SEMANTIC CHANGES IN ENGLISH BASIC COLOR TERMS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE VICTORIAN AND CONTEMPORARY ERAS

Perubahan Semantik dalam Istilah Warna Dasar Bahasa Inggris: Perbandingan antara Era Victoria dan Era Kontemporer

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Abstract: *: This study utilizes the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) to investigate the semantic changes in English basic color terms by comparing their usage in the Victorian Era (1840s–1890s) and the Contemporary Era (1950s–2010s). The research focuses on how these terms have evolved in meaning and association, as reflected in frequency trends and collocational patterns. Frequency analysis reveals an expansion in color terminology over time, mostly aligning with Berlin and Kay's basic color theory. This growth, particularly in less common color terms, suggests that modern cultural and societal factors might influence their development. Collocational analysis shows shifts in tone and usage, with red, green, and blue acquiring more positive associations (amelioration), while white, yellow, and grey show increasingly negative connotations (pejoration). Additionally, terms like purple, pink, and orange display broadened meanings, whereas black and brown have narrowed in their associations. The findings highlight a transition from natural and aesthetic contexts in the Victorian Era to more practical and commercial applications in contemporary use. This study offers valuable insights into the processes of semantic change and the broader significance of color terminology in English.*
Keywords: *semantic change, color terms, diachronic corpus*

Abstrak: Studi ini menggunakan Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) untuk menyelidiki perubahan semantik dalam istilah warna dasar bahasa Inggris dengan membandingkan penggunaannya di Era Victoria (1840-an–1890-an) dan Era Kontemporer (1950-an–2010-an). Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana istilah-istilah ini berevolusi dalam makna dan asosiasi, sebagaimana tercermin dalam tren frekuensi dan pola kolokasi. Analisis frekuensi mengungkap perluasan terminologi warna dari waktu ke waktu yang sebagian besar sejalan dengan teori warna dasar oleh Berlin dan Kay. Pertumbuhan ini, khususnya dalam istilah warna yang kurang umum, menunjukkan bahwa faktor budaya dan masyarakat modern dapat memengaruhi perkembangannya. Analisis kolokasi menunjukkan pergeseran dalam konotasi dan

penggunaan, dengan merah, hijau, dan biru memperoleh asosiasi yang lebih positif (ameliorasi), sementara putih, kuning, dan abu-abu menunjukkan konotasi yang semakin negatif (pejorasi). Selain itu, istilah seperti ungu, merah muda, dan oranye menampilkan makna yang lebih luas, sedangkan hitam dan cokelat telah menyempit dalam asosiasinya. Temuan ini menyoroti transisi dari konteks alami dan estetika di Era Victoria ke aplikasi yang lebih praktis dan komersial dalam penggunaan kontemporer. Studi ini menawarkan wawasan berharga tentang proses perubahan semantik dan signifikansi terminologi warna yang lebih luas dalam bahasa Inggris.
Kata kunci: perubahan semantik, istilah warna, korpus diakronik

INTRODUCTION

Color terms have a special role in language, functioning as a link between the physical world and human perception. Color terms carry a deeper connotation meaning beyond just the literal meaning that can influence how humans communicate. According to Florén (2005), although color terms are fundamental in all languages, their definitions and usages are often influenced by culture and evolve over time. As with many other expressions, color terms function at both literal (denotative) level, which refers directly to colors such as "*red*" and "*blue*", and the figurative (connotative) level, which represents emotions or cultural concepts as many other terms (Leech, 1985).

The way language may translate physical experiences onto more abstract or social concepts is reflected in the connotative use of color. Color terms are important in communication because they can be used to express both symbolic meanings and factual descriptions (Biggam, 2012). For example, phrases such as "*green with envy*" and "*feeling blue*" are used symbolically to express emotions, while "*she wore a green and blue ribbon*" is used factually to describe the actual color of something. This illustrates how color terms can elicit emotional states or attitudes beyond their literal meaning (Philip, 2006). Because of this, color terms function within a complicated network of linguistic and cultural connotations, making them useful instruments for understanding and expressing oneself in social and personal context.

