Systemitized iconicity: A mapping of components from space, body, hands, face to Wierzbicka's semantic primitives

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Iconicity is often treated as a global cognitive process of identifying/mapping similarity between form and referent. We adopt a novel perspective: which semantic concepts can be expressed using space and the human body? Wierzbicka's (1996) 55 semantic primitives is the testbed. We break iconicity into component pieces. How far can we go with basic visible pieces? Further question: could we ever have gotten language without iconicity as a basis?

Visible space is used for: (1) iconic representations – space for space; (2) metaphors – space for something else; and (3) linguistic use – space for grammar. Examples of (1): up/down, left/right, here/there, near/far, side; I, you, other, this – but ONLY after adding the body and a means for indicating besides eyegaze (can't gaze to yourself). Indicating body parts gives say, see, hear. With hand relations: inside, under/above, big/small. For (2) (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) orientational metaphors, vertical axis: happy is up, sad is down; space for time on front-back axis: future forward, past behind, now at sender's body; before/after, a long/short time. We are at 22, but needed hands, relations/orientations, and movements.

With (3), we see language-like behavior. ASL uses vertical space for definite/indefinite. Vertical space can show mental activities: think, know, hypothetical *what if*s (the side of the head, 'mental space'). Thus, we get conditional 'if', and other expressions of advanced cognition. The real business of spatial iconicity for grammar (event and argument structure) starts with geometry: point, line, plane shapes/volumes. Points give individuals (*x*). Movement between points can indicate force dynamics (hit), transfer (give), change of location (arrive). We maintain that representations carry notions of spatial patterning for e.g., ordered/random sets of arguments, temporal patterning for aspect (incessant, habitual, iterative), and event structure, including telic event endings (from visible physics), supporting the Event Visibility Hypothesis (Wilbur 2003).

We argue that SLs recruit available visible resources from physics and geometry, and use them for linguistic purposes in a variety of ways. How these resources are used may vary from SL to SL, but the available visible resources are the same and provide the components to 'visible iconicity'.

References: • Lakoff, G. & M. Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. • Wierzbicka, A. 1996. *Semantics: Primes and universals*. Oxford: OUP. • Wilbur, R. B. 2003. Representations of telicity in ASL. *Chicago Linguistic Society* 39. 354–368.