

Assignment

1–2 Language and linguistics*

- 1 What is the exponent, the referent and the meaning of the word *monarch* in the sentence *Queen Elizabeth II is the monarch of the UK*?
- 2
 - a. Which are the three main groups that we can categorize signs into?
 - b. Classify the following signs accordingly *and* add one of your own examples to each category.
 - i. involuntary cough; ii. cough for getting attention;
 - iii. the sign ♀; iv. a picture of a smoking cigarette with a diagonal bar across it; v. nod of head ('yes'); vi. *uh-huh* ('yes'); vii. the word *yes*; viii. *bzzz* (sound of a bee);
 - ix. waving the hand ('good-bye'); x. blushing; xi. the colors of traffic lights; xii. the French word *chat* ('cat');
 - xiii. the silhouette of a man or a woman on the door of a public restroom; xiv. the sign for 'I love you' in American Sign Language (ASL) (see the picture on the right)
- 3 Unlike in most European countries, in certain cultures shaking one's head means 'yes' and nodding means 'no.' What does this show about the type of these signs?
- 4 Besides being iconic, onomatopoeic words are partly symbolic as they tend to differ from language to language. Exemplify this—do a little research and find at least three onomatopoeic words in languages other than English that are different from their counterparts in your native language.
- 5 Displacement, duality (double articulation), patterning and creativity are some of the design features of human language. Explain these terms.
- 6 A wolf is able to express subtle gradations of emotion by different positions of the ears, the lips, and the tail. There are eleven postures of the tail that express such emotions as self-confidence, confident threat, lack of tension, uncertain threat, depression, defensiveness, active submission, and complete submission. This system seems to be complex. Suppose that there were a thousand different emotions that the wolf could express in this way. Would you then say a wolf had a language similar to a human's? Why?
- 7 Why can we say that linguistics (as opposed to literature or history) is a science?
- 8 What is the difference between studying a language from a synchronic and from a diachronic point of view?
- +1 Optional exercise: The Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis in science fiction
 - a. What do the strong and the weak version of the hypothesis state? (see e.g. Varga (2010: 26–27))
 - b. Explain how (the strong version of) the hypothesis appears (in an unrealistically extreme way) in the movie *Arrival* (dir. Denis Villeneuve, 2016).



* Some of the exercises are from Varga (2010) and from Fromkin, Victoria, Robert Rodman, and Nina Hyams. 2011. *An Introduction to Language*. 9th edition. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.