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OPENING TO COLOURS: A BASIC LEXICON IN JAPANESE

Wherever we go, wherever we look, we are immersed in the existence of colours. Colours are a constant to our existence [1] as well as a psychological factor that influences our mood, a way out of day by day routine.

Warm colours (red, yellow and orange) can visually overpower cool colours (blue, green, brown and purple). They appear closer while their cool counterparts visually recede [2].

Colour categories can be associated with colour terms by means of lexicalisation. Colour categories can be associated with more than one word (thereby allowing synonymy) and words can be associated with more than one category (thereby allowing homonymy) [3].

One of the most influential contributions to the colour system research is the monograph by Berlin and Kay (1969). Using naming experiments they elicited the colour categories of subjects and comparing the categories across different languages they noticed a remarkable cross-cultural correspondence. In the process of categorization, over seven million colour shades visible by human eye can be divided generally into eleven basic colour categories represented through prototypical colour terms. This set of eleven seems therefore to be a semantic universal [4].

To Chinese and Japanese people colour also meant order and ranking[5]. In Japanese, the word for colour is *iro* [6]. Ancient Japanese had four basic colour nouns: *shiro* (white), *kuro* (black), *aka* (red), and *ao* (green/blue)[7]. Except the nowadays adjectives for the four basic colour terms: *shiroi* (white), *kuroi* (black), *akai* (red) and *aoi* (blue-green), the other colour terms are formed by adding the lexeme -*iro* 色(colour) [8]:

	Adjective	Noun (+ *no*)
white	**shiroi 白い**	shiro白
black	**kuroi 黒い**	kuro 黒
red	**akai 赤い**	aka 赤
blue	**aoi 青い**	ao 青
yellow	ki-iro-I 黄色い	**ki-iro黄色**
brown	cha-iro-I 茶色い	**cha-iro茶色**
purple		**murasaki(-iro) 紫色**
green		**midori(-iro) 緑色**
gray		**hai-iro灰色/nezumi-iro鼠色/gureグレー**
orange		**daidai-(iro) 橙(色)/orejiオレンジ**
pink		**momo-iro桃色/pinkuピンク**

Actually, the nominal categories of the four basic colours are but the stems of the same adjectives: *shiro* (the stem of the adjective *shiroi*), *kuro* (the stem of the adjective *kuroi*), *aka* (the stem of the adjective *akai*), *ao* (the stem of the adjective *aoi*). The noun form of the four basic colour terms, followed by the particle *no* (*shiro no*, *kuro no [9]*, *aka no*, *ao no*) is not very productive; instead it is employed the adjective form. The adjectives for yellow and brown *kiiroi* and *chairoi* are made from adjectivized noun-compounds with the word *iro*: *ki-iro* and *cha-iro*. It is believed that those two adjectives appeared in the language

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relatively late and that their formation is due to their suitable phonetic shape [10] , but the nominal form: *chairo no* and *kiiro no* is more common.

Thereby the adjective form applies to the four basic Japanese colours (*shiroi*, *kuroi*, *akai*, *aoi*), but the nominal form is preferred for the rest of the basic colours. A significant distinction in choosing the nominal or the adjective form of the colour terms is made by genre, since literature prefers colour adjectives, while the mass media discourse employs their nominal counterparts to a greater extent [11].

Every Japanese colour term interact with a number of productive morphemes such as *-gakatta* (tinged with); *-ppoi* (-ish) [12].

▸ *shiro*白 (white)