Color terms offer intriguing instances of how meanings vary throughout languages and historical eras. These changes are frequently influenced by technology progress, societal development, and language contact. For example, the color term "*purple*" has undergone significant transformation. In ancient times, *purple* dye was extremely rare and expensive, became a symbol of wealth and power for royalty and the elite. However, the invention of synthetic dyes in the 19th century, made *purple* widely

accessible, diminishing its exclusive association with royalty, changing its social significance and linguistic representation (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002). These meaning changes demonstrate how language is flexible enough to accommodate the changing demands and experiences of its users while also reflecting larger societal changes.

The process by which a word's meaning changes over time is known as semantic change. One of the primary fields of linguistics research is this process as it demonstrates how language changes to reflect the evolving human experience (Djajasudarma, 2016). There are several different kinds of semantic changes that words can experience, including meaning widening, narrowing, amelioration, and pejoration (Traugott, 1985). Gradually, these dynamic processes occur when language interacts with cultural and societal changes highlighting the complex relationship between them.

A strong methodological foundation for researching semantic change is provided by corpus linguistics, which analyzes enormous collections of naturally occurring language. With corpus linguistics, researchers may study language patterns on a much wider scale by tracking how words are used in various context and historical periods using computational methods, in contrast to conventional linguistics techniques that frequently depend on introspection or smaller data sets (Allan & Robinson, 2012). The diachronic corpus, which comprises writings from several historical eras and enables researchers to track the changes in word meaning over time, is a crucial resource in this discipline. (McEnery & Hardie, 2011). By analyzing how a word's frequency, its collocation, and its contextual environment shift, researchers can gain insight into how a word's meaning has evolved over time.

Several previous studies have discussed the change in the meaning of color terms in language, but there are some gaps that still need to be filled. Some studies discuss the change in color meaning in a synchronic or cross-linguistic context, but neither compared two different historical periods or use historical corpus data (Platonova & Iljinska, 2016; Won & Westland, 2017; Zaslavsky et al., 2018). Diachronic corpora are invaluable for studying semantic changes in color terms, as they capture how cultural, technological, and social developments affect language. In addition, Matschi (2004) and Viti (2024) made important contributions to the study of historical semantics, but neither use a

quantitative approach with corpus data, nor examine trends in the frequency and collocation of color terms use in English between two historical periods.

The significance of corpus linguistics in monitoring semantic changes over time are demonstrated by Bunyarat and Tuptim (2023) and El-Assady et al. (2022). They introduce cross-cultural and computational approaches, but neither examine the change in the semantics of color terms in English diachronically using historical corpus data. By examining how color terms have been used in different historical contexts, researchers can detect both subtle and overt shifts in meaning that might not be readily apparent through qualitative analysis alone.

The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), developed by Mark Davies, is the largest structured corpus of historical English, offering a unique resource and special tools for analyzing linguistic variation throughout time (Davies, 2012). As part of the broader family of corpora from English-Corpora.org, which are widely recognized for their extensive use in English linguistic studies, COHA provides exceptional insights into historical English. The corpus spans over 475 million words from texts dating from the 1820s to the 2010s, making it 50-100 times larger than comparable historical corpora (Davies, 2020). It is also carefully balanced by genre across different decades. COHA was developed with support from a grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) between 2008 and 2010.

The application of corpus-based methods for investigating collocation and semantic changes across time has also been demonstrated by previous studies. Rahayu (2017) explores adjective collocations for the term *Halloween* in COHA and COCA, uncovering shifts in American perspectives on Halloween from the early 19th to the 20th century. Similarly, Artha (2018) examines adjective collocations of the word *Indonesia* across three political eras—Old Order, New Order, and Reformation—revealing how historical contexts influenced these changes. Dianitasari (2021) highlights the role of collocation analysis in identifying word associations, finding that the term *Woman* is rarely linked to *Leadership* characteristics but frequently associated with sexual topics, reflecting broader societal attitudes.
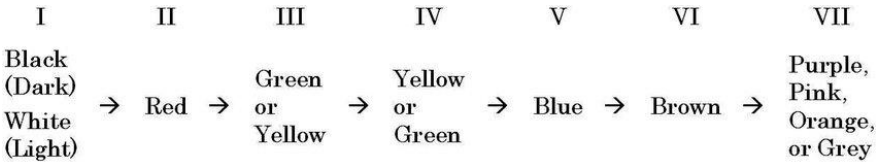
Among the existing studies, the most comparable one is by Matschi (2004), who examines the origin and development of English Color terms using etymological and

