

SIDE TRIPS

1. Palmer (1996: 148–149) describes his ethnographic work with speakers of Yaqui, a Uto-Aztecan language of northern Mexico and southern Arizona. He tells the story of drawing a crude picture of a stick figure and a house, meant to show a man standing by a house. When the picture was presented to Yaqui speakers, they described it, in Yaqui, as “a boy walking by a house.” In the same way, a picture of a bee sitting on a wall was described as “the bee crawling on the wall,” and a picture of a duck in the water was described as “the duck being carried along on the current.”

Try to prove that communication between speakers of Yaqui and English is possible. Think of some difficulties that may arise in communication between these cultures, considering that “for Yaqui speakers animate images may have greater salience than static images” (Palmer, 1996: 148).

2. The Japanese culture is said to retain a *sakoku* mentality in its treatment of foreigners. For example, non-Japanese are referred to as “*gaijin*,” meaning people from outside. This term is not considered derogatory, but it still emphasizes the exclusiveness of Japanese attitudes toward outsiders. How might the Japanese sign for “*gaijin*” be translated into English through form and how through content? You may find the information in section 2 on page 130 helpful in answering this question.
3. In an article entitled “We Are All Americans” in the liberal Spanish newspaper *El País*, Vicente Verdu has this to say about the American influence on other cultures:

The American model of life repeats itself like a fractal in the many different aspects of everyday existence, be it communal life, sex, art, or money. . . . American influence consists of a whole bundle of things, of varying degrees of goodness and toxicity. . . . Thanks to the Americans, we have ecology, although the United States did not sign the Kyoto Accord, and thanks to the Americans we have hard-line feminism, militant gays, nontraditional couples, equity within couples, and acceptance of multiculturalism. (2002: 41)

Can you identify some “distinctly American” concepts and how they are represented with verbal or nonverbal signs in other cultures? An example would be the concept of fast food and its representation by the sign “McDonald’s” (verbal) or the golden arches (nonverbal).

CHECK YOURSELF

Symbol
Semiotics
Linguistic relativity
Lacuna
Strong version of linguistic relativity
Weak version of linguistic relativity

Cognitive look
Image-schema
Corporeal look
Manifested category
Manifesting category