Meaning: 1. the colour (of snow); 2. blank, unprocessed: *shiroi kamiko* 白い紙子 (blank sheet of paper); 3. innocence: *kittto aitsu wa shiro ˈlich* きっとあいつは白だよ (I'm sure he is innocent); 4. the abbreviation for silver (*shirogane*)
Synonyms: *howaito* as in *howaito chokorēto* ホワイトチョコレート(white chocolate)
Shades: *aiborī* (ivory); *enpakushoku* 鉛白色 (white lead); *nyūhakushoku* 乳白色 (milk white) *kaihakushoku* 灰白色 (greyish white) etc.
Compounds: 1. 1. with Japanese reading: *shiromi* 白身 (albumen, egg white); 1.2. with Chinese reading: *hakujō* 白状 (confession); *kokuhaku* 告白 (confession); *hakujin* 白人 (ˈlichésˈz); *hakuchi* 白雉 (idiot); *hakuchūmu* 白昼夢 (day dream); *hakuchō* 白鳥 (swan); *hakuya* 白夜 (white/arctic night); *hakketsubyō* 白血病 (ˈlichésˈz); *meihaku* (obvious); 2. colour phrases; 2.1. coordinate colour phrases (translated by "and"): *shiro-kuro* 白黒 (black and white) as in *shiro-kuro shashin* 白黒写真 (a black and white picture) or *me o shiro-kuro saseru* 目を白黒させる (to look bewildered, to be confused, to blink one's eyes in surprise) or *shiro-kuro o tsukeru* 白黒をつける (to settle the matter in court); *kōhaku* 紅白 (red and white; colours for auspicious occasions); *kōhaku* 黄白(yellow and white; gold and silver; bribery, corruption); 2.3. other colour phrases: 2.3.1. parts of body: *shiroi me de miru* (to look coldly, to frown upon); 2.3.2. sports: *shiro-boshi* 白星 (a white dot, a victory mark) as in *shiro-boshi o ageru [13]* 白星をあげる (to win); 2.3.3. euphemism: *shiro-kubi* 白首(lit.: a white neck, i.e. a prostitute); *shiro-taku* 白タク(lit.: a white taxi. i.e. an unlicensed taxi)
Proper names: *Shirayuki-hime* 白雪姫 (Snow White)
Emphasis: /maQsiro/[14] = *masshiro* 真っ白 (pure white) as in *atama ga masshiro ni naru* 頭が真っ白になる (to go blank, to forget everything)
Verbs: *shiramu* 白む (to grow light); *shirakeru* 白ける (to become apathetic); *shiratsukeru*白つける (to be unamused or bored, to be spoiled; to feel ill at ease)

The main meaning of white is that of the colour itself as in *shiromi* (albumen), *hakuchō* (swan), *hakujin* (ˈlichésˈz). Being the colour of pure light, phrases like *hakuya* (arctic night); *hakuchūmu* (day dream) emphasize this aspect. If something is brought to light, it becomes visible: *meihaku* (obvious) or the light of truth is shed upon as a proof of innocence: *aitsu wa shiro da* (he is innocent); *hakujō* (confession). White has also the meaning of void, blank: *shiroi kamiko* (blank sheet of paper), showing the lack of interest: *shiroi me de miru* (to look coldly, to frown upon); *shirakeru* (to become apathetic); *shiratsukeru* (to be unamused or bored) or the lack of intelligence: *hakuchi* (idiot); *atama ga masshiro ni naru* (one's mind goes blank).

The colour white	**light**	→ obvious (the light making things standing out) (cleanness) → innocence (the light of truth)
	blank, void (lack)	→ indifference (lack of interest) → stupidity (lack of intelligence)

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▸ *kuro* 黒 (black)

Meaning: 1. the colour (of ink); 2. dark complexion: *hifu no kuroi* 皮膚の黒い (dark-skinned); 3. dirty: *yōfuku ga kuroku natta* 洋服が黒くなった (the clothes got dirty); 4. guilty: *kare wa kuro dearu* 彼は黒である (he is guilty)
Synonyms: *burakku* as in *burakku risuto* ブラックリスト (black list)
Shades: *ankokushoku* 暗黒色 (dark); *keshizumi-iro* 消炭色 (cinder); *shikkoku*漆黒 (jet black); *sumi-iro* 墨色 (India ink) etc.
Compounds: 1. 1. with Japanese reading: *kuroji* 黒字 (surpluss); 1.2. with Chinese reading: *kokushibyō* 黒死病 (the black death, the plague); *kokujin* 黒人 (a ▪ lichés ▪); *kokuban* 黒板 (blackboard); *kokuen* 黒鉛 (graphite); *kokuhyō* 黒表 (black list); *ankoku* 暗黒(darkness); 1.3. with special reading: *hokuro* 黒子 (black mole, beauty spot, mite); 2. colour phrases: 2.1. coordinate colour phrases (translated by "and"): *kokubyaku* 黒白 (black and white; right and wrong) as in *kokubyaku o akiraka ni suru*黒白を明らかにする (to decide/dispute as to which is right); 2.3. other colour phrases: 2.3.1. parts of body: *mune ga kuroi* 胸が黒い (to be black-hearted); *watashi no me no kuroi uchi ni* 私の目が黒いうちに (as long as I am alive); 2.3.2. quantity: *kuro-yama no yō na hito dakari* 黒山のような人だかり (a large crowd of people); 2.3.3. food: *kuro-zatō* 黒砂糖 (raw/brown sugar); 2.3.4. sports: *kuro-boshi* 黒星 (the bull's eye; a defeat) as in *kuro-boshi o toru* 黒星をとる (to be defeated); sports: *kuro-obi* 黒帯 (black belt); 2.3.5. stage terms: *kuro-ko* 黒子 (a *kabuki* stagehand dressed in black to be inconspicuous); *kuro maku* 黒幕 (a black curtain), but also a wirepuller, a mastermind: *kore ni wa dareka kuro maku aru rashii* これにだれか黒幕あるらしい (someone is certainly pulling the wires/there must be someone at the bottom of this affair); 2.3.6. obituary: *kuro-waku* 黒枠 (black borders; an obituary notice) as in *kuro-waku no hagaki* 黒枠の葉書 (a postcard announcing somebody's death)
Emphasis: /maQkuro/ = *makkuro* 真っ黒 (pitch black)
Verbs: *kuromu* 黒む (to become black, to blacken); *kurobamu* 黒ばむ (to become black, to blacken); *kurozumu* 黒ずむ (to become black, to blacken), *kuromaru* 黒まる (to blacken), *kuromeru* 黒める (to blacken, to make something black)

