# Article information:

Language is more abstract than you think, or, why aren't languages more iconic? | Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences  
<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rstb.2017.0137>

# Article summary:

1. The article discusses the origins of abstract knowledge and the design principles of language, exploring two major approaches to understanding semantic knowledge: embodied cognition and amodal cognition.

2. The article argues that despite the advantages of iconicity in language learning and processing, iconic words are less well-suited for expressing abstractions, which require word forms to be arbitrarily related to their meanings.

3. The article suggests that language is more abstract than often acknowledged by both embodied and amodal theorists, with abstract meanings being ubiquitous in common nouns.

# Article rating:

May be slightly imbalanced: The article presents the information in a generally reliable way, but there are minor points of consideration that could be explored further or claims that are not fully backed by appropriate evidence. Some perspectives may also be omitted, and you are encouraged to use the research topics section to explore the topic further.

# Article analysis:

The article "Language is more abstract than you think, or, why aren't languages more iconic?" published in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences discusses the origins of abstract knowledge and the design principles of language. The authors argue that to understand the origin of some abstract concepts, we need to turn to language itself. They discuss several ways that language can give rise to abstract concepts and argue that this ability may require word forms to be arbitrarily related to their meanings.

The article presents two major approaches to understanding semantic knowledge: embodied cognition and amodal cognition. Embodied cognition emphasizes the importance of perceptual, motor, and emotional experiences in our conceptual structure and word meanings. In contrast, amodal cognition emphasizes the role of symbolic and non-perceptual representations. The authors argue that accounting for abstract knowledge has posed a challenge for both approaches.

The article also discusses iconicity in language, which refers to cases where a word form bears some resemblance to its meaning. The authors argue that iconic words are too linked to specific referents and contexts, making them less well-suited for expressing abstractions. They present novel empirical evidence suggesting that there is a tension between abstract meanings and iconicity such that less iconic words are better suited for conveying abstract meanings.

One potential bias in this article is its focus on the advantages of less iconic languages for expressing abstract meanings without fully exploring potential benefits of more iconic languages. Additionally, while the article acknowledges challenges with both embodied and amodal approaches to understanding semantic knowledge, it does not fully explore alternative perspectives or counterarguments.

Overall, this article provides an interesting perspective on the relationship between language and abstract knowledge but could benefit from further exploration of alternative viewpoints and potential biases.

# Topics for further research:

* Alternative perspectives on embodied and amodal approaches to semantic knowledge
* Advantages of more iconic languages for expressing abstract meanings
* Critiques of the arbitrary relationship between word forms and meanings
* The role of culture in shaping abstract concepts and language
* The impact of language on thought and perception
* The evolution of language and its relationship to abstract knowledge

# Report location:

<https://www.fullpicture.app/item/2fe3ef7d7cabf4e00659bfc0cc44411e>