conceptual frameworks. However, the study does not use historical corpus data or conduct quantitative analysis on usage trends and collocations across defined historical period. This highlights the urgency to revisit the semantic development of basic color terms using corpus-driven method, particularly to reveal patterns of usage, frequency shifts, and semantic tendencies in authentic language data. Therefore, this study provides a novel contribution by combining corpus linguistics with semantic analysis to compare two distinct eras, Victorian and Contemporary. Therefore, this study utilizes COHA to investigate the semantic changes in English basic color terms by comparing their usage in the Victorian era (1840s-1890s) and the contemporary era (1950s-2010s). This study focusing on their evolving meanings and associations as reflected in frequency trends and collocational patterns. Studying semantic change of color terms reveals the mechanism and factors that influence meaning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The foundational theory about basic color terms is "*Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*" by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay (1969). In linguistics, anthropology, and cognitive science, this pioneering work presented a novel hypothesis in the study of color terms that has had a significant impact. The basic color terms theory developed by Berlin and Kay provides standards and patterns for comprehending how languages classify colors. In accordance with their standards, a basic color term must be monolexemic, meaning it consists of a single word (e.g., "*red*" rather than "*light red*"), have a meaning that is consistent across speakers and contexts, and not be limited to describing a specific set of objects (e.g., "*blond*" for hair is not a basic color term).

Figure 1. Basic Color Terms Stages (Berlin & Kay, 1969)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Black (Dark) White (Light) →	Red →	Green or Yellow →	Yellow or Green →	Blue →	Brown →	Purple, Pink, Orange, or Grey

Berlin and Kay proposed that the evolution of color terms follows a universal and predictable sequence, which they divided into seven stages as in Figure 1. In Stage I, languages have only two basic color terms, corresponding to *Black* (dark) and *White* (light). In Stage II, *Red* is added. Stages III and IV see the addition of *Green* or *Yellow*,

followed by the other. In Stage V, *Blue* emerges, followed by *Brown* in Stage VI. Finally, in Stage VII, terms for *Purple*, *Pink*, *Orange*, and *Gray* appear. This pattern is known as the implicational hierarchy, which states that if a language has a term for a specific color, it must also have terms for all preceding colors in the hierarchy. For example, a language with a term for *Blue* will also have terms for *Black*, *White*, *Red*, *Green*, and *Yellow*. Berlin and Kay's conclusions were based on a cross-linguistic study of 20 languages, later expanded in subsequent research, offering valuable insights into the relationship between language, perception, and universality in human cognition. Therefore, this study analyzes the 11 basic color terms in English.

1.   Semantic Change

The process by which words evolve over time is referred to as semantic change. Understanding semantic change is crucial to comprehending how the historical development of language. Semantic change can take many forms, including (1) widening, in which a word acquires a more general meaning; (2) narrowing, in which a word's meaning becomes more specific; (3) amelioration, in which a word's meaning improves or become more positive; and (4) pejoration, in which a word's meaning deteriorates or becomes negative; (5) metaphor, involves the mapping of one concept onto another; (6) metonymy, or contagion, refers to the association between one meaning and another (Traugott, 2000).

For instance, the term "*knight*" once referred only to a youthful servant but evolved to a soldier of aristocratic status who rides a horse. Semantic change in the context of color terms enables us to examine how the meanings of certain color words, such as *Red* or *Green*, may have changed over time due to cultural, technological, or social factors (McMahon, 1994). Understanding these shifts provides key insights into how language adapts to changing environments and societal values. In this study, the semantic changes identified are amelioration, pejoration, widening, and narrowing.

2.   Semantic Prosody and Preference

In the analysis of semantic change, both semantic prosody and semantic preference are crucial for comprehending how meanings evolve over time. Semantic prosody refers to the evaluative connotations a word acquires through its frequent collocations, which often reflect positive, negative, or neutral tones (Louw, 1993). For example, a particular

color term may develop certain emotional associations based on its repeated use in favorable or unfavorable contexts. In contrast, semantic preference focuses on a word's tendency to collocate with other words from a particular semantic field, indicating its propensity to be used with certain topics or themes (Begagić, 2018). For instance, "*Green*" may frequently appear in contexts related to nature, while "*Red*" may be associated with danger or excitement. These concepts are closely related, as a word's semantic preference can influence its semantic prosody. When a color term such as "*Black*" consistently collocates with negative concepts (e.g., "*black market*"), the term may develop a negative semantic prosody. By analyzing the collocational behavior (preferences) and evaluative tone (prosody) of color terms, this study aims to uncover subtle shifts in meaning that have occurred between the Victorian and Contemporary Eras, offering deeper insights into the dynamics of language change.

