

SENUFO PEOPLE IN THE PRISM OF THE PSYCHO-PRAGMATIC PERCEPTION OF COLORS

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Abstract: Colors' matter is a diverse one in the world because of their important role. People use colors for many purposes such as in art, at school, in politics, in the street, at the shop, at the market, in medias, during events, at home and in office. Colors are always present in human beings' life and they are used everywhere in daily life. They have deeply influenced physically and biologically humans. Very often, the psychology of colors varies across world cultures and it can cause a positive or a negative effect. As a matter of fact, the language, behavior, and worldview of Senoufo people living in the north of Côte d'Ivoire have been really influenced by the perception of colors. The word color is designated by the term "feligi" in Senoufo. Colors are deeply marked by three main classes or groups of colors for Senoufo people. Henceforth, each group of colors has been identified by a specific term. There are "ya-wurɔ or wo-wurɔ" for darken colors, "ya-ɲiigé or wo-ɲiigé" to show warmth colors, and "ya-fiigé or wo-fiigé" when referring to whiten or brighten colors. In Senoufo languages several colors are combined and considered as similar.

Keywords: colors, effects, psycho-pragmatic, Senoufo people.

LE SENOUFO DANS LE PRISME DE LA PERCEPTION PSYCHO-PRAGMATIQUE DES COULEURS

Résumé : La question des couleurs est appréciée diversement dans le monde en raison de leur rôle important dans la vie des êtres humains. Les gens utilisent les couleurs à de nombreuses fins telles que dans l'art, à l'école, en politique, dans la rue, au magasin, au marché, dans les médias, lors des événements, à la maison et au bureau. Les couleurs sont toujours présentes dans la vie des êtres humains et elles sont utilisées partout dans la vie quotidienne. Elles ont profondément influencé physiquement et biologiquement les humains. Très souvent, la psychologie des couleurs varie selon les cultures du monde et peut avoir un effet positif ou négatif. En fait, la langue, le comportement et la vision du monde des Sénoufo dans le nord de la Côte d'Ivoire ont été très influencés par la perception des couleurs. Le mot couleur est désigné par le terme "feligi" en Sénoufo. Les langues Sénoufo indiquent trois grandes classes ou groupes de couleurs. Premièrement, les couleurs sont regroupées selon leurs ressemblances. Ensuite, chaque groupe de couleurs est nommé par un terme spécifique. Il y a "ya-wurɔ ou wo-wurɔ" pour les couleurs sombres, "ya-ɲiigé ou wo-ɲiigé" pour indiquer les couleurs chaudes et "ya-fiigé ou wo-fiigé" pour les couleurs blanches. Dans les langues Sénoufo, plusieurs couleurs sont combinées et considérées comme similaires.

Mots-clés : couleurs, effets, psycho-pragmatique, Sénoufo.

Introduction

Our daily life is meaningful through the different colorful situations we overcome all the day along as well as our lives. Colors are perceived and appreciated different way according to communities. In the culture of Senuso people, they are accustomed to call the term color “feligi”. This notion is very meaningful in their society for its role-playing. It permits the people to know the colors, the genres, and the cognitive aspects of an individual, the behavior, and characteristics of people. Therefore, to some extent, the term “feligi” is a broad term gathering many things. The diverse appreciation of colors in cultures shows that the term “feligi” in Senuso encompasses three groups or classes of colors, which are quite different from what we known before. They come from the nature according to their perception and worldview. Though, what are the different colors according to Senuso people? What are colors effects? Do colors really affect human mind? How do colors play with the psyche of Senuso people? Therefore, some hypotheses may be grasped from these questions. On the one hand, the colorful nature has influenced in depth the perception and the psyche of Senuso people. And on the other hand, environmental colors are oriented toward the subjective number and name of each class of colors in Senuso languages. The objective of this paper is to show the real influential action of natural environment colors’ effects on Senuso people mind have deeply affected their speech, behavior and worldview. This work is a qualitative research which will be divided into three main parts. The first part of this article will be based on the way the data of the present work has been collected in the area. Then, the second part will show the different colors and their varieties in Senuso languages. Then, the psycho-pragmatic analysis will be the concern of the third part.

