

# Variability of Languages in Time and Space

Lecture:

## **8-1 Writing Systems**

Created by:

**Anna Nedoluzhko**

### Outline

- What is writing, When did writing develop
- Speech vs. Writing

# Writing Systems

- What is writing?
- When did writing develop?
- What types of writing systems are there?

# Writing

- **Keep in mind:** Writing is not a purer form of language than speech!
- Writing is a system of recording language by means of visible / tactile marks
- Writing is NOT object of linguistics

speech – written text  
music – written notes



*Words spoken are symbols of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are symbols of words spoken. (Aristotle: Peri Hermeneias)*

*Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. The linguistic object is not both the written and the spoken forms of words; the spoken form alone constitutes the object. (F. de Saussure: Course in General Linguistics)*

# Speech vs. Writing

- continuous
  - bound to utterance time
  - contextual
  - temporal
  - audible
  - produced by voice
- discrete
  - timeless
  - autonomous
  - permanent
  - visible
  - produced by hand

# **Variability of Languages in Time and Space**

Lecture:

## **8-2 Writing Systems**

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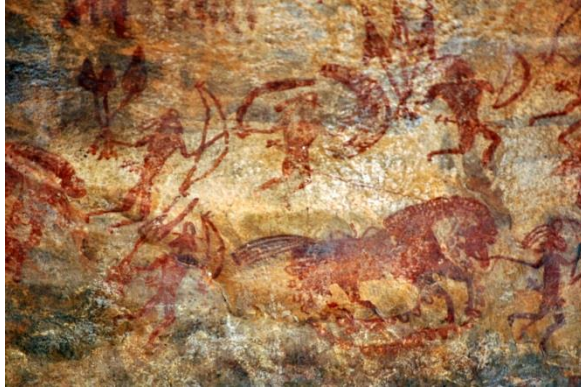
### Outline

- Pictography
- Ideography
- Morphography (logography)

semiography  
(meaning-based writing)

# Classification of writing systems

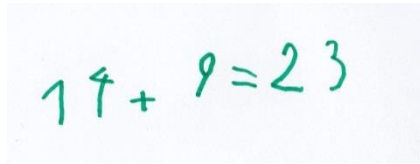
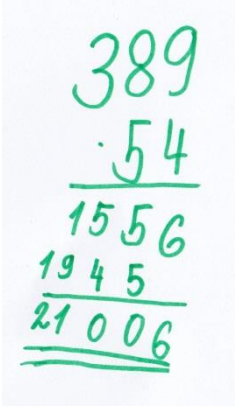
phonography  
(sound-based writing)



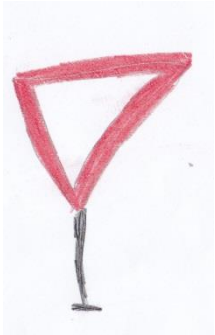
semiography  
(meaning-based writing)

# Classification of writing systems

phonography  
(sound-based writing)



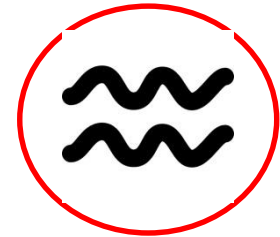
pictography





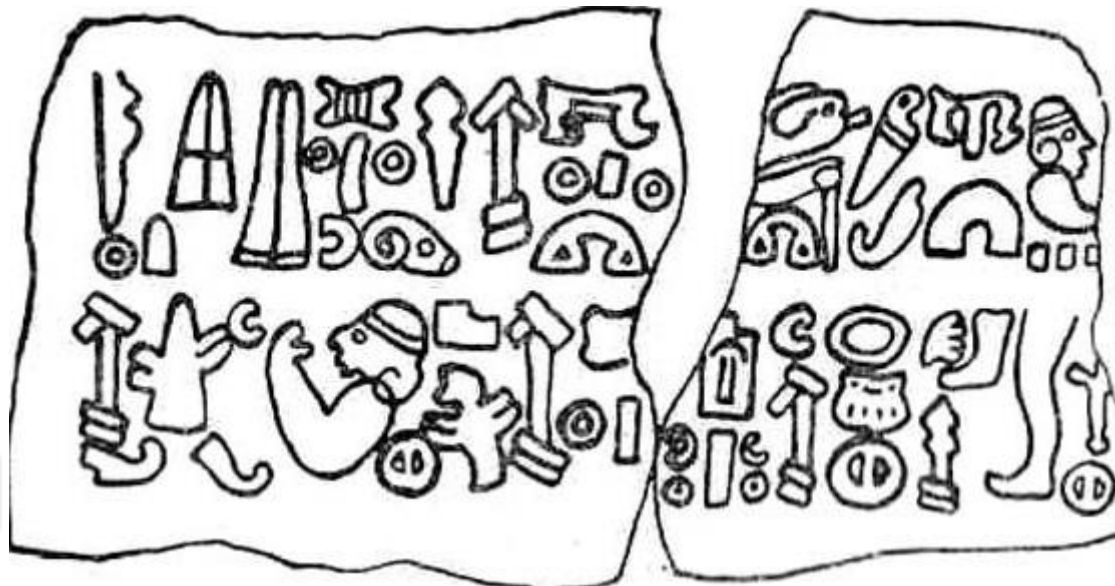
# Classification of writing systems

ideography



pictography

Luwian



二千

两个人

20

two people

Chinese

ideography

pictography

上  
中  
下

'up'