3.   Diachronic Corpus Linguistics

In modern linguistics, Corpus linguistics has become a fundamental approach offering researchers the tools to analyze language through large-scale datasets of authentic texts. Corpus linguistics is the empirical study of language, according to McEnery and Brezina (2022), whose analysis is based on real-world text samples. By providing researchers a more objective and quantifiable perspective on language patterns, enabling them to spot structures and usages that are common across genres and contexts, and offering a broader and more trustworthy image of language use, this method differs from traditional introspective approaches.

The value of corpus linguistics in revealing the collocational behavior of words—the way they often appear together in real language—was emphasized by Sinclair (1991). He maintained that much of a word's meaning is shaped by its surrounding context, which can be systematically observed through corpus analysis. The significance of phraseology and usage patterns was highlighted by Sinclair's (2004) study rather than focusing solely on the meaning of individual words. These insights are invaluable for understanding language in use, as they provide a more nuanced view of meaning that goes beyond static dictionary definitions.

The ability of historical corpora to track language change across time is discussed by McEnery and Hardie (2011) in the context of diachronic corpus linguistics. Researchers

can observe shifts in word meanings, grammatical structures, and usage patterns by comparing language data from various eras. This allows them to empirically support ideas of linguistic evolution and semantic change. This diachronic approach helps explain how external factors, such as cultural and technological shifts, influence the way language develops, offering a comprehensive view of linguistic dynamics across centuries. These kinds of analysis offer insightful information on how historical occurrences and language adaptation interact.

Corpus linguistics enables systematic analysis of large collections of texts to investigate patterns of language use. Through corpus tools like AntConc, the frequency, context, and collocational patterns of color terms can be analyzed, offering quantitative and qualitative insights into their semantic shifts. Through the use of corpus linguistics, this study will be able to track the evolution of color terms using actual data from both historical and contemporary data. For studying how language has changed throughout time, especially in diachronic study of meaning, corpus-based analysis is essential.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study examines diachronic semantic changes in English basic color terms using a comparative, corpus-based methodology. The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) serves as the main source of data, with an emphasis on two distinct historical periods: the Victorian Era (1840s–1890s) and the Contemporary Era (1950s–2010s). Data collection is the initial step, during which color terms are identified in the corpus and the collocates around the words are gathered. The study will focus on 11 English basic color terms, including *White, Black, Red, Green, Yellow, Blue, Brown, Purple, Pink, Orange,* and *Gray*.

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are used in the data analysis. For the frequency analysis, data is obtained from the 'Chart' feature of COHA which shows the number of uses of a word across decades. The quantitative data taken is not the raw frequency but the normalized one, per million words (PMW), to avoid bias from both periods. Illustrations in the form of charts are provided to help read the data. Collocational analysis examines the top 20 collocates for each color term to uncover patterns of association. High-frequency noise words (e.g., *the, to, with*) are eliminated by sorting the

data in COHA by relevance using the Mutual Information (MI) score with a minimum threshold of 3.

Semantic analysis explores the connotations of color terms by analyzing the collocations from COHA. Persistent, emerging, or disappearing collocates are examined in order to detect semantic changes. Data extraction and analysis were conducted using the COHA interface. The identified meaning shifts of color terms will be classified into specific semantic processes, such as amelioration, pejoration, meaning widening, and meaning narrowing. By combining frequency trends and collocational patterns, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the semantic changes in English basic color terms in the Victorian and contemporary eras.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion on the semantic changes in English basic color terms are presented in this section. The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) is used to compare their usage in the Victorian and the contemporary eras. The study highlights how language reflects changes over time by examining changes in frequency and collocation. The discussion is divided into two subcategories, namely frequency analysis and collocation analysis for each color term found in COHA.

