

How is lexical iconicity to be defined and operationalised?

Mark Dingemanse

Iconicity: “the resemblance-based mapping between aspects of form and meaning” (Dingemanse et al. 2015)

lexical iconicity

a semiotic relation that comes in types

Bellugi & Klima 1978, Ahlner & Zlatev 2010, Perniss et al. 2010 ...

useful for: qualitative analyses of lexical iconic patterns

challenge: types may be subjective and tend to multiply

image vs. diagram vs. ?metaphor (Peirce, Colapietro 2011)

strong vs. weak (Lyons 1977, Dingemanse et al. 2016)

transparent vs. translucent vs. opaque (Bellugi & Klima 1978)

primary vs. secondary (Sonesson 1994, Ahlner & Zlatev 2010)

?corporeal vs. imitative vs. synesthetic (Hinton et al. 1994)

pantomimic vs. perceptual (Tolar et al. 2008, Ortega et al. 2015)

phono vs. pheno vs. psychomimes (Martin 1975, Akita 2009)

relative vs. Gestalt (Dingemanse 2009/2011, Perniss et al. 2010)

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a substance that comes in degrees

Vinson et al. 2008, Perry et al. 2015, Winter et al. 2017, ...

useful for: correlational studies of learning & lexical structure

challenges: instructions are crucial; judgements are a black box

method	9 highest rated words
How iconic is this? [written]	uh oh, quack, moo, rip, cockado..., hard, shh, vroom, meow
How easy to guess for an alien?	woof, no, yucky, go, vroom, hello, l, yum, clap

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a property that is present or absent

Osaka et al. 2006, Revill et al. 2014, Bankieris and Simner 2015, ...

useful for: probing cognitive processes and mechanisms

challenge: underestimating multidimensionality

a *semiotic relation* that comes in types
a *substance* that comes in degrees
a *property* that is present or absent

needed:

theories that connect these operationalisations
minds that can flexibly switch between them

Iconicity as structure-mapping

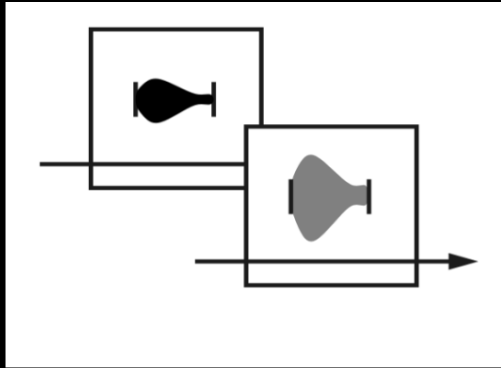
Form and meaning provide materials for building perceptual analogies (von Humboldt 1836, Bühler 1934, Gentner 1983, Tufvesson 2011, Emmorey 2014)

The iconicity question

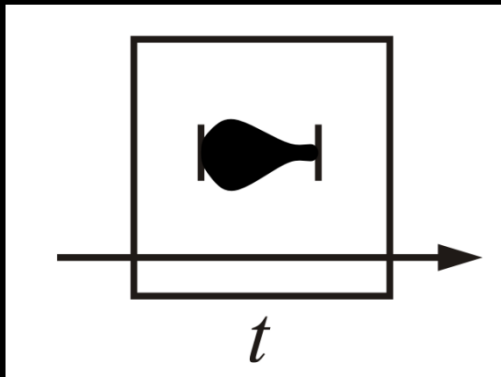
What are the affordances of form and meaning such that they support structural correspondences?
(Dingemanse 2013 *Gesture*)

Meaning	Modality	
	<i>Spoken</i>	<i>Signed</i>
Abstract concepts, logical operators, ...	Hard	Hard
Spatial relations, visual shape, ...	Hard	Easy
Sound, loudness, ...	Easy	Hard
Size, repetition, temporal unfolding, intensity, ...	Easy	Easy

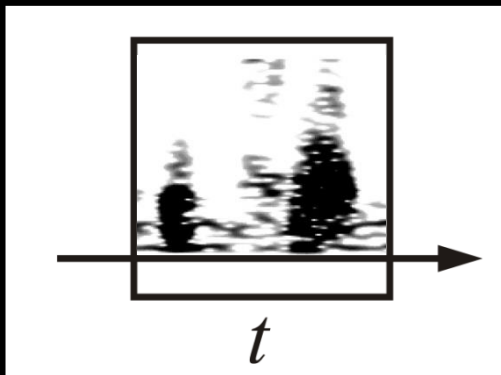
speech: affordances



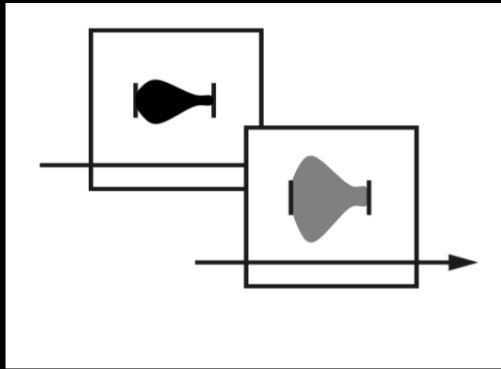
intensity, magnitude, quality



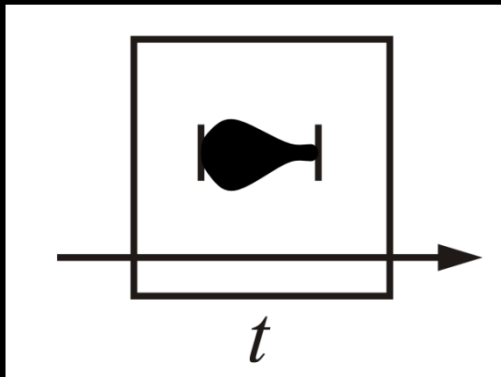
temporal profile



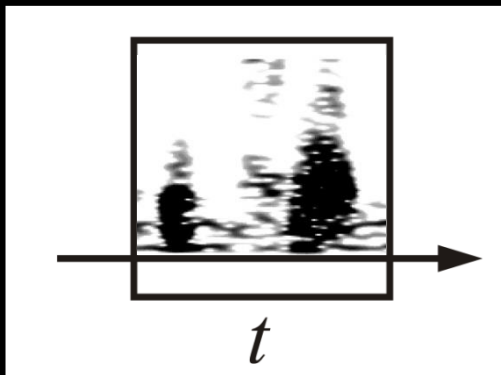
sound



relative iconicity: related forms
map onto related meanings
intensity, magnitude, quality



Gestalt iconicity: word structure
maps onto event structure
temporal profile



imagic iconicity: form and
meaning share modality
sound

diagrammatic

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Based on the following work (and references therein):

Dingemanse, Mark. 2013. Ideophones and gesture in everyday speech. *Gesture* 13(2). 143–165. doi:10.1075/gest.13.2.02din.

Dingemanse, Mark, Damián E. Blasi, Gary Lupyan, Morten H. Christiansen & Padraic Monaghan. 2015. Arbitrariness, iconicity and systematicity in language. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 19(10). 603–615. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2015.07.013.

Dingemanse, Mark. 2019. “Ideophone” as a comparative concept. In Kimi Akita & Prashant Pardeshi (eds.), *Ideophones, Mimetics, Expressives*, 13–34. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/ill.16.02din.