

PREPARATORY STUDY OF ‘LOVE FOR ONE’S HOME’ EDUCATION THROUGH LEARNING TRADITIONAL COLOR NAMES: KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRADITIONAL COLOR ENHANCES ITS ATTRACTIVENESS

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Abstract

As a preparatory step of our research project for ‘love for one’s home’ education through learning traditional colors, an experiment was conducted to examine the effect of attaining knowledge of a color on its attractiveness. A hundred and twenty-two university students answered the degree of affinity of six Japanese traditional colors twice with an interval of one hour, first without any information and second with the color name and a short text explaining its origin and the cultural background. Results showed the degree of affinity rose from the first to the second evaluation for most colors, supporting our hypothesis that people would appreciate the value of traditional colors when their knowledge about these colors was deepened. The appropriateness of the traditional colors as learning materials for ‘love for one’s home’ education, a part of moral education that is recently emphasized by Japanese government, was discussed. In addition, the present findings indicated the importance of the additional information that should be given to learners along with the traditional colors in order to maximize educational efficiency.

Keywords: *Knowledge of traditional colors, ‘love for one’s home’ education, traditional color names.*

1. Introduction

We have started a new research project for ‘love for one’s home’ education, that is recently promoted by Japanese government, through learning Japanese traditional color names. Each of these color names has a unique cultural background and long history. Unfortunately, however, they have not been taught in primary or higher educations for several decades, and young people have little knowledge about them. We thought the traditional color names would be excellent learning materials for Japanese young people to notice the attractiveness of their own community. In our preliminary survey, we found that those who have more knowledge about these color names tend to have a positive attitude toward learning more about them (Takahashi & Aotani, 2018a, 2018b). So the key question is ‘how to make them take the first step of learning.’ To find a clue to solve this question, we conducted a simple experimental study.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

A hundred and twenty-two Japanese university students, 71 males and 51 females, participated in the research. Their mean age was 18.6 years old ($SD=.85$).

2.2. Materials

Six Japanese traditional colors were used as evaluation targets (Table 1). These color names have been used in Japan for more than a thousand years, except for *Wakaba-iro* that has been used from the Meiji-period (1868 - 1912).

Table 1. Japanese traditional color names with Munsell notation in parenthesis used in this study shown on approximate background colors.

Imayou-iro	(5R 4.5/8.5)	Fuji-iro	(10PB 6.5/6.5)	Kamonoha-iro	(5BG 4/4)
Wakaba-iro	(7GY 7.5/4.5)	Kara-kurenai	(1.5R 5.5/13)	Kon-iro	(6PB 2.5/4)

2.3. Procedure

Participants answered the degree of affinity for each color, shown as a printed color chip (4cm × 4cm), on an 11-point scale (from 0: ‘do not like at all’ to 10: ‘like the most’). They did this twice with an interval of one hour. First they evaluated the colors without any additional information given (by seeing only color chips), and second with each color name and short text explaining its origin and the cultural background such as “*Imayou-iro*: *Imayou* means ‘modern’ or ‘now popular’ in the Heian-period (794 - 1192). Most popular dying color at that time was red created by *Beni-zome* (red-dying). This color name appears in *Genji-monogatari* and *Utsuho-monogatari*, famous classic tales, suggesting its widespread use.” In addition, after finishing the second evaluation, participants answered whether or not he/she had known each color name before the experiment.

3. Results

Figure 1 shows the mean affinity score for each color in the first and the second evaluation. Repeated-measure *t*-test revealed that the second score was significantly higher than the first score in *Wakaba-iro* ($t=4.010$, $df=121$, $p<.001$), *Kara-kurenai* ($t=2.158$, $df=121$, $p<.05$), and *Kon-iro* ($t=4.936$, $df=121$, $p<.001$). Table 2 shows the results separately for participants who had prior knowledge about the name of each color (YES group) and those who did not (NO group). Comparing the variation from the first to the second evaluation between groups, participants who did not know *Wakaba-iro* (43.4% of all) increased its affinity score to a greater degree than those who knew it (56.6%) ($t=2.702$, $df=120$, $p<.01$)

Figure 1. Mean affinity score of each color in the first (left column) and the second (right column) evaluation.

