The Structure of Blissymbolics

Margareta Jennische

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Speech and Language Pathology
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UNIVERSITET

Blissymbolics is a graphic AAC which allows to express language. Bliss-words are based on the meaning of concepts. The derivation of the included characters in a Bliss-word explains the meaning. The grammar is mainly expressed by indicators over the Blisswords.

But all this will be explained in the workshops.

Blisswords may look difficult:

But are they really difficult?

After these workshops I hope that you easily will be able to derive the meaning of this Bliss-word.

Bliss - words in use as AAC are always accompanied with the translation (the gloss)

In this presentation however all Bliss-words are given without the translation to a spoken language in order to give you the chance to derive the meanings yourself.

Also - In the presentation all Bliss-words are drawn on a grid to clearly show the proportions of their included elements.

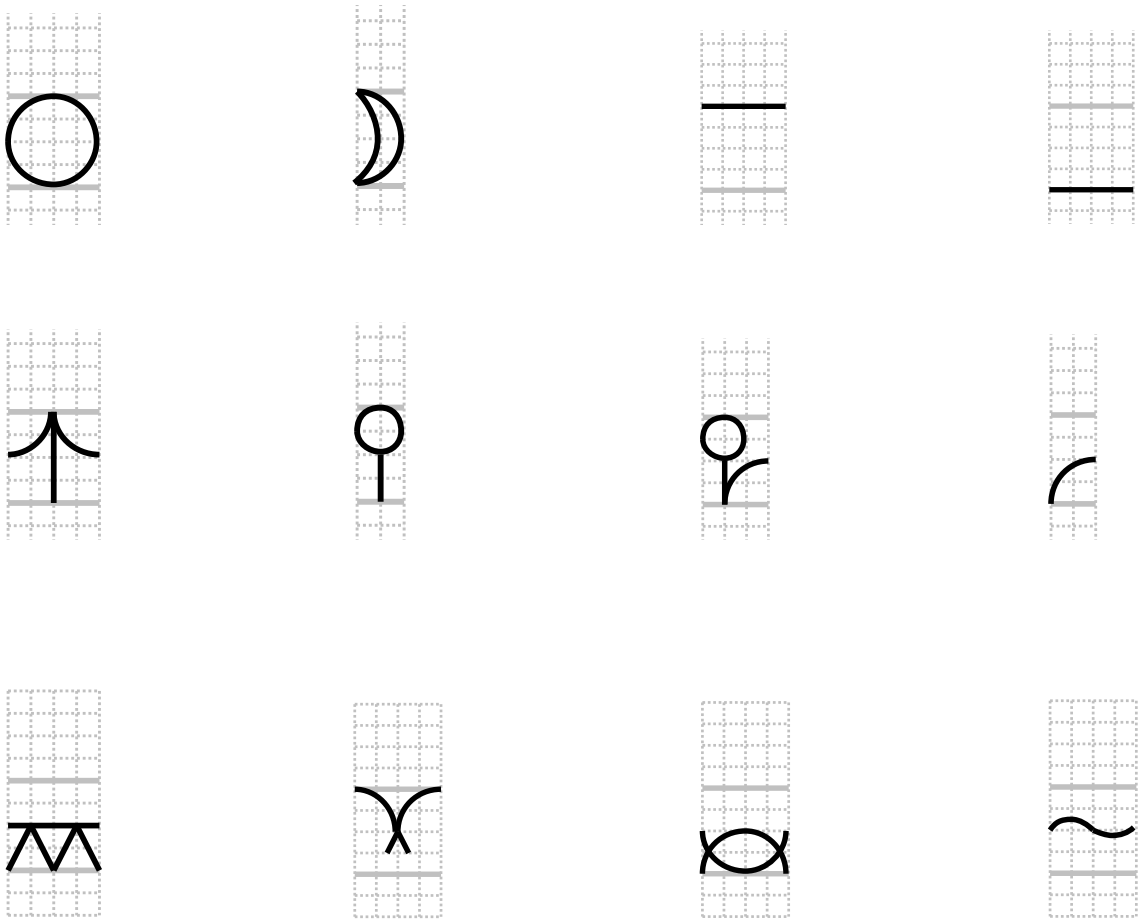
Bliss-words in use as AAC are without a grid, and can therefore easily be drawn by hand.

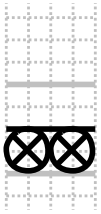
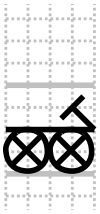
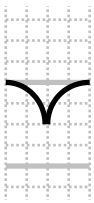
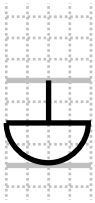
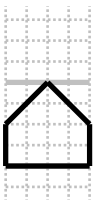
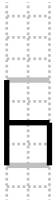
Blissymbolics, workshop nr 1

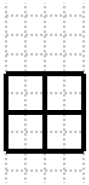
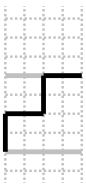
A Bliss-character is a basic “building block” of Blissymbolics.

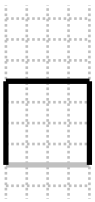
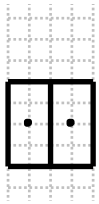
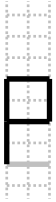
Each Bliss-character has a semantic meaning or function.

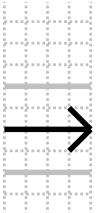
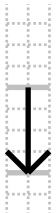
Examples of basic Bliss-characters
which are also **one-character Bliss-words:**

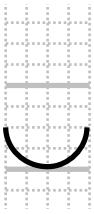
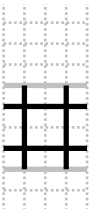


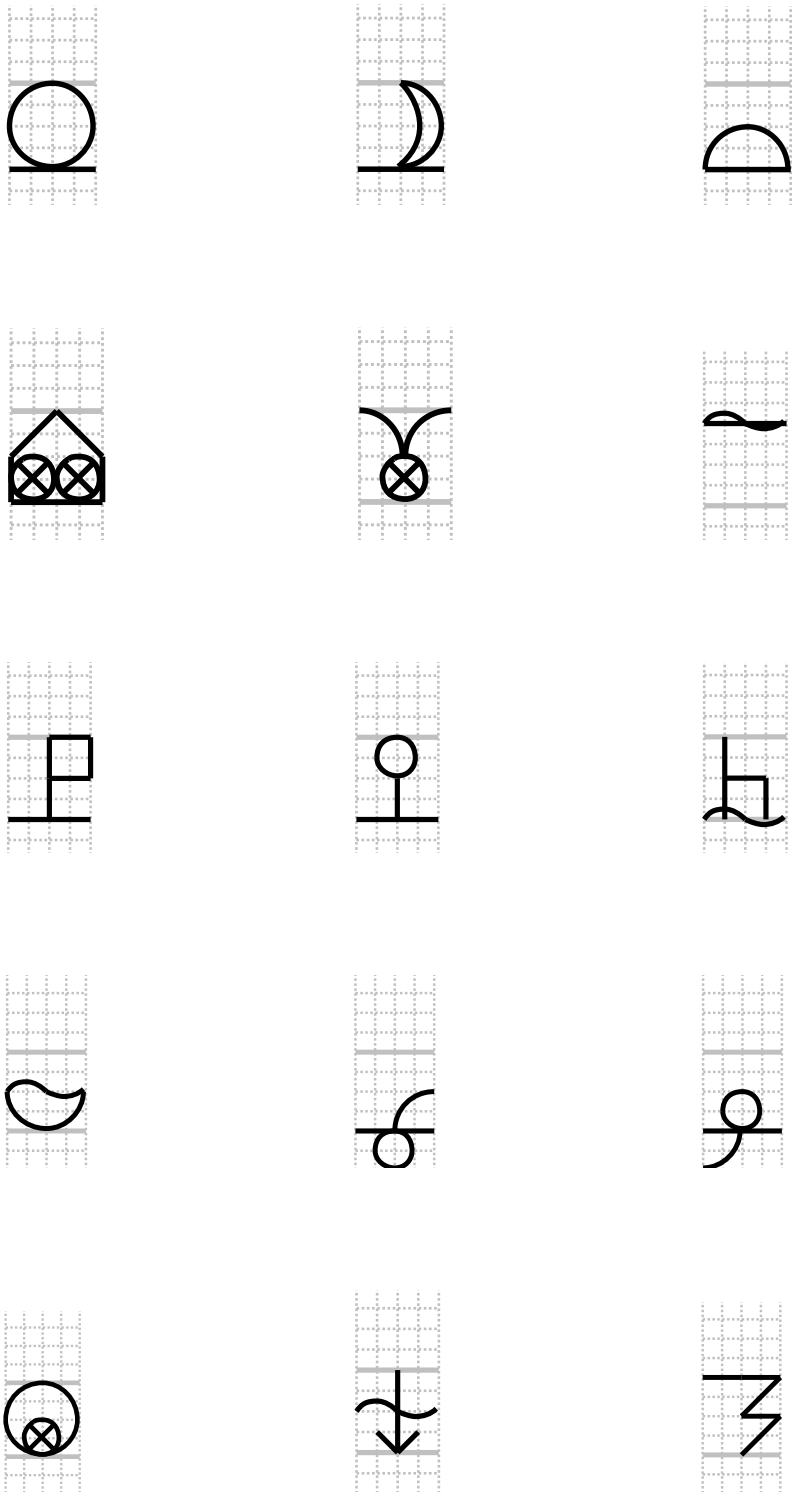



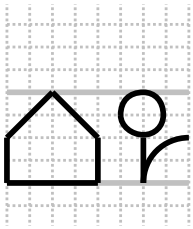



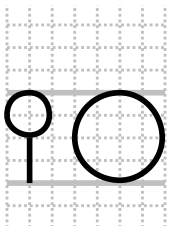



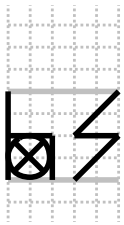
Basic Bliss-characters can be superimposed forming compound Bliss-characters

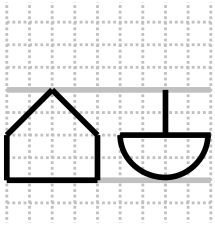


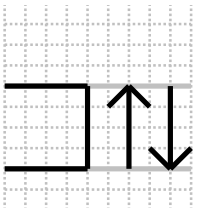
Bliss-characters can be sequenced forming multi-character Bliss-words