Frequency Analysis

In order to compare the Victorian era (1840s-1890s) and the Contemporary era (1950s-2010s), these table and chart present statistics about the per million words (PMW) frequency of English basic color terms. The Figure 2 shows the COHA display after searching based on frequency. Using the word '*White*' as an example, it can be seen that the frequency of occurrence per decade which is divided into: FREQ indicating the absolute number of occurrences or raw frequency; WORDS (M) indicating the total size of the corpus per decade in million words; and PER MIL is the frequency of occurrence of words per million words in the corpus, more comparable because it takes into account the varying corpus sizes.

Figure 2. COHA Frequency Display

SECTION	ALL	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
FREQ	185496	1316	3032	5193	5087	5550	6405	6941	7243	8745	8670	10595	11238	10474	11049	13264	13140	13309	15339	14812	14094
WORDS (M)	405	7.0	13.7	15.8	16.5	16.9	18.8	20.1	20.4	22.0	23.1	25.7	27.7	27.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	29.9	33.1	34.8	35.5
PER MIL	458.01	188.50	221.13	328.52	307.63	327.69	340.90	345.89	354.58	397.91	375.27	412.25	405.59	382.27	385.50	455.45	455.79	445.84	462.72	425.37	397.54
SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE																					

Figure 3 shows a simplified visualization of the raw data. The vertical axis indicates the PMW frequency, and each color is represented by a line that matches its designation. The majority of color terms seem to gradually become more common over time, suggesting that the usage of color term is becoming more varied. The general trend appears to be in line with the basic color terms theory by Berlin and Kay's (1969). All color terms noticeably increased throughout the 20th century, possibly due to industrialization, commercialization, and advances in color-related fields.

Figure 3. Decadal Frequency Line Chart
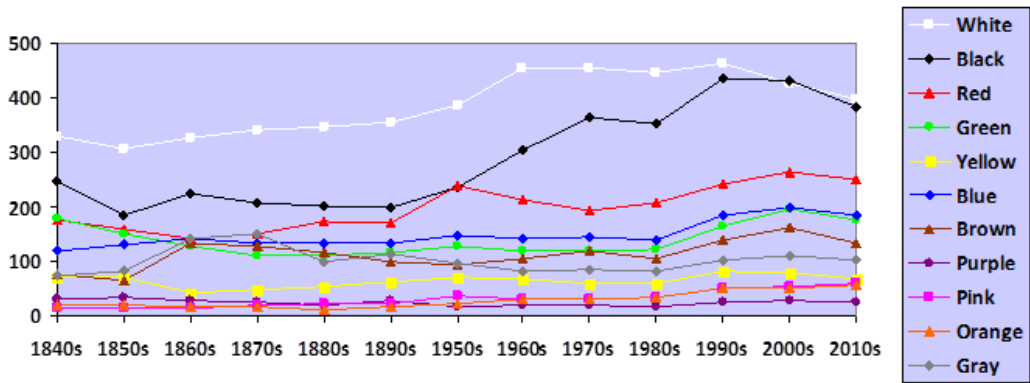
This arrangement reflects the relative frequency of each color term in the Victorian and contemporary eras combined. *White*, *Black*, and *Red* remain dominant throughout both periods, while less common color terms like *Pink*, *Orange*, and *Purple* have significantly lower totals. It is evident that *White* consistently has the highest frequency across all decades, reaching its maximum point in the 1990s. *Black* is the second most frequent, closely following *White*, and follows a similar pattern. *Red* maintains a steady increase over the decades and is the third most frequent color. Other color terms, *Green, Blue, Brown, Gray,* and *Yellow*, follow with mid-level frequencies,

gradually rising but at a lower rate. Conversely, less frequent color terms like *Pink, Orange,* and *Purple* showing a modest rising trend over time.

Tabel 1. Frequency Growth Rate

Color	PMW Victorian	PMW Contemporary	Growth Rate
White	334.2	432.6	29.44%
Black	210.34	357.93	70.17%
Red	161.3	229.37	42.2%
Green	132.23	146.47	10.77%
Yellow	58.61	69.46	18.51%
Blue	131.74	163.29	23.95%
Brown	102.86	122.91	19.49%
Purple	28.17	21.94	-22.12%
Pink	18.3	43.19	136.01%
Orange	16.4	39.78	142.56%
Gray	110.03	94.53	-14.09%

According to Table 1, it appears that most color terms have increased in frequency in the contemporary era. Frequency changes indicate the dynamics of the use of color terms over time. One of the most important findings is the sharp increase in ORANGE and PINK. The color term ORANGE experienced the most significant increase, which was +142,56% followed by PINK at +136,01%. This can be attributed to the growing use of these colors in modern contexts such as popular culture, design, technology, and gender associations. For example, PINK has been increasingly associated with femininity since the 20th century, while ORANGE has become more prominent in the context of digital and contemporary visual aesthetics.

