

A Cognitive Semantic Study of Some Colour Influenced Expressions in Nigerian English Usage

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/gjahss.2013/vol13n42637>

Published April 06, 2025

Citation: Igiri T.O. and Ngwoke R.I. (2025) A Cognitive Semantic Study of Some Colour Influenced Expressions in Nigerian English Usage, *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.13, No.4, pp. 26-37,

Abstract: *This paper studies the use of colour influenced terms in some Nigerianisms. Using a Conceptual Theory of Metonymy, it was found that the motivation behind using a colour term in such usages arises from what Steinvall (2002) calls 'type modification'. Generally, Berlin and Kay's (1969) Basic Colour Terms feature in uniquely Nigerian expressions. Metonymy as a cognitive process explains the semantic extensions of some colour terms involved. These extensions of meaning could yield to forming figurative expressions, for example, black axe. The main metonymic process that yields the semantic productivity of colours in Nigerian English usage is the PART-WHOLE relation where the colour of an entity is used to stand for the entity itself. These yields expressions such as blue to denote a particular type of powder. Sometimes entity names are used instead of a colour term itself and consequently extensions of meaning are projected (e.g. oylno pepper and Fantaface, Coca Cola leg).*

Key words: Colour terms, metonymy, Nigerianisms, Nigerian English, polysemy

INTRODUCTION

This paper studies the use of colour terms and colour related words in some *Nigerianisms* from a Cognitive Metonymy Theory. More specifically it examines conceptual metonymy in relation to Nigerian English expressions that have colour terms or colour related terms in Nigerian English usage. This is built upon the premise that colour words are used not *only* to denote the perceptual domain of COLOUR, but may be used in conjunction with other words to yield expressions whose meanings have to be learnt separately from the denotation of the colour term itself. Here, English colour terms are studied within the context of Nigerian English usage. English is the official language of Nigeria and there is presently a wide range of its usages in the country as a result of different indigenous languages, and the age, socioeconomic and educational levels of its speakers in Nigeria. Presently there abounds a healthy interest in 'New Englishes' of which 'Nigerian English' is part. This paper is at once a combination of the study of Nigerian English usage and an exploration into linguistic semantics. Radden and Kovecses (1999: 21) define metonymy as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle

[the form that triggers the cognitive process in the hearer], provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target within the same Idealized Cognitive Model [ICM]." ICMs are "the static or dynamic mental representations of typical .situations in life and their typical elements" (Guan, "2009: 181), and were first proposed by Lakoff (1987) to account for the cognitive processes, metaphor and metonymy. ICMs are central to how human beings organise knowledge in addition to other cultural expectations and values. In the words of Radden and Kovecses (1999: 20), ICMs include "not only people's encyclopedic knowledge of a particular domain but also the cultural model they are part of which in essence are the daily experiences of a person about entities, processes and actions.

Over the years, several linguists have studied Nigerian English usage with a view to understanding its uniqueness and determining the patterns; that distinguish it from other varieties of English. Nigerian English is a vibrant variety of English that has continued to develop and gain wide acceptance among users and scholars of English. In fact, some scholars such as Adegbija (2004) have explored the issue of nativisation of English in Nigeria which has led to several innovations in the English spoken in Nigeria to suit the cultural and communicative demands of Nigerians. Nigerian English has become such a vital issue in the linguistic scene of Nigeria that issues of standardisation of this variety have been debated and are still engaging scholars (Akere (1982) and Agheyisi (1988, Bamgbose 1998, and Adegbite 2010). Several aspects of Nigerian English have been studied in relation to its phonology (Jibril 1982 Gut & Milde (2002), syntax-Iibril (1991) and Banjo (1997), semantics Adegbija (1989, Kaan, Amase and Tsavmbu, 2013), morphology (Ehineni, 2014), vocabulary (Jowitt 1991, - Oluremi, 2013), sociolinguistics Akere (1982) and Jibril (1986, 1991) and classifications of its varieties (Banjo 1971, Adesanoye, 1973, Jibril 1982,. Olaniyi 2014). Similarly, contemporary researches which study specific discourses (eg. the mass media, social media etc.) for features of Nigerian English now abound (see Ehineni, 2014). Most of the semantic aspects frequently studied include semantic extensions and restrictions that words acquire when used in a Nigerian context (Adegbija 1989, Akindele and Adegbite 1999).

