

**COLOR POLYSEMY: *BLACK* AND *WHITE*  
IN TAIWANESE LANGUAGES\***

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**ABSTRACT**

This study profiles the polysemous nature of *black* and *white* expressions in Taiwanese Mandarin, Taiwanese Hakka, and Taiwanese Southern Min. The literal meanings for both *black* and *white* are the most dominant whereby *black* and *white* serve attributive functions modifying their collocating head nouns. The opaqueness of the meaning of the expression correlates with the degree of lexicalization. Some usages are compositional with the combinations metonymically projecting to the whole expressions. Some usages are metaphorically extended, leading to versatile nuances in meaning. These extensions give rise to different connotations and inter-cultural and intra-cultural variations. In addition, the analysis reveals that Taiwanese Mandarin has developed the most prolific usages of *black* and *white* expressions, followed by Taiwanese Southern Min, and Taiwanese Hakka.

Keywords: Color Polysemy, Lexicalization, Metaphor, Metonymy

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Colors have been investigated from different disciplines, ranging from linguistics and psychology to neurophysiology and anthropology. The earlier representative work from a linguistic perspective can be found in Berlin and Kay's (1969) investigation of 98 languages, in which all languages are claimed to share sameness regarding the foci of basic color terms and to show similar evolutionary stages in the use of color terms. Color terms, other than color designation, can represent specific meanings contingent to a society or culture. Color meanings need to be explicitly delineated for communication purposes and for the understanding of cultural specifics, as Goddard (1998:126) points out. One such effort, for instance, has been made by Wierzbicka (1990, 1996), who investigates the human understanding of color terms based on conceptual prototypes, whereby the concept of 'light' and 'dark' are connected with day and night, respectively. Apart from their conceptual prototypes, color terms exhibit enriched linguistic manifestations. When used in different collocations or idiomatic expressions, color terms no longer designate only a perceptible hue, but show various semantic compatibilities in certain syntactic structures (cf. Siegfried 1992). In addition, due to differences in cultural specifics, some expressions with color elements produce meanings that have nothing to do with color. Instead, metaphorical associations to non-physical domains, such as moral, emotional, and supernatural ones are found. Hence, extensive examinations of the syntactic and semantic distributions of color terms are necessary to better understand not only their linguistic significance but also the cultural specifics associated with them.

Black and white (henceforth, non-italicized forms stand for the visual colors) are the two colors at the initial stage in Berlin and Kay's (1969) sequence of color evolution, and are two universally perceptible colors to all mankind. Although both black and white are neutral or a-chromatic colors, language users often take black as a dark color and white as a light color (Siegfried 1992). According to different cultural conventions, black and white are associated with different meanings—white signaling purity and black signaling grief, for example. The color terms *black* and *white* (henceforth, italicized forms stand for

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the color words), when collocated with other linguistic expressions, are associated with more extended meanings, with some lexicalized expressions giving rise to figurative usages.

*Black* and *white* in Taiwanese Mandarin (TM), Taiwanese Hakka (TH), and Taiwanese Southern Min (TSM) manifest certain linguistic similarities in their usages. Differences, however, still exist regarding their syntactic and semantic distributions as well as their patterns of meaning extension. For example, the following three cases (1) in TM, (2) in TH, and (3) in TSM, exhibit linguistic and cultural specifics:

(1) 股市開黑盤

*gǔshì kāi hēipán.*  
Stock market open black plate  
'The stock market opened lower.'

(2) 烏哥流哥

*vu go liú go*  
black brother slippery brother  
'hooligans, loafers'

(3) 烏狗

*oo-káu*  
black-dog  
'fashionable man'

Hence, this study aims to characterize the syntactic and semantic distributions exhibited by the color terms *black* and *white* in TM, TH, and TSM, and at the same time to examine their extended interpretations in a cultural context. After the introduction, Section 2 presents previous studies of color terms, Section 3 presents the concept of lexicalization in conjunction with metaphor and metonymy, Section 4 describes the data and methodology, Section 5 reports the results, Section 6 presents the discussion, and Section 7 gives the conclusion.

## 2. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON COLOR TERMS

Studies of color terms (Berlin and Kay 1969; McDaniel 1974) hold that “all languages share a universal system of basic color categorization” and that “these universals are inherent in the human perception of color” (Kay and McDaniel 1978:610). Berlin and Kay (1969), investigating 98 languages, contend that “the referents for the basic color terms of all languages appear to be drawn from a set of eleven universal perceptual categories, and these categories become encoded in the history of a given language in a partially fixed order” (4). They delineate seven evolutionary stages of basic color terms, whereby black and white are the only two colors at stage one. In a follow-up study, Kay and McDaniel (1978) present the existence of biologically-based semantic universals about color terms. In contrast, Wierzbicka (1990, 1996) and Goddard (1998) maintain that visual and environmental things should be referred to as common reference points for color meanings. Take black and white for example. The most obvious distinction in all colors is light versus dark. The most significant environmental prototypes of this distinction are day and night because “the cycle of day and night is a recurrent and universal (or near-universal) human experience” (Goddard 1998:126). White and black are deemed as the representative colors for day and night.

According to Berlin and Kay (1969), Chinese 黑 *hēi* ‘black’ and 白 *bái* ‘white’ are at stage one of the basic color terms in the sequence of color evolutions. *Black* (with the character 烏 in TH and TSM, but pronounced as *vu* in TH and *oo* in TSM) and *white* (with the character 白 in TH and TSM, but pronounced as *pag* in TH and *péh* in TSM) are among the five basic color terms for TH and TSM identified by Cheng’s (1991, 2002) diachronic study (cf. also Wu 2011). Based on the traditional 陰陽五行 *YīnYángWǔXíng* ‘Yin Yang Five Elements’, the color 黑 *hēi* ‘black’ in Chinese is situated in the north and belongs to winter, during which time the world is in a period of recession, and activities associated with such time have been regarded as inauspicious, disastrous, evil, and negative. The color 白 *bái* ‘white’, on the other hand, is located in the northeast, which is the position of death in Chinese 風水 *FēngShuǐ* ([Wind-Water] geomantic omen), and has been

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connected with Chinese funerals and hence funeral clothes are white (cf. Zeng 2002).

The study of English color terms using a corpus can be seen in Philip (2011) in which the collocation of colors is inspected: “Colours have symbolic meanings, but colour words, being mere words, can only express those and other meanings in collocation with other words” (29). Philip (2011) observes that in idiomatic uses, variations may occur within the unit. For instance, *white elephant* could take various modifiers in terms of size (*biggest, huge*), expense (*expensive, costly*), or negative epithets (*embarrassing, over-ambitious*) (111); or the phrase could be used as in the noun modifier position (*white elephant building*) (113). Similarly, *black box* could also appear as a modifier (e.g., *black-box approach*) (112). Semantic variations are also seen in idioms such as *black sheep of the family* and *black sheep of the leading sector/economic science* (149).

As for *black* and *white*, Philip (2003:22) comments that their distinction (quoted below) has been recognized since the ancient Greek period.