Black is the darkest colour as in *kokuen* (graphite) and everything comes near it is spoiled or gets dirty, thereby, it bears the stain of guilt: *kare wa kuro dearu* (he is guilty). Moreover, *kuro*, as the symbol of darkness: *ankoku* (darkness), wipes away the shapes - that become inconspicuous as in *kuro-ko* (a *kabuki* stagehand dressed in black). The deletion may also mean total annihilation of life forms, i.e. death: *kokushibyō* (black death, plague); *kuro-waku* (an obituary notice). As the positive meaning of black, it signifies experience: *kuro-obi* (black belt), *kuro-maku* (a mastermind).

The colour black	**darkness** (inconspicuous, hidden)	(dirtiness) → guilt → death

▸ *aka* 赤 (red)

Meaning: 1. the colour of blood: *aka shingō* 赤信号 (red light, danger signal); *aka-wain* 赤ワイン (red wine); *sekijūji* 赤十字 (Red Cross); 2. a baby: *aka-chan* 赤ちゃん, *aka-nbō* 赤ん坊; 3. a communist: *aka-gun* 赤軍 (Red Army)
Synonyms: *kurenai* 紅 (deep red, crimson), *ake* 朱 (vermilion, cinnabar), *ni* 丹 (red, red earth), *aka/ake* 緋 (scarlet, cardinal); ▪*lic* レッド (red)
Shades: *aka-sabi-iro* 赤錆色(rust); *aka-ni*赤丹(red clay); *suō* 蘇芳 (sappanwood); *kin-aka* 金赤 (bronze red); *kāmain* カーマイン (carmine); *beni-iro* 紅色 (rouge); *renga-iro* 煉瓦色 (brick red); *wain* ▪*lic* ワインレッド (wine red) etc.
Compounds: 1. 1. with Japanese reading: *aka-ge* 赤毛 (red hair) as in *aka-ge no hito* 赤毛の人 (a red haired man); *aka-ji* 赤字 (a deficit); 1.2. with Chinese reading: *sekigaisen* 赤外線 (infrared rays); *sekidō* 赤道 (the equator); *sekihan* 赤飯 (boilded

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rice with red beans); *sekihin* 赤貧 (extreme poverty); *sekiri* 赤痢 (dysentery); *sekimen suru* 赤面する (to blush); *sekirara* 赤裸々 (naked, bare; frank); *sekkekkyū* 赤血球 (red blood cell); 2. colour phrases: 2.2. complex colour phrases (tints): *aka-guroi* 赤黒い (dark red); *aka-chakeru* 赤茶ける (to turn reddish brown); 2.3. other colour phrases: *aka no ʺliché* 赤の他人 (a perfect stanger); *aka-haji o kaku* 赤恥をかく (to be put to shame, to be disgraced in public)
Proper names: *Aka-zukin* 赤頭巾 (Little Red Ridinghood); *Aka no hiroba* 赤の広場 (The Red Square)
Emphasis: *makka* 真っ赤 (deep red), *aka-aka* 赤々 (bright red)
Verbs: *akameru* 赤める (to make red), *akarameru* 赤らめる (to turn red, redden, blush), *akaramu* 赤らむ (to become red)

