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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

**Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:**

Sofiyev, K. (2022). Principal Contributions of Semiotic-Structural Approach in Culturology. *Path of Science*, 8(4), 4001-4006. <https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.80-4>

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# Principal Contributions of Semiotic-Structural Approach in Culturology

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DOI: 10.22178/pos.80-4

LCC Subject Category: P1-1091

Received 12.02.2022

Accepted 26.04.2022

Published online 30.04.2022

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**Abstract.** Pierce brought to research one of the main concepts of semiotics, the "sign", and Saussure brought to study the language system ("langue"), and thus they created a new view about culture. Semiotics was formed from the Greek word "semeion", a sign. Pierce's iconic signs were included in semiotics as names of depicted facts. So, a severe interest in semiotics was impelled by the shaking (mini earthquake) of the "sign" concept. Two epistemological shakes or microearthquakes happened in the second half of the XIX century. One of them was connected with the notion of a "sign" (Pierce), and the other was connected to the idea of a "language". But much more lately, it was clear that two concepts were formed due to that earthquake, and they could become the basics of a new metalanguage. In the 20th century, "structuralism" began to be used. This term was brought to linguistics by Roman Jakobson. Zellig Harris assigned this term from Jakobson and named his book "Methods in Structural Linguistics". Everyone knew about the form and content of cultural and art events in the past. But when there was formed metalanguage of semiotics, connected with culture, a structure and content were identified with pointing and pointed components of the sign. So, semiotics realized the formulation of thinking to combine and separate something because it connected cultural facts with such notions as a sign, a structure and a text and, as a result, separated them from something. For example, it separated from non-cultural facts that weren't comprehended as a sign or text. It gave the metalanguage a new paraphrasing model based on semiotics. In the past culturological narrations were formed based on ideological admirations, statements or negative sayings, i.e. they were created from discourses of appraisal character. The period of confrontations and struggles made such discourses very popular. But in history, there were also such periods that speeches like "how well" and "how bad" exhausted themselves. There appeared a need for discourses like "how it is constructed". Exactly semiotics of culture became popular because they met this requirement.

**Keywords:** semiotics; structuralism; signs; code; text; Muslim culture; metalanguage of semiotics.

## INTRODUCTION

After the 60s of the last century, during the Soviet period, semiotics of culture gained the civil law in the regime of harsh criticism said by representatives of dialectical materialism. After the 80s, Azerbaijani culture gets acquainted with it for the first time. At present, semiotics of culture is studied at universities. But methodological innovations of semiotics aren't reflected by "some semioticians" yet.

In contemporary culturology, the semiotic-structural method proposes a new metalanguage and new paradigms for depicting cultural mate-

rials. And it must be learned what innovations they reveal in cultural materials.

*This scientific research aims to reveal the contributions of the semiotics of culture to culturology.*

The main concepts and provisions of semiotics have been sufficiently reflected in these works [1, 13, 14]. The book [11] examines the change of "cleanness and tidiness" from culture to culture, syntagm of behaviours and deconstruction of some sayings. That's why this research has greatly influenced our article.

Issues of the formation of semiotics as a science. Semiotics was formed from the Greek word "se-

meion", a sign. Interestingly, at first outside linguistics, the name of the branch of medicine made a diagnosis based on symptoms. But in the XIX century, while researching the phenomenon of a sign, Pierce found out that as posters cover a lot of spheres of a human's activity, they must be studied by an individual science. The American philosopher referred to symbols (conventional signs), icons (depicting characters) and indexes as the kinds of signals (in fact, types were much more, but in the XX century, the rest of them didn't win enough interest). From the very beginning, symbols as kinds of signs were known by European thinking. But icon signs and indexes became a centre of attention after Pierce. So, at first, the European review knew icon signs as depictions and a picture, but it wasn't even mean that they were signs. At the same time, European thinking knew about the kind of "index" as to point with a finger, but, for example. It wasn't even meant to name smoke as an index. Due to Pierce's names depicting facts, icon signs included them in the semiotics circle. And as indexes informed about events, such as smoke, light and smell, they were considered specific signs [14, p. 10].

A serious interest in semiotics was impulsed by the shaking of the "sign" concept. As a rule, a sign was comprehended as a gesture. When Pierce formed this notion as a concept, he found out that even rain, wind, and a picture created by a painter could be included in a sign category. It is interesting that much later than Pierce speaking in his lectures about a language unit Ferdinand de Saussure also came to a sign. When he shook this concept, he found that words were conventional signs, i.e. a word meant an object without any physical connection [12].

