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### COLOUR NAMING: SEMANTICS OF THE COLOUR WHITE IN ENGLISH AND POLISH LEXICON

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**Abstract:** In the present paper, an analysis is made of the colour names offered for the different shades and hues of the *white* palette of Dulux paints in English and Polish. The names are created by associations with colour names within the colour category WHITE but also with other domains of human experience, which are positively and naturally valued. The symbolism of the colour term is also reflected in some exemplars.

**Keywords:** colour terms, *white*, *off-white*, colour naming, Dulux colour names, phraseology, symbolism, figurative meanings.

#### 1. Introduction

Colours mean different things to different people. A physicist will interpret colour as a wavelength, an artist or a poet as a means of artistic expression, while a psychologist or a therapist might apply yet another explanation as well as application of colour. From the perspective of a linguist (e.g., Anderson & Bramwell 2014; Berlin & Kay 1969; Biggam 2012; Colour studies... 2014; Golda et al. 2022; Komorowska 2010; New directions... 2011; Panasenko & Fillová 2023; Panasenko & Korcová 2011; Philip 2011; Progress in colour studies... 2006; 2018; Stanulewicz 2009; Stanulewicz & Komorowska 2022; Steinvall 2002; Uberman 2009; 2013; 2014; Wierzbicka 1990; 1996; 2006; Wyler 1992), colours employed in language expressions can represent ominous or positive features of concepts embedded within and of the described phenomena.



The world we live in is filled with colour, which can be fully appreciated by individuals whose vision is not impaired. Colour is a physical property, defined by Oxford English dictionary as "any of the constituents into which light can be separated as in a spectrum or rainbow, and which are referred to by names such as *blue, red, yellow*; any particular mixture of these constituents; a particular hue or tint" (OED, *s.a.*).

Biggam (2012: 2) brings to attention the fact that the "nature of the colours we see is the result of a complicated interaction between the physics of light, the physiology of the human eye, environmental conditions at the time of viewing, the physical properties of the object being viewed and the way in which our brains receive and interpret all this information". Kingdom (2011: 3) stresses the point that "colour (chromatic) vision not only tells us about the colour of surfaces but about the structure of the visual world. One way that colour vision informs us about scene structure is by helping decompose the scene into its material and illumination layers". Phenomena involved in the processing of a visual image are, among others, surface texture, illumination, and reflectivity. Other salient features that affect the interpretation of colour are hue<sup>1</sup> (or chromatic colour), saturation<sup>2</sup>, tone<sup>3</sup>, and brightness<sup>4</sup> (Biggam 2012).

Colour has its prominence in various fields, it is used to describe physical objects, metaphorically it can refer to human emotions and states, it enhances the visibility of artefacts and provides a richness of imagery in literary descriptions. It is vital in daily life with reference to psychology, politics, marketing, but also industry, entertainment or education. There are hardly any walks of life where its presence is not manifested. As aptly summarised by Panasenko and Fillová (2023: 66), "scholars have identified ways of producing colours (neurology and physiology), their perception (psychology), understanding (philosophy, semiotics), and naming (linguistics, anthropology)". The present discussion will focus on linguistic aspects of colour lexicon, therefore stress will be placed on how colour terminology reflects the complexity of the world, as certain features and symbolic meanings are attributed to individual colour terms. Gage (1999: 79) highlights the fact that "colour-perception and colour-language turn out to be closely bound up with each other; since symbolizing is essentially a linguistic function, the available colour-vocabulary must have a decisive role in the creation of any language of colour-symbols".

It is important to stress the fact that colour vocabulary employed in the phraseology of a given language reflects the cultural mindset of its speakers and the linguistic image of the world, which is considered a language (and culture)-specific construal of reality, or scheme of conceptualising the world (Bartmiński 2006; Sharifian 2017 among others). Hence, the names of colours adopted for the

designation of particular hues frequently carry figurative meanings reflecting different associations with the concept of a particular colour category. Lakoff and Turner (1989: 185) claim that there is a predominant conceptualisation based on a conceptual metaphor GOOD IS WHITE. Sandford (2018: 280) notes that *white* has positive connotations with lightness and daytime. Kövecses (2010: 196) supports this statement and explicates that "since light, as opposed to dark, is valued positively, the LIGHT metaphor also highlights the positive evaluation of happiness". Sandford (2018: 280) infers that the human embodied experience based on the metaphor LIGHT IS UP, i.e., the sun in the sky, is the origin of two universal metaphors HAPPINESS IS LIGHT and HAPPINESS IS UP.

