

ENG836 - SEMIOTICS

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ENG836 - SEMIOTICS

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Introduction

I affectionately welcome you to the course ENG836: Semiotics. This course is designed for Postgraduate students whose major discipline is English Language. Be assured that you will enjoy studying this course.

This course guide is meant to give you a general overview of what this course is all about. It will briefly tell you what the course is about, what course materials you will be using and how to work your way through these materials. It suggests some general guidelines for the amount of time you are likely to spend on each unit of the course. It also gives you some guidance on your tutor-marked assignments.

This course should be taken as self-study. You are expected to complete it in one semester of about three months with your facilitator helping out. It is left for you to make sure that you attend facilitations and agree with your facilitator on how best to complete this manual and at the same time make the best out of it.

Course Aims

ENG836: Semiotics is designed to introduce you to how messages (information) are encoded and decoded through signs. The course is concerned with how messages are engraved in signs as well as how meanings are interpreted from sign.

The course aim is to expose you to how every organism makes meaning using signs as a tool for communication and messaging.

The overall aim of this Manual is to provide you with a theoretical grounding in the deployment of signs as a means of passing information, the processes of interpretation of distinctive signs used in communication and the various branches as well as the models of semiotics.

Course Objectives

It is hoped that by the time you complete this course using this manual, you will be able to:

- Define Semiotics;
- Discuss the origins and development of semiotics;
- Identify the various founding figures;
- Differentiate between the different subfields of semiotics;
- Discuss the different stages of the development of semiotics;
- Distinguish between different perspectives of semiotics from Ancient era to date;
- Differentiate between the various notions of ‘sign’;

- Define and classify the semiotic codes;
- Discuss the ideologies and theories of various founding semioticians;
- Differentiate between the various levels of meaning,
- Identify and discuss the contributions of various semioticians to modern semiotics;
- Explain how to explore signification in texts (signal);
- Identify the significance of some gestures and body movements in communication;
- Differentiate between Proxemics and Kinesics;
- Identify and explain semiotics modes;
- Identify the different categories of Proxemics;
- Identify different types and subfields of Kinesics.

Working through the Course Manual

To complete this course, you are advised to read the study units and other related materials for in-depth knowledge. It is also proper for you to consult at the reference sections of the course. Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, and at specific points in the course you will be required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course (semester), there is a final examination. You will find all the components of the course listed below. You have to allocate your time to each unit in order to complete the course successfully and on time.

For you to understand this course material, you are expected to study all the units diligently and successfully. Do not hesitate to consult your facilitator where need be. Each study unit introduces you to different aspect of semiotics. In order to complete your training in semiotics successfully, you should:

- Not disregard any aspect of this manual or see it as being simple, difficult or complicated. Just read on and you will always see the connections.
- Do all the self-assessment exercises, either alone or in a discussion group with your course mates
- Do not neglect any of the tutor-marked assignments, answer and submit to your facilitator on demand.

Course Materials

The major components of the course are:

1. Study units
2. Textbooks
3. Assignment File
4. Presentation schedule

Study Units

There are nineteen (19) study units divided into five modules. The first module has four units and deals with the definitions and the historical development of semiotics; the second module comprises of four units handles the theories of Semiotics starting from the founding father to some other recent theorists; the third module is divided into four units and treats Subfields of Semiotics; fourth module which is divided into four units and it examines Methods of Semiotics Investigation; and the last module is made up of two aspects – each has two units. The first aspect deals with Semiotic Modes – Proxemics and Kinesics while the second aspect of the module five is the practical aspect where you are expected to write a term paper on Proxemics or Kinesics investigation.

These Modules are arranged as:

Module 1: The Development of Semiotics

Unit 1: Definition of Semiotics

Unit 2: Historical Development of Semiotics

Unit 3: Semiotic Assumptions and Terminologies

Unit 4: Doing Semiotics

Module 2: Theories of Semiotics

Unit 1: Ferdinand de Saussure and Semiotics (1906)

Unit 2: Charles Sanders Peirce and Semiotics (1890)

Unit 3: Roland Barthes and Semiotics (1950s)

Unit 4: Umberto Eco (Interpretative Semiotics)

Module 3: Subfields (Branches) of Semiotics

Unit 1: Literary Semiotics

Unit 2: Cultural Semiotics

Unit 3: Pictorial Semiotics

Unit 4: Biosemiotics

Module 4: Methods of Semiotics Investigation (Analysis)

Unit 1: Paradigmatic Analysis

Unit 2: Syntagmatic Analysis

Unit 3: Cognitive Semiotics

Unit 4: Seminal Paper 1: General Semiotic investigation of your choice

Module 5: Proxemics and Kinesics: Semiotic Modes

Unit 1: Proxemics

Unit 2: Kinesics communication (language of the body)
Unit 3: Seminal Paper 2: Proxemics or Kinesics investigation

Each module is divided into units that expand on topics related to the main theme of the module. Next, these topics are listed followed by discussions on them. You should be able to complete assignments that are added at intervals as the discussions go on. Each assignment provides practice for you in developing the sequential components of the course. Your answers are supposed to be relevant and short.

In module one, you will study about the Development of Semiotics. In unit one of this module, you will be exposed to the various definition of Semiotics while unit two discusses the Historical Development of Semiotics. Unit three exposes you to some Semiotic Assumptions and Terminologies while unit four exposes you to a simplify form of Doing Semiotics.

The second module teaches you about the difference theories and principle of semiotics. In discussing the theories of semiotics we will examine two founding fathers - Ferdinand de Saussure (1906) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1890) whose treatment of the scientific study of signs are similar but unique in their treatment of some aspects. These two founding fathers set the ground for the current semiotics as we have it today. There are many other semiotic theorists but major outstanding ones such as Roland Barthes (1950s) and Umberto Eco (Interpretative Semiotics) are examined. Their treatment, assumptions and contributions to the theories of semiotics are discussed.

Module three exposes you to some branches of Semiotics -Literary, Cultural, Pictorial and Biosemiotics. Literary semiotics, as a branch of semiotics, investigates how meanings are encoded and deconstructed through the use of signs in the literary world. Although, Cultural semiotics is closely related to literary semiotics, it is distinct in that it expands the explorations of all artefacts within the society such as marketing (advertisements), fashion, power structures, food, and other cultural objects which are embedded with cultural signification. Pictorial Semiotics is the sub-field of semiotics that accounts for how pictures including the various sub-genres of pictures (drawings, paintings, photographs) encode and transmit messages. Biosemiotics is the branch of semiotics that examines how meanings are constructed and decoded in all levels of the biological realm – human and lower animals includes living organisms both in plants and animals.

In the fourth module, you will learn about Methods of Semiotic Investigation. Several methods of encoding, deconstructing and decoding of meaning in signs have been put forward. We examined two semiotic investigation methods which were borrowed from structural linguistics – syntagmatic and paradigmatic. For the structuralists, sign is seen as the building blocks which are brought together to form a text. Through Syntagmatic analysis, semioticians seek to identify elementary constituent segments within the text as well as the conventions (the rules of permutation) which underlie the production and interpretation of texts.

Paradigmatic, on the other hand, examines the text from the angle of selection of signs in the midst of many others sharing the same features and functions. The third unit in module four – Cognitive semiotics is not a method of semiotic investigation but a model of investigation. Cognitive semiotics is the study of how the human minds (including lower animals) interpret meaning. The fourth unit is a seminal paper on general Semiotic investigation of your choice. This unit gives you the opportunity to apply all you have learnt so far.

Finally, the fifth module talks about semiotic modes with specific interest in proxemic and kinesic communication (language of the body). The study of proxemics and kinesics helps to readdress the mistaken predisposition in the past which considers mostly linguistic codes in the study of sign systems. It has been proven that all forms of body language (including body motions) are forms of distinct signals for messaging and they are classified under non-verbal language. The last unit in this module affords you the opportunity to apply what you have learnt in this module by writing a seminal paper on proxemics or kinesics.

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

A total of 8 hours of tutorials is provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutorial facilitator, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutorial facilitator will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter, as well as provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor marked assignments to your tutorial facilitator well before the due date. They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone or e-mail if you need help. Contact your tutorial facilitator if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings.

- You have difficulty with the self-assessment exercises.
- You have a question or a problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a list of questions before attending them. You will gain a lot from participating actively.

Assessment File

There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked assignments and a written examination. In doing these assignments, you are expected to apply information gathered during the course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutorial facilitator for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the presentation schedule and the Assignment file. The work that you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

There is a tutor-marked assignment at the end of every unit. You are required to attempt all the assignments. You will be assessed on most of them but the best three performances will be used for your continuous assessment.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a (tutor-marked assignment) form, to your tutorial facilitator. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutorial facilitator on or before the deadline. If for any reason you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutorial facilitator before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension.

You are expected to write two seminar papers as part of your grading. The date, method of submission and the score will be communicated to you by your facilitator. Endeavour that your seminar papers are original and truly semiotic in content, methodology and analysis.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination will comprise a written exam and seminar papers will carry 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which will reflect everything you have learnt about semiotics. You should use the time between finishing the last module and taking the examination to revise the entire course. You may find it useful to review your self-assessment exercises and tutor marked

assignments before the examination. You are expected to be conversant with the historical origin of Semiotics, the founding fathers and the varied terminologies. It is imperative that you are also familiar with the significant dates in the field of Semiotic.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment (the best three of all the assignments submitted)	Three assignments, marked out of 10% Totalling 30%
Seminar Papers and Final examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Course Overview

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks Activity	Tutor-Marked Assignment
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	MODULE 1: The Development of Semiotics		
1.	Definition of Semiotics		
2.	Historical Development of Semiotics		
3.	Semiotic Assumptions and Terminologies		
4.	Doing Semiotics		
	MODULE 2: Theories of Semiotics		
1	Ferdinand de Saussure and Semiotics (1906)		
2	Charles Sanders Peirce and Semiotics (1890)		
3	Roland Barthes and Semiotics (1950s)		
4	Umberto Eco (Interpretative Semiotics)		
	MODULE 3: Subfields (Branches) of Semiotics		
1	Literary Semiotics		
2	Cultural Semiotics		
3	Pictorial Semiotics		
4	Biosemitotics	:	
	MODULE 4: Methods of Semiotics Investigation (Analysis)		
1	Paradigmatic Analysis		
2	Syntagmatic Analysis		

3	Cognitive Semiotics		
4	Seminar Paper 1		
MODULE 5: Proxemics and kinesics: Semiotic modes			
1	Proxemics		
2	Kinesics communication (language of the body)		
3	Seminar Paper Writing 1		

Summary

This Course guide has served as an opening to you on what you will learn from the Semiotics Course Material and on how best to go about acquiring the information it contains. You have learnt that there are five modules and study units; and each module deals with specific aspects of semiotic perception which if accurately studied and understood will guide you to correct semiotic investigation. You have also been informed that your grading in the course will be based on all the tutor-marked assignments, seminar papers and the final examination.

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MODULE ONE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEMIOTICS

UNIT ONE: DEFINITION OF SEMIOTICS

UNIT TWO: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SEMIOTICS

UNIT THREE: SEMIOTIC ASSUMPTIONS AND TERMINOLOGIES

UNIT FOUR: DOING SEMIOTICS

Unit 1: DEFINITION OF SEMIOTICS

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1:0 INTRODUCTION

Human nature is such that communication forms part of its social daily activities. The complexity of this communication has attracted different research and investigations into the nature, mode and manner of human communication. The expressions of one's experiences, feelings and views are transmitted to others in varied forms ranging from the use of words, images, signs, pictures, objects, graphic and gestures. The interpretations of these elements of communication are the major interest of Semiotics. In this unit we shall examine the term 'Semiotics'.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- a) define Semiotics,
- b) Identify the two related sources of the term,
- c) explain the basic principles of Semiotics, and
- d) discuss the scope of Semiotics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 What is Semiotics?

To have a clear perception of Semiotics we shall first trace the definitions of Semiotics to the two acclaimed originators of the field of Semiotics - Ferdinand De Saussure, a linguist, and Charles Sander Peirce, a philosopher and scientist. Generally, Semiotics in a layman language is the study of the interpretation of meaningful signs. But this definition is too vague and does not fully express the nature and scope of semiotics. To understand the nature and scope of Semiotics, we

shall first resort to the ideas of the founding fathers (De Saussure and Peirce); and then we shall examine the definitions of some other linguists who have played prominent roles in the development of Semiotics.

According to Ferdinand De Saussure who is regarded as the father of the study of semiotics (cited in Chandler, 2007: 2-3):¹

It is . . . possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it semiology (from the Greek *sē meîon*, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge. (Saussure 1983, 15–16)

To clarify his notion of sign and demonstrates that Semiotics is beyond linguistic signs, he says: He uses the term 'Semiology' to describe the study of sign and he argues that linguistics is 'only a part of the general science of semiology'. By implication, *the* definition is based on a linguistic perspective.

However, for Charles Sanders Peirce, who is not a linguist but a philosopher and scientist, defines it as: '...the quasi necessary, of formal, doctrine of sign...'²

...Signs in general [are] a class which includes pictures, symptoms, words, sentences, books, libraries, signals, orders of command, microscopes, legislative representatives, musical concertos, performances of these... (cited in Gorleé 1994: 50).³

Peirce expands the notion of Semiotics; unlike De Saussure's notion it is larger than linguistics. It involves every form of elements which can be used to represent ideas, feelings and experiences. It is both verbal and nonverbal entities.

The two originators of Semiotics used two different but related terms (semiology and semiotics) to explain the same ideas - the study of sign. Thus we can say that there are two developmental traditions of Semiotics - Saussure's tradition and Peirce's tradition. Saussurean tradition is based on the inspiration from human

¹ Semiotics The Basics. Second edition. 2007

²"Semiotics and Pragmatics: An evaluative comparison of conceptual"

https://books.google.com/books?id=PfiYrcDdVQwC&pg=PA24&lpg=PA24&dq=Peirce+1931+-58,+2.227&source=bl&ots=vDWMBLaVNI&sig=k-87gT7YxJWQR0_rMuCoUf_Vntk&hl=en. Retrieved 22 Feb. 2017.

³"A Discursive-Semiotic Approach to Translating Cultural ... - ILZE.ORG."
<http://ilze.org/semio/017.htm>. Retrieved 22 Feb. 2017.

language and speech. Hence his definition points towards signs as they relate to human language. Peircean tradition, on the other hand, is based on the inspiration from the sciences (logic and mathematics). His definition points towards signs which feature in the physical realm and biosphere. Therefore, his notion of signs is not restricted to human speech, rather 'a sign is anything which determines something else ... refer to an object [or something else other than itself] ...' (Peirce 228)

Subsequent definitions by various scholars working within the framework of Semiotics often take off from the definitions of Saussurean and Peircean traditions. For example, Eugene Gorny in his article 'WHAT IS SEMIOTICS?'⁴ observes that semiotics can be defined from two angles - definition by subject and method. By subject, it is defined as 'the science of signs and/or sign system'. Gorny refers to this definition as '... the most widespread, canonical definition...' In defining it according to method, he says 'Semiotics is the application of linguistic methods to objects other than natural language'. He argues that semiotics implies viewing non-linguistic entities linguistically. Hence, it is 'a transfer of the metaphor of language onto any non-linguistic phenomena ... a METAPHORICAL DESCRIPTION OF ANYTHING AS LANGUAGE.' Although this definition seems not to have made direct reference to the notion of sign, it is implied in the definition of language. Similarly, the definitions from various dictionaries reflect the two traditions. It is defined as:

- i) The study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behaviour; the analysis of systems of communication, as language, gestures, or clothing.
- ii) A general theory of signs and symbolism, usually divided into the branches of pragmatics, semantics, and syntax⁵.

The first definition reflects Peircean tradition and the second, Saussurean tradition. Oxford Dictionary defines it as 'the study of meaning-making, the study of sign processes and meaningful communication. This includes the study of signs and sign processes (semiosis), indication, designation, likeness, analogy, allegory, metonymy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication'. Oxford Dictionaries define it as 'the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation'⁶.

⁴ "What is Semiotics? - Zhurnal.Ru." <http://www.zhurnal.ru/staff/gorny/english/semiotic.htm>. Retrieved 25 Feb. 2017.

⁵ "Semiotics | Define Semiotics at Dictionary.com." <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/semiotics>. Retrieved 25 Feb. 2017.

⁶ "semiotics - definition of semiotics in English | Oxford Dictionaries." <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/semiotics>. Retrieved 25 Feb. 2017.

The recurring decimal in all these definitions is sign. Thus, Semiotics can be defined as the study of how signs are encoded and decoded as communicative instruments. Put differently, Semiotics is the study (or investigation) of how meaning is communicated through sign system.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Critically review the two developmental origins of semiotics.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF SIGN

Sign is an important term in the definition of semiotics; it is the starting point in semiotic traditions of Saussure and Peirce. All semiotic scholars agree that semiotic studies begin with sign. The question now is what is sign in semiotics. Is it the usual signs we are all used to: cloudy weather - a sign that it is about to rain, a thumb raised up - a sign of agreement or support or okay. The context in which a sign is communicated determines the meaning of the sign. A typical example is a thumb raised up which has varied meaning as illustrated in the diagram below.

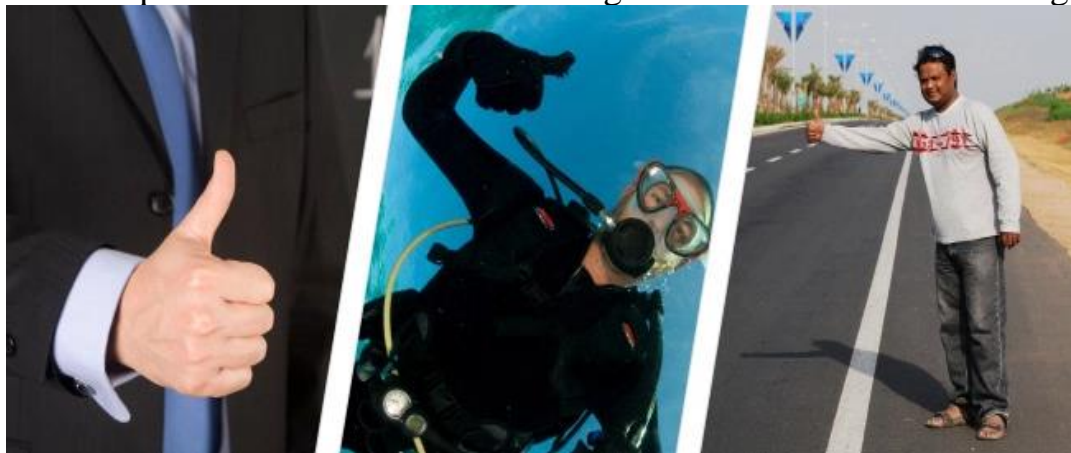


Fig. 1 Picture of thumb up

The first thumb up means 'Ok' - this is a popular and generalised meaning; the second, in the context of diving means up to the top, and the third, by the road side means a person needs a ride.

Also, the different colours of the traffic light tend to have universal meaning: red signifies stop, green - go and yellow - get ready.

⁷"Semiotics explained – Sign Salad." <http://www.signsalad.com/semiotics-explained/>. Retrieved 15 Mar. 2017.



Fig. 2 Picture of traffic light

Most signs are context sensitive although some have acquired universal meaning as in the traffic light, legal logo, medical logo and many others.

There are all sorts of signs all around us; some signs are visual, others are aural or sonic signs. The sound of a police or ambulance siren, for example, is usually heard before the vehicle is seen. There are all forms and shapes of signs around us but semioticians are only interested in distinctive and communicative signs. Signs are unique and definable within their contexts of usage because a particular sign which is meaningful to a group may be meaningless to another group. Typical examples are religious artifacts are meaningful only to the adherents of such religion while they may have no meaning to non-believers.

Signs in semiotics refer to something which can generate meanings (such sounds, words, images, pictures, gestures, graphics and objects). Thus, a sign stands for or points to the meaning of something, the meaning of what it stands for or represents is not inherent in the sign. The meaning assigned to the sign is arrived at arbitrarily and conventionally. Hence sign is context sensitive. Moreover, a particular sign may evoke different meanings depending on the context and /or culture in which the sign is encoded.

Although both Saussure's and Peirce's definitions of semiotics make reference to the notion of sign, their views on sign differ. Saussure's model of sign deals with linguistic concepts, it does not take cognisance of a thing or an object. Saussure's idea of sign is based on structuralist methodology. His sign comprises two components - the signified and the signifier. For example these four letters 'tree' whether spoken or written is a sign; it signifies the concept of a tree. Both the

signified and the signifier are psychological, form not substance. Sign is the link or association between the signified and the signifier as illustrated in Saussure's diagram below:

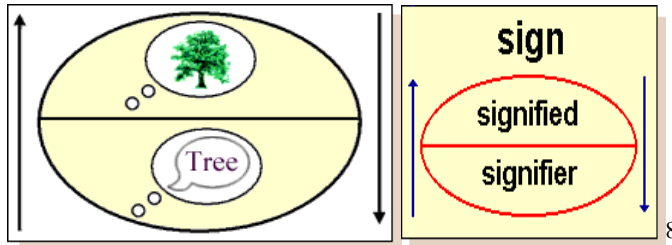


Fig. 3 Saussure illustration of signified and signifier

Saussure calls the relationship between the signifier and signified signification. The element in the upper part of the circle is the concept (signified) which is the image that comes up in the hearer's mind / brain when a speaker pronounces the word 'tree' (signifier) which is in the lower part of the circle.

Peirce's model, on the other hand, refers to both concepts and objects. His model is based on logic and philosophy and comprises three components - representamen, interpretant and object. Representamen refers to the form of the sign, object implies that which the sign makes reference to, and interpretant refers to that which the sign denotes or the sense made by the sign. Peirce's sign is triangle as illustrated below:

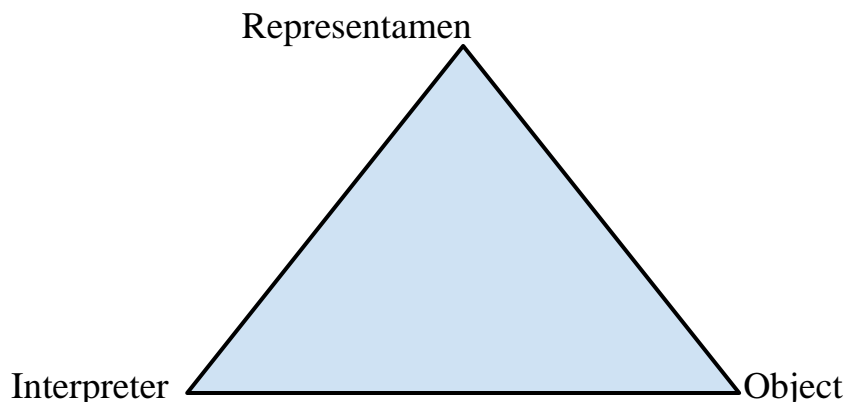


Fig. 4 Peirce's triadic relation

⁸ "Semiotics for Beginners: Signs - visual-memory.co.uk." 7 Mar. 2014, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem02.html>. Retrieved 28 Feb. 2017.

The components of Peirce's sign - representamen, interpretant and object - are intertwined in that each component cannot be understood in isolation; they are interdependent.

There is a partial similarity between Saussure's sign and Peirce's sign: Peirce's representamen and Saussure's signifier are similar, also Peirce's interpretant and Saussure's signified are similar. However, Saussure does not make any reference to the external meaning of sign which Peirce calls object.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List out three examples of visual, sonic and aural signs and identify their meaning.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our society is embedded in and surrounded by various forms of signs. Signs are very useful elements to human society because they are employed in the transmission of ideas, experiences, feelings, views, etc. Language is sometimes defined as arbitrary linguistic signs through which humans communicate. Signs have always been a means of expression from time immemorial. However, the study of signs is a recent development. An efficient and effective communicator should be able to encode and decode both linguistic and non-linguistic signs accordingly.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has introduced you to what semiotic is: the science that studies the nature and structure of distinctive signs in the society. The study of signs which is called semiotics as well as Semiology originated from two distinct but related sources in modern time. In the two origins, however, the sign is the take-off point; it is the object of enquiry.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Define Semiotics.
2. What is a sign?
3. Differentiate between the two notions of 'sign'.

7.0 REFERENCE / OTHER SOURCES

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UNIT 2: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SEMIOTICS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Ancient Semiotics
 - 3.1.1 Ancient semiotics: Preamble
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The study of signs and symbols as a means of communication, technically referred to as semiotics, is not a new field. Although scholars from ancient times have always made references to the nature, structure and functions of signs and symbols in their scholarly works, semiotics was not set aside as a field or area of study until the modern era. Moreover, the fact that human interactions is highly characterised by a series of different signs and symbols, implies that the study of sign is probably as old as man, though in an informal manner.

In this unit, we shall trace the origin of semiotics to its very beginning - Ancient time - when it was first used in the medical field. By the medieval period, the concept was implicitly utilized by scholars in their various annotations on different subject matters and discourse. The term, in the early part of the modern period, was more or less within philosophy. Presently, the concept is applied to the analysis of patterns of signs and symbols as a means of communication both in linguistics and other areas of research which study the characteristics of communicative systems such as anthropology, psychology and sociology.

