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Are Oranges Yellow? *Appelsínugulur* as a Basic Color Term in Icelandic

1 Introduction

In their groundbreaking *Basic Color Terms* (1969), Brent Berlin and Paul Kay argue that basic color terms enter languages in a specific order in an evolutionary sequence. According to Berlin and Kay, a basic color term must fulfill four criteria (Table 1).

	A BASIC COLOR TERM MUST BE	EXPLANATION
I.	mono-lexemic	The meaning of the color term is not predictable from the meaning of its parts. This excludes for example terms such as 'yellowish,' 'reddish-brown,' or 'lemon-colored.'
II.	exclusive	The meaning of the term cannot be included in that of any other color term. This excludes for example terms such as 'crimson' or 'scarlet,' which are both terms for 'red.'
III.	unrestricted	A color term is not considered basic, if its use is restricted to a specific, narrow class of objects. This excludes for example terms that are only used for the color of hair, such as 'blond.'
IV.	psychologically salient	The term must be in frequent use and psychologically recognizable for a large number of people. This excludes for example rare or personally-defined color terms, such as the "the color of the rust on my aunt's Chevrolet" (Berlin and Kay 1969:6).

Table 1. *The four criteria of a basic color term, according to Berlin and Kay (1969).*

Berlin and Kay (1969:2) determined the existence of eleven basic color terms that match all of the four characteristics: white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, pink, purple, orange, and grey. Their conclusions for the establishment of an evolutionary sequence and the different language stages are summarized in Table 2.

I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII
white	→	red	↗	green	→	yellow	↘	blue	→	brown	→	purple
black			↘	yellow	→	green	↗					pink
												orange
												grey

Table 2. *The introduction of basic color terms into a language, according to Berlin and Kay (1969).*

According to Berlin and Kay (1969), all languages can be assigned to one – and only one – of the seven stages at a certain point in a language’s development.¹ Concerning stage VII, Berlin and Kay (1969:21–22) note that “the remaining basic categories, purple, pink, orange, and grey, are quickly added to the lexicon and ... in no particular order.” They further explain that “[s]tage VII systems include all eight-, nine-, ten-, and eleven-term systems” (1969:22).

Kirsten Wolf (2006:189; 2009:223; 2010:110) maintains that Old Norse-Icelandic is an early stage VII language with eight basic color terms: *svartr*, *hvítr*, *rauðr*, *grænn*, *gulr*, *blár*, *brúnn*, and *grár*. She notes (2006:187; see also 2010:110) that a ninth basic color term, *bleikr* (for pink), has been added to the color lexicon in Modern Icelandic, which in Old Norse-Icelandic denoted simply a light color or light shade of color as in “pale,” “wan,” “bleached,” “blond,” “fair,” or “light-colored.”² In accordance with Berlin and Kay’s definition, Modern Icelandic would, therefore, be a stage VII language with nine basic color terms, lacking basic color terms for purple and orange (see also Poisson 2011:22, 26).³ Jackson Crawford (2011), however, argues convincingly that the Icelandic *fjólublár* ‘blue like a violet,’ commonly used for purple, should be considered a basic color term despite its compound

1 Berlin and Kay’s study and evolutionary sequence of color-terms are certainly not undisputed and have been revised since the publication of *Basic Color Terms* (1969). For critiques, see e.g., Hickerson 1971; Witkowski and Brown 1977.

2 For a more detailed discussion of *bleikr* in Old Norse-Icelandic, see Wolf 2005.

3 Wolf (2010:110) mentions that “*lilla* (purple) ... has very recently entered the language, and *órans* (orange) is in the process of entering the language.” Jackson Crawford and Susanne Arthur’s (née Fahn) research on these two color terms, however, has since shown that this statement may have to be revised (see below for *órans* and Crawford 2011 for *lilla*).

nature.⁴ Crawford (2011) insists that “the value of [Berlin and Kay’s] monolexemic criterion [– which excludes compound terms –] may be questioned in a language community that strongly identifies itself with independence from lexical borrowings from other languages.” As in the case of purple, Modern Icelandic uses a compound, *appelsínugulur* ‘yellow like an orange’ to denote the color orange (a secondary color-term according to Berlin and Kay’s study). This article seeks out to prove, however, that *appelsínugulur* – like *fjólublár* – should be considered a basic color term. The author begins with a brief history of the fruit and color orange (ch. 2) and gives an overview of the development of terms for the fruit and color in Icelandic (ch. 3 and ch. 4). She then explores reasons why *appelsínugulur* became the predominant term in Icelandic and examines whether it is perceived as a shade of yellow or an independent and basic color term (ch. 5 and ch. 6).

