The expressions *tregu i gjelbër* (green market), *dritë jeshile* or *dritë e gjelbër* (green light) are frequently used in the style of social and political activity to denote movement, permission for a specific accord, or approbation.

As can be seen in table 2, the color terms taken in the study express a wide range of feelings. Despite being synonymous, the terms that show the color green occasionally exist in the Albanian language as different emotional colors. The color term *i blertë* denotes eternity, hope, and renewal to Albanian speakers. We find it used in certain Bible translations with this connotation in the corpus data. We also noticed that the color *jeshil* frequently has a negative connotation while the terms *i gjelbër* and *i blertë* almost always have a pleasant connotation. This can be explained by the usage of *jeshil* in talkative conversation as opposed to the terms *i blertë* and *i gjelbër*, which belong to the book discourse.

Another distinction between the colors analyzed is that the colors *i verdhë* and *jeshil* are used to represent illness, fear, outrage, and worry in Albanian. While *i verdhë* tends to have a negative emotional tone when compared to *i blertë*/*i gjelbër*/*jeshil*, it also has some green hues.



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

4. Conclusions

"Yellow" and "green" are known colors for human beings. In some extent, "yellow" and "green", like other colors, have a significant impact on the cognitive system of human beings, given that they are colors that refer to nature.

Analyzing the linguistic data collected from the Albanian Corpus, we separated the meanings of the color term *i verdhë* (yellow) and *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* (green) in two main categories: prototypical meaning and extended prototype-based understandings. The prototypical meaning of the term color *i verdhë* is considered to be the color of the sun and the moon, while *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* is the color of vegetation, of renewal. Extended meanings of these two colors are further classified into two categories: i.e., metonymic extension and metaphorical extension.

Based on our research, the identification of the semantic difference between the lexemes *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* indicates the lexical wealth of Albanian. Differences between lexemes that indicate the same color, as well as the connotative uses of the term *i verdhë* can be valuable to foreigners who are willing to learn Albanian, and it can also be helpful to translators who work with the Albanian language.

The connotative values of colors that appear in conventional linguistic expressions consolidate and perpetuate the folk, beliefs about the meaning of color: the language user can turn to his/her linguistic knowledge to support their belief.

Naturally, this search may not fully address the metaphorical and metonymic implications of *i verdhë*, *i blertë/i gjelbër/jeshil* etc. It is a modest beginning for an in-depth study, some word drops drawn from the enormous ocean of human vocabulary. Therefore, the conclusion can only be a test. The predicament demonstrates the necessity for more rigorous research in this area. It is necessary to thoroughly examine my results, challenge, test and investigate any open questions to further the cognitive study of metaphor and metonymy in the albanian lanugage.



07 - 09 July 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

References

- Albanian National Corpus <http://web-corpora.net/AlbanianCorpus/search/>
- ASHSH (2006). *Dictionary of the Albanian language*. Tirana.
- Berlin, B., & Kay, P. (1969). *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brown, R.W., & Lenneberg, E. G. (1954). *A Study in Language and Cognition*. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 49, 454.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0057814>
- Çabej, E. (1976). *Etymological studies in the field of Albanian*. Vol. II, Tirana.
- Demiraj, Sh. (2013). *The Albanian language and its history*, Onufri, Tirana.
- Johnson, M. (1992). *Philosophical Implications of Cognitive Semantics*. Landsberg: Cognitive Linguistics.
- Lakoff, G. (1993). *Metaphor and Thought* (2nd Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lan, L. & McGregor. (2009). *Color metaphor in business discourse*. *Language for Professionals Communication: Research, Practice and Training*. Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
- Langacker, R. (2008). *Cognitive Grammar, A basic introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Lloshi, Xh. (2005). *Stylistics of the Albanian language and pragmatics*, Albas, Tirana.
- Phillip, G. (2006). *Connotative meaning in English and Italian color-word metaphor*. <http://metaphoric.de/10/Philip.pdf>
- Riska, A. (2011). *Human experience and the development of the lexicon (The case of Albanian words that denote colors)*, Sociolinguistic studies in Albania, heritage, situation and perspective. Tirana.
- Thomai, J. (2010). *Phraseological dictionary of the Albanian language*. EDFFA, Tirana.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1990). *The meaning of color terms: semantics, culture and cognition*. *Cognitive Linguistics*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249926957>