

3 Language and communication

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Reading

1 Predicting the content of a text

- 1.1 a You have been asked to prepare for a tutorial on the question *How are language choices influenced by the context in which communication takes place?* You need to decide which books on your reading list will contain relevant information. Use the strategy below to assess the first book on the list.

1 Read the title of the book.
What does the main title tell you about the topic of the book?
What does the subtitle tell you?
What do you know about the topic already?

Communicating Across Cultures: Understanding in a global world

2 Read the title of Chapter 2.
What do you know about these topics already?
How does this relate to the title of the book?
Does this title tell you anything about how the chapter will be organised?

2 *Speech acts, politeness and misunderstanding*

3 Read the title of section 2.5.
What do you think the section is about?

2.5 *The gender factor*

4 Read the opening sentence of the first paragraph of section 2.5.
What do you think follows in the paragraph?

Some sociolinguistic research suggests that women are more likely than men to use politeness strategies in their speech.

5 Read the opening sentence of the second paragraph.
What do you think follows in the paragraph?

Hobbs (2003) argues that it is important that studies in gender variation should examine the relationship between situation and language use.

- b How might the text in 1.1a be relevant for the tutorial question *How are language choices influenced by the context in which communication takes place?*

1.2 In pairs, discuss whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about making predictions before and while you read.

- 1 It helps me decide whether I want to carry on reading the text.
- 2 It makes me evaluate what the writer is saying.
- 3 It helps me understand vocabulary in the text.
- 4 It is more important when reading some texts than others.
- 5 It improves my reading speed.
- 6 It helps me find the information I need in a text.



Study tip You can improve your reading efficiency by predicting what is to come and then checking your predictions against what you find in the text.

1.3 You are going to read an extract from a book with the title *The Study of Language*, taken from a chapter with the title *On the development of writing*. What do you already know about writing and its development? In pairs, complete the following statements by underlining the correct words in *italics*.

- 1 Most alphabets contain 20 to 30 / 30 to 40 symbols.
- 2 The earliest known alphabet developed around 1700BC in *the Middle East / North America*.
- 3 The earliest remaining examples of written symbols are on pieces of wood / *clay*.
- 4 The earliest writing systems used *letters / pictures*.
- 5 Some of the earliest Chinese writing was done on *paper / bones*.
- 6 The largest alphabet is Khmer, with 74 / 54 letters.

1.4 Before you start reading, look at the title *Pictograms and ideograms* and predict what the text will be about.

- 1 Do you know what *pictograms* and *ideograms* are?
- 2 Do you know any other words beginning *pict-* and *ide-* that might give you a clue?

2 Reading for detail

2.1 Read the text and decide where the following pictures (A–F) should be inserted in the text (1–6).



A 3 B _____ C _____ D _____ E _____ F _____

Pictograms and ideograms

Cave drawings may serve to record some event (e.g. Humans 3, Buffaloes 1), but they are not usually thought of as any type of specifically linguistic message. They are usually treated as part of a tradition of pictorial art. When some of the 'pictures' came to represent particular images in a consistent way, we can begin to describe the product as a form of picture-writing, or pictograms. In this way, a form such as **1** might come to be used for the sun. An essential part of this use of a representative symbol is that everyone should use a similar form to convey a roughly similar meaning. That is, a conventional relationship must exist between the symbol and its interpretation.

→ Symbolic, ideographic

G&V 3, p53

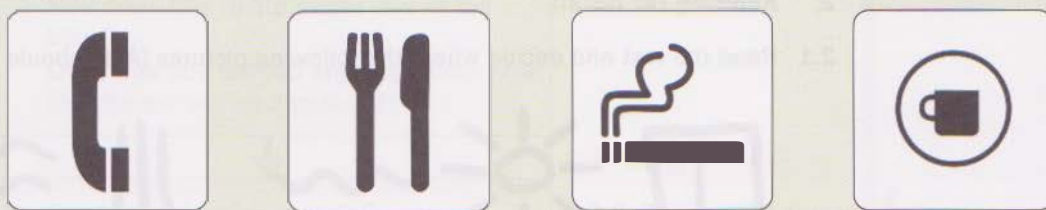
10 In time, this picture might develop into a more fixed symbolic form, such as **2**, and come to be used for 'heat' and 'daytime', as well as for 'sun'. Note that as the symbol extends from 'sun' to 'heat', it is moving from something visible to something conceptual (and no longer a picture). This type of symbol is then considered to be part of a system of idea-writing, or ideograms. The distinction between pictograms and ideograms is essentially a difference in
15 are pictograms and the more abstract derived forms are ideograms.

A key property of both pictograms and ideograms is that they do not represent words or sounds in a particular language. Modern pictograms, such as those represented in the accompanying illustration [Figure 1], are language-independent and can be understood with
20 much the same basic conventional meaning in a lot of different places where a number of different languages are spoken.