Red is decoded as the colour of blood: *sekimen suru* (to blush), thereby *aka* turns out to be the symbol of vitality: *akachan* (baby) and of life: *sekijūji* (Red Cross). *Aka* is also the colour of fire as in *sekigaisen* (infrared rays), with all its related terms such as excessive heat (incandescence): *sekidō* (the equator); emotion: *akahaji o kaku* (to be disgraced in public) or political zeal (communism): *aka-gun* (Red Army). Furthermore, *aka* stands for bright, glowing colours that are conspicuous (at a great distance): *aka no tannin* (a perfect stranger). Red overpowers other colours by standing out and signalling danger: *sekihin* (extreme poverty), *akaji* (deficit).

The colour red	**fire**	→ heat/warmth → brightness, conspicuousness → danger → emotion
	blood	→ vitality/life → (emotion/the flow of blood)

▸ *ao* 青 (blue/green)

Meaning: 1. the colour of the sky: *ao-zora* 青空 (the blue sky) as in *ao-zora kyōshitsu* 青空教室 (an open-air school); 2. pale: *aoi kao* 青い顔 (a pale face); 3. unripe, green, inexperienced: *aoba* 青葉 (fesh leaves); *seinen* 青年 (youth, young man)
Synonyms: *ao* 青 (blue), *ao* 蒼 (blue, pale), *ao* 碧 (blue, green), *burū* ブルー (blue)
Shades: *ai-iro* 藍色 (indigo); *ruri-iro* 瑠璃色 (azure); *mizu-iro* 水色 (light blue), *sora-iro* 空色 (sky blue); ターコイスブルー *tākoisu burū* (turquoise blue); シアン *shian* (cyan); *kon'iro* 紺色 (deep blue) etc.
Compounds: 1. 1. with Japanese reading: *aoiki toiki* 青息吐息 (in great distress); 1.2.. with Chinese reading: *seishun* 青春 (a youth, the spring of life); *seishōnen* 青少年 (the younger generation, the youth); *seidō* 青銅 (bronze); 2. colour phrases: 2.2. complex colour phrases (tints): *gunjō-iro* 群青色 (ultramarine); *ao-guroi* 青黒い (deep blue); *ao-jiroi*青白い (pale, wan); 2.3. other colour phrases: *ao-kusai* 青臭い (grassy smelling; unskilled; green) as in *aokusai iken* 青臭い意見 (half-baked opinion); *ao-suji* 青筋 (blue vein) as in *aosuji o tatete okoru* 青筋を立てて怒る (to go purple with rage); *aonisai* 青二才 (a stripling; a raw [green] youth, novice); *seiun no kokorozashi o daku*青雲の志を抱く (to aspire to greatness, to have a lofty ambition) ; *seiten* 晴天 (blue sky, fine weather) or *seiten hakujitsu no mi to naru* 晴天白日の身となる (to be cleared from the charge against)

Ao had existed for a long time in Japanese, maybe before *midori* (green); it was primarily used to describe the light phenomenon, and only later did it become the colour term. This could prove the existence of the two parallel systems and principles of categorizations: one expressed through the system of colour terms, and the other expressed through the system of terms for the light phenomenon [15].

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As in Japanese, the colour *ao* covers two chromatic categories: blue, which stands for the colour of the sky as in *seiten* (blue sly, fine weather) and green which is connected to vegetations and unripe fruit: *aoba* (fresh leaves). In its figurative meaning, *ao*, as green, represents the youth or an inexperienced person: *ao-kusai* (unskilled, green); *aonisai* (a stripling). *Ao* is also an indicator of paleness (lack of colour) or distress as in *aoiki toiki* (in great distress). Being the colour of the sky, *ao* represents distance, a far away spot: *seiun no kokorozashi o daku* (to have a lofty ambition).