“As black is the colour of darkness and white the colour of light, they have been symbolically related to evil and good respectively, through further symbolism which dictates that goodness is pure and inspired by divine light, whereas its opposite, evil, is impure and has an affinity with the dark.”  
(Phillip, 2003:22)

Another quantitative study can be found in Saif Mohammad (2011) which captures the concept-color association using a crowd-sourcing technique. The following results in Table 1 for black and white are reproduced from Mohammad’s (2011) Table 3 and 4 on page 103, originally in bold.

Table 1<sup>1</sup>: Meaning associations of black and white

Meaning associations	Black (%)	White (%)
Anger words	30.7	2.1
Anticipation words	7.5	16.2
Disgust words	33.7	2.0
Fear words	31.8	4.5
Joy words	2.2	21.8
Sadness words	36.0	3.0
Surprise words	13.4	11.0
Trust words	6.3	22.0

As indicated in the table, *black* is often associated with anger, disgust, fear, and sadness, while *white* is often associated with anticipation, joy, and trust. Furthermore, negative words are associated with *black* (28.3%), *red* (21.6%), and *grey* (14.1%); and positive words are associated with *white* (20.1%), *green* (15.5%), and *blue* (12.0%). Li and Bai (2013), in their corpus-based comparison of Mandarin 黑 *hēi* ‘black’ and 白 *bái* ‘white’ to English *black* and *white*, observe that the concept of blackness is more or less the same in the two languages, but that whiteness has more negative uses in Mandarin than in English.

While the color meanings associated with *black* and *white* have been investigated in English and somewhat in Mandarin Chinese, those in Taiwanese Hakka and Taiwanese Southern Min have been only rarely studied, although they are geographically and culturally contiguous to Taiwanese Mandarin. It is hence worthwhile to examine lexical, phrasal and constructional behaviors associated with *black* and *white* in the data so as to delineate the similarities in the three languages, and to detect language-specific usages that are contingent to cultural factors. Before describing the data and methodology, we will summarize the concepts that are necessary for the analysis and explanation of the data—lexicalization, metaphor and metonymy.

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from Mohammad’s (2011) Tables 3 and 4 on page 103, originally in bold.

### 3. LEXICALIZATION

Lexicalization is crucial in many languages, especially in Chinese languages as it explicates the complex relationship between a word and its constituents. While the term is referred to differently by linguists, for the purpose of the current study, the definition given by Briton and Traugott (2005) is adopted here whereby it refers to a word formation process in which a new lexical item is produced with its structural and semantic properties not completely derivable from the components of the word formation pattern (96). The output of such a process forms a gradient continuum of complexity, ranging from fixed or idiomatic phrases (L1), to compounds and derived forms (L2), to lexical simplexes and idiosyncratic fossilized forms (L3) (Briton and Traugott 2005: 97). The stronger the degree to which a word is lexicalized, the less transparent the structural and semantic relationship of its components; while, on the other hand, the weaker the degree to which a word is lexicalized, the more transparent the structural and semantic relationship of its components. The degree of lexicalization within a word increases along with the loss of its grammatical and semantic component characteristics. Briton and Traugott (2005) point out that lexicalization processes form a gradient continuum by the three levels of lexicality L1, L2, and L3. For example, *nuts-and-bolts* in English and *yāgēn* (壓根) [pressure-root] ‘completely, totally’ in Mandarin Chinese illustrate strongly lexicalized words, whereas *black market* in English and *chīfàn* (吃飯) [eat-rice] ‘to eat a meal’ in Mandarin Chinese is weakly lexicalized. In addition, Briton and Traugott (2005: 97) indicate that lexicalization is a process of gradual change with overlapping intermediate steps, leading to possible ambiguity, with an extended meaning co-existing with the original meaning until the extended meaning becomes an independent meaning of its own. Enfield (2003:29) explicitly formulates the bridging context model to indicate the stages of changes in meaning, as given below in Table 2.

Table 2: Stages in semantic changes (based on Enfield 2003:29)

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Form	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>
Meaning	'p'	'p' (+> 'q')	'p', 'q'	'q'

As indicated in the four stages, Stage 2 provides a regularly occurring context where an implicating meaning ('q') arises from the original meaning ('p'); in the context of Stage 3, meaning 'q' becomes an independent meaning, with meaning 'p' persisting or disappearing at Stage 4. The bridging context provides an environment whereby a pragmatic inference arises, giving rise to ambiguous interpretations. Then, through metonymic strengthening, polysemous items arise when two context-independent meanings co-exist (cf. Traugott 2011). Moreover, as explicated in Briton and Traugott (2005:97), lexicalization typically involves semantic idiomaticization with the components of a word losing their compositionality. For instance, *blackmail* refers to neither a piece of mail nor anything literally black. In addition, new meanings are less transparent, being derivable through metaphorical abstraction. For instance, the chunk *nuts-and-bolts* denotes an abstract meaning of working components. Regarding the color terms that are investigated in this study, we will examine syntactic chunks according to different degrees of lexicality. And then the distributions of the different meanings derived through metonymic or metaphoric extension will be examined.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The data investigated by this study come from multiple sources. The TM data come from the *Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary* (教育部重編國語辭典修訂本) compiled by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan (臺灣教育部) in 1994, the *Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Mandarin Chinese 3.0* (中研院平衡語料庫) by Huang et al. (1995), and the *NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese* (政大漢語口語語料庫) by Chui



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& Lai (2008). The Taiwan Google Research Engine is also used to assure that the data corresponds to the Taiwanese Mandarin. Proper names are excluded.

The TH data come from the *Taiwanese Hakka Dictionary of Common Words* (教育部臺灣客家語常用詞辭典) compiled by the Ministry of Education Hakka Dialect Compiling Group in Taiwan (2011), the *NCCU Corpus of Spoken Taiwanese Hakka* (政大客語口語語料庫) by Chui & Lai (2008), the *Taiwanese Hakka Proverbs Dictionary: Wisdom of the Ancestors* (臺灣客家諺語語典：祖先的智慧) by Huang (2005), *The Dictionary of Taiwanese Sixian and Hailu Hakka Dialects* (臺灣四縣腔海陸腔客家話辭典) by Xu (2009), *A Chinese-English Dictionary--Hakka Dialect* by MacIver (1992), *One Hundred Hakka Proverbs* (客諺一百首) by He (1991), and *1500 Interesting Hakka Proverbs* (聽算無窮漢—有趣的客語俚諺 1500 則) by Tu (1992). The data are transcribed based on the Taiwanese Hakka Pīnyīn Program issued by the National Language Committee in Taiwan in 2009. The tone diacritics of the 四縣 Sìxiàn dialect are rendered for the data.

