

Dos and don'ts in pictorial and multimodal consumer information: Visual rhetoric and/vs. cognitive semantics

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1. Introduction

Research on pictorial elements in consumer information

- focus on highly persuasive genres like advertising (cf. e.g. Jeong 2008, Stöckl 2009)
- few accounts of material that aims at providing factual information (cf. e.g. McComiskey 2004)

1. Introduction

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Background and basics – Material and theories
 - The material and its properties: What assembly instructions and warning symbols have in common
 - The theories and some of their main tenets: Visual rhetoric vs. cognitive semantics
3. Applying the frameworks – Analysis of some examples
 - General issues
 - Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes
4. Conclusion

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2. Background and basics: Material

Assembly instructions and warning symbols: Properties of the material

- Primary function: vital information about products and the dos and don'ts connected to them



2. Background and basics: Material

Assembly instructions and warning symbols: Properties of the material

- Primary function: vital information about products and the dos and don'ts connected to them




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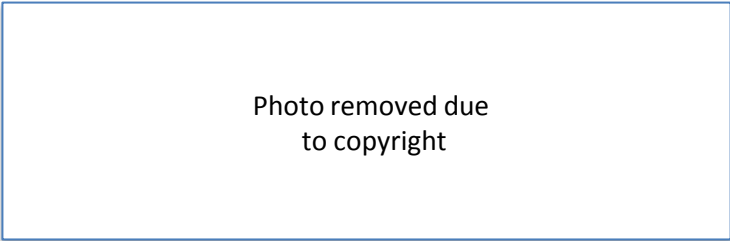


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2. Background and basics: Material

Assembly instructions and warning symbols: Properties of the material

- Primary function: vital information about products and the dos and don'ts connected to them
- Information conveyed exclusively or predominantly by way of largely standardized visuals



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2. Background and basics: Material

Assembly instructions and warning symbols: Properties of the material

- Which means are used to ascertain a smooth understanding?
- Which principles underlie the pictorial elements?
- Why are sometimes linguistic elements interspersed?



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2. Background and basics: Theories

Visual rhetoric: Some basics

- Burke (1950), *A rhetoric of symbols*, Berkeley/CA: U of Berkeley P.
 - rhetoric as “symbolic action” (Olson 2007: 1)
 - symbols not only in language, but also in many other systems (e.g. mathematics, music, sculpture, painting)
- *Symbol* as central notion
 - an instance of visual rhetoric must be symbolic in the sense that “the relationship [...] between image and referent is arbitrary” (Foss 2005: 145).

2. Background and basics: Theories

Visual rhetoric: Some basics

- *Visual rhetoric* refers to (cf. Foss 2004: 307-310):
 - communicative artifacts
 - scholarly perspective:
 - the nature of the communicative artifact
 - its function for an audience
 - its evaluation

2. Background and basics: Theories

Visual rhetoric: Some basics

- Visual rhetoric and multimodality?
 - e.g. interaction of verbal and visual elements in comics (cf. e.g. Turner 1977) or poems (cf. e.g. Cao & Chen 2014)

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2. Background and basics: Theories

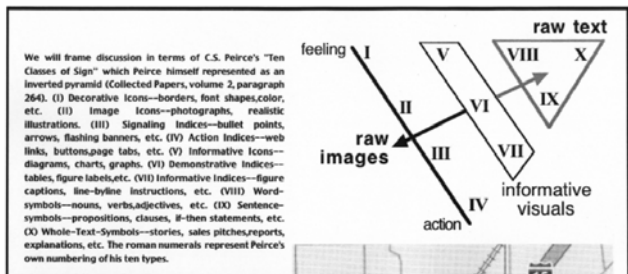
Visual rhetoric: Some basics

- Visual rhetoric and multimodality?
 - e.g. interaction of verbal and visual elements in comics (cf. e.g. Turner 1977) or poems (cf. e.g. Cao & Chen 2014)
 - interaction between verbal and visual elements in any kind of written/printed text: “verbal text is a kind of visual” (Amare& Manning 2007: 58)

