



Language a sign system

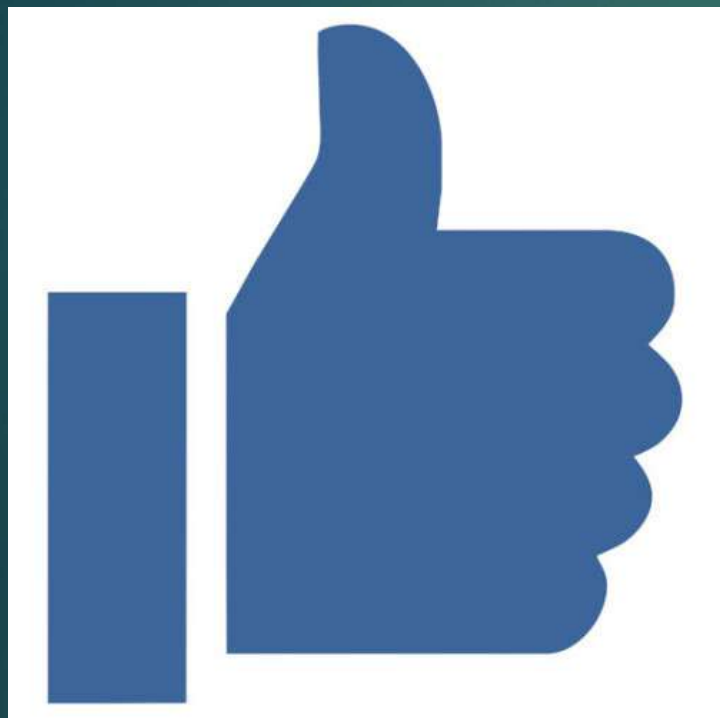
ALBERTO ANDÚJAR

Signs

- ▶ Signs are composed of FORM AND MEANING
- ▶ Form -----} Something perceivable
- ▶ Meaning -----} A mental notion or idea



More signs



Meaning?

More signs

- ▶ But also sound forms
- ▶ “Car” or “Tree”



Signs

- ▶ We need both form and meaning to have a sign.
- ▶ Example: a coin without one of the sides could be accepted in a supermarket or bank?
- ▶ What about the letter "h" of the alphabet?





























Signs

- ▶ Relation between form and meaning in the sign
- ▶ Iconic signs -----} A sign that has a form resembling its meaning
- ▶ Symbolic signs -----} A sign the form and meaning of which are purely related by convention

Icons

Notice that the form the icon is not an exact representation of the meaning

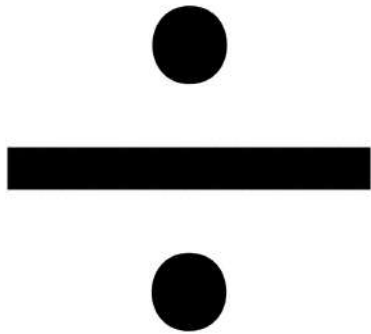
The form shows some characteristics of the corresponding concept

Filter	 
Search	  
Document	  
Admin/Security	 
Report	  
Protection	
User	 
Cart	  
Contact	  
Alert	     

Different forms can iconically represent the same concept

Symbols

The link between form and meaning involves some degree of conventionality or arbitrariness



Symbolic signs in language

- ▶ There is no natural connection between the word "tree", "træ" (Danish) or "fa" (Hungarian) and its meaning.
- ▶ None of them is in any way suggestive of the meaning
- ▶ Most words in human languages are symbols

Iconic signs in language

- ▶ Some exceptions: Some words are iconic
- ▶ The phonetic forms of words such as woof-woof, baa-baa and ding-dong are quite suggestive of their meanings, which are sounds.
- ▶ These words are **onomatopoeic**
- ▶ Further examples of iconicity: **Long** and **loooooong**. In this case iconicity takes place because of the phonetic difference, representing different meanings.

Relation between linguistic signs

- ▶ Syntagmatic
- ▶ Paradigmatic

Relation between linguistic signs

▶ Syntagmatic

- ▶ IN SPEECH OR WRITING- Signs occur in combination with other signs – human beings often put together many signs to convey complex meanings.
- ▶ This dimension is called syntagmatic: The signs that go together to make up an utterance are **NOT** put together randomly (They follow a certain order)
- ▶ Example: I will or will I? First is a statement, second is a question

Relation between linguistic signs

- ▶ Relation between signs that appear in the presence of one another are syntagmatic relations.
- ▶ *'I will never forget that terrible day'* – Syntagm (Any coherent grouping of signs that form a unit)
- ▶ In the sentence above "that terrible day" cannot be split or separated. These three words function as a single unit.
- ▶ Is it the same in "never forget that"?

Relation between linguistic signs

- ▶ Speakers not always put signs together in a string of words but – **choose** the signs that go in a sequence **from a number of alternatives** that may have been used.
- ▶ Paradigmatic dimensions – each sign selected involves a contrast with other signs that may have been used instead
- ▶ Signs in this case are related in a paradigmatic relation forming a “**paradigm**”.

Relation between linguistic signs

- ▶ The set of signs in paradigmatic relation with a particular sign in a syntagm is restricted.
- ▶ In the aforementioned sentence “ I will never forget that terrible day” the sign “I” contrasts with...
- ▶ Can I use “not” or “up” in that position?
- ▶ Let’s play a game with the word “Brother”
- ▶ The meaning of a sign in a language is dependent in part on the other signs in closely paradigmatic relation.