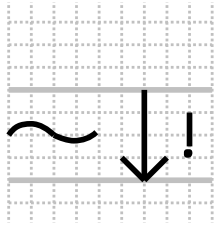


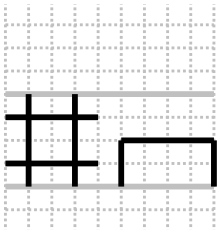


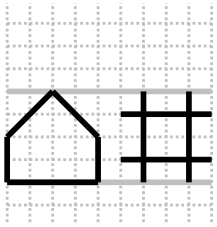


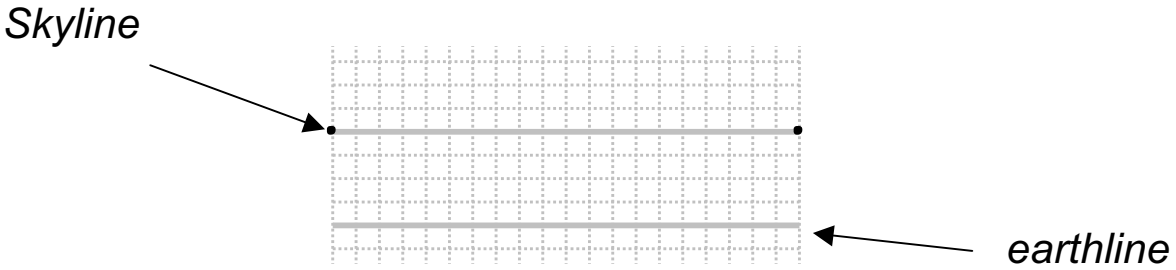








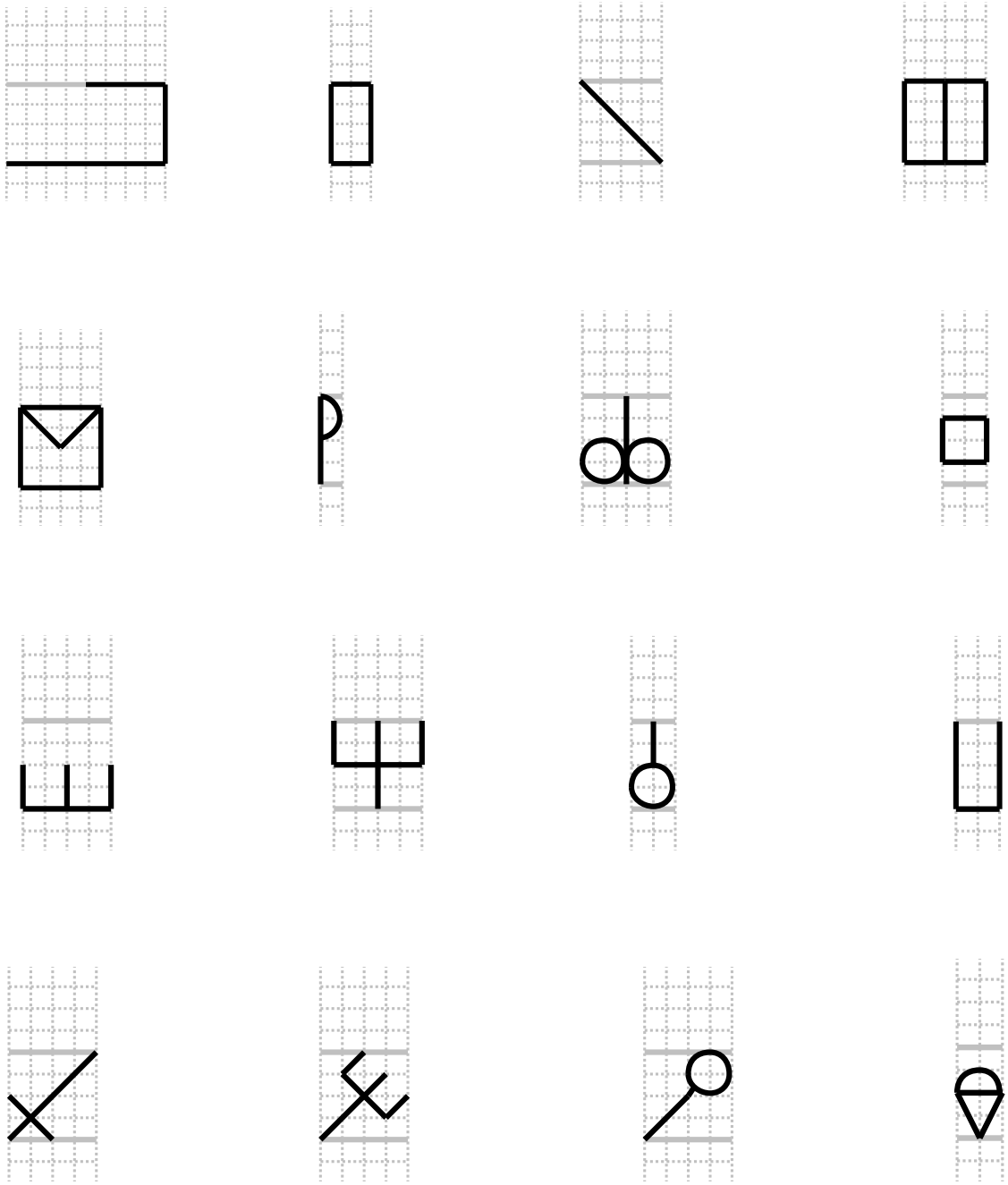




Worksheet Bliss-words 1

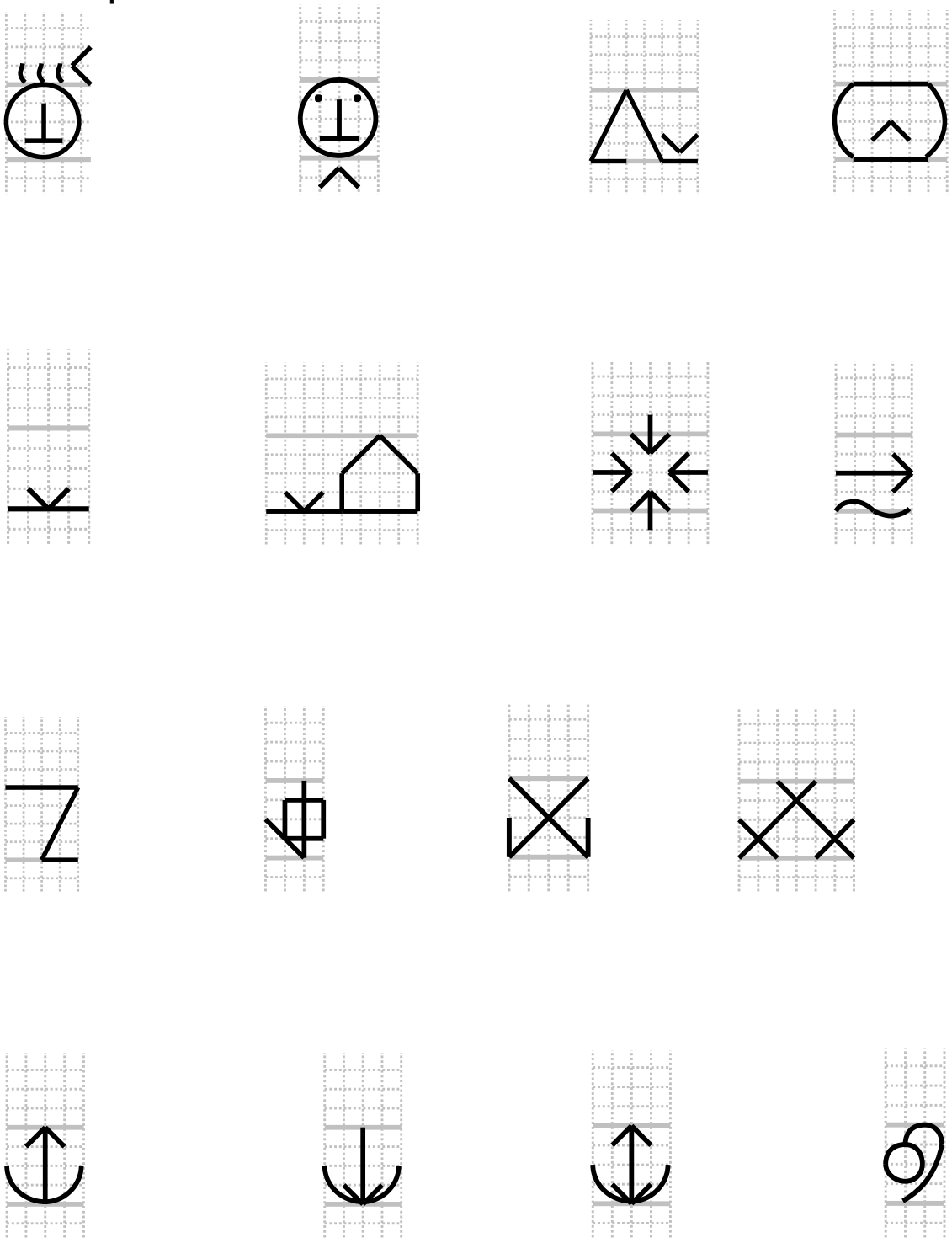
Blissymbolics, workshop nr 2

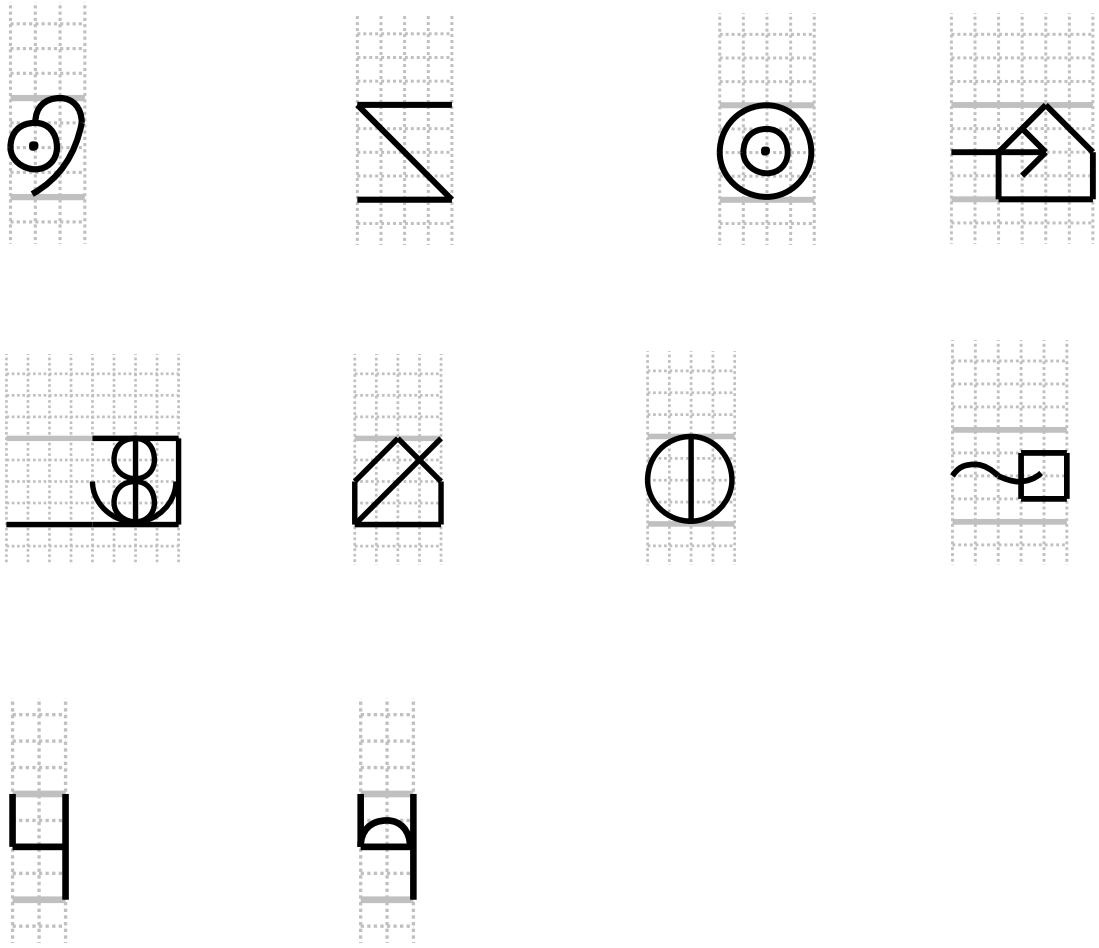
More examples of basic Bliss-characters which are also one-character Bliss-words.



More superimposed characters forming compound Bliss-characters

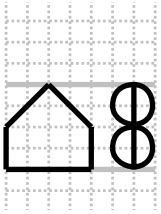
Use of pointers

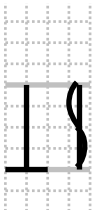
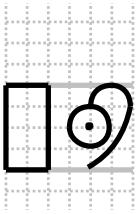
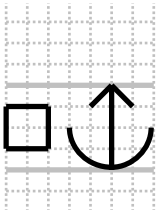
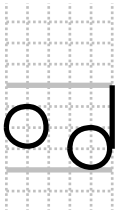
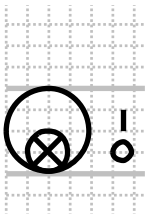
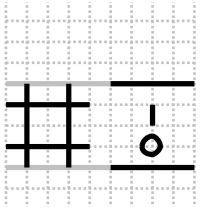
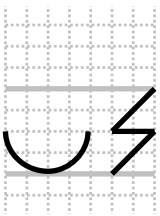
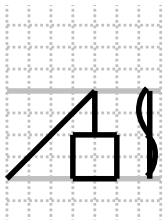
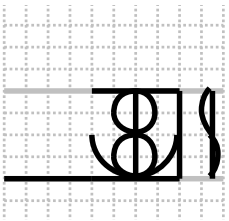




It is important to note that the original associations paired with each shape/component in the Bliss-words are those assigned by Charles K. Bliss. In some instances, persons new to Blissymbols might believe they could improve on these associations. However, to maintain the internal integrity of the language of Blissymbolics, BCI decided from the beginning, to retain the meanings assigned by the originator of Blissymbolics, C. K. Bliss.