We will frame discussion in terms of C.S. Peirce's "Ten Classes of Sign" which Peirce himself represented as an inverted pyramid (Collected Papers, volume 2, paragraph 264). (I) Decorative icons—borders, font shapes,color, etc. (II) Image icons—photographs, realistic illustrations. (III) Signaling Indices—bullet points, arrows, flashing banners, etc. (IV) Action Indices—web links, buttons,page tabs, etc. (V) Informative Icons—diagrams, charts, graphs. (VI) Demonstrative Indices—tables, figure labels,etc. (VII) Informative Indices—figure captions, line-byline instructions, etc. (VIII) Word-symbols—nouns, verbs,adjectives, etc. (IX) Sentence-symbols—propositions, clauses, if-then statements, etc. (X) Whole-Text-Symbols—stories, sales pitches,reports,



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Same text – different ways of presentation (Amare& Manning 2007: 59, 61, 64)

2. Background and basics: Theories

Cognitive semantics: Some basics

- focus on language, but only as a source of information regarding the mechanisms of cognition
- thinking motivates language, but also other ways of expression
 - e.g. semantic overlap between speech and gestures (cf. e.g. Müller&Cienki 2008) → multimodality as norm
 - application of theories to language-picture interaction (cf. e.g. Lundmark 2005) or sculptures (cf. e.g. Coulson& Oakley 2003)

2. Background and basics: Theories

Cognitive semantics: Some basics

- key interest: identification of motivation underlying the expressions
- broad conception of motivation: pragmatic, sociolinguistic and cognitive factors (cf. e.g. Radden & Panther 2004; Ungerer 1991)
→ motivation as omnipresent:

“It is easier to learn something that is motivated than something that is arbitrary. It is also easier to remember and use motivated knowledge than arbitrary knowledge”.
(Lakoff 1987: 346; original emphasis)

2. Background and basics: Theories

Visual rhetoric and/vs. cognitive semantics: Interim summary

Visual rhetoric	Cognitive semantics
focus on pictorial, graphic elements	focus on language (as a mirror of cognition)
no exclusion of other modes of expression	keen interest in other modes of expression
mainly arbitrary signs	mainly motivated signs

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- frequency of metonymy

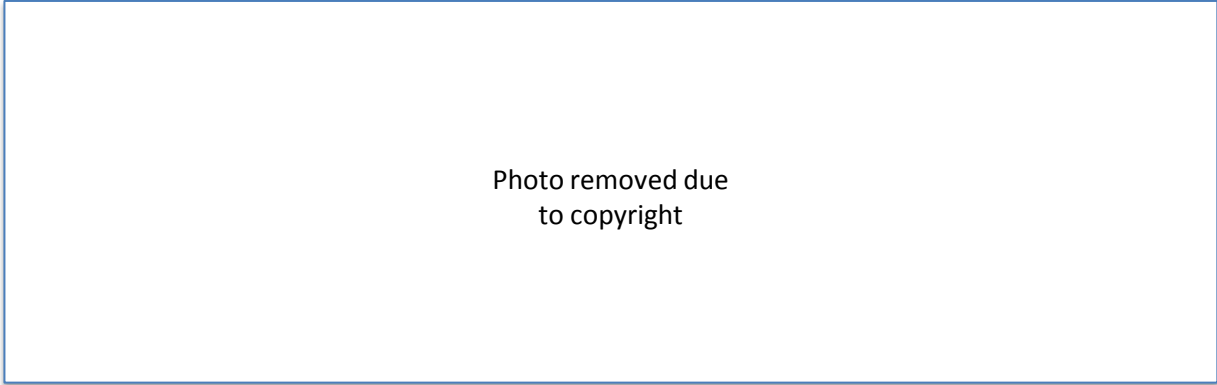


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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- frequency of metonymy

FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR EMOTION CAUSING IT

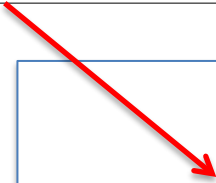


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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- frequency of metonymy

QUESTION MARK FOR PROBLEM



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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

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General issues

- frequency of metonymy

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HAMMER FOR ANY TOOL

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

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General issues

- frequency of metonymy

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SHELVES FOR ANY IKEA PRODUCT

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

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General issues

- frequency of metonymy

FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR EMOTION CAUSING IT

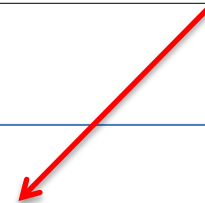


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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

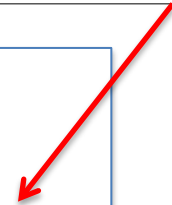
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General issues

- frequency of metonymy

BUILDING FOR COMPANY

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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