This paper also studies the semantics of some words in Nigerian English. However, previous semantic studies have not fully investigated the use of colour related expressions in Nigerian English. The aim of this paper is to study and explain the conceptual mechanisms that underlie the production and Understanding of words that are' influenced by a colour term using the Conceptual theory of metonymy. The chosen expressions in this paper are those that have a colour term in them or are.-related to the perceptual field of colour. For the purposes of this study, words and expressions influenced by colour terms were obtained from Jowitt's (1991) glossary in *Nigerian English usage: 'An introduction* and the following dictionaries: Orhiunu's (2001) *Babawitty's dictionary of pidgin English words and phrases*; Igboanusi's (2002/2010) *A dictionary of Nigerian English usage*; Blench's'(2005) *NigerianEnglish Dictionary*; and Adegbite, Udofot and Ayoola's (2014) *A Dictionary of Nigerian English*.

Analytical Framework

This study is conducted using the Conceptual Theory of Metonymy by Radden and Kovecses (2007). These two theorists work within the larger field of Cognitive semantics. Geeraerts

(2010, p. xiv) defines cognitive semantics as a "psychologically and cognitively oriented approach to semantics that developed from 1980 onwards". As an experiential-based theory, it seeks to explain the workings behind the linguistic choices of language users. Radden and Kovecses (2007) have further expanded and modified the initial claims of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. In essence the basic arguments of Radden and Kovecses is that metonymy is a conceptual phenomenon, a cognitive process and operates within an idealised cognitive model. Metonymy is a cognitive process that, is grounded in the experiences of the language user, and it structures how human beings think and act. As a cognitive process, metonymy is "subject to general and systematic principles. Borrowing from Lakoff and Johnson's terminology, Idealised Cognitive Models (ICM), Radden and Kovecses(1999) point out that ICM includes both "the encyclopedic knowledge of a particular domain" and "the idealised cultural models that they are part of. They identify three ontological realms in which metonymy occurs, namely the realm of concepts, the realm of form, and the realm of things and events. Entities occupying the same ontological realm or across different ontological realms interrelate and this results into different ICMs and possibilities for metonymy. Radden and Kovecses point out that not all relationships within an ICM can produce metonymies as metonymies only arise when both the intended target and vehicle are distinct such that their relationship "is suited to be exploited metonymically." The types of metonymy producing relations can be encapsulated under:

- (i) Whole ICM and its part(s): these lead to the formation of metonymies where we understand one part of an ICM via whole or the whole ICM via one of its parts.
- (ii) Parts of an ICM: where we understand a part of an ICM via another part of the ICM (though the ICM is still in the background).

Radden and Kovecses provide a list of classifications of metonymies and entrenched metonymic routes as follows (all examples given are theirs): (i) Whole ICM and its part(s):'

1. *Thing-and-Part ICM*: This ICM may lead to the two metonymic variants:

- a. WHOLE THING FOR A PART OF THE THING: *America* for 'United States'
- b. PART OF A THING FOR THE WHOLE THING: *England* for 'Great Britain'

2. *Scale ICM*: Radden and Kovecses define scales as "a special class of things, and the scalar units are parts of them. Typically, a scale as a whole is used to stand for its upper end, and the upper end of a scale is used to stand for the scale as a whole":

- a. WHOLE SCALE FOR THE UPPER END OF THE SCALE:
You're speeding again, for 'You are going too fast'
- b. UPPER END OF A SCALE FOR THE WHOLE SCALE;
How old are you? for 'What is your age?'