2 A Brief History of the Fruit and Color Orange

The orange tree probably originated in northern India and reached China around 2200 B.C. and later Europe via the Silk Road (Toussaint-Samat 1992:662–663; Root 1980:303). The term orange for the fruit is possibly of Dravidian (Tamil) origin and was adopted into Sanskrit (*nāraṅgaḥ*), and later Persian (*nārang*), Arabic (*nāranj*) and Spanish (*naranja*) (Barnhart 1988:733; OED 1989:X.887; OED online 2011: ‘orange;’ American Heritage 2009). The first oranges introduced to Europe – so-called Persian oranges – were bitter. The Latin term for this bitter variety is *pomum aurantium* ‘orange apple,’ from which, for example, the Italian *pomeransi*, French *pume orange*, German *Pomeranze*, and Danish *pomerans* are derived. *Aurantium* likely refers to the original Sanskrit term for the fruit, although it has been argued (see e.g., Bonavia 1888:327) that it is related to *aurum* ‘gold,’ thus referring to the golden color of orange peel.⁵ The English term *orange* is a shortening of the Old French form *pume orange*. The first recorded written citation of the word in Middle English is found in a text composed around 1380 (Barnhart 1988:733). However, a record from around 1290 suggests that oranges

4 I would like to thank Jackson Crawford for providing me with a copy of his unpublished conference paper.

5 Another Latin term used to describe oranges is *malum aureum* ‘golden apple’ (Bonavia 1888:327).

had already reached England during that time. This document indicates that queen Eleanor of Castille bought seven oranges after a cargo ship from Spain arrived in Southampton (Root 1980:304).

The bitter Persian oranges were replaced in the fifteenth century by a sweet variety, brought to Europe from India by Portuguese traders (Harper 2001). This sweet variety reached northern Germany by the beginning of the eighteenth century, via Amsterdam and Hamburg (Drosdowski 1989:40). The German term *Apfelsine* (derived from Old Dutch: *appelsina*, Low German: *Appelsina*) for the sweet orange is a literal translation of 'China-apple'⁶ from an old word *Sina* for China, because oranges were brought to Europe from South China around the year 1500 (Drosdowski 1989:40). In Germany, the term *Orange* for the fruit was generally used in the south, while *Apfelsine* was more prevalent north of the river Main (Ammon et al. 2004:545), indicating that the term 'China-apple,' which is also used in all Scandinavian languages (Danish: *appelsin*, Norwegian-Bokmål: *appelsin*, Norwegian-Nynorsk: *appelsin*, Swedish: *apelsin*, Icelandic: *appelsína*, Faroese: *appilsin*), is typical for Northern Europe. In Denmark and Sweden, references to oranges can be found in documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Heizmann 2005:43). It is unclear when oranges were first introduced to Iceland (see ch. 3).

The color term orange, which is derived from the name of the fruit and likely a shortening of 'orange-colored,' was seemingly not used in English before 1542 (Ammon et al. 2004:545; *Ordbog over det Danske Sprog* 1975:XV.1174; Harper 2001). Despite the fact that the fruit is generally called 'China-apple' in Scandinavia, most Scandinavian languages use a word derived from orange to indicate color (Danish: *orange*, Norwegian-Bokmål: *oransje*, Norwegian-Nynorsk: *oransje*, Swedish: *orange*). The only exceptions are Icelandic and Faroese, which have developed compound terms or secondary color terms according to Berlin and Kay (Icelandic: most commonly *appelsínugulur*, Faroese: *brandgulur*, *reyðgulur*).

3 The Fruit Orange in Icelandic

Icelanders have used a number of terms to describe the orange fruit (Table 5), which are largely derived or translated from Latin (*pomum*

6 In the eighteenth century the term *Chinaapfel* was also used in Germany in addition to *Apfelsine* (Drosdowski 1989:40).

aurantium, malum aureum), English (*orange*), German (*Pomeranze, Apfelsine, Orange*), Danish (*appelsin, pomerans*) or other Scandinavian forms (*appelsin/apelsin*). The oldest Icelandic term *eyjarepli* occurs only once, in *Kirialax saga*,⁷ a saga whose composition is dated to the mid-fourteenth century, but it is doubtful that the term in fact refers to oranges or that the fruit was known in Iceland at that time (Heizmann 2005:42–43, 47–48).⁸

Mention of the fruit appears in the mid-seventeenth century and becomes more frequent from the first half of the eighteenth century onwards. The earliest examples – listed in Table 3 – are derived from the Latin *pomum aurantium*, German *Pomeranze* and Danish *pomerans*. Quite often the term appears in texts translated from German or Danish (see Table 3).

