

Re: The Myth of Arbitrariness

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-10/msg01160.html>

- *From:* "Dr. Jamshid Ibrahim" <Idibrahim@xxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 28 Oct 2005 12:02:11 -0700
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benlizross wrote:

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> You appear to be confusing two quite different things: (1) the
> arbitrariness of the link between sound and meaning in languages as we
> know them, which is neither a "myth", nor a "claim" nor a "solution" to
> anything, but an everyday observed fact, as your "dog" example shows;
> and (2) some idea about how things originally got their names. The
> fact is that we have absolutely no idea (and no hope of knowing) who
> first made up a word for "dog", or what that word was, or why they gave
> it such a name. Of course people do still make up new words for new
> things, using a number of principles, of which mimesis would be one. And
> you could argue that such acts of invention are not "arbitrary". But
> that's not what Saussure was talking about.

Don't you think the two points you mentioned are two sides of the same sheet of paper. As you personally admitted names are not given at random but it is not an easy task either to find out the principles and establish the relationship between sound and meaning. Nothing comes out of the blue. The answer might be provided by semiotics. The link between sound, meaning and objects is perhaps still hidden to us and needs to be established yet. There is still a long way to go.

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 - ◇ *From:* benlizro
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