More sequences of characters forming multi-character Bliss-words



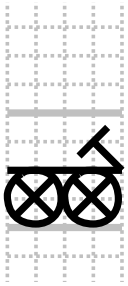
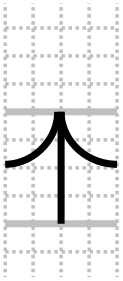










Worksheet Bliss-words 2

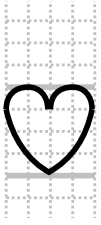
Blissymbolics, workshop nr 3

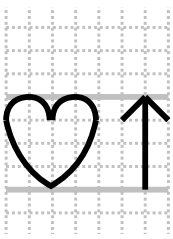
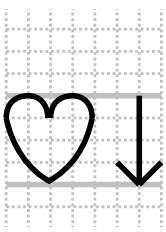
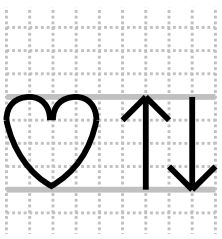
Bliss-characters: pictographic, ideographic, international

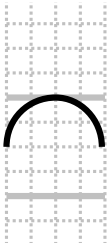
So far most Bliss-characters have been more or less *pictographic*. They have not depicted a specific thing, like a specific house or a specific animal, but shown the shape of some important features of a concrete referent e.g.,

car  *and tree* 

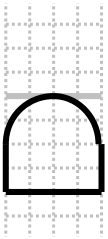
Many words in a language refer to an abstract concept. In Blissymbolics many Bliss-characters are *ideographic* which means that a well-recognized shape is given an abstract meaning.

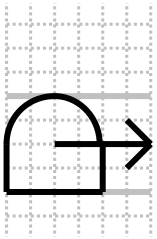
 *feeling*

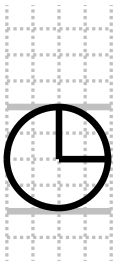






mind, thought





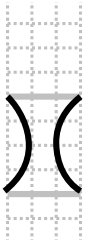


time

month

past

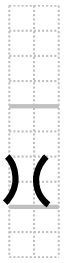
future



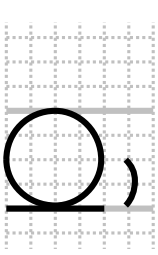
present time

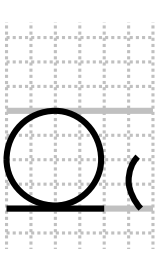
ago

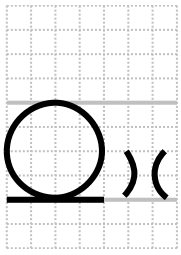
then

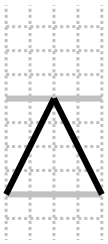


now

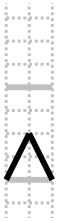




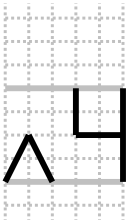


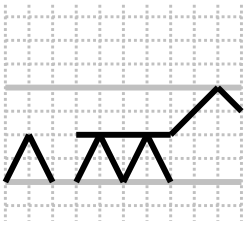


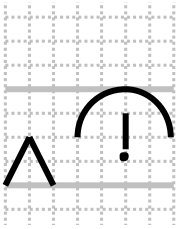
action

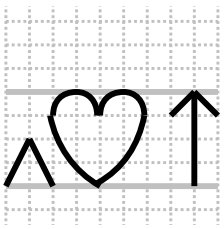


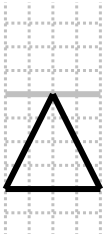
activity, male(gender)



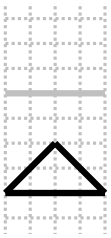




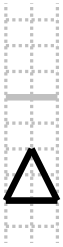




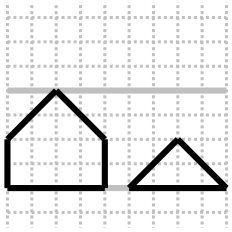
creation

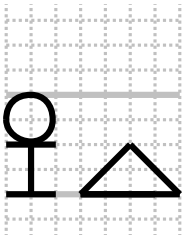


making, production

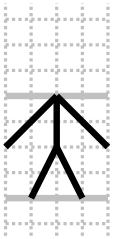


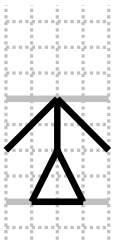
female (gender)

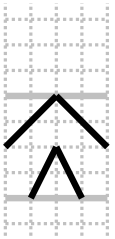


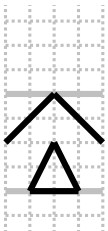


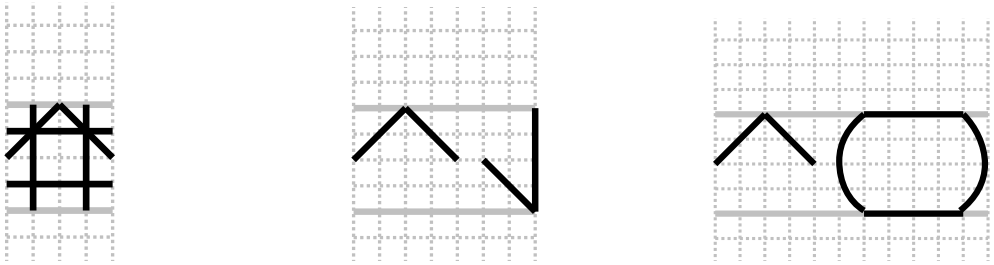
protection, shelter

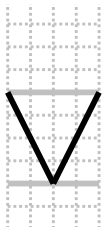








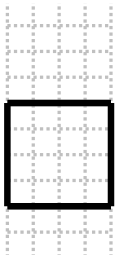




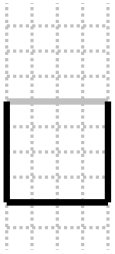
evaluation

cause, reason

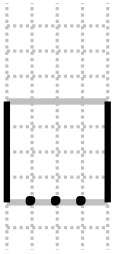
effect, result



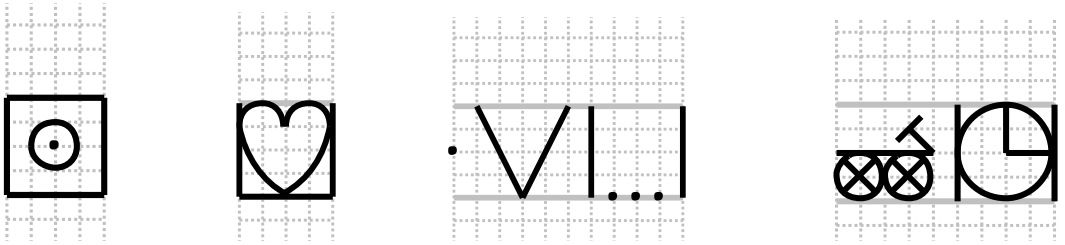
enclosure



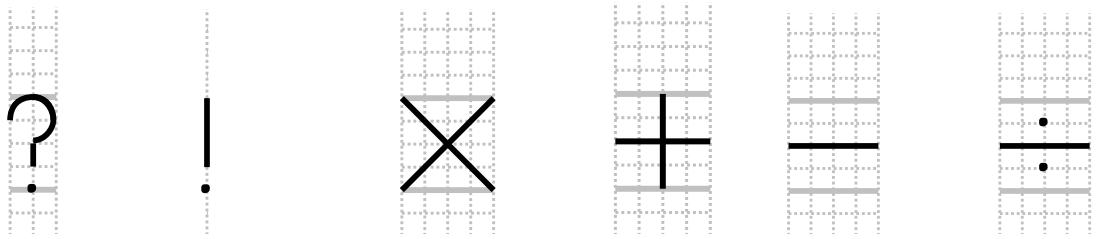
opening



limitation

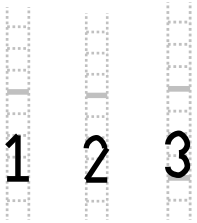


International characters used in Blissymbolics



question imperative multiplication addition subtraction division

arrows and arrow-heads in four directions



numbers

Worksheet Bliss-words 3 abstracts. **Worksheet Bliss-words 4 more abstracts**

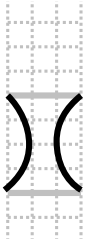
Blissymbolics, workshop nr 4

“Big and little meaning”

Full-sized and half-sized Bliss-characters have different but related meanings

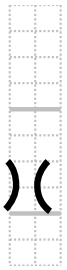
past

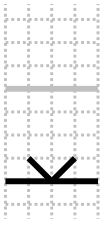
future


present time

ago

then

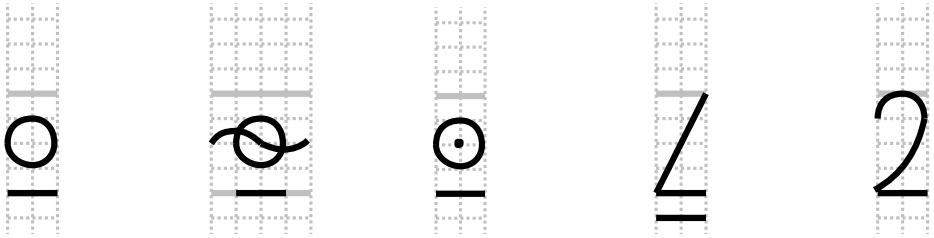

now

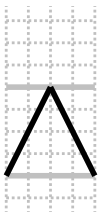

place

on

earth, ground, land

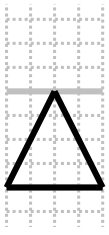
ground – (little meaning, “surrounding”)



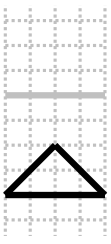


action

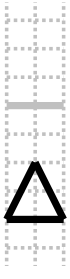
activity, male(gender)



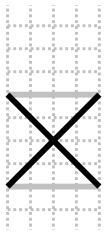
creation



making, production

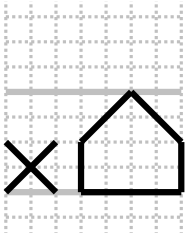


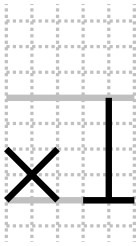
female (gender)

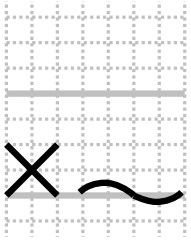


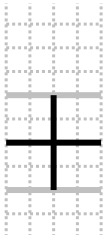
multiplication

much, many

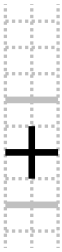




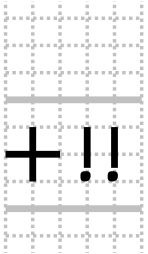


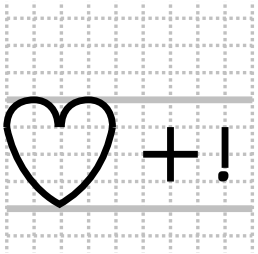


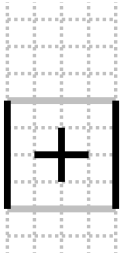
addition



and,also, “positiv”

