



# Metaphors in sign languages

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# Sign languages are not

- Pantomime
- Universal sign language
- Gesture variants of spoken languages
- Created by hearing people
- Fingerspelling

*Sign languages are complex and independent languages, which differ from spoken languages only in communication channel*

# History of SL study

- XIXв. –XIX – first SL descriptions made by teachers at schools for deaf children

- 1960 – William Stokoe's grammar of ASL

*Sign Languages are independent human languages*



# History of SL study

– 1970-1990 – various neuro- and psycholinguistic studies of SLs

*SLs are processed in the same brain domains as SpLs (Klima & Bellugi 1979)*



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- 2000 – Typology of Sign Languages



# SIs and iconicity

Ferdinand de Saussure :  
arbitrariness of the sign



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Prejustice against iconic forms in the  
language



# SIs and iconicity

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Prejudice against sign languages





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Prejudice against sign languages

Minimizing and discounting iconicity  
in sign languages



# SLs and iconicity

## New wave

Sign languages have incredible potential for iconic expression of a broad range of basic conceptual structures



# SLs and iconicity

## New wave

If sounds were not so limited in what they can iconically represent, they would no doubt have even more iconicity.



# Linguistic iconicity: The analogue-building model



[Sarah F. Taub 2001]

# Linguistic iconicity: The analogue-building model

- Image selection



[Sarah F. Taub 2001]

# Linguistic iconicity: The analogue-building model

- Image selection
- Schematization



[Sarah F. Taub 2001]

# Linguistic iconicity: The analogue-building model

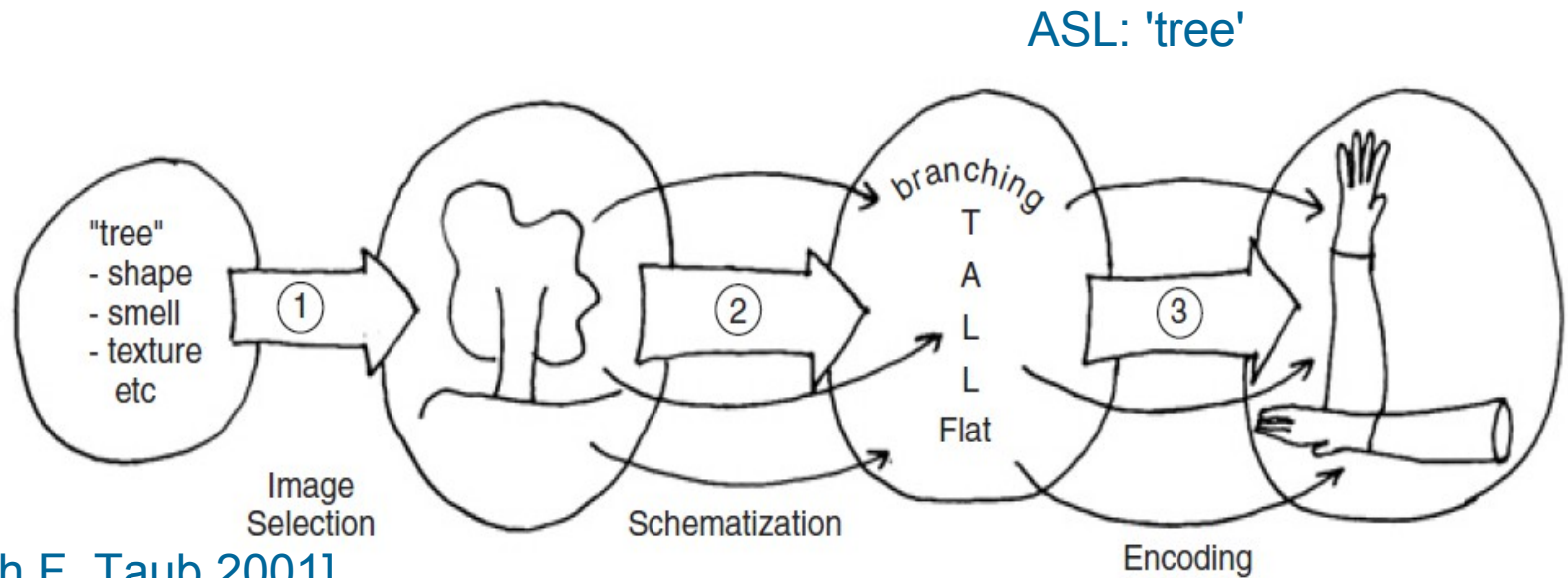
- Image selection
- Schematization
- Encoding



[Sarah F. Taub 2001]

