

Colour terms for GREEN in standard Albanian: a corpus-based study

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Introduction

In Albanian three different words are used to describe the green colour:

(1) *i/e blertë* — probably of Indo-European origin; its original colour meaning is unclear and might be 'green', 'yellow' or 'pale' [Çabej 1976: 260; Русаков 2006: 158].

(2) *i/e gjelbër* — from Lat. *galbinus* 'yellow-green' [Çabej 1996: 319]

(3) *jeshil* — from Turk. *yeşil* '1) green; 2) fresh; 3) unripe' [Dizdari 2005: 455]. It is used in spoken language.

Approach

Cognitive approach:

Рахилина Е. В. *Когнитивный анализ предметных имен. Семантика и сочетаемость*. М., 2000.

Data source:

Albanian National Corpus (19 million tokens).

Website: <http://webcorpora.net/AlbanianCorpus/search>

Meanings

Literal meaning (GREEN colour)

1. Colour of vegetation (94 word usages in Corpus: *i/e gjelbër* (61), *jeshil* (21), *i/e blertë* (12)), i.e.: *bar i gjelbër* (4), *i bari i blertë* (2), *bari jeshil* (2) 'green grass'.
2. Colour of reptiles and insects. Only one example was found in Corpus: *vemja jeshile* 'green caterpillar'.
3. Colour of eyes: *syte i gjelbër* (14), *i syte i blertë* (15), *syte i jeshil* (29) 'green eyes'.

Figurative meanings

1. Metaphor of 'unripe' (about fruits and vegetables, no examples in Corpus), 'too young' (only 1 example):

(1) *Po të kisha një fëmijë, jeta ime do ishte ndryshe, por me sa duket pulat jeshile të racës sonë nuk bëjnë vezë me gjelat e shtëpisë së Ibrahimit.* [Ben Blushi, *Të jetosh në ishull*, 2008]

'If I had a child, my life would be different, but it seems that green hens from our breed don't lay eggs with roosters from Ibrahim's house'.

2. Metonymy:

2.1. Designation of face's colour: sickly looking; expressing emotions like envy and anger.

(2) *Balli i xha u bë jeshil, ndërsa një gulç i bllokoi fytyrën.*

[Ilir Levonja, Martin Myzeqari, 2000–2013]

'Uncle's forehead became green, and breathlessness locked up his throat'.

2.2. Description of bad food (with green mold). These examples were not found in Corpus.

2.3. Description of secretions (pus, mucus):

(3) *Mishi i bëhej të kuqe, dhe prej tyre rridhnin lëngje që ngrinin si kore të blerta deri në hundë.*

[Gustave Flaubert, Zonja Bovari (përkth. nga V. Kalemi), 2009]

'Flesh became red discharging pus which was turning into green crust until the nose'.

2.4. Meaning of 'being ecologically friendly'. The most frequently used one is *i/e gjelbër* (15):

energja e gjelbër (1) / *energja e blertë* (1) 'safe energy',

roja e gjelbër (1) 'green patrol',

teknologjia e gjelbër (1) 'ecological technology',

qyteti i gjelbër (5) 'green city',

zona e gjelbër (2) / *zona jeshile* (2) 'green zone',

motori i gjelbër (1) 'safe motor',

kurora e gjelbër (4) 'greenbelt (lit. "green wreath")'.

2.5. Calques from English most often involve *i/e gjelbër*:

karton i gjelbër (20) / *karton jeshil* (3) 'green card',

kanali i gjelbër (1) 'green corridor',

kufi i gjelbër (3) 'green border',

lëvizje e gjelbër (1) 'green movement',

para e gjelbër (1) 'dollars (lit. "green money")'.

Statistical results

| | <i>i/e gjelbër</i> | | <i>i/e blertë</i> | | <i>jeshil</i> | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------|-------------------|------|---------------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| artefacts (126 items) | 80 | 63 | 19 | 15 | 27 | 21 |
| space (226 items) | 189 | 84 | 29 | 12,8 | 8 | 3,5 |
| plants (94 items) | 61 | 64,9 | 21 | 22,3 | 12 | 12,8 |

Semantic groups of nouns used with adjectives for GREEN:

1) Artefacts (126 lexemes): *çallmë,-a* 'turban', *mëndafsh,-i* 'silk', *tavolinë,-a* 'table', *vazë,-a* 'vase', *dantellë,-a* 'lace', etc.

2) Space (226 lexemes): *lëndinë,-a* 'meadow', *lirishtë,-a* 'lawn', *lumë,-i* 'river', *pylli,-i* 'forest', etc.

3) Plants (94 lexemes): *bar,-i* 'grass', *fletë,-a* 'leaves', *myshk,-u* 'moss', *pemë,-a* 'fruit tree', etc.

Conclusions

Distribution and lexical combinability

1. All adjectives for GREEN are most often used literally, especially for designation of the colour of vegetation (94 usages).

2. There are very few examples of metaphors in the Corpus. This may be explained by the fact that speakers of Albanian tend to rarely use the adjective for GREEN figuratively.

We found one example with *jeshil* used as 'unripe, too young' and 26 examples with different adjectives used as 'ecological' (most frequently used *i/e gjelbër*, seldom *i/e blertë* and *jeshil*).

3. Choice between *i/e gjelbër* and *i/e blertë* in set expressions takes place intuitively, which can appear to be a consequence of similarity of their meanings in speakers' perception.

4. The adjective *jeshil* remains the most isolated in the system of colour terms owing to its late borrowing in Albanian.

jeshil

Raised frequency as an attribute with "artefacts" (21% from all examples)

It is often combined with the noun *sy,-ri* 'eye' (29 word usages), and never with *fushë,-a* 'field'. We may suggest that *jeshil* is not used metaphorically and metonymically.

Low frequency in combination with names of "space" (3,5 %)

i/e gjelbër

It is frequently used metaphorically and metonymically in combination with objects related to the group "space" (84%)

i/e blertë

It is almost equally distributed among the three semantic groups of nouns (12,8% - space, 22,3% - plants, 15% - artefacts)

References

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