In the study to follow, the colour white and off-whites (within the spectrum of white) will be addressed with reference to the names specified for Dulux paint colours in English and in Polish. In the semantic analysis particular colour names will be listed and their non-literal designations will be identified. As noted above, such colour names encompass metaphorical meanings that were generated in association with various domains of experience. The domains of experience will be identified and exemplified accordingly. The data for the discussion have been collected from the English and Polish Dulux websites respectively. Similarities and differences between the colour terminology applied to various hues in the compared languages as well as domains evoked in colour names will be highlighted.

## 2. Colour terms

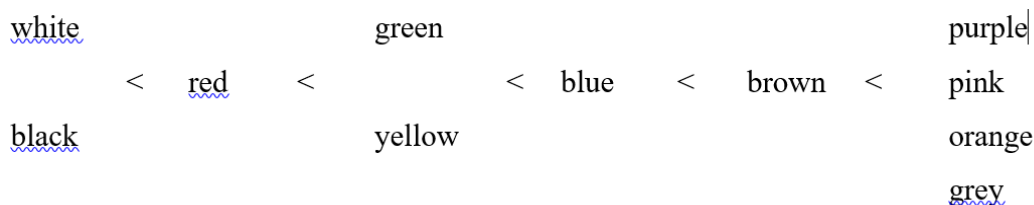
Even though the category of colour seems universal, colour vocabulary does not entirely overlap in diverse language communities. Colour terms form a semantic set, or field, i.e. a group of lexical items that "are defined with respect to one another" (Kreidler 1998: 303). Based upon numerous studies Berlin and Kay (1969: 2) noted that "although different languages encode in their vocabularies different *numbers* of basic color categories, a total universal inventory of exactly eleven basic color categories exists from which the eleven or fewer basic color terms of any given language are always drawn". Those eleven basic colour categories specified above are: *white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, and grey*. Much as such a finding was expected, it seems that another one was not, pointing to certain restrictions both in number and sequence. The researchers (ibid., 2-3) state the following:

*"If a language encodes fewer than eleven basic color categories, then there are strict limitations on which categories it may encode. The distributional restrictions of color terms across languages are:*

1. *All languages contain terms for white and black.*
2. *If a language contains three terms, then it contains a term for red.*
3. *If a language contains four terms, then it contains a term for either green or yellow (but not both).*

4. *If a language contains five terms, then it contains terms for both green and yellow.*
5. *If a language contains six terms, then it contains a term for blue.*
6. *If a language contains seven terms, then it contains a term for brown.*
7. *If a language contains eight or more terms, then it contains a term for purple, pink, orange, grey, or some combination of these".*

This type of colour term distribution can be represented in the form of the rule below:



Berlin and Kay (ibid., 4) stated that in the rule specified above, "for distinct color categories (*a*, *b*), the expression  $a < b$  signifies that *a* is present in every language in which *b* is not present". The rule is noted to signify "not only a distributional statement for contemporary languages but also the chronological order of the lexical encoding of basic colour categories in each language".

Corresponding to the results of the basic colour category research, Kreidler (1998: 89) states that "different cultures recognize different numbers of colors and divide the color spectrum in different ways" (compare among others Biggam 2012; Steinvall 2002; Wyler 1992; Wierzbicka 1990; 2006). It has also been pointed out by Tokarski (2004) that the differences in naming colour and applying a particular number and type of colour categories as well as colour terms do not arise from any diversity in human perceptual abilities and physiology of vision, but from the cultural dissimilarities and various ways of conceptualising the world which are embedded in linguistic means of expression.

Biggam (2014: 10) stresses the fact that in the course of numerous research studies linguists have identified sets of concepts which they believe to be crucial for human societies "to mentally register and to label linguistically in order to facilitate communication. Some concepts which seem very basic are [...] geographically or culturally restricted so that, for example, snow is not likely to feature in the mindset of a society living near the equator [...]". Nonetheless, there are basic or core concepts that are considered indispensable for any language and culture community to communicate efficiently. This group of essential concepts drawn up by Swadesh (1971) also includes "the colour concepts which he calls "white", "black", "red", "green" and "yellow" " (Biggam 2014: 10).