3. *Constitution ICM*: For Radden and Kovecses (2007), this ICM refers to the material or substance that constitutes an object. They point out that "substances are unbounded and therefore uncountable. A substance may, however, be conceived of as bounded, i.e. as object-

like, and is then coded as a count noun, as in (a) below. Conversely, an object may be conceived of as unbounded, i.e. substance-like, and "is then coded as a mass noun" as in (b) below.

a. OBJECT FOR MATERIAL CONSTITUTING THE OBJECT:

I smell skunk, for 'the smell produced by a skunk'

b. MATERIAL CONSTITUTING AN OBJECT FOR THE OBJECT: wood for 'forest'

4. *Event /CM* According to Radden and Kovecses (2007), an event as a whole, just like entities, may stand for one of its sub-events, and a sub-event may stand for the whole event.

a. WHOLE EVENT FOR SUB-EVENT: *Bill smoked marijuana*.

b. SUB-EVENT FOR WHOLE EVENT: *Mary speaks Spanish*.

They explain that the event in (a) has several sub-events such as lighting a marijuana cigarette, taking it to one's lips, and inhaling the smoke. However, the sub-event of inhaling is according to Radden and Kovecses (2007), probably felt to be the most significant sub-event and the one that is normally meant by the speaker.

5. *Category-and-Member ICM*: in this ICM, a category and its members stand in a 'kind-of relation' As shown by Seto (1999 cited in Radden and Kovecses, 2007), kind-of relations are different from part-of relations, although the relations of taxonomy and paronymy, tend to be confusing. They further note that taxonomic hierarchies may also be metaphorically seen as part-whole structures in which "[e]ach higher-order category is a whole, with the immediately lower categories being its parts" (Lakoff 1987: 287). This justifies why they analyse Category-and-Member ICMs as instances of the whole-part configuration.

a. CATEGORY FOR A MEMBER OF THE CATEGORY:

the pill for 'birth control pill'

b. MEMBER OF A CATEGORY FOR THE CATEGORY:

aspirin for 'any pain-relieving tablet'

6. *Category-and-Property ICM*: this is another classification that involves category, but this time in relation to property. Radden and Kovecses explain that properties "may either be seen metaphorically as possessed objects (PROPERTIES ARE POSSESSIONS) or metonymically as parts of an object". Furthermore, categories are capable of evoking and metonymically standing for, one of their salient or essential properties and, vice versa, that is, a salient or essential property may evoke, and metonymically stand for, its category.

a. CATEGORY FOR SALIENT PROPERTY: *brain* for 'intelligence'

b. SALIENT PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY: *blacks* for 'black people'

7. *Reduction ICM*: This is a type of PART FOR WHOLE metonymy found in "the reduction of the form of a sign", which follows the general model, FORM_A-CONCEPT_A FOR FORM_B-CONCEPT_A.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, ITS MODEL COULD BE GIVEN as:

(a) PART OF A FORM FOR THE WHOLE FORM: *crude* for *crude oil*

All the above are instances of part for whole metonymy. There are also PART-FOR-PART of an ICM that are proposed by Radden and Kovecses (2007). In this type of metonymy, the focus is on the relationship that obtains between "conceptual entities that function as parts with

respect to a whole ICM". This type of metonymy usually applies to "entities within an event. These include *Action ICM*, *Location ICM*, *Containment ICM*, *Possession ICM*, *Control ICM*, *Production ICM*, *Causation ICM* and *Perception ICM*.

Metonymy performs both communicative and cognitive functions. Following Langacker (1993), Radden and Kovecses (1999) enumerate several cognitive and communicative principles which explain the choice of vehicle in instances of metonymy. Some of the relevant factors they point out are human experience, cultural preferences, perceptual selectivity, and the principle of relevance. These can all explain the principles behind the choice of vehicles.

Colour terms in Nigerian English Usage: The data

As stated above, this paper is concerned with, the use of colour terms and or colour related terms in Nigerian English. The data comprise of expressions (*Nigerianisms*) that are peculiarly Nigerian or have some 'Nigerian¹' meaning. This term is used by Jowitt (2004) who defines Nigerianism as a markedly Nigerian form used by a large number of Nigerians. In this present study then, Nigerianisms are marked forms in Nigerian English usage which have colour terms in them with a different semantic component than that found in standard varieties of English in the western world. 'Adegbija (1989: 174) explains that 'the necessity for accommodating new experiences, feelings, thought patterns., modes of life, culture and customs which English in Nigeria has encountered has compelled the creation or invention of lexical items with nativised meanings.' In such usages, the conceptualisation pattern of Nigerians is 'reflected mainly in the semantic component of a language' (Adekunle, 1979, p. 30). The following are the Nigerian expressions analysed in this paper: black soap, red oil, white rice, black beans, black axe, brown envelop, ebony, yellow, yellow fever, oyinbo pepper, see/hear pepper, coke and Fanta.