The colour blue/green	sky (blue)	→ distance
	unripe (green)	→ pale (lack of colour) → inexperienced (lack of experience)

▸ *kiiro* 黄色 (yellow)

Meaning: the colour of gold/money
Synonyms: ierō イエロー (yellow)
Shades: karashi-iro芥子色 (mustard); tanpopo-iro 蒲公英色(dandelion coloured); remon-iroレモン色 (lemon coloured); カナリヤ (canaria) etc.
Compounds: 1.1. with Japanese reading: kimi黄身 (yolk of an egg); 1.2. with Chinese reading: ōgyoku 黄玉 (topaz); ōgon 黄金 (gold, money) as in ōgon jidai (golden age); ōdan 黄疸 (jauntice); ōnetsubyō 黄熱病 (yellow fever); ōshoku jinshu 黄色人種 (yellow race); ōdo 黄土 (loes); kōga 黄河 (The Yellow River); kōdō 黄道 (the elliptic, the zodiac); iō 硫黄 (sulphur); 1.3. with special reading: tasogare 黄昏 (twilight); yomi 黄泉 (Hades); 2. colour phrases: 2.2. complex colour phrases (tints): kuro-midori 黒緑 (blackish green); tankōshoku 淡黄色 (light yellow); ōkashiku 黄褐色 (yellowish brown); 2.3. other colour phrases : kiiroi koe 黄色い声 (a shrill voice)
Verb: kibamu 黄ばむ (to turn yellow, to be tinged yellow)

If we assume that yellow is the colour of money/gold, *kiiro* may also suggest the existence of a metallic object: *kiiroi koe* (a shrill voice). Fading flowers become yellow, thereby the presence of the colour implies bareness, drought and sometimes disease as in *ōdan* (jauntice); *ōnetsubyō* (yellow fever). Being a bright colour, yellow expresses natural phenomena involving light or luminescence: *tasogare* (twilight), *kōdō* (zodiac)

The colour yellow	→ gold/metal
	(dry, arid) → disease
	→ brightness

▸ *midori* 緑 (green)

Meaning: green, verture
Synonyms: *midori* 碧 (green), *midori* 翠 (green), *gurīn* グリーン (green)
Shades: ki-midori 黄緑 (yellow-green); moegi-iro 萌黄色(light green); moegi-iro 萌葱色 (light green); aodake-iro 青竹色 (green bamboo); uguisu-iro鶯色(bush warbler); koke-iro 苔色(moss green); nae-iro 苗色(seedling); waka-midori 若緑(fresh green) etc.
Compounds: 1. 1. with Japanese reading: ki-midori 黄緑 (yellow-green); 1.2. with Chinese reading: ryokuka suru 緑化する (to plant trees); ryokuju 緑樹 (a green-leafed tree); ryokucha 緑茶 (green tea); ryokunaishō 緑内障 (glaucoma); sekiryokushikimō 赤緑色盲 (daltonism); 2. colour phrases: 2.3. other colour phrases: midori no hi 緑の日 (greenery day); midori no kurokami 緑の黒髪 (raven black hair)

▸ chairo 茶色 (brown)

Meaning: the colour of tea
Synonyms: kasshoku 褐色 (brown); kuri-iro/risshoku 栗色 (brown)

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Shades: koge-chairo こげ茶色 (dark brown); usu-chairo 薄茶色 (light brown); akachairo 赤茶色 (reddish brown), chakasshoku 茶褐色(dark brown); tankasshoku 淡褐色 (light brown), kitsuneiro 狐色 (golden brown) etc.

▸ haiiro 灰色 (grey)

Meaning: Hai-iro and nezumi-iro are made by metaphorical transfer: the morpheme hai (ash) and the morpheme nezumi (mouse/rat), i.e. the colour of the ash or the colour of the rat. Hai-iro represents gloom, mediocrity and dullness.
Synonyms: gurē グレー (grey), nezumi-iro 鼠色 (grey)
Shades: haiseishoku 灰青色 (greyish blue); kaihaku 灰白 (grey, griseous); kairyokushoku 灰緑色 (greenish grey); haiseishoku 灰青色 (grayish blue); kairyokushoku 灰緑色 (greenish grey); kaihaku 灰白 (grey, griseous); kusunda haiiro くすんだ灰色 (dingy grey) etc.
Compounds: 1.1. with Japanese reading: hairo-guma 灰色熊 (a grizzly); 2. colour phrases: haiiro no jisei 灰色の人生 (a grey life); haiiro no giin 灰色の議員 (a Dietman in between; a wobbler)

▸ *pinku* ピンク/*momo-iro* 桃色 (pink)

Meaning: The word *momo* in *momo-iro [16]* means peach, but *pinku* is more common.
Synonyms: *momo-iro* 桃色 (rose, pink); *tankōshoku* 淡紅色 (pink)
Shades: *shokingu pinku* ショキングピンク (hot pink); *ichigo-iro*苺色 (strawberry); *ōrudo rōzu* オールドローズ (old rose); *sāmon pinku* サーモンピンク (salmon pink); *sakura-iro* 桜色 (cherry blossoms); *bara-iro*薔薇色 (rose); *botan-iro* 牡丹色 (peony) etc.
Colour phrases: *pinku eiga* ピンク映画 (a risqué/an off-colour movie)