However, when addressing the semantics of colour, Wierzbicka (2006) points out that 'colour' is a salient semantic molecule in the English language, but there are also languages which do not have a word *colour*. Similarly, it has been indicated by Biggam (2014: 11), that basic colour categories identified by Berlin and Kay (1969) familiar in English are not within the lexical scope of other language communities. Based on substantial research in the area "it is now undeniable that the basic single-hue categories, such as yellow, green, and blue are not universal or ancient and, therefore, cannot be considered as essential concepts for viable human communication". Nevertheless, Biggam (2014: 21) suggests that "the language ancestral to Proto-Indo-European developed three basic colour categories: light, dark, and macro-red, possibly by the end of the Upper Palaeolithic (roughly 10,000 years ago)". The linguist also refers to the presence of colours designating *white* and *black* in the first stage of the evolution of lexical colour categories<sup>5</sup> in interpreting it in the following words:

*"I have taken the liberty of interpreting Stage I of the UE model as "light" and "dark", in which "light" includes, not only white, red and yellow (W/R/Y) but also brightness, which is interpreted as light-emission (for example, sunlight), reflectivity (for example, sunlight on water), surface illumination (such as pale sand in sunlight) and space illumination (such as daylight, or firelight in a cave). "Dark" is taken to include black, green and blue (Bk/G/ Bu) but also the absence of, or a low level of lighting [...]. When a new category developed, based on fire-colours, it is suggested that it too included a substantial brightness element, both because a fire really is bright, and also because humans were already accustomed to noticing and appreciating brightness at least as much as the warm hues".*

In the following section definitions of *white* will be presented based on lexicographic sources, and the symbolism of the colour term will also be addressed.

### **3. The colour white: Meaning and symbolism**

It is essential to point out that there are certain prototypes for the colour terms present in human languages, that are anchored in the universals of human experience. As noted by Wierzbicka (1990; 1996) *black* and *white*, identified as Stage I of the evolution of basic colour terms, are closely related to and associate with the concepts *dark* and *light*. She further stresses the relations "do not imply that people think of the day as "something white" and of the night as "something black", as they might think of snow as something white and of charcoal as something black". She further explains, referring to colour term prototypes that "'white' doesn't have a similarly uniform universal prototype in a very bright day [...], and may in fact embody in its meaning two very different points of reference: a temporal one (day versus night) and a spatial one (a white wintry landscape, covered with snow)" (Wierzbicka 1996: 304).

Analysing the semantics of *black* and *white*, Wierzbicka (1990: 142) identifies the Berlin and Kay (1969) Stage I in the evolution of colour lexicon categories with reference to universals of human experience categories such as *fire*, *sun*, *day*, and *night*. She proposes the following explanation:

*"Stage I, two basic color terms*

1. colors which can make one think of fire, sun, daylight
2. colors which are not like those which can make one think of fire, sun, or daylight they can make one think of nighttime".

In contemporary dictionaries of English *white* is defined with reference to *milk* and *snow* (see definitions below), while in Polish the same imagery is evoked with the reversed order, i.e. Pl.: *śnieg* – [Eng.: snow] and Pl.: *mleko* – [Eng.: milk]: Pl.: ***Biały*** – *mający bardzo jasną barwę, taką jak śnieg lub mleko* – [Eng.: white – of a very light colour, such as snow or milk] (WSJP 2018).

**White** is defined in *Oxford English dictionary online* (OED, s.a.) as follows:

*"I. In senses referring to physical appearance or physical properties.*

*1. a. Of the lightest colour possible, that of milk or freshly fallen snow; designating this colour. From a scientific perspective, the quality of being white is due to the equal reflection or emission of all wavelengths of the visible spectrum of light; white objects therefore lack any distinctive hue. In general use, however, it is normally classed as a colour".*

In *A dictionary of colour* compiled by Paterson (2004: 411), *white* is extensively described in the following words:

*"The colour of snow. A colour associated with peace and purity [...] and formerly with wealth – it was only the rich who could afford to wear clothes made from white cloth since they needed such frequent washing. In English folklore the colour white is associated with innocence although it also symbolises death and bad luck. According to superstition it is unlucky to give white flowers (particularly with red flowers) to someone who is ill.*

*In the range of approximately 450-380 nanometres. Defined in Ambrose Bierce's *The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary*, Penguin Books, 1971, as 'White, adj and n., Black'. The colour of the outer ring in archery. In printing, any space on paper which has no print. The albumen of the egg. Having no hue; light in colour; as regards tea or coffee, having milk added. Strictly, white is not a colour. It is rather the combination of all the colours so that when white light is viewed through a prism the rainbow effect is created indicating all the colours of which white is comprised. The three white pigments used in the manufacture of white oil colours are flake white, zinc white and titanium white. More white paint is produced than any other colour paint".*

It is also referred to as "One of the colours in the X11 Color Set. It has hex code #FFFFFF" (ibid., 411).