At a general level, these expressions can be divided into two groups; those that have an obvious colour word and those that do not: Of the former there are *blacksoap*, *red oil*, *white rice*, *black beans*, *black axe*, *brown envelop*, *ebony*, *yellow*, and *yellow fever*. The metonymic patterns of these expressions are not the same because their semantic components are different. In other words, the types of meanings involved in the understanding of the expressions give insight into the metonymic pattern behind their formulation. For example, *Blacksoapis* defined as a kind of traditional soap which is dark in colour. However, it is not just any kind of black (coloured) soap, but a particular type of locally made soap, which according to Adegbite, Udofot and Ayoola (2014), fs believed to have medicinal properties. Here the *Category-and- Property ICM* produces the conceptual relationship of SALIENT PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY. Thus, the term *black soap* is a category that is identified by its most salient attribute, namely the colour black. Indeed, black soap as a category is entrenched in the usage such that these statements found in the Youtube: 'Skin care routine: African Black soap'; and 'My secret to a glowing skin: 5 black soaps [brands] that you should try now' are clearly understandable to Nigerian users of the English Language.

The conceptual relationship of SALIENT PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY, also-applies to the Nigerianisms. *Red oil*, *white rice*, and *brown beans*. *Redoil* is a type of oil, usually palm oil (not just any red coloured oil) sold in -the market. *White rice* is the name of a kind of plain

cooked rice that is eaten with stew in Nigeria (it is contrasted with *jollof* rice or *fried* rice which are cooked with some ingredients which give the rice some colour). The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 9th Edition has in its entry for *rice*, the expression 'brown rice' which has its bran layer intact (as opposed to rice that has had both the outer husk and bran layer removed that makes it to become white). *White rice* in Nigerian English is referentially different from that in the Oxford Dictionary because in the latter sense *white rice* denotes a type of *uncooked* rice, and the colour functions primarily to show how it was processed. *White rice* in Nigerian English, is a cooked item which shows the *type of cooking* involved in its making. Similarly, *Brown beans* is a variety of beans in contrast to the white variety, thus, we can say 'brown beans are tastier than white beans'. The colour terms in these usages are in the adjectival position, that is they are used as modifiers of the noun.

However, this is not the case for the other expressions, *blue*, *ebony*, and *yellow*. These adjectives are used as nouns. As such they do not appear with a noun. *Blue* in Nigerian English is a colourant "in the form of blue powder, often mixed with water and applied to white materials to prevent them from fading" (Adegbite, Udofot and Ayoola, 2014). In Nigerian English, *Ebony* means a beautiful black (in complexion) lady (Adegbite, Udofot and Ayoola, 2014). *Yellow* is defined in the *Nigerian English Dictionary* (Blench, 2005) as a 'Might-skinned person', and is 'a generally positive term' (*A Dictionary of Nigerian English Usage*, Igboanus, 2002). This is an extension of the category of yellow. Even though 'yellow' is used as a racial marker to identify East Asian (Fan, Liao, and Lou, 2017), this usage is not quite as common and frequent in Nigerian English usage. In fact, the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 9th Edition lists 'yellow' as a taboo/offensive word. The part-whole metonymic pattern, SALIENT ATTRIBUTE FOR OBJECT, applies for the use of blue, ebony and yellow. From the above analysis, these Nigerianisms are metonymies, which in cognitive linguistics refers to understanding one thing by another thing or one thing providing mental access to another thing. However, Ding (2015) points out that these conceptions of metonymy should be modified with issues of prominence. That is, a thing with a lower degree of prominence is understood by another thing with higher degree of prominence or "one thing with higher degree of prominence provides mental access to another lower degree of prominence" (Ding 2015: 1838). Colour is a perceptually prominent feature which makes it easy for the user of English in Nigeria to use it to refer to the entity that has a colour. Tentatively, one could argue that the cognitive prominence of colour is higher than that of other physical features such as size, height or texture which explains why they are not used to 'stand for' some entity that possesses these qualities. Colour, in other words, is a cognitively prominent phenomenon which makes it readily available for forming metonymic relationships. In addition to prominence, Ibanez (1997: 173) states that using explanations from Relevance Theory, the uses of metonymy can be explained "in terms of the balance between cognitive economy and contextual effects". In other words, when we use metonymy, we use less words to describe an entity and a complex target. Thus, using the word *blue* to refer to the colourant is an economical way of talking about it.