▸ *murasaki* 紫 (purple)

Synonyms: *pāpuru* パープル (purple)
Shades: *shikon* 紫紺 (bluish-purple); *ao-murasaki* 青紫 (indigo), *aka-murasaki* 赤紫 (purplish red, murex, claret), *fuji murasaki* 藤紫 (pale purple); *waka murasaki* 若紫 (light purple); *fuji-iro* 藤色 (lavender) etc.
Compounds: 1. 1. with Japanese reading: *murasaki zuishō* 紫水晶 (amethyst); 1.2. with Chinese reading: *shigaisen* 紫外線 (ultraviolet rays); 1.3. with special reading: *ajisai* 紫陽花 (hydrangea)

▸ orenji オレンジ /daidai-iro 橙色

Meaning: Orange is more used than *daidai [17]-iro*.
Synonyms: *daidai-iro* 橙色 (orange)
Shades: *kaki-iro* 柿色 (persimmon-coloured); *mikan-iro* 蜜柑色 (mandarin orange), *ninjin-iro* 人参色 (carrot-coloured); *yamabuki-iro* 山吹色 (orange-yellow) etc.

The morphemes *shiro* (white), *kuro* (black), *aka* (red) and *ao* (blue/green) are marked with the specific relation to light and lighting, especially to the light characteristic for parts of day: *shiro* is a feature of a morning sky, frost, reflection of light on snow, that makes positive connotation of clearness and innocence of the new born, and negative of the rawness and unsophisticated. *Aka* which is etymologically closest to bright, light and glowing, also belongs to the bright part of a day, that is to the brightest – noon of the summer day when all colours stand out and glitter. This is, at the same time, the colour of the sun, not only according to the hue, but to the intensity of light. This makes its positive connotations of sincerity and clearness, and negative as of conspicuousness. *Ao* stands for shades and evening. It is associated with the part of a day when the greenery becomes of gloomy colour shading more and more, and the paleness of the moonlight, which, with its darkness and paleness, makes negative

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connotations. It is also the colour of the depths, of the sky and sea, that although sometimes dark, can be of a rather pleasant colour and lighting, which makes its positive connotations. And *kuro* is the colour of the pitch night, and therefore stands for total absence of light that hides everything – that is its negative connotation; and, on the other hand, that darkness does not make the colour less intensive, it can rather add to it some quality which makes its positive connotations [18]. This relationship toward the quantity and type of light is influencing figurative meanings and emotional attitudes in the following way: bright and clear (*shiro*, *aka*) are good and innocent, and dark; and unclear (*kuro*, *ao*) are bad, wrong and suspicious. It is true vice versa as well: what is too clear or overwhelmingly obvious (*aka*, *shiro*) is also considered as negative, and what by its 'darkness' acquired the quality of being of desirable intensity (*ao*, *kuro*) is evaluated as positive [19]. According to those etymological theories which partly match the Berlin and Kay's research (1969), the terms which appeared first were the terms for white and black, which cover the whole spectral and non-spectral space of the colour and light cognition, dividing it into warm and cold, light and dark poles. The third term is the term for red, emphasizing the phenomenon of colour i.e. glowing. That is the case with the Japanese language as well. The fourth term that evolves in language is the term for the green or yellow colour, and in the Japanese language that is the term *ao* which refers to both green and blue. However, the etymology of the terms shows that the term *ao* primarily referred to the semantic and cognitive space between *shiro* (white) and *kuro* (black) i.e. between light and dark, and only later did it become the opposite side of the term *aka*, name for the bright, red colour [20] . The particularity of the Japanese language is that the system of terms for chromatic colours developed separately from the original system of polarization of light and dark, and warm and cold. The yellow and brown colour can be considered as new poles that developed from the sides of reddish and bluish colours [21].

Talking about the ability to develop figurative meanings, except for the morphemes *shiro*, *kuro*, *aka*, *ao* other terms are considerably limited. The morphemes *midori* (green), *murasaki* (purple), *chairo* (brown) etc. can usually have only one figurative meaning that is generally associated with a certain cultural phenomenon: the morpheme *midori* is associated with the greenery, and with the positive attitude toward its intensive, almost black colour; the morpheme *murasaki* is associated with elite that through the centuries wore the purple clothes or the ornaments of that colour; the morpheme *cha* is associated with the tea, extremely important beverage in the Japanese culture and civilization [22].