The arrangement demonstrated that less common colors like *Pink* and *Orange* experienced the most rapid growth, followed by dominant colors like *White, Black*, and *Red*. The mid-level colors—*Green*, *Yellow*, *Blue,* and *Brown*—saw moderate growth, while *Gray* and *Purple* had the lowest increase in usage. Figure 4 shows that in both periods, *White*, *Black,* and *Red* dominate in frequency, followed by *Brown*, *Blue*, and *Green*, which are relatively close in frequency, followed by *Gray* and *Yellow*. Less common colors like *Pink*, *Orange*, and *Purple* consistently show lower frequencies, with *Pink* and *Orange* experiencing a noticeable increase growth in the contemporary era.

Figure 4. The Growth Rate Bar Chart
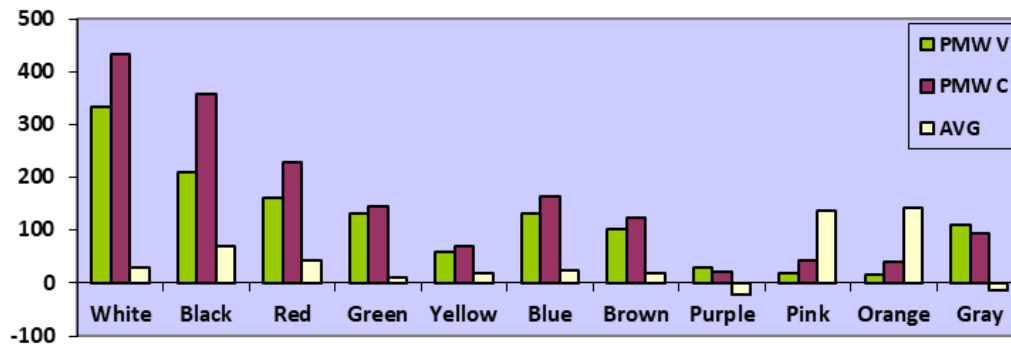
There are a number of parallels and divergences between this study to Berlin and Kay's (1969) theory of the seven stages of basic color terms with regard to the usage and development across time. According to Berlin and Kay, color terms evolve through a predictable sequence, starting with basic terms like *Black* and *White*, followed by terms for *Red, Green, Yellow, Blue,* and eventually less common color terms like *Brown, Purple, Pink, Orange,* and *Gray*. This sequence reflects both the linguistic and cultural salience of color terms in a given society.

The findings from this study align with Berlin and Kay's stages in that dominant color terms like *Black* and *White* remain to be the most frequently used, supporting their position as foundational, primary color terms that maintain prominence over time. Additionally, *Green, Yellow,* and *Blue* show moderate growth, consistent with their placement in Berlin and Kay's theory as established but secondary terms. These color terms experience steady increases without the dramatic surges as seen in less common color terms like *Pink* and *Orange*, which, in contrast, show the most rapid growth in the contemporary era, reflecting the growing diversity and nuance in color terminology.

One notable difference is the relatively slower growth of *Gray* and *Purple*, which may indicate that their adoption in contemporary English is less significant compared to color terms. This slower adoption could imply that these terms are less central in contemporary color categorization, potentially contradicting Berlin and Kay's theory where these colors would be expected to emerge and stabilize as basic terms in later stages of linguistic development. Overall, the study highlights a shift toward increased diversity in color terms, especially for less common color terms, suggesting that the evolution of basic color terms may be influenced by more recent cultural and societal factors, even

though the expansion of color terminology over time largely aligns with the stages outlined by Berlin and Kay,

Collocation Analysis

The data in COHA are sorted by relevance in this stage of the collocation analysis. High-frequency noise words (e.g., *the, to, with*) are eliminated by using the Mutual Information (MI) score with a minimum threshold of 3. To ascertain if a color has a positive, negative, or neutral connotation, the semantic prosody of each color terms is examined by exploring semantic preference in the form of its top 20 collocations. The discussion is divided into two groups: the first one focuses on the positive and negative prosody of each color term, while the second discusses neutral prosody in general.