Apart from the above colour word metonymies, there exists another class of expressions which have a colour term appended to them but, whose meanings do not appear to be literal as in the

cases above. These expressions are *brown envelope*, *black axe* and *yellow fever*. *Brown envelope* in Nigerian English is "money put in an envelope as gratification or in appreciation of a service rendered" (Adegbite, Udofot and Ayoola, 2014). This expression arose out of the use of a cheap common brown envelope used to put naira notes. This is an instance of metonymy where the brown colour of an official envelope is the vehicle that triggers the conceptualization of *brown envelope* to denote monetary gifts (legally or illegal). Here, the part-part relationship yields the pattern, SALIENT CONCRETE ATTRIBUTE FOR SALIENT ABSTRACT ATTRIBUTE. That is, brown is a salient concrete feature of envelope that is used to refer to the idea of giving a monetary gift.

Yellow fever, according to the *Nigerian English Dictionary* (Blench, 2005), refers to either a disease (hepatitis or jaundice) or more commonly, a traffic policeman who is 'so named because of their orange uniforms'. In the first sense (hepatitis), the Causation ICM accounts for it. More specifically, the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy, where the effects of the disease (the yellowing of the skin and fever) are used to refer to the disease which is the cause. In the second sense, the conflation of the orange colour of the uniform with yellow is striking for it raises the question as to why does this expression exist, and not *orange fever*. Part of the motivation of this expression arises not from the actual colour of the uniform but in the negative connotation that the disease 'yellow fever' has. In other words, referring to traffic wardens with this expression could be said to be a *semantic extension* of the name of the disease. This disease, which was so named because of the physical signs it leaves on the body of the affected person, is metonymically mapped onto the people who control traffic, and who by their uniforms are symbols of the Nigerian government. In fact, this expression was made popular by the anti-government popular singer, Fela Anikulapo Kuti.

Furthermore, *Babawilfy's Dictionary of Pidgin English Words and Phrases* (2001) gives another meaning of *yellow fever*: The other meaning of *yellow fever* is a 'lady who bleaches [her] skin lighter', and this meaning is derogatory. This is also an extension of the original term for the disease. *Yellow fever* appears to be a polysemic expression in Nigerian English.

Black axe is defined in *A Dictionary of Nigerian English Usage* as 'a coinage for a secret cult popular on university campuses' (Igboanusi 2002: 62). Here, it is the symbolism of 'black as evil' (Ibrahim. 2009) that motivates the use of the colour term in this compound noun. Axe is a tool which, despite its usefulness, can be used for destructive purposes and together with the negative symbolism of black, *black axe* becomes an expression full of negative nuances. The conceptual relationship of Action ICM produces the metonymy INSTRUMENT FOR AGENT, Here there is a relationship between an agent (cult members) and the instrument used by the agent to perform an action (killing or maiming another person). The PART-FOR-PART metonymy activates this relationship. According to Radden and Kovecses (2007), PART FOR PART metonymies tend to PART FOR PART metonymies "tend to build on a relation and one of its participants or between two participants related". Thus in *black axe* the relationship between a cult member and his probable object of destruction is emphasised.