White is widely accepted as symbolising innocence (Pastoreau 2008) and purity (Van Leeuwen 2011). Biedermann (1996: 380) explains in more detail as follows: "since white can be defined either as the absence of all pigmentary color or as the presence of all the colors of the spectrum of light, it thus can symbolize either the undisturbed innocence of prelapsarian Eden or the ultimate goal [...] – purification and a heavenly restoration of that "lost" innocence." In many cultures priests wear clothes that are white or uncoloured, which stands for purity and truth. Christians also wear white clothes during the ceremony of baptizing; "transfiguration, glory, and the road to heaven" (ibid.) are symbolised by the white robes of the Pope. Negative symbolic meanings of white include its association with death, also ghosts are universally depicted as being or wearing white. In the Chinese tradition, this is the colour of age, misfortune, and mourning.

Considering the terminology of the hues for *white* and *off-white* the following shades can be identified: *alabaster/marble*, *albescent*, *argentine/silver/silvery*, *chalky*, *creamy*, *ivory*, *marmoreal* (referring to complexion), *milk/milky white*, *nacreous/pearly*, *niveous/snowy/snow-white*, *sallow/waxen* (referring to complexion), *white hot*, *whitish*. In Polish, the above refer to, respectively: *alabastrowy/marmurowobiały*, *bielący się/bielejący*, *srebrny/srebrzysty*, *kredowy/kredowobiały*, *jasnokremowy*, *koloru kości słoniowej*, *alabastrowy* (complexion), *mlecznobiały*, *perłowy/opalizujący*, *śnieżnobiały*, *woskowy* (complexion), *jarząco/fosforyzujący biały*, *białawy* (Konieczna 1998: 115-116).

#### **4. Colour naming: The lexicon of white in English and Polish**

The analysis considers the names of colours generated for the various shades within the spectrum of *white* and *off-white*, as exemplified by a particular brand of paint. The diversity in this lexical area is substantial as various manufacturers create a unique repertoire of terms to differentiate one brand from another. This frequently means that the same shade/hue will be referred to by a different brand name depending on the producer. The data for the present discussion have been collected from the websites in English and Polish respectively of Dulux colour names. The spelling has been preserved as originally available, hence the names of colours and categories in English start with a capital letter, while this is not the case of Polish categories and names, with the exception of two proper names, i.e. *Heraklion* and *Hellada*.

##### *4.1 Dulux colour names in English*

As identified at 'Pick your colour palette' in the spectrum of *White* (within the subcategory 'Popular Colours') the following 41 colours can be selected: *Moon Shimmer*, *Frosted Dawn*, *Absolute White*, *Cliff Walk*, *Morning Light*, *Fine Cream*, *Jasmine White*, *Magic White*, *Timeless*, *Pure Brilliant White*,

*Cloudy Dreams, Rock Salt, Sloe Flower, Cream Tea, White Chiffon, Calm Clouds, White Mist, Vanilla White, Porcelain Doll, Orchid White, Almond White, Milky Pail, Classic Cream, Magnolia, Gardenia, Bone China, Delicate Seashell, Summer Linen, Natural Calico, Letters Unread, Vintage Chandelier, Natural Wicker, Barley Twist, Barley White, Cotton Cream, Cornish Cream, Pearl Grey, Celtic Cream, Boutique Cream, Ivory, and Feather Flock.* Incidentally, nearly half of the colours have pinkish overtones, the remaining group show a tendency to border on bluish and greyish colouring. It is important to highlight that the names are listed in the order of gradually greater saturation of admixture colour, i.e., red, blue, purple, and black.