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General issues

- frequency of metonymy

BUILDING FOR COMPANY:
INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE

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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

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General issues

- frequency of metonymy

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PRINCIPAL PART FOR WHOLE

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

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General issues

- frequency of metonymy

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TELEPHONE CONNECTION FOR ANY KIND OF CONTACT

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- motivated character of pictorial elements representing concrete situations/objects
 - iconic character of many objects: e.g. person, hammer, telephone, house, etc.
 - many conventional metonymies: e.g. MEMBER FOR CATEGORY (hammer), INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE, PRINCIPAL PART FOR WHOLE (telephone), etc.
- ➔ issues for cognitive semantics

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- relations between motivated and arbitrary elements:
 - e.g. relevance of question mark for CAUSE-RESULT metonymy: arbitrary character for sentence type?



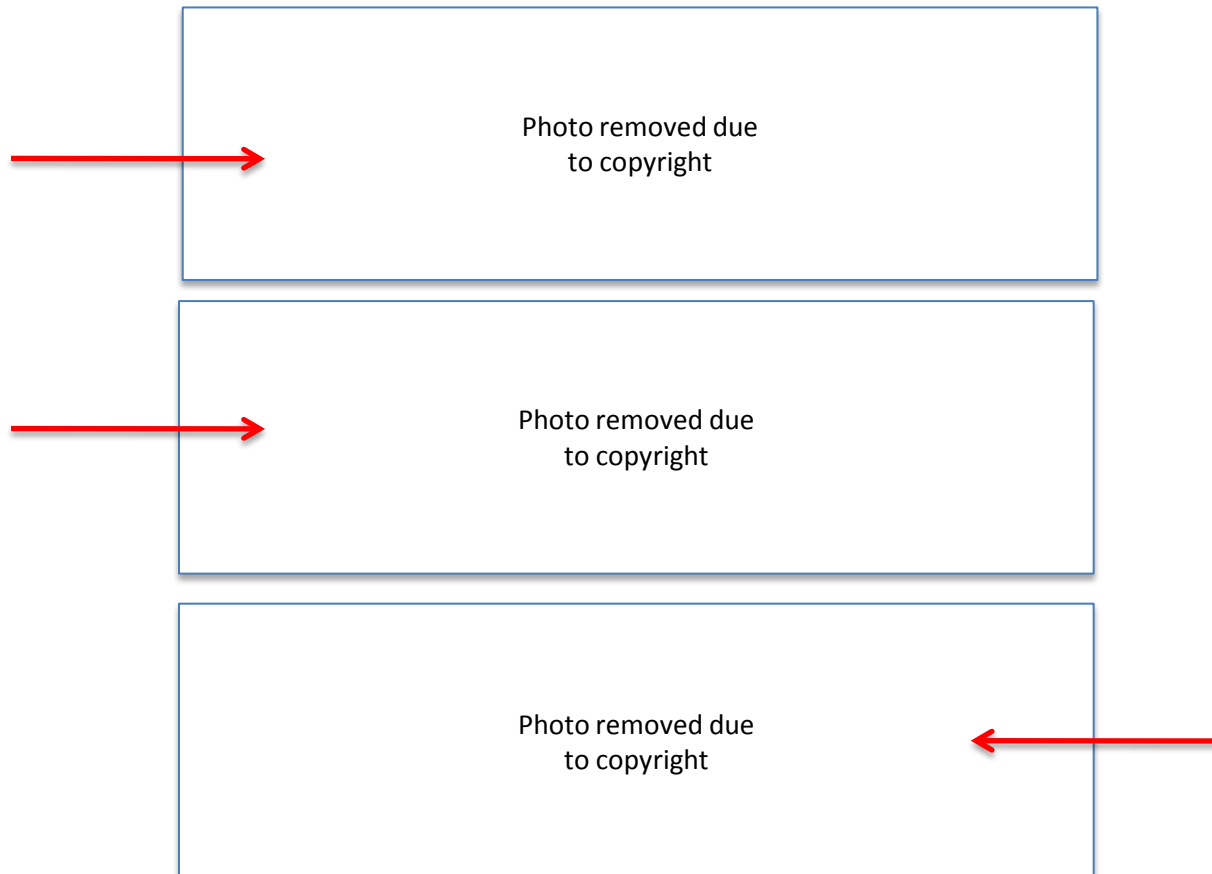
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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

