

Abstract

This study investigates how Thai children aged 3 to 6 use color terms, specifically their ability to name (production) and to identify (comprehension) colors (and a possible association between the two).

Twenty Thai children aged 3 to 4 (10 boys and 10 girls) and another twenty aged 5 to 6 (10 boys and 10 girls) from 2 different schools in Bangkok, Suwawan Nursery School and Wat Mongkolwararam School, participated in the study. All of them had normal eyesight, no report of color blindness, and were right-handed. They came from mixed economic and social backgrounds and were recruited based on their answers to questionnaires.

Results showed that, within the primary-color category, 3 to 6 year-olds were significantly better on the naming than on the identification task. However, within the non-primary-color category, their identification scores were significantly higher than their naming scores. Findings did not reveal an association between color preference and the 2 tasks. Comparisons across performances for primary color category versus that for non-primary color category showed that children performed significantly better when the tasks (naming and identifying) involved primary colors than when they involved non-primary colors. Sex did not appear to have any effect. Age differences showed a significant effect with 5 to 6 year-olds having higher scores in both tasks for the non-primary color category.

Failure to provide correct color words generated various other naming strategies. The most common one was the use of other basic color terms which fall within the same color hue as the target colors. This suggests that 3-6 year-olds already had categorical perception and conceptual color space.