



DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH AND ITALIAN

The Lexicographic Treatment of Color Terms

Dissertation Defense: Krista Williams

Thursday, May 8, 2014 at 10:00 am

Indiana Memorial Union, Redbud Room



NEW LOCATION!

In this dissertation, my goal was to describe the way color terms are defined in dictionaries. I began by introducing the difficulties lexicographers face when defining or translating color terms. This was followed by an overview of the phenomenon of human perception we call color.

In my examination of color terms in monolingual lexicography, I found that the strategies used to define color terms do not fit a general defining typology. Rather, I propose a new typology, comprised of three strategies: defining with reference to the spectrum of visible light, defining with reference to relationship with other colors, and defining with reference to illustrative objects. In addition to creating this new typology, I also examined the scientific information included in color term definitions and how the senses of color terms are divided. This exploration suggested that the scientific and non-scientific senses of color terms are not as distinct as those of other polysemous words.

Translating color terms in bilingual lexicography poses its own challenges. The color lexicons of two languages are seldom identical, with differences possible both in the grammar and semantics of the language itself and in the language's division of the color space. I explored these differences, as well as how lexicographers treat them, in bilingual dictionaries of French paired with nine languages. I found that lexicographers translate color *words*, as opposed to color *terms*, meaning that scientific or technical information does not play a part. I also presented grammatical, semantic, and color space-based differences that require additional information when translating color words in bilingual dictionaries. These divergences set color words apart from words of other semantic domains. *Brown* and *purple*, two color words with multiple equivalents in English, were also explored in dictionaries of modern hexagonal French, modern Quebec French, and older hexagonal French in order to illustrate cases where semantic restrictions require equivalent discrimination for color words. This data also indicated a change in the translations of *brown* and *purple* in hexagonal French.

COMMITTEE

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If you would like to attend, please contact the Graduate Secretary, Casey Green, at 812-855-1088 or fritgs@indiana.edu.

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