**Color and language**

We tend to think of colors as ideas which all humans agree on – grass is green, flames are orange, the sky is light blue .

Many people are surprised to learn, therefore, that different languages do not consider the basic colors to be the same. Some New Guinea Highland languages, for example, still have terms only for black and white (perhaps better translated as "dark" and "light"). Hanuno'o language, spoken in the Philippines, has only four basic color words: black, white, red and green. Pirahã language, spoken by an Amazonian tribe, is said to have no fixed words for colors. According to linguist Dan Everett, if you show them a red cup, they’re likely to say, "This looks like blood".

Here are some specific examples of how different colors are dealt with in various languages.

Latin originally lacked a generic color word for "gray" and "brown" and had to borrow its words from Germanic language sources.

Classical Greek is said to not have had different names for blue and black.

Biblical Hebrew had no word for blue.

Navajo has one word for both grey and brown and one for blue and green. It has two for black, however, distinguishing the color of "coal" from that of "darkness".

Spanish has several words which correspond with the basic English word for “brown”: brown skin and brown sugar are moreno; brown hair is castaño; brown bears are pardo, but other brown animals are marrón, as are eyes, cars, paint and clothing - although many Latin American speakers would use the word café for a basic brown. As a result, textbooks disagree about the “basic” word for this color.

Shona language (a Bantu language from Southern Africa) has no one word for our "green" concept; they have one word for yellowish-green, and a different word for bluish-green.

Hindi has no standard word for the color "gray". However, lists for child or foreigner Hindi language learning include "saffron" [केसर] as a basic color

Serbo-Croatian speakers say "blue hair" (plava kosa) for blond hair, even though they have words for yellow and golden.

Italian speakers call the egg yolk rosso d’uovo (“red of the egg”.)

In Vietnamese, both tree leaves and the sky are described by the color word xanh.

In Thai, the word เขียว means green, but is also used to describe the sky.