In three cases (Gudmund Thorgrimsen 1784:25; Magnús Stephensen 1797:266; Steingrímur Thorsteinsson 1886:199–200, 229), *pomerans* is used parallel to the Icelandic term *gullepli* ‘golden apple’ (see Table 3 and Table 4), likely a translation of the Latin *malum aureum* (see fn. 5). *Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans (ROH)* lists seventeen occurrences of *gullepli* from the mid-eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. The term is problematic, since it may not necessarily just refer to the fruit orange, but could also describe an apple made of gold. The oldest example is in Jón Jónsson’s *Meditationes triumphales. Edur Sigurhrooss Hugvekiur* (1749). It is doubtful that the term refers to an orange in this case, since the phrase reads “Þu ert O Iesu sem eitt Gull-Eple i Silfur-Skaal” (Jón Jónsson 1749:95) [‘You are, oh Jesus, like a golden apple in a silver bowl’];⁹ here the author is clearly contrasting the gold of the apple with the silver of the bowl. The second oldest example of *gullepli* (Gudmund Thorgrimsen 1784:25), on the other

7 “hennar höfuð var því líkt sem eyjar epli með gulligum lokkum” (Konráð Gíslason 1860:406; Kálund 1917:75–76) [Her head was like an ‘island apple’ with golden curls.] – The quote is from the description of Florencias, the daughter of king Lotharius of Byzantine and includes comparisons to plants and minerals. See also Heizmann (2005:42).

8 Kálund notes in his edition of *Kirialax saga* that the term is a shortening of *Sikileyiar epli* ‘apple from Sicily’ and means *appelsin* (1917:76). His etymology has since been adopted (see for example *Íslensk orðabók* (ÍO 2007:196) ‘*eyjarepli*,’ or *Wikipedia. Frjálsa alfræðiritið: ‘appelsína.’*). In her English translation of *Kirialax saga*, Alenka Divjak (2009:338) translates the term with ‘orange,’ without suggesting that the term might be questionable. Heizmann (2005), however, convincingly challenges Kálund’s assumption.

9 See Vulgate, Prov. 25.11 “Mala aurea in lectis argenteis.”

hand, clearly refers to the fruit orange (see Table 3).¹⁰ In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the term becomes increasingly used in poetry rather than prose (see *ROH* for examples), and in two cases it occurs in a glossary (Steingrímur Thorsteinsson 1886:199, 229), next to other possible terms for the orange fruit (see Table 3 and Table 4).

QUOTE	DATE/SOURCE	TRANSLATED FROM
“En engin aldini voru á þeim tíma árs fullvaxin utan <i>pómerans</i> og <i>bónanster</i> ”	1661; Guðbrandur Jónsson 1946: II.73	
“margslags Triaam ... <i>Pomerans</i> og Laurberia Triaam”	Lassenius 1723:150	German; Lassenius 1857:80–81
“Paalmavidar-Tried merker hans Sigurvinning ... enn <i>Pomerants</i> Avöxturenn þann sæta Ylm ...”	Lassenius 1723:151	German; Lassenius 1857:80–81
“I Gardenum feck hann mörg aagiæt Aldine, so sem ... <i>Pomerantz-Eple</i> ”	Björn Markússon 1756:314	Danish
“Aldinin eda Eplin. ... Gull-epli (mala aurea, <i>Pomerantzer</i>)”	Gudmund Thorgrimsen 1784:25	German; Büsching 1779:80
“Eyian er ynnðæl, øll yrke, pløntud og þakin granat-epla-, fikiu- og gull-epla edur <i>pómerants-triám</i> ”	Magnús Stephensen 1797:266	
“I landi þessu finna menn ... sudurlanda ávexti (<i>Pómerønzur</i> , ...)”	Grímur Jónsson 1821:II.1, 224	
“Gold...–orange, kvk. ... gullepli, <i>pómeranza</i> (pomum aurantium), <i>óransía</i> .”	Steingrímur Thorsteinsson 1886:199–200	German (glossary)

Table 3. Earliest examples of terms derived from the Latin pomum aurantium, German Pomeranze or Danish pomerans.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, when, presumably, oranges were still a fairly new and exotic product in Iceland and no common Icelandic term for the fruit existed, the terms *orangeávöxtur* ‘orange-fruit,’ *orange-epli* ‘orange-apple,’ and *óransía* ‘orange’ appear in written sources. *ROH* only lists one example for each term (Table 4).