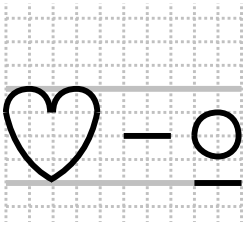


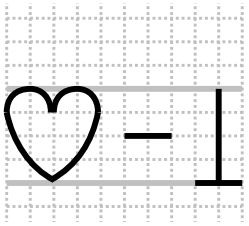


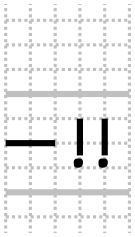


subtraction

minus, without

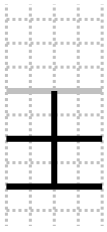






life

being, existence

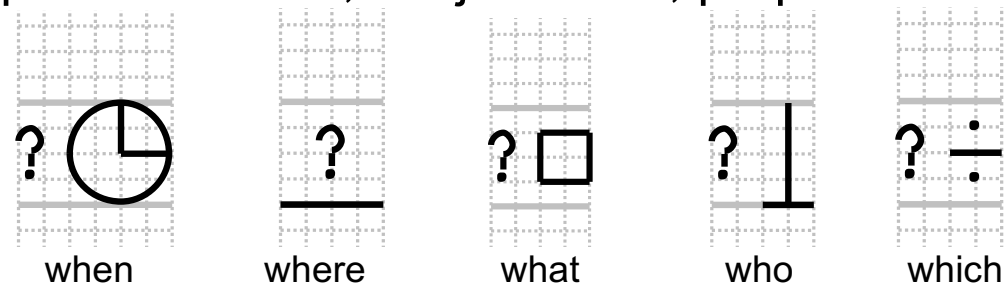


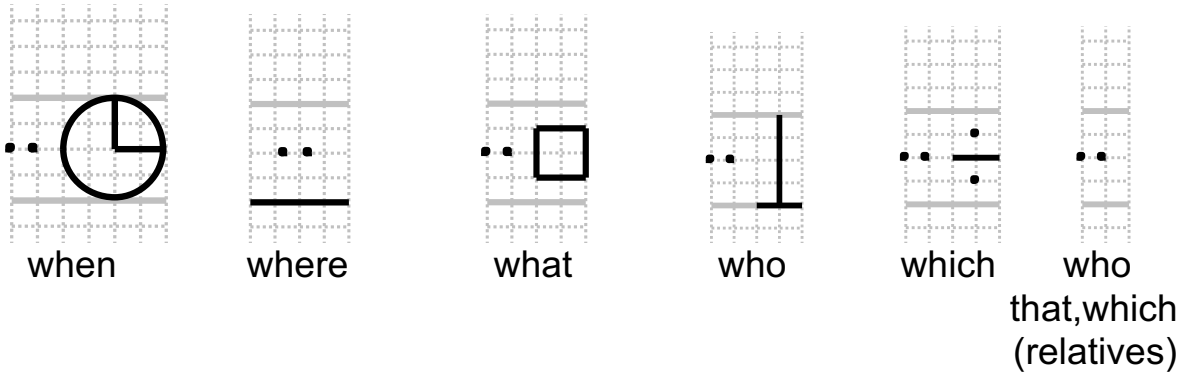
possession

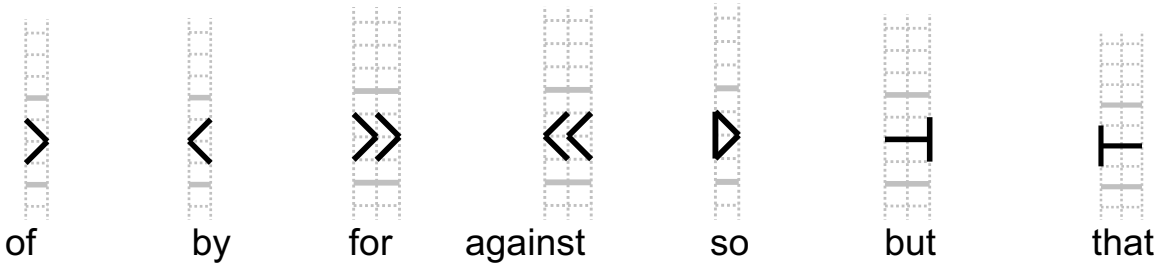
to have

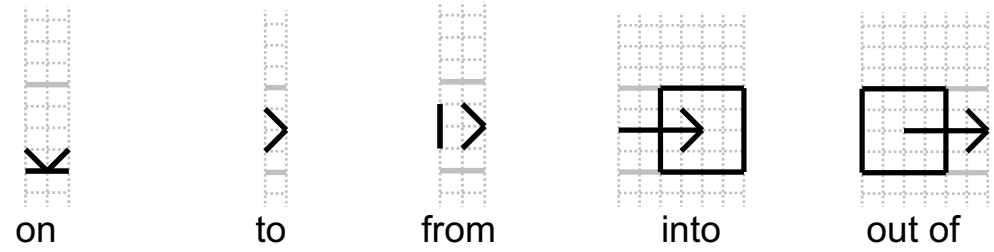
Small frequent words:

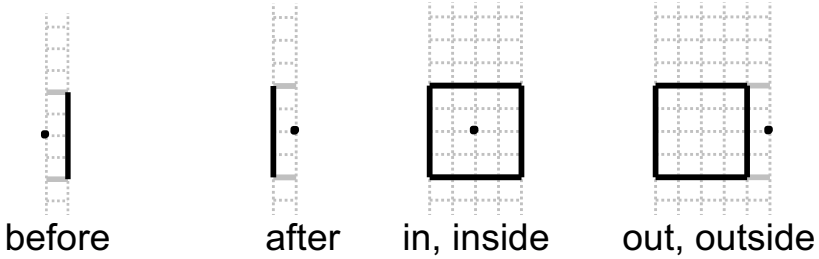
question words, conjunctions, prepositions











Blissymbolics, workshop nr 5

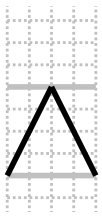
Blissymbolics has a grammar of its own, but in communication the grammar is mostly adjusted to the grammar of the spoken language in the area.

Indicators placed over a symbol express word classes or grammatical forms

Indicators are ¼ sized and placed at a ¼ distance above skyline.

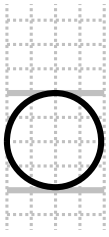
Word classes

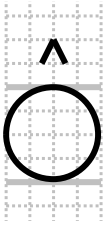
Action indicator, verbs

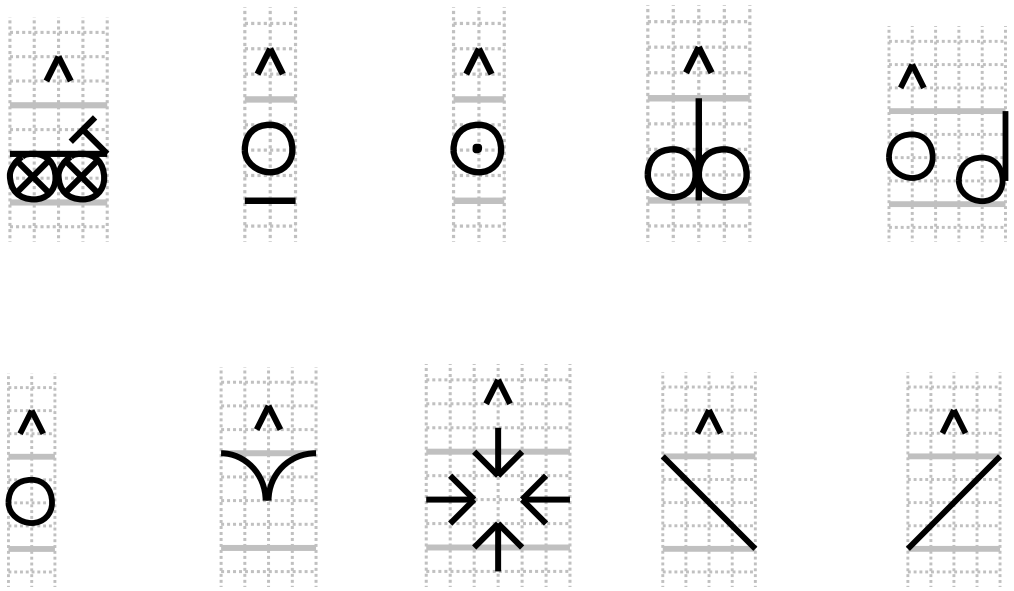

action

activity

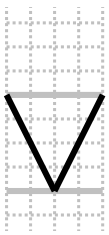
ind. action (verb)


sun


to shine

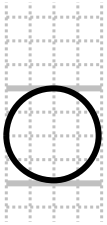


Descriptive indicator, human evaluation,
Adjectives and adverbs

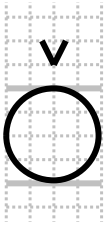


evaluation

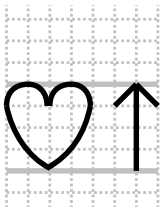
ind.description (adjective, adverb)

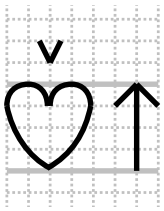


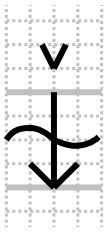
sun

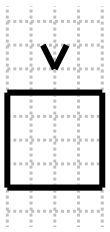


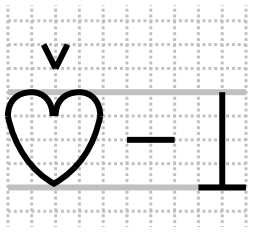
sunny

 *happiness, joy*

 *happy, happily*



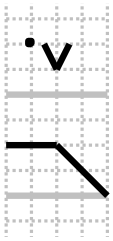


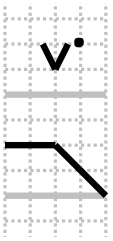


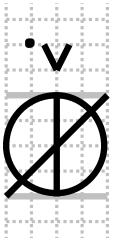
Sometimes the distinction between *before* and *after* fact is needed to be expressed. The point denotes the meaning.

ind.description before fact

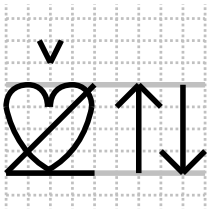
ind.description after fact

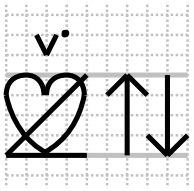
 *breakable, fragile*

 *broken*

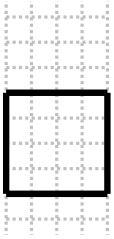

deadly

dead


embarrassing

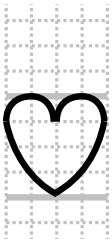

embarrassed

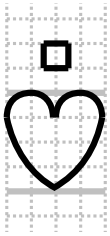
Thing indicators differentiate between concrete objects and abstract nouns.

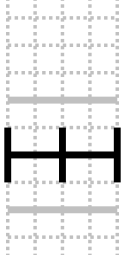

enclosure

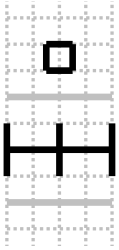
thing

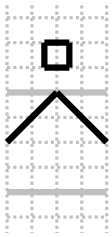
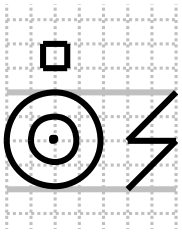
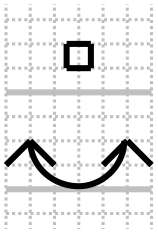
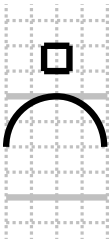
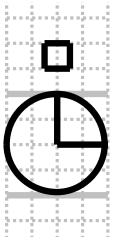
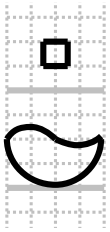
ind. thing


feeling

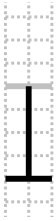

heart


measurement


ruler

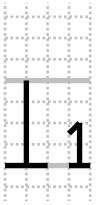







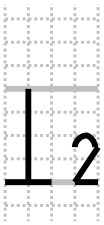
Pronouns.