0.1. Theoretical Framework

Each research work is based on previous work. This one is directly linked to Sapir-Whorf’s hypothesis tacked in the sense of linguistic relativity. The relativity shows that structural differences between languages are paralleled by non-linguistic cognitive differences. It is in the consideration of the structure of the language itself that effects cognition that the present work is undertaken. The number and the type of the basic color words of a language determine how a subject sees the world as Kay and Kempton (1984) argued in their findings. For Sapir:

Language does not reflect reality but actually shapes it to a large extent. Thus, he recognizes the objective nature of reality; but since the perception of reality is influenced by our linguistic habits, it follows that language plays an active role in the process of cognition. Sapir’s linguistic relativity hypothesis can be stated as follows: the language we speak and think in shapes the way we perceive the world. b) The existence of the various language systems implies that the people who think in these different languages must perceive the world differently.

Sapir, (1929 b : 207)

Sapir’s idea that a given language shapes reality was inspired by Humboldt's idea of the world view inherent in every language. Sapir portrayed in the process of cognition, language is very important. Thence, Whorf observes language is :

[...] the best show man puts on. Other creatures have developed rough communication systems, but no true language. Language is cardinal in rearing human young, in organizing human communities, in handing down the culture from generation to

generation. First, that all higher levels of thinking are dependent on language. Second, that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one understands his environment. The picture of the universe shifts from tongue to tongue.

Whorf (1956:vi)

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is referred to here because it explores the idea that the language uses by a speaker affects how he/ she perceives reality. As Whorf (1956) said in these particularly strong terms:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. This agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, BUT ITS TERMS ARE ABSOLUTELY OBLIGATORY; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees.

Whorf (1956: 213–214)

Native languages have their own conception of nature which is organized in their mind. Not all languages have the same view point. So, the linguistic systems in people minds are quite different.

0.2. Methodological framework

This article has been done in consideration with some fundamentals works. First of all, it is a contribution to update knowledge in the field of both pragmatics and colors study. People speak in accordance with some undeniable elements of their environment. The trend of this article is to fasten the important role plays by colors to Senufo language use deeply influenced by those colors. Colors and the psychology of colors will help us to grasp the psycho-pragmatic use of colors in this area. Secondly, I have collected a data which constitutes the corpus of his analysis to highlight the manifestation of colors in Senufo people interactions. For the success of the research work, I have interviewed ten (10) women and twenty (20) men during the month of July 2021. The interview was about colors perception effects and how they first impact on people psychology, and then the language. This particular orientation of the research has led to the choice of Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis for the analysis. The goal in approaching women as well as men of this community was to collect a sample from native speakers and to elicit diverse perspectives.

2. Different Colors of Senufo People

The previous works of researchers like Cerrato (2012), Goldstein (2009), and Weinschenk (2011) have revealed three types of colors in some languages like English and French. The first type is primary colors. They are Red, Yellow, and Blue. Three other colors derive from the mixing of the three primary colors called secondary colors Orange, Green, Violet. The third type of colors is tertiary colors composed of six colors: Red-Orange, Yellow-

Orange, Yellow-Green, Blue-Green, Blue-Violet, and Red-Violet, which are formed by mixing a primary with a secondary color. On the contrary, Senúfo languages consider three main groups of colors which can be called primary colors in this area. But, the terms primary colors, secondary colors, and tertiary colors are not well delineated in Senúfo languages. I refer to those terms in the context of the present analysis and in considering the process of getting secondary and tertiary colors. Secondary colors are the composite of primary colors, and tertiary colors come from a primary and a secondary color. In Senúfo languages spoken in Korhogo area for example, keen or dark-red is called *jiigé-sifia ceré*. This color is compared to the blood color. Here two words are put in relation RED and BLOOD to sort out Dark-Red or Keen-Red in English. So, there are two words for what I called secondary colors and generally three words for tertiary colors like the mixture of black-white-red. Senúfo people conception and perception of colors are really different from others. Therefore, many things depend on their world view, way of using colors in language, behavior, even life.