However, the compilation of 'All colours' in the palette of *White*, within the 'Colours to be mixed' subgroup, contains 94 exemplars. They are presented in the sequence reflecting gradual increase in colour saturation: *Snow Scene, Silk Breeze, Chiffon White 4, White Cotton, Chalky White 3, Chalky White 2, Java Cream 4, Mineral Haze 4, Potters Clay 4, Bleached Lichen 4, New Meringue, Crushed Cotton 4, Clouded Pearl 3, Natural Taupe 4, Rum Caramel 6, Cracked Clay 3, Clouded Pearl 4, Cracked Clay 4, Chiffon White 3, Nutmeg Cluster 6, Maraschino Mocha 6, Wild Mushroom 6, Rich Praline 6, Quartz Flint 4, Clock Face, Java Cream 2, Exotic Spice 6, Cocoa Blush 6, Twisted Bamboo 4, Roman Stone 6, Nordic Bliss, Subtle Ivory 4, Summer Pecan 6, Golden Jasmine 3, Frayed Hessian 4, Golden Jasmine 4, Velvet Truffle 6, Caramel Sand 6, Cappuccino Candy 6, Bracken Salts 6, Java Cream 3, Crushed Cotton 3, Chalk Blush 4, Crumpled Linen 4, Clouded Pearl 2, Sultana Spice 6, Dusted Moss 4, Vanilla Mist 3, Subtle Ivory 2, Grey Steel 4, Nomadic Glow 6, Soft Almond 6, Quilted Calico 6, Earthen Cream 4, Vanilla Mist 1, Night Jewels 6, Cameo Silk 4, Rail Cloth, Iced Ivory, Gentle Gold, Salisbury Stones 6, Quiet Descend, Twisted Bamboo 3, Bitter Chocolate 6, Subtle Ivory 3, Delicate Veil, Cameo Silk 4, Crumpled Linen 3, Golden Jasmine 2, Earthen Cream 3, Chiffon White 2, Vanilla Mist 2, Almost Pistachio, Frayed Hessian 3, Cameo Silk 2, Diffused Lace, Quilted Calico 3, LOVE LETTER CF19, Gentle Gold 3, Earthen Cream 2, Java Cream 1, Subtle Ivory 1, Frayed Hessian 2, Twisted Bamboo 2, Crumpled Linen 2, Quilted Calico 2, GENTLE MOON, Gentle Gold 2, Quilted Calico 1, WAXED WOOD, Twisted Bamboo 1, Earthen Cream 1, Gentle Gold 1, and Crumpled Linen 1.*

As can be easily noted from the extensive list above, certain colour names are repeated with a different number added to them (e.g., *Chiffon White, Twisted Bamboo, Crumpled Linen*) each with a slightly different shade and added colour intensity). In addition, in this group brownish and yellowish tones can be identified in addition to bluish and pinkish exemplars.



Moreover, within the *Cool Neutral* group out of 35 colour names in the subcategory 'Popular Colours', the following references to *white* are identified: *Cornflower White* with light bluish colouring, and *Ashen White* with greyish overtones. In the *Warm Neutral* palette of the 45 items *Nutmeg White* with pinkish colouring can be noted. All three off-white colour names included in the natural palettes are very light and seem to contain a relatively low amount of added colour. However, when analysing the 91 names in the 'Colours to be mixed' subgroup of the *Cool Neutral* palette, these instances are available: *Metal White*, *Chiffon White 1*, *Goose White*, while in the same subcategory of the *Warm Neutral* set out of the total of 247 colour names not a single instance of a name encompassing the lexeme *white* can be found.

#### 4.2 Dulux colour names in Polish

While analysing the *white* and *off-white* palette available at the Polish Dulux website an immediate difference from the English website can be noted. First of all, there is no distinction between subcategories such as those available at the English website, i.e. 'Popular Colours' and 'Colours to be mixed'. The Polish website offers a smaller number of colours within the category Pl.: *białe i kremowe* – [Eng.: white and cream]. The total number of colour names includes the list of the following 32 exemplars, some of which are used repeatedly: Pl.: *biała* – [Eng.: white], Pl.: *satynowa biała* – [Eng.: satin white], Pl.: *biała* – [Eng.: white], Pl.: *neutralna biel* – [Eng.: neutral white], Pl.: *designerski biały* – [Eng.: designer white], Pl.: *neutralna biel* – [Eng.: neutral white], Pl.: *nieskazitelna biel* – [Eng.: impeccable white], Pl.: *neutralna biel* – [Eng.: neutral white], Pl.: *nietuzinkowe ecru* – [Eng.: extraordinary ecru], Pl.: *antyczny marmur* – [Eng.: antique marble], Pl.: *antyczny marmur* – [Eng.: antique marble], Pl.: *ziarno sezamu* – [Eng.: sesame seed], Pl.: *perłowy biały* – [Eng.: pearl white], Pl.: *pastelowy comfort* – [Eng.: pastel comfort], Pl.: *niebywale śmietankowy* – [Eng.: exceptionally creamy], Pl.: *rajska plaża* – [Eng.: paradise beach], Pl.: *wyborny lukier* – [Eng.: delicious icing], Pl.: *białe wino* – [Eng.: white wine], Pl.: *sila wanilii* – [Eng.: power of vanilla], Pl.: *waniliowa poświata* – [Eng.: vanilla glow], Pl.: *grecka chatwa* – [Eng.: Greek halva], Pl.: *kremowa klasyka* – [Eng.: classic cream], Pl.: *biały skandynawski* – [Eng.: Scandinavian white], Pl.: *totalnie kremowy* – [Eng.: totally creamy], Pl.: *światelka Heraklionu* – [Eng.: lights of Heraklion], Pl.: *słońce Hellady* – [Eng.: Hellas' sun], Pl.: *biały skandynawski* – [Eng.: Scandinavian white], Pl.: *chłodna biel* – [Eng.: cool white], Pl.: *chłodna biel* – [Eng.: cool white], Pl.: *białe żagle* – [Eng.: white sails], Pl.: *czar alabastru* – [Eng.: alabaster charm], and Pl.: *garść muszelek* – [Eng.: a handful of seashells].