Although, discussions and commentaries on the nature and functions of signs (semiotics) date back to the Ancient time, however, ancient reflections and perspective of the subject differ from that of the medieval period and the modern era. The foundation of modern semiotic was laid in the medieval era.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- a) trace the origin of semiotics from Ancient times to the modern period;
- b) discuss the roles played by some scholars;
- c) discuss the different stages of the development of semiotics; and
- d) distinguish between different perspectives of semiotics from Ancient era to date.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1.1 ANCIENT SEMIOTICS: PREAMBLE

The term which is derived from the Greek word ‘σημειωτικός’ (sēmeiōtikos), meaning "observant [interpretation] of signs", is also known as semeiotics, semiology, semasiology, semeiology, was coined by Hippocrates of Kos, a Greek physician. Hippocrates used the term to refer to symptoms as warning signs of a medical condition. Later, Plato differentiated between physical and man-made (conventional) ‘sign’ (semeion) in his discussion on Reasoning Process. Plato observed that words are practical means of identifying innate ideas. By implication, words are signs of innate ideas. Aristotle, Plato’s student, however, opposed Plato’s notion on the relationship between sign and the world. Aristotle viewed the relationship as empirical as against Plato’s mentalist perspective. In Stoics logicians refer to words and sentences as linguistic signs. For Stoics logicians, a sign (semeion) is regarded as an abstract propositional content of a sentence.⁹

⁹"Bibliography on Stoic Philosophy of Language - History of Logic."
<https://www.historyoflogic.com/biblio/stoic-language-biblio.htm>. Retrieved 3 Jul. 2017.

3.1.2 TWO INFLUENTIAL ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS

Two major late ancient thinkers whose traditional doctrines on sign paved the way for medieval semiotic theories are Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Boethius (480-528). Augustine's proclamations and observations on the concept of sign formed the central and essential aspects of the theory of signs up to the 13th century. Augustine's notion of sign was partially influenced by the Stoic philosophy of language but his concept of sign is different from Stoic dogma on sign. His definition is based on Latin tradition of rhetorics which is characterised by triadic relation. He defines a sign as 'something that shows itself to the senses and something other than itself to the mind' (Augustine *De dial.* 1975: 86). Thus his notion of sign is based on sceptical tradition.

Augustine's theory of language contrasts the Stoic semantics. For Augustine, speech has a communicative function and hence, 'a word is a sign of something, which can be understood by the hearer when pronounced by the speaker' (Ibid, 86). Thus the essence of signifying is to convey one's mind (Ideas, opinions, view) through sign - words/images - to another person's mind. Later, Augustine modifies his initial definition of sign to reflect fundamental epistemic function only - 'a sign is something which, offering itself to the senses, conveys something other to the intellect' (*De doct. chr.* II I, 1963, 33). Initially, Augustine's onset definition of sign is characterised by commemorative function. His later definition is brought about as a result of his abandoning skeptical tradition.

Augustine further divides sign into two classes - natural signs (*signanaturalia*) and given signs (*signa data*). Natural signs refer to those signs whose basic objective is not to signify, yet lead to the knowledge of something else. Examples of nature signs are a dark and cloudy sky indicates possibility of rain; the cry of a child indicates discomfort of the child at that point in time; the size of trace of tyres on the path indicate whether it was a bicycle, a motorcycle or a vehicle that passed through the path. Given signs (conventional signs) are those signs composed by living beings as exchange to express ideas, opinions or inner thoughts and perceptions. Thus signs are used as elements to signify or stand for something else. Augustine observes that there are all sorts of 'given signs' of which the spoken word (speech) takes preeminent position because the spoken word belongs to the primary system of signs. Written words, on the other hand, are man-made and introduced to achieve permanency of spoken words, and hence they are secondary sign system. Augustine notes that all non-verbal signs can be put into words but not all words can be put into non-verbal signs.

At this juncture we must underpin Augustine's contribution to semiotics. This is the first time in the history of commentaries on the notion of sign that both definition and explanation of sign is all encompassing - conventional linguistic signs and natural non-conventional signs are all inclusive in his doctrine of sign.

Boethius's contribution to semiotics is as a result of his focus on the concept of signification. Boethius's standing point is on Aristotle's writings -*Peri Hermias*. He expounds on the four elements of linguistic semeiosis as identified by Aristotle. These are external objects or things, mental concepts or representations, spoken words and written words. Boethius refers to these four elements as the 'order of speaking'. In other words, the existence of things necessitates concepts, concepts bring about spoken words which basically signify mental concepts, and then spoken words necessitate the written words. Thus, sign refers to things through the vehicle of concepts.

Thus, during the Ancient era, comments and discussions on the notion and function of sign, and by extension, semiotics, were not done under the umbrella of linguistic studies but within the fields of medicine, logic (philosophy of language) and rhetoric.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Differentiate between natural signs and given signs; given copious examples.

3.2 MEDIEVAL SEMIOTICS: PREAMBLE

Before we discuss medieval semiotics, it is important that we realise that medieval semiotics does not imply that semiotics is a discipline of study like medieval arts or medieval sciences rather it is a complex field of elaborate discussions and commentaries on the forms, functions and classification of sign by various medieval scholars. It is pertinent to be aware that scholastic organization of knowledge differs a great deal from modern knowledge acquisition. During the medieval period, knowledge acquisition or learning was mainly based on commentary tradition. Most medieval writings are discussions on canonical texts such as the works of Aristotle, Plato, Stoics writings, Augustine's *De Dialectica*, the Grammar of Priscian, and the Sentences of Peter Lombard, to mention a few. In such commentaries, medieval scholars discussed extensively on topics treated in canonical texts by analysing basic terms, concepts and notions therein. Hence, terms such as 'sign' (signum) or 'representation' (repraesentatio) which appeared in canonical texts were often the major subject matters in some medieval scholarly commentaries and discussions.¹⁰

¹⁰"Medieval Semiotics (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy)." 19 Dec. 2003, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/semiotics-medieval/>. Retrieved 3 Jul. 2017.

* Augustin De dial 1975, pp 86

Conversely, a large amount of detailed discussions on the structure and classifications of sign during the medieval era was as a result of Aristotle's identification of 'word' as a 'sign' (semeion) in his writing: *De Interpretatione* (*On Interpretation*) ; and Augustine's reference to the sacrament as a 'sacred sign' (signum sacrum) in his writing. Thus, the ideas and discussions on semiotics during medieval period can be traced to late ancient texts; especially that of Augustine (354-430) whose doctrine of sign contributed immensely to the history of semiotics.

In our discussion on medieval semiotics, we shall examine different ideas and doctrines of sign in phases. Each phase represents a significant era in the historical development of the study of signs (semiotics).

3.2.1 PHASE I: THE REVIVAL OF SEMIOTICS IN MEDIEVAL ERA.

The study of sign came into focus once again in the late 11th century when Anselm of Canterbury combined Aristotle's view on mental concepts with Augustine's theory of mental words in his commentary. Anselm observes that mental words are natural words and similar to mental images of things. As a result, mental words 'signify objects in a more expressive way than any other kind of words.' (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 4) Augustine's notion that the concept of language is embedded into the generic notion of sign made explicit by Anselm brought about the idea that medieval theory of sign is placed within the context of grammar and logic.

Another great medieval author who contributed to semiotic theory during this era is Peter Abelard (1079-1142). He distinguished between two classes of signs: i) signs that simply signify, these are signs that can be regarded as 'accidental' signs; there is no direct relationship between the signifier and the signified, for example traffic red light signals stop. ii) Signs that are inherent meaning bearers and have some sort of relationship between the signifier and the signified as in the case of smoke which indicates fire.

3.2.2 PHASE II: THE ERA OF ELABORATIVE SEMIOTICS

By the second half of the 13th century, the theory of sign was elaborated upon made possible by the combined influences of Aristotle's and Augustine's notions of sign. Before now Augustine's theory of the sign was a subject matter of discussion only within theology. However, mid-13th century experienced the theory of sign as a subject matter in the faculties of arts.

During this period, sign is considered as a basic concept in linguistics studies. It was observed by Robert Kilwardby that 'speech is nothing but a sign' (*De*

ortuscientiarum, 1976, 160). He argued that ‘every science is about signs or things signified’ and that there are several sciences on the basis of the various kinds of signs. Consequently, this era identified natural signs, a subject matter of natural science; moral signs, a subject matter of moral science; and linguistic signs which are products of human communication for the purpose of interaction, formed the subject matter of rational science.

One notable medieval theorist of sign is Roger Bacon (1214 - 1293); Bacon did not only give a detailed classification of signs but also developed a general conception of signification within linguistic theory of sign. He views the concept of sign as an issue of relation. He built on Augustinian and Aristotelian theories of signs and came out with classic classification of signs. He identified two main classes and their subdivisions as follows:

❖ 1. Natural Signs

1.1 Signifying by inference, concomitance, consequence

1.1.1 signifying necessarily

1.1.1.1 signifying something present (large extremities = strength)

1.1.1.2 signifying something past (lactation = birth of a child)

1.1.1.3 signifying something future (dawn = imminent sunrise)

1.1.2 signifying probability

1.1.2.1 signifying something present (to be a mother = love)

1.1.2.2 signifying something past (wet ground = previous rain)

1.1.2.3 signifying something future (red sky in the morning = rain)

1.2 Signifying by configuration and likeness (images, pictures, species of colour)

1.3 signifying by causality (tracks = animals)

❖ 2. Signs given and directed by a soul

2.1 signifying instinctively without deliberation (sigh = pain; laughter = joy)

2.2 signifying with deliberation (words)

2.3 interjections

Fig.5 Bacon’s classification of signs taken from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Bacon’s sign classes are more of differentiating modes of signifying and not different signs per se.

Before the mid-13th century, only spoken and written words were regarded as signs; mental concepts, on the other hand, were seen as likeness (similitude) of things. During this period, the study of sign experienced conceptual change and mental

concepts gained relevance in the theory of sign and were generally regarded as signs and not simply being the likeness of things.

3.2.3 PHASE III: EXPANSION OF SEMIOTICS SCOPE

The scope of the theory of sign before now was limited to philosophy of language and its social environment. John Locke (1632 -1704), however, in 1690 extended the scope in his 'Essay concerning human understanding'. He observed that there are forms of sciences according to the 'general division of the objects of our understanding'. Subsequently, he divided the sciences into three sorts - physica, practica and semiotike. He defined semiotike as the doctrine of sign whose task was 'to consider the nature of signs the mind makes use of for the understanding of things, or conveying its knowledge to others' (Semiotics Insight into Aristotle's Theory of Being, 113). Locke observed that signs are an important vehicle in communicating 'our thoughts to one another, as well as to record them for our use'. Thus he proposed that a science of sign be developed and separated from other sciences.

And for the first time, a title was suggested for the science of signs. Locke, through Latin derivative wrongly coined 'semiotics' from 'semiotica'; a term which has remained to the modern period.

3.3 MODERN SEMIOTICS: PREAMBLE

From all we have discussed so far, we can deduce that the study of sign as a field of interest goes back to Ancient Greek. Many Ancient and medieval thinkers contributed their quota to the field in varying degrees. We should not be tempted to regard the historical development of the study of sign as a continuous and unbreakable movement from the ancient era through the mid-ages up to the present time. We must take cognisance of the fact that there were times when the study of signs was neglected and almost forgotten. However, somehow, there always emerges a new scholar, who renews the discussion in the study. Sometimes, such scholars may not be aware of previous discussions and commentaries.

3.3.1 THE FOUNDING FIGURES OF MODERN SEMIOTICS

The interest in semiotics suffered neglect between the end of the medieval period and early modern times. However, the subject matter popped up again in two different parts of the globe simultaneously and independently. One was an upshot of a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, termed 'semiology'; and the other was by an American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, termed 'semiotics'. Thus the

cultural interest in the study of sign developed in the twentieth century under two distinct but related theories - 'semiotics' and 'semiology'.

Although the study of sign has a long history, modern study is traced to these two scholars often regarded as the founding figures of modern semiotics. The semiotic theories of these duos have exerted great influences on the modern study of sign. de Saussure's theory is characterised by a dyad notion and was postulated in 'Cours de linguistique generale', a text published posthumously by his students in 1916. Peirce, a contemporary of Ferdinand, independently developed an interest in the study of sign under the influence of Late Latin writing which he studied. His interest in logical reasoning made him verge into semiotics as a possible 'new science of signs' which will aid logical reasoning process. Peirce's theory is characterised by triadic relation. Renewed interest in semiotics/semiology in modern times as an independent discipline of study came to limelight after the death of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 -1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 -1914).

3.3.2 OTHER MODERN SEMIOTIC DISTILLERS

Modern semiotics though influenced by a linguist and a philosopher, has extended its scope to other areas of academic fields which deal with communication. This was made possible by some notable scholars like Charles Morris (1901 -1979), Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980), Yuri Lotman (1922 -1993), Thomas Sebeok (1920 - 2001) and Umberto Eco (1932 - 2016). Each of these has made contributions to the development of modern semiotics. Their contributions shall be highlighted briefly.

3.3.2.1 Charles W. Morris (1901 - 1979)

Charles Morris developed a behavioural theory of signs (semiotics) in his quest to fuse logical reasoning with signs interpretation. He argues that signs (symbols) can have three types of relations which he called semantics, pragmatics and syntax.

By so doing, Morris expand the scope of semiotics to include these three aspects:

- i. Syntax refers to the relation of signs (symbols) to other symbols;
- ii. Semantics refers to the relation of signs and things they refer to;
- iii. Pragmatics refers to the relations between signs and their users, that is the effects signs have on the people who use the signs.

His semiotic theory is interested in explaining the tri-relation between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in a dyadic way.

3.3.2.2 Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980)

Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist, philosopher, linguist and semiotician. He influenced the development of not only the school of theory of semiotics, but also other schools including structuralism, social theory, design theory, anthropology and post-structuralism. Barthes used semiotics, the study of signs, to unravel how the bourgeois in French society asserted its values through bourgeois cultural myths. That is, the consumption of wine is portrayed as a robust and healthy habit through the sign vehicle employed. Through semiotic analysis, he extricates the hidden meaning in a picture of a full, dark bottle which is a signifier that relates to a specific signified: a fermented, alcoholic beverage. This, the bourgeoisie relates it to a new signified: the idea of healthy, robust, relaxing experience. He called the bourgeois cultural myths "second-order signs," or "connotations."

His contribution to semiotics is in the area of using sign theory to decode hidden meanings in cultural phenomena of everyday life such as fashion system, toys, and cartoons.¹¹

3.3.2.3 Yuri Lotman (1922 -1993)

Yuri Lotman was a literary scholar, semiotician, and cultural historian. He was the founder of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School which developed a theoretical framework for multidimensional semiotics analysis of culture. He used his knowledge of the study of sign systems in his analysis of arts, cinema, and literary writing. Thereby he became a major contributor in semiotics of cinema, arts, literature and robotics.

3.3.2.4 Thomas Sebeok (1920 - 2001)

Thomas Sebeok was an American linguist and semiotician. He employed the theory of sign (semiotics) to others fields of study and thus, expanded the scope of sign theory outside human interactions to include non-human signaling and communication systems which he term "zoosemiotics", a term coined by him. He was also among the founders of biosemiotics.

¹¹"Semiotics and Cultural Criticism by Arthur Berger."
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~engl5vr/Berger.html>. Retrieved 14 Jul. 2017.

3.3.2.5 Umberto Eco (1932 - 2016)

Umberto Eco was an Italian literary critic, writer, philosopher and semiotician. He expanded Peirce's notion of sign. He noted that signs can be interpreted in many forms based on one's perception and experience as a result of culture, worldview, context and one's level of comprehension. Eco's contribution to semiotics is in the development of approaches to contemporary semiotics. His observation on the nature of signs and its usage is quite interesting. He explains the theory of semiotics in his book *A Semiotics Theory* as follows:

Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or actually be somewhere at the moment in which sign stands for it. Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie. If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth; it cannot be used to "to tell" at all. I think that this definition of a "theory of the lie" should be taken as a pretty comprehensive program for a general semiotics. (7)

Of course, Eco does not really mean to call semioticians 'liars', his definition 'theory of lie' simply underscores the fact that signs can be used to deceive others. His notion of possibility of deception through signs was proved by Roland Barthes' a semiotic analysis of the hidden meaning in the symbol of wine as a robust and healthy habits.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Write a brief contribution of two modern semiotics distillers.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The study of signs, whether it is term 'semiotics' or 'semiology', has become an interdisciplinary object of inquiry due to the fact that communication is not only a characteristic of humans, but a characteristic of everything - living and non-living things. Hence, the notion of sign system as a meaning conveyance has been extended to other areas of studies apart from linguistics and philosophy. Such other fields of inquiry include culture, myth, dressing, landscape, politics, music, arts, and other material objects within the environment.

Although the study of sign during ancient and early medieval periods was explored under philosophy, linguistic terms are often employed in the discussions of the theory of sign. This is so because linguistics deals with the structure and nature of

language as a means of communication, and has developed a series of terminologies to reflect the notion of communication.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have traced the origin and development of the study of sign to ancient thinkers like Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, the stoics, and Augustine. The term was coined by Hippocrates as a medical terminology from Greek word. While Plato and Aristotle survey the relation of signs with the world, Augustine investigates the nature of signs.

We also discussed how the theory of sign was revived and elaborated during the mid-ages by different medieval scholars like Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Roger Bacon and John Locke. The modern terminology 'semiotics' was incorrectly coined from Latin derivative by John Locke. It was also during the medieval period that the field underwent conceptual change.

We further surveyed how the twentieth century experienced intellectual outburst of the study of sign theory. We traced the foundation of modern theory of sign to two founding fathers - a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure who termed the study as 'semiology', and an American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce who termed his theory of sign 'semiotics'. We identified other modern contributors to include, though not limited to, Charles W. Morris, Roland Barthes, Yuri Lotman, Thomas Sebeok and Umberto Eco.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discuss the contributions of two Ancient philosophers to semiotics.
2. Explain the role of John Locke to Modern semiotics.
3. Explain Charles Morris' contribution to the theory of sign.

7.0 REFERENCE

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UNIT 3: SEMIOTIC ASSUMPTIONS AND TERMINOLOGIES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
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 - 3.2 Order of signification
 - 3.3 Semiotic codes
 - 3.4 Semiotic rhetorical tropes
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference

1:0 INTRODUCTION

Semiotics, as you might have gathered from all we have studied thus far, is interested in how signs in its various modes, whether verbal or nonverbal, visual, audio-visual, sound; and in whatever form be it behaviour signs (body language, dressing, facial expressions), social, cultural or political signs are utilised to generate meanings as well as to communicate messages. Our society is dotted with all manner of signs as a means of communicating. And humans as higher animals always encode and

decode meanings from its environs per seconds. Arthur A. Berger in his conclusion in his 'Semiotics and Cultural Criticism' observes:

Everyone tries to make sense of human behaviour, in our everyday lives, in the novels we read, in the films and television shows we see, in the concerts we attend, in sports events we watch or participate in -- humans are meaning-generating and meaning-interpreting animals, wherever else we are. We are always sending messages and always receiving and interpreting the messages others send us. What semiotics and semiology do is provide us with more refined and sophisticated ways of interpreting these messages-and of sending them. (n.p)

Berger, indirectly calls every human a semiotician.

Hence, semiotics as a meaning-making and meaning-inferring process has its assumptions and terminologies which make it possible to decipher the messages intended through the deployment of signs. This unit shall avail us the opportunity to become conversant with major semiotics terms and assumptions.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- a) explain the various aspects of sign;
- b) define, classify and exemplify the semiotic codes;
- c) differentiate between semiotic level and orders of signification; and
- d) define and illustrate the four semiotics rhetorical tropes.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The nature of sign

Sign is the starting point in semiotic theory. In unit 1 of this Module we defined a sign. We can summarize our definitions as *sign is anything (such as a word, sound, image, gesture, substance material) which stands for something other than itself to someone*. If something does not stand for another thing, then it is not a sign. Our interest in this unit, however, is not so much as in the definition but in its structure and forms as handed down to us by the founding fathers - Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sander Peirce. Both of them differ slightly in their notion of sign.

Ferdinand de Saussure's sign is made up of a **signifier** and a **signified**. The signifier, for example is the letters 't-a-b-l-e', and the signified is the concept of table - an object that has a flat surface with three or more legs - which is formed in the mind. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is called **signification**.

Charles Peirce's sign consists of three parts: **representamen**, **interpretant** and **object**. The representamen refers to the form which the sign takes for example the

letters ‘o-r-a-n-g-e’, the interpretant is not a person but the concept of orange in the mind - a juicy spherical shaped fruit with yellowish skin, and the object is the external reality of the sign - the fruit itself; that is the real orange.

Peirce further identified three modes of signs. These are: icon, index and symbol. **Icon** is a sign which resembles its object in some way; that is it looks or sounds like the object. Examples are map, paintings, photographs and words that resemble (imitate) the sound - onomatopoeia. In other words, the signifier is seen as having a close resemblance of the signified, or imitating the signified.

Index is any sign that has a logical connection either existentially or casually, to the object. That is the signifier has a direct association which could be physical or casually to the signified. Examples are smoke indicates fire and a flood indicates rain.

Symbols are signs which have neither resemblance nor logical connection to the object. Put differently, the signifier does not resemble, imitate nor have a direct association with the signified. Examples are words and traffic lights.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Define the terms ‘representamen’, ‘interpretant’, ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’.

3.2 Levels of Representation (Meaning)

The primary purpose of semiotics is to disentangle meanings from signs. As a result of most signs being polysemous in nature, semioticians also account for the different levels of meanings (signification). There are two levels of signification - **denotation** and **connotation**. These two terms describe the relationship between a signifier and the signified. **Denotation** refers to the literal signification or representation between a signifier and the signified. According to Chandler in *Semiotics for Beginners*, it can be ‘described as the definitional, “literal”, “obvious” or “common sense” meaning of a sign’ (n.p). Chandler further opines that ‘the first order of signification is that of denotation: at this level there is a sign consisting of a signifier and a signified’ (n.p). Take for example; someone says “Oh, I saw an amusing parrot this afternoon.” On the denotative level of signification a parrot is a colourful bird with a long beak and mimics sounds it hears often. Thus the signifier is p-a-r-r-o-t, and the signified is a type of bird. This level of representation is commonly accepted by members of the speech community. Denotative signification is arrived at through an agreement among the members of the speech community. In other words, denotation is broadly accepted without controversy. It is accepted by a larger populace.

Connotation, on the other hand, is an associative representation. It is a culture-bound signification in that the signification of a particular signifier and signified may vary from culture to culture. Chandler in *Semiotics for Beginners* notes that ‘connotation is a second-order of signification’ (n.p) because connotative representation is arrived at by making reference first to ‘denotative sign (signifier and signified) as its signifier and attaches to it an additional signified’ (n.p). Thus in the utterance: “Oh, I saw an amusing parrot this afternoon.” the denotative sign “p-a-r-r-o-t” as a type of bird becomes a connotative signifier; the cultural environment agrees to extend certain characteristics of this type of bird to a person who displays such features/tendencies. Thus, at the connotative level of representation, a parrot is “a person who talks too much”. Hence it is seen as associative, extended, or additional signification. Bezuidenhout in his article “A Discursive-Semiotic Approach to Translating Cultural Aspects in Persuasive Advertisements” notes that ‘connotation describes the interaction that takes place when the sign meets the emotions of the user and the values of his culture’ (n.p). Thus it is a subjective signification while denotative is objective. According to Chandler, connotation ‘is used to refer to the socio-cultural and “personal” associations (ideological, emotional, etc.) of the sign’ (n.p). Socio-cultural and personal associations have to do with the sign decoder’s age, class, gender, beliefs, and ethnicity.

We must note that signs are often open to several interpretations, however this polysemic characteristic of signs is more pronounced with connotative signs than denotative ones.

While there are two levels of representation or meaning, Roland Barthes, according to Chandler argues that there are different ‘orders of signification’. He identifies **three orders of signification**, namely denotative, connotative and mythological orders. The differences between these three orders are not very distinct. The first order of signification is **denotative level** which is regarded as ‘primarily representational and relatively self-contained’. The next (second) order is the **connotative level**; it ‘reflects “expressive” values which are attached to a sign’. The third order of signification is **mythological or ideological level** whose ‘sign reflects major cultural-variables concepts underpinning a particular worldview...’ (Chandler, n.p). Mythology or ideology implies societal beliefs.

While there are two levels of representation made up of denotation and connotation, there are three orders of signification consisting of denotative, connotative and mythological orders.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List and explain the three orders of signification.

3.3 Semiotic codes

Code refers to the organisation of signs as representation of information. It is a set of guidelines for converting information into representation. Hence, it can be referred to as a set of shared understanding of practices familiar to its users and are regarded by the users in the community of usage as a convention which correlates signifier and signified. Put differently, codes function as an interpretative framework for communicators - producers and receivers alike.

In the production of any text, the producer must select and combine signs bearing in mind the codes which the target audience is familiar with in order to avoid misinterpretation. Codes are context-sensitive (operate within specific culture), therefore their signification in a particular community may differ in another community. Also they are somehow 'secret structures' in the mind. Berger in his book: *Media Analysis Techniques* observes that 'codes are difficult to see because of their characteristics - they are all-pervasive, specific, and clear-cut, which makes them almost invisible; they inform every aspect of our existence ...' (25). Codes are socio-culturally and historically influenced because they are not static; they change over time.

There are all sorts of codes - traffic codes, bodily codes, linguistic codes, behavioural codes, aesthetic codes, dress codes, verbal and nonverbal code scientific codes, and so on. Here are some examples:

Traffic codes: a set of signs and symbols for communicating traffic information and regulation to road users - drivers and pedestrians. These systems of signs help to control road users' behaviour and thus standardize their conduct on the road. Examples of traffic codes include: road signs, traffic lights, painted lines, and others.