# Linguistic iconicity: The analogue-building model

- Image selection
- Schematization
- Encoding



[Sarah F. Taub 2001]



# Iconic signs in RSL

rocking-chair



# Iconic signs in RSL

wardrobe



# Metaphor in sign languages

The double mapping :

- Iconical mapping between the concrete source domain and linguistic forms



# Metaphor in sign languages

The double mapping :

- Metaphorical mapping between the concrete source domain and an abstract target-domain
- Iconical mapping between the concrete source domain and linguistic forms



# Metaphor in sign languages : analogue-building model

Metaphor

Image selection

Schematization

Encoding



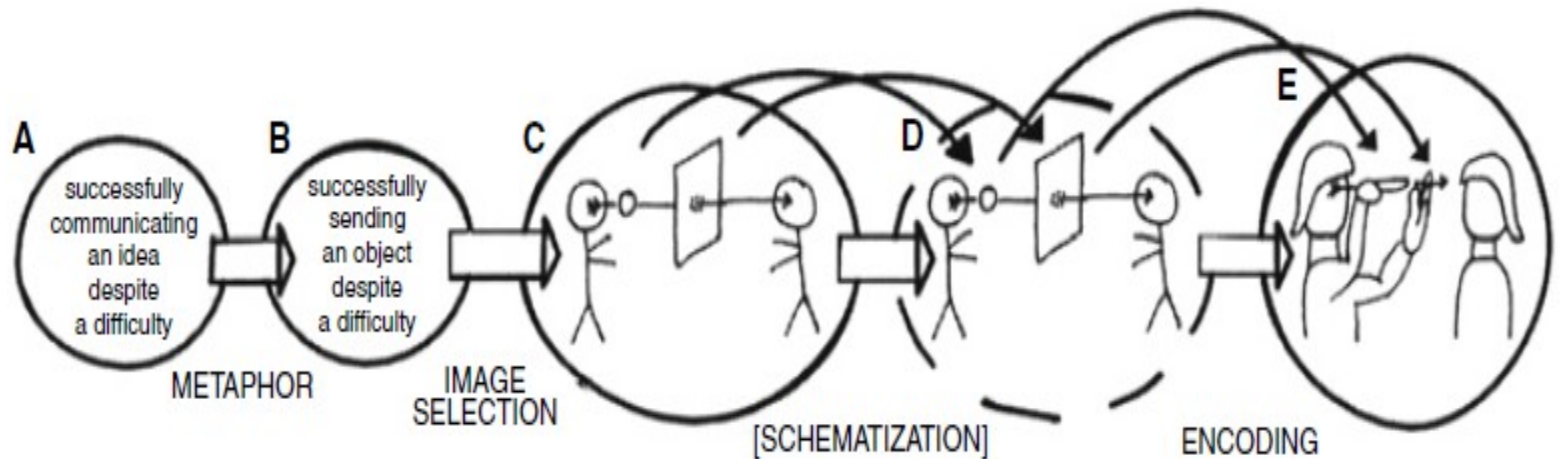
# Metaphor in sign languages : analogue-building model

ASL : 'think-penetrate'



# Metaphor in sign languages : analogue-building model

ASL : 'think-penetrate'



# Metaphor in sign languages: examples

RSL : 'to compare'





# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (1)



# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (1)

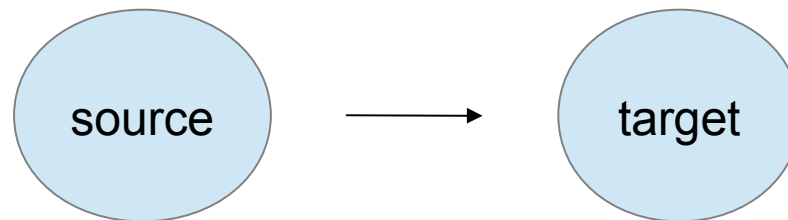
Completely different structure from  
the spoken languages metaphor



# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (1)

Completely different structure from  
the spoken languages metaphor

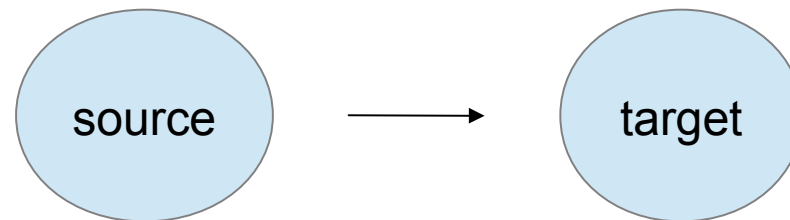
Metaphor in spoken languages :



# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (1)

Completely different structure from  
the spoken languages metaphor

Metaphor in spoken languages :



