



Semiotic Aspects of the Curriculum of Translation Studies

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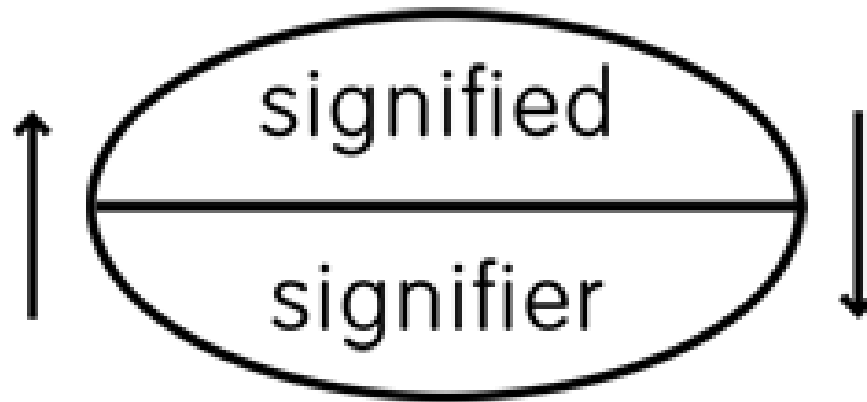
Semiotics, the study of signs

- **What is semiotics (linguistic, or structuralist semiotics, to be exact)?**
- **Who are Saussure, Peirce, Barthes, Jakobson, Greimas and Eco, and why are they important?**
- **What is a sign, a symbol, an icon and an index?**
- **Which codes do we take for granted?**
- **What is a text and what are the limits of its interpretation?**
- **How can semiotics be used in textual analysis?**
- **What is intertextuality?**
- **What is untranslatability, why does it occur?**
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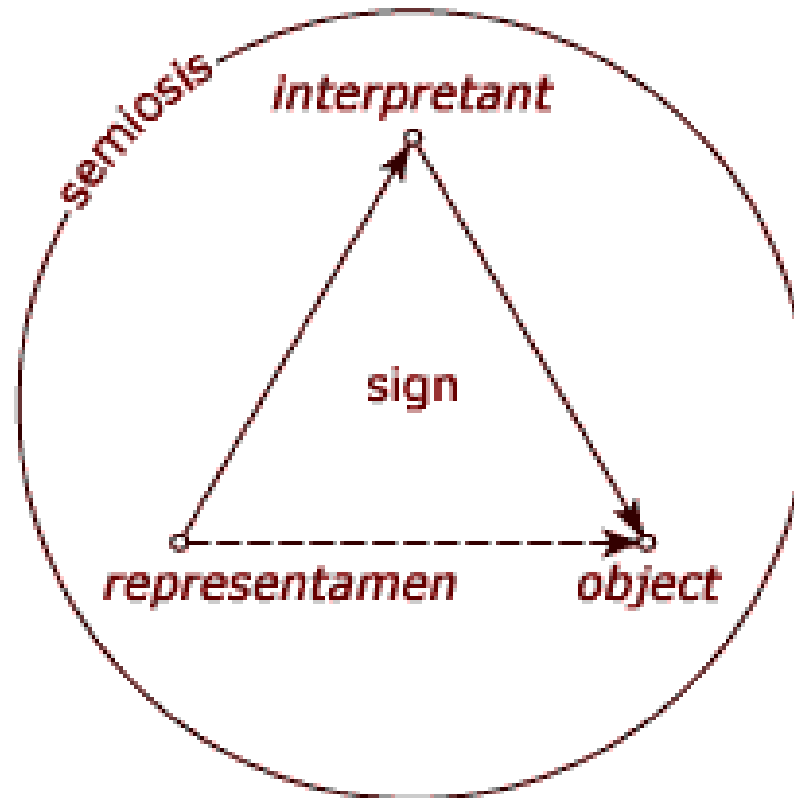
Diadic Model of the Sign