Fig. 6: SAMPLES OF TRAFFIC SIGNS

Dressing Codes: In the Nigerian society and other parts of the world, some clothing and accessories serve as signifiers. Kingly regalia - crown, beads, special garments - are worn to signify that the wearer is a king. Some professions (military, medical, lawyers and others) have dressing rules and regulations when on duty. Clothing as a form of information sender has become very popular in Nigeria social parties; celebrant's family and close friends are marked out through what is commonly referred to as "Aso-ebi" (meaning family uniform). Thus, information is sent out through one's clothing and accessories.

Bodily codes (nonverbal codes): Messages are often sent out through our body language such as facial expressions, eye contact, head movements, bodily contacts, gestures, postures and some unconscious nervous habits. Also distance (proximity) between the speaker and the hearer signifies the level of familiarity between the parties.

Culinary codes: Consumables can speak volume. For example, at a bar a person has a bottle of champagne before him and another has a bottle of coke, or at a restaurant, one person has a plate of rice without any meat or fish, and another has a plate of rice accompanied with large quantities of meat or fish, including salads; in both scenarios, the drinks and the plates of food are statements on the financial capacity of the consumers. Moreover, certain food items have specific ways they are consumed: tea, beverages and coffee are put in teacups not on a flat plate.

Aesthetic codes refer to the different ways messages are expressed in arts such as poetry, drama, prose, paintings, music, sculpture, etc.

Scientific codes: These are employed in mathematics, physics, chemistry and other sciences. There are a series of symbols and formulae used as a means of passing information across.

Codes are more than conventions of communication or interactions but are 'procedural systems of related conventions which operate in certain domains'

(Chandler, n. p). They organise signs into meaningful systems by correlating signifiers and signified.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Define the term ‘code’ and give four examples of scientific and nonverbal codes.

3.4 Semiotic rhetorical tropes

Semiotics focuses attention on how meanings are generated from the way we use our language in various forms - written or spoken text, images, pictures, and others. In all these forms, the interest is on how signs communicate messages. Semiotic theorists have identified four rhetorical tropes through which messages can be encoded in text.

1. **Metaphor:** In semiotic theory, metaphor is seen as an important means of transmitting meaning in an analogical and implied manner - connotative meaning. Metaphor comes into play when one signified acts as a signifier but refers to another different signified. Metaphor functions on the premises of similarity and difference between a signifier and the signified. In the utterance: “Her mouth is a razor” the signifier is r-a-z-o-r, the signified is a sharp flat object used for cutting, which functions as a signifier to a person’s mouth whose words can cut through any feelings. As Chandler observes a ‘new sign [is] formed from the signifier of one sign and the signified of another. The signifier thus stands for a different signified; the new signified replaces the usual one’ (n. p). It is a process of transferring the quality of one signified (a razor) to a new signified (person’s mouth - words). Thus expressing the unfamiliar (the mouth, in our example) in terms of the familiar (razor).

Metaphors can be verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal (visual) metaphors are metaphoric images and often feature in films, plays and advertisements. Chandler asserts that most metaphoric expressions are regarded as having iconic mode based on the resemblance involved between the signifier and the signified; some others are symbolic when the resemblance is oblique. Metaphoric expressions are, sometimes, culture based; their significations are derived from the cultural experience by convention.

2. **Metonymy:** Metonymy is closely related to metaphor. The signification between signifier and the signified is associative relationship and is connotative meaning. Metonymy comes into play when one signified stands for another signified which can be closely associated (direct relation) with it in some way. In the utterance: “The press harassed me with questions today”,

the press implies the journalists. By association, press and journalists are used interchangeably because it is the journalists who assemble articles (news) for the (printing) press. Metonymy functions as a substitution in various forms. Below are examples of some of such substitutions adapted from *Semiotics for Beginners*¹²:

- Effect for cause: ‘Don’t get under the collar!’ For ‘Don’t get angry!’
- Object for users : The *cab* took me to an unusual place, cab for the driver.
- Object for associated institution: the *press* for journalists.
- Place for person: *Aso Rock* is quiet. Aso Rock for the President.
- Place for institution: The *National Assembly* has said nothing; the National Assembly for senators and members of the House of Representative
- Institution for people: The *University* is playing deaf. The University for the Vice Chancellor.

Metonymy, unlike metaphor which exploits similarity and involves iconic and symbolic mode, is based on closeness or contiguity and involves indexical mode. Metonymy does not necessitate transposition (an imaginative leap) from one sphere to another as metaphor does. Hence it is seen to be more connected to reality and more ordinary than metaphor. Like metaphor, metonymy can be verbal and non-verbal (visual). Unlike metaphor, metonymy is based on ‘contiguity or closeness’, and has direct connection to reality. Therefore, metonymy has indexical mode.

3. **Synecdoche**: Sometimes synecdoche is incorporated under metonymy because both are based on contiguity and are indexical modes. However synecdoche is different from metonymy in some aspects. It is the selection of a part of a framework of a signified in order to envisage the larger framework of the signified. The signifier is an integral part of the signified. The following are some examples:

- Part for Whole: ‘two heads [persons] are better than one’. ‘All hands on deck’ - all hands stand for everyone; ‘He is my eyes and ears’ where ‘eyes’ and ears signify ‘a spy’; ‘Boots on the ground were everywhere’ – meaning ‘soldiers were everywhere’; ‘many mouths to feed’ where mouth signifies hungry persons.
- Whole for a Part: ‘I was stopped by the law’ - where law stands for a police officer; ‘the market was low today’ - market stands for customers; ‘white collar jobs’ – meaning ‘government paid employment’; ‘Nigeria won the match’ where Nigeria refers to the Nigeria football team.

¹² "Semiotics for Beginners: Rhetorical Tropes - visual-memory.co.uk." 27 Nov. 2018, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem07.html>. Retrieved 5 Jun. 2019.

- Species for Genus: hypernym - the use of members of a class (hyponym) for the class (superordinate) as in 'bread' for 'food', 'she is a rose' where 'rose' signified beauty; 'the crown is sad' where crown signifies a royal person.
- Genus for Species: hyponymy - the use of superordinate for a hyponym as in 'vehicle' for 'car', or 'machine for 'big cars'. 'The flower' – refers to hibiscus or rose or daisy. 'The future is green' – where green signifies bright future. 'This is morning' where morning signifies early stage or a beginning.

4. **Irony:** The fourth main semiotic trope is irony. Irony involves the signification of oppositeness. That is when the signifier signified the opposite of the signified. Put differently, irony involves using a particular sign (h-a-p-p-y) to signal the opposite of the signified (sadness). For an example, when mother notices that the room is scattered with clothes thrown around and she says to the children; "This place is well organised and clean. Keep it up!" This is an ironic statement. Mother actually means the opposite - the room is unorganised and dirty; the children must stop this act of untidiness. Irony is regarded as 'substitution by dissimilarity of disjunction' (Chandler, n. p). It is difficult to identify irony especially when the context of the signification does not give a clue to the intended meaning of the encoder. Irony can be referred to as 'double-coded' because it often possesses two representations - the truth status and the perceived intent. The perceived intent (intended meaning) distinguishes it from a lie or false information. The double-coded characteristic of irony is illustrated below:

Modality status	The signifier	Truth status	Perceived intent
Literal factual	She is beautiful	True (the girl is good looking)	To inform
Ironic	She is beautiful	False (the girl is ugly)	To amuse
Lie	She is beautiful	False (the girl is ugly)	To mislead

Fig. 7. A table showing the double-coded nature of irony

These four semiotics rhetoric tropes - metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony - represent different relationships between the signifier and the signified. The different relationship as suggested by Hayden White cited in *Semiotics for Beginner* are

Rhetorical trope	Type of relationship
Metaphor	Resemblance
Metonymy	Adjacency
Synecdoche	Essentiality
Irony	Doubling

Fig. 8. A table summarising the different relationship between signifier and the signified

4.0 Conclusion

Everyone who communicates engages in some level of semiotic exercise consciously. This is so because our society is enveloped in various forms of signs which are deployed as a means of communication. Humans are higher animals with intellect and as such are able to transmit feelings, opinions, ideas and beliefs through the use of signs. These signs come in various forms - words, images, sounds, colours, acts, odour, flavour, objects and others to which meanings are attached. Signs are so powerful that they can shape, mould, control, and even manipulate our behaviour, perceptions and beliefs without our being conscious of their power over us.

Semiotics theory is set out to provide explicit techniques and sophisticated means for information processing (meaning-making and meaning-comprehending) so that the process of encoding and decoding information through signs is unified and less cumbersome. We must note that signs are polysemous - a signifier can have multiple signified. Take for example the colour RED. Red symbolises fire, blood, love, or danger. Therefore, signs must be employed and interpreted with caution.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we have explained major semiotics terminologies and assumptions. Sign is made up of two (signifier and signified) or three parts (representamen, interpretant and object) depending on the perspective - Saussurean or Peircean. A sign can be in the form of an icon, index or symbol. Signs have two levels of representation; denotative level is the objective signification of a sign while connotative is the subjective aspect. The orders of signification include denotative order which is the

literal value of the sign, connotative is the expressive value of the sign, and mythological is the cultural value.

Code, a set of guidelines for converting information into representation, is a basic ingredient in the production of any text. Codes are context sensitive, pervasive and dynamic. Codes are used by specific groups as a form of standardization of behaviour. We have traffic codes, verbal and nonverbal codes, aesthetic codes, scientific codes and others.

We also discussed the four main rhetorical tropes that are important in semiotic analysis. They are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Each of which evoke a distinct relationship between the signifier and the signified.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. With copious examples, differentiate between icon, index and symbol.
2. Explain the order of signification.
3. Explain the term 'code'.
4. Discuss the levels of representations.
5. List and explain the four major rhetorical tropes.

7.0 REFERENCE

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UNIT 4: DOING SEMIOTICS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Semiotic Analysis of an advertisement
 - 3.2 Semiotic Analysis of a cartoon
 - 3.3 Semiotic Analysis of a poem
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference

1:0 INTRODUCTION

In the interpretation of any sign - iconic, indexical or symbolic sign, the semiotician is faced with the process of making meaning from what is seen and also to decipher the significance between the various codes inherent in the text. A text refers to anything that can be 'read' as a system of signs that signify message or information.

When doing semiotic analysis it is important from the onset to decide which aspect of semiotic analysis is the analyst examining. The analysis could be on any of the following:

- investigation on the levels of representation or the order of signification,

- enquiry on the semiotic rhetorical tropes present in the text,
- analysis of the various codes in the text, or
- a combination of all the aspects mentioned above.

Whatever the analyst decides to do, the central tool or element is sign. And the purpose of semiotic analysis is to identify the signified - what is seen in the text - and the signified; that is the interpretations of the signs (the literal as well as suggestive meanings). When identifying the signified the analyst must:

- Analyse the verbal signs,
- Analyse the visual signs, and
- Analyse the symbolic message.

Semiotic analysis can be performed on the different aspects of human endeavours in the society where communication takes place such as religion, mass media (posters, marketing, advertising, news programme, etc.), economics, cultural elements and many more.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- a. Explain the processes involved in semiotic analysis, and
- b. Investigate any text using semiotic procedure.

3.0 CONTENT

The essence of semiotic analysis is to identify and explain how the text makes meaning; to analyse how signs signified in the text effectively the analyst must proceed in stages.

3.1 Semiotic analysis of a cartoon

Our text is a cartoon of the aftermath of a heavy downpour in Lagos. The cartoon, like every other cartoon, makes use of two modes - visual signs (images) and verbal signs (words).

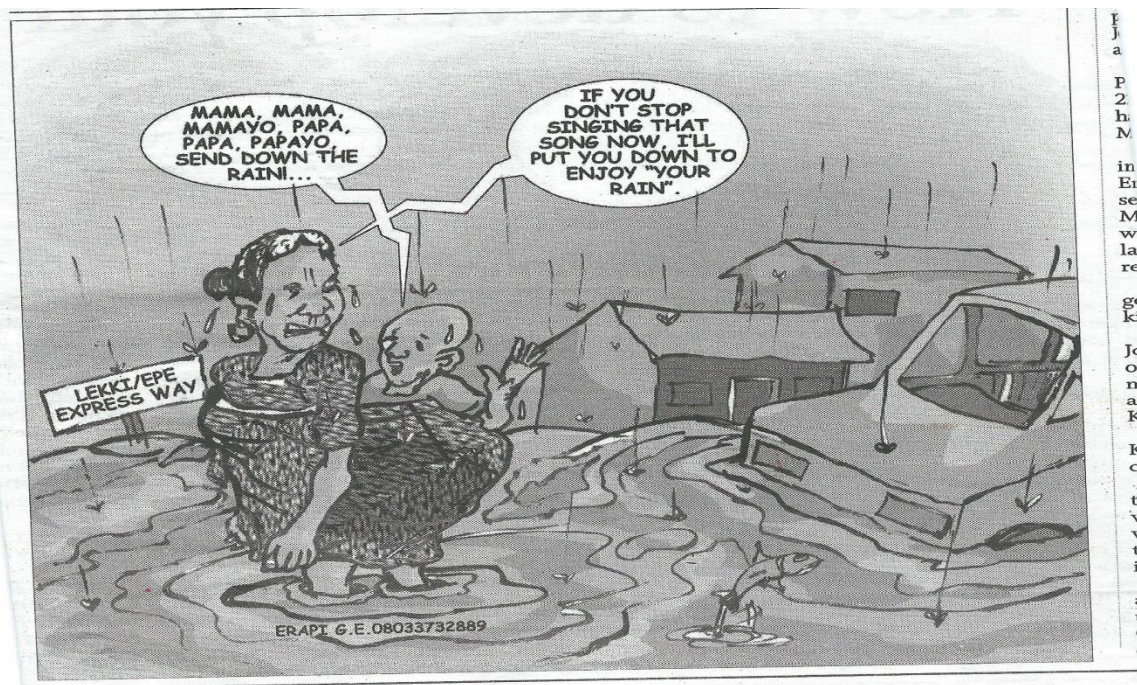


Fig. 9 A cartoon taken from DAILYSUN Friday, July 14, 2017

The cartoon features iconic, indexical and symbolic signs. First, let us identify the signifiers - those signs which are visibly seen in the cartoon.

It has several signifiers - the visual signs in our text include:

- I. A woman carrying a baby on her back - iconic and symbolic signs.
- II. Flooded area and drops of rain - iconic and indexical signs.
- III. Fish jumping from the flood - iconic and indexical signs
- IV. Two vehicles and houses submerged in the flood - iconic and symbolic
- V. Road sign submerge in the flood - symbolic.

Verbal signs: There three separate verbal signs:

- A. The child's utterance (a song): 'MAMA, MAMA, MAMAYO, PAPA, PAPA, PAPAYO, SEND DOWN THE RAIN...' - symbolic sign
- B. The woman's utterance: 'IF YOU DON'T STOP SINGING THAT SONG NOW, I'LL PUT YOU DOWN TO ENJOY "YOUR RAIN"'. - symbolic
- C. The inscription on the road sign: 'LEKKI/EPE EXPRESS WAY' - symbolic

The signified

- I. A caring and protective mother: she puts the child on her back to safeguard the child from being drowned in the flood. This image suggests that mothers (or perhaps some mothers) would go to any length to protect their children from danger in spite of mother's discomfort. It also symbolises femininity's

role in the society (mythological order). Verbal sign B suggests that mother is not finding the present situation funny, it is a stressed moment for her. The child on her back with the legs in the flood signifies that the child is not a toddler and would have been able to walk through the flood. This image is supported with the verbal sign A - the song by an old Nigerian musician, Majek Fasak, which the child is singing or reciting. This mother and child image is a visual metaphor suggesting that when a child is in distress, mother is there to give protection and care. The child's song connotes the innocence of children even during disaster.

- II. This iconic and indexical sign suggests that there was continuous heavy rain for quite a long period which led to the flood. The flood symbolises that the environment lacks a good drainage system.
- III. These iconic and indexical signs suggest that the level of the flood is very deep and the flooded area is equated to a river hence water creatures (fish) can survive in it. This is an ironic sign.
- IV. This signifies that the flooded environment is a residential area. It also suggests that both humans (mother and child) and materials (vehicles and houses) experience negative effects of nature (heavy downpour). Both mother and child image and the house and vehicle image are synecdochical signs - the mother and child image signifies the persons who are victims of the flood while the house and vehicle represent non human sufferers.
- V. This identifies the geographical setting of the flood. The area 'Lekkiaxis' which connotes 'wealth and affluence' also suffers from lack of public amenity (good drainage), and it helps to reinforce the basic truth that natural disaster is not selective or partial - both the wealthy and the poor benefit from nature.

Signification

The signs in the cartoon have both denotative and connotative signification. It also features rhetorical signals - metaphor and irony as explained under the signified section above.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Identify and explain the order of signification in the cartoon.

3.2 Semiotic analysis of an advertisement.

Our next analysis is a persuasive advertisement of Westernlotto. The advert which is a print media advertisement utilises both visual and verbal signs as well as incorporate colours as signs.



Fig. 10 A print advert taken from DAILY SUN Newspaper Friday, July 27, 2017

The advert has several signifiers - the visual signs include:

- I. A man laughing, his arms are stretched out openly with fist hands and his entire body slant backwards. He is encircled by large number of the highest denomination of Nigeria legal tender (#1,000).
- II. Face of a clock, dotted with three different colours - green, red and black.
- III. Yellow background and a darkish white background,
- IV. Three small objects (phone, jackpot machine and the face of a computer) placed towards the down part of the advert.

Verbal signs - there are three groups of separate verbal signs:

- A. The first verbal signs are written in caps and boldface: 'UPGRADE YOUR LIFESTYLE IN MINUTES'
- B. The next is a two-words phrase written in blue and pink: 'WesternLotto'
- C. One short clause supported by one word imperative phrase written in italics: 'It's your time. Play!'

The signified

The visual signs signify the experience to be encountered by anyone who plays and wins - becomes rich and over joyous. He is in a world of his own surrounded by excess money and other goodies of life signified by the three different colours. Green signifies abundant goodness (vegetations), red suggests love and happiness, and black implies the unknown future. The background colours of yellow and orange which are the dominant colours in the advert connote the plausibility of a player winning and having a similar experience of the state of ecstasy.

The verbal signs act as anchorage to the visual signs. The first verbal sign is symbolic; it affirms the experience of the joyful man. In case the audience finds it difficult to decode what is happening to the man, this verbal makes it clearer and direct. The second verbal sign identifies the source of the man's experience. And the third verbal sign which is written in italics underscores immediacy of the action; no delay and hence the imperative and catchy phrase: *Play!*

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain the levels of representations in the cartoon.

3.3 Semiotic Analysis of a poem

The Poem 'My Mother' written by Ann Taylor (1783 -1866), is very rich in semiosis. The poem is a praise-song dedicated to motherhood for mothers' care and affection. Reading through the poem, Walter Crane (1845-1915) was able to create vivid illustrations (pictures) of some of the verses of the poem. We are reading this poem not as a stylistician or a literary critic but as a semiotician.

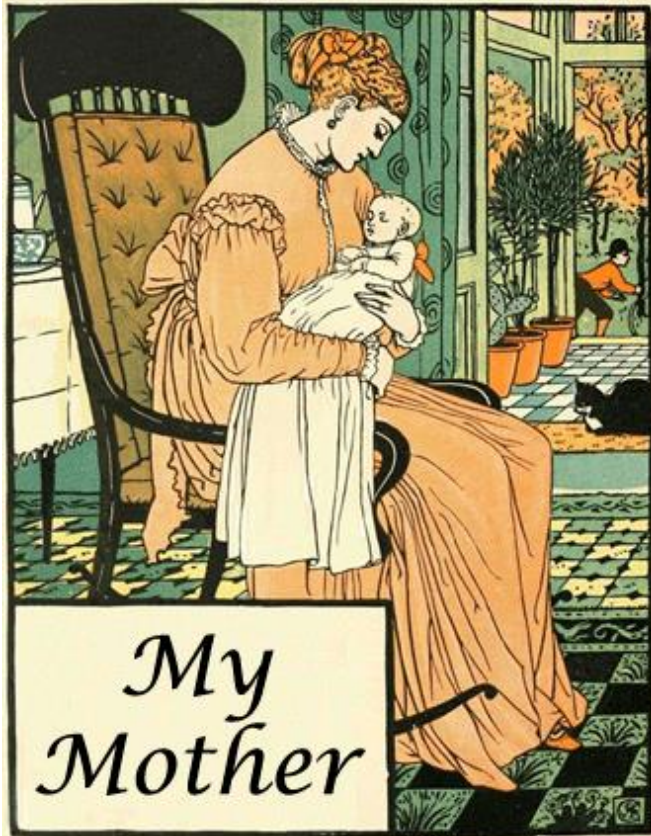


Fig. 10: My Mother by Ann Taylor - Your Daily Poem

My Mother

Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hush'd me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheek sweet kisses prest?
My Mother.

When sleep forsook my open eye,
Who was it sung sweet hushabye,
And rock'd me that I should not cry?
My Mother.

Who sat and watched my infant head,
When sleeping in my cradle bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed?
My Mother.



Fig. 11: My Mother by Ann Taylor - Your Daily Poem

When pain and sickness made me cry,
 Who gazed upon my heavy eye,
 And wept for fear that I should die?
 My Mother.¹³

These illustrations depict the linguistic signs contained in the poem. The illustrator, Walter Crane has utilised semiotic knowledge to create the pictures. The poem is characterised by different orders of significations: denotative, connotative and mythological orders.

Denotative order: the poet describes mother's roles of caring and showing affections: 'fed me from her gentle breast', 'rock'd me that I should not cry?', 'sat and watched my infant head'.

Connotative order: the poet acknowledges the stresses encountered by mother in the course of bringing up children. Some of the lines in the poems are not to be decoded literally: 'hush'd me in her arms to rest' connotes that mother is always protective of the child. Also in 'on my cheek sweet kisses prest?' connotes that mother ensures

¹³"My Mother by Ann Taylor - Your Daily Poem."
http://www.yourdaily poem.com/listpoem.jsp?poem_id=2588. Retrieved 3 Sep. 2017.

that the child is always comfortable. 'Sat and watched my infant head' connotes that mother never leaves the child alone for fear of being exposed to danger.

Mythological order: the poem is highly metaphorical: 'gentle breast', 'sweet kisses', 'rock'd me that I should not cry?', 'infant head', 'cradle bed', 'tears of sweetness'. These are used to signify mother's roles of caring and nurturing.

The poem is also characterised by a series of images: 'hus'd me in her arms', 'rock'd me', 'sleeping on my cradle bed', 'sat and watch my infant head', 'wept'.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Read the two verses below from 'My Mother'. Using Roger Bacon's classification of signs (see Unit 1 above), identify the kinds of signs present in the two verses.

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place to make it well?
My Mother.

Who taught my infant lips to pray,
And love God's holy book and day,
And walk in wisdom's pleasant way?
My Mother.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Semiotic analysis can be performed on meaningful signs - such as linguistic units (words, phrases and sentences), images, graphics and pictures. A semiotic analyst must be conversant with the principles of semiotic analysis and be able to unravel meanings from any forms of signs. The nature of the text being analyzed will determine the form of the analysis. Some texts may not be characterised by three orders of significations; some may be characterised by two levels of representations. The role of a semiotic analyst is simply to untangle encoded meanings from texts.

5.0 SUMMARY

It is clear that semiotic analysis can be performed on all forms of meaningful signs. We have analysed the different types of texts in this unit: a print advert, a cartoon and a poem. The three texts analysed are characterised by different orders of significations as well as levels of representations.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is a text in semiotic analysis?
2. List five different human activities which a semiotician can analyse.
3. Differentiate between visual and verbal signs.

7.0 REFERENCE

Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotics: The basics*. London: Routledge.
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http://www.yourdaily-poem.com/listpoem.jsp?poem_id=2588

MODULE TWO: THEORIES OF SEMIOTICS

UNIT ONE: Ferdinand de Saussure and Semiotics (1906)

UNIT TWO: Charles Sanders Peirce and Semiotics (1890)

UNIT THREE: Roland Barthes and Semiotics (1950s)
UNIT FOUR: Umberto Eco (Interpretative Semiotics)

UNIT ONE: Ferdinand de Saussure and Semiotics (1906)

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Saussure's Structure of Language
 - 3.2 Saussure's sign theory
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Semiotics as a branch of knowledge has passed through diverse but related 'transformation'. Its present outlook is as a result of the contributions of different scholars (such as Henry Stubbes (1670), John Locke (1690), Charles Sanders Peirce, (1890), Ferdinand de Saussure (1906), Claude Levi-Strauss (1950), Roland Barthes (1950), Michel Foucault (1960s) and others. The semiotic ideologies of these scholars are based on the norms and tenets of their primary areas of research such as medical science, structural linguistics, philosophy, anthropology and psychology.

In this unit we shall examine Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic notion. As a linguist, Saussure semiotic has linguistic undertone. He developed a branch of linguistics called 'Structural Linguistics'. His theory and teachings on structural linguistics and semiotics were published after his death by his students. By implication, it can be said that his theory may not have been fully developed because his lecture notes were compiled and published as *The Course in General Linguistics* posthumously.

The Course in General Linguistics contained Saussure's lectures at the University of Geneva from 1906 to 1911. The fact that Saussure's linguistic theory was published posthumously in 1916 by his former students - Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye - makes the clarifications of some key terms by Saussure himself impossible. Thus, his theory is open to debates and controversy.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. Identify the influence of linguistics knowledge on Saussure's semiotics,
2. Distinguished Saussure's sign theory from any other theory,
3. Differentiate between paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Saussure's Language Structure

Saussure observes that language is a symbolic system through which humans communicate. Language is made up of structure. The structure is such that the different parts of the structure are meaningless outside the structure: the individual part, though unique, has no value. An individual element becomes meaningful only in relation to another within the structure. Therefore, the various elements within the language structure are interrelated.

