

Goossens', C. A. (1983). *The relative iconicity and learnability of verb referents differentially represented by manual signs, Blissymbols, and Rebus symbols: An investigation with moderately retarded individuals*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette. Lyle L. Lloyd (Advisor): 133 pages of text, 106 references, 6 appendices, 17 tables, and 20 figures.

This study investigated the relative iconicity, the relative learnability, and the role of iconicity in the learning of 12 verb referents differentially represented by manual signs (S), Blissymbols (B), and Rebus symbols (R). Toward this end, 54 institutionalized, nonspeech-naïve, moderately retarded adolescents/adults (24 with no memory constraints, 30 with memory constraints) were asked to perform either a Multiple-Choice Iconicity Task (MCIT) or a Paired-Associates Learning Task (PALT).

Irrespective of assigned task, across three consecutive days each subject received all three nonspeech conditions in either RSB, RBS or BRS order. Iconicity data were derived from the MCIT and the Baseline Cycle of the PALT; learning data were derived from the 7-Test Cycles of the PALT.

Investigating relative iconicity, Blissymbols proved to be significantly less iconic than Rebus symbols. The iconicity of Blissymbols in relation to manual signs and of manual signs in relation to Rebus symbols varied depending upon the iconicity task, the subject group, and the order of testing.

Concerning relative learnability, Blissymbols were consistently more difficult to learn than were manual signs or Rebus symbols. The relative ease with which manual signs and Rebus symbols were learned varied depending upon the subject group. Subjects with memory constraints found manual signs to be significantly more difficult to learn than Rebus symbols; subjects with no memory constraints learned manual signs and Rebus symbols with comparable ease. Order of training did not significantly affect the ease with which manual signs and Rebus symbols were learned. For Blissymbols, learning was significantly poorer when taught in a BRS order than when taught in RSB or RBS orders.

Addressing the role of iconicity in learning, significant correlations between iconicity and learning were evident for both manual signs and Rebus symbols. Iconicity of Blissymbols did not correlate significantly with learning of Blissymbols; ease of visual discrimination was speculated to be a more significant factor in learning.

Normal adult translucency rating data correlated more significantly with the learning data of moderately retarded individuals than did iconicity data derived from moderately retarded persons. Normal adult transparency data did not yield a significant correlation.