In the palette referred to as Pl.: *odcienie neutralne* – [Eng.: neutral shades] that cover the grey scale of the colour spectrum, of 44 exemplars only two names refer to *white*: Pl.: *białe noce* – [Eng.: white

nights] which is very light grey, and two shades called Pl.: *czarno na białym* – [Eng.: black on white] which represent deep, dark grey, and black.

By metaphorical extension of *white*, which is prototypically defined with reference to the colour of snow, other five names evoking winter imagery can be identified: Pl.: *beztroska zima* – [Eng.: carefree winter], Pl.: *śnieżny zaprzęg* – [Eng.: snow sled], Pl.: *okruch lodu* – [Eng.: ice shard], Pl.: *srebrzysty lód* – [Eng.: silvery ice], Pl.: *zimowa cisza* – [Eng.: winter silence]. All of the colour names represent progressively darker shades of grey.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

It has to be noted from the exemplary material gathered and presented above that quite a few colour names in the *white* and *off-white* palette in both English and Polish employ the names of the hues and shades identified for the category. For English corpus these include: *silver, silvery, chalky, chalk, milky, creamy, ivory, pearly*, and *snowy*. Moreover, in a number of cases *white* is used in a colour name as a noun: then it is supplemented with a descriptive adjective, such as: *absolute, jasmine, magic, pure brilliant, vanilla, orchid, almond, barley, chiffon, chalky, cornflower, ashen, nutmeg, metal*, and *goose*. However, in three cases, *white* is used in adjectival position in a phrase, i.e. *white chiffon, white mist*, and *white cotton*.

Most English names do not employ the colour term *white*, instead by means of association they make reference to various domains, such as:

NATURE: PARTS OF DAY: *Frosted Dawn, Morning Light, Night Jewels*;

NATURE: FLORA: *Jasmine White, Sloe Flower, Vanilla White, Orchid White, Almond White, Magnolia, Gardenia, Natural Wicker, Barley Twist, Barley White, Bleached Lichen, Twisted Bamboo, Golden Jasmine, Bracken Salts, Dusted Moss*;

NATURE: FAUNA: *Feather Flock*;

NATURE: SKY/WEATHER: *Moon Shimmer, Cloudy Dreams, Calm Clouds, White Mist, Silk Breeze, Clouded Pearl, Vanilla Mist, Gentle Moon*;

NATURE: EARTH: *Rock Salt, Delicate Seashell, Pearl Grey, Ivory, Chalky White, Mineral Haze, Potters Clay, Cracked Clay, Clouded Pearl, Quartz Flint, Roman Stone, Subtle Ivory, Caramel Sand, Chalk Blush, Earthen Cream, Iced Ivory, Salisbury Stones, Waxed Wood*;

FOOD: *New Meringue, Fine Cream, Cream Tea, Vanilla White, Almond White, Classic Cream, Cotton Cream, Cornish Cream, Celtic Cream, Boutique Cream, Java Cream, Rum Caramel, Nutmeg Cluster, Maraschino Mocha, Wild Mushroom, Rich Praline, Exotic Spice, Cocoa Blush, Summer*

*Pecan, Velvet Truffle, Cappuccino Candy, Sultana Spice, Vanilla Mist, Soft Almond, Bitter Chocolate, Almost Pistachio;*

MAGIC/SORCERY: *Magic White, Timeless;*

FABRIC: *White Chiffon, Natural Calico, Summer Linen, Cotton Cream, Silk Breeze, Chiffon White, White Cotton, Crushed Cotton, Frayed Hessian, Velvet Truffle, Crumpled Linen, Quilted Calico, Cameo Silk, Rail Cloth, Delicate Veil, Diffused Lace;*

HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS: *Porcelain Doll, Milky Pail, Bone China, Letters Unread, Vintage Chandelier, Clock Face, Love Letter;*