Analysis of Positive and Negative Collocations in Color Terms

White

During the Victorian Era, the color term "*White*" was associated with positive connotations such as brightness and purity as in one of its collocates "LUSTRE", but also carried a slight negative connotation, such as "HAGGARD". In the Contemporary Era, the positive connotations have largely disappeared, and negative associations such as "NOISE" and "PLASTIC" become more common, reflecting modern concerns about artificiality and disruption. This shift represents pejoration, as the color term's positive connotations have diminished in favor of negative ones from its collocations.

Black

In the Victorian Era, "*Black*" primarily associated with negative connotations, such as "CROOK" and "RASCAL", which frequently symbolizing criminality or decay. Even though they shift toward more contemporary contexts such as materials ("PLASTIC") and law enforcement ("POLICE"), these negative tones persist in the Contemporary Era. The absence of positive connotations and the persistence of negative ones reflect a narrowing of meaning, as the color term continues to indicate negative qualities while adapting to new societal concerns.

Red

The color term "*Red*" in the Victorian Era had a variety of connotations, including

both positive associations like "FEAST" and negative ones such as "GHASTLY" and "GORE", reflecting its ties to danger and vitality. In the Contemporary Era, positive connotations like "TEAM" and "INTERNATIONAL" that emphasize collaboration and global identity replace the negative connotations. This marks a process of amelioration, as the color term sheds its negative connotations and acquires favorable meanings.

Green

During the Victorian Era, with positive collocates like "FLOWERY" and "SILKEN", the color term "*Green*" symbolized life and elegance, though it occasionally carried negative connotations such as "MOULD". By the Contemporary Era, the negative tone disappears entirely, replaced by modern associations with teams ("TEAM") and fashion ("SWEATER"). This represents amelioration, as the term retains its positive imagery while adapting to contemporary contexts.

Yellow

In the Victorian Era, the color term "*Yellow*" was associated with negative connotations like "DEATHS" and positive ones like "BECOMING" and "HARVEST". However, in the Contemporary Era, the positive tones vanish, replaced by negative associations like "ALERT", reflecting caution and warning. This shift signifies pejoration, with the term losing its earlier positive imagery in favor of cautionary tones.

Blue

The color term "*Blue*" in the Victorian Era conveyed both positive meanings, such as "RELIEVED", and negative ones, like "DARKLY". In the Contemporary Era, negative tones are entirely absent, and positive associations such as "TEAM" and "ELECTRIC" predominate, signifying vitality and unity. This evolution demonstrates amelioration, as the term moves toward exclusively positive, vibrant meanings.

Brown

In the Victorian Era, "*Brown*" associated with positive tones like "BLUSH" and "SUNNY", evoking warmth and natural beauty. However, in the Contemporary Era, these positive associations disappear, leaving the term largely neutral. This change reflects narrowing, as the rich, positive imagery of the term diminishes over time.

Purple

During the Victorian Era, color term "*Purple*" carried both positive connotations,

such as "GLORY" and "BATHED", and negative ones like "LIVID" which describes furiously angry. In the Contemporary Era, the term expands to encompass both modern positive associations like "STAR" and "HEART" and new negative ones such as "BRUISES". This is an example of widening as the color term retains its dual-tone character while expanding its scope of meanings.

Pink

The term "*Pink*" in the Victorian Era had positive associations like "SCARLET" and "SPRUCE", symbolizing elegance and vibrancy, with no negative tones. In the Contemporary Era, positive meanings persist as in "TICKLED" and "LIPSTICK", but new negative associations such as "BLOOD" emerge, marking widening, as the term evolves to encompass both favorable and unfavorable connotations.

Orange

The Victorian Era associated "*Orange*" with positivity, such as "WREATH" and "FRAGRANT", evoking coziness and sensory appeal. In the Contemporary Era, while positive tones like "ZEST" remain, negative associations like "BURNT" are introduced. This shift indicates meaning widening, as the term retains its favorable meanings while adopting new, less favorable ones.

Gray

The color term "*Gray*" carried a range of tones In the Victorian Era, with positive connotations like "YOUTH" and negative ones such as "SOMBRE" and "WIDOW", symbolizing aging and grief. By the Contemporary Era, the positive tone disappears, and negative associations like "THINNING" dominate. This represents pejoration, as the term's imagery shifts toward exclusively unfavorable meanings.