'down'



salient



concave

## Morphographic systems

- Relationship between the symbol and its referent is mostly arbitrary
- A graphic unit corresponds to a meaningful and grammatically autonomous unit (a word or a morpheme)
- Each morpheme gets its own symbol, thousands of symbols needed
- There are two major logographic writing systems: Sumerian (Cuneiform) and Chinese
- Further in the writing of Japanese, less frequently in Korean, formerly in Vietnamese

# Variability of Languages in Time and Space

Lecture:

## **8-3 Writing Systems**

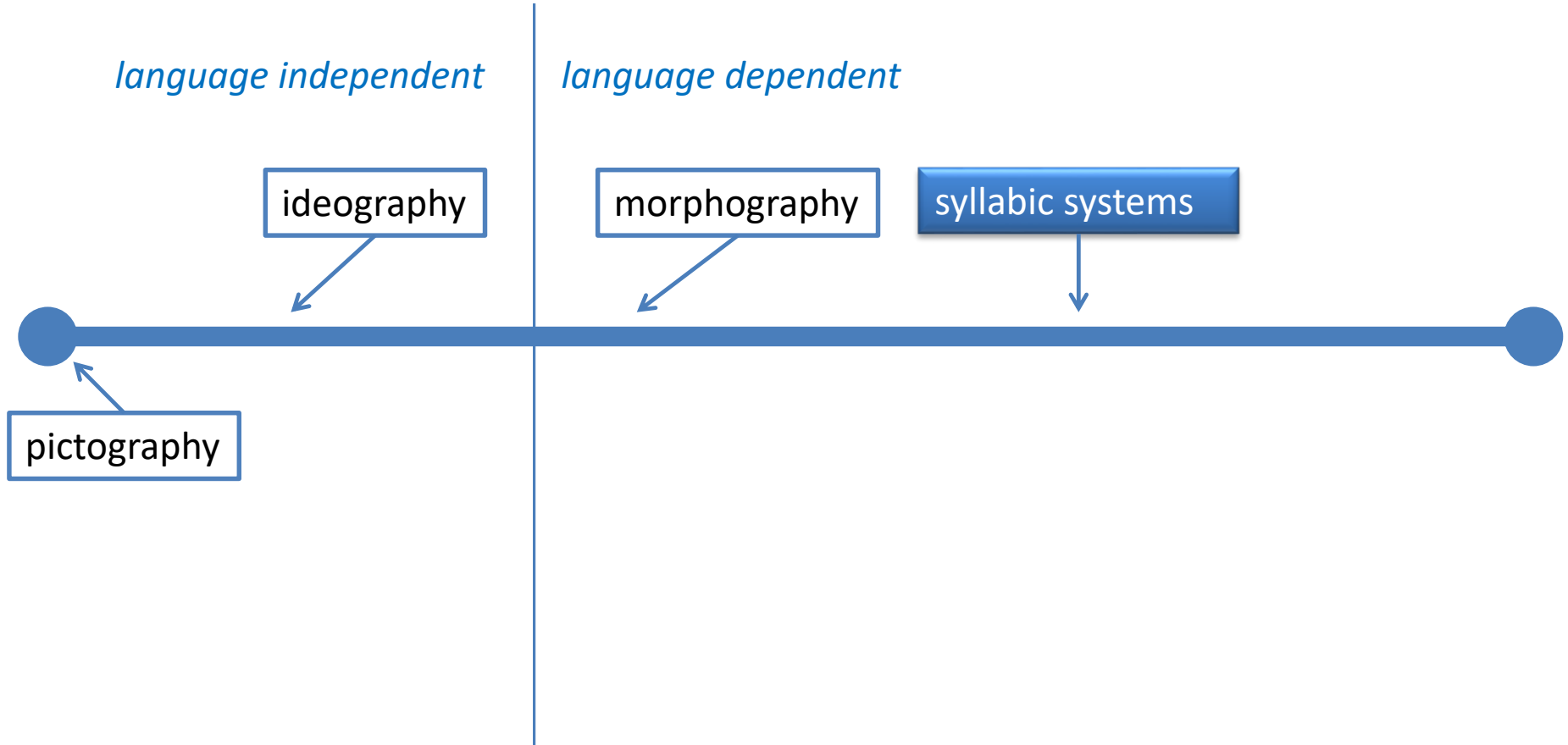
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### Outline