The TSM data come from the *Taiwanese Southern Min Dictionary of Common Words* (教育部閩南語常用詞辭典) compiled by the Taiwan Ministry of Education Taiwanese Southern Min Common Words Dictionary Compiling Group (教育部臺灣閩南語常用詞辭典編輯委員會)(2011), the *Taiwanese Concordancer* (臺語文語詞檢索) by Liu & Chenzheng (2007), the *Taiwanese Southern Min Lexicon Dictionary* (臺灣語彙辭典) by Yang (2005), the *Tōngyòng Taiwanese Southern Min Dictionary* (通用臺語字典) by Wu (2005), the *Taiwanese Southern Min and Hakka Language Archives* (中研院閩客語典藏), *Taiwanese Southern Min Riddles and Proverbs of Taoyuan City I* (桃園市閩南語諺語謎語(一)) by Hu (2003), the *Taiwanese Southern Min Proverbs Collection of Tainan County* (臺南縣閩南語諺語語集) by Hu (2004), the *Dictionary of Sayings and Proverbs of Taiwan* (臺灣俗語辭典) by Chen (2004), the *New Edition of The Origin of Taiwanese Southern Min Expressions* (新編臺語溯源) by Yi (1988), *Let's Learn Taiwanese Together: The Revival of Taiwanese Culture* (逗陣學臺語—臺灣文化東山再起) by Li (2007), and *The Wisdom of Taiwanese* (臺灣話ㄟ智慧) by Fang (2005), and the *Dictionary of Taiwanese Sayings and Proverbs* (臺灣俗諺語典) by Chen (2003). The data are transcribed with tone

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diacritics based on the Taiwanese Southern Min Rome Pīnyīn Program (臺灣閩南語羅馬字拼音方案) issued by the National Language Committee in Taiwan in 2008.

The following data found for *black* and *white* are given below. Instances containing both *black* and *white* (e.g., 指黑為白 *zhīhēiwéibái* [point-black-as-white] ‘call black white’) are counted twice, once in the *black* category and once in *white*. ‘Expression’ refers to the number of types found from the resources above. For *black*, 黑 is the target term in TM and a variant character 烏 is targeted in TH and TSM. However, the Mandarin 烏 is only found in fixed expressions such as 烏鴉 *wūyā* [black-duck] ‘raven’ and 烏龍茶 *wūlóngchá* ‘wulong tea’ and is not included in the analysis.<sup>2</sup> For *white*, 白 is the target term in all of the three languages.

Each of these expressions is categorized according to the following category, if such a category applies.

- (a) Number of characters: The numbers of characters are recorded. Sometimes an expression could be a proverb, or a whole sentence.
- (b) Grammatical functions: the role of *black* or *white* as attributive/predicative adjective, noun, or verb is annotated.
- (c) Constructions: The construction in which the part-of-speech of *black* or *white* appears is coded.
- (d) Meanings: Four types of meanings are coded: ‘Literal’ for instances in which *black* and *white* denote color meanings. The second meaning is ‘metonymically compositional’ which refers to instances in which the meaning of the whole chunk is compositional with *black* and *white* as the modifiers highlighting the colors of the other components; then the combination is used to stand for the whole thing/person. The third meaning is ‘metaphoric extension’ in which *black* and *white* do not denote color meanings at all; instead, opaque meanings which are derived through metaphor. Instances of

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<sup>2</sup> The data used for this study is based on the Sinica Corpus version 3.0. The corpus has an updated 4.0 version released online in year 2013, which includes a more extensive amount of data. To maintain a consistent and coherent analysis, the current study will not include new tokens that are available now in the new version. We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out the update.

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metaphoric extension are further analyzed according to different extended senses. The fourth meaning ‘no color meaning’ refers to those in which no color meanings are associated with *black* and *white* to begin with.

The above annotations are made on excel file for each set of the data.

### 5. RESULTS

The following results are found. First of all, the types of expressions analyzed are given in Table 3. In total, for *black*, 225 expressions were found in TM, 93 in TH, and 152 in TSM; for *white*, 315 were found in TM, 109 in TH, and 130 in TSM. And Table 4 gives the distribution of the number of characters found. Two-character disyllabic compounding expressions are the most commonly found across languages and across color terms; three, four or five-character chunks are also found; and fixed proverbs are also found in the data.

Table 3: Types of Expressions in Different Languages

Language	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
Mandarin (TM)	225	315
Hakka (TH)	93	109
Southern Min(TSM)	152	130

Table 4: Number of Characters

Color Terms	Language	2	3	4	5	Others	Total
<i>Black</i>	TM	83 36.89%	54 24.00%	63 28.00%	2 0.89%	23 10.22%	225 100%
	TH	34 36.56%	21 22.58%	6 6.45%	1 1.08%	31 33.33%	93 100%
	TSM	63 41.45%	51 33.55%	17 11.18%	0 0.00%	21 13.82%	152 100%
<i>White</i>	TM	144 45.71%	43 13.65%	72 22.86%	2 0.63%	54 17.14%	315 100%
	TH	58 53.21%	16 14.68%	6 5.50%	0 0.00%	29 26.61%	109 100%
	TSM	58 44.62%	44 33.85%	16 12.31%	0 0.00%	12 9.23%	130 100%

Regarding the grammatical functions that *black* and *white* play, the attributive function is the most dominant, in particular for *black* — 81.78% of the total number of occurrences for 黑 *hēi* in TM, 89.25% for 烏 *vu* in TH, and 90.79% for 烏 *oo* in TSM. As for *white*, the attributive function is still the most dominant, although relatively lower than *black* in terms of percentage — 62.22% of the total number of occurrences for 白 *bái* in TM, 77.06% for *pag* in TH, and 80.77% for *pèh* in TSM. There is a higher percentage of occurrences of *bái* 白 *white* in TM to indicate the function of a noun (24.22%) or adverb (12.70%) than in TH or TSM. Table 5 reports the results.

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Table 5: Distribution of Grammatical Functions

Color Terms	Language	Attributive	Predicative	Noun	Adverb	Verb	Others	Total
<i>Black</i>	TM	184 81.78%	3 1.33%	37 16.44%	1 0.44%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	225 100%
	TH	83 89.25%	4 4.30%	5 5.38%	1 1.08%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	93 100%
	TSM	138 90.79%	0 0.00%	1 0.66%	12 7.89%	0 0.00%	1 0.66%	152 100%
<i>White</i>	TM	196 62.22%	0 0.00%	77 24.44%	40 12.70%	2 0.63%	0 0.00%	315 100%
	TH	84 77.06%	3 2.75%	12 11.01%	9 8.26%	1 0.92%	0 0.00%	109 100%
	TSM	105 80.77%	0 0.00%	10 7.69%	15 11.54%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	130 100%

Correspondingly, the Modifier + Noun construction is the most dominant one with *black* and *white* modifying the following noun — a percentage of 55.56% of the number of occurrences for 黑 *hēi* in TM, 50.54% for 烏 *vu* in TH, and 67.76% for 烏 *oo* in TSM; 45.71% of the number of occurrences for 白 *bái* in TM, 63.30% for *pag* in TH, and 70.77% for *péh* in TSM. The percentage of this construction gets higher if the reduplicative form of *black* or *white* that functions as a modifier only is added. For this type of modifier, as in 黑漆漆 *hēiqīqī* [black-qi-qi] ‘very dark’, *black* in TM has the highest percentage of occurrences at 14.67%. Similarly, *white* in TM has a relatively higher percentage of occurrences than that in TH or TSM when functioning as a noun (3.81% preceded by a modifier in a Mod + Noun construction; 11.11% followed by a verb in a Verb + Noun construction). In addition, *white* in TM has the highest percentage of occurrences among the three languages when functioning as a verb modifier (13.33% in a Mod + Verb construction). Table 6 reports the results.