QUOTE	SOURCE
“ <i>Orange-ávextir</i> (appelsínur) voru fluttir frá Kína til Portúgal, 1547, og komust þaðan út um suðurhluta Evrópu”	Páll Sveinsson 1862:94
“Ein tegundin verðr eins stór og smá <i>orange-epli</i> ”	Jón Jónsson Hjaltalín 1862:33
“Orange, ... kvk. ... <i>óransía</i> , <i>óransíutré</i> , gullepli, gullapaldur.”	Steingrímur Thorsteinsson 1886: 229

Table 4. Earliest examples of terms derived from orange.¹¹

¹⁰ Gudmund Thorgrimsen uses *gullepli* to translate the German term *Pomeranze*. See Büsching 1778:80.

¹¹ It is possible that *orange-epli* refers to the Cox Orange Pippin apple rather than an

Appelsína, the only used term in Modern Icelandic, appears in print in the middle of the nineteenth century in a recipe for “*Rúgbrauðs kaka*” ‘rye bread cake’ in Þóra Andrea Nikólína Jónsdóttir’s *Ný matreiðslubók ásamt ávísun um litun, þvott o.fl.* (1858:119). The term is a Danish or German loanword (see e.g. Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon 1989:22). Considering that recipes are generally written to be intelligible to all, it is obvious that *appelsína* was the predominant term by the time the cookbook was printed. Similarly, Páll Sveinsson (1862:94) states “Orange-ávextir (appelsínur) voru fluttir frá Kína til Portúgal, 1547, og komust þaðan út um suðurhluta Evrópu” [‘Orange-fruits (China-apples) were brought from China to Portugal in 1547, and spread from there through the southern parts of Europe’]. The quotation shows that *appelsína* was in this case used simultaneously alongside *orange-ávextir* and was presumably equally or more readily understood at the time.

Attempts to introduce the Icelandic term *glóaldin* ‘glowing fruit’¹² in the early twentieth century to replace the loanword *appelsína* failed. This was presumably because, as Jón Hilmar Jónsson (1978:358) suggests, the loanword entered the language quickly and was widely accepted in a short time. *ROH* lists thirteen citations of *glóaldin* dating between 1929 (Helgi Pjeturss 1929:228) to 1972 (Halldór Laxness 1972:237).

TERM	EARLIEST OCCURRENCE
eyjarepli ?	mid-14th century
terms derived from <i>pomerans</i>	1723
gullepli	(1745) 1784
terms derived from <i>orange</i>	1862
appelsína	1858
glóaldin	1929

Table 5. Summary of Icelandic terms for the fruit orange (order as discussed in article).

actual orange. This kind of apple is available in Iceland, as for example illustrated by newspaper advertisements, such as in *Þjóðviljinn* (1951:7) or *Dagur* (1960:6), where *Cox Orange epli* ‘Cox Orange apples’ are advertised next to *appelsínur* ‘oranges.’ It should be noted, however, that these advertisements are much younger than Jón Jónsson Hjaltalín’s article. It is, therefore, uncertain if Cox Orange apples were known in the nineteenth century. Jón Jónsson Hjaltalín (1862:33) uses the term as a size comparison in an article about echinoderms, which means that the context does not allow for a definite interpretation of the term.

12 In the author’s opinion, *glóaldin* may be a loose translation of the Latin *malum aureum*.

4 The Color Orange in Icelandic

Before the introduction of the fruit orange and, consequently, the term *appelsínugulur*, Icelanders appear to have used a variety of terms to describe orange-colored objects, largely compounds of red and yellow.

Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog (ONP) lists five examples of *rauðbleikr*. Kirsten Wolf (2010:123) suggests that *bleikr* was used to describe the hue yellow before the introduction of the term *gulr*. Accordingly, *rauðbleikr* could be considered a compound of red and yellow. The citations in *ONP*, dating from the late thirteenth to the late fourteenth century,¹³ are used to refer to hair, a beard, and two gemstones (sardonyx and jacinth), all of which may be perceived as orange-colored. While Cleasby and Vigfússon's translation of *rauðbleikr* as 'reddish' (1874:484) is acceptable, it conceivably refers to a color in the range between red and yellow.