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General issues

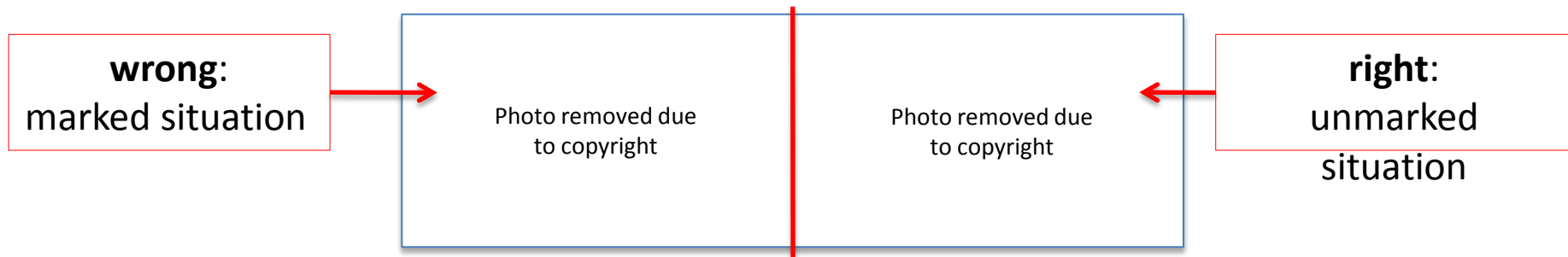
- relations between motivated and more arbitrary elements:
 - e.g. crossing outs



3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

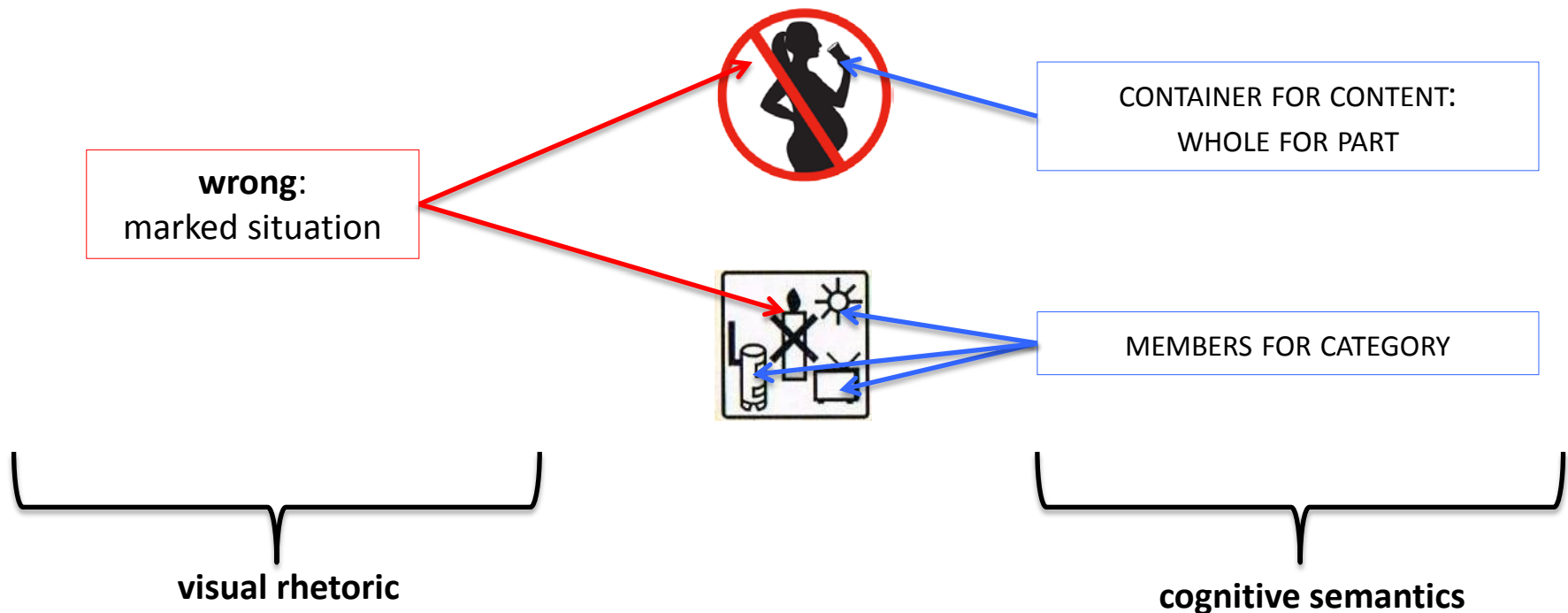
- tendencies regarding a division of labour between cognitive semantics and visual rhetoric
 - situations and behaviours mostly represented by motivated elements
→ **cognitive semantics**
 - attitude towards situations and behaviours (i.e. distinction between 'right' and 'wrong') represented by more arbitrary elements
→ **visual rhetoric**
 - not only the presence of a 'negation' symbol is significant, but also its absence