2.1. Primary Colors in Senúfo Languages

The primary colors or first class of colors in Senúfo is deeply marked by three main or groups of colors. Initially, they have grouped colors according to their resemblances. Henceforth, each color has been identified by a specific term. There are darken colors, warm colors, and whiten or brighten colors. They are recognized by black, red, and white in Senúfo languages because several colors are combined and considered as similar. Almost any generalization that can be made about color can be overturned into practice (Linton, 1999). Thence, Senúfo people have mentioned three types or groups of colors in their environment .*ya-wuɔ* referred to darken colors or black, *ya-jiigé* to name warmth colors or red and *ya-fiigé* for brighten , whiten colors or simply white. "Color is conceptual. There is no building technology for color, no hi-tech of color. Color is just pure idea, pure intellectuality, pure emotion. Color animates, bringing past and the future in the present. Color makes things come toward life" (Linton, 1999, p.83). Afterwards, in accordance with Dodo & al (2023, p.49) in Senúfo community, there are three major groups of colors they use. Any color that has the same look is considered as color of the same broad color's family. At that side, there is no way of specifying colors individually, but to globalize them all. Then, they call all the similar colors by the same name. These colors are "*ya-fiigé*", "*ya-jiigé*" and "*ya-wuɔ*". For this reason, Zeynep Başoğlu (2002: 2) said that colors may vary with each person depending on age, gender, race, cultural background, education, psychology, and physiology.

2.2. Secondary Colors for Senúfo People

The second class of colors are identified throughout the three primary colors known as "*ya-fiigé*", "*ya-jiigé*" and "*ya-wuɔ*". Each group constitutes a set of colors. Senúfo people secondary colors context is quite different from English or French one. For English or French, secondary colors are the result of the mixing of two primary colors. Senúfo people consider that secondary colors as well as all colors (primary, secondary and tertiary) come from nature. They strongly believe in it that all colors' name are straightly led to nature. Each color is identified in reference to a natural element or feature. As Sapir quoted by Whorf argued:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society; It is quite" an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and

that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. (The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group [...] We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do 'because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

Whorf (1956:134)

As Sapir said, the real world has deeply influenced the perception of the natural effects of nature, and constitutes a stimulus for Senúfo people. Those effects favor their biological reactions to colors. The deep influence became now a cultural influence because their world view is related to their own perception and appreciation of the real world. For this reason, it is important to understand the reason why their culture perceives colors differently in order to communicate the right message to an audience. So, the darken colors instead of saying black can be seen as follows:

-Psychology of ya-wuɔ or wo-wuɔ colors in Senúfo

In Senúfo languages and culture, the color called “wo-wuɔ” is a common way of naming color that looks like all types of black, green, blue, violet, indigo. But, there is an orientation and a name of each one to make a clear difference between wo-wuɔ colors. All colors are led to nature and the specific element of the nature is used as a comparison term. Here is the way Senúfo people name colors.

(01)

wuɔ –pipi or jebli- wuɔɔ = black or dark black

Color black is compared to night and it symbolizes age, maturity, spirituality (dark forces) mystery, and mystic.

(02)

wuɔ - ɲini cerè or bula ceré = blue

Blue color refers to the sky as its name in Senúfo languages mainly the supreme creator of the universe. It is known as a truthfulness, legacy, cool and soothing color. It symbolizes depth as well as stability, peace, and truth.

(03)

Wuɔ- galaw ceré = violet and indigo

Violet and indigo color translates human reflexive action, obedience, behavioral integrity.

(04)

Wuɔ- ɲiaprigé ceré or wuɔ- lamonigɔ ceré = green

It is the color of life, nature, of our mother earth of trees, grass, plants that makes us feel the quietness of the environment. It symbolizes regeneration, energizing, peace, tranquility, growth, harmony, freshness, fertility and creativity.