Later, according to Saussure's followers, a conventional sign formed a connection with indexes and icon signs and acquitted a methodological role of a concept, a character. When Saussure took a language as a system of symbols, he concluded that there was a need for a precise science to learn all sign methods. And the Swiss scientist named this science "semiology" [5, p. 90]. A bit later, Pierce called "semiology" as "semiotics". The roots of both words were formed from the Greek word "semeion", a sign.

Two epistemological shakes or microearthquakes happened in the second half of the XIX century. One of them was connected with the notion of a "sign" (Pierce), and the other was asso-

ciated with the idea of a "language". But much more lately, it was clear that two concepts were formed due to that earthquake, and they could become the basics of a new metalanguage. The American philosopher Charles Morris continued Pierce's theory and connected humanitarian sciences with signs on the base of the same image. And from this, he found out that semiotics had to become the metascience of all humanitarian sciences.

Everyone knew about the form and content of cultural and art events in the past. But when there was formed metalanguage of semiotics, connected with culture, a structure and content were identified with pointing and pointed components of the sign. So, semiotics realized the formulation of thinking to combine and separate something because it connected cultural facts with such notions as a sign, a structure and a text and, as a result, separated them from something. For example, it separated from non-cultural facts that weren't comprehended as a sign or text. It gave the metalanguage a new paraphrasing model based on semiotics. In the past culturological narrations were formed based on ideological admirations, statements or negative sayings, i.e. they were created from discourses of appraisal character. The period of confrontations and struggles made such discourses very popular.

But in history, there were also such periods that discourses like "how well" and "how bad" exhausted themselves, and thus, there appeared a need for sermons like "how it is constructed". Exactly semiotics of culture became popular because they met this requirement. By chance, semiotics of culture got rid of appraisal rhetoric and entered into its subject swearings and non-official cultural symbols as cultural facts. There was a time when culturology, which used appraisal discourses, was too sterile. It needed adverse facts for imprecating rhetoric which aimed at defending positive points. But semiotics gave paradigms to tell about them in a standard, neutral tone. Metalanguage, which provided a foundation for appraisal discourses, saw a danger for culture covering wrong facts. This situation created the background in the 70s of the XX century, which popularized an alternative approach in Soviet culturology. Despite the science-based cultural optimism and culturological sterility in the Soviet world, the method based on pessimism and negativeness was suddenly blown up like a bomb.

M. Bakhtin's books about Dostoyevsky and Rable weren't based on semiotic paradigms and meta-language. But it's strange that just semiotics considered these books as their native ones and brought into requisition his ideas. As for us, the reason was that these books managed to make the worst and ugliest materials about culture a subject of culturological thinking. As an example, we can note Bakhtin's reveal of the culturological role of grotesque bodies based on his concept of "carnival aesthetics" [3, p. 23].

After M. Bakhtin, a similar effect on the Soviet culturology was given by A. Losev's book dedicated to Renaissance aesthetics. Though it's told about symbols in this work, it isn't true to consider semiotic research in Losev's book instead of apologetics and admiration created by the Soviet aesthetics and culturology in connection with the Renaissance aesthetics. There was told about the dissolute life and activity of such famous Renaissance figures as Lorenzo de Medici, Papa Alexander VI Borja, and Cesar de Borja. A. Losev justified the concept of the "wrong side" of titanism based on dissolute and fearful facts, and then he tried to explain it as a normal stagnation of transfer from old moral to a new one [3, p. 120-126].

Though Losev wrote much about symbols and signs as the Antique philosophy's contribution to world thinking, he was indifferent to other ideas of semiotics. The philosopher was a little interested in code and text dichotomy, communication and semiotic processes in culture. But, despite it the noted reasons, his creative activity was native to semiotics.

In the past, in Tartu semiotic school, under the influence of famous figures of Russian formal school (V. Shklovskiy, B. Eichenbaum, Y. Tinyanov) and later M. Bakhtin and A. Losev there was formed such metalanguage which created a new culturology. That new culturology was opposite to traditional culturology, which created discrimination in culture from an axiological point of view, i.e. "bad/good", "decent/dishonest", "successful/unsuccessful", "own/foreign", "clean/dirty". World culturology doesn't always interest forbidden themes, i.e. problems unworthy of scientific attention and respect. But when it's interested in them, the scientific event happens. So, at the end of the Soviet period, events were abundant.