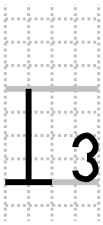
 *person*

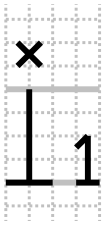
man

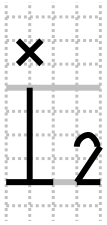
woman

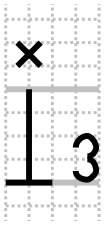
 *I, me,myself*

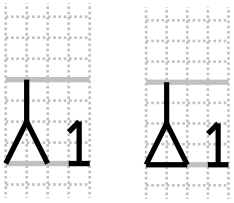
 *you,yourself*

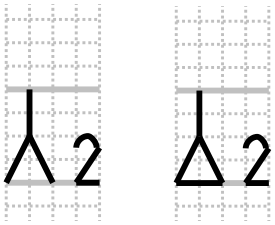
 *he,him,himself*
she,her,herself

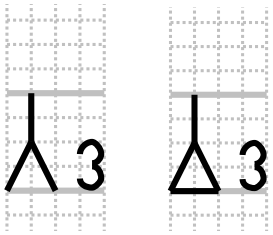
 *we,us,ourselves*

 *you,yourselves*

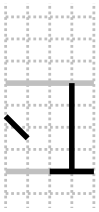
 *they,*
them,
themselves

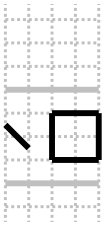




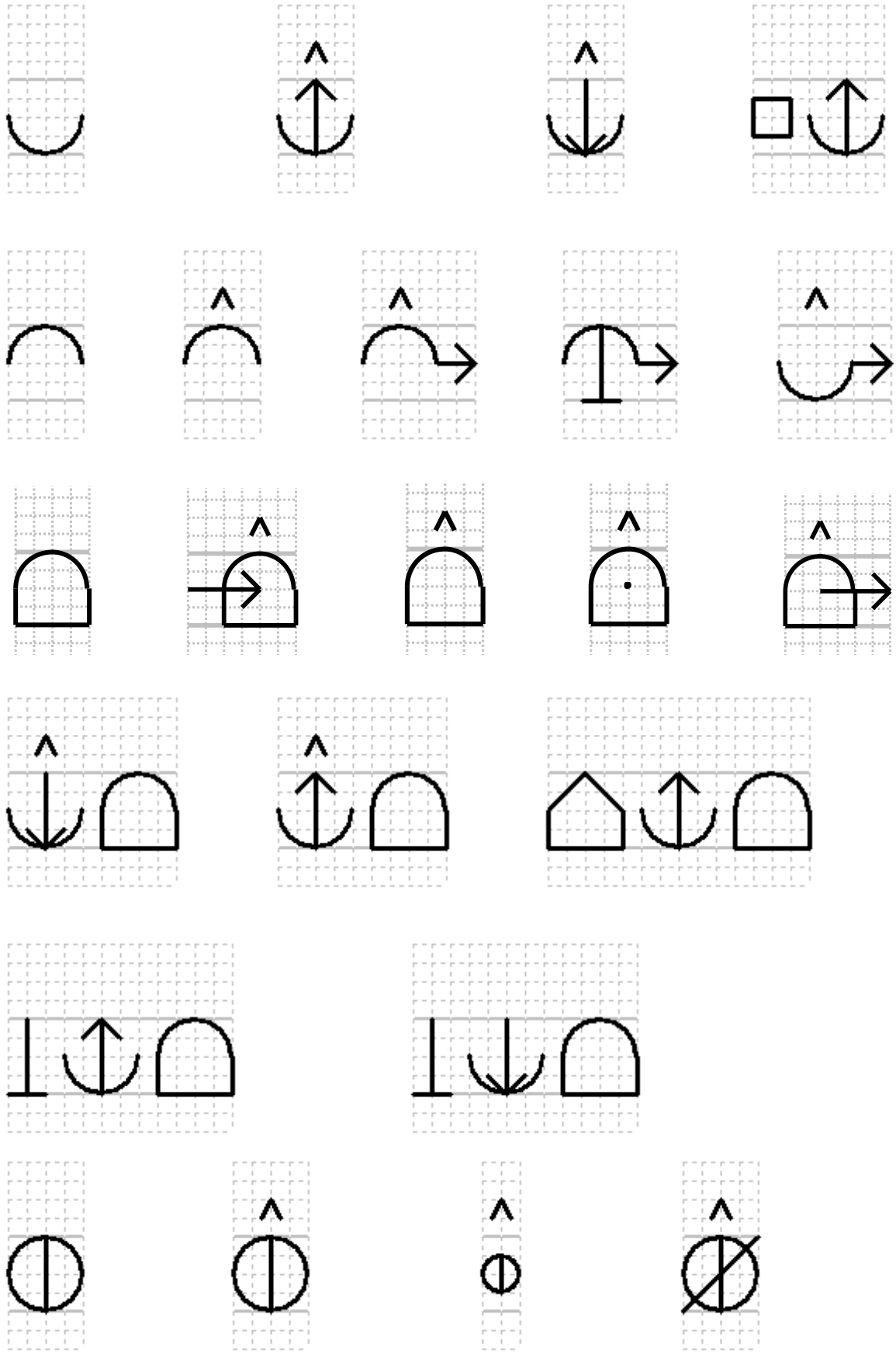


it

 *any/someone*

 *any/something*

See the logic 1. Some common concepts.

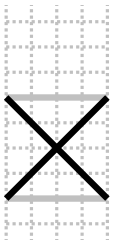


Worksheet 5

Blissymbolics, workshop nr 6

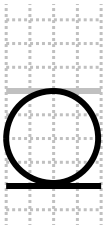
Plural

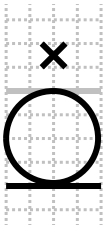
Plural indicator

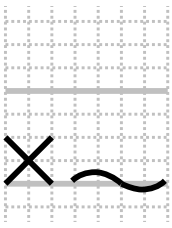

multiplication

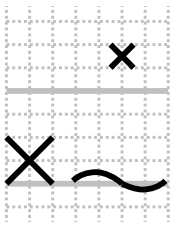
much

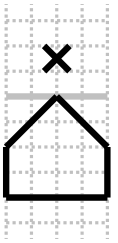
ind.plural

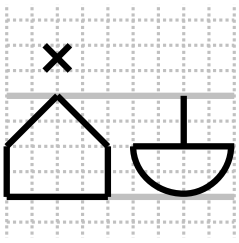

day

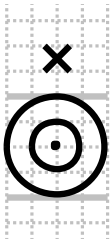

days

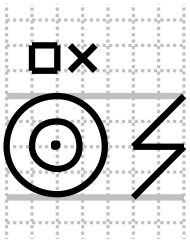

lake

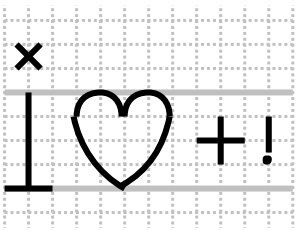

lakes

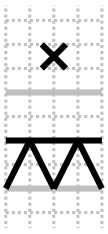


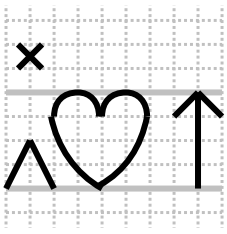


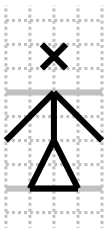




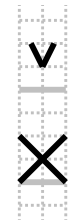








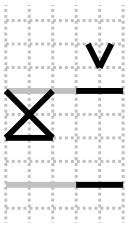
Adjectives. Comparatives and superlatives are expressed by “more” and “most” as the first character.

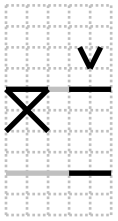


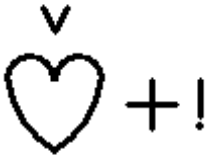
much

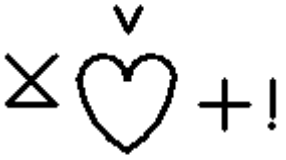
more

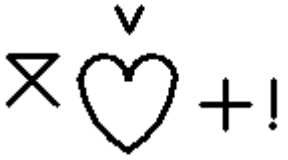
most

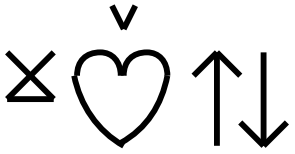










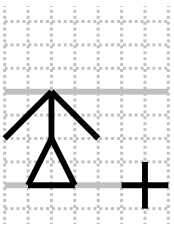


or

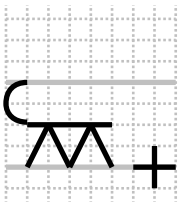
or

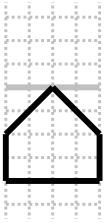
Possession. The possession modifier, belongs to, is generally positioned as the final character of the Blissword to indicate possession.