The structure of language is such that it is made up of abstract rules which help to give signification (meaning). These abstract rules are conventionally and arbitrarily assigned meanings. Hence language users must internalise language rules in order to communicate effectively in the language. Language is seen to have different related layers which when linked together product meaning. Saussure views language as a system of signs whose signification (meaning) is arrived at by the relationships between the signs.

He made a distinction between langue (language which is the symbolic system through which language users communicate; this is the abstract aspect of language) and parole (speech which is the actual utterances; this is the language usage in real situations). Langue refers to the rules of language learnt by the user while parole refers to the actual utterances produced by language users.

3.2 Saussure's Sign Theory

Ferdinand de Saussure's sign theory is influenced by his interest in language as a means of communication. His major concern about signs is how a sign (acoustic word) relates to another sign (mental word). Hence, his theory is made up of two elements: the signifier and the signified. His semiotic theory is seen as dyadic theory. His theory can be graphically represented as follows:

Sign	-----	table
Signifier	-----	the letters t-a-b-l-e
Signified	-----	the actual concept which is evoked in the mind of the hearer.

The signifier and the signified are tightly knitted together: inseparable. This theory does not make any reference to the object in the real world. He observes that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the signifier and the signified; the relationship is arbitrary.

Saussure's theory states that signs are organised into codes along two axes (dimensions): paradigmatic axis and syntagmatic axis. The paradigmatic axis which is the vertical component of language structure is the plane of selection (choice). The syntagmatic axis, which is the horizontal component, is the plane of combination. Commenting on the importance of paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, Chandler observes that:

Saussure was 'concerned exclusively with three sorts of systemic relationships: that between a signifier and a signified; those between a sign and all of the other elements of its system; and those between a sign and the elements which surround it within a concrete signifying instance'. ... [therefore] meaning arises from the differences between signifiers [signs]; these differences are of two kinds: syntagmatic (concerning positioning) and paradigmatic (concerning substitution). The distinction is a key one in structuralist semiotic analysis. Temporally, syntagmatic relations refer intra-textually to other signifiers co-present within the text, whilst paradigmatic relations refer intertextually to signifiers which are absent from the text (Saussure 1983, 122; Saussure 1974, 123). The 'value' of a sign is determined

by both its paradigmatic and its syntagmatic relations. Syntagms and paradigms provide a structural context within which signs make sense; they are the structural forms through which signs are organised into codes.¹⁴

The notion of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations is an important one in Saussure's sign theory. Saussure being a linguist made use of linguistic terminologies which eventually have a strong bearing on semiotics to the present time.

Paradigmatic axis and syntagmatic axis can be illustrated as follows:

The /	girl(s) / boy(s) / child(ren) /	is / are / was / were	beautiful / angry	orange / rice / beans
A / An	dog / rat / goat	like(s) / hate(s)	dead / alive	venue / school
Many	table(s) / car(s) / book(s)	cook / kill / beat /	happy / sad	
Some	/ crowd / man	visit(ed) / travel(ed)	dirty / clean /new	

Fig. 12: Paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes



: Paradigmatic axis - level of choice selection



: Syntagmatic axis - level of combination

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit we have examined Ferdinand's sign theory which is characterised by a dyadic relation. His theory is influenced by his linguistic interest. Hence his theory's main concern is the way signs (words) relate to other signs (words); he was not interested in the object. His notion of sign comprises a signifier (acoustic word) and the signified (the concept it represents). The signifier and the signified are interrelated and inseparable. He identifies two types of relationships between signs, namely paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. There is no tied bond between the signifier and the signified: the relationship is arbitrary.

¹⁴ "Semiotics for Beginners: Paradigms and Syntagms." 4 Jul. 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem03.html>. Retrieved 5 Dec. 2018.

5.0 Summary

Saussure's theory of sign is influenced by his linguistic background. As a structuralist, he sees language as consisting of layers (structure) of signs. Each sign is made up of two parts - signifier and signified. His sign theory is known as Dyadic relation. The signifier refers to the sound image (acoustic word) and the signified refers to the concept (mental impression). The value of any language sign is arrived at through the relation (interaction) between one sign and another within the language structure. The value (signification) a sign is conventional and arbitrary. Saussure's theory states that signs are organised into codes along two dimensions - paradigmatic axis and syntagmatic axis. The vertical component which is the plane of selection is termed paradigmatic axis while the syntagmatic axis is the horizontal component and the plane of combination.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. What do you understand by dyadic theory?
2. Differentiate between langue and parole.
3. What influenced Ferdinand's treatment of sign?
4. Define the terms: paradigmatic and syntagmatic.

7.0 Reference

Chandler, Daniel (1994): *Semiotics for Beginners* [WWW document] URL <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/> Retrieved July 4, 2018.

UNIT TWO: Charles Sanders Peirce and Semiotics (1890)

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3.2 Peirce's sign theory
3.3 Classification of sign
3.4 The Sign Process
4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Semiotics as we know dates back to time immemorial: right from the creation of man signs have been in man's environment. Semiotics, the study of signs relation has passed through three distinct stages as we explained in Module 1. Modern semiotics is credited to two founding fathers; Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Having examined the semiotic theory of Saussure it is pertinent that we take a critical look into the views and observations of Peirce regarding semiotics. Semiotics is solely concerned with how signs are used to communicate and how people decode and encode the various signs that abound around us. Now let us examine Peirce's observations on signs.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to

1. Differentiate between Peirce's semiotics theory from any other theory
2. Identify and explain the dimensions of Peirce's notion of sign.
3. Differentiate between the three classes of sign as observed by Peirce.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Peirce Philosophy of sign

Peirce's interest and concern in logical reasoning influenced his ideas on sign. As a philosopher, logician and mathematician, he was concerned about how thoughts processes are articulated; he views thought and expression as one related act. As a logician three-category system has a strong hold on him. Hence, his sign theory is centred on triadic principles. The principles of logical reasoning influence his different categories and subcategories of signs.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Why is Peirce's sign theory centred on triadic principles?

3.2 Peirce's sign theory

Peirce considers anything that can point to something else other than itself as a sign. To him, sign is not a smallest unit but anything that is imaginable, recognised, sensed, whether simple or complex, and 'stands' for something else or forms a relationship with something else in order to produce a meaning. Therefore, a sign is not absolute in itself but relates to another element (sign). His notion of sign is more encompassing than that of Saussure's.

Peirce observes that a sign has three dimensions:

- Representamen: the form of the sign - word, drawing, a sneeze, handshake, etc.
- Interpretant: the sense of the sign in the mind (mental image).
- Object: the referent, that which the sign refers to. The object is dynamic and so is ever changing to suit its context.

Each of these dimensions (components) of sign depends on the other and they collectively make meaning.

Peirce's triadic model of sign theory is a complex process: the interpretant is also a sign in the mind of the interpreter; the object becomes a sign in the real world of the users. Thus, sign functions as a continuous and unfolding process thereby creating chains of meaning-making signs through new signs interpreting a prior sign. The process of sign interpretation (semiosis) is an active process involving layers of inferences.

In line with Peirce's sign model, Barbieri (2009) states that semiosis

is not just the production of signs; it is the production of signs and meanings together. The result is that a system of signs, i.e., a *semiotic system*, is always made of at least two distinct worlds: a world of entities that we call *signs* and a world of entities that represent their *meanings*. The link between sign and meaning, in turn, calls attention to a third entity, i.e., to their relationship. (20)

For Pierce, sign interpretation is not simply a case of sign and the object relation but complex interactional relations between sign components.

3.3 Categorisation of Sign

The essence of sign is to generate meaning. Consequently, Peirce argues that there are three forms / classes of signs based on the relation of the sign and the meaning generated. In other words, there are three distinct ways a 'pointer' to its object. His classification of signs into these three unique forms - icon, index and symbol - is based on resemblance, relation and convention.

1. Icon: this is a form of sign which is similar to its object either in terms of look or sound. Icon has a likeness with the generated meaning (the object). Examples: map, x-ray, onomatopoeia, etc. Subcategories of icons are image (shares sensory qualities with its object), diagram (shares a level of arbitrariness with its object) and metaphor (shares a degree of parallelism and contrast with its object).
2. Index: this is a form of sign that suggests something about its referent (object). It has a connection which is either existential or causal to its object. Examples: high body temperature, smoke, pain, pulse rate, finger and footprints, etc. Subcategories of index are (i) tracks: it has a physical, cause and effect relationship though not simultaneous with the referent. Examples are lingering smell of food, foot prints, perfume, etc (ii) Symptom: that which gives off (emit) their object (referent) directly. That is, it exhales its object. It is impossible to distinguish between symptom and its object. Example fever, pains, etc. (iii) Designation is a special kind of pointer; it is distinct from its object. Examples proper names, demonstratives, pronouns, etc.
3. Symbol: is a form of sign which has no similarity with its object. Symbol generates meaning by convention, or agreement. That is the relationship between symbol and its object is arrived at by pure agreement or convention. Examples: lexical words, national flag, colours, numbers, etc.

These three categories of sign (icon, index and symbol) are not mutually exclusive signs. That is to say that one single sign can be iconic, indexical and symbolic sign

at an instant. A typical example is a map. According to Danesi (1994) ‘a map is ... indexical (it indicates where places are) and iconic (it represents places in topographical relation to each other) and symbol (its notational system must be learned)’ (77).

3.4 The Sign Process

Peirce’s theory of sign recognises that the relationship among the three components of signs which brings about signification (meaning) is a complex process. Consequently, he categorises sign processing into three levels stages using numerals:

1. Firstness: This is the independent stage of a sign. It is in the mode of being though it makes reference to nothing else. It is a stage of oneness - self completeness. This belongs to the realm of possibility; it is possible of being a sign but points to nothing yet. Example: the feeling of pain or headache.
2. Secondness: This is the mode of actualisation - the sign is actually a pointer but without relation with the object yet. It has a relation with firstness.
3. Thirdness: This stage is the mode of interpretation. It points to an object by virtue of bringing a second entity in relation with the first one in order to form a third entity - the object which is represented in the real world. Thirdness mediates between firstness and secondness. It is the stage of experience and conceptualisation.

4.0 Conclusion

Peirce’s sign theory is influenced by his scientific (Mathematician, logician and philosopher) background. His theory has three dimensions (components) and is referred to as a triadic model of sign. He introduced a third element (the object) which is missing in Saussure’s sign theory. His philosophical enquiry into reality and nature played a vital role in his sign theory. Consequently, he classified sign into three distinct categories of icon, index and symbol. As far as Peirce was concerned semiotics is synonymous with logic whose sole interest is on how human beings process knowledge. Hence, his theory further explains how the human mind process sign in order to arrive at the meaning of the sign. He presented this sign process in ordinal numeral: firstness, secondness and thirdness. Peirce believes that signs abound around in the society, and human beings think

through signs and then communicate through signs in order to give meaning to anything and everything in the human environs.

5.0 Summary

In this unit we have studied Peirce's sign theory. This theory posits that sign has three dimensions - representant (word, drawing), interpretant and object. For Peirce, sign is anything that 'points' to something else other than itself; it is anything that is imaginable, sensed and can be a pointer. Thus Peirce's notion of sign is very wide and all encompassing. The process of signification is very complex and it is an active process consisting of a series of inferences - the interpretant becomes a sign in the mind of the interpreter, and the object also becomes a sign pointing to another sign in the real world. He classified signs into three forms based on resemblance, relation and convention. The three classes are icon, index and symbol. Iconic signs are signs that share similarity with their objects; indexical signs suggest something about the objects and symbolic signs lack neither similarity nor suggestive features with their objects. Also, the act of processing signs has three stages, namely firstness, secondness and thirdness.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Explain Peirce's notion of sign.
2. Identify and explain the three components of sign in Peirce's theory.
3. Discuss Peirce's sign process.
4. With illustrations discuss the three categories of Peirce's sign.
5. 'Anything is a sign' Discuss.

7.0 Reference

Barbieri, M. Three Types of Semiosis. *Biosemiotics* 2, 19–30 (2009).

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UNIT THREE: Roland Barthes and Semiotics (1950s)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the two previous units, we have discussed the sign theory of the two founding fathers of semiotics. In this unit we shall study another semiotician though not a founder but a well renowned scholar who contributed so much to semiotics. As a social semiotician, Roland Barthes moves the study of sign outside language into photography and other visual signs.

2.0 Objectives: At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Discuss Barthes' ideology;
2. Differentiate between the various levels of meaning;
3. Distinguish between Barthes' semiotic theory and the other semiotic theories; and
4. Identify and discuss Barthes' contributions to modern semiotics.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Barthes Ideology

Roland Barthes was influenced by Saussure's sign model. However he inverts Saussure's formulation - Linguistics is a branch of semiotics. Barthes sees semiotics as a branch of linguistics and not the other way round as asserted by Saussure. In other words, linguistics is not a branch of semiotics. Semiosis is a composite of signs - that which stands for something; and signs are used as a means of passing information.

Barthes observes that messages are passed across by means of codes. For him there is no message without a code except for photographs which are produced without human intervention. He strongly believes that human society is littered with varied codes through which messages are transmitted. He sees code as culturally defined systems of relationships. Hence, as members of a particular culture, people's semiotic behaviour is shaped by some sets of codes within the environments which

have been internalized and then put to use for communication (transmission of messages).

He identifies two kinds of relationships between text (message) and image (code). He called the two kinds of relationships anchorage and relay. He explains the terms:

Anchorage – images are prone to multiple meanings and interpretations.

Anchorage occurs when text is used to focus on one of these meanings, or at least to direct the viewer through the maze of possible meanings in some way.

Relay – the text adds meaning and both text and image work together to convey intended meaning e.g. a comic strip.¹⁵

According to him all images have more than one meaning - that is images are seen by him as being 'polysemous'. By implications, codes (images) possess several interpretations - they are open to many meanings.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Whose semiotic theory influenced Roland Barthes?

3.2 Levels of Meaning

Barthes, influenced by Louis Helmsley's notion that there are different orders of signification, identifies two levels of meanings (order of signification) which he termed denotative and connotative. He observes that Saussure's model of sign focused mainly on denotative aspects of signification, ignoring completely the connotative aspects. According to Barthes, the first order (level) of signification is that of denotation and the second order is that of connotation.

At the denotation level, a sign consists of a signifier and a signified. At this level most signs have 'common sense' meaning. It has shared meaning or signification which is an agreement among the large number of people who employ the sign as a means of sending messages. Therefore, the denotation of a sign arises through social convention. It is sometimes referred to as 'literal' or 'obvious' meaning of a

¹⁵ "The Rhetoric Of The Image – Roland Barthes (1964) | Traces Of The" 21 Dec. 2009, <https://tracesofthereal.com/2009/12/21/the-rhetoric-of-the-image-roland-barthes-1977/>. Retrieved 28 May. 2019.

sign. It is seen as the underlying and primary meaning. Of course, some analysts and theorists disagree with the notion 'underlying and primary' meaning. At the second order of signification, connotation is derived from the 'way the society uses and values both the signifier and the signified' (Fiske & Hartley 1978: 41).

Explaining 'connotation', Chandler in *Semiotics for Beginners* writes:

The term 'connotation' is used to refer to the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations (ideological, emotional etc.) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, ethnicity, and so on. Signs are more 'polysemic' more open to interpretation - in their connotations than their denotations. (n. p)

Commenting further on denotation and connotation, Chandler observes that separating denotation and connotation orders of signification cannot be neatly done. He opines that most semioticians are of the opinion that there is hardly any sign that lacks connotation. Put differently, most signs are both denotative and connotative. The distinction between denotation and connotation are arrived at based on referential meaning which is shaped by the assessment and signification assigned to the sign in question. Most semioticians argue that there can be no objective and neutral description of any sign such that the sign is devoid of being assigned associative reference or signification. In spite of this lack of clear cut demarcation, semioticians cannot deny or ignore the existence of these two orders of signification.

Barthes also observes that denotation and connotation combined together to produce ideology which he refers to as myth. Myth has been described by John Hartley as a third order of signification (Hartley, 1982: 217). Myth is an ideology which sharpens and conceptualises one's way of viewing certain signs within the culture. According to Barthes

myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order semiological system. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second (MY: 114) ¹⁶

¹⁶"Roland Barthes - Georgetown University." <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Allen-Barthes-excerpt.pdf>. Retrieved 29 May. 2019.

To illustrate how myth distorts the meaning of the original sign and sends a message that is intentional, Barthes analyses a photograph of a young black soldier in French military uniform which is mythically significant to French nation.

I am at the barber's, and a copy of Paris-Match is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro* in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro* in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier... In myth (and this is the chief peculiarity of the latter), the signifier is already formed by the signs of the language... Myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us...¹⁷ (6 & 7)

Thus, myth imposes certain intended cultural values, beliefs and attitudes while suppressing others.

Explaining the term 'myth' Chandler in *Semiotics for Beginners* states that myths, in a wider sense, are commonly regarded as beliefs which are false. But within semiotic circle, myths are not treated as false beliefs; they are often regarded as extended metaphors which help to codify and assign signification to human experiences. Barthes assigns ideological function to myths because they help 'to naturalize the cultural, to make dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely 'natural', 'normal', self-evident, timeless, obvious 'common-sense' - and thus objective and 'true' reflections of 'the way things are'. (n.p)

¹⁷ "Semiotics for Beginners: Denotation, Connotation and Myth." 7 Apr. 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem06.html>. Retrieved 29 May. 2019.

Barthes can be said to have identified three orders of signification: denotation, connotation and mythology (ideology).

1. The first order of signification - denotation - is primarily representational and self-contained.
2. The second level of signification - connotation - represents expressive values attached to a sign.
3. The third order of signification - mythology - represents cultural variable abstractions supporting a particular philosophy.

Self-Assessment Exercise

How many levels of signification was identified by Barthes?

3.3 Semiotic theory of Barthes

Roland Barthes as a social semiotician expands the frontier of semiotic analysis to include every aspect of the society. He uses semiotics theory to critique every form of cultural materials (music, clothing, painting, food, drinks and literature) in French society.

Barthes' semiotic theory is greatly influenced by Saussure's theory of semiotics which distinguishes between the signifier and the signified. The signifier is that which stands for something outside of itself; and the signified is what it stands for - the meaning or signification. As an anti-essentialist, he disagrees with the idea that there is something which in a particular signifier which makes it relates naturally to its signified. That is to say that there is nothing peculiar that makes a signifier to point to its signified. It is rather a process of social construction that brings about the categorisation of people or objects into classes or division.

Although influenced by Saussure's theory, he does not automatically employ Saussure's theory. He substitutes and introduces some terms in his own theory. He substitutes the term 'arbitrary' with a new one 'motivated'. For Barthes, the relationship between a signifier and a signified is motivated; it is not always arbitrary. Arbitrariness occurs only from the point of view of language signs. He believes that everything around the environment is a sign which points to or represents a particular message. Hence, media, fashion, art, photography,

architecture, literature, etc. are myths which have cultural meaning. Barthes describes myth as a “system of communication” or a “message,” a “mode of signification.” (Barthes: 109).

Self-Assessment Exercise

Pick a popular print media advertisement and explain the three levels of signification of the advert.

4.0 Conclusion

Semiotics theory has over time expanded its frontier through the contributions of several theorists. Roland Barthes contributes so much to modern semiotics through his different essays which critique cultural items which are significant. Language is not only an instrument for sending messages but it is also an artifact. Through his semiotic analysis, he exposes how French bourgeois society imposes values and beliefs through ideological means. Though there are three levels of signification, sometimes the three levels are interwoven in the message and a clear demarcation may be obscured.

5.0 Summary

In this unit we have examined Roland Barthes semiotic theory which is influenced by that of Saussure. Barthes is well known for his critiques which he used to expose the hidden meaning in some cultural ideology in French society. He identifies three levels of significations - denotation, connotation and myth (ideology). In Barthes theory, the relationship between a signifier and the signified is not arbitrary but motivated. Most codes are polysemous and hence they are open to more than one meaning depending on the context.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Explain the relationships between a text and the image.
2. List and explain the orders of signification.
3. Discuss Barthes contributions to the field of semiotics,
4. Differentiate between denotation and connotation.

7.0 References

Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics for Beginners Denotation, Connotation and Myth*
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UNIT FOUR: Umberto Eco (Interpretative Semiotics)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Umberto Eco as a semiotic theorist with a difference was bold enough to fault some aspects of previous semiotics theories of Saussure and Peirce. He identifies some fallacious assumptions which he sets out to correct in his own semiotic theory. He proposes that a comprehensive semiotic theory should be a theory that can accommodate diverse disciplines. Eco publicised semiotics to a wider audience. His mode of semiotics is referred to as interpretative semiotics. His major interest was in how messages are decoded and mode of sign production.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. Discuss Umberto Eco's semiotic theory.
2. Explain the role of sign in Eco's semiotics theory.
3. Discuss the fallacious assumptions identified by Eco.
4. Distinguish Eco semiotic principles from those of his predecessors.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 General Overview

Unlike previous theories on semiotics, Eco proposes that an ideal semiotic theory should be all encompassing and should be able to accommodate all fields of human endeavours. In his book, *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976), Eco explains the outlook of his semiotic theory:

to explore the theoretical possibilities and the social function of a unified approach to every phenomenon of signification and/or communication. Such an approach should take the form of a general semiotic theory, able to explain every case of sign-function in terms of underlying systems of elements mutually correlated by one or more codes.

A design for a general semiotics (1) should consider: (a) a theory of codes and (b) a theory of sign production – the latter taking into account a large

range of phenomena such as the common use of languages, the evolution of... (3-31)¹⁸

By implications, Eco's Semiotic theory is centred on codes which he gives preeminent status, and sign production. In his theory, sign is given a function role of establishing 'the correlation of an abstract element [signifier] of the expression system with an abstract element [signified] of the content system'. (Eco, 1976, p 50).

Eco's general semiotic theory would account for, as well as accommodates, all occurrences of communication and meaning making situations. Eco's semiotic theory examines a large coverage of signs used as modes of communication; it takes cognisance of all forms of communication exhibit by animate and inanimate. It can be regarded as semiotic umbrella for all aspects of messaging such as the study of how animal communicate – zoosemiotics, the study of human use voice modulation to communicate as well as human physical touch, posture and distance (kinesics and proxemics). Eco's semiotics also creates room for the study of visuals - how pictures, drawings, diagrams and photographs function as means of communication. The study of natural language (as well as biological and environmental signs) and formalised language (including the study of mathematical, logical, or scientific languages) are not left out in Eco's semiotic theory. Eco's theory spreads across the entire human environment: it studies the group and family behaviour as well as the mass media.

Eco's enlargement of semiotic scope to include every human activity is influenced by the fact that he believes that 'ideas are communicative signs' which can be abstract or concrete. In like manner, he regards every object within an environment as a potential sign for transmission of messages.

The interest of a unified semiotic theory, according to Eco, should not be solely in the topology of signs and the relationships between the signifier and the signified. Such an interest presents signs as a static entity. His major concern for an appropriate comprehensive semiotic theory lies in the problem of decoding. Hence

¹⁸ "A Theory of Semiotics on JSTOR." <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16xwcf4>. Retrieved 30 May. 2019.

his theory emphasises how sign-vehicles function as well as a means of comprehending the production and interpretation of sign-vehicles. He advocates for an inductive approach instead of a deductive approach to the study of sign (semiotics) so that the theory can be utilised by different disciplines. According to O'Connor

This comprehensive theory must be applicable across wildly diverse disciplines. To accomplish this, Eco advocates an inductive approach, wherein one examines the underlying similarities between various disciplines to arrive at a theory, rather than a deductive approach, wherein the fields are examined in terms of precepts. (n. p)¹⁹

This application of deductive approval to the study of signs will make a comprehensive semiotic theory non-restrictive to a limited field or discipline. For him, every cultural item is a semiotic sign which should not be studied in abstraction but within social phenomena.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Identify Eco's major concerns in his theory.

3.2 Umberto Eco's Semiotic Theory

In Eco's semiotic theory, sign is displaced as a central notion in semiotics. He accords an important status to codes thereby relegating sign to the background. He views code as an entity which provides the tenets that make it possible for signs to be organised as concrete manifestation in communicative situations. According to Guillemette and Cossette

Codes are necessary for any communicative activity. There are as many codes (linguistic and non-linguistic) as there are activities and contexts. For example, the code of medical semiotics (the study of symptoms) is what allows the doctor to conclude that the patient's "stomach ache" is in fact a liver problem.²⁰

Eco himself defines code as "a series of rules that will allow one to attribute a signification to the sign" (Eco, 1988, 28). Similarly,

¹⁹"Eco, A Theory of Semiotics, annotation by Kim O'Connor."

<http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/ECO.HTM>. Retrieved 31 May. 2019.

²⁰ "Umberto Eco : The Semiotic Process and the Classification of Signs"

<http://www.signosemio.com/eco/semiotic-process-and-classification-of-signs.asp>. Retrieved 31 May. 2019.