Japanese lexicon consists of two sets of mutual exclusive terms, one of native origin, the other borrowed from English [23]. Several English loanword colour terms are more salient then their native Japanese counterparts [24]. Instead of *momo-iro* (lit. peach coloured), *daidai-iro* (lit. orange coloured) and *nezumi-iro* (lit. mouse coloured) or *hai-iro* (lit. ash coloured), Japanese prefer to use the English loanwords *pinku*, *orenji*, *gurē*. English loanword colour terms may be in the process of replacing a number of native Japanese colour terms in the reverse order of the Kay and Berlin's evolutionary sequence. For instance, *cha-iro* could be the next term replaced by *buraun* [25].

In addition to these basic colour terms, we can encounter several linguistic phenomena such as: reduplication, emphasis and colour verbs. Reduplication can occur only to the four basic Japanese colours, but emphasis is extended to *chairo/kiiro* (that can also be used as adjectives). Moreover, there are few verbs

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corresponding to the four basic colour terms in Japanese, including the verb which refers to the term for purple (*murasaki*).

Noun	adj.	Redupli-cation	Emphasis/maQ-/	verb			
				-mu	-ramu	-zumu	-bamu
shiro	shiroi	shiro-jiro [+voicing]	masshiro	shiro-mu	-	shiro-zumu	shiro-bamu
kuro	kuroi	kuro-guro [+voicing]	makkuro	kuro-mu	-	kuro-zumu	kuro-bamu
aka	akai	aka-aka	makka	aka-mu	aka-ramu	-	aka-bamu
ao	aoi	ao-ao	massao	ao-mu	-	ao-zumu	ao-bamu
kiiro	(kiiroi)	-	makkiiro	-	-	-	ki-bamu
chairo	(chairoi)	-	matchairo	-	-	-	-
murasaki	-	-		-	-	-	murasaki-bamu
midori	-	-		-	-	-	-
haiiro	-	-		-	-	-	-
daidai	-	-		-	-	-	-

It's also worth noting that the phrase "complete range of colours" is meaningless unless precisely defined. Colour identification is partly physiological and partly cultural/linguistic (individual colours are given specific terms that apply to a "focus" point on the spectrum and may be applied to a narrow range of the spectrum). However these imprecise ranges may omit whole areas of the spectrum which can only be described vaguely as "greeny-yellow" or qualified as "darkish blue-green." Michael Minnich suggests: "Colour system is not simply cultural and it's not simply observational. It seems to have some relationship to language itself, something like grammatical gender or case marking" [26].

NOTES

[1] For example, Robin Lakoff noticed that in this society women spend much more of their time on colour-related activities such as choosing clothes than men do (see Lakoff, Robin (1975). *Language and Woman's Place.* New York: Harper Colophon)

[2] In contrast, cool colours appear smaller and farther (the accidents involving black cars outnumber the accidents involving warm colour cars; that is why most of the taxis are painted in yellow or black *go* pieces are made bigger than white *go* pieces). In the darkness people can difficultly make out brown, black, blue and purple, but they can see white, yellow and orange. Babies perceive red in the early stages of their life, and most of their toys are red or made up of red parts. Senior citizens having eye problems cannot distinctly see blue or green (there are a lot of cooking accidents because they could not see the flame of the cooking stove). Looking at warm colours, one can perceive a longer flow of time, while staring at cool colours, they perceive the same amount of time as shorter. Black objects appear to be 1.87 times heavier than a white object, although they weigh the same (cf. http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%89%B2).

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[3] Belpaeme, Tony; Bleys, Joris (2005). *Colourful language and colour categories,* In: "Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on the Emergence and Evolution ofLinguisticCommunication" (EELC'05). (http://arti.vub.ac.be/%7Ejorisb/pubs/05%20eelc.pdf)

[4] The distributional restrictions of colour terms are: 1. all languages contain term of white and black; 2. if a language contains three terms, then it contains a term for red; 3. if a language contains four terms then it contains a term either for green or for 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, it contains a term for blue; 6. if a language contains seven terms, it contains a term for brown; 7. if a language contains eight or more terms, then it contains a term for purple, pink, orange, grey or some combination of these (cf. Berlin, Brent; Kay, Paul (1969). *Basic Colour Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, reedited in 1991, Center for the Study of Language and Inf., pp. 2-3)

