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WYLER, Siegfried, **Colour and Language: Colour Terms in English**. Tübingen, Gunter Narr, 1992, 203 pp., ISBN 3-8233-4219-3.

Discussion on colour terms in recent years has focused on relativist and universalist issues centring around the question of how the colour continuum is segmented by different speech communities. Research in this field has primarily dealt with issues of the perception and conceptualization of colours, i.e., questions of an anthropological or neurophysical nature. Wyler's monograph attempts to investigate colour terms first and foremost from a linguistic point of view, i.e., to address morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic issues, and to discuss the use of colour terms in specific texts. In Wyler's terms this means 'to reflect on what kind of words are used to denote colour, how many such words humans use in varying circumstances, what is the nature of such words ..., what are their grammatical properties ..., what do such words serve for ..., where do symbolic and where emotive issues become recognizable or relevant, and what creative power is harboured in colour names' (p. 10f.).

This monograph reflects the author's long-standing research interest in various questions pertaining to colour terms in the English language. The book comprises 18 chapters of something like 6 to 10 pages each (apart from three lengthier chapters which are in their turn subdivided into a number of short subchapters), and covers a variety of topics related to colour and language. Four chapters in the monograph deal with morphological and syntactic aspects and discuss such issues as the derivation, conversion, gradation, and modification of colour terms, as well as the position of colour terms in sentences and phrases. The great majority of chapters are of a semantic and/or pragmatic nature and cover such topics as 'Is colour-naming arbitrary?', 'Do colour terms constitute a wordfield?', 'The acquisition of colour terms', 'Colour term identification and classification', 'Standardization of colour terms', 'The figurative usage of colour terms', 'Colour terms in texts', 'Colour terms and race in literature', etc.

The first chapter gives a brief overview of the debate that has been going on in colour term research between universalist researchers (such as Berlin, Kay, McDaniel, or Wierzbicka) and researchers that adhere to a relativist view (originally headed by Sapir and Whorf, more recently by Lenneberg and Rosch-Heider, and in Europe principally by Weisgerber and Gipper of

the Bonn school of linguists). BERLIN and KAY (1969) is one of the most persuasive attempts to show that basic colour terminology is explicable in terms of a set of eleven universal colour categories, which, however, may not all be present in a given language. Although the evolutionary diachronic aspect of their hypothesis has met with increasing criticism, their assumptions as to the universality of colour naming has found strong support in more recent neuro-physical research in the area of colour perception and colour naming, which supports the hypothesis that perceptual systems determine linguistic categories (in particular see ROSCH-HEIDER 1987). Wyler points out that research carried out in this field has mostly been undertaken in what might be called 'linguistic isolation' (i.e., informants identifying and naming colour chips), and that the linguistic context of an actual speech situation has hardly ever been considered relevant for the information gained from informants.

In contrast to the research outlined in this first chapter the author sets himself the task of investigating how people 'cope with colour in words, phrases, sentences and texts' (p. 10). The book's impressive wealth of observations on colour as a linguistic phenomenon, and the wide range of topics discussed might occasionally leave the reader with the feeling that the space allocated to each topic is too restricted, and it is not always easy to see how the research findings presented are integrated within the overall purpose of the book. However, Wyler's attempt to work towards establishing an inventory of colour term properties (functional, morphological, syntactic, semantic), which he presents in the form of a checklist in the last chapter, serves as a kind of unifying principle for the various topics discussed in this monograph.

In the following I want to restrict myself to the discussion of some of the major implications that have to be drawn from the studies presented in this monograph.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 deal primarily with semantic issues and discuss fundamental properties of colour names in terms of wordfield theory, arbitrariness of colour naming, and the occurrence of oppositional pairs (such as red wine – white wine). Here, as again in Chapter 15 on the figurative use of colour terms, Wyler makes use of semantic feature analysis. Some of the assumptions Wyler makes as to the way in which words can function as colour names are at the least problematic. He suggests that '[m]orphemes which function as colour names must, in some way or other, have a component [+COLOUR] which is either easy to

recognize for the speaker and the hearer, or it must allow us to establish a colour notion by way of allusion or implication' (p. 37). Wyler writes that 'words like "speed", "vicinity" or "dimension" cannot serve in this function, nor can "street", "table" or "dog". "Happiness" on the other hand can' (p. 37). 'Happiness', Wyler says, is easily associated with 'joy', 'elation', and hence with the colour 'red' (connected with a person's reddish complexion). The argument seems somewhat arbitrary. It is difficult to see why this kind of associative process should come into operation with certain words and not with others. Wyler maintains that "asphalt" easily suggests a "greyish" colour' (p. 37). Wouldn't this be equally true for the word 'street'? The problem, it seems to me, resides in the perspective that is taken on language. The questions might be more profitably addressed from a perspective that focuses on the language user, rather than on language as a 'self-regulating-system' (p. 59). Wyler explicates his outlook on language when he writes '[l]anguage can be understood as a self-regulating system. It develops means to cope verbally with exigencies of the non-linguistic. Colours in their immense quantity are an example of how language "invents" strategies to make these phenomena accessible to human speech and communication' (p. 59). It seems to me that the emphasis should be placed not so much on what language 'does', but on what speakers and hearers do with language in communicative interaction.

Wyler himself advocates the contextualized study of colour terms in Chapter 6, 'Colour term identification and classification'. This chapter (with 30 pages) is the longest chapter in the book and reflects extensive research into various areas in which colour terms are significant, such as flags, coat-of-arms, and tartans; plants; textiles; cosmetics; and antiques. Wyler discusses various attempts at colour term classification. His main criticism of a morpho-semantic structural classification of colour terms, as undertaken by BIDU-VRANCEANU (1976) for Rumanian colour names, is that such a decontextualized analysis neglects such relevant issues as figurative usage, semiotic functions, and topic restrictedness of colour terms. The author concludes that 'such an investigation must be contextual, i.e. it must investigate the terms as components of oral or written texts' (p. 83).

Wyler investigates colour terms contextually in respect to their use in fashion magazines (Chapter 6, Section 4), in the writings of art historians and art critics (Chapter 9), and, above all, in literary texts (Chapter 16).

The student of literature will find many interesting observations in Wyler's discussion of the manifold functions of colour terms (descriptive, suggestive, symbolic, semiotic) in the writings of such authors as Golding, Mansfield, Woolf, Le Carré, Conrad, James, and Hemingway.

Finally, a few remarks about the readership this book wants to address. As a female reader, I would have appreciated seeing other pronominal forms used instead of the widely used generic 'he' for reference to readers, authors, etc. Generally, this monograph should be of interest to anyone who wants to find out more about the many questions pertaining to colour as a linguistic phenomenon. It is written not only for the linguist, for whom it offers a well-researched overview of the issues that have been relevant in colour term research in the last forty years or so, but also for a wider public that is interested in colour and its verbalization. Wyler uses a language that is clear and not overburdened with technical jargon and makes his study thus accessible to the linguist and non-linguist alike.

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