A 'code' is an instrument for connecting the expression of signs to their content, and is a correlational device which generates 'sign-functions.' A 'code' is also a rule for sign production and interpretation, in that it determines how the expression and content of signs are to be correlated.²¹

And he explains that a sign 'is used to transmit information; to say or to indicate a thing that someone knows and wants others to know as well' (Eco 1988, 27). Eco considers 'signification' as the semiotic event whereby a sign "stands for" something.²² In line with Hjelmslev's idea of sign he views sign as "an entity which has both an 'expression-form' and a 'content-form' and which is established by the interdependence between them. A sign is a unit consisting of an expression and a content which are connected with each other by a mutual correlation or 'sign function.'"²³

Eco observes that a sign is characterised by element of both an expression-plane, and conventional content-plane which could be multiple (Eco: 1976, p 48). In Eco's theory, a sign is regarded as a 'sign-function' ('fictive' element of expression plane) and it is an abstract entity.

Unlike previous theories of semiotics, Eco regards signification as a system comprising of

- (i) Syntactic rules (i.e. rules for the combination of signs)
- (ii) Semantic rules (i.e. rules for the signification of signs) and
- (iii) Behavioural rules (i.e. rules for the coordination of syntactic and semantic rules, so that proper understanding of a given array of signs may produce a corresponding behavioural response).

Thus, an 's-code' (or code as system) is a system of rules which has syntactic, semantic, and behavioral applications. An 's-code' differs from an ordinary 'code,' in that an 's-code' is a system of signification, while a 'code' is merely a correlational device for producing or interpreting signs. A 'code' may correlate the items of different information systems or the items of different 's-codes.' (Eco's Angelfire, n.p)

²¹"Eco's - Angelfire." <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/eco.html>. Retrieved 31 May. 2019.

²²"Eco's - Angelfire." <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/eco.html>. Retrieved 31 May. 2019.

²³"Eco's - Angelfire." <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/eco.html>. Retrieved 31 May. 2019.

By this description, he places the code above sign in his semiotic theory. His theory is hinged around transmission of linguistic and non-linguistic messages through the use of codes.

According to Sherzer, Eco's semiotic theory is based on four theoretical assumptions:

- (1) meanings are cultural units;
- (2) these units can be isolated thanks to the chain of their interpretants as revealed in a given culture;
- (3) the study of the signs in a culture enables us to define the values of the interpretants by viewing them in a system of positions and oppositions;
- (4) semantic fields are useful tools for explaining significant oppositions. (p.80)

Eco's theory is broad and takes cognizance of all forms of messaging including non-linguistic messages. His theory also recognises the intrusion of semantic field in semiotic analysis.

Self-Assessment Exercise
Explain Eco's notion of sign.

3.3 Theory of Sign Production

One major aspect of Eco's semiotic theory is the issue of sign production. He classifies sign production into four groups based on 'four criteria: 1) the amount of physical labour which is necessary in order to produce expressions, 2) the type-token ratio, 3) the continuum which is to be shaped, and 4) the mode and rate of articulation'²⁴

The four modes of sign-production are:

1. **Recognition** is a process which involves the reconstitution of a pre-existing or past experience of sign-expressions. This act 'of recognition may reconstitute the object or event as an imprint, a symptom or clue' (Eco, 1976, p.221).
2. **Ostension** is a process which involves a choice of existing or potentially existing sign-expressions as 'tokens' of 'expression-types.' [It is the production of a temporary code for a unique situation, such as when two

²⁴"Eco's - Angelfire." <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/eco.html>. Retrieved 1 Jun. 2019.

people who do not have a common language resort to a kind of ‘sign language’ as a means of communication].

3. **Replication** involves producing ‘expression-tokens’ according to the model of already-existing ‘expression-types.’ [It is the production of a sign-expression which mimics an already existing object, idea, place or thing].
4. **Invention** involves the production of completely new sign-expressions. [The production of new sign-expressions is culture- based] (Ibid)

Eco identifies two kinds of type/token ratios - ‘ratio facilis’ and ‘ratio difficilis’. Alex Scot in his article entitled ‘Umberto Eco’s A Theory of Semiotics’ explains ‘ratio facilis’ as ‘a mode of sign-production in which an ‘expression-type’ is replicated by an ‘expression token’ (n.p). He also defines ratio difficilis as ‘a mode of sign-production in which a ‘content-type’ is correlated with an ‘expression-token’ (n.p). Eco’s in-depth and detailed theory of sign-production makes his semiotic theory complex. He uses unique terminologies (such as vectors, types, tokens, stylizations, combinational units, etc) to explicate sign-production. Eco defines ‘vectors’ as symbols of a structure of expressions which must function with markers of another structure of expressions in order to produce an expression. He then identifies three forms of ‘vectors’ (namely, stylizations, combinational units, and pseudo-combinational units) through which ‘types’ can be duplicated by ‘tokens’. The three forms of vectors have been defined as:

Stylizations refer to those expression-markers which are correlated to content-markers by extra-coding.

Combinational units refer to the amalgamation of expression-markers which may be correlated with mixtures of content-markers.

Pseudo-combinational units refer to expression-markers which are not connected with content-markers (and which therefore have no meaning), but which are nevertheless governed by combinational rules.

Through his detailed and complex theory of sign-production, Eco proffers comprehensive intuition on the process through which signs can be culturally explained.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List Eco’s four modes of sign production.

3.4 Eco's Criticism of Earlier Theories

Umberto Eco posits that past and present semiotic theories feature some fallacious assumptions about sign systems such as the nature of signs, the process of signification (meaning of signs) and the categorisation (typology) of sign. He identifies two major fallacies in classical semiotic theories, namely referential fallacy and extensional fallacy.

Referential fallacy is the false assumption that the meaning of a sign is determined by the object to which the sign refers. He contends that the meaning of a sign is a culturally defined and the meaning is located in the content and not in the referent of the sign which is abstract. **Extensional fallacy** refers to the false assumption that the meaning of a sign is identified by 'its extension, that is by the class of the object to which the sign-vehicle refers'. (Scott, n. p)

According to him, a cultural unit can be defined along two units (layers):

1. **Semantic unit:** this unit deals with or refers to the content and has semantic markers - 'semes'. He posits that a semantic unit could be (i) 'categorematic' (having an independent meaning and being capable of standing on their own) and (ii) 'syncategorematic' (having no dependent meaning and therefore incapable of standing on their own). A semantic marker of a content unit (sememe) could be denotative or connotative.
2. **Syntactic unit:** This unit is the expression unit (or 'lexeme') and can be analysed into elementary syntactic components.

Therefore, the meaning of signs is not really identified by whether the signs refer to actual objects (referential) nor is the existence of actual objects (extension) to which a sign refers is an important condition for the signification of the sign.

On the aspect of **typology of signs**, Eco contends that the typology of signs in classical semiotic theory fails to reveal how different kinds of signs could have a common mode of production. He objects to classical semiotic notion that sign typology would elucidate the nature of the sign function. Consequently, Eco disagrees with Peirce's explanation (typology) of 'types' and 'tokens'. According to Peirce semiotic theory as stated in Scott's article:

'types' and 'tokens' are signs of different kinds. Peirce posits that a 'type' is a law which is a sign (he terms it 'legisign') and a 'token' is an actual existing thing or event which is also a sign. A 'type' is a general rule which

acts through a 'replica' (i.e. a sign which is an individual example of its application), and a 'token' may also be a 'replica.'

Eco, on the other hand, recognises and treats 'type' and 'token' differently from Peirce's view. Eco regards

a 'type' [as] an abstract model for a concrete 'token,' and a 'token' [as] an actual sign-vehicle which is used for communication. A 'token' is also an individual occurrence of an expression, and may signify either an 'expression-type' or a 'content-type.' An 'expression-type' is an element of an expression-plane, while a 'content-type' is an element of a content-plane. (Scott, n.p)

Eco's distinction is based on his conviction that semiotic theory should not be concerned with typology of signs, the theory should provide how sign production may lead to the interpretation of sign functions.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List the major false assumptions identified by Eco.

4.0 Conclusion

The underlying vision of Umberto Eco's semiotic theory is distinct from the classical semioticians. However, his theory and that of others are interested in addressing the issue of how signs, signals or codes can be interpreted as means of messaging or communication. Classical semiotic theories tend to limit or rather interpret sign systems as an entity similar to linguistic signs. Eco's semiotic theory, on the other hand, includes all forms of messaging and communicative events.

5.0 Summary

Umberto Eco has demonstrated in his semiotic theory that every object, concept, or idea has the potential feature of being a sign within the environment of a specific culture. For him, the sign is 'everything that stands for 'something else'. However, he places codes in a preeminent position rather than signs. Code is made to assume such an important status which makes sign to be seen as having a sign-function (signs take up role both in the conveying system and conveyed system. By implication, sign is a tool for Construal.

Of most importance in Eco's semiotic theory is the process of sign production. Thus, he identifies four modes of sign production - recognition, ostension, replica and invention. The essence of sign production is to allow for the accommodation of all processes of messaging or communicative events - linguistics and non-linguistics.

Eco detects false assumptions which he calls 'fallacy' in the past and present theories of semiotics. These false assumptions include the notion of signs, the process of signification (meaning of signs) and the categorisation (typology) of sign.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Explain Eco's process of sign production.
2. List Eco's theoretical assumptions according to Sherzer.
3. List and explain Eco's criticisms of other semiotic theories.
4. Discuss Eco's notion of 'types' and 'tokens.'
5. Explain signification in Eco's Semiotic theory.

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MODULE THREE: SUBFIELDS (BRANCHES) OF SEMIOTICS

UNIT ONE: Literary Semiotics

UNIT TWO: Cultural Semiotics

UNIT THREE: Pictorial Semiotics

UNIT FOUR: Biosemiotics

UNIT ONE: LITERARY SEMIOTICS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Semiotics, which is the study of signs as means for passing information or communicating messages, has grown from its initial medical signs reading to linguistic signs decoding, and now, to other aspects of human activities. One such activity is the literary phase of the society. In this unit we shall discuss what literary semiotics is all about and how to explore meanings in literary discourse.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. Differentiate literary semiotics from other subfields of semiotics.
2. Identify the various subfields of literary semiotics.
3. Explain the devices of literary semiotics.
4. Explain how to deconstruct signification in literary semiotics.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 General Overview

Literary semiotics investigates how meanings are encoded through the use of signs in the literary world. First, let us explore the term ‘literary’. Literary as a word is coined from the French word ‘littéraire’, meaning something relating to literature (that is the art of writing or printed matters). Generally, the word ‘literature’

connotes prose writings, drama and poetry. However, in our study literary semiotics includes other aspects of documentations such as the mass media (newspaper and magazine write ups), visual (image) media, advertisements, films, drawings, graphics and others. Literary semiotics is sometimes referred to as ‘Semiotic literary criticism’. Literary semiotics is an approach to literary studies (criticism) which is informed by the theory and methods of the science of signs or semiotics.

Historically, literary semiotics is an offshoot of formalist (Structuralist of the Prague School) approaches to literature. At its early stage, the interest of the practitioners was solely on the formal analysis of narrative forms which they attempted to analyse to bear a resemblance to literary ‘mathematics’. However, current literary semiotics sets out to analyse how meanings can be explored and deconstructed (decode) from signs and signals such as linguistic codes (word), symbols, drawings, pictures, images, sounds, colours, objects, theatrical settings and others. Literary semiotics provides the principles through which different media - visual, audio-visual - coded languages (signs and signals) can be translated into verbal words or descriptions. Literary semiotic proponents are aware that each form of media has a unique means of encoding messages.

Trendy advertisements employ both linguistic codes and pictorials to send out strong and long lasting messages to the audience. Lots of images are also employed in poetry, prose writing, dramas (as well as films). These images come in various forms such as figurative languages, set (stage) designs, lightings, colours, costumes and space. Each of these images and many more have a unique function and form an anchorage of meanings. They are instruments for unveiling the messages being communicated either as supportive role (anchorage) to the linguistic codes or as a major role to relay the message.

3.2 Analytical Framework

3.2.1 Procedure:

Literary semiotics encompasses varied fields of messaging - verbal, visual and pictorials. These various fields can all be regarded as ‘discourse’ - means of communication or expression. We have learnt in the previous module that there are three levels (orders) of signification. Therefore, any semiotic analysis embarked upon must feature these orders of signification (meaning).

The following are guidelines and not necessarily sequential.

Step one: Identify the sign-vehicle to be explored - a visual, verbal or non-verbal.

Step two: Determine the levels of the signification of the sign in relation to the topic or subject matter.

Step three: Decide the function of the sign - is the sign meant to inform, educate, persuade or entertain?

Step four: Decide the class (mode) of the sign - is it iconic, indexical or symbolic.

Step five: Set questions which will aid you to explore and deconstruct the signs or codes being analysed.

It is pertinent to put aside your personal views or belief in the process of exploring the levels of signification of any code or sign. Personalised views or opinions would mar the analysis and produce a non-scientific analysis.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Discuss the three levels of signification.

3.2.2 Aspects of Meaning

There are three aspects of meaning that should be accounted for in literary semiotic analysis. These aspects of meaning are adapted from the work of Jamani, Kamini (p. 198- 199)²⁵. They are:

1. Conceptual Aspect of meaning: This aspect of meaning designates denotative meaning which is prompted by the arrangement of the signs or codes to reflect the theme or subject matter of the discourse. This aspect describes participants, processes, relationships, and circumstances. It constructs what is actually taking place or what is actually happening in relation to associated participants (agents, instruments) and circumstances (where, why, under what conditions). For visual-graphical semiotic resources such as diagrams and graphs, presentational [conceptual] aspects manifest in elements (e.g., arrows) that are arranged to illustrate meaningful relations between elements about a concept or topic. (198)

²⁵"A Semiotics Discourse Analysis Framework: Understanding Meaning"

http://www.novapublishers.org/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=22083. Retrieved 4 Jun. 2019.

Conceptual aspect of meaning is the intra-textuality of the discourse since the meaning is arrived at based on the presentation and arrangement of the codes or signs within the discourse.

2. Social Aspect of Meaning:

This aspect is the connotative aspect of meaning and it is prompted by the associated (implied) meaning of the signs or codes contained in the discourse. The social aspect of meaning is influenced by the contextual and social setting of the discourse. This aspect of meaning is intertextuality. The sign or code is given a second level of meaning which is not overtly stated in the discourse but is related to something else outside the discourse. For example, some animals, colours, drawings, etc, have specific connotative meanings in some societies, professions and religion.

3. Ideological Aspect of Meaning:

This aspect of meaning may not always feature in every discourse. However, it could be explored in advertisements, fiction, poetry, drama (films), pictorial and visual arts. This meaning is influenced by the culture in which the discourse is set. It makes sense of one's experience within a culture. Meaning is assigned to the codes based on past experiences; that is, culturally based; it imposes certain intended cultural values, beliefs and attitudes associated with the code in the discourse. It is also referred to as mythology; it is a cultural variable abstraction or a particular philosophy. Sometimes a discourse peddles a particular belief or idea (ideology) of a group within a community or cultural setting to other members of that community or to members of another community. Ideological meaning is very prominent in the advertisements of products.

Self Assessment Exercise

Differentiate between Social aspect of meaning and Ideological aspect of meaning

3.2.3 Formulation of Questions

To achieve an objective deconstruction of any sign or code, it is important that the analyst be guided by some pertinent questions which will help to uncover the

intended message as conceived by the originator of the sign or code (message).
The following questions are adapted from Bezuidenhout²⁶

Language-oriented questions:

- ❖ What is the theme or subject matter of the discourse?
- ❖ Who is the intended audience?
- ❖ Are there any language irregularities (e.g. play on words, incorrect/adjusted spelling)?
- ❖ What types of registers are predominant in the discourse (choice of words)?
- ❖ Is the discourse spoken/written in the first or third person (point of view)?
- ❖ What is the essence of the choice of narrative point of view?
- ❖ Are there any of the four rhetorical tropes?
- ❖ How do they shape and influence the meaning of the discourse?

For oral/spoken discourse

- ❖ Are there any voice inflections?
- ❖ Which sub-cultural group does the choice of language identifies (youth, teenagers, toddlers, etc.)?
- ❖ Does the accent being used reflect a particular language group?

Identifying the codes or signs in the discourse

- ❖ What are the codes or signs, the objects and the interpretants?
- ❖ What do they signify?
- ❖ What are the orders of signification?
- ❖ What is the nature of the sign (icon, index or symbol)?
- ❖ How does the nature of the sign influence the signification?
- ❖ How do the codes used relate to each other (words and images)?
- ❖ Do the codes/signs reflect any cultural/ideological assumptions?
- ❖ Do the codes/signs have more than one interpretation - are the polysemous?
- ❖ Explain the different interpretations of the codes.

These questions are guide and any analyst can formulate more questions to suit the discourse being analysed.

²⁶ "A Discursive-Semiotic Approach To Cultural Aspects In ... - ILZE.ORG." <http://ilze.org/semio/>. Retrieved 4 Jun. 2019.

3.3 Rhetorical Tropes (devices)

Most discourses are rhetorical and are characterized by common tropes or figurative expressions. Any attempt to deconstruct meaning from a semiotic angle must of necessity and importance identify and discuss the figures of speech which is a system of expression of messages as contained in the discourse being analysed. Rhetorical tropes are a class of codes of a special class. According to Chandler:

Tropes may be essential to understanding if we interpret this as a process of rendering the unfamiliar more familiar. Furthermore, however they are defined, the conventions of figurative language constitute a rhetorical code, and understanding this code is part of what it means to be a member of the culture in which it is employed. Like other codes, figurative language is part of the reality maintenance system of a culture or subculture. It is a code which relates ostensibly to how things are represented rather than to what is represented.²⁷

Tropes are, therefore, utilized as signifiers but their signification is culture bound and can be regarded as belonging to the second order of signification (connotative meaning). They are used to generate 'imagery' within a discourse. Chandler asserts that "identifying figurative tropes in texts and practices can help to highlight underlying thematic frameworks; semiotic textual analysis sometimes involves the identification of an 'overarching (or 'root') metaphor' or 'dominant trope'." (n.p)²⁸

There are four major rhetorical (literary) tropes which are essential in literary semiotic criticism. These are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. According to Chandler, 'Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) is usually credited with being the first to identifythe four basic tropes (to which all others are reducible) ... this reduction was popularized in the twentieth century by the American rhetorician, Kenneth Burke (1897-1993), who referred to the four 'master tropes' (Burke 1969, 503-17).'

For a detailed explanation on the four tropes see Module 1, Unit 3, sub section 3.4. The table below shows a brief summary of the four tropes is adapted from Chandler

²⁷ "Semiotics for Beginners: Rhetorical Tropes - visual-memory.co.uk." 27 Nov. 2018, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem07.html>. Retrieved 5 June 2019.

²⁸ "Semiotics for Beginners: Rhetorical Tropes - visual-memory.co.uk." 27 Nov. 2018, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem07.html>. Retrieved 5 Jun. 2019.

Trope	Basis	Linguistic example	Intended meaning
<i>Metaphor</i>	Similarity despite difference (explicit in the case of <i>simile</i>)	I work at the coalface	I do the hard work here
<i>Metonymy</i>	Relatedness through direct association	I'm one of the suits	I'm one of the managers
<i>Synecdoche</i>	Relatedness through categorical hierarchy	I deal with the general public	I deal with customers
<i>Irony</i>	Inexplicit direct opposite (more explicit in <i>sarcasm</i>)	I love working here	I hate working here

Fig. 13: Summary of semiotics tropes

Self-Assessment Exercise

With relevant illustrations, differentiate between metaphor and metonymy.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit we have examined literary semiotics as a subfield of semiotic study. Although a subfield which deals with verbal and non-verbal discourse, its analysis, aim and methodology are different from literary criticism. The major aim of literary semiotics is to identify the signs/codes used within a discourse as a means of expressing messages, and to explore and deconstruct the meaning of such signs and codes.

5.0 Summary

Literary semiotics also known as ‘Semiotic literary criticism’ is an approach to literary studies (criticism) which is informed by the theory and methods of the science of signs or semiotics. Its procedure and methods differ greatly from literary

criticism. At the on-set it was intended to formally analyze narrative forms only. Presently, literary semiotics has extended its scope to include both written narratives and non-verbal narratives such as linguistic codes (word), symbols, drawings, pictures, images, sounds, colours, objects, theatrical settings and others.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Trace the historical development of literary semiotics.
2. What are rhetorical tropes?
3. Explain how an analyst can go about exploring and deconstructing meaning using literary semiotic process.
4. List the various subfields of literary semiotics
5. Discuss three aspects of meaning that should be accounted for in literary semiotic analysis.

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UNIT TWO: CULTURAL SEMIOTICS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cultural semiotics is closely related to literary semiotics in that cultural semiotics expands the explorations of all artefacts within the society including some of the aspects examined by literary semiotics. Cultural semiotics includes all cultural codes such as marketing (advertisements), fashion, power structures, food, and other cultural objects which are embedded with cultural signification.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. Identify the various subfields of cultural semiotics.
2. Differentiate cultural semiotics from other subfields of semiotics.
3. Explain how to explore signification in cultural semiotics.
4. Identify the similarity/dissimilarity between cultural semiotics and literary semiotics.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 General overview

Cultural semiotics is the field of semiotic studies which identifies and deconstructs meaningful recurring codes within a culture using the theoretical framework of Semiotics. It is also called social semiotics. Cultural semiotics theoretical framework is a brain child of Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School of thought led by Yuri Lotman. However, it was Roland Barthes who first critiqued cultural artefacts and deconstructs the significations of cultural codes in different aspects of French society ranging from advertisement (marketing), politics, clothing and ideology. It was Barthes who expanded semiotics into the realm of culture; and hence he can be called the founding father of cultural semiotics. Other cultural semioticians

include Umberto Eco, Marcel Danes and Claude Levi-Strauss. Cultural semiotics can be defined as the study of how human symbolic acts such as customs, lifestyles, habits, values, beliefs and other material objects are modes of communication within the society.

Semiotics of culture explores cultural practices. Cultural semioticians regard any objects, symbols or actions as signs of such have meaning to the members of the cultural group. The aim of cultural semiotics is to identify and deconstruct any meaningful objects, symbols and actions within a particular culture. Cultural semiotics explores the process of the production of signification of meaningful objects, symbols and actions.

A cultural group has been defined as ‘a group of people who share a common system of codes’ Marcel Danesi (Cited in Semiotics for Beginners). He also defines a cultural code as ‘a kind of macro-codes, consisting of numerous codes which a group of individuals habitually use to interpret reality’.²⁹

Understanding how these systems of codes become signifiers, their signified and interpretants (their signification) are the core interests of cultural semioticians.

Self -Assessment Exercise

List three major proponents of cultural semiotics.

3.2 Systems of Codes

The world is dotted with all kinds of objects, things, symbols, ideas, etcetera. One then wanders if all are signs and what makes them to be considered as signs or as belonging to systems of signs. Pawlowski provides us with a good response in the book, *Semiotics Theory of Culture*, he states that ‘various foods and ways of cooking them, inform us about religion, wealth, or social status of the persons involved. For the same reason, many other objects, such as clothes, cars, flats and their equipment, are interpreted as signs.’³⁰ (p 198) Pawlowski opines that language expressions are the most perfect of all systems of signs. He also includes

²⁹"Semiotics for Beginners by Daniel Chandler - visual-memory.co.uk." <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/>. Retrieved 7 Jun. 2019.

³⁰"Semiotic Theory of Culture | SpringerLink." https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-009-9019-7_10. Retrieved 7 Jun. 2019.

‘figurative painting, programme music, road and railway signals and rules of kinship relations in a social group’. (198) He further explains that for any object to be classified as a sign it is important to establish what type of relations bind between the object ‘A’ and what it signifies, object ‘B’. According to him, what makes object ‘A’ a sign is the possibility to infer the presence of object ‘B’ from object ‘A’ due to ‘accepted conventions or customs’. He calls this relationship ‘indicator relation’.

In support of the notion that every meaningful object - concrete or abstract, linguistic or non-linguistic, verbal or non-verbal - is a code, Chandler posits that ‘any objects or actions which have meaning to members of the cultural group, seeking to identify the rules or conventions of the codes which underlie the production of meanings within that culture’. (n.p) He further observes that ‘understanding such codes, their relationships and the contexts in which they are appropriate is part of what it means to be a member of a particular culture.’ (n.p)

Eco cited in *Cultural Semiotics: for a Cultural Perspective in Semiotics* posits that ‘once society exists every function [within the society] is automatically transformed into a sign of that function [it has signification]. This is possible once culture exists.’ (118). Chandler contends that “Within a culture, social differentiation is 'over-determined' by a multitude of social codes. We communicate our social identities through the work we do, the way we talk, the clothes we wear, our hairstyles, our eating habits, our domestic environments and possessions, our use of leisure time, our modes of travelling and so on” (n.p).

Thus, Signs and symbols are so pervasive around us such that different facets of the society, consciously and unconsciously, employ unique codes/signs to communicate. There all forms of public rituals which are characterised with significant and symbolic signs and codes. Below are some examples:

Traditional marriages in Igbo land – when the bride-to-be takes a cup of palm wine from her parent to present to her would-be-husband who drinks the palm wine and then follows her to her parents’ seats. This signifies public identification and acceptance of the giver (young maid) and the receiver (young gentleman).

Football match is highly coded - starting from the choice of colours (yellow flag signifies a rule infraction and warning), through numbered uniforms, to

other forms of signs from the referee and linesman (such as blowing of the whistle) to the players.

Traffic jam is also sign-loaded and characterised with a multimedia display of beeping horns, angry expressions, flashing hazard lights and waving middle fingers, etcetera as modes of expressing dissatisfaction with the traffic behaviour of the other commuter.

Signs and symbols within cultural settings are not restricted to the above public gatherings. The most common signs and symbols include:

Highway codes: these sets of codes are significant to commuters. Highway codes provide traffic information which regulates the behaviour of all drivers and pedestrians. Signs and symbols which are used to communicate traffic information include road signs, colours (red, yellow and green), barriers, painted lines, stoplights, etc.