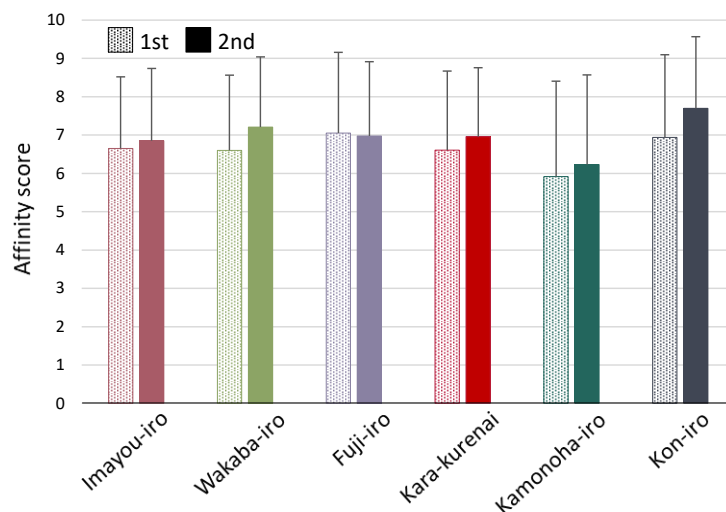


Table 2. Results of participants with or without prior knowledge of each color name.

	Knowledge	Participants (%)	First evaluation	Second evaluation	Variation (1→2)	Group difference
Imayou-iro	YES	4.9	5.33	5.83	-0.50	ns
	NO	95.1	6.72	6.91	-0.19	
Wakaba-iro	YES	56.6	6.78	7.04	-0.26	$p<.01$
	NO	43.4	6.36	7.43	-1.07	
Fuji-iro	YES	62.3	7.37	7.20	-0.17	ns
	NO	37.7	6.50	6.63	-0.13	
Kara-kurenai	YES	44.3	6.26	6.91	-0.65	ns
	NO	55.7	6.90	7.00	-0.10	
Kamonoha-iro	YES	5.7	7.57	6.71	-0.86	ns
	NO	94.3	5.82	6.20	-0.38	
Kon-iro	YES	94.3	6.99	7.70	-0.71	ns
	NO	5.7	6.14	7.71	-1.57	

4. Discussion

The affinity score of Japanese traditional colors increased from the first to the second evaluation, with only one exception for *Fuji-iro*. Though the simple repetition effect might be involved here, in our view such positive change in subjective evaluation is mainly caused by the additional information of the colors. Being inspired by the ‘antique’ color name and its historical and cultural background, participants may have noticed a new attractiveness of the traditional colors, each of which has an unclear tone that is generally not preferred. The results supported our hypothesis that people would appreciate the value of traditional colors when their knowledge about these colors was deepened.

Participants’ prior knowledge of the examined colors varied widely by colors, from *Imayou-iro* that was known by only 4.9% of participants to *Kon-iro* that was known by 94.3% of them. However, the relationship between the prior knowledge of the color and the amount of increase of its affinity score by the additional information was not clear. This result is slightly contradictory to the above discussion, because our hypothesis expects people not having prior knowledge of the traditional color would be influenced more by the ‘new’ information of its historical and cultural background. Only the result of *Wakaba-iro* supported this reasoning. *Wakaba-iro*, as mentioned earlier, is the only color that does not have a very long history among the colors examined. So it may suggest that young people are more sensitive to the attractiveness of rather modern traditional colors. This is a problem for further consideration in the future.

In the educational context, the present results have positive implications for achieving the aims of ‘love for one’s home’ education. Japanese traditional colors and their names are said to be the fruit of Japanese nature and culture that has matured over a long time. This is why we believe them to be the ideal learning materials for ‘love for one’s home’ education. By learning these colors, young people would know their local history, notice the value of their own culture, and also enhance a sensitivity towards nature. In order to achieve the aim of moral education stated in the National Curriculum Standards in Japan, that is ‘cultivating morality as a foundation for developing Japanese citizens with a proactive attitude who would ... respect traditions and culture, love one’s country and hometown which have fostered such traditions and culture,’ we think Japanese traditional colors are perfect learning materials. The present results showed one possible way to maximize learning efficiency of such moral education, that is to provide learners with appropriate information explaining the historical and cultural background of the traditional colors.

Based on the present findings, the next step of our project should be a verification of the effect of learning in a more realistic situation. We must examine how and how much participants’ understanding of, and attitude to, their home would change by learning Japanese traditional colors in a relatively long span, more concretely for some months. After an accumulation of data of such an experimental study, we hope to create a kind of booklet showing the attractiveness of traditional colors as a convenient learning tool that can be widely used in schools, in those of the lower grade in particular.

References

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