Not only the choice of colors, rather their individual role on human life is also very important to know, because each minutest deviation of any element of nature is sufficient to disturb the entire natural community, because there is nothing individual in this nature. All are the parts of this nature and they are of equal importance that is why any disturbance in one element is sufficient to disturb the entire nature unavoidably.

Sinchan (2017:689)

The word “ya-wurɔ” is the first name that will be followed by another to refer to a specific color “ya-wurɔ”. However, they immediately understand each other about what the person is referring globally on the color’s name. By demonstrating what they call after “yawurɔ”,

-Psychology of ya- niigé or wo- niigé colors in Senúfo

"ya-niigé or wo-niigé" is the word used to refer globally to warm colors in Senúfo languages. Here are red colors according to the real world and living environment of Senúfo.

(05)

niigé - sifia₂ceré = red

sifia₂ceré means red like blood is the most vibrant, attractive, alert and sharp. Red color also shows most arrogant, active behavior, anger, danger, warning, power, royalty, courage, stress, love, war, difficulties, dominating people who can live only in self-control (domination), self-confidence and assurance, it leads to concentrate on very important things in life, desire, activity and mechanism can be highlighted in red color, action, strength and excitement, dominance, anxiety and tiredness and violence .

(06)

niigé - cága₂niɛdz₂iere ceré = orange

orange is the color of thought and imagination. cága₂niɛdz₂iere ceré means declining sun, contemplation, scrutiny, energy and motivation.

(07)

niigé – namigé ceré (flow of neré color) = yellow

Namigé ceré refers to the flow of neré color which is the natural color in real world in their living area. Yellow indicates happiness and joy, light, brightness, intelligence and proximity of warming. It symbolizes to trust to achieve a person’s desired goals, and leading a meaningful life. It is a color of positivity happiness and joy.

(08)

niigé - sééw or tèèw cere = gold

Gold: Symbolic of immortality and royalty. As in many cultures, gold prized as a symbol of wealth and power. Psychologically gold is seen as the color of inner wisdom, quality and wealth. It is associated with prestige, luxury and material wealth

(10)

niigé -yardzɔgɔ burogo ceré or nɔ̀gɔ̀pkeligé burogo ceré

This type of color in Senufo languages is at the line of secrets. It is the color of the poro masks of the sacred forest. Indeed, this color is similar to chocolate, maroon or brown. Sometimes, it looks like khaki color. They are very proud of this uniform as it represents their identity and the sense of existence.

(11)

ɲiigé - tamigé ceré = brown.

Senufo people do prefer considering some natural components as their colors to not be lost in colors' domain. It is cultural to them and as they work on farms, they ought to attribute a color to it. This kind of restriction is due to the jobs of farmer.

-Psychology of ya- fiigé or wo- fiigé colors in Senufo

White color is "ya-fiigé or wo-fiigé" in Senufo languages. It is associated with light, goodness, innocence, rest, and purity. It is considered to be the color of perfection. White means safety, purity, coolness and cleanliness.

2.3. Tertiary Colors in Senufo Languages

Tertiary colors in Senufo languages have no clear cut identification like other languages. We cannot hear naming tertiary colors as known: light red, pink, dark red, reddish-brown, light-green, dark-blue, and dark-pink. Only one element has been referred to in term of tertiary color. The animal that carries many colors is the python. A thing may be identified with.

(12)

Fuo ceré = multicolor.

Fuo is the name of python in Senufo languages.

(13)

nɔ̀zɪré ceré

This color is the mixture of black and white and is the color of partridge. Both of the colors are present at the same time and no specific color name is found to cover it.

(14)

kabu pɔ̀n

This color is the mixture of black-white-red. All the dogs which have such a color are called "kabɔ̀ pɔ̀'n".

(15)

davi pɔ̀n

A dog is called after this name when it is purely black. Another color is not mixed up to the black one and only the parts of the eyes have another type of color.

