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Насколько изобразительно звукоизобразительное слово?// Информация - Коммуникация - Общество (ИКО-2014): Материалы XI Всероссийской научной конференции. Санкт-Петербург, 23-24 января 2014 г./ СПб., 2014. С.152-155

How iconic is an iconic word?

Аннотация

The present paper is devoted to the study of diachronic development of English iconic vocabulary. In the course of linguistic evolution all iconic (onomatopoeic and sound symbolic) words gradually lose their iconicity and acquire conventional, language specific traits. The process of de-iconization is unavoidable and irrevocable. As a result in a language there exist simultaneously new iconic words with a perceivable sound-sense associations and old ones whose structure has been destroyed by regular phonetic changes and the development of polysemy. We classify all iconic words into three basic categories according to the grade of their de-iconization and introduce criteria of their stratification.