The most frequently used term for the color orange in Icelandic (besides the now prevalent term *appelsínugulur*) is *rauðgulur* 'red-yellow,' which appears three times in *ONP* and fifty-three times in *ROH*. The oldest occurrence in *ONP* is from a testament written in Oslo on April 13, 1331 (DN 1855:III.148).¹⁴ It refers to a *pallklæde* 'carpet/covering' and could describe a solid orange color or a red and yellow pattern. The other occurrences are in *Sturlunga saga* (AM 122 a fol., c1350–1370) and *Karlamagnús saga* (AM 180 d fol., c1700),¹⁵ respectively, and both describe the color of hair (*ONP*). As with *rauðbleikr*, these instances describe objects that can be conceived of as orange-colored. *ROH*, which contains examples from after the middle of the sixteenth century, lists occurrences of *rauðgulur* dating from 1545 to 1977. Until the end of the seventeenth century, the term was almost exclusively used to denote the color of hair, clothing and fabrics, particularly altar linens. The adjective was later associated with a larger variety of objects, although its use for ginger-colored hair still prevailed (see *ROH*

13 One of the examples is found in AM 447 4to, a late seventeenth-century manuscript containing *Eyrbyggja saga* (see *ONP*). The occurrence of *rauðbleikr* in this case cannot be dated to the thirteenth to fourteenth century with certainty since it could be a post-medieval variant.

14 Since the example is taken from a Norwegian source, it cannot be included in this study, which focuses on Icelandic. It is nonetheless mentioned for completeness.

15 As with AM 447 4to (see fn. 13), the occurrence of *rauðgulr* in this case cannot be dated to the Middle Ages with certainty because the citation exists only in a post-medieval manuscript (AM 180 d fol.).

for examples). In the glossary of *Þýzk lestrarbók* (Steingrímur Thorsteinsson 1886:229) the German color *orange* is defined as something “sem hefir óransíu lit, eða er rauðgulur eins og óransíubörkur” [that is the color of an orange, or red-yellow like the rind of an orange]. Here, the author makes a definite connection between *rauðgulur* and the fruit and color orange.

From the mid-seventeenth century (1642) to the late twentieth century (1992) the term *brandgulur* ‘fire-yellow’ appears. The thirteen examples in *ROH* suggest that the term is closely associated with textiles – especially silk – and in the twentieth century with the color of mushrooms and animals. Just as *bleikr* was used to indicate the hue yellow, *brandr* ‘brand/flare’ – referring to fire – may have been used to indicate the hue red.¹⁶ This supports the argument that before the introduction of the fruit Icelandic only used compounds of red and yellow for the color orange.

Twelve examples of *gulrauður* ‘yellow-red’ dating between 1704 and 1977 are listed in *ROH*. The term is used in a variety of contexts, including the description of textiles. It does not, however, refer to ginger hair for which *rauðbleikr*, *rauðgulur*, and *gullrauður* (see below) appear to be the only compounds used.

In the late nineteenth century, isolated examples of *oransjegulur* (1877), *orangegulur* (1882), and *óransíugulur* (1891) – all meaning ‘orange-yellow’ – appear (*ROH*). This coincides neatly with the nineteenth-century examples of *orangeávöxtur* ‘orange-fruit,’ *orangepli* ‘orange-apple,’ and *óransía* ‘orange’ noted above. Icelanders presumably noticed the close connection between the fruit and the color, which they may have encountered in other languages, but since no common Icelandic term for the fruit – and therefore the color – had yet been introduced into the Icelandic lexicon, a variety of terms emerged. *ROH* lists one example of *gulleplalitaður* ‘colored like a golden apple’¹⁷ from 1906 and nine examples of *gullrauður* ‘golden-red’ from between 1935 and 1977. The latter, however, may describe a ‘golden/shimmering’ red color more than the actual color orange.¹⁸ The term is frequently

16 Kirsten Wolf (2010:122) gives an example from *Skáldskaparmál*, in which gold is described as “fire of arm or joint or limb, since it is red.” This may suggest that both gold and fire were considered red in Old Norse-Icelandic.

17 A reference to the Latin *malum aureum* (ch. 2 and ch. 3).

18 As with *bleikr*, Kirsten Wolf (2010:123) suggests that *gull* may have been used to describe the hue yellow before the introduction of *gulur*. This suggests that *gullrauður*, like *rauðbleikr* could be considered a compound of yellow and red.

associated with the description of flames, the sun (sunrise/sunset), copper, and the color of hair (see *ROH* for examples).

The term *appelsínugulur* that is most commonly used now, first appeared during the middle of the twentieth century (see *ROH* for oldest examples), and, just like the loanword *appelsína*, it caught on much faster than the Icelandic creation *glóaldin*. In terms of frequency, the color term *appelsínugulur* outnumbers *glóaldinrauður* ‘red like an orange,’ for which *ROH* lists only one example from 1966. Occurrences of *appelsínurauður* ‘red like an orange’ also exist (*ROH*), but are less frequent than *appelsínugulur*.