One of Saussure's important paradigms that contributed to linguistics was connected with structure. More precisely, the Swiss scientist used the

term "system", but not this concept, and created a base of thoughts that later led to the structure. One of those thoughts was that a language was only a connection of differences and similarities. Language isn't an item like an object or body. It's an organization of relationships network. That's why the origin of any language can be found based on its difference or similarity to other languages. Later we will explain the epistemological importance of this approach to this problem. Now we'd like to talk about Saussure's role in the structure. Structuralism was created the following way. Though at the beginning of the XX century, Saussure was an active theorist, he wasn't the only one in this sphere.

Moreover, as R. Jakobson said, some ideas assigned to Saussure linguists also got from scientists. This fact is seen in Roman Jakobson's example. In the 20s, i.e. long before Russia obtained copies of Saussure's works, Jakobson had assigned ideas to create a new situation in linguistics. One of the sources of these ideas was Husserl, more precisely, Gustav Shpet, who Husserl taught.

After the 20s, the term "structuralism" became widely used in Prague Linguistic Circle. Before linguistics, this word was familiar to psychologists. It appeared due to British American psychologist Y. Titchener. He studied at Leipzig University, but R. Jakobson brought "structuralism" to linguistics. From the beginning of the XIX century, linguistics began to assign many words that belonged to biology. This process also belonged to the terms "structural" and "structure", which entered linguistics.

Zellig Harris assigned the term from Jakobson and named his book "Methods in Structural Linguistics". And Saussure's ideas, for the first time, were used by Russian formalists and members of the Moscow Linguistic Circle [10].

As we see, the creation of structural linguistics and later creating of the semiotics of culture was accompanied by a paradox. First, critical points of the theory of signs unfamiliar to each other were formed in Europe and America. Though "structure" was one of those points, it was named a "system". There wasn't any novelty in Saussure's using this term. Approach to an object as a system was observed in G. Leibniz, Marx and many other thinkers. Saussure's principal novelty was that he took the character of every element connected in the system from their link but not their

substratum. To explain it, we'd like to use Saussure's favourite chess model.

The figure "Horse" movement rules find its determination in the difference of movement rules of other statistics. One of these differences is that the horse can step over other figures. As this difference and this movement trajectory are principal for the figure "Horse", from the standpoint of material, the figure of the "horse" can be made in different ways, i.e., from wood, stone, or ice. The chess game won't be broken if this figure isn't like a horse while moving like a horse.

Saussure's brilliant idea about the system later played a significant role in forming "structure". Let's examine this idea once more, based on non-language material. An ordinary conscious connects the character of an object and body with their physical and material features. For example, he considered a stone structure, dome, and yard as primary praying places and thought non-physical meanings were connected with those physical forms. But a structuralist says that a defining feature of the mosque, "praying place – non-praying places," is an attitude created by the opposition. This attitude isn't material like a stone or wood, but it's crucial for the definition of the mosque fact. Structuralism clarifies that the mosque wins certainty from the right side in the opposition noted above, i.e. from the "non-praying places". The Islamic discourse that "Every place on the Earth may be a mosque" is revealed by structuralist wisdom. If you take any place in a distinctive form from "non-praying places", that place can become a mosque.

When phonological linguistics theory was being formed under the influence of Nikolay Trubetsky and Roman Jakobson, there was found that to characterize phonemes, it was essential to making a list of differential signs found in oppositions, such as "voiced/deaf", "open/closed". After this, it will be possible to see that every phoneme is a unit of differential features (for example, "a" is a unit of thick and opened vowel features) [2, p. 96-100]. We want to add also that by drawing analogies between this structural phonological theory and nuclear or quantum physics, some scientists have concluded that for social sciences, phonology is the same as quantum physics for physics. Klod Levi-Stross justified this idea because, in anthropology, structure made a family net based on the principle of differential features of phonology [8, p. 35-36].

In structuralism, differential features and two evil oppositions allow the implementation of a critical task. It's the task to depict a maximum number of events by minimal means. Phonemes (number of letters in writing) are too limited in spoken language. But different combinations of restricted phonemes and letters create numerous words. A structural method works just in a similar form: on the base of a few differential features, it characterizes many events.

Another determining force of structure connected with any object, body and event is that an object's feature is determined by the system, as we see in bread, diamond and graphite. On the other side, just this structure dominance leads to the fact that physical discrepancy doesn't interfere with different bodies and objects.

Abdulbaki Cholpinarli's idea about Sufism is a good metaphor, which explains how physical vectors of bodies are neutralized in culture and culturology. According to Golpinarli's idea, like poets for Sufists, the entire world appears as a manifestation of the Absolute Being. Sufists examined the Koran and told about the word "lebs" which meant suspicion and libas (dress), that any moment the world entered the dress from nowhere and left the dress for nowhere [6, p. 63-64]. If we continue this metaphor from the structural point of view, then a structural unit of bodies can appear in different dresses because they leave one physical dress and enter the other one.