[5[In 603 *kan'I* (court ranks according to headgear colours) was established. The ranks in the twelve level cap and rank system consisted of the greater and the lesser of each of the six Confucian virtues: virtue (徳 *toku*), benevolence (仁 *jin*), propriety (礼 *rei*), sincerity (信 *shin*), justice (義 *gi*) and knowledge (智 *chi*): first and second rank (of *toku*) were represented by purple; third and forth rank (of *jin*) were represented by blue; fifth and sixth rank (of *rei*) were rendered by red; yellow stood for the seventh and eighth for the rank of *shin*; white was the colour for the ninth and tenth rank of *gi* and finally black, represented the eleventh and the twelfth rank of *chi.* (cf. Mizutani, Y. [no year]. *Shaikai-ryō shiryōshū 6-nen-sei,* Tokyo: Bunkeidō, p.22)

[6] *Iro* can also mean lust, sexual desire, passion

[7] Their ancient adjective forms were *shiroshi*, *kuroshi*, *akashi*, and *aoshi*.

[8] Optional in the case of *murasaki* (purple), *midori* (green), *daidai* (orange)

[9] The nominal form for the four basic colour terms, especially *kuro*, is sometimes used when the modified noun does not belong directly to the natural world, but to the manufactured goods and clothing: **kuroi kami no ke* (black hair) vs. *kuro no naga-gutsu* (black boots) (cf. 藤村逸子. *色彩名詞と色彩形容詞の対立 – 新聞と文学のコーパスからわかること*–p. 11, graph 4; p. 15, http://www.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/fujimura/gyoseki/iro.pdf (24.05.2009)

[10] Trickovic, Divna (2004). Basic *colour categories in the Japanese language in reference to their adjectival form,* p. 8 , http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:NbQ8TlnwTsIJ:www.uab.ro/reviste_recunoscute/philologica/philologica_2006_tom2/44.doc+Trickovic+Divna,+(2004),+Basic+Colour+categories+in+the+Japanese+language+in+reference+to+their+adjectival+form&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro&client=firefox-a

[11] 藤村逸子, Art. Cit., p. 15, graph 5

[12] Stanlaw, James (2005). *Japanese-English – Language and Culture Contact*, Washington: University of Washington Press, p. 221

[13] It is a phrase usually used in *sumo* competitions

[14] /maQsiro/, /Q/ is the double consonant phoneme, known as *sokuon*.

[15] Trickovic, Divna, Art. Cit., p. 7

[16] It also means amorous affair

[17] *Daidai* is a Japanese bitter orange

[18] Trickovic, Divna, Art. Cit., p. 7

[19] Ibidem, p. 6

[20] 飛田良文; 佐藤武義 (2003). *現代日本語講座、第4巻、語彙*. 東京: 明治書院,. Pp. 15-18, apud. Trickovic, Divna, Art. Cit., p. 8

[21] Ibidem, p. 9

[22] Ibidem, p. 5

[23] Stanlaw, James, Op. cit., p. 218

[24] Ibidem, p. 212

[25] Ibidem, p. 232

[26] http://www.putlearningfirst.com/language/research/colour_words.html

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Links :

http ://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%89%B2

http ://www.putlearningfirst.com/language/research/colour_words.html

ABSTRACT

Colours are a constant to our existence. Berlin and Kay (1969) established a set of eleven colours as semantic universals. Except the nowadays adjectives for the four basic colour terms: shiroi (white), kuroi (black), akai (red) and aoi (blue-green), the other colour terms are nouns formed by adding the lexeme -iro: chairo (brown), kiiro (yellow), murasaki(-iro) (purple), midori(-iro) (green), hai-iro (grey), orenji (orange), pinku (pink). In Japanese, the colour ao covers two chromatic categories blue as well as green. The morphemes shiro (white), kuro (black), aka (red) and ao (blue/green) are marked with the specific relation to the light characteristics for parts of day. Aka emphasized the phenomenon of colour i.e. glowing and a primarily referred to the space between light and darkness. Talking about the ability to develop figurative meanings, except for the morphemes shiro, kuro, aka, ao, other terms are considerably limited. Several English loanword colour terms (pinku, gurē, orenji) are more salient then their native Japanese counterparts. In addition, we can encounter several linguistic phenomena such as: reduplication, emphasis and colour verbs, especially applied to the four basic colour terms.

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