In an informal survey taken by a small number (6) of Icelanders, participants were asked to list any other Icelandic color terms which they might use instead of *appelsínugulur* for the color orange.¹⁹ Two participants did not list any alternatives. One mentioned *rauðgulur* and “*órans*” ‘orange;’ another *órans*, *rauðgulur*, *gulrauður*, and *appelsínulitur* ‘orange-colored’; the third *dökkgulur* ‘dark-yellow,’ *ljósrauður* ‘light-red,’ *sólarlag* ‘sundown,’ and *roði* ‘redness/blush;’ and the fourth *rauðgulur* and *appelsínurauður*.²⁰ The use of *órans* may suggest that Icelandic is beginning to incorporate a true basic color term – clearly a loan word – instead of a compound term for the color orange. The fact that one of the participants put the term into quotation marks, however, indicates that the term is likely considered uncommon.²¹ Since *appelsínugulur* is well established, it is doubtful that *órans* should become predominant.

19 The survey had four major parts. First, participants (of varying genders, ages and educational backgrounds) were shown pictures of different objects and color palettes. The objects and palettes were yellow, orange, red, or shades thereof. The participants were only allowed to describe the objects as ‘*yellow/gulur*’ or ‘*red/rauður*.’ In the second part, the same pictures were shown. This time participants should write down any Icelandic color term they would use to describe the objects in question. Next, participants were asked to indicate which squares of a detailed color palette they considered *orange* (English) and *appelsínugulur* (Icelandic). Lastly, participants answered the question whether they thought the fruit orange was named after the color or vice versa, and listed Icelandic color terms besides *appelsínugulur* which they might use for the English term *orange*. They were instructed to arrange their answers from ‘most likely to use’ to ‘least likely to use.’

20 Of these answers, *sólarlag* and *roði* should definitely be eliminated since they are not adjectives. *Appelsínulitur* can be a variant of the adjective *appelsínulitaður* ‘orange-colored’.

21 The term is not included in the *Íslensk orðabók* (ÍÓ 2007) or any online database. A larger survey (possibly online) would be needed to determine if *órans* is in fact entering the Icelandic lexicon. During time spent in Iceland, the author of this article has, however, never heard or seen the term *órans* used in conversation or writing, which suggests that such a survey may not be fruitful or valuable.

TERM	EARLIEST OCCURRENCE
rauðbleikr	late 13th century
rauðgulur	14th century
brandgulur	mid-17th century
gulrauður	early 18th century
oransjegulur, orangegulur, óransíugulur	late 19th century
gulleplalitaður	early 20th century
gullrauður	mid-20th century
appelsínugulur	mid-20th century
glóaldinrauður	1966
appelsínurauður	mid-20th century
appelsínulitur/appelsínulitaður	21st century?
dökkgulur	21st century?
ljósrauður	21st century?

Table 6. Summary of Icelandic compound terms for the color orange (order as discussed in article; the final three examples appeared only in the survey).

5 Assessment of Data: The Story of the Yellow Orange

Of the thirteen examples of Icelandic compound color terms for orange (Table 6), five are definite or possible compounds of red and yellow (*rauðbleikr*, *rauðgulur*, *brandgulur*, *gulrauður*, *gullrauður*), three are associated only with yellow (*oransjegulur/orangegulur/óransíugulur*, *appelsínugulur*, *dökkgulur*), three are associated only with red (*glóaldinrauður*, *appelsínurauður*, *ljósrauður*), and two (*gulleplalitaður* *appelsínulitur/appelsínulitaður*) resemble ‘orange-colored,’ the word from which orange is ultimately derived.

It is to be expected that orange is frequently described as a compound of red and yellow, or becomes isolated from either red or yellow, in early language stages, since it is not a primary color but is formed by mixing those two colors. In Berlin and Kay’s analysis of early language stages (stages I–III), which do not yet have a term for yellow, both yellow and orange often seem to derive from red (1969:26, 29). After the introduction of yellow into a language – occasionally as a loanword from other languages – the color orange, however, is frequently associated with yellow.²² Considering the close

²² Examples include the language of the !Kung Bushmen in South Africa (Berlin and Kay 1969:33), certain languages of the Torres Straits groups (Berlin and Kay 1969:38–39), the language of the Native American Zuni (Lenneberg and Roberts

connection between the colors orange and yellow, it is not surprising that Berlin and Kay (1969:22) suggest that, when orange is established as a separate basic color term in a language, it most often “becomes isolated from YELLOW.” There are, however, other instances where orange is derived from red or considered part of red.²³