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Table 6: Distribution of Constructions

Color Terms	Language	Mod	Mod+	Mod+	Mod+	Noun+	Noun+	Noun+Noun	Verb+	Idiomatic/ Proverbs/Others	Total
		( <i>hēiqīqī</i> 黑漆 漆)	( <i>hēidiǎn</i> 黑點 黑點)	( <i>pángbái</i> 旁白 旁白)	( <i>báishòu</i> 白受 白受)	( <i>bìnhēi</i> 鬢黑 鬢黑)	( <i>hēibái</i> 黑白 黑白)	( <i>hēibáihǔnyáo</i> 黑白混淆 黑白混淆)	( <i>fāhēi</i> 發黑 發黑)	( <i>Jìnzhūzhěchì,</i> <i>jìn mòzhěhēi</i> 近朱者赤， 近墨者黑)	
Black	TM	33 14.67%	125 55.56%	0 0.00%	1 0.44%	13 5.78%	1 0.44%	2 0.89%	15 6.67%	35 15.56%	225 100%
	TH	7 7.53%	47 50.54%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	2 2.15%	1 1.08%	0 0.00%	2 2.15%	34 36.56%	93 100%
	TSM	19 12.50%	103 67.76%	0 0.00%	8 5.26%	1 0.66%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	21 13.82%	152 100%
White	TM	37 11.75%	144 45.71%	12 3.81%	42 13.33%	10 3.17%	3 0.95%	2 0.63%	35 11.11%	30 9.52%	315 100%
	TH	7 6.42%	69 63.30%	0 0.00%	8 7.34%	6 5.50%	3 2.75%	0 0.00%	9 8.26%	7 6.42%	109 100%
	TSM	10 7.69%	92 70.77%	0 0.00%	14 10.77%	2 1.54%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 5.38%	5 3.85%	130 100%

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Table 7 gives the distribution of the meanings of *black* and *white*. The most dominant distribution of the meanings of *black* and *white* is to denote literal color meanings across the three languages — for *black*, 52% of occurrences in TM, 89.25% in TH, and 75.66% in TSM; for *white*, 48.25% in TM, 67.89% in TH, and 61.54% in TSM. The occurrence of metonymically compositional extension is relatively low in terms of percentage both for *black* and for *white*, although the percentage for 黑 *hēi* in TM is relatively higher. In addition, compared to *black*, the percentages for *white* are higher across the three languages. As for metaphoric extension, both 黑 *hēi* and 白 *bái* in TM occur at relatively higher percentages compared to their corresponding counterparts in TH and TSM.

Table 7: Distribution of Meanings

Color terms	Language	Literal	Metonymically Compositional	Metaphoric Extension	No Color Meaning	Total
<i>Black</i>	TM	117	26	77	5	225
		52.00%	11.56%	34.22%	2.22%	100%
	TH	83	1	7	2	93
		89.25%	1.08%	7.53%	2.15%	100%
	TSM	115	2	31	4	152
		75.66%	1.32%	20.39%	2.63%	100%
<i>White</i>	TM	152	30	128	5	315
		48.25%	9.52%	40.63%	1.59%	100%
	TH	74	10	25	0	109
		67.89%	9.17%	22.94%	0.00%	100%
	TSM	80	10	38	2	130
		61.54%	7.69%	29.23%	1.54%	100%

The distributions of metaphoric extensions of *black* are given from Table 7.1 to Table 7.3. In total, 77 types of 黑 *hēi* expressions in TM, seven types of 烏 *vu* expressions in TH, and 31 types of 烏 *vu* expressions in TSM are found. Almost all of the metaphoric associations

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with *black* carry negative connotations, including illegal or underground, evil or vicious, secret or mysterious, depressed, frustrated or gloomy, disgraceful or dishonorable, inauspicious or unfortunate, sluggish, and sarcastic or cynical. 黑 *hēi* in TM shows the most versatility in type and number of extensions compared to the corresponding counterparts in TH and TSM.

Table 7.1: Distributions of Metaphoric Extension in *Black* TM

Metaphoric Extension	Examples	Types of Expressions	%
Illegal, Underground	<i>hēihuò</i> (黑貨)	25	32.47
Evil, Vicious	<i>hēixīn</i> (黑心)	18	23.38
Secret, Mysterious	<i>hēihán</i> (黑函)	11	14.29
Depressed, Frustrated, Gloomy, Hopeless, Negative	<i>hēi'ànshíqí</i> (黑暗時期)	7	9.09
Disgraceful, Dishonorable	<i>mǒhēi</i> (抹黑)	5	6.49
Inauspicious, Unfortunate	<i>zǒuhēiyùn</i> (走黑運)	4	5.19
Low, Sluggish, Not prosperous	<i>Gǔ shì chǎng</i> <i>hēi</i> (股市長黑)	2	2.60
Sarcastic, Biting, Cynical	<i>hēisèyōumò</i> (黑色幽默)	2	2.60
Unexpectedly excellent, Profoundly remarkable	<i>hēimǎ</i> (黑馬)	2	2.60
Keeping a low profile, Being humble and modest	<i>zhīsbáihǒuhēi</i> (知白守黑)	1	1.30
Total		77	100



Color Polysemy: *Black* and *White*

Table 7.2: Distributions of Metaphoric Extension in *Black* TH

Metaphoric Extension	Examples	Types of Expressions	%
Evil, Vicious	<i>vu xim cong</i> (烏心腸)	4	42.86
Illegal, Underground	<i>vu diam</i> (烏店)	2	28.57
Secret, Mysterious	<i>vu mien ced</i> (烏面賊)	1	14.29
Total		7	100

Table 7.3: Distributions of Metaphoric Extension in *Black* TSM

Metaphoric Extension	Examples	Types of Expressions	%
Illegal, Underground	<i>oo-kim</i> (烏金)	12	38.71
Confusingly, indiscriminately	<i>oo-péh-kóng</i> (烏白講)	9	29.03
Evil, Vicious	<i>oo-sim-kuann</i> (烏心肝)	4	12.90
Secret, Mysterious	<i>oo-phue</i> (烏批)	2	6.45
Fashionable, Handsome, Beautiful	<i>oo-káu-hiann</i> (烏狗兄)	2	6.45
Disappearing, Becoming nothing, Empty	<i>oo-iú</i> (烏有)	1	3.23
Disgraceful, Dishonorable	<i>oo-miâ-tuann</i> (烏名單)	1	3.23
Total		31	100



## Color Polysemy: *Black* and *White*

Table 7.4~Table 7.6 below indicate the occurrence of the metaphoric extension of 白 *white* in the three languages. In total, 128 types of *bái* in TM, 25 types of *pag* in TH, and 38 types of *pèh* in TSM are found. The metaphoric extensions associated with 白 *white* can carry either positive or negative connotations. Positive meanings include lawful, clear/transparent, moral/unimpeachable/innocent and humble/modest. Negative extensions include in vain/without results, plain/ordinary, empty/with nothing, for free/without paying, wastefully/ it's a pity that..., powerless/helpless and evil/vicious.