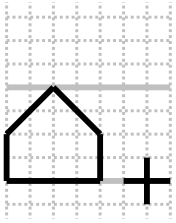
mother

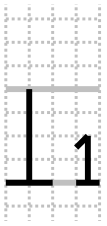

mother's

dog

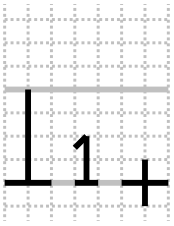

dog's
of the dog


house

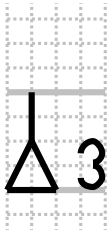

of the house



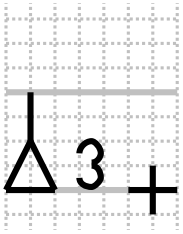
I



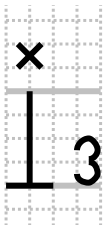
my, mine



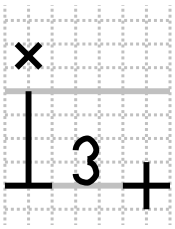
she



her, hers

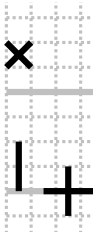


they



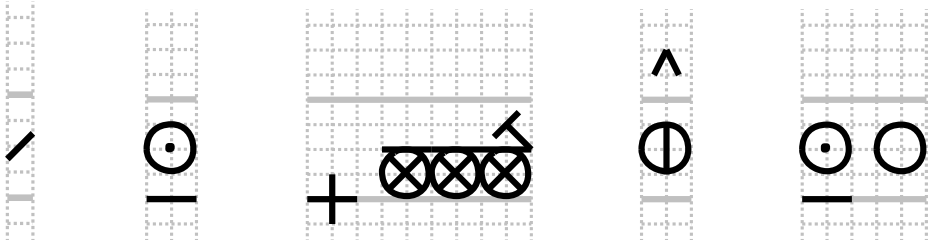
their, theirs

they

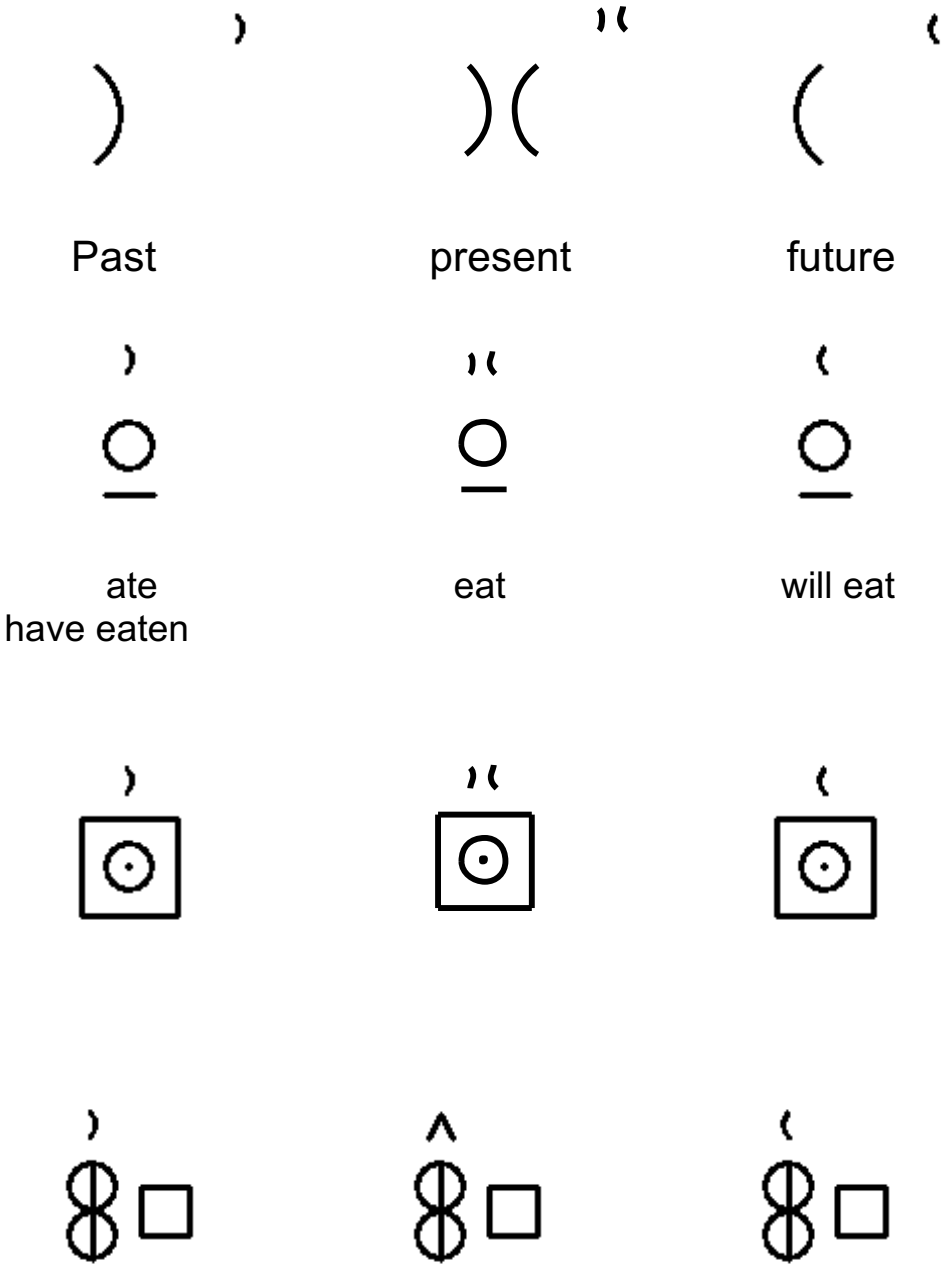


their, theirs

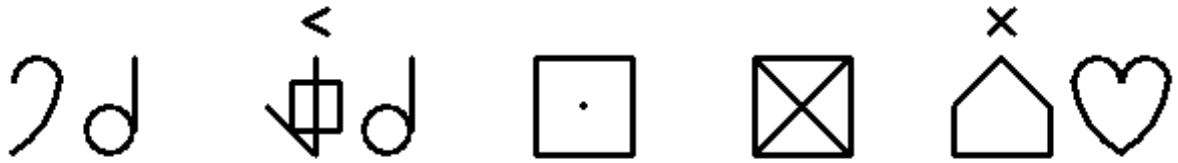
The position of the possession modifier can be changed to better accommodate the linguistic environment



Verb. Present, past and future tense are expresses by ¼ sized indicators of present, past and future. The action indicator which denotes the verb can also be used for present time.



Passive form. The indicator of passive form points at the “acted on”.



Music is played in all homes

The book was read by many persons

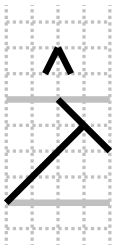
The song will be rehearsed tomorrow

Conditional.
Indicators of past, present and future conditional

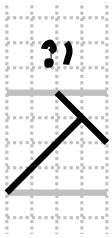
past cond.

pres cond.

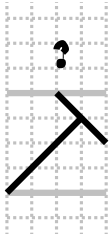
future cond



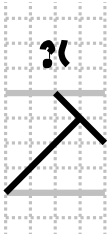
to hammar



would, may have hammered

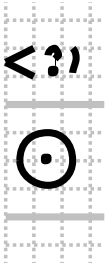


would, may hammar (now)



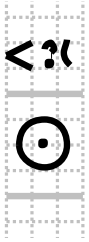
would, may hammar (in future)

to see



would, may have been seen

would, may be seen (now)



would, may be seen (in future)

Bliss has a grammar of its own
The syntax of Bliss grammar includes a few simple rules**.**

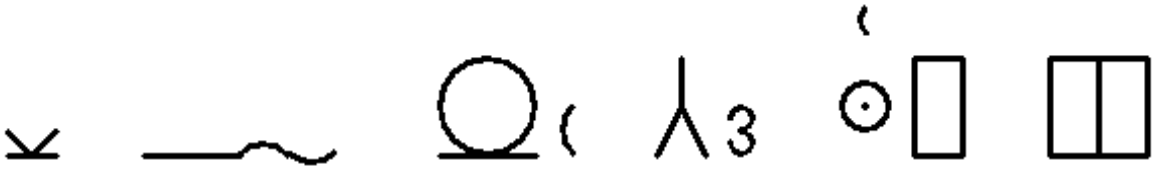
1 Subject before verb

2 “not” before the verb

3 Questions start with question to make the reader aware

4 Commands start with the exclamation mark

5 Place and time start the sentence



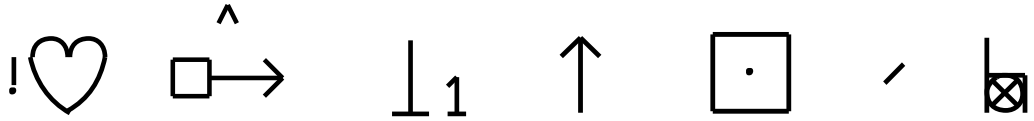
Bliss has a grammar of its own, but for educational purposes to teach reading and to express at a high linguistic level in connection with other languages a large number of grammatical indicators have been developed. Language structures have different needs of indicators to be linguistically precise. (see www blissymbolics.org, library exports, search for indicators)

In communication focus should be on the message, e.g.,

one word expressions :

telegram expressions :

or as a sentence :



Blissymbolics, workshop nr 7

Position, orientation, size and distance.

Position in relation to earth line and skyline can be relevant to the meaning of a Bliss-word.

earth

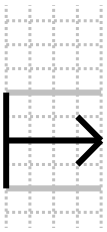
subtraction

sky

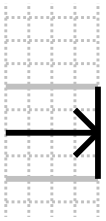
belong to

and

with

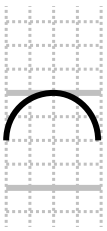


start, beginning



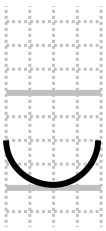
end, stop

Orientation, relevant to the meaning

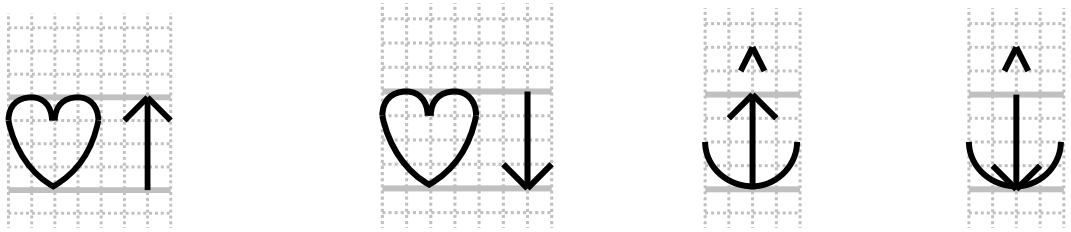


mind

bow

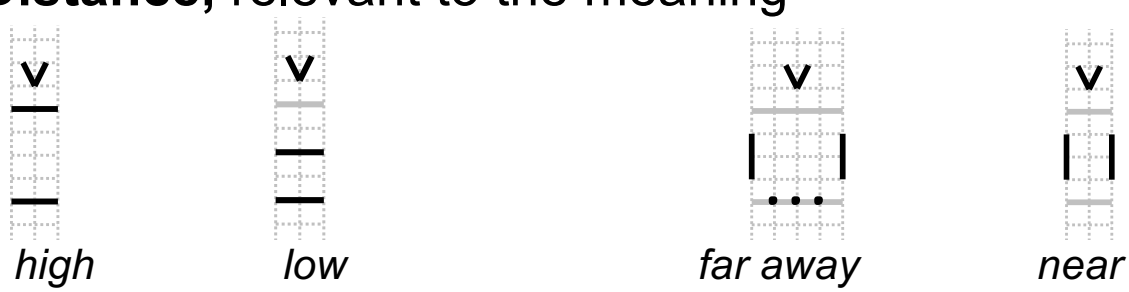


container

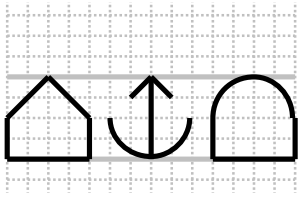


Size, relevant to the meaning:

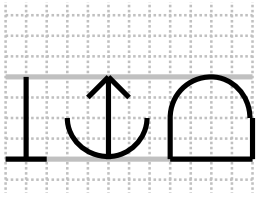
Distance, relevant to the meaning



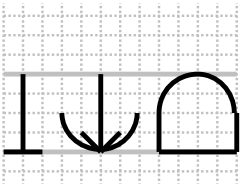
The first character in a multi-character Bliss-word is the **classifier**, which tells the category of the concept. The following characters are **specifiers**.

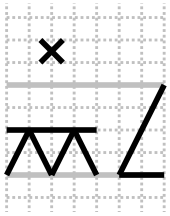


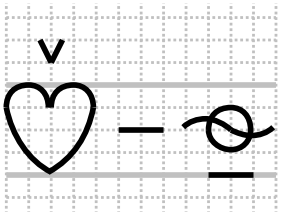
(a type of building..)

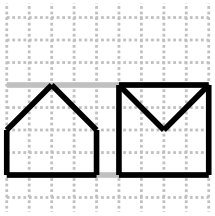


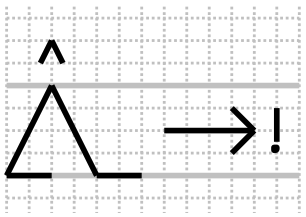
(a type of person..)