3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- tendencies regarding a division of labour between cognitive semantics and visual rhetoric: more examples



3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- processing difficulties can arise regarding both parts

wrong:
marked situation: ✓



TYPICAL (?) MEMBERS FOR CATEGORY:

sun: ✓
furnace: ✓
TV set: ???

→ **visual rhetoric:**

standardized 'negation' symbol, easy
to process

→ **cognitive semantics:**

potential problems regarding
identification of relevant category

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

General issues

- processing difficulties can arise regarding both parts

wrong:

marked situation: ✓

concrete rendering of:

girl: ✓

animal: ???



TYPICAL MEMBERS FOR CATEGORIES:

girl: ✓

dog: ✓

→ **visual rhetoric:**

standardized, easy-to-process 'negation;
BUT: potential problems regarding
identification of dog

→ **cognitive semantics:**

typical members, easy to process

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- variations in the concrete rendering of symbols



vs.



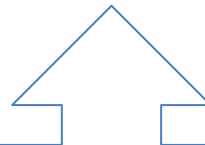
3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

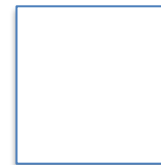
- ‘no alcohol during pregnancy’: official version vs. real-life examples



Original version of pictogram proposed
by French government
(source: wikimedia)



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Some international traffic signs
(source: www.bildwoerterbuch.pons.com)

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

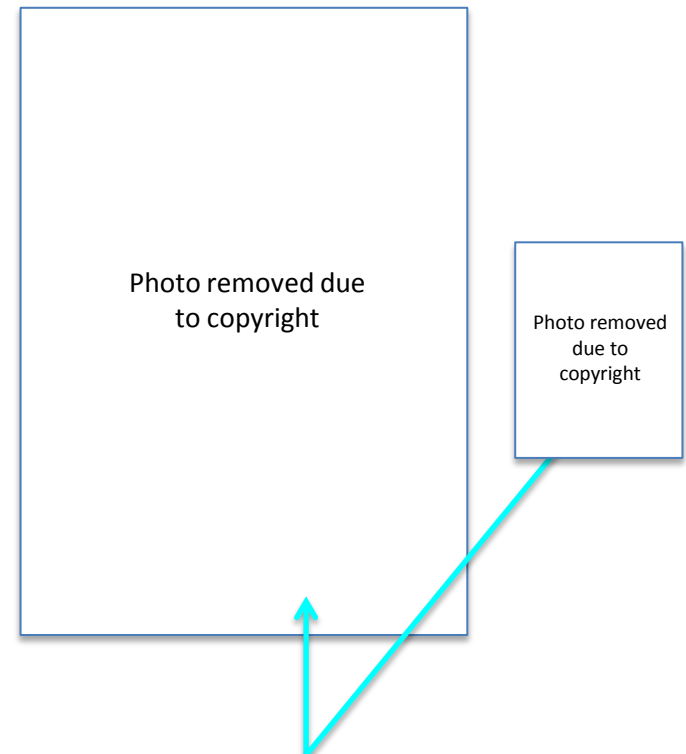
Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- ‘no alcohol during pregnancy’: official version vs. real-life examples



Original version of pictogram proposed
by French government
(source: wikimedia)

vs.



Contextualized version on wine bottle:
Colours and framing

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- ‘no alcohol during pregnancy’: official version vs. real-life examples



vs.

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Original version
(source: wikipedia)

Contextualized versions: Colours and framing

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- 'gluten free': playing with basic shapes



Label for gluten free foodstuff primarily used in German-speaking countries (source: wikipedia)

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

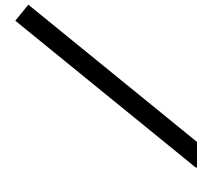
- 'gluten free': playing with basic shapes



vs.



vs.



