

*Sign or non-sign?*

*Abstraction and concretization in an Uexküll-based model for multimodal interaction*

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When considering processes of abstraction and concretization *within* the domain of signs—e.g. in linguistics, the relation between the abstract language system and its instantiation in concrete utterances—the fundamental distinction between signs and non-signs is often neglected. What is the difference between the action of pushing and the gesture of pushing? How is it that a pencil—as the demonstratum of a given pointing gesture—can either function as the object that the speaker is referring to, namely this particular pencil, or function as a sign for another reference object, for example, a car in a car-crash scenario (Fricke 2007)? How can it be explained that form features of iconic gestures may contradict the form features of the reference object intended by the speaker? And how can processes of type construction and semantic loading be described (Fricke in press)?

My presentation is based on the fundamental Peircean assumptions that any entity can be interpreted as a sign or as a non-sign, and that the interpretation of an interpreter or addressee is independent from the intention of the sign producer. Whereas the interpretation of non-signs as signs can be understood as a process of abstraction, reciprocal processes of interpreting signs as non-signs are processes of concretization: The sign vehicle or representamen is in focus, and its relations to the object and the interpretant have been cut off. In other words: The triadic sign relation has been reduced to the former sign vehicle and its material qualities.

So far, interpretation processes of this kind have been primarily described as intra-personal processes. In contrast, I will propose a model for multimodal interaction which allows for descriptions of interpersonal processes between communicating individuals as well. In this model, two functional circles, based on Jakob von Uexküll's bio-semiotic sign concept, are connected. Whereas in Uexküll's monologic model, sender and recipient coexist (receptors = recipient, effectors = sender) within one organism, my proposal additionally allows for the description of complex feedback cycles in human multimodal interactions as well as those in non-human organisms.

## References

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