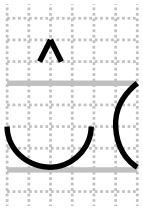


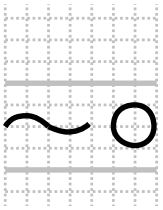


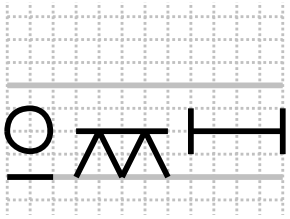


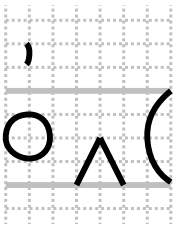


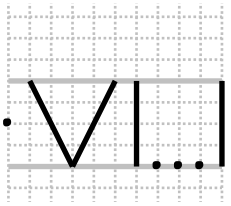


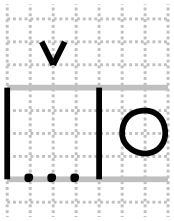


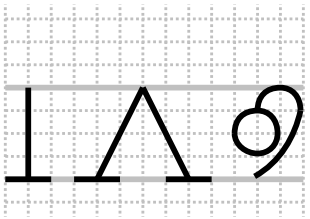


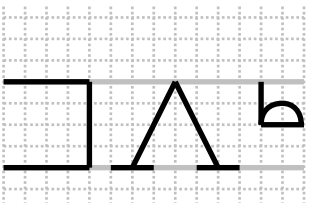










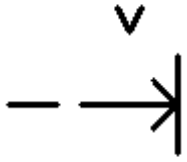


Blissymbolics, workshop nr 8

Modifiers are used as prefixes or suffixes to modify the meaning of a Bliss-word, some examples (indicators are never used above modifiers)

group of

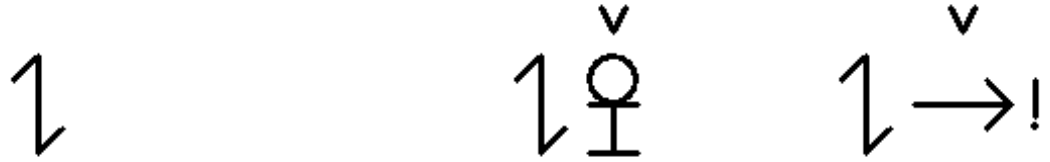
generalisation



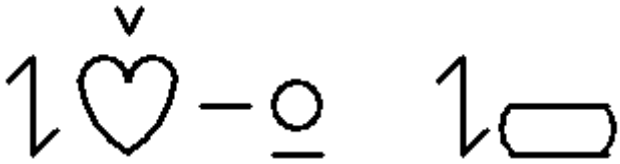
minus, without

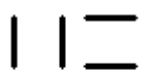
pointers

intensity

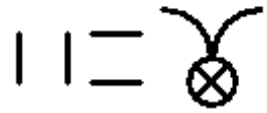


opposite meaning *old* *slow*





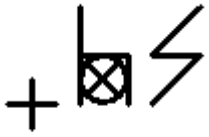
similar, almost the same as



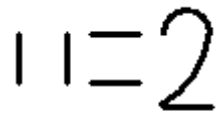
Similar to an airplane?

Almost the same as glasses

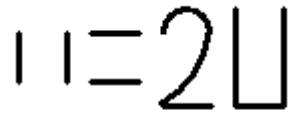
be connected with, belong to



part of



Sounds similar to



Sounds similar to glass?
(could be=class)

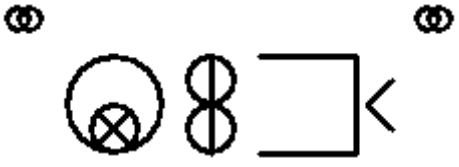
Combinations are used to create new Bliss-words to express a new concept or a not available Bliss-word in a quick and easy manner.

1 A combination starts and ends with a combine character.

2 The first character is always the classifier.

3 Specifiers follow the classifier.

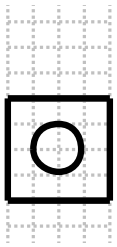
4 The combine characters are placed at the level of indicators, ¼ of a distance before and after the Bliss-word.



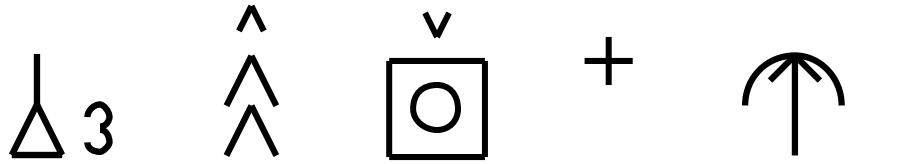
When a Bliss-word is missing:

1. Try to find a synonym e.g., get, receive

2. Find another word - class and change it.

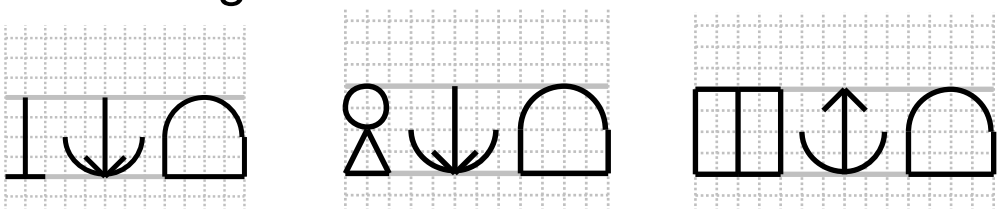


Secret

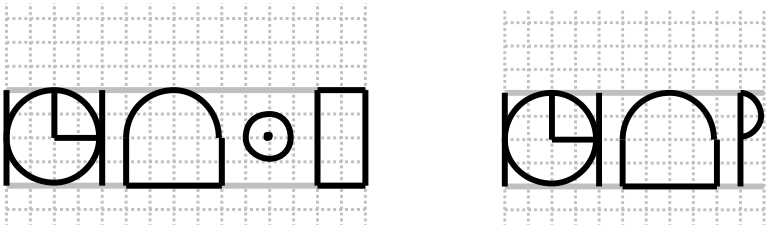


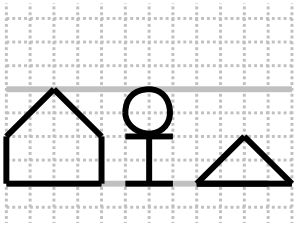
She *works* *secretly* *with* *information*

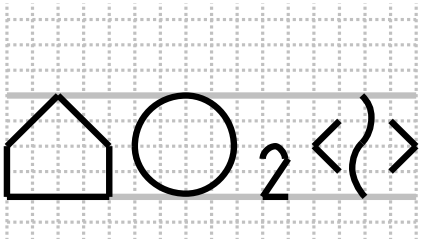
3. Exchange classifier



4. Add, change or delete a specifier.

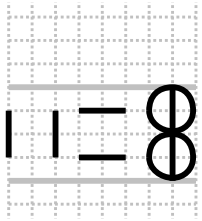




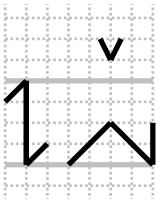


5. Use a modifier

E.g., Visa card



Well



6. Make a combination.

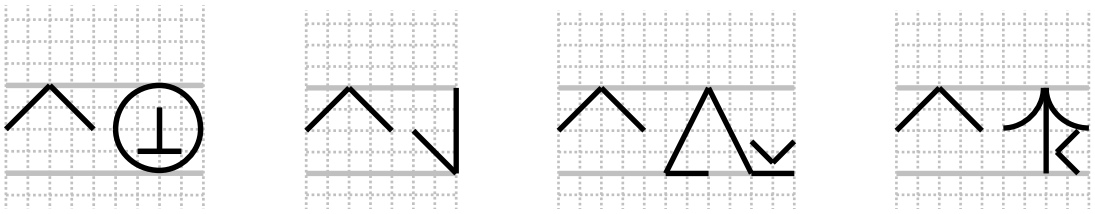
Blissymbolics, workshop nr 9

Bliss as an educational tool

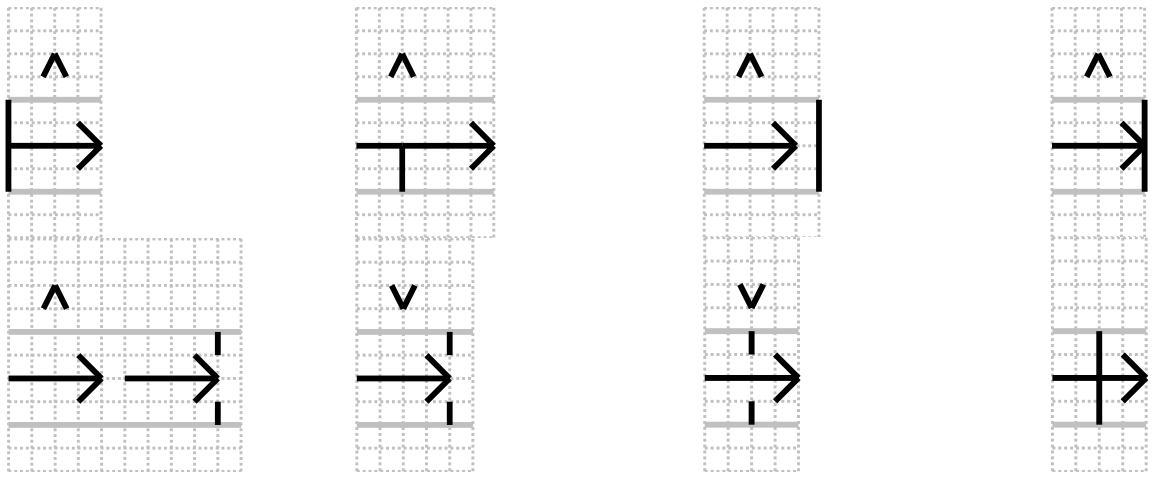
- **For exploration of meanings**

The logic structure is visually supported and contribute to the learning and exploration of the meanings of the Bliss-words.