- Syllabic systems
- Alphabetic systems

# Classification of writing systems



## Syllabic Writing System

- The basic graphic units are interpreted as speech syllables
  - a syllable is a unit of speech that can be articulated in isolation and bear a single degree of stress (English) or a single tone (Chinese)
  - typically, a sound of a consonant followed by a vowel (CV)
  - different languages allow for different syllables

**VC**

**CVC**

**CCCVCC**

EN: *strength*

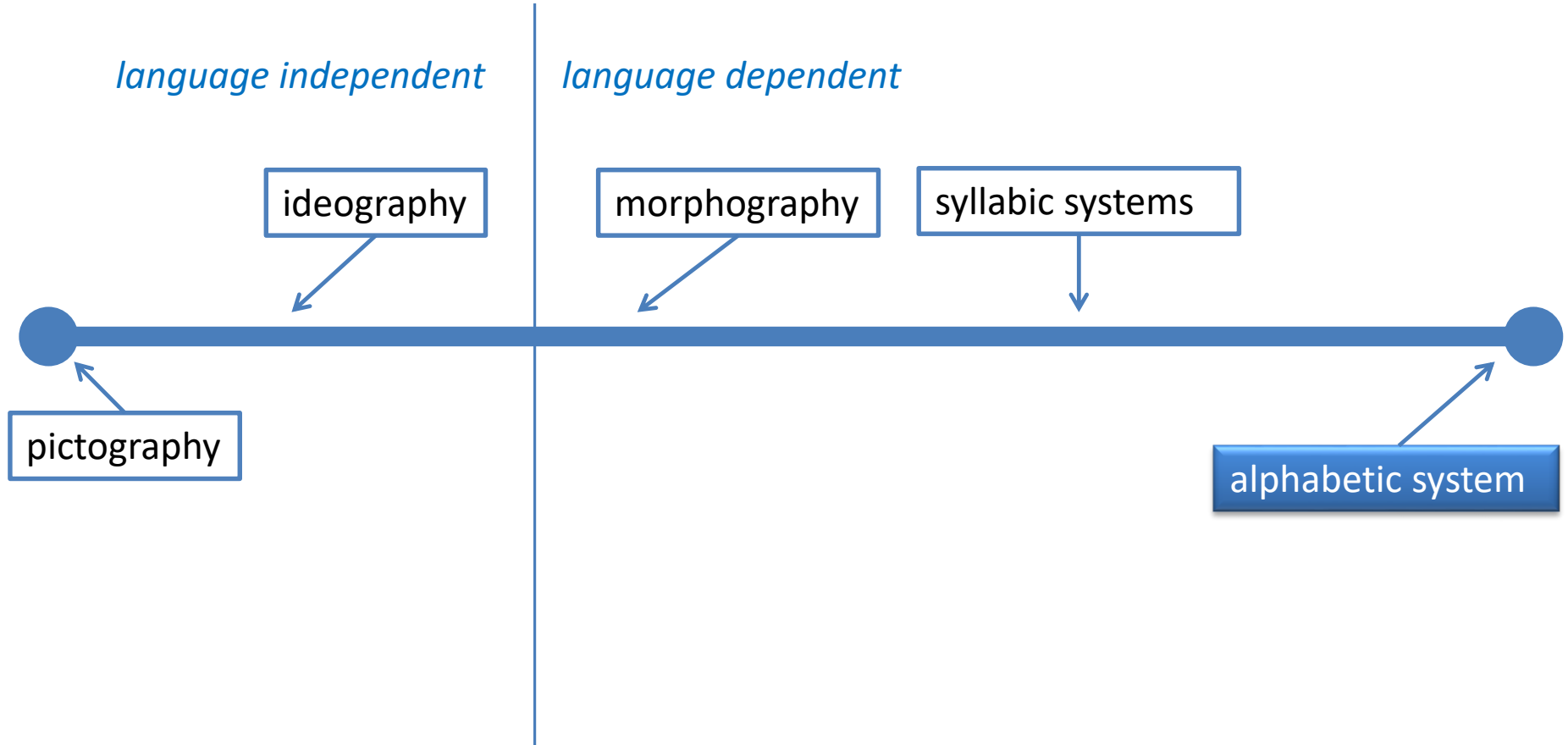
**V**

**CvCV**

## Syllabic Writing System

- No writing system could map speech syllables to graphic signs in the ratio 1:1
- Languages combine different strategies developed for syllabic writing to decrease the number of signs in comparison to the number of speech syllables
  - combining simple syllables, disregarding minor distinctions such as aspiration of final consonants
  - combining syllables with logograms
- One of the most well-known examples of syllabic systems is the Katakana writing system in Japanese

# Classification of writing systems





## Alphabetic Writing System

- Alphabetic letters encode phonemic segments
- Less than 50 symbols is needed to make this system work
- Languages: English, German, Greek, Czech, ...