3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

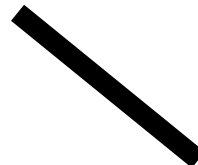
- playing with basic shapes
 - visual rhetoric: cf. esp. literature on technical communication (e.g. Allen 1996, Amare& Manning 2007)
 - cognitive semantics: cf. recent work
 - e.g. PérezHernández (2014): “role of *image schemas* in the design of international bands”; “effectiveness of subtle variants of the same visual cues” (2014: 204f)
 - cognitive linguists (e.g. PérezHernández 2014, Koller 2009) often partly rely on work belonging to visual rhetoric (e.g. van Leeuwen 2006; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Phillips &McQuarrie 2004)

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(PérezHernández 2014: 232)



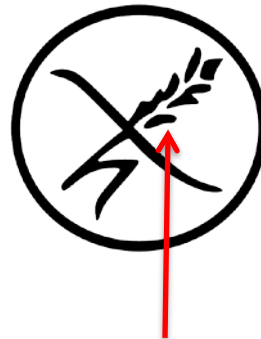
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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- 'gluten free': shape variations + a challenging metonymy

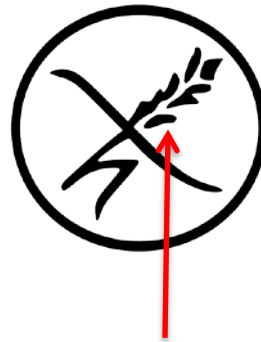


WHOLE FOR PART

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- 'gluten free': shape variations + a challenging metonymy



TYPICAL SHAPE FOR SOME MEMBERS OF THE CATEGORY SHARING IT:
SOME MEMBERS OF THE CATEGORY FOR SUBSTANCE THEY CONTAIN

3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- 'gluten free': shape variations + a challenging metonymy
➔ necessity of linguistic cue