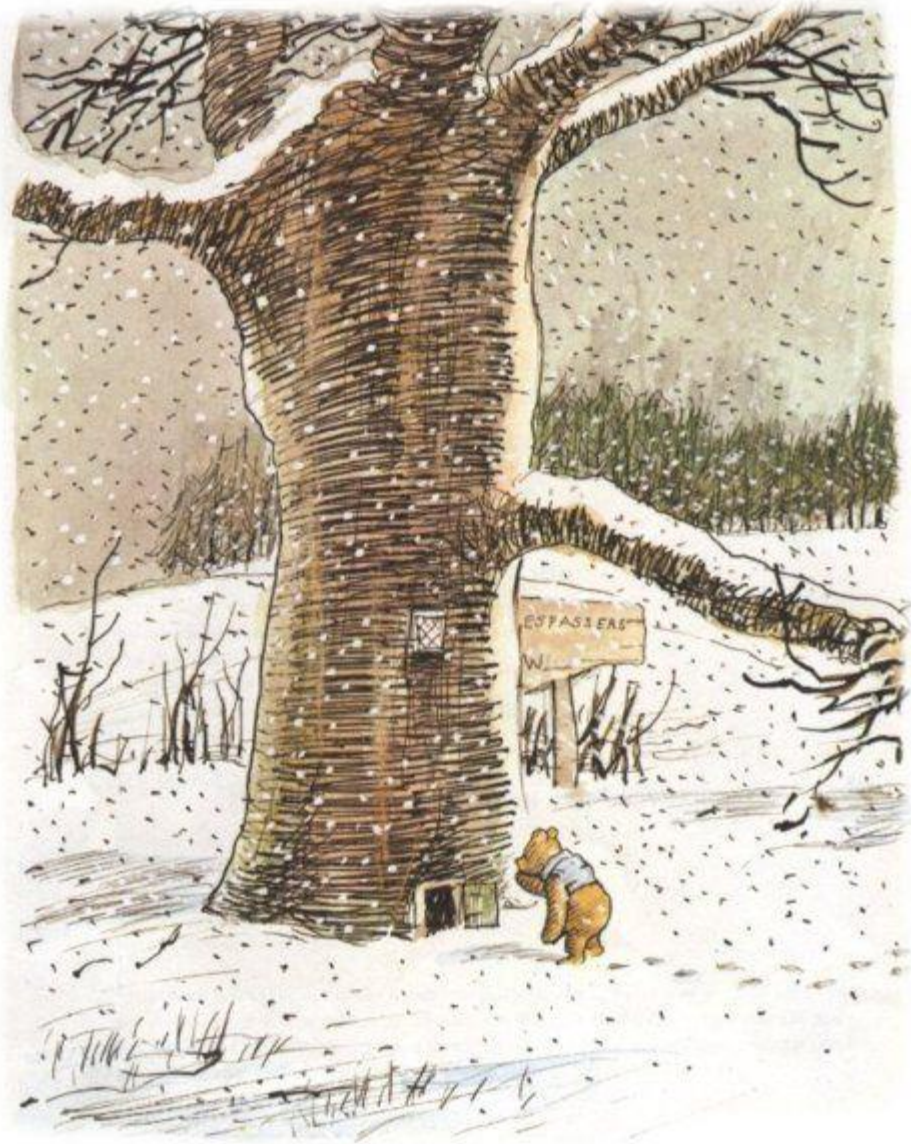
Semiotic Models: Dyadic and Triadic
Ferdinand de Saussure





Triadic Model of the Sign







The Piglet lived in a very grand house in the middle of a beech-tree, and the beech-tree was in the middle of the forest, and the Piglet lived in the middle of the house. Next to his house was a piece of broken board which had: TRESPASSERS W” on it. When Christopher Robin asked the piglet what it meant, he said it was his grandfather’s name, and had been in the family for a long time. Christopher Robin said you couldn’t be called Trespassers W, and Piglet said yes, you could, because his grandfather was, and it was short for Trespassers Will, which was short for Trespassers William.

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Semiotic Interpretation of what Text Is

- The text **remains provisional** until it is actually received.
- A text starts performing its intended function only when it has a reader. Thus it has to be **conventional** for the reader to decipher it:
- **field and a theme,**
- **contents,**
- **Presupposition (i.e. background of discourse taken for granted, e.g. Is Peter coming? Which means Peter exists and he is somewhere),**
- **composition,**
- **non-verbal elements (photos, graphs, tables),**
- **genre and style,**
- **sentence structure and**
- **hyper segments of the text, such as chapters and paragraphs.**
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If a text is an act of speech...

- i.e. if it is face-to-face communication it has both, linguistic and non-linguistic means of expression, such as:
- Intonation;
- Facial expression;
- Gestures;
- Interpersonal distance.



Social features of text

- A text is, first of all, a **social medium** of interaction, i.e. a means of human communication.
- **intentionality** (on the writer's / speaker's part)
- **acceptability** (on the reader's/hearer's part),
- **Conventionality:**

text types: informative vs. expressive vs. persuasive texts or descriptive vs. narrative vs. argumentative texts;

text classes: e.g. weather report, prayer, folk-ballad, operating instructions;

genres: literary vs. non-literary



TEXT. A definition

- **A text is a communicative action which can be realized by a combination of verbal and non-verbal means.**



Codes and Conventions

- The concept of **code** is central in structuralist semiotics:
- The production and interpretation of texts depends upon the existence of **codes** or **conventions** for communication (Jakobson 1960).
- ...codes provide a framework within which signs make sense.
- Interpreting the conventional meaning of signs requires familiarity with appropriate sets of conventions.
- Society itself depends on the existence of such signifying systems
- Codes are not simply ‘conventions’ of communication, but rather procedural systems of related conventions which operate in certain domains.