(16)

bɔ̀lgɔ̀ pɔ̀n

This color is the kind of dogs which are not black nor light, but with both of the features. It is the darken color. In addition, many colors in Senufo languages take the names of bullocks. These colors are considered as parts of their culture for the utility of bullocks in

the community. They are the basis of wealth acquisition. Bullocks are used to cultivate farmlands and then, necessitate consideration.

(17)

sɔlvɑʼɑn nɔn

This color is the grey color put over a bullock. It is compared to the waste of ash. The bullock with this color has not a special color on its body. Most of the time, its neck is brown lightly.

(18)

kɑgbɑɑ nɔn

This color is a color of taboo for the whole Senufo group. It is a sacred mask color, which is very dangerous and full of horror events. This mask in fact is not seen by men as well as women, but only by those who are initiated in it. However, with its role in the community it has been taken as a color made up of black-red-white. This color is then referring to a bullock color that has at the same time all these three colors over its body. Then, in Senufo community, the notion of hen “golo” is very significant with the multiplicity of colors. This multiplicity of colors is caused by the types of hen in their society.

(19)

kɔpɑndʒərə ɡolɔʊ / ɡɔsurugɔlɔ

This type of hen in Senufo culture is the combination of three colors: black-white-red. It refers to hen which have all these colors with black and white dominated over red.

(20)

ɡoməʒnɔ

This type of hen is important for rituals. However, it is very difficult nowadays to find out such types of hen. It is a kind of hen with entirely no feathers over its body. This color looks like brown and sometimes white. It is difficult to specify the concrete and exact color.

(21)

ɡoʔɪɾɛɛ

In the process of color nomination, this special one refers to a specific type of hen with soft feathers. This color is compared with a hen, which feathers are like cotton and is similar to a nicked hen. It looks like a white color.

(22)

ɲɑɖɑlɑɡɑ ɡolɔ

This typical color is referring to grey color. It is a type of earth that we refer with “ɲɑɖɑlɑɡɑ” that is a kind of earth that is sometimes darken and grey. Senufo people use this color of earth to all types of hen and colors similar to this type as “ɲɑɖɑlɑɡɑ ɡolɔ ɕeré”. Actually, this color is very important in the language and permits to distinguish several similar groups of colors.

3. Psycho-Pragmatic Perception of Colors

It is well-known that colors are universal. But, the way one views them and feels is straightly linked to the psychology of that person.

3.1. Effects of Colors' Psychology on Senufo People Behavior and Attitude

The effects of colors on a human being behavior and attitude are like ink. That person lives with undeniable ink as an experience. For this reason, Başoğlu (2002, p. 1) asserts that "Color is first and foremost an experience. Color is a given gift to the human beings to enhance the total experience of the world around. The contacts of the human beings to the world are through the senses. Color is also a language, it conveys the messages faster than anything else". In this view, Senufo people use to compare or In qualifying person attitude or behavior (good or bad)

(23)

fɔ-fiiḡè = white heart referring to truth

(24)

fɔ-fiiḡè ʃiḡ = a truth- telling person or a good person

(25)

Fṽ-ḡiiḡè = red heart

(26)

Fṽ-ḡiiḡè ʃiḡ =refers to a cunning person, a wicked, a nasty, an ill-natured, and a malicious person.

These examples of the use of colors enlighten people on the fact that colors can show our inner self and are a gateway of expression in our outer world. So, "color is stronger than words and faster than speech. It is a language all in itself" (Neal, 2000:24). In late days, some colors were referred to some diseases because they were dangerous diseases in accordance with the psychology of colors.

(27)

kaguɔ- fiin (white coughing) = Tuberculosis

(28)

ya- ḡiim (red disease / red sickness) = Leprosy

Whorf maintained that the structure of a language tends to condition the ways in which a speaker of that language thinks. Hence, the structures of different languages lead the speakers of those languages to view the world in different ways. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis says that how we think is influenced by the language that we speak and then to the scientific world, what has been found.

Whorf (1956, p. vi)

For Whorf, two cardinal hypotheses should be mentioned. First, all higher levels of thinking are dependent on language. Second, the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one understands his environment. The picture of the universe shifts from tongue to tongue.