Table 7.4: Distributions of Metaphoric Extension in *White* TM

Metaphoric Extension	Examples	Types of Expressions	%
In vain, Without results, Be futile	<i>báimáng</i> (白忙)	26	20.31
Lawful	<i>báidào</i> (白道)	25	19.53
Clear, Transparent	<i>lòubái</i> (露白)	21	16.41
Plain, Ordinary	<i>báiròu</i> (白肉)	18	14.06
Empty, With nothing; Without reasons, Credit	<i>báilài</i> (白賴)	17	13.28
For free, Without paying	<i>báichībáihē</i> (白吃白喝)	7	5.47
Moral, Unimpeachable, Innocent	<i>báiyè</i> (白業)	6	4.69
Wastefully, Its a pity that ...	<i>hēihànbáiliú</i> (黑汗白流)	3	2.34
Evil, Vicious	<i>dǎoguǐdiàobái</i> (搗鬼吊白)	3	2.34
Powerless, Helpless, Cannot do anything, Having no alternative	<i>báidèngzhèyǎn</i> (白瞪著眼)	1	0.78
Keeping a low profile, Being humble and modest	<i>zhīsbáihóuhēi</i> (知白守黑)	1	0.78
<b>Total</b>		<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>

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Table 7.5: Distributions of Metaphoric Extension in *White TH*

Metaphoric Extension	Examples	Types of Expressions	%
Empty, With nothing; Without reasons	<i>pag giog zeu</i> <i>cud loi</i> (白腳走出來)	7	28
Clear, Transparent	<i>gongkapag</i> (講卡白)	5	20
In vain, Without results, Be futile	<i>pag da</i> (白打)	5	20
For free, Without paying	<i>pag pag ded</i> (白白得)	4	16
Plain, Ordinary	<i>pag vun</i> (白文)	2	8
Moral, Unimpeachable, Innocent	<i>qinpag</i> (清白)	1	4
Legal	<i>mun vu pag</i> (問烏白)	1	4
Total		25	100

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Table 7.6: Distributions of Metaphoric Extension in *White* TSM

Metaphoric Extension	Examples	Types of Expressions	%
Indiscriminating	<i>péh-bák</i> (白目)	10	26.32
Empty, With nothing; Without reasons	<i>péh-péh</i> (白白)	7	18.42
In vain, Without results, Be futile	<i>tsò-péh-kang</i> (做白工)	5	13.16
Clear, Transparent	<i>bîng-pik</i> (明白)	5	13.16
Plain, Ordinary	<i>péh-bûn</i> (白文)	5	13.16
For free, Without paying	<i>péh-tsiáh</i> (白食)	2	5.26
Moral, Unimpeachable, Innocent	<i>tshing-pik</i> (清白)	2	5.26
Lawful	<i>péh-tō</i> (白道)	2	5.26
Total		38	100

From the results of the data, both *black* and *white* across the three languages occur mostly in a Mod + Noun construction in which they carry an attributive modifying function of the following noun. Correspondingly, the prototypical literal meaning is the most dominant one for *black* and *white* across the three languages. All of the three languages share the same literal meaning of *black*, denoting the physiological, visible color black, or darkness, such as 黑髮 *hēifǎ* [black-hair] ‘black hair’ in TM, 烏雲 *vu<sup>1</sup> iun<sup>4</sup>* [black-cloud] ‘dark clouds’ in TH, and 烏豆 *oo-tāu* [black-bean] ‘black beans’ in TSM. The same literal meaning can also be found in a Noun + Mod construction as in 鬢黑 *bìn hēi* [hair-black] ‘black hair’ in TM. The adjectival function can extend to an adverbial function in a Mod + Verb construction as in 白受 *báishòu* [white-take] ‘to undergo something without results’. *Black* and *white* can also function as a noun in a Noun + Noun construction as

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in 黑白混淆 *hēibáihǔnyáo* [black-white-mix] ‘to call black white’. In the same manner, the literal meaning denoting the physiological color white is the most dominant meaning across the three languages. Examples like 白雪 *báixuě* [white-snow] ‘white snow’ in TM, 白米 *pag mi* [white-rice] ‘white rice’ in TH, and 白紙 *péh-tsuá* [white-paper] ‘white paper’ in TSM can illustrate. Since white is the representative color of the human conceptualization of daytime, it can schematize the condition of brightness and light as illustrated by 白天 *báitiān* [white-day] ‘daytime’ in TM, 白晝 *pag zu* [white-day] ‘daytime’ in TH, and 當頭白日 *tng-thâu-péh-jit* [just-head-white-sun] ‘bright daytime’ in TSM.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Meaning Extension and Lexicalization

When used in a number of collocations or idiomatic expressions, *black* and *white* gradually lose their designation of perceptible hue, and give rise to metonymic and metaphoric meanings together with their collocating components. The results of the data show different degrees of lexicalization, leading to different degrees of opaqueness in meaning. For metonymically compositional cases, the modified parts associated with *black* and *white* are metonymically highlighted to stand for the whole person. The lexicalized compound is categorized as L2. Many cases are found with *black* and *white* describing body parts. For example, in 黑手 *hēi shǒu* [black-hand] ‘a mechanic’ (also, the corresponding expressions 烏手 *vu su* in TH; 烏手 *oo-tshiú* in TSM), *black* carries an attributive function. The meaning is compositionally derived from the two components with *black* describing the color of the salient body part *hand*. As mechanics’ hands are constantly stained, their hands are metonymically used to refer to the whole persons. The lexicalized compound is then conventionalized to refer to an occupation. The case of 白眼 *báiyǎn* [white-eye] ‘supercilious look’, which describes the white of an eyeball, is metonymically used to indicate a person’s indifferent and contemptuous attitude as shown by a cold stare or a disdainful look. Likewise, 扮黑臉 *bànhēiliǎn* [play-black-face] ‘to take a big stick

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approach' is also a metonymically profiled case in which a black face is used to denote a severe and cruel person acting strictly towards others. 扮白臉 *bànbáiliǎn* [play-white-face] 'to take a sweet talk approach' illustrates a similar process.<sup>3</sup> Similar examples can be illustrated by 烏人 *vu'ngin* [black-person] 'the black race' in TH, and 烏頭 *o-tau* [black-head] 'Taoist priest' in TSM. The case 烏鬚到白鬚 *oo-tshiu-kàu-pèh-tshiu* [black-hair-to-white-hair] 'from youth to old age' has both *black* and *white* metonymically referring to the colors of beards, in turn representing different ages.

When both *black* and *white* denote more extended meanings without color designations in an expression, metaphoric extensions lead to a higher degree of opaqueness in meaning. Their degree of lexicalization is categorized as L3. Such examples as 黑心 *hēixīn* [black-heart] in TM, 烏心腸 *vu'xim'cong* [black-heart-intestines] in TH, and 烏瀉肚 *oo-lok-tōo* [black-intestines] in TSM all characterize vicious and evil personalities. These expressions with the color word 黑/烏 *hēi/vu* 'black' modifying a body organ demonstrate metaphoric extensions since no association of the colors can be detected. Still, 烏面賊 *vu'mien ced* [black-face-thief] 'unknown sources' in TH indicates that objects with unknown sources are mysterious, and 烏批 *oo-phue* [black-mail] 'blackmail' in TSM indicates that a letter from an unknown writer is anonymous. Furthermore, 黑道 *hēidào* [black-road] 'gangsters' in TM, 烏店 *vu'diam* [black-store] 'a store extorting an extra-large sum of money from customers' in TH, and 烏市 *oo-tshī* [black-market] 'a black market' in TSM are related to illegal and underground behavior and activities. Moreover, the blackening of reputations can be manifested as in 抹黑 *mǒhēi* smear-black 'smear people's reputation' in TM and 烏名單 *oo-miâ-tuann* [black-name list] 'a black list' in TSM.