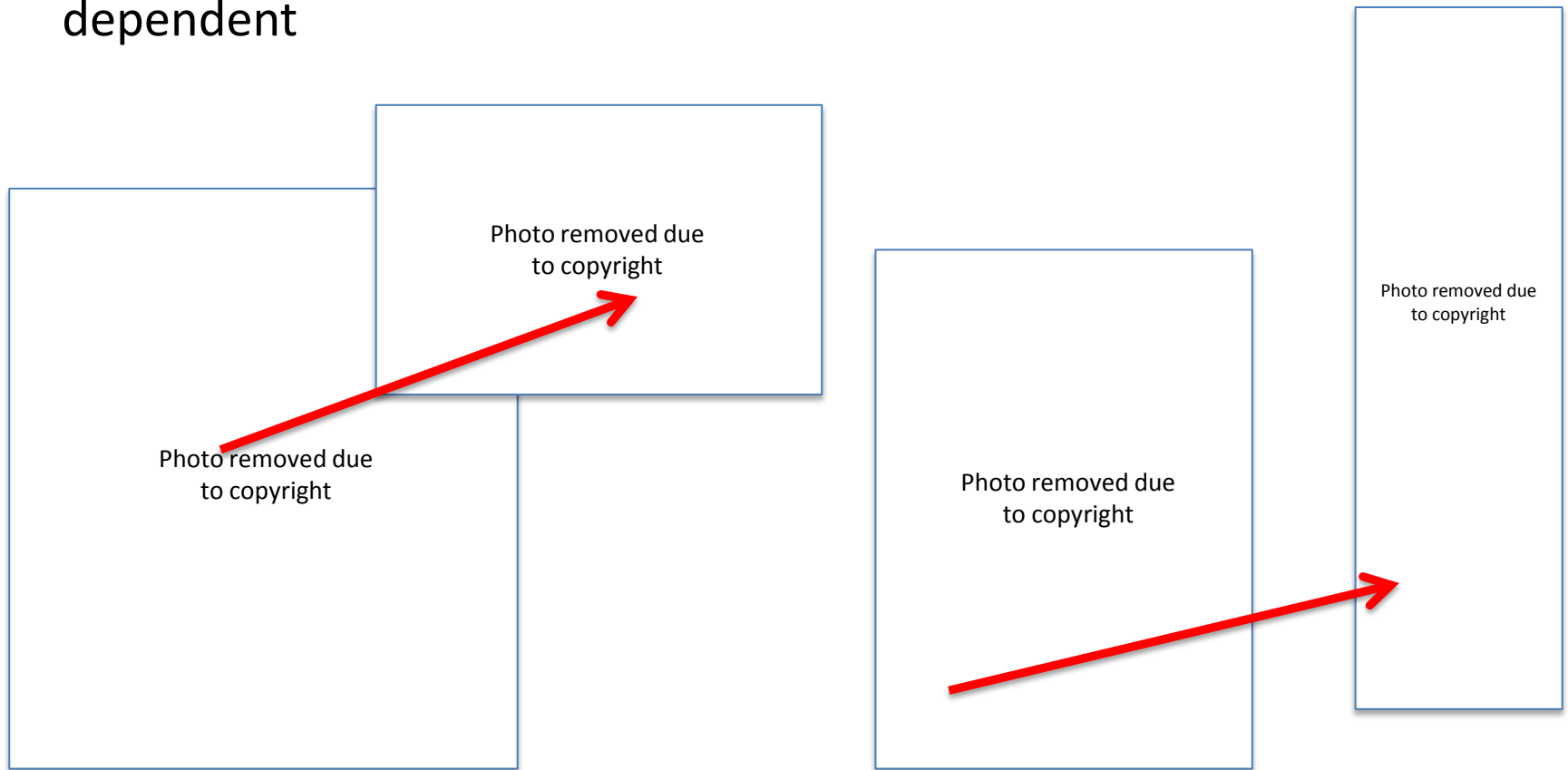


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3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

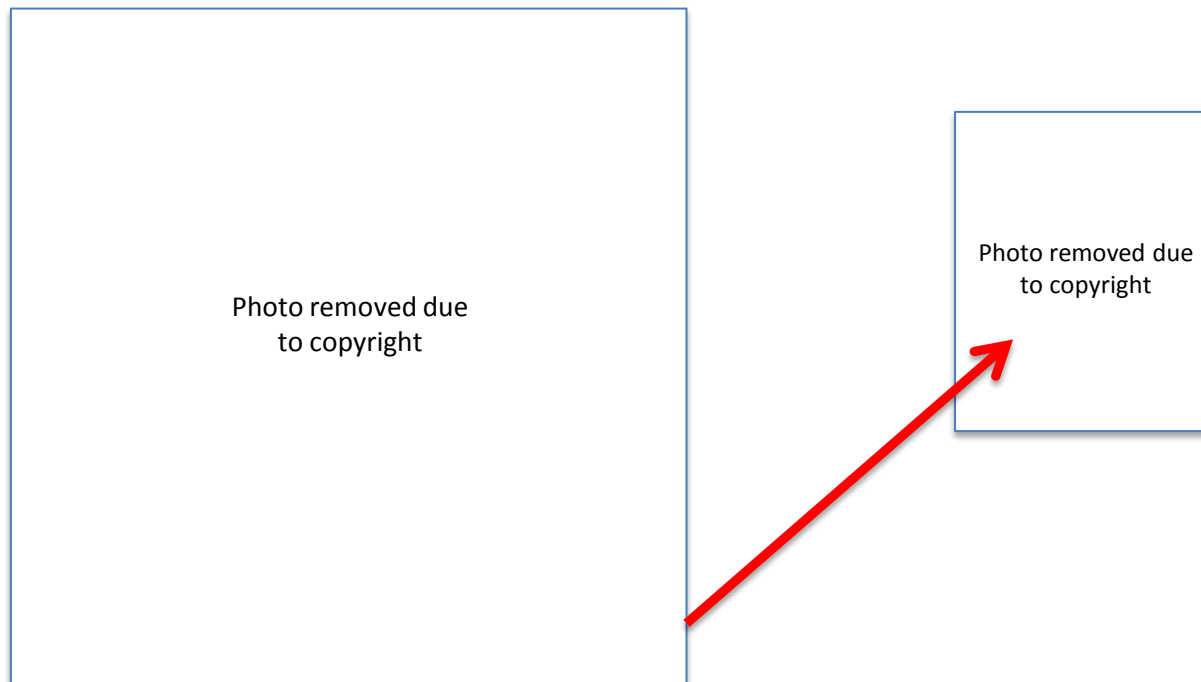
- 'gluten free': shape variations + a challenging metonymy
➔ necessity of linguistic cue: audience-/company-dependent