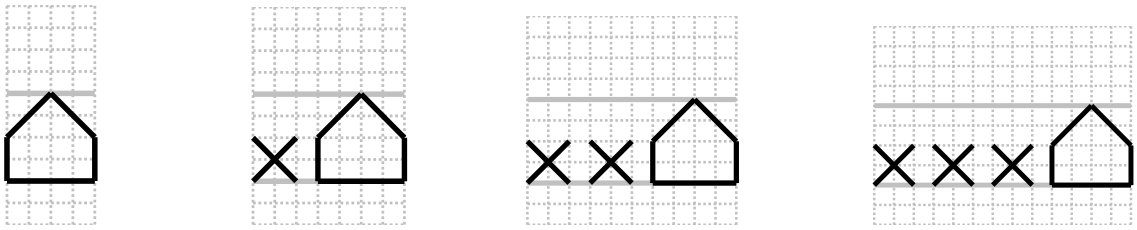
Protection



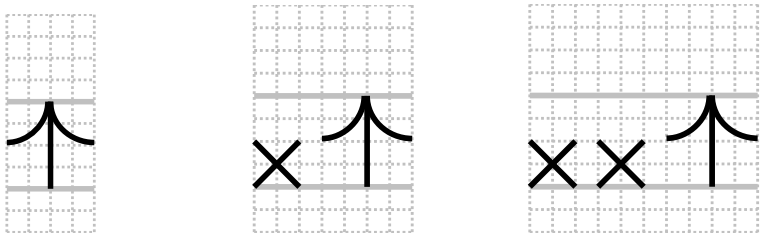
Arrows



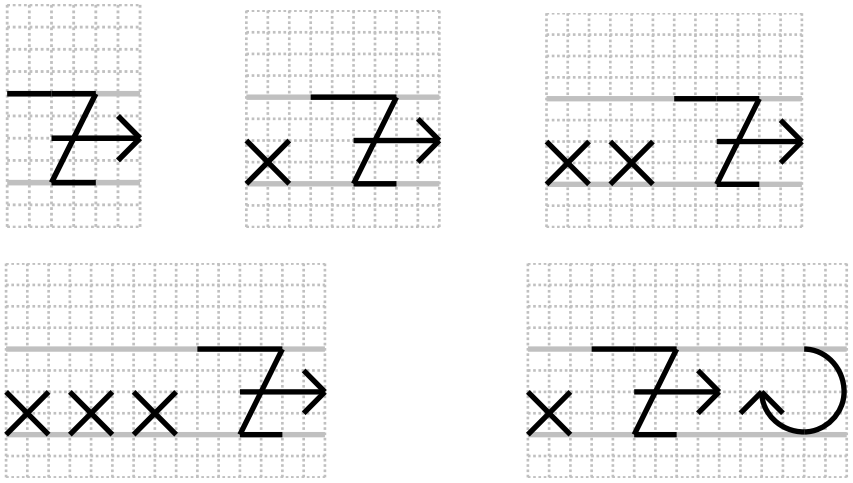
Buildings



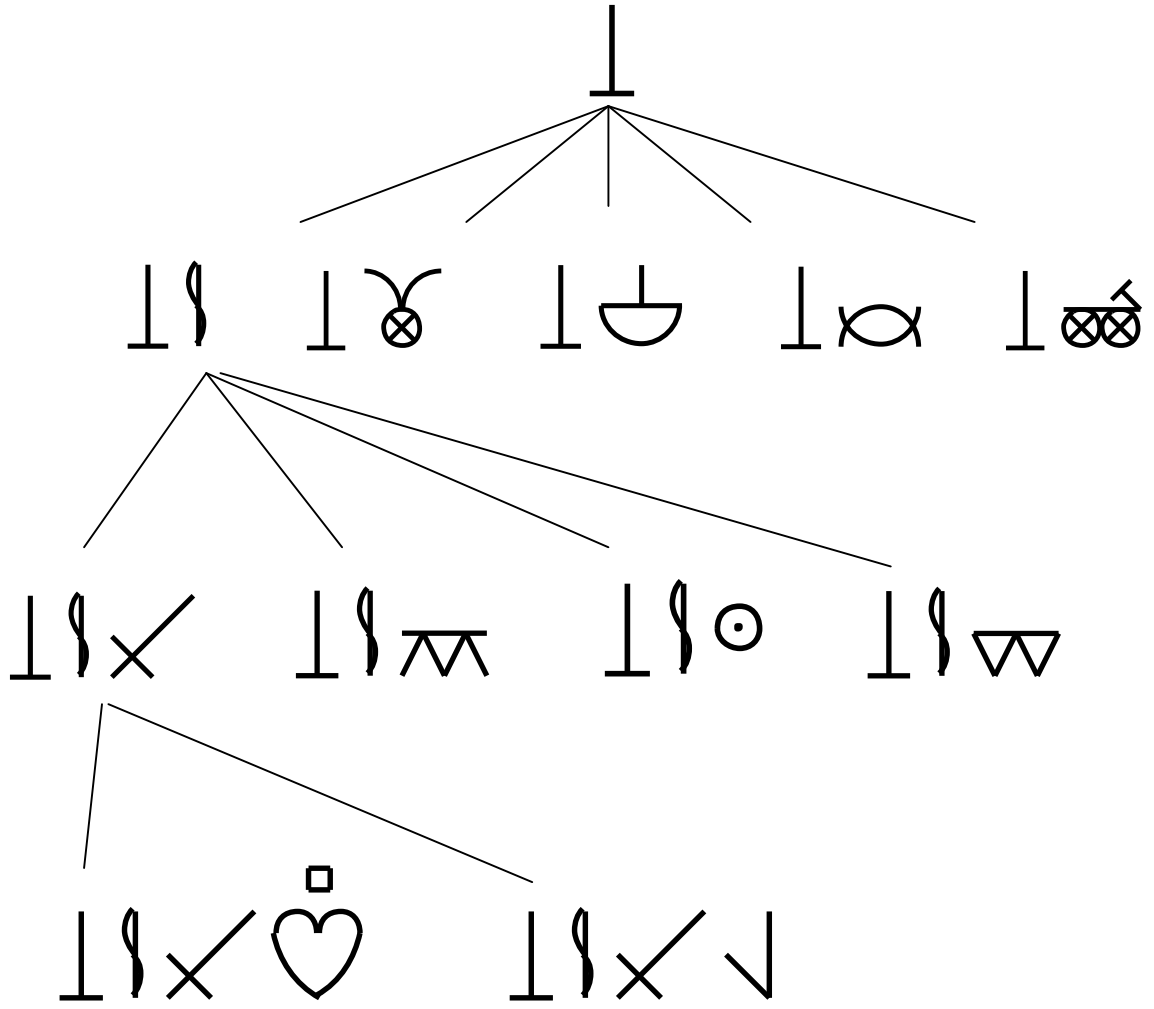
Trees



Winds



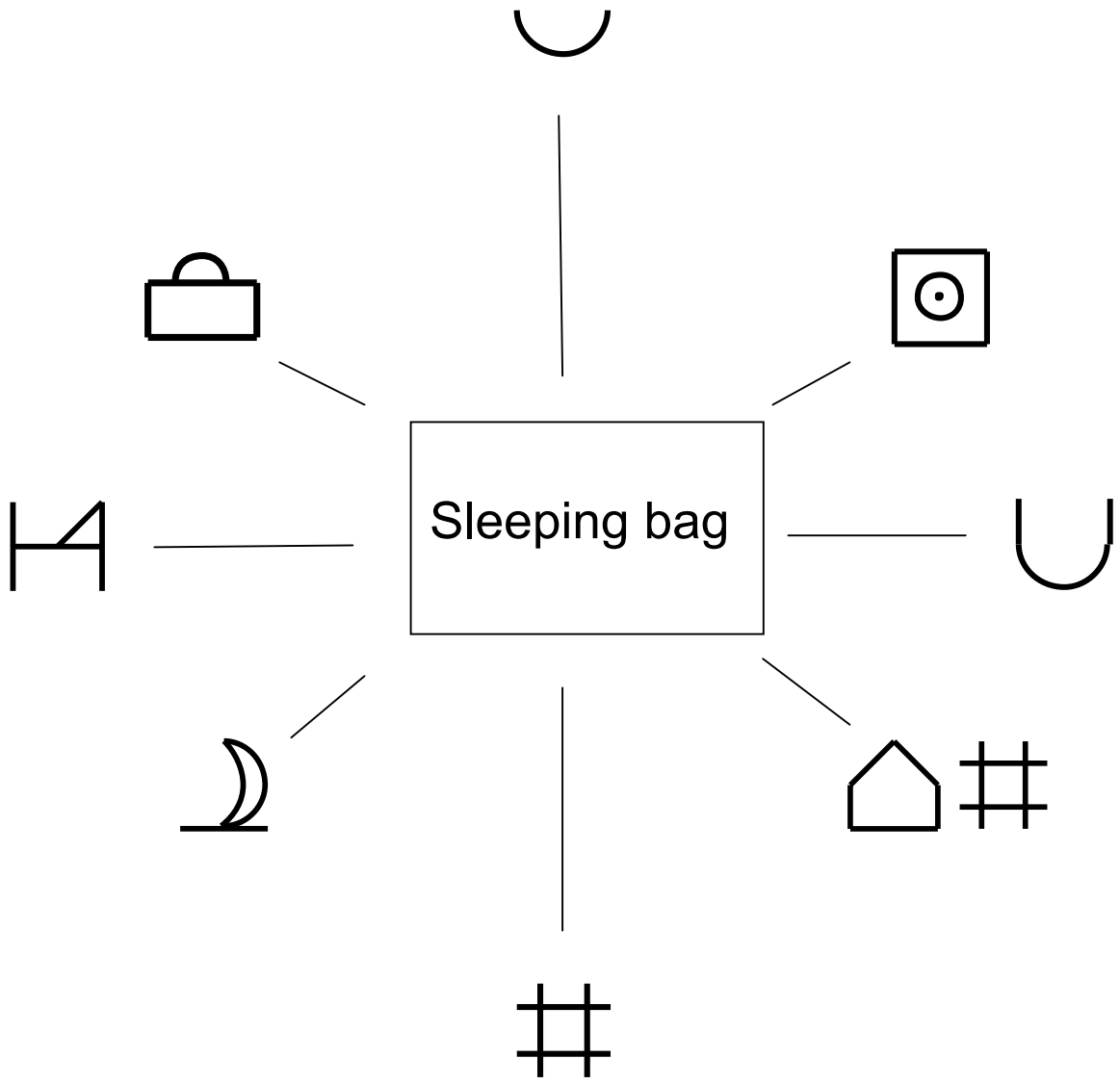
Professions



Supporting sequential thinking

Today we will talk about water

Associations to meanings



My Bliss-word: , ,

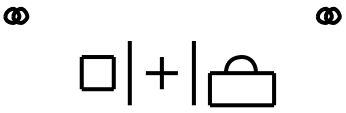
Enables word-formation.

Word-formation is a stage during language development, typical for 3-5 years old children.

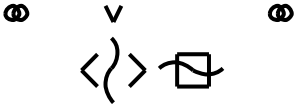
E.g. children's expressions:

Swe: *bröd+hålla-re* (eng: bread+hold-er)

Swe: *väsk+fast+sätt* (bag+fastened+put/thing =package rack)



Swe: *is+varmt* (ice+hot])



Swe: *lammi-ig* (lamb-y)

Verbs

Swedish: *sax-a* (scissors-inf = to cut)

English: *to scissors*

Turkish*: "scissors+do"*

German: *zu sheren* (shere-inf=to cut with scissors. Schere = scissors)

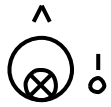
Swedish: *deg-a* (deg-inf = to bake)

German: zu teigen (Teig=dough)

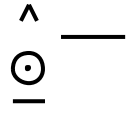
Turkish: "*Dough+do*" (to bake)

English: *to knife*

German: *zu computer*



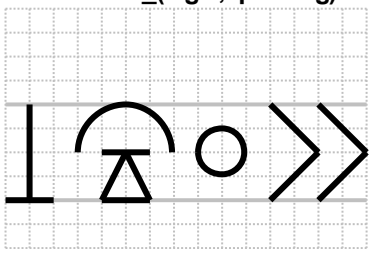
German: zu blauen (paint blue)



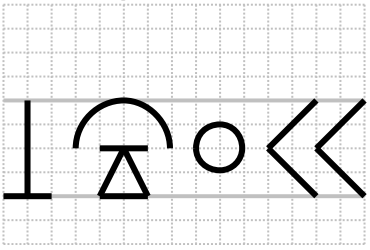
Bliss has a vocabulary to grew with

for society knowledge

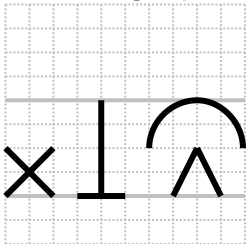
advocate_(legal,speaking)



prosecutor

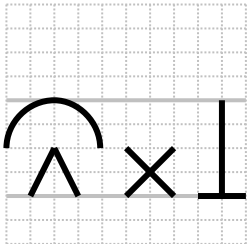


ethnic group



A group of persons
sharing the same view of life

culture



The view of life shared by a
group of persons

The logic structure - in teaching

solar energy

wave energy

wind energy

hydro energy

geothermal energy

bioenergy

Indicators are used to express grammar

Action present time the past the future

activity now ago then

Verb - tense

to break, breaks, broke, will break, was broken,

An educational tool to teach reading

Blissymbolics visualizes the structure of written language.

Texts and books can be written in Blissymbolics.

Bliss and language development

Some personal reflections

All spoken words are *abstract symbols*. The meanings and definitions of the words are what we all have agreed on through experience and use (a chair is something to sit on). This means that the baby is open to receive, manage, analyze and store symbols.

Important for children when naming things is: similarity in *shape,* the *function* and the *creator's intention* (German & Bloom, 2000). Interestingly it is not photographic similarity or other depicting or representational images. (Think of how easily young children can get a pile of pine needles to be minced meat when they play in the forest, and see that two rings on a drawing may be a car if you tell them so, and how the sky at the top of a page is a blue line). Thus images which are *not* photographic or depicting might stimulate the children's fantasy and form *their* representation of concepts. Language helps children to develop their imagination as *a dancing Mr.*

Cucumber or a *banana house*. They want to be able to express and tell about things which have never been seen.

All children 3-5 years old are small linguists who create their own words, for example*: to needle, to scissor* (Swedish examples are: *dega* =to dough, *pärla*= to pearl, *kolvit* = pitch-white as there is a pitch-black) a *trafikig* street = an self-made adjective form of traffic, he spring*de* home (a regular inflection for an irregular verb). It seems that children use their language to experiment and be linguistically creative during language development.

Words for *abstract concepts*, time concepts, legal concepts are used all the time when talking. Could it be so that these concepts change and will get a narrowed meaning if representing images are used for example for feelings, opinions.

From the time when children are small, superordinate concepts are used when talking. (Eg cars, animals, houses, boats, color). During development, children's way of organizing concepts gradually develop and at about 8-10 years of age the concepts of the children will resemble adults' concept hierarchy. Depicting images will always resemble a certain type of car, boat or color. Does this affect the children's ability to form superordinate concepts?

As an adult and as a teacher there are many occasions when you need to explain concepts and the meaning of words. Bliss can be an *educational tool* in teaching situations. The Bliss-words include distinctive features of the meaning. Also the Bliss-words are easy to draw while discussing.

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