If we examine an event as a unit of differential features, its dress won't deceive us. In Islam, there is an exciting exception connected with Qibla. When a pious, for respectful reasons, don't know the Qibla's direction, he can draw a circle, consider its middle as Qibla, face it, and pray. This "structural" reform of the Shariat connected with Qibla, i.e. replacing Qibla, although the physical "dress" of the actual geographical Qibla is based on the hadis. There's a story that when the Prophet sometimes rode, he prayed not in the direction of Qibla but in the order of the road along which he was riding [6, p. 222]. So, the Prophet approached the problem with the structure principle and didn't consider the "Qibla" as a unit of differential features. Those features noted that the central part of Qibla differed from the directions that weren't faced and moved to. So, this hadis allows replacing the true Qibla with a "kvazi-Qibla" in an emergency.

In religious and non-religious spheres, there are a lot of examples of the physical "dresses" of cul-

tural monuments that aren't taken into consideration according to the structural approach. In China, Tibetan Lamaists hung Dalai Lama's portrait in their apartments. So, the open frame became a synonym for Dalai Lama's image. In the past, the wall with the Dalai Lama's portrait on it was the base of difference from the rest part of the wall was a sacral zone for Tibetans. When the picture was forbidden, difference began to belong to the empty frame of the portrait, and the result was the same. So, the Tibetans again considered the wall of their apartments as sacral using Dalai Lama's other sign.

The value of replacing the cultural monument's actual being with a structural being is indispensable for culture. As a physical being of Egyptian Pyramids, the Sphinx, the Maiden Tower, Fortress Walls, the huge bas-relief of Buddha blown up by the Taliban in Afghanistan is essential to get information about the molecules of their fragments can be analyzed. The most effective method according to this problem is radiocarbon analysis. Indeed, if we want to learn the age of the Maiden Tower, we'll carry out a carbon dioxide analysis of its initial stones but not the present ones which have been used in its restoration. But despite such importance of physical-material being, we observe the virtual restoration of disappeared fragments and monuments in culture on the base of structural being. Arms of Venera Miloskaya were broken. But someone will occur to restore the arms just for parody. The broken arms exist, but their disappeared parts in the structural principle, i.e. principle of zero or kvazi-being, are kept in mind. There are hundreds of ancient objects and monuments whose incomplete physical being isn't restored, and contemporary educated people can see their unseen elements through the eyelet of structural code.

This phenomenon is widely observed in architecture. Destructions of destroyed ancient monuments replace their primary variant. According to the Torah, when the Jews entered Israel first, they carried the tent with God and its chest. Later the Prophet David built that tent in Jerusalem. The Prophet Suleyman made Jerusalem (or Suleyman) temple on the Temple Mountain instead of that tent. Over the centuries, Temple remained

for Jews as Beyt Mikdash, i.e. Beyt-ul Holy. Before Christmas in 586, Assyrian King Nabuchodonosor destroyed that Temple. But later, the other Temple was built in its place, which the Roman soldiers destroyed. Just the structural essence of God and the sacrament's chest later led to the tent, which kept that structural essence and became synonyms after the First Temple built by the Prophet Suleyman. However, they had different physical features (dresses).

The Second Temple built by the Irod the Great also entered the list of those synonyms. But when that Temple was destroyed, the Wailing Wall located a bit below that Temple became a new synonym of the First Temple. During the Islamic period, the al-Aksa Mosque was built on the site of the Second Temple. Interestingly, despite relations between Judaism and Islam for the Jews, it remained a foreign and even enemy Temple status. The reason was that although al-Aksa took some structural features from Jewish temples as a central point, it just didn't take a structural essence that belonged only to Judaism, such as "The place where the God and sacrament's chest was kept".

## CONCLUSIONS

Pierce and Morris's idea of icon signs created the opportunity to learn fine arts and audio-visual arts by semiotic methods. Traditional art criticism studied depictions from the similarity with objects and revealed modernist deformations as new ones. Due to semiotic approaches, deformations in the description were shown in the parameters of increasing information content.

Saussure's dichotomy of "language-speech" brought to the "cultural codes – texts" paradigm in the semiotics of culture. As a result, when art was taken in the communicative model, coding and decoding cultural texts became clear.

Semiotics of culture segmented the culture and created the opportunity to take discrete. But namely, A. Losev's idea of infinity of symbols (signs) allowed the semiotics "to be philosophized" and see the content of the text in infinite richness.

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