

An Analysis of the Semantic Expressions of the Black-meaning Class of Color Words in ShuoWenJieZi

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Abstract: A total of 253 color words are included in ShuoWenJieZi. The color words are mainly distributed in the basic color words red, blue, black, yellow and white five color system. Among them, 68 color words are recorded in the category of black meaning. Black color words account for 27% of the color words. There are three main ways to express the semantics of black-meaning color words in the ShuoWen Jiezi: black with other color words, degree words with color words, and color words attached to something. All three ways present semantic precision and ambiguity.

Keywords: ShuoWenJieZi; Color words; Black; Semantic expression

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1. Introduction

The author of ShuoWenJieZi (Hereinafter referred to as ShuoWen) is Xu Shen. The ShuoWen is the first Chinese character book that systematically analyzes the shape and origin of Chinese characters. The ShuoWen was the first book to create a radical arrangement. It has a number of 540 radicals and contains 9353 seal characters. In addition, the book contains 1163 rewritten characters.

In this paper, we classify black-sense color words into color-object words and object-color words. A color-object word is an object whose semantic center contains “thing” and “color”, and the color modifies and describes the object. object-color, its semantic center contains “thing” and “color”, color modifies and describes the thing. The color word contains two semantic components: the color of thing and the color of thing, and the color word is a color word that describes the color with the thing (Pan, 2015). At the same time, the inclusion of color words in the black meaning category in ShuoWen is supplemented in this paper with the addition of Xu Xuan. In addition, words with the semantic meaning of “black” are also included.

Some scholars have discussed the precision and ambiguity of words from the perspective of combination patterns (Li, 1996). In this paper, we take the semantic combination of black color words in ShuoWen as a reference point to explore the precision and ambiguity of related words. There are three main ways to express the semantics of black-meaning color words in ShuoWen: black is combined with other color words, degree words are combined with color words, and color words are attached to something.

2. Black with other color words

Black is also used with other color words to express something or a color by two or more color words. There are 24 related words(include duplicate words) in the ShuoWen, of which black prefers to be combined with four colors: yellow, white (fair), blue (pale), and red, as shown in the table below. Most of these words have a positive structure, in which black is the main color, and this expression is mainly a regulation of the brightness of the color “black”, and it is worth noting that some words are made of a combination of three colors.

No.	Types	Example words
1	“Black” with “yellow”	貌、貂、雜、黠、黠、纂、黠
2	“Black” with “pale” and “green”	雅、霉、駟、條、黠、黠、黠、條
3	“Black” with “white” (fair)	牦、條、黠、黠、纂
4	“Black” and “red” with	驥、繫、玄、黠

Here is an example of “black” and “white” together. “White” is the opposite of black, and “white” is a color like frost and snow. In the semantics of the black-meaning class of color words in the Sayings, there are two cases in which black and white go together. In one case, black and white appear as contrasting opposing colors. The strongest (black) and the weakest (white) are easily perceived (Zhang, 2007). Therefore, the opposition of black and white is most easily noticed when it is produced on something at the same time, as in the case of the first example in the third row of the table, which refers to a hairy cow with black and white fur. In the second case, white is the dominant color, and black is integrated into white as a kind of toner to adjust the brightness of white, with black and white separated by imaginary words, as in the second and third example words in the third row of the table.

To sum up, the combination of black with other colors is more common, although the meaning of black-meaning class color words is ambiguous due to the uncertainty of the category of colors matched and the unverifiable weight of color words and color words. At the same time, black-meaning class color words represent something or a color through the combination of multiple monochromatic colors, and to a certain extent achieve the precision of the meaning of color words.

3. Matching degree words with color words

Different levels of processing can lead to variations in color shades. Some things in nature can also have different shades of color due to factors such as light and angle. There are 11 related words in the Sermon, of which the modifiers mainly have two variations of degree shades, as shown in the following table.

No.	Types	Example words
1	Deep	骊、黯、廌
2	Shallow	驪、黯、黠、黠、黠

In this paper, we give examples of cases in which the degree becomes shallow. Words that become lighter in degree can be divided into two specific categories. One of them is the combination of degree words and simple color words. For example, in the first example in the second line of the table, the degree word “light” in its semantics is similar to the combination of the light color word (white) and black mentioned above. The difference is that the degree adverb here tends to emphasize the change in the saturation of the color word in the black sense. The other type is the combination of degree words with two collocations of color words in a way that the collocation is first with the color word and then with the degree word. For example, the last example word in the second row of the table. The semantic meaning of this word is firstly “yellow” combined with “black”, which is a change of brightness. The second is the combination of “light” and “yellow-black”, which is a change of saturation. In short, the second type of combination is more precise than the first one, and the lightness of black is adjusted by the change of degree, thus making the expression of black-meaning color words more precise.

4. Color words attached to something

The color word is attached to something, that is, when the color word of black in ShuoWen is used to explain something. In addition to the characteristics of shape, size and state, black is also an important characteristic of something. There are 41 related words in the ShuoWen, which can be divided into two categories according to the status of the black element: “black” as an important feature and “black” as a non-important feature. The details are shown in the following table.

No.	Types	Example words
1	The semantic element “black” as an important feature	铁、羶、鹵、麟、鬻、骊、驪、黠、缙、豸、繫、薰、嬾
2	The semantic element “black” as a non-important feature	黠、牦、惇、虞、貌、貂、駟、駟、雅、駝、駟、狂、豸、鬻、螭、玖、璫、墨、涅、鬻、驪、驪、駟、黠、黠、條、繫、黠、驪

In this paper, we use the semantic element “black” as an example of a non-important feature. A non-important feature means that “black” is only a secondary feature of the object being described. The semantics of such words include two or more colors, or such

words are dependent on other features of something. For example, the first word in the second line of the table contains both “white” and “black”.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the black-meaning class color words in the Sayings have both the aspect of ambiguity and the aspect of epistemic accuracy. From a macroscopic point of view, the black-meaning class color words in ShuoWen show precision in their semantic expressions. This precision is relative and conditional. The more sense elements there are, then the narrower the extension of the word (Jiang, 2005). By combining color words, adding degree words, and adding descriptions, black-meaning color words become narrower and narrower, and their semantics becomes relatively precise. “Black”, whether as a significant or non-significant element, makes the extension of black color words narrower, and the object or color they represent becomes more and more precise. From a microscopic point of view, the semantic expressions of black color words in ShuoWen show ambiguity. Color is a fuzzy phenomenon, and words that signify color are also typically fuzzy words (Wu,1999). Therefore, when studying the semantics in Chinese, including black-sense class color words, it is necessary to first acknowledge that the semantics has a certain degree of ambiguity. From a microscopic point of view, in the process of pairing black with other color words, the semantic meaning of black-meaning class color words is fuzzy due to the uncertainty of the black-meaning category and the ratio of the two colors; in the process of pairing degree words with color words, the semantic meaning of black-meaning class color words is also fuzzy due to the uncertainty of the degree shades; in the black-meaning class color words attached to objects, the semantic meaning of most words is simple, so it is impossible to determine the specific objects referred to. In short, the semantic expressions of black-meaning color words in ShuoWen show precision and ambiguity.

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