The examples of compound color terms for orange in Modern Icelandic, support the view that orange derives from either red or yellow. The oldest color terms describing orange objects (*rauðbleikr*, *rauðgulur*, *brandgulur*) as well as the terms coined when oranges became better known in Iceland (*oransjegulur*, *orangegulur*, *óransíugulur*) use a hue of yellow (*-bleikr/-gulur*) as a suffix, indicating that orange may originally have been perceived as a shade of yellow by Icelanders.²⁴ Due to the strong historical association with yellow, a direct translation of ‘orange-colored’ (*gulleplalitaður*, *appelsínulitaður*) or a term with the suffix *-rauður* would not have been adequate after the introduction of the fruit to Iceland. This may explain why *appelsínugulur* became the predominant term. The prefix *appelsínu-* was likely given preference over *rauð-*, *brand-*, or *dökk-* because of the close connection between fruit and color. Since the loanword *appelsína* entered the Icelandic lexicon very quickly, it likely influenced the creation of the new color term.

6 *Appelsínugulur* as a Basic Color Term

Though orange may have originally been perceived as a hue of yellow in Iceland, it can be argued that today, *appelsínugulur* should be considered an independent and basic color term despite its compound nature. In a recent study, Regier, Kay and Khetarpal (2007) argue that “Color Naming Reflects Optimal Partitions of Color Space.”

1956:31), or certain dialects in southwest Iran, where orange can be included in yellow or red, depending on the shade, but it is most frequently associated with yellow (Friedl 1979:58, fig. 6; 63, fig. 9; 64). Furthermore, Delwin and Brown (2006:16608–9) illustrate in an analysis of the “World Color Survey (WCS) color-naming data set by using k-means cluster and concordance analyses” that yellow and orange are inseparably connected by establishing a WCS chromatic category “YELLOW-OR-ORANGE.”

²³ Examples include the language Malaya (Berlin and Kay 1969:97), the language of the Aguaruna, the indigenous people of the Peruvian jungle (Berlin and Berlin 1975:68), or Jaqaru, a language spoken in the Andes Mountains in Peru (Hardman 1981:66).

²⁴ The fact that orange juice generally has a yellowish color may add to this perception, since there is such a close connection between the fruit and color orange.

They nonetheless admit (Regier, Kay and Khetarpal 2007:1441) that “linguistic convention may be one force that can pull a particular language away from a perceptually optimal partitioning of color space” and that the historical development of a language must be taken into consideration. Both the history of the language and linguistic convention play an important role in Iceland. Icelandic grammar and language purism favor the creation of new compound words rather than the adaptation of monolexemic loanwords, which makes the monolexemic criterion of basic color terms unsuitable for such a language community.²⁵ Berlin and Kay’s monolexemic criterion can also be criticized. While they consider *orange* to be a basic color term (fulfilling the monolexemic criterion), they eliminate the examples “lemon-colored” and “salmon-colored” for not being monolexemic (1969:5–6). Since orange is, however, a shortening of orange-colored, its status as a basic color term could conceivably be questioned as well.

Appelsínugulur fulfills Berlin and Kay’s remaining three criteria. According to the two scholars (1969:6), a basic color term must apply to a wide range of objects. *Appelsínugulur* is used unrestrictedly to denote orange-colored objects.²⁶ Moreover, *appelsínugulur* fulfills the fourth criterion as it is “psychologically salient for informants” (Berlin and Kay 1969:6). It is the predominant term for orange. In fact, in the *Íslensk-ensk orðabók* (Sverrir Hólmarsson, Christopher Sanders and John Tucker 1989) it is the only term listed for the color orange. Its preferential status over other possible color terms is also supported by the fact that two survey participants did not list any alternatives to *appelsínugulur*. Additionally, in the survey, Icelanders almost always uniformly used *appelsínugulur* (occasionally with the common prefixes *dökk-* ‘dark,’ *ljós-* ‘light,’ and *skær-* ‘bright’) for describing orange objects. When asked to indicate which numbered color squares in a color palette to be *appelsínugulur* (Icelandic) or *orange* (English), the participants listed the exact same number range for both languages, which reveals that all participants considered Icelandic *appelsínugulur* and English *orange* as equivalent. A similar informal survey conducted by the author among native German-speakers, who use basic color

25 Jackson Crawford (2011) makes the same argument with regards to *fjólublár* ‘purple.’ See fn. 5.

26 Ásta Svavarsdóttir, editor of *Orð og Tunga*, brought to my attention that *appelsínugulur* would, however, never be used for hair in the Modern Icelandic, for which *rauður* is chosen. This is comparable to English, where a reddish color of hair is generally referred to as *red* or *ginger* rather than *orange*.

terms for yellow (*gelb*) and orange (*orange*), resulted in comparable number ranges, particularly with regard to the average starting point in the red area of the spectrum. There is no doubt that there is a uniform consent amongst Icelanders of what is conceived of as *appelsínugulur* and that the term is distinct from yellow.