A special case of the presence of colour association in Nigerianisms is found in usages that do not have a colour term but rather there is some allusion to it. These include *Oyinbo pepper*, *to see pepper* or *to hear pepper*; and *Coke and Fanta*. *Oyinbo pepper* means to be 'light in complexion' (*oyinbo* means a white person (Adegbite, Udofot and Ayoola, 2014)), *to see pepper* or *to hear pepper* means 'to get or be in trouble' (Blench, 2005). *Coke and Fanta* is defined in *Babawilly's Dictionary of Pidgin English Words and Phrases* (2001) as a 'derisory term used to describe the mottled complexion of one who uses [skin] bleaching products'. In all these cases there are no colour terms at all. However, the meanings of the expressions demonstrate that colour association plays a vital role in their meaning. In the first expression, *Oyinbo pepper*, the skin colour of Caucasians is referred to via its colour which is likened to the red colour of red pepper: the whiteman's skin colour (pinkish), which in hot climates is usually flushed (reddish), is perceptually salient for Nigerians. But the colour is not mentioned. Instead a culturally popular food item, *pepper*, is used to refer to the colour of the skin. Here, it should be noted that although pepper has many colours (red, green, and black), the red one is the prototype of pepper in Nigeria, hence extensions of meanings will as expected, be drawn from the central member of the category, PEPPER. The metonymy, OBJECT FOR SALIENT ATTRIBUTE, is used to derive the expression. In other words, the object (pepper) is used as a cognitive reference point to stand for its red colour which is its salient attribute.

In the second case, *to see pepper* or *to hear pepper*, the association of red with anger (see Steinvall 2007) is evoked through a whole-part metonymy - SALIENT OBJECT FOR SALIENT ABSTRACT ATTRIBUTE to express the meaning of 'to look for trouble'. Again the meaning of 'rousing of anger'³ which is associated with the colour red is mapped onto the entity *pepper*, making it the trigger. As a trigger, it is particularly effective because of the added hot or spicy nature of pepper. This Nigerian English expression is semantically similar to the Standard English idiom, *wave a red rag to a bull*, which means to provoke someone or to make someone very angry.

DISCUSSION

From the above analysis, the expressions can be classified based on the motivation behind using these colour terms with certain entities. First, colour can be used to denote the natural or 'usual' colour of an entity: it is in this classification that expressions such as *red oil* fall into. Second, colour names enter into combinations with other words, but in this case the colour term does not designate the colour of the entity. Rather, it is the symbolic and/ or connotative meaning of the colour term that motivates its occurrence with other words, for example *black axe*. Steinvall (2002) discusses the functions of colour terms when they appear as adjectives modifying nouns, as in the former case. One of these functions is 'type modification' that is, colour terms in the adjectival position can perform a classifying function. According to Steinvall,

This function is of special interest for three reasons:

- it seems to be restricted to only a few terms, whereas any colour term can be used for descriptive purposes.

- it would appear that this function allows the colour term to be used outside the domain of Its normal designation; consider, for example, the phrase *red hair* On many occasions red hair is as close to orange or rust as to red and would possibly be more correctly described as such.
- finally, it would seem that type modification is Intimately linked with some aspects of figurative usage (2002: 98).

Steinvall's (2002) data showed that in dictionary and corpus studies very few colour terms are frequently used for type modification, and these are six primary Basic Colour Terms¹ (white, black, red, blue, green, yellow) and to a certain degree also brown, grey, golden and silver. Also, using colour terms in the formation of subclasses is a very good example of prototype phenomena. In the words of Steinvall (2002: 98), '[t]he colour terms are Used to classify marginal subtypes of a category, and frequently the colour of the object constitutes an Instance of the colour word which is fairly distant from the focal colour. Thus, we can talk about prototype phenomena on two levels, as it were: within the colour domain and within the domain of the Item.' In the Nigerian data, instances where colour terms were used for type modification are red (*red oil*), white (*white rice*), and black (*black soap*) all of which are Basic Colour Terms. In the case of red oil, the oil in reality is a deep orange colour and not prototypically red. Yet the colour red is used in its classification function. The term 'red' is more basic than 'orange' which could explain why it is used instead. This is similar to what obtains in the expression 'red hair', which denotes hair that is closer to the colour orange than red. Similarly, the colour terms in 'white rice', and 'black soap' are not typical instances of the colours themselves: white rice has an 'off-white' colour, and black soap is a deep shade of brown.