Unlike those of *black*, the metaphoric extensions associated with *white* carry either positive or negative connotations. To illustrate, the concept of brightness can extend to delineate clearness and transparency, such as 明白 *míngbái* [light-white] 'clear' in TM, 打白講 *da`pag gong`* [hit-white-talk] 'frankly speaking' in TH, and 講較白咧

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<sup>3</sup> These two cases, originating from the faces worn by actors in a traditional Chinese opera, have undergone historical development regarding their meanings. Details will be discussed in the next section. We owe this account to one of the anonymous reviewers.

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*káng-kah-pèh-leh* [talk-more-white] ‘to state more transparently’ in TSM. In addition, the meaning of clarity and transparency can extend to a human’s morality and innocence, as implicated by 清白 *qīngbái* [clear-white] ‘moral, innocent’ in TM and its equivalents in TH and in TSM. Moreover, the meaning of transparency can also denote legality, as illustrated by 白道 *báidào* [white-road] ‘legal organizations’ in TM and its counterparts in TH and in TSM. Alternatively, since the color white is without any hues, it can delineate plainness and ordinariness. Such examples as 白開水 *báikāishuǐ* [white-boiled water] ‘plain boiled water’ in TM, 白粥 *pāg zūg* [white-congee] ‘plain congee’ in TH, and 白滾水 *pèh-kún-tsuí* [white-boiled-water] ‘plain boiled water’ in TSM all convey the meaning of a plain flavor. Furthermore, since the color white lacks hues, it can metaphorically imply emptiness or a matter or object without reason or cause; for example, 平白無故 *píngbáiwúgù* [level-white-no-reason] ‘without any reason or cause’ in TM, and 白手捉魚 *pāg su zōg ng* [white-hand-catch-fish] ‘building up a fortune from scratch’ in TH. An interesting case is 白手起家 *báishǒuqǐjiā* [white-hand-raise-family] ‘building up a fortune from scratch’. While 白手 *báishǒu* denoting empty hands seems to convey negative implications, the whole idiomatic expression implies quite positive connotations, denoting a diligent person who builds up a fortune from nothing. Since neither 白手 *báishǒu* nor 起家 *qǐjiā* can stand alone, the idiomatic expression is taken as a case of a lexicalized compound categorized as L3. Still, the meaning of doing something in vain or something being futile can be extended. Examples such as 白費力氣 *báifèilìqì* [white-spend-efforts] ‘all efforts have been in vain’ in TM, 打白行 *dā pāg hang* [hit-white-come] ‘come without achieving a purpose’ in TH, and 白講 *pèh-kóng* [white-speak] ‘speak in vain’ in TSM carry such implications. In addition, the meaning of obtaining something without paying, as in having food or drinks for free, can be found in cases such as 白吃白喝 *báichībáihē* [white-eat-white-drink] ‘having food and drinks for free’. The meaning of nothingness can also depict a situation in which people are so helpless that they cannot do anything in the face of an event. This extension is realized via 白白 *báibái* [white-white] ‘helpless’ as in 白白地被欺負 *báibáidì bèi qīfū* [white-white-bei-bully] ‘being helplessly bullied?’.



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Finally, idiosyncratic cases of *black* and *white* expressions that arbitrarily employ the color word can also be seen across the three languages. Cases such as 黑甜鄉 *hēitiánxiāng* [black-sweet-land] ‘dreamland’ in TM and 烏紗 *oo-se* [black-hat] ‘bribery’ in TSM can be found for *black*; and cases such as 白雲鄉 *báiyúnxīāng* [white-cloud-land] ‘the place where gods or deities live’ in TM, 白目眉 *pag mugˊmiˊ* [white-eye-brow] ‘brazen-faced and shameless people’ in TH, and 青磅白磅 *tshenn-pōng-pèh-pōng* [green-white] ‘all of a sudden’ in TSM can be found for *white*.

### 6.2 Cultural Universality and Variations

The usages with *black* and *white* demonstrate metaphoric extensions that are deeply embedded in their cultural context (cf. Kövecses 2002:195). The discussion in the previous section shows near-universal distributions of *black* and *white*, indicating similar conceptualizations in the three cultures. Negative connotations account for a dominant proportion in the metaphoric extensions of *black* expressions in TM, TH, and TSM. The color black carries the meaning of mystery and secrets, which further implies attributes of viciousness and illegality and of the concept of inauspiciousness. Other meanings encompassing a depressed state of mind, the sluggish stock market, and people’s disgrace and dishonor all carry negative connotations. Such a tendency also accords with the traditional viewpoints of the color black in a Chinese community. According to *Yin Yang Five Elements*, the color black belongs to winter, a period of dormancy when the natural world and human activities are slow and inactive. Hence, it is highly plausible for *black* expressions to develop extended meanings with negative connotations. On the other hand, both positive and negative extended meanings can be associated with *white* expressions in TM, TH, and TSM. The color white carries the meaning of clearness, which further extends to denote morality and legality. Alternatively, because the color white is without any hues, it implies emptiness or something without reason or cause. Many meaning extensions thus emerge from this implication—plainness and ordinariness, something being in vain, having something for free, and a helpless state of mind. This is natural

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since humans universally conceptualize the color white as daytime, which implies brightness and hope, and the color black as the dark night, which implies darkness. These implied meanings, in turn, exercise an influence on the linguistic conceptualizations of *white* expressions to develop extended meanings associated with mostly positive connotations and of *black* expressions associated with mostly negative meanings. In fact, these developments are quite prevalent as have been discussed in respect to many different languages (Wierzbicka 1996; Lucy 1997; Goddard 1998).

However, variations can still be observed within culture and across culture. Some usages also reflect intra-cultural variations, including the style dimension and the subculture dimension (Kövecses 2005). The style dimension refers to linguistic variations along with levels of formality. For example, proverbial expressions in TM are literary and carry certain moral lessons or exhortation functions (Lakoff and Turner 1989), as illustrated by 近朱者赤, 近墨者黑 [close-red-one-red, close-black-one-black] *jìnzhūzhěchì, jìn mòzhěhēi*. ‘People are easily influenced by the environment’, and 知白守黑 *zhībáishǒuhēi* [know-white-keep-black] ‘know and observe all, but stay obscure’, a line of classical drama. In addition, proverbial expressions often employ animals, plants or objects as the source domains to metaphorically convey aspects of human character. The two cases illustrate: 烏心蘿蔔好面皮 *vu xim lo ped ho mien pi* [black-heart-radish-good-face-skin] ‘People with vicious and insidious minds look good from an outer appearance.’, and 烏研仔貯豆油, 無得看 *oo-kan-á té tâu-iû, bô-tit-khàn* [black-bottle-contain-soybean oil, no-can-see] ‘Don’t judge a person by his appearance.’. 白璧無瑕 *báibìwúxiá* [white-jade-no-flaw] ‘flawless’ delineates a piece of white jade without any tiny flaw or a small stain. The contrast of defects and stains vividly manifests the purity of the white jade. This proverb is thus compared to a human’s pure moral character and flawless deeds. The proverb 樵燥米白 *Ceu zau mi pag* [dry-wood-rice-white] ‘an abundant supply of high-quality goods’ indicates that the house stores dry wood and white rice, both of which symbolize an abundant supply of high-quality goods in daily life. Therefore, it implies the comfortable and abundant life of a rich family. Another interesting proverb is 白白米飼

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咕雞 *pèh-pèh-bí*, *tshī tuh-ku-ke* [white-white-rice-feed-doze-chicken] ‘useless to raise a stupid, cowardly, and good-for-nothing person’, which indicates that it is useless to use good-quality rice to feed chickens that only doze off. Later on, it is used to imply that it is useless to raise a stupid, cowardly, and good-for-nothing person or a worthless wretch.