3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

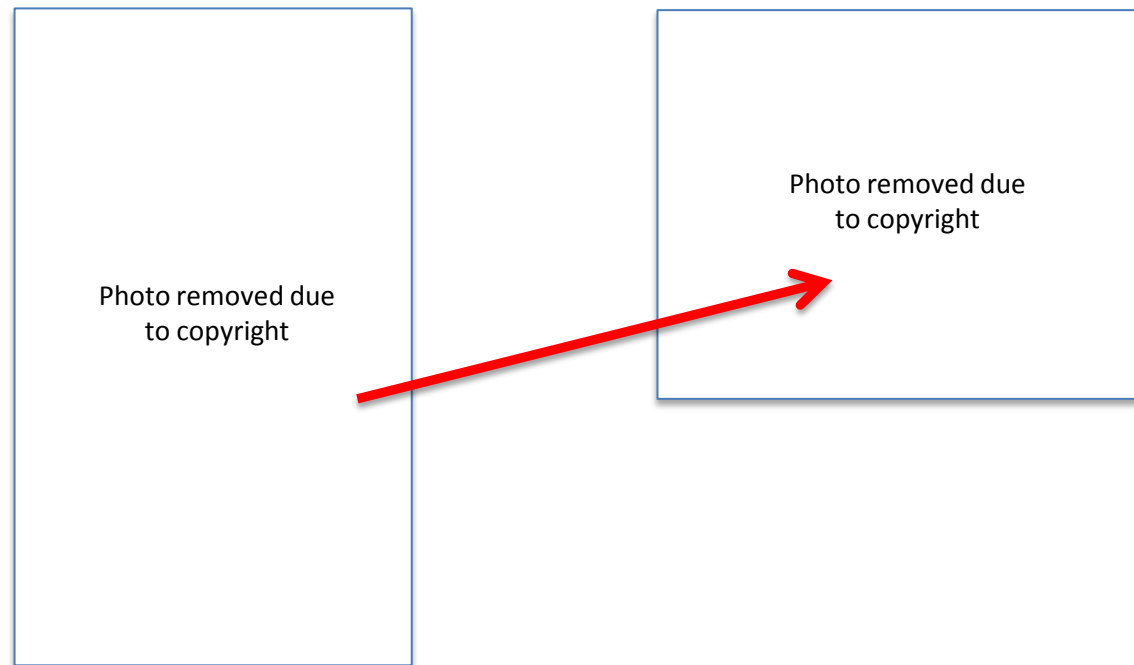
- 'gluten free': shape variations + a challenging metonymy
➔ necessity of linguistic cue: audience-/company-dependent



3. Applying the frameworks: Examples

Further features: Context, colours, concrete shapes

- 'gluten free': shape variations + a challenging metonymy
➔ necessity of linguistic cue: audience-/company-dependent



4. Conclusion

Summary of the findings

- full explanation of all features of the material often presupposes a combination of visual rhetoric and cognitive semantics
- some common interests of the two theories (e.g. framing)
- cognitive semantics:
 - recent work incorporates findings from visual rhetoric (cf. e.g. PérezHernández 2014, Koller 2009, Pinar Sanz 2013)
- visual rhetoric:
 - especially metaphor has found its way into its repertoire (cf. e.g. McQuarrie& Mick 1999)
 - less striking features (e.g. metonymic and image-schematic patterns) still often underestimated

Thank you!

References

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References: Figures

Barefoot Cabernet Sauvignon bottle, back label (details).

BILLY Assembly instructions (details), Inter IKEA Systems B.V., 2006.

BiovegankaramellParadies Pudding, packaging (front and detail).

ERBIUM Assembly instructions (details), Inter IKEA Systems B.V., 2001.

International traffic signs (<http://www.bildwoerterbuch.pons.com>; 01.09.2014)

Label for alcoholic beverages as proposed by the French Interministerial campaign for the fight against drugs and addiction (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zero_alcool_pendant_la_grossesse.svg; 15.04.2014).

Label for gluten free foodstuffs used primarily in German-speaking countries

(http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:Symbol_für_glutenfreie_Nahrungsmittel.svg&filetimestamp=20090424202544&; 15.04.2014).

Lorenz Naturals, packaging (front, back, and details).

Naturata Bio Reismudeln, packaging (back label and detail).

NoillyPrat bottle, back label (detail).

Ramazzotti bottle, back label (detail).

Warning signs (details) taken from leaflet accompanying candles, Depot GmbH (according to European Norm 15494 of 2007).