Codes and Semiotic Structures

- Back in 1968, R. Jakobson wrote:
- “Language is... a purely semiotic system...The study of signs, however,...must take into consideration also applied semiotic structures, as for instance, architecture, dress or cuisine... any edifice is simultaneously some sort of refuge and a certain kind of message. Similarly, any garment responds to definitely utilitarian requirements and at the same time exhibits various semiotic properties” (1968, 703).

medium

medium

genre

genre

text

text

text

text

text

genre

genre

text

text



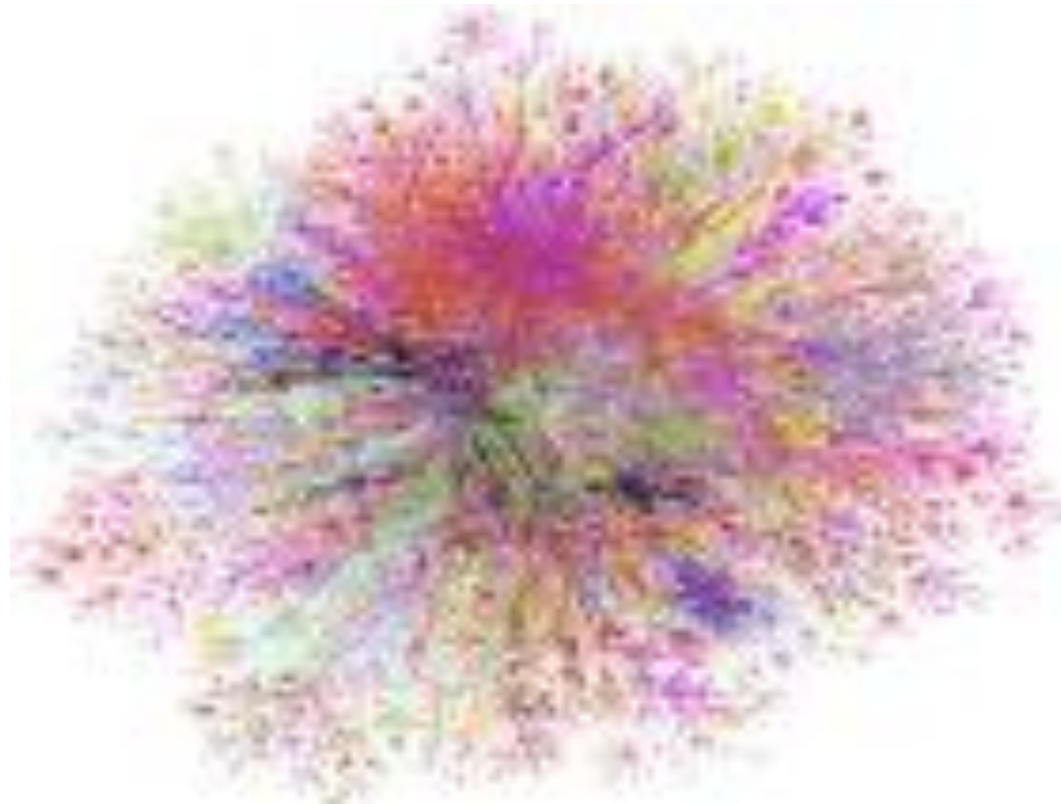
- „All the various non-verbal dimensions of culture, such as styles in clothing, village lay-out, architecture, furniture, food, cooking, music, physical gesture, postural attitudes and so on are organised in patterned sets so as to incorporate coded information in a manner analogous to the sounds and words and sentences of a natural language... It is just as meaningful to talk about the grammatical rules which govern the wearing of clothes as it is to talk about the grammatical rules which govern speech utterances“.



INTERTEXTUALITY

The constellations, and universe, of texts

Each text exists in relation to others. In fact, texts owe more to other texts than to their own makers.





Intertextuality in linguistics

- Reminders

On 21st December 1913, Arthur Wynne presented what is recognized as the first true crossword to the unsuspecting readership of the New York World. He continued to provide puzzles for the next 10 years without anyone following suit. Then, in 1923, two Harvard graduates, Robert Simon and Lincoln Schuster, launched their Cross Word Puzzle Book. Its first edition sold out overnight and nine reprints soon followed.



Direct Quotations

- Direct quotations:

All my life, I have been intrigued by the gap between appearances and reality. Things are never quite as they seem. I was born a subject of the British Empire, and as a child, read in my Children's Encyclopaedia that 'our empire' was one 'on which the sun never set'. I saw that there was more red on the map than any other colour, and was delighted. Before long, I was watching in disbelief as the imperial sunset blazed across the post-war skies amidst seas of blood and mayhem. Reality, as later revealed, belied outward appearances of unlimited power and permanence.

(Davies 2012, 1)



Quazi-quotations

- Quazi-quotations, when part of a quotation is intentionally misquoted:
- *By the time we returned to Copenhagen, we were barely speaking to each other. Familiarity did not breed children, as Mark Twain once remarked. It bred irritability and sniping. We were sluggish from carrying around extra pounds and exhausted from all that leisure.*
- (Precedent: *Familiarity breeds contempt*) (Bombeck 1991, 81)

Allusion



"I hope he hasn't turned vegetarian"



Semiotic Intertextuality as Allusion

**Every Snack You Make
Every Meal You Bake
Every Bite You Take
I'll Be Watching You...**



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- Extensions, or continuations:
- For the Next Millenium, by Christian K. Narkiewicz-Laine



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