3.2. Assigned Meanings in Colors

The use of colors can convey information nonverbally, create a certain mood, and even influence people decisions-making. This influence can be seen on objects, the clothes

they wear, and the way they consider the environment. Generally, red color is used in Senufo community with the idea of danger, power, domination, anger, and most of the time, used when performing rituals. In Senufo people behavior, dark-black, red, white, and the color white and black are considered sacred colors when performing rituals. The psychology of these colors have deeply influenced the behavior, the worldview, and the perception of Senufo people. They can be compared to the color yellow in India where the brides wear yellow. In China yellow was connected with royalty and deity and the Chinese show a marked preference for it. Here a sharp distinction is made between sacrifices performed with dark-black, red, white, and white and black chicken. The quack or diviner usually wears a red clothe. He may ask to the person in trouble to perform the rituals with a dark-black, red, white, or white and black feathering rooster or chicken according to the expectative solution. The quack can also ask him to perform rituals with an animal of white or black color he-goat or sheep. The animal color depends on the problem to be solved. Therefore, dark-black symbolizes darkness, night, and bad actions. Red color means danger, anger, power, domination, and the white is related to peace, rest, and calmness. In addition, the red hat of the chief symbolizes royalty, power and domination. Whereas, the red clothe of masks, the red clothe of dozo initiated people symbolize power, domination and danger. Sometimes, people assimilate the dangerous mask to danger and its name is followed by the suffix -jiin:

(29)

naferi-jiinɛ = red mask

The white color clothe of the chief or a man refers to his rest day, safety, purity, and calmness. On the contrary, they bury corpse with white wrappers. Here, the white color means sanctification from bad, evil actions and all sins. It purifies the corpse before entering in the unseen world of spirits. Inasmuch white color serves it as a light in the new world it is about to belong to. Colors have depicted on Senufo languages to describe difficult situations, the weather, and dangerous sicknesses. Colors use in accordance with sickness

(30)

u be na go-wuɔbele jia = he was seeing black fowls

People say this sentence when someone was seriously ill. When they don't expect the relief from this sickness, the word dark black is used. The dark black color is referred to having in mind the darkness, gloom, and night which means no hope. Contrary to this view, when the person is miraculously healed, they add:

(31)

caga u na go-fiubele jia = he is seeing white fowls today.

So, the recovery is seen as peace, rest, joy, hope, and good health through the reference to white color.

(32)

kafal-jiinɛ = storm or violent wind

“kafal-jiin” or “kafal-jiinɛ” is the name Senufo have given to the storm due to its characteristics. The storm is known as a violent wind, a dust storm. It is in this consideration Senufo have named it. Then, the use colors has also influenced proverbs use or folk as follows:

(33)

naʎéu ndò - jiiṅ ni wee segi faʎi = the red hat of the old man cultivates his farm

The red hat symbolizes royalty, power and domination. The workers are deeply influenced by this symbol of “red hat” when they see the old man. The work is done with respect due to the old man through his red hat. Warm colors like red, yellow and orange evoke higher arousal emotions. Colors can trigger arousal states and emotions. Diviners wear colored clothes like white during their training period and red when performing ministry. In this context”. Meghamala and Sushma (2016:122) say “People wearing certain colored clothes claim sharper awareness, more confidence as well as greater energy”.

Conclusion

Colors belong to human beings' life and are diversely appreciated in all communities. They play a huge role in human interaction. Then, they guide and give a right direction to us. We are far better able to recognize each other due to the fact that we can see in such a wide range of color. Colors are also essential in our lives because they help us recognize distinctive personal combinations such as eye or hair color. The psycho-pragmatic perception of colors in Senufo community is perceived through their language which has been influenced by colors name. Those names are straightly referring to the origin. Colors come from nature according to Senufo people perception. Though, they have named colors according to the natural element or the environmental element which carries the same color. Hence, colors have impacted their world view, life, behavior, and their language use is really rooted in those natural and environmental colorful terms use.

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