Body language: there are different forms of body language used as means of communicating to others. Most parts of the body such as the head, eyes, shoulders, hands, legs are used to communicate volume of information. Individual also communicate through facial expressions, gestures, postures and the distance between an addressee and the addresser. Some forms of body language are unconscious habits of the users while others forms are deliberate means of communicating information.

Clothing: Another aspect of cultural semiotic is articles of clothing and other body accessories such as jewellery and headgear. Often times, clothing are worn not for the purpose of protection and warmth, but as a means of self-expression. Clothing communicates volume in every society especially when used as individual's identity as well as groups of persons or professionals.

Cultural semiotics, therefore, explores and deconstructs how these objects or signals are produced and interpreted as means of 'messaging' and communication. Therefore 'virtually everything a person owns, wears, uses, carries, lives with, cares for, displays, or spends money on--from pets to pierced earrings--can be interpreted as a sign.' (Ibid., n.p)

Self-Assessment Exercise

List the five major codes that you encountered recently?

3.3 Analytical Framework

The procedure discussed under literary semiotics (unit 1, section 3.2.1) can also be applied for cultural semiotic analysis with little or no modifications. Similarly, questions formulation would be adjusted to reflect the system of the sign/code being explored.

Questions to guide cultural semiotics deconstruction would include, but not limited to, the following:

- ❖ What type of discourse (text) is being explored - dressing, body language, culinary or customs?
- ❖ What is the medium of the discourse - verbal/non-verbal, concrete/abstract, or image?
- ❖ What classes of signs are in the discourse - icon, symbol or index?
- ❖ Are the codes in binary opposition?
- ❖ What levels of meaning is being conveyed in the discourse?
- ❖ Are there any sub-text or background in the discourse - colour, spatial, writing, shape, or figures?
- ❖ What is the sub-text signifier?
- ❖ What reality claims are signified in the discourse?
- ❖ Is there any reference to regular mundane acts?
- ❖ What does these regular mundane acts signifier?
- ❖ How do the rhetorical tropes in the discourse contribute to the entire signification of the discourse?

4.0 Conclusion

Cultural semiotics is closely related to literary semiotics in that most of the codes (discourses) within literary semiotics fall within cultural semiotics. However, there are some other discourses (codes) which are not in the domain of literary semiotics but cultural semiotics explores their significations such as culinary codes, articles of clothing and related accessories (beads, jewellery, headgear, etc.), individual and group phenomena, institutions, etcetera. The interpretation of these cultural discourses or signals is made possible by the repetitiveness of the utility if the signals and the conventional assigned signification by members of the concerned groups in the society. Hence there is often an automatic interpretation process (the

association of signifier and signified) whenever group members encounter such shared signals.

5.0 Summary

We have examined the nature of cultural semiotics, its founding figures and school of thought, and the various discourses which are within the cultural semiotics domain. Although cultural semiotics shares a lot in common with literary semiotics, yet it is distinct and covers a larger system of signs. Cultural semiotics demonstrates that meaning is embedded in everyday humdrum acts as well as complex habits, consciously or unconsciously done.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Differentiate between literary semiotics and cultural semiotics?
2. Identify three major codes in any community and explain the message?
3. Explain the term 'indicator relation'.
4. Define a cultural group in the Semiotic field?
5. List three cultural groups you know.

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UNIT THREE: PICTORIAL SEMIOTICS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Semiotic studies can be regarded as the science which examines the production and signification of message representation in any form. Therefore, images productions in varied forms or structures are not left out of the sub-field of semiotics. Semiotics also accounts for how pictures including sub-genres of pictures (drawings, paintings, photographs) encode and transmit messages by translating the pictures (images) into words. This is referred to as pictorial semiotics which is our focus in this unit. Pictorial semiotics, unlike other subfields of semiotics, is relatively a new domain; new in the sense that it has no ‘foundation’ background to rely on. Although it can be argued that art history deals with pictures, Art history only deals with pictures that are recognised as a work of art, leaving out others aspects or sub-genres of pictures.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. Explain what pictorial semiotics is all about.
2. Identify and explain the major models of pictorial semiotics.
3. Explain how to explore signification in pictorial semiotics.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 General Overview

Pictorial Semiotics is the application of semiotic principles to the encoding and deconstruction of messages inherent in pictures. It is the application of the science of sign to the study of images in various forms, such as paintings, drawings, photographs, and pictorial advertisements. Although drawing, painting and photography are forms (streams) of pictures which are regarded as iconic images,

photographs differ from the other two streams. According to Peirce (cited in Chandler) it is basically indexical image because photographic text is an 'automatic recording of things seen ...it involves both mechanical reduction ... and human intervention' (n.p)³¹.

Picture is a representation (perceptual art) of anything such as person, building, scenario, ideology and object on a surface or canvas. Most pictures depict reality and can, therefore, be regarded as 'transparent' code. Transparent code because pictures often signify (at least, at the literal level of signification - denotation) what they represent overtly. However, pictorial codes most often depict three orders of meanings - denotative, connotative and mythology. The basic essence of pictorial semiotics is to explore how pictorial elements differ from as well as similar to other signals and the other meanings carrying elements (codes).

Although pictorial semiotics has no 'foundational' background, some of its principles have been influenced by the other disciplines such as classical structuralism (linguistics), cognitive and perceptual psychology. It was Roland Barthes who first carried out semiotic analysis on pictures using structuralism (linguistics) principles, though in a simplified format. His semiotics study of pictures simply expounded the manner in which ideological (mythology) meaning is expressed in pictures in French bourgeois society. Communicating and deconstructing information (meaning) from pictorial text (non-verbal language) is complex and unique as opposed to the more accustomed technique in which it is conveyed and explored by verbal language.

According to Oxford Reference pictorial semiotics was at its early stage 'dominated by structuralist analysis which, unlike most textual analysis, treats texts (in any medium) as part of a system'³². The linguistic principles of structuralism which was used as a fore-model 'involved the application of the commutation test, but, unlike verbal language, pictorial representation has proved irreducible to basic, recombinable units which are meaningless in themselves.' (ibid) However, Göran

³¹"(PDF) Semiotics for Beginners by Daniel Chandler Semiotics for"
https://www.academia.edu/8055851/Semiotics_for_Beginners_by_Daniel_Chandler_Semiotics_for_Beginners. Retrieved 16 Jun. 2019.

³²"Pictorial semiotics - Oxford Reference."
<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100326357>. Retrieved 9 Jun. 2019.

Sonesson, disagrees with this position of 'irreducible' form of pictures. He posits that some pictures may be analysed into smaller units and then put together to form recombinable units (complete signs). Such pictures that normally form repertoire, according to him, are 'used for particular purposes, such as traffic signs, the pictograms used in public spaces, the pictures on packs of cards, the ideograms...' (22)³³ He further observes that 'most pictures, ... seem to exist on their own, without forming part of a series; or they become part of the series only post hoc...' (22)

Sonesson captures the definition and purpose of pictorial semiotics aptly. He says: 'Pictorial semiotics is the science of depiction, as a peculiar mode of information and communication'. He explains the scope of pictorial semiotics to include 'the study of the peculiarities which differentiate pictorial meanings from other kinds of signification, [as well as the] assessment of the ways ... in which pictorial meanings are apt to differ from each other while still remaining pictorial in kind.' Sonesson further argues that pictorial signification differs from other forms of visual signification. According to him 'In differentiating pictorial meaning from other meanings, we should in fact be particularly interested in knowing how they are distinguished from other kinds of visual signification, such as sculpture, architecture, gesture, and even writing; or how they differ from other iconic signs, that is, from other signs motivated by similarity or identity'. (45)

Therefore, pictorial semiotics is concerned with, not a sector or particular specie is pictures, but all kinds of pictures including pictures within advertisements or otherwise.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List the different orders of meaning depicted by pictorial codes.

3.2 Categories of Pictorial Signs (codes)

There are various classes of pictures depending on their functions, manners of dissemination and mode of construction. Sonesson (ibid) posits that pictorial signs (codes) can be grouped into classified using their stance in everyday language. He identifies four categories of pictorial signs. These are:

³³"Semiotics Institute Online | Current Issues in Pictorial Semiotics."
<https://semioticon.com/sio/courses/pictorial-semiotics/>. Retrieved 9 Jun. 2019.

1. Construction categories: these are pictorial codes which help to contribute to the content of the text in which they appear. In other words, such pictures are relevant to the central theme of the text. The notion of construction helps to differentiate the photograph from the painting.
2. Function categories: these are pictures which have specific goals within the society. They produce special effects in the communicative situation. These categories of pictures are sub-classified into i) publicity picture - the goal of this subgroup is to sell products; ii) the satirical picture - the goal is to tease somebody; and iii) the pornographic picture - the goal is to arouse sexual sensation.
3. Circulation categories: these refer to channels used to distribute or display the pictures in the society. The scene of presentation influences the mode of production of the picture. Hence the bill-board pictures are different from the newspaper pictures. Also the postcard pictures are different from those of posters.
4. Organisation categories: this refers to the picture alignment or arrangement occupied on the expression plane.

Sonesson observes that ‘the mixture of different construction categories, function categories, or circulation categories [and organisation categories]’ produces ‘a rupture of our expectations’ (Sonesson, 1994). In the process of exploration and deconstruction, pictorial semiotics takes cognizance of these various categories in the signification of the text.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Identify and differentiate the various categories of pictures around your vicinity.

3.3 Analytical Framework

In search of an appropriate theoretical model, Sonesson posits that the pictorial signs are complex in nature due to the manner ‘units’, some of which are highly redundant are put together to produce a pictorial text, and whose meanings are difficult to disconnect. Therefore, depending on the linguistic model of deconstruction of meaning is not appropriate. He opted for a medical model of pictorial meaning. (p 10, Lecture 4). However, several pictorial semioticians have proposed different levels, models and methods of analysing a pictorial text.

3.3.1 Levels of Pictorial Analysis

Using Hjelmslev's terminology as basis, Groupe μ (1979:178ff) cited in Sonesson (1988) posits that a pictorial text may be analysed into two major layers - iconic and plastic expression planes. These two are subdivided into different layers.

- a) the graduality of the plastic expression plane;
- b) the graduality of the plastic content plane;
- c) the substance of the iconic expression;
- d) the form of the iconic expression;
- e) the substance of the iconic content;
- f) the form of the iconic content. (55)³⁴

3.3.2 Models of Pictorial Analysis

Sonesson (1998)³⁵ observes that pictures can be analysed in four distinct models:

1. **The Narrative Model:**

This is the application of narrative mode to picture analysis. This implies that the picture is somehow organized in the manner of a story. However, some pictures cannot be analysed using this model. This model can be applied to some kinds of pictorial texts such as those that appear in films, comic strips, cinema, television, and photo novellas. This model becomes problematic and therefore, cannot be applied in the analysis of static pictures, which lacks form of narrative level in its construction. Sonesson opts that this method has lots of lapses. He to distinguish five different classes of pictorial objects which the application of this model resulted in different implications:

- a) The temporal series: The continuous series of moving pictures, as in a cinematographic film, and, often, on television.
- b) The temporal set: A series of static pictures united by a more or less common theme, as in comic strips and photo novels.

³⁴"(PDF) GÖRAN SONESSON: Pictorial Semiotics 1 Contents | Göran"
https://www.academia.edu/5424640/G%C3%96RAN_SONESSON_Pictorial_Semiotics_1_Contents. Retrieved 14 Jun. 2019.

³⁵"(PDF) Methods and Models in Pictorial Semiotics | Göran Sonesson"
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- c) The multi-phasic picture: A single, static picture, containing persons and events which are known to represent various phases taken from the same event series, or action scheme.
- d) The implied temporality picture: A single, static picture, lacking multi-phasicity, but recognizable as picturing an event taken from a well-known or prototypical action scheme, in particular what Lessing would have called a pregnant moment of such an action scheme.
- e) The static picture: A single, static picture, for which every indication making it referable to a wider action scheme is conspicuously lacking.

2. The Rhetoric Model:

This is the application of rhetorical figures to the analysis of pictures. It consists of identifying and labelling some parts of the pictures with traditional figures of speech. And then, these figurative devices, especially the two common traditional figures - the metaphor and metonymy, are integrated into the general organization of the picture in order to deconstruct the signification. The shortfall of this model lies in the fact that it simply labels the parts of the text without accounting for how the rhetorical figures contribute to the overall signification of the pictures. According to Sonesson rhetorical analysis

only becomes enlightening, when we go beyond the mere classification of the device, to show on which features it reposes in that particular picture, how these are modified and modulated by the presence of other pictorial elements, and how the rhetorical meaning passes from expression traits to content traits and back again. So what we have to look for is a wider context in which to place the rhetorical model. (3-4)

3. The Rhetorical Model in its Systematic Mode:

Although similar to rhetorical model, it is different in nature from it. This model is systematic, better organized into a number of subdivisions and it is extensive in nature. It introduces and employs the notion of isotopy into

pictorial analysis. An isotopy helps to connect an entire text and thus rejects the artificial selectional restrictions within a text. (35-36)

Therefore, the application of isotope is still not very clear, and it has been observed to have some difficulties in its application. Hence it is undergoing restructuring.

4. **The laokoon model:** This model takes its name from the work of is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1766) who borrowed it from a Hellenistic sculpture of priest Laocoon and his sons dying under the attack of serpents. Lessing chose this sculptural name to symbolize this model's principle. The model considers the limits and restraint of pictorial text. This is expressed by comparing artistic signs in space and time alone. In this model, artistic signs in space refers exclusively to spatial objects (things), and artistic signs in time indicates objects in time alone (actions and processes). By implication, spatial signs are quite capable of referring to temporal objects, and temporal signs to stand for spatial objects. (83)³⁶

Pictorial semiotics is still undergoing series of reformation and restructuring in order to formulate an appropriate theoretical model for the field. Attempts are being made by some semioticians to correlate Lessing's distinctions with some parts of Hjelmslev's scientific terminology in order to fine tune an appropriate theoretical model for pictorial semiotics.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Differentiate between rhetorical model and narrative model.

3.3.3 Question formulation

In order to explore and deconstruct the signification of pictures as intended by the producers (the artist), the following questions can be used as a guide.

- In what way does this picture differ from other types of picture?
- What is the picture all about - the theme?
- Which aspect/portion of the text gives you this impression?
- Is there any contradiction in the text, what does it suggest?

³⁶"(PDF) GÖRAN SONESSON: Pictorial Semiotics 1 Contents | Göran"
https://www.academia.edu/5424640/G%C3%96RAN_SONESSON_Pictorial_Semiotics_1_Contents.Retrieved 14 Jun. 2019.

- Is there any aspect of the text that explores rhetorical tropes?
- Is there any binary opposition?
- What is the signification of such opposition?

4.0 Conclusion

Pictorial semiotics as an upcoming promising subfield is still undergoing formation and restructuring of its tenets, methodology and theoretical framework. Though it is a subfield that has no foundation background to fall back on like other subfield; yet it has a bit of connection to art history and theory. However art history is limited to the visual analysis of pictures regarded as ‘works of art’. Pictorial semiotics, on the other hand, focuses on all forms of image production such as drawing (which is likeness representation on paper surface), painting (which is art work using colours or paints), and photograph (which deals with arts and technology to produce images).

5.0 Summary

In this unit we have examined pictorial semiotics as a novel subfield. Pictorial semiotics is the application of the science of sign to the study of images such as paintings, drawings, photographs. Picture being a perceptual art of anything such as person, building, scenario, ideology and object is classified under iconic sign and is regarded as ‘transparent’ code. Four categories of pictorial texts have been identified, namely construction, function, circulation and organisation categories. Also two levels (iconic and plastic) of pictorial analysis have been suggested. There are four models of analysis: narrative model, rhetorical model, systematic rhetorical model and laokoon models.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. What is pictorial semiotics about?
2. List and explain the models of pictorial analysis.
3. Identify the two layers which a pictorial text may be analysed
4. Explain the categories of pictures we encounter in our daily communication.

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UNIT FOUR: BIOSEMIOTICS: SUBFIELDS OF SEMIOTICS

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- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last three units we have examined the three different subfields of semiotics. In the unit we shall study other subfields. Semiotics as an academic discipline deals with how signs (texts) of various forms and structures are used to communicate. Its major concern is the production and interpretation of meaningful signs. Signal as mode of messaging is not limited to human nature alone. Hence semiotics has been applied to both human and non-human activities.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to

1. Identify more subfields of semiotics.
2. Distinguished between the various subfields of Biosemiotics.
3. Define Biosemiotics.
4. Identify the aspects of sign processes that are of interest to Biosemiotics.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Biosemiotics: Overview

Biosemiotics is the application of semiotics to all levels of the biological realm. The application of semiotics to the study of meaning making in living organisms both in plants and animals is made possible by Peirce's distinction between an interpretant and an interpreter. Peirce's semiotic theory, which is a triadic concept of semiosis, gives room for the exploration of conscious and unconscious signs (such as movement of the different parts of the body. Explaining the influence of Peirce's semiotic principles on Biosemiotics, Brier (2006) opines that

Peirce's semiotics is the only one that deals systematically with non-intentional signs of the body and of nature at large, and therefore accepts involuntary body movements (such as instinctive motor patterns) and

patterns of and within the body (such as limping and smallpox) as signs, and further patterns and differences in nature (such as the track of a tornado) it has become the main source for semiotic contemplations of the similarities and differences of signs of inorganic nature, signs of the living systems and the cultural and linguistic signs of humans living together in a society. (3)

Biosemiotics is the attempt to understand the actions of signs not only in lower animals but also in plants. Biosemiotics is the ‘study of “phytosemiotics” + “zoosemiotics” + “anthroposemiotics” = biosemiotics. ‘Phytosemiotics’ refers to the study of signs in plants, in terms of bacterial communication; ‘anthroposemiotics’ refers to the traditional semiotics of language and culture which was an aspect of Saussure philosophy, and ‘zoosemiotics’ deals with the study of animal signal as a means of communication. The goal of Biosemiotics is to explore the processes of signalling messages (communication) as well as the process of extracting the signification of the message encoded in signs in nature - all living organisms.

Biosemiotics shows that all animals – lower and higher – engage in semiosis in distinctive form. According to Barbieri (28)

The extension of semiosis to all living creatures did not ignore the diversities between them and it was acknowledged that there are different types of semiosis in different taxa. Plant semiosis, for example, is distinct from animal semiosis and both of them from the semiosis of fungi, protists and bacteria. Despite the differences, however, they are all semiotic processes, and this allows us to conclude that semiosis exists in all living systems. (28)

Emmeche (1992) identifies all the aspects of sign processes which Biosemiotics sets out to study to include:

(1) the emergence of semiosis in nature, which may coincide with or anticipate the emergence of living cells; (2) the natural history of signs; (3) the ‘horizontal’ aspects of semiosis in the ontogeny of organisms, in plant and animal communication, and in inner sign functions in the immune and nervous systems; and (4) the semiotics of cognition and language.

Biosemiotics can be seen as a contribution to a general theory of evolution, involving a synthesis of different disciplines. It is a branch of general semiotics, but the existence of signs in its subject matter is not necessarily presupposed, insofar as the origin of semiosis in the universe is one of the riddles to be solved. (78)

Biosemiotics demonstrate the fact that the universal is littered with signs. Hence, according to (Hoffmeyer, 1996)

Whatever an organism [be it higher or lower animals, plants, animal and plants cells] senses also means [it signal] something to it – e.g., food, escape, sexual reproduction etc., and all organisms are born into a semiosphere, which is to say a world of meaning and communication: sounds, odours, movements, colours, electric fields, waves of any kind, chemical signals, touch etc. The semiosphere poses constraints or boundary conditions upon species populations since these are forced to occupy specific semiotic niches i.e. they will have to master a set of signs of visual, acoustic, olfactory, tactile and chemical origin in order to survive in the semiosphere. And it is entirely possible that these semiotic demands to populations are often a decisive challenge to success. (61).

Supporting this perspective of Biosemiotics, Brier observes that the term ‘Biosemiotics’ is hybrid combination of ‘bios’ which is an abbreviation of biology – the study of life - and ‘semion’ meaning sign. Brier opines that Biosemiotics ‘is a growing field that studies the production, action and interpretation of signs, such as sounds, objects, smells, movements but also signs on molecular scales in an attempt to integrate the findings of biology and semiotics to form a new view of life and meaning as immanent features of the natural world’ (2). Biosemiotics leverages on the fact that ‘life’ and ‘signs’ are contemporaneous entities and therefore highlights ‘the biology of recognition, memory, categorization, mimicry, learning and communication ..., together with the analysis of the application of the tools and notions of semiotics such as interpretation, semiosis, types of sign and meaning’ (Ibid). Brier further identifies the areas of biosemiotics inquiry to include ‘non-consciously-intentional signs in humans, non-intentional signs, also between

animals as well as between animals and humans, and signs between organs and cells in the body and between cells in the body or in nature' (Ibid).

Therefore, Biosemiotics explores the processes of both consciously and unconsciously for the transmission of messages through signals and the deconstruction of such messages.

Biosemiotics has demonstrated that communication (messaging) is not unique to humans alone but to all living organisms, According to Sebeok (1991)

The process of message exchanges, or semiosis, is an indispensable characteristic of all terrestrial life forms. It is this capacity for containing, replicating, and expressing messages, of extracting their signification; that, in fact, distinguishes them more from the non-living - except for human agents, such as computers or robots that can be programmed to simulate communication - than any other traits often cited. (22)

Self-Assessment Exercise

How is Biosemiotics a pointer to the fact that the universe is littered with signs.

3.2. Historical Development

Historically, the search for the exploration and deconstruction of signs in the biological realm can be traced to Jakob von Uexküll (1864 - 1944) who examined the phenomenal 'world of organisms' that is the world around animals - zoosemiotics - as they perceive it. The next stage of development was the shift from how animals perceive their surroundings to the study of animal behaviours. The behaviour of animals, it was concluded to be a product of in-born instincts. Consequently, a more in depth study was carried out to study animal genetically disposition such as instincts and natural selection. It has been observed that biosemiotics was foreshadowed in Jakob von Uexküll's Umweltlehre. It was, however, Sebeok who prolifically combined the inspirations of von Uexküll and Peirce, and fused them into a new subfield of semiotics – first, Zoosemiotics and later, Biosemiotics.

In 1953, a major breakthrough was achieved in genetic code - Watson-Crick double-helix model of DNA; thereby establishing the fact that semiotic processes exist in bio-chemical level (endosemiotis).

The conception of Biosemiotics as a field of study dates back to the 1960s and 70s when Thomas Sebeok introduced the exploration first Zoosemiotics and then Biosemiotics with the sole aim inquiry into the biological roots of not only human signalling but also the route taken by nature to move from the organic realm to the domain of the signs, communication and languaging.

By implication, Biosemiotics can be seen as a ‘four-in-one’ subfield of semiotics in that it is committed to the establishment of connection between biology, philosophy, linguistics and communication studies. Every living thing - man, animals, plants, organism cells - basically engages in the deployment and interpretation of signs as means of messaging.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Who was the first researcher to examine the world of animals?

4.0 Conclusion

Biosemiotics as a subfield of semiotics has demonstrated that the universe is littered with signs with various forms of structures and shapes. Every living thing - humans, animals, plants and cells organisms communication using signals in various distinct manners. Semiotics, therefore, is not restricted to certain aspect of the community but all parts which signal message or information.

5.0 Summary

In this unit we have examined Biosemiotics as a subfield of semiotics. Biosemiotics is a combination of ‘phytosemiotics, zoosemiotics and anthroposemiotics. The interplay of phytosemiotics, zoosemiotics and anthroposemiotics, and the eventual establishment of Biosemiotics is greatly influenced by Peirces’ triadic theory of signs. Although Jakob von Uexkülls Umweltlehre created a fertile ground for the study of sign in lower animal; it was, however, Sebeok, who firmly and fruitfully developed the ideas of Biosemiotics in the 60s and 70s, first as zoosemiotics and

later, when the inquiry extended beyond the animal world, Sebeok substituted it authoritatively with 'biosemiotics'.