SEASONS: *Summer Linen, Snow Scene, Summer Pecan;*

PLACES: *Cornish Cream, Celtic Cream, Boutique Cream, Java Cream, Nordic Bliss, Salisbury Stones;*

METAL: *Grey Steel, Gentle Gold;*

TRAVEL: *Cliff Walk, Nomadic Glow, Quiet Descent.*

The Polish corpus of the studied colour names includes the following terms designating the shades and hues: PL.: *alabastrowy* – [Eng.: alabaster], PL.: *marmur* – [Eng.: marble], PL.: *perłowy* – [Eng.: pearly], PL.: *śmietankowy* – [Eng.: creamy], PL.: *kremowy* – [Eng.: creamy], PL.: *srebrzysty* – [Eng.: silvery], and PL.: *śnieżny* – [Eng.: snow-white; literally *snowy*].

The collection of Polish colour names analysed in the study of Dulux *whites* and *off-whites* has far fewer exemplars as compared to the corpus gathered for English. The number of terms in which *white* is featured comes to a total of 18. These names include: PL.: *biała* – [Eng.: white], PL.: *satynowa biała* – [Eng.: satin white], PL.: *neutralna biel* – [Eng.: neutral white], PL.: *designerski biały* – [Eng.: designer white], PL.: *nieskazitelna biel* – [Eng.: impeccable white], PL.: *perłowy biały* – [Eng.: pearl white], PL.: *białe wino* – [Eng.: white wine], PL.: *biały skandynawski* – [Eng.: Scandinavian white], PL.: *chłodna biel* – [Eng.: cool white], PL.: *białe żagle* – [Eng.: white sails], PL.: *białe noce* – [Eng.: white nights], and PL.: *czarno na białym* – [Eng.: black on white]. It has to be noted, however, that five of the names are used repeatedly, i.e. PL.: *biała* – [Eng.: white], PL.: *biały skandynawski* – [Eng.: Scandinavian white], PL.: *chłodna biel* – [Eng.: cool white], PL.: *czarno na białym* – [Eng.: black on white] are all featured twice, and PL.: *neutralna biel* – [Eng.: neutral white] is adopted three times. It is also essential to point out that each of the colour exemplars represents a different hue, gradually more saturated with colour other than white. Moreover, the terms PL.: *białe noce* – [Eng.: white nights], and PL.: *czarno na białym* – [Eng.: black on white] come from the palette of neutral shades/hues.

We will now identify the other domains of experience that are featured in the remaining colour names, which do not use *white*:

NATURE: Pl.: *antyczny marmur* – [Eng.: antique marble], Pl.: *ziarno sezamu* – [Eng.: sesame seed], Pl.: *garść muszelek* – [Eng.: a handful of seashells], Pl.: *czar alabastru* – [Eng.: alabaster charm];

FOOD: Pl.: *niebywale śmietankowy* – [Eng.: exceptionally creamy], Pl.: *wyborny lukier* – [Eng.: delicious icing], Pl.: *sila wanilii* – [Eng.: power of vanilla], Pl.: *waniliowa poświata* – [Eng.: vanilla glow], Pl.: *grecka chałwa* – [Eng.: Greek halva], Pl.: *kremowa klasyka* – [Eng.: cream classics], Pl.: *totalnie kremowy* – [Eng.: totally creamy];

SEASONS: SUMMER (HOLIDAYS): Pl.: *rajska plaża* – [Eng.: paradise beach], Pl.: *białe żagle* – [Eng.: white sails], Pl.: *garść muszelek* – [Eng.: a handful of seashells];

SEASONS: WINTER: Pl.: *beztroska zima* – [Eng.: carefree winter], Pl.: *śnieżny zaprzęg* – [Eng.: snow sled], Pl.: *okruch lodu* – [Eng.: ice shard], Pl.: *srebrzysty lód* – [Eng.: silver ice], Pl.: *zimowa cisza* – [Eng.: winter silence];

(HOLIDAY) PLACES: Pl.: *rajska plaża* – [Eng.: paradise beach], Pl.: *światelka Heraklionu* – [Eng.: lights of Heraklion], Pl.: *słońce Hellady* – [Eng.: Hellas' sun];

COLOUR: Pl.: *nietuzinkowe ecru* – [Eng.: extraordinary ecru], Pl.: *pastelowy comfort* – [Eng.: pastel comfort].