*soft pillow → soft glance*

# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (1)

Completely different structure from  
the spoken languages metaphor

- Based on iconicity
- No source



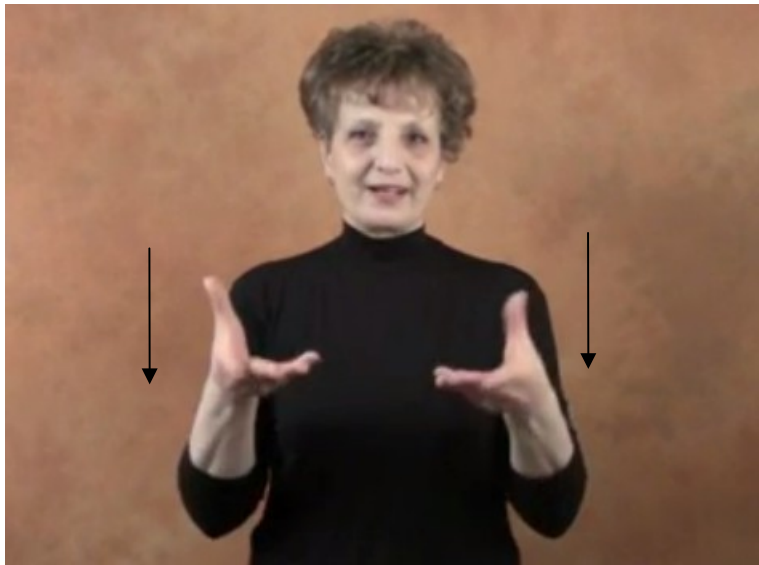
# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (2)

Based on iconicity – a concept, which  
itself need to be clarified



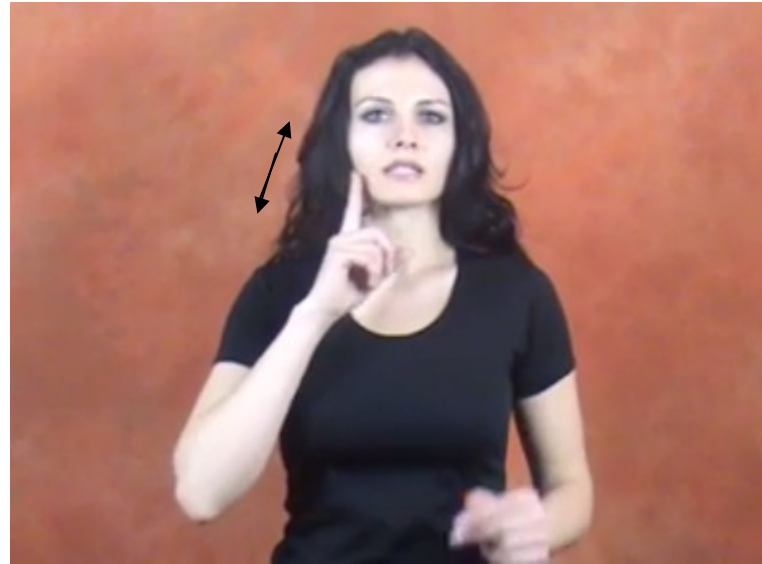
# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (2)

Based on iconicity – a concept, which  
itself need to be clarified  
RSL 'soft'



# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (2)

RSL 'green'





# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (2)