One survey participant described a dark-orange object as *rauð-appelsínugulur* ‘red like a yellow orange’ and, as noted, some participants occasionally indicated nuances of orange with the common prefixes *dökk-*, *ljós-*, and *skær-*. The fact that shades of orange are described by adding prefixes to the term *appelsínugulur* (rather than *gulur* or *rauður*), supports the argument that *appelsínugulur* is its own lexemic unit, clearly defined and distinct from *gulur* and *rauður*. It would not be necessary to add the prefix *rauð-* to a compound color term (*appelsínugulur*), if the compound itself was considered a subclass of another color (*gulur*).²⁷ There are multiple examples of *rauðgulur*. The term can undoubtedly be used to describe dark orange objects, rendering a creation such as *rauðappelsínugulur* unnecessary. The only explanation appears to be that *appelsínugulur* is considered a lexemic entity in itself rather than a secondary color term, a shade or subclass of yellow. Accordingly, it fits Berlin and Kay’s second criterion for a basic color term in that “it is not included in that of any other color term” (1969:6).

7 Conclusion

The examples of color terms for orange in Modern Icelandic and the survey results reveal that in the past, Icelanders clearly associated the color with yellow more than with red. While the dominant term *appelsínugulur* may originally have been perceived as a shade of yellow, this study shows that it is now psychologically salient and not necessarily considered a sub-class of yellow. *Appelsínugulur* should be considered a basic color term despite its compound nature, as the monolexic criterion put forth by Berlin and Kay is problematic. Correspondingly, Modern Icelandic should be considered a Stage VII language with at least ten, if not all eleven basic color terms: *svartur*,

²⁷ Comparably, while descriptive color terms such as ‘reddish yellow,’ ‘reddish orange,’ ‘orange-yellow,’ or ‘orange-red’ are easily acceptable and understandable in English, a color term such as ‘reddish orange-yellow,’ consisting of three individual color terms, would be very uncommon.

hvítur, rauður, grænn, gulur, blár, brúnn, grár, bleikur, (likely) *fjólublár* (see Crawford 2011), and (most certainly) *appelsínugulur*.

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Keywords

Basic color terms, orange (fruit), orange (color), *appelsínugulur*.

Lykilorð

Grundvallarlitaorð, appelsína (ávöxtur), appelsínugulur (litur).

Útdráttur

Brent Berlin og Paul Kay halda því fram í *Basic Color Terms* (1969) að grundvallarorð yfir liti (*svartur, hvítur, rauður, grænn, gulur, blár, brúnn, fjólublár, appelsínugulur, grár*) séu tekin inn í tungumál eftir ákveðinni reglu í sjö þrepum. Kirsten Wolf (2006; 2010) hefur haldið því fram að nútímaíslenska sé á þrepi VII og hafi einungis níu grundvallarorð yfir liti og vanti því grundvallarorð fyrir 'purple' (*fjólublár*) og 'orange' (*appelsínugulur*). Þessi grein gefur yfirlit yfir þróun hugtakanna sem notuð hafa verið í íslensku fyrir appelsínuávöxtinn og appelsínugula litinn. Rannsakaðar eru ástæður þess að Íslendingar tóku ekki grundvallarorðið 'orange' upp í mál sitt eins og önnur norræn tungumál, en völdu í staðinn að nota samsett orð tengt gula litnum (*appelsínugulur*). Höfundurinn heldur því ennfremur fram að þó að *appelsínugulur* hafi einu sinni verið skynjaður sem afbrigði af gulu hafi orðið náð sálfræðilega sjálfstæðri stöðu í málinu ('psychologically salient' á ensku) og ætti því að vera talið sem grundvallarlitarorð þó svo að það sé samsett. Því ætti nútímaíslenska að teljast vera á

Þrepi VII með að minnsta kosti tíu grundvallarlitarorð: *svartur, hvítur, rauður, grænn, gulur, blár, brúnn, grár, bleikur* og *appelsínugulur*.

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