6.0 Tutor - Marked Assignment

1. What is i) phytosemiotics ii) zoosemiotics iii) anthroposemiotics?
2. On whose semiotic theory is Biosemiotics build?
3. What is the sole aim of Biosemiotics?
4. List the aspects of sign processes that are of interest to Biosemiotics

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**MODULE FOUR: METHODS OF SEMIOTICS INVESTIGATION
(ANALYSIS)**

UNIT ONE: PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS
UNIT TWO: SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS
UNIT THREE: COGNITIVE SEMIOTICS
UNIT FOUR: SEMINAR PAPER 1

UNIT ONE: PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS
CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Paradigmatic: An overview
 - 3.2 Paradigmatic Opposition Poles
 - 3.3 Application of Paradigmatic Analysis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor - Marked Assignment
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1.0 Introduction

The essence of semiotic analysis is to deconstruct the signification (meaning) of signs contained in a particular text - verbal, non-verbal, linguistics, non-linguistics. Several methods of investigating signification have been put forward by different semiotic scholars. Most methods of investigation of signs signification are borrowed from another field of study but such is made to suit the purpose of semiotic analysis. In this unit we shall examine one of such methods of exploring the meaning of signs in a text.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Explain the term 'paradigmatic'
2. Perform semiotic analysis of a text using paradigmatic method.
3. Distinguish between unmarked and marked features.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Paradigmatic: An overview

Semiotics analysis is concerned with the encoding, deconstructing and decoding of meaning in signs. To deconstruct the meaning embedded in a text, sign is seen as the building blocks which are brought together to form a text. Therefore a text is a collection of several signs whose meaning can be deciphered by identifying the relationship between the signs. In other words, signs have relationships with one another. The idea of relationship between signs is a structuralist influence on semiotics. Most semiotics principles, at the early stage of its development, are based on structuralist notions. For the structuralist, whose founding father is Ferdinand de Saussure, there is a systematic relationship between signs within a text. These systemic relationships are of two folds, namely paradigmatic and syntagmatic. It was Louis Hjelmslev who introduced the terminology 'paradigmatic relation' to refer to Saussure's associative relation between two linguistic signs belonging to the same plane. Chandler posits that "the 'value' of a sign is determined by both its paradigmatic and its syntagmatic relations. Syntagms and paradigms provide a structural context within which signs make sense; they are the structural forms through which signs are organized into codes."³⁷

Paradigmatic is that aspect of the relationship which can be substituted with another sign. Therefore, the signs are in opposition - the choice or selection of one sign, implies the absence of other signs in the same plane. Each sign in the plane is called 'paradigm'. A paradigm has been defined as 'a set of associated signifiers or signifieds which are all members of some defining category, but in which each is significantly different.' (ibid) It is important to note that paradigmatic relationships can occur between signs - either as a signifier or signified. Paradigmatic relationships occur if a set of signs share a similar role. That is to say 'signs are in paradigmatic relation when the choice of one excludes the choice of another'. (p. 255). Therefore, according to Chandler "the use of one signifier (e.g. a particular word or a garment) rather than another from the same paradigm set (e.g. respectively, adjectives or hats) shapes the preferred meaning of a text. Paradigmatic relations can thus be seen as 'contrastive'". (ibid)

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain text from a semiotic perspective.

³⁷ "Semiotics for Beginners: Paradigms and Syntagms." 4 Jul. 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem03.html>. Retrieved 25 Jun. 2019.

3.2 Paradigmatic Opposition Poles: Marked and Unmarked

Paradigmatic study of a text involves binary or polar oppositions of marked and unmarked. The principle of the theory of poles of paradigmatic oppositions was introduced by Roman Jakobson, a Russian linguist and semiotician. He posits that paradigms can be paired as 'unmarked' and 'marked' forms. 'Every single constituent of any linguistic system is built on an opposition of two logical contradictories: the presence of an attribute ("markedness") in contraposition to its absence ("unmarkedness")' (cited in Lechte 1994, 62). Pairing a set of items (or signs) implies non-proportioned ranking or hierarchical system of the paired signs. According to Chandler,

the unmarked term is often used as a generic term whilst the marked term is used in a more specific sense.... With many of the familiarly paired terms, the two signifieds are accorded different values. The unmarked term is primary, being given precedence and priority, whilst the marked term is treated as secondary or even suppressed and excluded as an 'absent signifier'The unmarked term is presented as fundamental and originative whilst the marked term 'is conceived in relation to it' as derivative, dependent, subordinate, supplemental or ancillary (Culler 1985, 112; Adams 1989, 142). [However] the unmarked term is logically and structurally dependent on the marked term to lend it substance. (12)³⁸

The separations or distinctions between the unmarked and marked items (signs) are characterised as norm, natural, dominant and transparent for the unmarked while marked items are regarded as a special case, salient, out of the ordinary, and defined by negation connotatively. Consequently, the choice of a marked signal as against the unmarked gives special signification to the text in which the sign is encoded.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List out five marked and unmarked animal names.

3.3 Application of Paradigmatic Analysis

In this sub-unit we shall list some paradigmatic items as outlined in Chandler 'Semiotic for Beginners'. According to him "The paradigmatic elements are the

³⁸ "Semiotics for Beginners: Paradigmatic Analysis - visual-memory.co.uk." 4 Jul. 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem05.html>. Retrieved 26 Jun. 2019.

items which cannot be worn at the same time on the same part of the body (such as hats, trousers, shoes).”³⁹ This can be illustrated with female garments as follows:

There are three paradigms in garment choice:

Upper body garments: blouses, tee-shirts, tunics, sweaters

Lower body garments: a pair of jean trousers, a jean skirt, a plain skirts

Footwear: a pair of sneakers, brown sanders, white or blue canvas.

Each of the paradigm above contains a possible set of codes from which choices can be made. The items in each segment have certain common attributes – functions, structures. The young lady may choose a blouse instead of tee-shirt, for upper body garment; a jean skirt in place of a plain skirts, for lower body garment; and a pair of sneaker as a substitute for brown sanders; for footwear. She performs the selection based on socially defined and shared classification system of the garments.

A similar paradigmatic selection can be made in food system:

Breakfast: a selection between green tea, coffee or beverage (milo, bournvita or cocoa); plain bread or toasted bread; omelette egg or scrambled egg; oats, custard or pap.

Lunch: Pounded yam, garri, semovita, or rice; egusi soup, okro soup, vegetable soup or pepper soup; cow meat, goat meat, pork, or chicken.

Dinner: Fried ripe plantain, boiled unripe plantain, unripe plantain porridge or boiled yam; palm oil pepper sauce, green vegetable sauce, egg sauce.

Only one class of food is selected from each of the three sets of food varieties group and consumed at a particular meal period. In the choice of variety of food to consume at a particular time, we unconsciously perform paradigmatic analysis.

4.0 Conclusion

A text is formed by the combination of series of signs which are interrelated and whose signification is arrived at based on the relationship between the signs within the text. We examined paradigmatic as a method of deconstructing and exploring the signification of signs within a text, it must be noted that both paradigmatic and syntagmatic are inseparable method of analysis.

³⁹ "Semiotics for Beginners: Paradigms and Syntagms." 4 Jul. 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem03.html>. Retrieved 25 Jun. 2019.

5.0 Summary

In this unit we have examined the principle that signs are building blocks which are put together to form a composite signal. Therefore, a text is a collection of several signs whose meaning can be deciphered by identifying the relationship between the signs. Thus signs have relationships with one another. It is this relationship that helps to deconstruct the signification of the signal. The ideal relationship between signs is a structuralist influence on semiotics... This systemic relationship is of two folds, namely paradigmatic and syntagmatic; Paradigmatic as a method of semiotic analysis and it involves a polar oppositions of marked and unmarked features of texts.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Define the term 'paradigmatic'
2. List and differentiate Paradigmatic Opposition Poles.
3. What is a paradigm?
4. Choose any text of your choice and list out the marked and unmarked signs in the text.

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UNIT TWO: SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Syntagmatic: An overview
 - 3.2 Syntagmatic Functions
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor - Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference

1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit, we examined paradigmatic aspects of analysing a text. We stated that signs have a systematic relationship among those other signs within the text. This systemic relationship is of two folds, namely paradigmatic and syntagmatic. In this unit, we shall examine syntagmatic planes. In this plane signs are strung together to form a unit or a whole. Therefore, a text is a combination of several signs which are arranged in two ways - syntagmatic and paradigmatic. These two manners of arranging signs within a text are often presented as 'axes'. Paradigmatic occurs along the vertical axis and syntagmatic along the horizontal axis. The signification (meaning) of a text is derived from the relationships between the paradigmatic and syntagmatic planes (axes).

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Explain the term; syntagmatic'
2. Differentiate between paradigmatic and syntagmatic planes.
3. Carry out a syntagmatic analysis of a text.

,3.0 Main Body

3.1 Syntagmatic: An overview

We always communicate using group or unit of signs; messages are not transmitted through individual signs. Saussure posits that 'normally we do not express ourselves

by using single linguistic signs, but groups of signs, organised in complexes which themselves are signs' (cited in Chandler). However, Chandler opines that 'thinking and communication depend on discourse rather than isolated signs. Saussure's focus on the language system rather than on its use meant that discourse was neglected within his framework. The linking together of signs was conceived solely in terms of the grammatical possibilities which the system offered.'

The combination of signs to form a unit is referred to as syntagmatic structure. Chandler observes that

syntagmatic analysis of a text (whether it is verbal or non-verbal) involves studying its structure and the relationships between its parts. Structuralist semioticians seek to identify elementary constituent segments within the text - its syntagms. The study of syntagmatic relations reveals the conventions or 'rules of combination' underlying the production and interpretation of texts (such as the grammar of a language). The use of one syntagmatic structure rather than another within a text influences meaning. (ibid)

Each constituent or segment along the plane of combination is called 'syntagms'. Syntagms are logically organised to form a sequence of meaningful signals.

The syntagmatic plane is the axis of combination of specific signs (by the virtue of the structure of the sign) which occupy particular slots along the horizontal axis. This combination is made possible by standard regulations and conventions. Hence, to form a sentence which is a grammatical unit the structure is a combination as in:

Noun + verb + Noun / Adjective / Adverb.

Each of these units has a specific grammatical signification.

Noun (subject) + verb (predicator) + noun (object) / Adjective (complement) / Adverb (adverb).

Subject: The subject slot which is filled by nouns or nominals is the theme or topic of the sentence - that which is being talked about.

Predicator: is the action, condition or state of being of the subject of the Sentence.

Object: The object slot is filled by nouns /nominals. It is the person or thing which suffers, benefits, or affected by the action of the predicator. Complement: This slot is filled by adjectives or nominals. It describes or makes reference to the subject or object of the sentence. It completes the sense of the predicator with reference to the subject or object.

Adverb: This slot is filled by adverbials. It modifies the predicator: it identifies the

why, where, when, how, or how often of the verb.



NOUN	VERB	NOUN	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB
A boy	killed	the lion		last week.
The girl	is		intelligent.	
Mother	fries	yam		On Sundays.
An orange	has fallen			on the roof.
Nigerians	travel			abroad every year.

Fig. 14: A Table showing a combination of specific linguistic signs alone syntagmatic plane

Syntagmatic implies that a sign attracts or magnets another sign to itself. Hence in language, a singular noun begins with a vowel sound attracts the article ‘an’ but if the noun begins with a consonant sound, it attracts ‘a’. In other words “Syntagmatic” means that one element selects the other element either to precede it or to follow it’. (ibid) Consequently, the attraction of another sign by a preceding sign helps to give signification to the latter. Syntagmatic planes are the plane of possible combination and succession of signs as demonstrated in the table above.

Structural analysis is not peculiar to grammatical analysis alone, though it was introduced into grammar by Saussure. It can also be performed as a narrative sequence in films and television shots or scenes and myths. A syntagmatic analysis, in film and television, deals how each frame, shot, scene or sequence related to the others. Chandler opines that Levi-Strauss regarded the myths of a culture as ‘variations on a limited number of basic themes built upon opposition related to nature versus culture ... [similarly], myth could be reduced to a fundamental structure.’

Therefore,

Structuralist semioticians seek to identify elementary constituent segments within the text its syntagms. The study of syntagmatic relations reveals the

conventions or 'rules of combination' underlying the production and interpretation of texts (such as the grammar of a language). The use of one syntagmatic structure rather than another within a text influences meaning. (Chandler, Semiotics for Beginner - Syntagmatic Analysis)

Commenting on the signification of syntagmatic analysis, Hayden White (cited in Semiotics for Beginners) states that 'narrative is not merely a neutral discursive form... but rather entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and even specifically political implications.' Therefore the choice of a particular arrangement or combination of signs is meaningful.

Chandler observes that syntagmatic analysis which is a brain child of linguistic model has become a useful analytical tool to semioticians who look out for units of analysis in audio-visual texts. In the semiotics of film, he identifies basic correspondents with written language: the frame in film is equivalent to morpheme (or word) in language, the shot as sentence, the scene as paragraph, and the sequence as chapter. Therefore, the syntagmatic structure of frame, shots scene and sequence can be done.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Do a syntagmatic analysis of a female wearing traditional attire.

3.2 Kinds of Syntagmatic Functions

Syntagm is a systematic amalgamation of signs that makes the signification of the signs structured together (sometimes called a chain or combination). These logical combinations are made possible by guiding rules and framework conventions. Conversely, a sign (word) standing alone may not be completely meaningful. The signification of any sign/word is made possible by the presence of other signs around it. The underlying rules which govern the arrangement of signs along horizontal axis made it possible that some words are optional choice while others are obligatory.

Consequently, Hjelmslev identifies three kinds of syntagmatic functions.⁴⁰ These functions are solidarity, combination and selection. Two or more syntagmas are said to be in solidarity function when all the syntagmas are necessary (obligatory) to form a composite unit. Two or more syntagmas are said to be in combination when the syntagmas are variable (possibility but not necessary) to form a composite whole. Two or more syntagmas are said to be in selection when all the syntagmas are Complementary. Explaining the three function, Hjelmslev posits that ‘(1) if one element is present, the other must also be present, and vice versa [solidarity function]; (2) one element does not have to be present for the other to be present [combination function]; (3) one element is required for the other to be present, but not the reverse [selection function].’ This is graphically represented by Hjelmslev thus:

both this and that, by necessity	constant ↔ constant	Solidarity
both this and that, by contingency	variable – variable	Combination
this necessarily accompanied by that	variable → constant	Selection

Fig. 15: A Table showing Syntagmatic Functions

Syntagmatic Functions	Illustrations	Illustrations	Explanation
Solidarity	The boy <u>killed</u> a lion. Verb	She <u>washed</u> the clothes. Verb	The object of a sentence ‘a lion’, ‘the

⁴⁰"Louis Hjelmslev : The Semiotic Hierarchy / Signo - Applied Semiotics"
<http://www.signosemio.com/hjelmslev/semiotic-hierarchy.asp>. Retrieved 26 Jul. 2019.

			clothes' is an obligatory element when the verb is transitive.
	A pair of trousers /wrapper/skirt / shorts requires a blouse/shirt	Sporting wears require canvass or sneakers	Articles of clothing have obligatory element; certain garments must be present to be in solidarity with other garments.
Combination	He coughed last week / all night / always.		The adverbials 'last week', 'all night', 'always' are variables that can be replaced or removed.
	A pair of trousers + shirt + tie + cap	Sport wears + canvass + face cap	The tie and (face) cap are variables – not necessary. They are combination elements
Selection	Taking <u>an</u> apple <u>a</u> day keeps one away from doctor.		The choice of 'an', 'a' is determined by the sound of the first letter of the noun it precedes.
	A female trousers + a blouse / a shirt		The choice is between 'a blouse' and 'a shirt'.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List and illustrate the three syntagmatic functions discussed.

4.0 Conclusion

We have examined the fact that signs / words do not make meaning in isolation. Each composite signal is structured along two planes, one of which is a syntagmatic plane and the other is a paradigmatic plane. The syntagmatic plane is the horizontal axis. Signs along the syntagmatic plane acquire significance under the influence of

other signs with which it forms a chain. This axis is a plane of combination of signs which are either combined as an obligatory, or optional syntagma.

5.0 Summary

Having studied the structures of signs along the two axes of paradigmatic and syntagmatic, we can deduce that although the two planes are unique, both are required to achieve desired significance. Syntagmatic is the plane of combination along the horizontal axes. It is a systematic amalgamation of signs that makes the various signals have significance (a unified chain or combination). There are three kinds of syntagmatic functions: solidarity, combination and selection.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. What is a syntagma?
2. List and discuss the Syntagmatic Functions.
3. Demonstrate how grammatical words are combined to form a sentence.
4. Differentiate between paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes.

7.0 Reference

Chandler, Daniel (1994): *Semiotics for Beginners* [WWW document] URL <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/> Retrieved June 25, 2019

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UNIT THREE: COGNITIVE SEMIOTICS

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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 - 3.1 Cognitive Semiotics: An overview
 - 3.2 Characteristics of Cognitive Semiotics
 - 3.3 Areas of Cognitive Semiotic Research
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor - Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference

1.0 Introduction

In units 1 and 2 of this Module we discussed paradigmatic and syntagmatic planes. In this unit we shall examine cognitive semiotics. It is important to note that cognitive semiotics is not another aspect of how signs are structured (combinatory or selection). Rather cognitive semiotics is an approach or model to the study of meaning-making process. It combines different methods from varied disciplines such as cognitive science, linguistics, psychology and philosophy. It is a multifaceted model of studying how meaning is created in both human and non-human.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define cognitive semiotics.
2. Differentiate cognitive semiotics from other models of analysis.
3. Explain the characteristics of Cognitive Semiotics.
4. Identify the possible research areas of Cognitive Semiotics.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Cognitive Semiotics: An overview

The origin of Cognitive semiotics, an integration of the cognitive sciences and semiotics, can be traced to Thomas C. Daddesio (1994). Cognitive semiotics

evolved as an extension of the criticism against the formalist conceptions of natural language, and the search for an underlying conceptual structure of language which would account for the compatibility of language with perception and action.⁴¹

Cognitive science deals with the mind and perception while Semiotics is interested in meaning making signs. Therefore, Cognitive Semiotics is the study of how the human minds (including lower animals) construe meaning. According to Per Aage Brandt in his article 'What is cognitive semiotics? A new paradigm in the study of meaning', the fundamentals of cognitive semiotics are:

- To find the principles that make signs and the use of signs possible and specific sign types necessary;
- To find the representational laws of the mind that allow human imagination and meaning creation to develop and differentiate into the manifold discourses and practices that characterize our cultures and genres; and,
- to find the basic principles that allow us to make sense (and even nonsense) of the world we live in. (49)

Cognitive Semiotics is a multidisciplinary method of construing meaning in relationship to perception and the mind. Jordan Zlatev (n.p) observes that Cognitive semiotics 'cuts through and stretches across existing disciplinary divisions and configurations.' According to him, Cognitive Semiotics should not be regarded as a branch of 'overall field of semiotics'. Cognitive Semiotics is a conglomerate of different schools of semiotics – Peircean, Saussurean, Greimasian. It does not belong to a single discipline or branch of inquiry. The term 'cognitive' can be misleading in terms of the definition, domain and modality of Cognitive Semiotics. 'Cognitive' as the modifier-head construction helps to pin down the importance and function of perception and the mind in the study of sign and its signification.

Therefore, cognitive semiotics is not a branch of Semiotics like literary semiotics or cultural semiotics. Rather it is a method of inquiry into how the mind allows human imagination and meaning creation to develop.

Self-Assessment Exercise

What are the fundamentals of Cognitive Semiotics?

⁴¹ "What is cognitive semiotics? A new paradigm in the study of"
<https://journals.openedition.org/signata/526>. Retrieved 12 Dec. 2019.

3.2: Characteristics of Cognitive Semiotics

Cognitive Semiotics can be distinguished from other models of semiotics by its characteristics. The following cognitive semiotics characteristics have been enumerated by Jordan Zlatev and extracted from his article ‘What is Cognitive Semiotics?’

3.2.1 A productive combination of (semiotic) theory and empirical research

Generally, all research is both theoretical and empirical. This characteristic is a major feature of Cognitive Semiotics. All Practitioners of Cognitive Semiotics (and Semiotics, in general) ensure that their research is characterised by objectivity, verifiable and systematic conceptual analysis. This is done by formulating concrete research programs that state programmatically that the “methods and theories” employed in the study of phenomena such as imagination, gesture, metaphor, etc., are not subjective.

3.2.2 Methodological triangulation

Cognitive Semiotics employs a kind of methodological “triangulation” whose major aims are to:

- (a) Recognise the rationality of all methods used in different areas of investigation,
- (b) Recognise the epistemological priority of first- and second-person methods in the study of meaning, and
- (c) Incorporate the three types of approaches (philosophy, ethnomethodology and classical sociology / experimental psychology.) in the same project.

Cognitive Semiotics avoids being myopic and dogmatic in its method to issues of value, meaning, norm and consciousness; and thus mends the gap between science and the humanities.

3.2.3 Influence of Phenomenology

Most Cognitive Semiotic researches are influenced by the philosophical school of phenomenology whose basic notion is to depart from experience itself, and to provide descriptions of the occurrences of the world as true to experience as possible. Cognitive Semiotics avoids constructing metaphysical doctrine, or postulating invisible-to-consciousness causal mechanisms that would somehow “produce” experience. Cognitive Semiotic is not wrapped between the extremes of positivism and relativism and hence it does not entail any form of “monadic” subjectivism that considers phenomena as the universal as being lived in separate bubbles made up of “representations”, but as a meaningful life-world, co-constituted through human perceptions and

actions which is obvious for cultural meanings, such as those of language and most basic layers of perception (e.g., of colour). Also, the most subjective experience is communicable – on the type if not token level. And finally, the structures of experience are elucidated by phenomenology as “prefigured” in the principles of life itself.

Cognitive Semiotics’ strong emphasis is on dynamics and specific topic areas such as the distinction between presentation and representation, analyses of imagination and “picture consciousness”. It stresses the interrelations between the living body (Körper) and the lived body (Leib) (Gallagher 2005), and the inter-subjectivity (Zlatev et al. 2008). Cognitive Semiotics also highlights individual and cultural developments of phenomenology. Phenomenology influenced and introduced the analyses of time consciousness, passive synthesis and sedimentation

3.2.4 Dynamism

The dynamism of Cognitive Semiotics is displayed in its studying of meaning on all levels: beginning from perception to language, as well as cultural representations of language (such as in theatre, music, pictures, film, etc.) which are regarded not as static products. Most Cognitive Semiotics researchers are of the opinion that meaning should not be studied in only static and structural terms. Such scholars feel studying meaning in a non-dynamic is deficient for understanding the fundamentally interactive, subject-relative, and (often) informative nature of semiosis. Hence, various formulations have been used to capture the dynamic nature of meaning such as sense making, meaning construction, languaging, etc. At the onset, the term “dynamic semiotics” was used by Cognitive Semiotic scholars prior to the adoption of “cognitive semiotics”.

3.2.5 Interdisciplinarity and/or transdisciplinarity

Cognitive Semiotics is a composite of different disciplines and methods. Based on the background of the scholars of Cognitive Semiotics, the discipline is made up of the following research areas:

- (1) Semiotics,
- (2) Linguistics (methods perceiving meaning as the crux of language),
- (3) Psychology
- (4) Anthropology (especially biological and cultural)
- (5) Enactive cognitive science and
- (6) Philosophy

These characteristics identified and explained by Jordan Zlatev underscore the transdisciplinary nature of Cognitive Semiotics.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Identify the different disciplines that make up Cognitive Semiotics.

3.3 Areas of Cognitive Semiotic Research

The interdisciplinary nature of Cognitive Semiotics often creates confusion on what sort of semiotic analysis can be performed within cognitive semiotics. To erase this confusion, and to identify the scope of Cognitive Semiotics, Jordan Zlatev assigns the following research areas as specifically Cognitive Semiotics:

3.3.1 Gesture studies

From the onset, the search for explicit and systematic semiotic analysis in gesture studies (at different levels of types of iconicity, indexicality and conventionality) began. By 1941, Efron suggested how gesture studies can be made systematic using new technology for recording and analysis. This suggestion was again reiterated by Bouissac in 1973. Between 1980 and 2005, gesture analysis was carried out as an independent interdisciplinary field. Hence Jordan Zlatev is of the opinion that gesture studies as an independent field of inquiry will be able to gain much by incorporating Cognitive Semiotic principles; and Cognitive semiotics, similarly, has much to gain from gesture studies.

3.3.2 Child development

Jean Piaget, one of the founding fathers of Child Developmental Psychologist, adopted cognitive semiotics approach in his study on child development. His developmental theories (Domain General Theories) emphasized the importance of cognitive functions in the development and adaptation of a person's growth, especially in communication (language). Cognitive functioning, he observes, is possible as a result of the broadening of different domain-general mechanisms.

Later, Domain General Theories, which adopted cognitive semiotics approach and examined the relationship between language development and cognitive interconnectivity functions, was replaced with Domain General Theories. The new theories posit that a child's brain is made up of neural

structures (or modules) which have distinct functions. Hence, training in one capacity may not influence another because each module is independent and develops at different schedules or periods. Consequently, Communication (especially, language) and cognition were seen to be unconnected and thus kept apart and studied separately. Accordingly, the adaptation of cognitive semiotic approach to child developmental studies became alienated.

Modern Developmental Psychologists (Jerome Bruner, 1990; and Chris Sinha, 1988) have revisited the approach of Piagetian and Vygotskian ideas in human development studies of meaning, language and representation. Thereby opening the way for the re-adaptation of cognitive semiotics approach in child developmental studies.

3.3.3 Bio-cultural Evolution

Bio-cultural Evolution is a foremost subject and useful phrase for anthropologists. It examines fundamental issues about human's identity, including growth (development) in the world. Bio-cultural evolution is defined as 'the mutual, interactive evolution of human biology and culture; the concept that biology makes culture possible and that developing culture further influences the direction of biological evolution' (Jurmain et al. 2012: 7).

Most developmental psychology scholars whose area of inquiry is the descent of man and who adopt bio-cultural perspective on evolution usually use semiotic perceptions in their research. According to Jordan Zlatev 'an important publication in the area is Merlin Donald's (1991) *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Human Culture*' (n.p). Zlatev observes that the major issue in Donald's work - skill learning, imitation and gestural communication - deals with 'human cognitive and semiosis'. Zlatev further opines that Terry Deacon's work - *The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain* (1997) - 'relates explicitly to semiotic theory ... [because it] draws on ideas from Peirce to propose that interpretative processes follow a progression of iconism (i.e. recognition), indexicality (space-time contiguity, as in the pairing of stimulus and response in classical conditioning), and most complexly - indeed, unique to our species - symbols' (n.p).

Thus, Bio-cultural evolution is a new area of study in Cognitive Semiotics.