Analysis of Neutral Collocations in Color Terms

Throughout the two periods, neutral collocations provide valuable insights into the descriptive and functional uses of color terms. Without necessarily having positive or negative connotations, they frequently reflect societal, cultural, or technological contexts, demonstrating how color terms are employed in everyday language (MacLaury et al. in Van Gijn & Hirtzel, 2010).

Neutral collocates in the Victorian Era primarily focus on descriptive and aesthetic functions, frequently in relation to nature, clothing, and material culture. For instance, *White* is associated with "DRESSING-GOWN" and "CAMBRIC". while *Green* is linked to "HILL" and "LANES". *Blue* appears in phrases such as "CLIFFS" and "ETHER". *Purple* is paired with terms like "COLOUR" and "TINTS". According to these correlations, color terms were primarily employed to describe visual elements of the natural world, clothing, and art, reflecting the era's literary and cultural preoccupations with refinement and nature (Biggam, 2012).

Given the growing importance of color terms in contemporary technology and commerce, neutral collocations are moving toward more useful and commonplace applications in the contemporary era. For instance, *White* is commonly associated with "PLASTIC" and "T-SHIRT", while *Black* appears with "MARKET" and "COMMUNITY". *Red* frequently collocates with "CAR" and "SAUCE", and *Yellow* is seen alongside "TAPE" and "BUS". Instead of being used just in strictly aesthetic context, these collocates show how color terminology are widely used to describe commonplace items, branding, and digital innovations (Gaballo, 2013; Li, 2022; Parkinson, 2014).

The shift in neutral collocations across the two periods reflects a process of meaning widening, where color terms have expanded from characterizing artistic or natural elements to more practical and commercial applications (Geeraerts et al., 2024). For instance, *Green*, once associated with nature (e.g., "HILLOCK"), now also describes modern objects and branding (e.g., "PEPPER", "TEAM"). Similarly, *Yellow* and *Orange*, which were used in the Victorian era to describe natural or artistic phenomena, are now more frequently linked to objects or commodities like "TAPE" and "JUICE".

This evolution illustrates how language reflects emerging technologies, industries, and cultural transitions and how color terms adjust to these changes (MacLaury et al. in Van Gijn & Hirtzel, 2010). The transition from an emphasis on nature and artistic expression to more practical applications demonstrate how color terms evolve to fit the modern world, becoming embedded in everyday language and practical usage. Neutral collocations further highlight a shift from aesthetic and natural contexts in the Victorian Era to practical and commercial applications in the contemporary era.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of color terms across the Victorian and Contemporary Eras reveals significant shifts, demonstrating semantic processes such as:

- Amelioration: as the emphasis on energy, modernity, and unity has grown in the Contemporary Era, color terms like *Red*, *Green*, and *Blue* have undergone shifts toward more positive associations. Nowadays, these color terms are associated with positive ideas such as vitality, well-being, and social cohesiveness.

- Pejoration: on the other hand, *White*, *Yellow*, and *Gray* have experienced negative connotations over time. During the Victorian Era, what were once more positive have evolved to symbolize artificiality, aging, and caution today.

- Widening: the significant of color terms like *Purple, Pink*, and *Orange* have broadened in meaning, now encompassing both positive and negative tones. In the Victorian Era, these colors were frequently associated with elegance, luxury, and natural world. However, they now represent a wider range of meanings, influenced by modern symbolism, cultural shifts, and commercial branding.

- Narrowing: in contemporary situations, color terms like *Black* and *Brown* have become more specialized, with *Black* maintaining its primarily negative connotations, while *Brown* has lost much of its earlier positive imagery, frequently appearing more neutral or even unremarkable in modern contexts.

The examination of neutral collocations in different periods shows how color terms have changed to fit their respective social and cultural context. While color terms are more commonly associated with practical, commercial, and technological contexts in the Contemporary Era, they were primarily used to describe natural or artistic elements in the Victorian Era. All things considered, the shifts illustrate the dynamic relationship between language and societal developments. Color terms have evolved from aesthetic descriptors to a more utilitarian application in everyday life. As current study primarily focuses on frequency and collocation analysis, future research is expected to include concordance analysis, which may also be effectively examined using COHA.

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