It is generally thought that there were pictographic and ideographic origins for a large number of symbols that turn up in later writing systems. For example, in Egyptian hieroglyphics, the symbol **3** was used to refer to a house and derived from the diagrammatic representation of the floor-plan of a house. In Chinese writing, the character **4** was used for a river, and had
25 its origins in the pictorial representation of a stream flowing between two banks. However, it is important to note that neither the Egyptian nor the Chinese written symbols are actually 'pictures' of a house or a river. They are more abstract. When we create symbols in a writing system, there is always an abstraction away from the physical world.

When the relationship between the symbol and the entity or idea becomes sufficiently
30 abstract, we can be more confident that the symbol is probably being used to represent words in a language. In early Egyptian writing, the ideogram for water was **5**. Much later, the derived symbol **6** came to be used for the actual word meaning 'water'. When symbols are used to represent words in a language, they are described as examples of word-writing, or 'logograms'.

Figure 1



Yule, G. (2006). *The Study of Language*. (3rd edn). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3 Scanning for information

3.1 Read the text again and decide which of the characteristics (a-f) apply to each of the following terms (1-4). Some characteristics apply to more than one term.

- | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|--------------|-------|-------|---|--|
| 1 | Pictograms | <u> a </u> | _____ | _____ | a | A picture that represents an image |
| 2 | Ideograms | _____ | _____ | _____ | b | The source of symbols in later writing systems |
| 3 | Modern pictograms | _____ | _____ | _____ | c | Doesn't stand for particular words or sounds |
| 4 | Logograms | _____ | _____ | _____ | d | Independent of any language |
| | | | | | e | Used as words in a language |
| | | | | | f | An abstract form, not a picture |

4 Understanding implicit meanings

The relationship between sentences may be signalled with a sentence connector (e.g. For instance). Where it is not, the relationship is implicit and you need to work out the connection.

4.1 What is the relationship between the second and the first sentence? Is it an *explanation*, a *contrast* or an *example*?

- 1 Cave drawings may serve to record some event (e.g. Humans 3, Buffaloes 1), but they are not usually thought of as any type of specifically linguistic message. They are usually treated as part of a tradition of pictorial art. _____
- 2 The distinction between pictograms and ideograms is essentially a difference in the relationship between the symbol and the entity it represents. The more 'picture-like' forms are pictograms and the more abstract derived forms are ideograms. _____
- 3 ... it is important to note that neither the Egyptian nor the Chinese written symbols are actually 'pictures' of a house or a river. They are more abstract. _____
- 4 When the relationship between the symbol and the entity or idea becomes sufficiently abstract, we can be more confident that the symbol is probably being used to represent words in a language. In early Egyptian writing, the ideogram for water was [5]. _____

5 Vocabulary building: adjectives

5.1 a In pairs, try to replace the words in bold with adjectives from the text in 2.1. Look back at the text to check your answers.

- 1 When some of the 'pictures' come to represent particular images in a way that **doesn't change**, we can begin to describe the result as a form of 'pictogram'. (line 4) _____
- 2 As the symbol extends from 'sun' to 'heat', it moves from something that **can be seen** to something **based on ideas**, and no longer a picture. (line 11) _____; _____
- 3 Modern pictograms are language-independent and can be understood with much the same basic **generally accepted** meaning in many different places. (line 19) _____
- 4 When the relationship between the symbol and the entity or idea becomes **unconnected with real objects**, it is fairly certain that the symbol is being used to represent words in a language. (line 30) _____

b Complete these sentences using the adjectives you wrote in 5.1a.

- 1 Some doctors advocate an integrated approach to medicine, using both _____ and alternative medicine, such as homeopathy.
- 2 Ursa Major is a constellation _____ throughout the year in large parts of the northern hemisphere.
- 3 A study in 2000 has revealed that the percentage of the population belonging to religious groups has remained _____.
- 4 Scientists have been criticised for ignoring practical applications of science in preference to more _____ and theoretical issues.
- 5 The test aims to assess both the factual and _____ knowledge of students.

6 Thinking about ways of taking notes

6.1 a In pairs, think about possible strengths and weaknesses of each of the following note type.

- 1 Tabular notes: notes are organised in a table
- 2 Diagrammatic notes: notes are connected by lines; key words may be put in boxes
- 3 Highlighting notes: the most important words in the text are highlighted or underlined.
- 4 Margin notes: notes are written in the margin of the book, article, etc.
- 5 Linear notes (handwritten / word processed): notes are handwritten, or typed, as normal text; line spacing and underlining may be used to show text organisation, key words, etc.

- b Discuss when one note type would be more useful than another and then decide which of the note types you would use to make notes on the text in 2.1 to prepare for a presentation of *writing systems*.