It is worthy of note that some of the colour names which do contain the lexeme *white* also refer to other domains, such as: Pl.: *perłowy biały* – [Eng.: pearl white] (NATURE), Pl.: *białe wino* – [Eng.: white wine] (FOOD), Pl.: *biały skandynawski* – [Eng.: Scandinavian white] (PLACES), Pl.: *satynowa biała* – [Eng.: satin white] (FABRIC), Pl.: *chłodna biel* – [Eng.: cool white] (TEMPERATURE).

Having studied the corpus of colour names provided by the Dulux paint manufacturer chosen for analysis in the present discussion, it has to be noted that the broad colour category of *white*, including the spectrum of *off-white*, is much more extensive in English as compared to Polish. Another observation is that the associations made to other domains are positive or neutral, there are no negative connotations noted in either name offered for an individual hue. The terms that are employed to designate various shades of the *white* and *off-white* palette are positively valued, as they are based on the predominant conceptualisation grounded in a conceptual metaphor GOOD IS WHITE. In the English corpus of the colour names the greatest number of exemplars refer to the domain NATURE, including also its sub-domains identified as: FAUNA, FLORA, SKY/WEATHER, PARTS OF DAY. The imagery of FOOD is also frequently evoked, and FABRIC follows third. When considering the Polish corpus of Dulux colours for the category under consideration, FOOD predominates, but the

categories SEASONS, PLACES, and NATURE show a comparable distribution of instances. In the analysis of the Polish corpus, the domains SEASONS: SUMMER (HOLIDAYS) as well as (HOLIDAY) PLACES are categorised as referring optionally to holidays, hence brackets, because the domain HOLIDAYS almost always evokes positive associations, which seems to be the intention of the creators.

What has to be added, however, is that some colour name exemplars in both English and Polish have been classified as possibly belonging to two domains (for instance, *Vanilla White* – FLORA, FOOD; *Silk Breeze* – FABRIC, WEATHER; Pl.: *rajaska plaża* – [Eng.: paradise beach] – SEASONS: SUMMER (HOLIDAYS), (HOLIDAY) PLACES; Pl.: *garść muszelek* – [Eng.: a handful of seashells] – SEASONS: SUMMER (HOLIDAYS), NATURE).

Incidentally, the terms *sallow/waxen* and *woskowy* respectively in English and Polish are not employed in colour names discussed above, as they are negatively-valued for their association with sickness or the state of being unwell.

In summary, the implied relation between the linguistic categories WHITE and PLEASANT/POSITIVE has been shown as strong in both compared languages. Incidentally, it is quite interesting to note that, even though in both languages the colour term *white* is defined by prototypical reference to *snow* and *milk*, in Polish only *snow* is featured in Dulux paint colour names, while in English a reference to milk (*Milky Pail*) is made only once. Also, the symbolism of *white*, i.e. innocence, purity and light, is very rarely referenced in the analysed corpus, as only two colour names in English show associations with light, i.e. *Morning Light* and *Moon Shimmer*, while in Polish only one term refers to purity, i.e. Pl.: *nieskazitelna biel* – [Eng.: impeccable white]. Other than the number of colour names provided for different hues of *white*, there are no significant discrepancies between the English and Polish analysed lexical sets.

## Notes

1. Hue is defined by Biggam (2012: 3) as "the spectrum of visible light, parts of which, according to their wavelength or frequency, are perceived by humans to differ from others".
2. Saturation is the property which designates "the purity or otherwise of a hue, in relation to the amount of grey it is perceived to contain" (ibid.).
3. Tone "refers to the admixture of white or black with a hue, creating a range which runs from pale at one end to dark at the other. Taking blue as the example hue this time, the blue tone range runs from very pale blue through shades with successively increasing amounts of blue added to them, so

that they range from very pale blues to pale blues to palish blues to fully saturated blue (in which no white is perceived). At this point, the blue tone range begins to add successively increasing amounts of black, resulting in darkish blues, dark blues and very dark blues" (ibid., 4).

4. Brightness of colour "is concerned with the amount of light reaching the eye, but the nature and sources of such light are varied. An object may be bright because it is pale and well-lit, or because its surface is made of a reflective material, or because it is itself a light source such as a lamp" (ibid.).

5. Berlin and Kay (1969: 17) describe it as follows: "Stage I in the evolution of lexical color categories is represented by just two terms: *black* plus most dark hues, and *white* plus most light hues. For convenience we will write these categories BLACK and WHITE".

### List of abbreviations

OED – Oxford English dictionary

WSJP – Wielki słownik języka polskiego ze słownikiem wyrazów bliskoznacznych


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