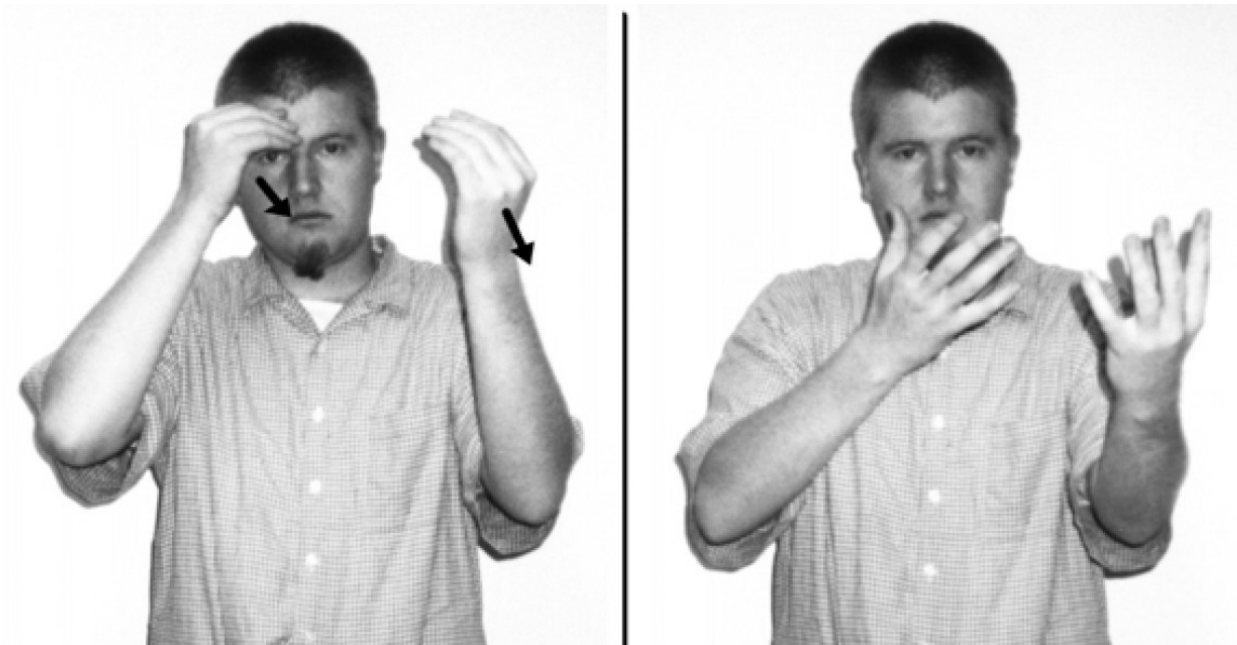
RSL 'full'



# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (3)

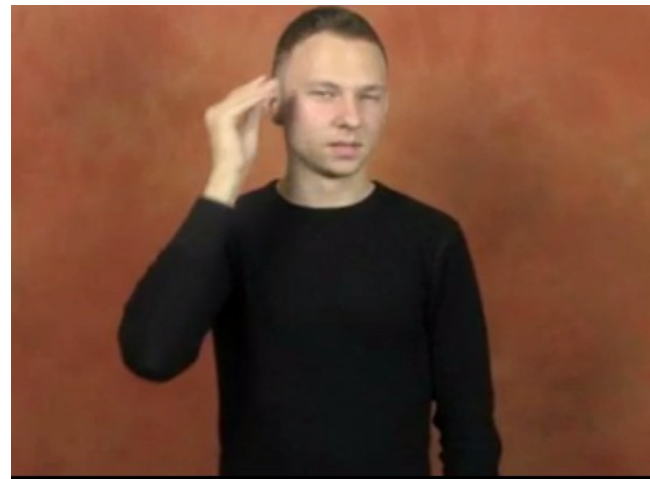
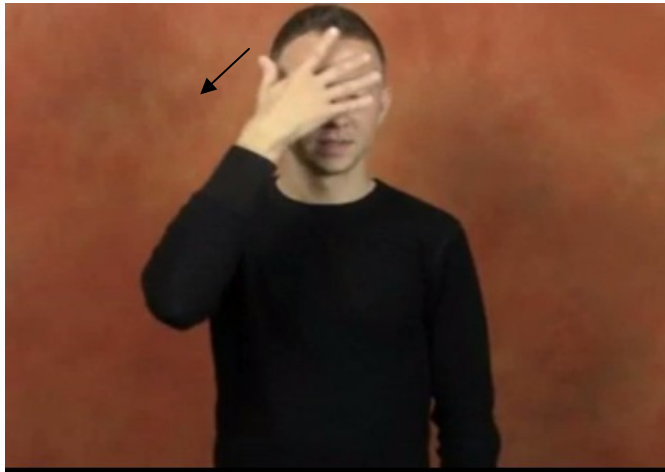
Field for imagination

ASL 'I inform you' [Taub 2001]



# Theory of metaphor in SLs : problems (3)

RSL 'forget'



# Theory of metaphor in SIs : solution

Not to start from iconicity  
Look for the source signs



# Theory of metaphor in SIs : solution

Not to start from iconicity

Look for the source signs

(1) exactly the same sign

RSL : *polnaya chashka* 'cupful' –

*polny obzor* 'full review'



# Theory of metaphor in Sls : solution

(2) source sign is a part of the target sign

ASL : 'think-penetrate'



# Theory of metaphor in SIs : solution

(2) source sign is a part of the target  
sign

ASL : 'drill'





# Theory of metaphor in Sls : solution

(2) source sign is a part of the target  
sign

RSL : 'understand'





# Theory of metaphor in Sls : solution

(2) source sign is a part of the target sign

RSL : 'penetrate'



# Conclusions

A different view of metaphor in SLs

- More natural
- Is based on the same principles as the theory of metaphor in spoken languages



**Thank you for your  
attention !**