On the other hand, certain colloquial expressions have developed, such as 黑掉 *hēidiào* black-drop in TM in the usage 他在商業界黑掉了 *Tā zài shāngyèjiè hēidiào le* [he-at-business circle-black-drop-particle] ‘His reputation is damaged in the field of commerce’. Another case is 不拿白不拿 *bùná bái bùná* [no-take-white-no-take] ‘It is wasteful if you don’t take it’ that is often used in a colloquial situation. The distinction of subcultures within the general culture leads to unique linguistic conceptualizations. For example, the meaning ‘illegal, underground’ is relevant to the subculture of judicial organizations, law officers, and governmental bureaus. In TM, related usages such as 黑官 *hēiguān* [black-officer] ‘government employees acting in an illegitimate manner’ and 掃黑 *sǎohēi* [sweep-black] ‘cracking down on crimes’ are found. The meaning ‘low, sluggish, not prosperous’ in TM illustrates another example. Cases such as 開黑盤 *kāihēipán* [open-black-plate] ‘stay lower’ and 長黑 *chánghēi* [long-black] can be seen only in reference to the stock market, as in the sentences 股市開黑盤 *gǔshì kāi hēipán* [stock market-open-black-plate] ‘The stock market opened lower’ and 股市長黑 *gǔshì chánghēi* [stock market-long-black] ‘The stock price is tumbling’. Moreover, some usages refer to certain types of people. In TM, 白丁 *báidīng* [white-person] ‘illiterate people’ and 白民 *báimín* [white-person] ‘illiterate people’ refer to commoners or illiterate people. The equivalent terms 白身 *pag siin* [white-body] ‘illiterate people’ in TH and 白丁 *pèh-ting* [white-person] ‘illiterate people’ in TSM also reveal this dimension of delineating subculture.

In terms of cross-cultural variations, two aspects can be detected—differences in source domains and target domains, and different historical roots. Kövecses (2005) proposes the concept of alternative metaphor, which indicates that the scopes of the source and the target domains may not be consistent. Among the three languages, TM has the highest number of versatile meaning extensions regarding both *black* expressions and *white* expressions. The meaning extensions

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exhibited by *black* show more deviant distributions than *white* across the three languages. Berlin and Kay (1969) address the relationship between color lexicons and cultural and technological development as follows: “Color lexicons with few terms tend to occur in association with relatively simple cultures and simple technologies, while color lexicons with many terms tend to occur in association with complex cultures and complex technologies” (104). In other words, the number of color lexicons proportionally indicates the complexity of cultural and technological developments. Our finding shows that TM has the widest distributions, TSM lies in the middle, and TH has the least distributions. We may hence presume that the semantic complexity of color expressions in TM is highly likely to be closely related to the vivacity of its cultural, economic, and technological developments. Table 8 displays the different meaning extensions of *black* and *white* across the three languages.

Table 8: Comparisons of Meaning Extensions in TM, TH, and TSM

Color	Metaphoric Extensions	TM	TH	TSM
<b>Black</b>	Evil, Vicious	✓	✓	✓
	Illegal, Underground	✓	✓	✓
	Secret, Mysterious	✓	✓	✓
	Disgraceful, Dishonorable	✓		✓
	Depressed, Frustrated, Gloomy, Hopeless, Negative	✓		
	Inauspicious, Unfortunate	✓		
	Keeping a low profile, Being humble and modest	✓		
	Low, Sluggish, Not prosperous	✓		
	Sarcastic, Biting, Cynical	✓		
	Unexpectedly excellent, Profoundly remarkable	✓		
	Black, Darkness		✓	
	Disappearing, Becoming nothing, Empty			✓
	Fashionable, Handsome, Beautiful			✓

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	Reckless, Capricious, Careless			✓
	Clear, Transparent	✓	✓	✓
	Empty, With nothing; Without reasons, Credit	✓	✓	✓
	For free, Without paying	✓	✓	✓
	In vain, Without results, Be futile	✓	✓	✓
	Moral, Unimpeachable, Innocent	✓	✓	✓
	Plain, Ordinary	✓	✓	✓
White	Legal	✓		✓
	Evil, Vicious	✓		
	Keeping a low profile, Being humble and modest	✓		
	Powerless, Helpless, Cannot do anything, Having no alternative	✓		
	Wastefully, Its a pity that ...	✓		
	Right and wrong		✓	
	Reckless, Capricious, Careless			✓

Furthermore, several examples can illustrate the multifaceted dimensions of source and target domains across the three languages. The term 烏狗 *oo-káu* [black-dog] ‘a fashionable guy’ in TSM contains the extensional meaning ‘fashionable and handsome’. The term 烏哥流哥 *vu<sup>4</sup> go<sup>4</sup> liu go<sup>4</sup>* [black-brother-slippery-brother] ‘hooligans, loafers’ in TH refers to some hooligans idling away their time on the street through the connection between the image of hooliganism and darkness. The case 走黑運 *zōuhēiyùn* [walk-black-luck] ‘unfortunate’ in TM, which derives from terminologies of magical calculations in Chinese culture, implies inauspiciousness and unluckiness. The case 股市開黑盤 *gǔshì kāi hēipán* [stock market-open-black-plate] ‘The stock market stayed lower’ in TM is used in a particular way to describe the sluggish phenomenon in the stock market. One expression that is unique in TSM only is 烏白 *oo-pèh* [black-white] ‘confusingly or indiscriminately’ (nine types are found) as in 烏白講 *oo-pèh-kóng* [black-white-talk] with *black* and *white* co-occurring together serving as an adverb to modify the following verb.

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Hence the meaning of 烏白講 *oo-pèh-kóng* [black-white-talk] means to say something in a confusing or unclear way'. The case 烏有 *oo-iú* [black-have] 'disappearing, nothing' in TSM is another illustration. Still other exclusive metaphoric extensions are influenced by English, such as 黑馬 *hēimǎ* [black-horse] 'a dark horse' in TM.