From the explanation given above, it is possible to discern the semantic relation of polysemy in the use of colour terms in Nigerian English usage. Palmer (1996: 100) defines polysemy as a case of 'the same word hav[ing] a set of different meanings.' Polysemy illustrates extensions of meaning that a word may have. In cognitive linguistics, semantic extension can be accounted for by the cognitive process of metonymy. The words *blue*, *yellow* and *yellow fever* are polysemic as a result of metonymic mapping: *blue* is used both as a colourant and as a colour term; and *yellow* is used as colour term and to refer to light-skinned Africans. In Nigerian English usage, the meaning of the terms *ebony*, *blue* and *yellow*, have been extended to denote entities. In this semantic extension, the colour terms are used as nouns and not as adjectives as is the primary grammatical class of colour terms. That is, they are not used as an attribute of the entities in question but these expressions have been formulated through metonymic conceptualisations where an attribute closely related to an object can stand for an object, that is, contiguity. Contiguity does not necessarily involve a physical link between an entity and its parts. Rather, according to Lakoff (1987)³ contiguity involves 'concepts' within an ICM that are linked to each other, hence the expression "conceptual contiguity". All ICMs have a relationship to one another that are gestalt-like, thus, ICMs and "the network of conceptual relationships give rise to associations, which may be used in metonymic transfer" (Guan, 2009: 181). Indeed⁴ this paper argues that metonymy accounts for the semantic extensions of colour terms in Nigerian English usage. Furthermore, the expressions are understood by the speakers of English in Nigeria because they have access to similar ICMs which provide the cognitive

background for the expressions. As Ibanez (1997) points out, cognitive processes, in addition to organizational or structuring of concepts, also have a communicative potential. (For an insightful discussion on the communicative aspects of metonymy see Panther and Thornburg 2004). :

Metonymic extensions of the meaning of colour terms could yield figurative expressions. In expressions such as *black axe*, *brown envelope* and *yellow fever*, their meanings have to be learnt separately from the meaning of the words in them. These phrases are figurative expressions. Steinvall (2002: 218) identifies two different kinds of metonymy which participate in the formation of figurative usage of colour terms: a part-whole metonymy (SALIENT ATTRIBUTE FOR OBJECT).and a part-part metonymy (SALIENT CONCRETE ATTRIBUTE FOR SALIENT ABSTRACT ATTRIBUTE). According to Steinvall (2002) figurative senses of colour appear to be culturally motivated, which 'explains why previous researchers have found few-universal patterns' (2002: 218). As such the Nigerian English expressions, *black axe*, *brown envelop* and *yellow fever*, appear to be unique to Nigerian English.

CONCLUSION

This paper has used the concept of conceptual metonymy to explain some colour words or colour-related expressions that are used in Nigerian English. Metonymy as a conceptual process makes it possible for people to use a concept/thing to refer to another concept/thing. This paper has demonstrated how metonymy allows us to make links between the perceptual field of colour and entities that have a colour. By implication, in the derivation of words/expressions such as *bluefor* instance, the linguistic choice of the word 'blue'⁵ reveals that the domain of COLOUR is a cognitively salient field. That is, this feature triggers the formation of different expressions that have a colour word (eg. *black soap*) or a colour related word (eg. *Oyinbo pepper*). From the analysis, the metonymic relation of SALIENT PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY yields expressions that define a particular category, for example *black soap* and *white rice*. With regard to the expression that does not have a literal meaning, for example, *brown envelop*, the metonymic relation SALIENT CONCRETE ATTRIBUTE FOR SALIENT ABSTRACT ATTRIBUTE is behind its formulation. For *yellow fever*, the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy explains it, while *black axe* is derived from the metonymic relation INSTRUMENT FOR AGENT.

Furthermore, the conceptual metonymy theory explains how expressions that do not contain any colour term but are linked to colour (eg. *oyinbo pepper* and *to see/hear pepper*) are formulated due to conceptual contiguity which enables a person to 'talk of one thing' using another closely related item. Here, the relationships OBJECT FOR SALIENT ATTRIBUTE and SALIENT OBJECT FOR SALIENT ABSTRACT ATTRIBUTE respectively are used to account for them. As a whole, this paper argues that the conceptual salience of colour as a visible percept makes it available to be used in the formation of mental links between an object or person with its/his colour. Metonymy as "a conceptual process thus exploits the potential to use colour as a linguistic resource for naming/labeling items and concepts.

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