Some of the language-specific usages can originate from cultural heritages or historical roots. An interesting case in TSM is 烏狗兄 *oo-káu-hiann* [black-dog-brother] 'a fashionable guy'. It is now used to refer to a fashionable handsome guy. However, one of the reviewers points out that this case has undergone historical development whereby its meaning has been upgraded from negative to positive. According to the *Common Usages of Taiwanese Southern Min* (臺灣語常用辭典) compiled by Wang (1957), 烏狗 *oo-káu* [black-dog] has a negative meaning 'frivolous' although currently it denotes 'fashionable', and likewise for 烏貓 *oo-niau* [black-cat], which used to refer to bad girls. Another case in TSM is 白賊七仔 *pèh-tshát-tshit-á* [white-thief] 'a person who likes to tell lies and play tricks on others'. The expression originates from a folk story. As the legend goes, a person named 七仔 *tshit-á* likes to tell lies and to play tricks on others, and therefore is so nicknamed. The lexicalized compound 白賊 *pèh-tshát* [white-thief] 'lies' stands for lies in TSM (Peng 1997). Still another case is that of 采白 *cai pag* [color-white] 'things that are used in a wedding, or a funeral' in TH. In Hakka culture, 采 *cai* means different colors or auspicious signs and usually stands for objects in a wedding. 白 *pag* symbolizes the white garments worn in a traditional funeral. This lexicalized expression is employed to represent the objects or things associated with a whole situation. Then, any given expression can through time become more conventionalized, as the two cases in TM 扮白臉 *bànbáiliǎn* [play-white-face] 'to take a sweet talk approach' and 扮黑臉 *bànhēiliǎn* [play-black-face] 'to take a big stick approach' illustrate. Originating from the faces worn by actors in a traditional Chinese opera, they are now complete lexicalized expressions with fixed idiomatic meanings to denote people's personalities or attitudes. Interestingly, as pointed out by one of the reviewers, both of their meanings have undergone historical changes into opposite directions. In traditional Chinese opera, 白臉 *báiliǎn* has a negative connotation due to the association with the

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historical figures 曹操 Cáocāo and 秦檜 Qínkuài. Hence, 白臉 *báiliǎn* in the opera represents characters who are vicious, devious, treacherous, cunning villains. On the contrary, 黑臉 *hēiliǎn* has a positive connotation due to the association with the historical figures 張飛 Zhāngfēi and 包青天 Bāoqīngtiān. Hence 黑臉 *hēiliǎn* in opera represents characters who are brave, and righteous and who have a strong sense of justice and friendship. Their meanings have undergone a change into completely opposite directions as used in modern TM.<sup>4</sup>

### 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Taking a data-driven perspective, this study profiles the semantic distributions of *black* and *white* expressions in TM, TH, and TSM. The literal meanings for both *black* and *white* are the most dominant, serving attributive grammatical functions. For both *black* and *white* expressions, their opaqueness in meaning correlates with the degree of lexicalization. Some usages are metonymically triggered, contributing compositional meaning to the expressions. For metaphoric extensions, distributions of extended meanings are thoroughly examined. Meaning extensions associated with color expressions are embedded in the cultural context, giving rise to different connotations, and inter-cultural and intra-cultural variations. While the extended meanings associated with *black* carry mostly negative connotations, those associated with *white* carry either positive or negative connotations. Such a tendency shows the near-universal conceptualizations of black and white as have been studied in different languages in the extant literature.

Several suggestions can be made for further research. First, TM has developed the most prolific usages, followed by TSM, and TH. This finding may be ascribed to the different degrees of displacement and isolation from the main community—the most displaced and isolated a language is, the most resistant it is to new forms of lexicalization. It is well-known that a displaced community of speakers tends to be more conservative and least likely to accept changes. Among the three

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<sup>4</sup> We owe this account to one of the anonymous reviewers. Issues regarding why and how such developments would happen will be left for future research.

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languages, TH is certainly the most displaced and isolated from its main community, and can be predicted to be the most resistant to new forms of lexicalization. Although TSM and TH can be both described as being isolated from their main speaking community, the prevalence of TSM in the mass media and in commercial and/or socio-political discourse may have helped it to be more open to new lexicalization.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, an important issue from the comment of one of the reviewers has to do with ambiguity. For instance, the meaning of illegal/underground is identified for products or goods as in 黑貨 *hēihuò* [black-goods] ‘illegal goods’ while the meaning of evil/vicious’ is identified for persons as in 黑心 *hēixīn* [black-heart] ‘evil, vicious’. However, in the case of 黑店 (烏店 in TH and TSM) *hēidiàn* [black-store], the usage focuses on the lack of conscience of the owner, rather than the store being a legal entity or not. Hence the meaning of ‘evil, vicious’ seems to stand out in this case, although the interpretation of being illegal/underground store is still possible as well. Cases such as 黑心油 *hēixīnyóu* [black-heart-oil] ‘adulterated oil’ and 黑心食品 *hēixīnshípǐn* [black-heart-food] ‘adulterated food’ spell out both interpretations of being vicious and being illegal. Certainly, contexts can provide appropriate interpretations of these cases. Another case is 白道 *báidào* [white-road], which is categorized with a positive connotation. However, as pointed out by one of the reviewers, when it is used to refer to the police within a context, it sometimes implies a very negative connotation.<sup>6</sup> Such contextual factors that can bring connotative impacts to linguistic usages can be explored in the future. Furthermore, an extensive exploration of various expressions associated with basic color terms will give rise to a better and more holistic linguistic and cultural understanding of the three languages, a task that needs future endeavor. In addition, further studies are also needed to examine the correlation of the different degrees of prosperity of a society and the semantic development of color terms from the

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<sup>5</sup> We consider Taiwan Mandarin, Taiwan Hakka, and Taiwanese Southern Min as three different languages instead of three dialects because they are mutually unintelligible, although some scholars may consider them as dialects.

<sup>6</sup> The example provided by the reviewer is 白道比黑道更可怕 *bái dào bǐ hēi dào gèng kě pà* [white-road-compare-black-road-more-terrible] ‘The police are sometimes more terrible than an underground organization.’ The example is found in the link <http://www.taiwanenews.com/doc/liaw20080629.php>.



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perspective of sociolinguistics or the sociology of language (Wardhaugh 2001), an issue also left for another context.

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顏色多義詞：「黑/烏」與「白」  
在臺灣華語、臺灣客語以及臺灣閩南語之分析

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本論文運用多樣語料來源探討顏色詞「黑/烏」與「白」用法在臺灣華語、臺灣客語以及臺灣閩南語中語意特徵及文化意涵。分析顯示「黑/烏」與「白」主要擔任定語修飾其共現的名詞，因此表示顏色之字面義也佔最多；延伸義與其與搭配詞詞彙化的程度呈現對應，詞彙化越深，語意越隱晦。隱喻延伸義鑲嵌于文化脈絡中，「黑/烏」表現負面與「白」表現正面之言外之意，在三個語言當中普遍地存在；然有些隱喻延伸義也表現跨文化或次文化之變異。此外，臺灣華語發展出最多的隱喻延伸，臺灣閩南語次之，而臺灣客語最少，此結果意涵臺灣語言顏色詞用法的蓬勃發展可能跟該語言的族群文化之孤立或偏僻程度有關，越孤立偏僻受外界影響越少，相對語言用法發展也越保守。

關鍵字：顏色詞多義性、詞彙化、隱喻、轉喻、語意延伸