3.3.4 Enactive Cognitive Science

Another area of research identified by Zlatev is Enactive Cognitive Science. The enactive approach, an innovative mission that aims to change human understanding of mind and cognition, originated within biological context. Presently the term has been adopted in other areas such as cognitive science with the aim of establishing the connections between the body and the environment, and the ideas of conceptual relationships between the mind and the body scientifically.

Zlatev notes that pioneering enactivists were apprehensive ‘of any concept that sounded similar to representation, such as that of sign. Their empirical focus was on the direct experience of perception and action, and on resolving the “hard problem” of consciousness – not on sign-mediated meaning’ (n.p). Lately, however, some enactivists have delved into topical issues such as mental imagery and enculturation (Thompson 2007) and gesture (Gallagher 2005). Thereby acknowledging the need to make a distinction between presentation and representation. Similarly, Sonesson (2011), a cognitive semiotician has explicitly argued that an analytical distinction be made between presentation and representation, with major focus on the representational (e.g., pictorial) aspects of meaning.

Consequently, Zlatev states that there is ‘mutually consistent, complementary and anti-reductionist orientations’ between Cognitive Semiotics and enactive approaches, and that this mutual and consistent argument could lead to a ‘more interaction between’ cognitive semiotic and enactive approach.

4.0 Conclusion

Cognitive Semiotics is yet to evolve into a self-sufficient discipline. It is an interdisciplinary field or model (and not a branch like Cultural Semiotics, Literary Semiotics, etc) of Semiotic study that has adopted and is still adopting its methods and subjects of inquiry from varied disciplines. Cognitive Semiotics is an emerging transdisciplinary field that considers its subject of inquiry - meaning - not a constituent of a specific empirical domain but cuts “between and across” disciplines.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we have examined Cognitive Semiotics as an emerging transdisciplinary field. It is an approach or model to the study of the meaning-making process and not a branch or aspect of Semiotics per se. It is a composite of

cognitive science, linguistics, psychology and philosophy whose sole aim is to study how meaning is created in both human. Five distinctive features of Cognitive Semiotics include: a combination of (semiotic) theory and empirical research, methodological triangular, phenomenology influence, dynamism and interdisciplinarity. Four areas of research that are associated with Cognitive Semiotics are Gesture studies, child development, biocultural evolution and enactive cognitive science. Of course, this list of areas of research is open for more in future.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. What is Cognitive Semiotics?
2. List and briefly explain the features that differentiate Cognitive Semiotics from other areas of semiotics
3. Identify two possible research areas of Cognitive Semiotics.

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UNIT FOUR: SEMINAR PAPER 1 - GENERAL SEMIOTIC INVESTIGATION

Introduction

This unit affords you the application of what you have learnt so far.

- Choose a text - any sign, symbol or an icon - of your choice.
- Use any semiotic theory of your choice.

- Your analysis should reflect and discuss the construction and deconstructions of meaning making in the text.

Suggestions

Your text can be any form of advertisement, a literary text - poem or prose, cartoon, any form of picture, any professional symbol or logo and many more.

In your analysis, identify and discuss the signification of

- verbal text, if any
- Images,
- Sounds,
- Colours, etc.

MODULE FIVE: PROXEMICS AND KINESICS: SEMIOTIC MODES

UNIT ONE: Proxemics

UNIT TWO: Kinesics communication (language of the body)

UNIT THREE: Seminar Paper 2

UNIT ONE: Proxemics

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1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Body

 3.1 Definition of Proxemics

 3.2 Categories of Interpersonal Space

 3.3 Theories of Proxemics

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor - Marked Assignment

7.0 Reference

1.0 Introduction

As earlier stated, Semiotic studies deal with the study of meaning-making (sign) process in communication. The erroneous tendency in the past has been that of considering mostly linguistic codes in the study of sign systems. However in recent times, researchers have shown that there are other modes of systems. According to Siefkes (2015):

Other sign systems such as gesture, images, graphics, typography have been in use for centuries, yet they were marginalised by philosophic reflection and scientific research due to the influence of linguocentrism, the tendency of Western cultures to privilege language and downplay other sign systems and sign types. The fact that language occurs regularly in close integration with these other sign systems is more problematic for traditional linguistics than usually acknowledged. (113)

He further acknowledges that there are diverse ‘semiotic modes such as language, images, gesture, typography, graphics, icons, or sound.’ (114) According to one of the founding fathers of Semiotics – Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic theory, there are various sign systems (codes); codes are sets of meaning-making representation.

In this unit and the subsequent one, we will be discussing another aspect of ‘meaning-making processes’. The human environment, as we experience it every day, is littered with all forms of sign process or meaning-making process. Meaning making entails ‘the process by which people interpret situations, events, objects, or discourses, in the light of their previous knowledge and experience.’ (Encyclopaedia of the Sciences of Learning). Thus, sign can be communicated through any of the senses: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory’

Our focus in this unit is on Proxemics which is an aspect of spatial system, one of the five semiotic systems (modes) identified. Others include the linguistics, visual, audio and gestural systems. Bull and Anstey (2010) opine that a text could be multimodal when it uses more than one semiotic system to communicate information. The five semiotic systems include:

Linguistic: encompassing vocabulary and the grammar of oral and written language

Visual: involving issues such as colour, vectors and perspective in images

Audio: consist of features such as volume, pitch and sound effects

Gestural: encompassing features such as movement, speed and stillness in facial expression and body language

Spatial: involving features such as proximity, direction, position of layout and organisation of objects in space.

Consequently, meaning-making (semiotics) involves verbal and non-verbal forms and can be expressed in five distinct and broad organised modes /systems.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Identify and explain semiotics modes.
2. Explain the term 'Proxemics'
3. Identify the different categories of proxemics.
4. Discuss the importance of proxemics in communication.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Definition and types of Proxemics

The term 'proxemics' was coined by Edward T. Hall, a cultural anthropologist, in 1963, from the word 'proximity' which implies being close or near in terms of space, time or relationship. The term was used to refer to behavioural spacing during interpersonal communication. It deals with 'how man unconsciously structures microspace - the distance between men in the conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in his houses and building, and ultimately the layout of his towns'. (Hall, 1963)

Proxemics deals with how 'spacing' is communicative or informative. Spacing during communication could signal various meanings such as comfort/discomfort, intimacy/distance and assertion of power to mention a few.

Within any Communicative context there are at least two people involved. The space between these two communicators is significant and meaningful. Similarly, two spatial arrangements or orientations which push interlocutors apart and pull them in are referred to as sociopetal axis and sociofugal axis. Sociopetal space refers to communicative space which permits free and easy conversations. In sociopetal space communicators can see each other easily; it pulls in interlocutors. A typical example is a restaurant. The sitting arrangement permits for face-to-face

interaction. Sociofugal space, on the other hand, makes conversations difficult, it discourages discussion hence in such spacing, sitting arrangement is such that people do not face each other and therefore cannot speak easily. Examples of sociofugal space are classroom, cinema and auditorium settings.

Proxemics is the study of how information is covertly stated through behavioural and structural spacing during formal and informal interactions. It can also be defined as the study of how physical (personal and territorial) spacing, including the arrangement of private and public buildings and offices, is informative. It is the study of communicators' use, perception and structuring of space during interaction. At the core of proxemics is 'the nature, degree, and effect of the spatial separation individuals naturally maintain (as in various social and interpersonal situations) and of how this separation relates to environmental and cultural factors' (Merriam Webster Dictionary). Proxemics does not only deal with the individual's spacing per se but also studies 'how people use and structure space or spatial arrangements in work, personal relations, etc. [as well as] the cultural, behavioral, and sociological aspects of spatial distances between individuals. (np, Webster's New World College Dictionary). Thus, it is a subcategory of nonverbal communication. However, the notion of distance as a non-verbal communication act is treated in proxemics as part of an integrated system.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Write short notes on the five semiotic systems that you know.

3.2 Categories of Interpersonal Space

Space is a necessary component of communication systems; it symbolises varying degrees of acceptability and closeness or distance. Different degrees or levels of interpersonal space (or the distance) are usually, purposely established between communicators during interaction. These various levels of interpersonal space during conversation/interaction are sometimes referred to as 'type of proxemics. Hall (1969) groups the distances sustained by humans during interaction into four types. These are intimate, personal, social, and public spaces.

i) Intimate Space (Zone): This category of space occurs when the two people involved in the interaction are familiar. The space is very close and permits embracing, touching, holding hands or whispering. It is about 0 to 2 feet of space. This intimate space allows for confidential messages. Communicators that share intimate space are usually spouses and very close friends.



Figure 17: Intimate space taken from <https://pandagossips.com/posts/84>

ii) Personal Space (Zone): Personal space is close enough to allow interactions among close friends or family but it is not as close as intimate space. The space is about 2 - 4 feet and the proximity is close enough to sometime allow touching. If unqualify person encroaches into this zone, there is usually feeling of discomfort.



Figure 18: Personal Space Taken from <https://pxhere.com/en/photo/1583761>

iii) Social Space (Zone): This distance is such that it does not allow touching or personal body contact. It is about 4 to 12 feet. It is used for interactions among acquaintances, co-workers and students. This zone allow for formal or business interactions.

iv) Public Space (Zone): This category of space is that which occur in public lectures or public speeches. It is the space between a speak and the

audience. It is over 10 feet.⁴²

These various zones, especially intimate and personal spaces, provide comfort for their owners but create uneasiness for unqualified communicators usually seen as intruders. It is however, pertinent to note that urbanization and population growth have sometimes forced people to voluntarily give up permit interference into intimate and personal zones. This occurs when someone is in a mass transport or in an overcrowded environment such as an elevator.

Self-Assessment Exercise

List and explain various types of interpersonal zones.

3.3 Theories of Proxemics

Hall initiated the theory of proxemics based mainly on his intriguing personal cross-cultural encounters. Subsequently, other researchers putting Hall's ideas to the test resulted in two divergent proxemic theories - Equilibrium Theory by and Expectancy Violation Model.

Equilibrium Theory – This theory which was propounded by Anthropologist Michael Watson states that Proxemics aids humans in maintaining a status quo based on common sense. According to this theory, any relationship can be plotted on a scale showing the degree of intimacy. Consequently, communicators would adjust proxemic factors in order to maintain a consistent degree of intimacy and thus, achieve the purpose of the interaction. Argyle opines that two people who might not be within the range of intimacy space due to circumstances outside their control would subconsciously attempt to preserve status quo through eye contact. Thus, if distance fails to reflect the intimacy or lack of it, the eye contacts are used to make-up for the distance shortcoming - by either focusing eyes on the intimate person or by avoiding eye contact with one-intimate person.

Expectancy Violation Model – Propounded by Professor Judee Burgoon, Professor of Communication, observes that retreating from proxemic behaviours is sometimes not detrimental to relationship. She opines that violating the rule of proxemics could, on the contrary, aid the offender to achieve the intended result. Thus, in as much as proxemic behaviours aid communicators to achieve desired outcome, those who break proxemic norms by violating spatial expectations can also achieve their communication aim made possible by other non verbal cues, including the norms of

⁴²"The Role of Proxemics in Communication & Productions" <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-role-of-proxemics-in-communication-productions.html>. Retrieved 18 Jan. 2020.

society and the target's idiosyncrasies. Violations of spatial expectations could cause arousal and distraction.⁴³

Proxemic theories have been applied to several fields such as film, advertisement business interactions and private life. To create a close and emotional attachment, the distance between camera and the object or characters is reduced so that the audience becomes emotionally attached to the product or character. Different cultures have specific proxemic behaviour which are learnt from childhood.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Situate any of the two theories of Proxemic within an encounter you have witnessed.

4.0 Conclusion

Proxemics form an aspect of non-verbal communication. They are meant to be supported by verbal signs as well as other non-verbal cues in order to avoid misunderstanding or misinformation. Being culturally defined implies that proxemic behaviour differs from culture to culture. Hence, it is also hidden and is intuitively practised.

Like every other non-verbal communication, the signification of proxemics behaviour is better understood and analysed in combination with environmental or temperament flexibles. Proxemics is part of an integrated system of non-verbal communication.

5.0 Summary

In this unit we have demonstrated that proxemics, an aspect of non-verbal communication, is an aspect of meaning-making representation. Proxemics deals with how humans consciously and unconsciously created perceive distance during interactions, and the use of spacing in private and public environment as being informative. It is one of the five semiotic systems (modes); these are the linguistics, visual, audio and gestural systems.

Proxemic theory was introduced by Hall and was expanded thereafter. There are four identified maintained distances during interaction - intimate, personal, social and public depending on the relationship existing between the interlocutors.

⁴³"Proxemic Theory - A First Look at Communication Theory."
<https://www.afirstlook.com/docs/proxemic.pdf>. Retrieved 18 Jan. 2020.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Differentiate between Sociopetal space and Sociofugal space?
2. Explain the categories of interpersonal distance which can occur during interaction.
3. Differentiate between the two divergent proxemic theories.
4. What is Proxemics?

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UNIT TWO: Kinesics Communication

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Historical background
 - 3.2 Types of Kinesics
 - 3.3 subfields of kinesics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit we introduced an aspect of non-verbal communication as a form of meaning-making representation. In this unit we shall devote it to another aspect - Kinesics - language of the body. Body language is as old as man and is one of the most powerful and popular means of signalling meaning. It is often

employed to supplement spoken symbols. The signification of body language, like other non-verbal communication signals, depends on context, situation and personalities involved in the communication.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define kinesics;
2. Enumerate and explain types of kinesics;
3. Explain the subfields of Kinesics;
4. Identify the significance of some gestures and body movements in communication.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Historical background

The term, Kinesics, was coined in 1952 by Ray Birdwhistell, an anthropologist in his study of nonverbal communication which was influenced by the works of Margaret Mead. Although it emerged in anthropological and linguistic inquiry, it has spread to other research areas due to its invaluable importance and frequent usage in communication. The use of body movement as a means of communication is as old as man. The Greeks and Romans in ancient periods employed gestures in rhetorical discourses as a persuasive enhancement accompaniment and as such the use of gesticulation was intensively studied. Similarly, during the Middle Ages, documentation was done using specific gestures because many people were not able to read nor write during the period.

Tracing the beginning of modern inquiry of body language, International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences opines that ‘Darwin is often seen as the father of modern communicative studies of body motion’ (n.p). Although, Darwin’s work – ‘Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals’ (1872) as well as his subsequent researches failed to state categorically in his observations how animal and human body motions and expressions are significant in communicative systems, he is still regarded as the father of modern day study of body language.

However, Sapir’s work made a progression in the study of body communication by demonstrating the possibilities of body motion codes which can be learnt and utilised for effective communication (Sapir 1931; 1933). Other intuitions on body

motions as means of communication can be traced to the work of Efron (1941) which focused on culture-bound nature of body language as well as the gestural multiplexes structures of body language, and La Barre's discussion on 'phatic' communication which heralds and encircles spoken language (1947). Nevertheless, none of these studies is considered to have been characterised by scientific exploration. Hence, the publication of the Introduction to Kinesics by Birdwhistell (1952) is regarded as the onset of scientific inquiry into the systematic nature of body communication.

We can state categorically that the use of the body language as an aspect of communication dates back to ancient time. Also, the study of the message or information conveyed through body motion did not start now.

Kinesics according to Harrigan (2008) refers to 'actions and positions of the body, head and limbs' (p.137). Waiflein (2003) says kinesics 'concerned body movement, gestures, and facial expressions'. Coleman (2009) defines kinesics as 'gestures and other body movements in nonverbal communication...' (404). Kinesics is thus, the signification of the human body used to communicate ideas, thoughts, attitudes and emotions during interaction. It is an aspect of non-verbal communication.

Several works dealing with body language were written before the coinage by Ray Birdwhistell. Megan Waiflein (2013) in his article 'The Progression of the Field of Kinesics' enumerated earlier writings before the coinage to include: "Physical Expression: its modes and principles", 1885 by Francis Warner; "Gesture- an Exceptional Usage" written by Edward Z. Rowell in 1927. However, Charles Darwin's work titled *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, (1872) written much earlier examined man and animal expression of emotions from a biological perspective.

Kinesics which involves the movement of the body such as posture, gestures, and facial expressions, and in recent time, bipedic gestures, became a field of its own as a result of the writings of Ray Birdwhistell, professor of psychology and anthropology at the University of Louisville. In his introductory work (a seminal paper) on Kinesics titled 'Introduction to Kinesics: An annotation system for the

analysis of body motion and gesture', 1952, Birdwhistell presented the assumptions, intentions, and goals for this area of research.

Birdwhistell in his Introduction to Kinesics, calls the smallest distinctive unit of behaviour 'kinemes' and he identifies about 60 kinemes as culturally widespread worldwide. The sets of kinemes that are not distinctive – lack unique meaning - but are recognizable, he called 'kines'. Megan Waiflein observes that 'Cultural differences are due to variations within kinemes, and not due to the use of different kinemes. [That is] the same gesture can be used in numerous cultures, but can have a different meaning in each [culture]' (4). Birdwhistell further suggests that it is possible to combine kinemes and form kinemorphs . Such combination of kinemes indicates more meaning than when a communicator employs only one kineme.

Explaining how the field of kinesics can grow based on Ray Birdwhistell's introductory work, Megan Waiflein identifies three stages: Pre-kinesics, mirco-kinesics, and social kinesics.

Pre-kinesics Stage opens the groundwork and involves the study of literatures about human skeletal muscular system and psychology and the study of individual human variation and limitation.

Mirco-kinesics Stage deals with the recording and primary analysis of kinesics data (Birdwhistell 1979:14) such as facial expressions and different distinct body language. Most micro body movements and facial expressions indicate emotional state during communication.

Social kinesics Stage is the final stage. This is the stage which ascertains the circumstantial signification of various repetitive facial expressions and body language. Birdwhistell states that the future of Kinesics "rests upon the recognition that acts, like words, have only the social meaning of their performance in context" (1983:360).

Through his various publications - *The Introduction to Kinesics*, 1952; *Kinesics and Context*, 1970; and *Background to Kinesics*, 1983, Birdwhistell, established the groundwork for Kinesics as a branch of inquiry in anthropology.

Birdwhistell's work was greatly influenced by descriptive linguistic principles. He regards the process of learning kinesics to be similar to the process of learning verbal language. Consequently, he breaks kinesics down into minimal constituents of units of body movement: kines, kinemes, and kinemorphs. Kine is the smallest identifiable unit of body movement while a kineme is a group of movements that may be used interchangeably without affecting social meaning (like phonemes in linguistics). A simple kinemorph refers to a group of kines functioning like a word part while complex kinemorphs consist of a group of kines that function like a word (1952).

He classified the body into eight segments as a means of organising kines:

- i) total head,
- ii) face,
- iii) trunk,
- iv) shoulder, arm, and wrist,
- v) hand and finger activity,
- vi) hip, leg, ankle,
- vii) foot activity, walking, and
- viii) neck (1970).

Like words, the signification of Kinesics is context dependent; the meaning of kinesics can only be interpreted appropriately when put into context (cultural and communicative situation). Similarly, he stresses the fact that 'no position, expression, or movement ever carries meaning in and of itself' (2010:45). The signification of body language can vary, and the same kinesics may have several distinct meanings; no kineme ever stands alone to convey message.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain the influence of linguistics on Kinesics.

3.2 Types of Kinesics

Kinesics is seen as the general study of the various body movements during communication. Human body is made up of several parts and most of these various parts play vital roles during interaction. As a result of this kinesics (body movement) is classified into five categories according to the functions: emblems, regulators, illustrators, affective display and adaptors; by Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen (2004). A sixth category, termed bipedics or bipedic gestures, was introduced by Peter O'Reilly (2012).

3.2.1 Emblems: are associated with the hand movement such as thumbs up/down, beckoning finger or palm, forming V shape with forefinger and middle finger erect, forming a circle with the thumb and forefinger and stretching out the rest of the three fingers, and many more hand/finger motions. Emblems are sometimes used as substitutes for words and phrases; they have stand alone signification. In other words, words are not necessarily required as complements in order to interpret the message being conveyed. In spite of the non-universality of emblems they are understood by members of different cultures.



Figure 19: Sample of Emblem from <https://www.clipart.email/clipart/hand-gesture-silhouette-110840.html>

3.2.2 Regulators deal with the movement of the head and face to control the flow and pace of communication. Regulators such as smile, frown, nod or head-shake and eye-contact during communication are usually employed by either the speaker or listening. They are often used as feedback between the speaker and the listener. When utilized by the speaker; it could imply wait longer, hold that thought, pay attention, talk now, stop disturbing, be careful, etc. However, when employed by the listener, it could signal hurry up, repeat, elaborate, be less boring, give others a chance to speak, etc. (Ekman 2004:44). Eye movement is complex and an in depth study of eye behaviour is studied as a separate branch of scholarly inquire called oculusics.

3.2.3 Illustrators: these are the movement of the arm or any other part of the body to exemplify the verbal message being conveyed. Illustrators are employed as a means of emphasizing or contradicting or pointing to what the speaker is communicating verbally. The signification of illustrators depends mostly on the speaker's body movement during the process of communicating. Illustrators are useful especially when the speaker experiences difficulty choosing words to explain opinion or thought.



Figure 20: Sample of illustrator Taken from <https://thethreetomatoes.com/what-do-i-do-with-my-hands>

3.2.4 Affect Display: This refers to the use of different body movement such as facial expressions, gestures, hand and feet movements, and posture to express emotional feelings. The human face is very productive in the outward expression of internal feeling (emotion). The signification of the interpretation of Affect Display is often consistent with the emotional message being conveyed.

3.2.5 Adaptors: are movements of the body employed to release physical or emotional tension during communication. Adaptors also called manipulators includes touching movements which can be directed to self, others or object in order to express positive or negative internal state of the speaker. They are habitually displayed unconsciously due to lack of control as a result of feelings of nervousness and anxiety. (Ekman 2004:43).

3.2.6 Bipedics: Bipedic Gestures refer to the movement of the leg and foot posture during communication. The term “Bi-ped-ic” is derived from the Latin “Bi-” meaning ‘two’, and ‘-ped-’ meaning ‘foot’, and ‘-ic’ is a common suffix from the

Greek ‘ikos’ and the Latin ‘icus’ meaning ‘to have the features of’” (Qut in O’Reilly, p. 16). Leg/foot movements and postures during communication can occur in both standing and seated positions, and are employed to convey distinct internal attitudinal and emotional states of the users. Both the speaker and the listener may use this aspect of kinesics during interaction. Different leg/foot movements and postures are illustrated blow:

Positive Emotion & Attitude	(i)Positive Foot Pointing (standing)	Basic Emotions: Joy, Surprise; Circumplex Emotion: High Pleasantness & Valence, High or Low Arousal. Attitude: Friendliness, Submissiveness, Stable & Temporal
	(iii) Positive Leg Crossing (standing)	
	v) Positive Leg Crossing (seated)	
Negative Emotion & Attitude	(ii) Negative Foot Pointing (standing)	Basic Emotion: Fear, Disgust, Anger, Distress, Surprise; Circumplex Emotion: Low Valence & Pleasantness, High or Low Arousal. Attitude: Hostility, Dominance, Stable & Temporal
	(iv) Negative Leg Crossing (standing)	
	(vi) Negative Leg Crossing (seated)	

Figure 21: Theories of Emotion & Attitude Applied to Bipedic Gesture. (Adapted from O’Reilly, Peter. P 30)

Self-Assessment Exercise

Observe a communicative situation. Pick out commonly utilized kinesics during the interaction.

3.3 Subfields of kinesics

The complexity and multiplicities of facial and body language have necessitated the division of Kinesic into three subfields in order to allow for in depth studies of the various aspects of facial and body movement. The subfields are oculesics, proxemics, and haptics. These subdivisions make it possible for scholars to focus on specific sections of body language.

3.4.1 Oculesics is the study of the eye movement, pupil dilation, and eye contact during interaction. The movement of the eyes is regarded as a pointer to the emotions of the user; they demonstrate essential information. Hence, the eyes are metaphorically referred to as ‘the windows to the soul’. It has been established that the eye contact implies: i) interest by the listener, ii) intimidation by prolonged stares (usually from a superordinate communicator to a subordinate one), and iii) allows for turn taking signals. Similarly, pupil dilation (blink) signals attraction to the target individual. Thus, eye movement conveys essential information during interactions without verbal clues.

3.4.2 Proxemics is the study of spacing between communicators, arrangement of private and public artifacts as a means of passing strong messages. In other words, it is the study of the movement of the whole body (to create distance) during communication. Therefore, it is a subfield of Kinesics. This aspect of body communication has been dealt with in the previous unit.

3.4.3 Haptics is the systematic study of the meaning of touch as a form of communication; touch implies hugging, kissing, hand-shaking, embracing, tickling, patting on the back, and touching one’s own body. Touch has both positive and negative (threatening) signification. Touching is a strong aspect of nonverbal communication; it is part of some professions (medical context) but it is also unacceptable in some professions (Adult learning setting). It is employed in different situations for different functions and purposes.

Consequently, touch is classified into five categories: functional/professional, social/polite, friendship/warmth, love/intimacy, sexual/arousal. This categorisation is based on the situation and function of touch. Touch is an essential part of friendship/warmth, love/intimacy and it is often utilised at these levels. Handshake is usually accepted in interpersonal interaction as a form of polite/social ethics. Hugging and patting on the back is rarely employed and usually with caution.



Figure 22: Sample of Professional touch. Taken from <http://what-when-how.com/nursing/therapeutic-communication-skills-client-care-nursing-part-2/>

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain 'Oculesics' as a subfield of kinesics.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit we have examined kinesics, as a major body language. It was established that gestures, body motions and movements are important aspects of nonverbal communication. Kinesics, seen as a complex and all encompassing movement of the human body, is subdivided into the different sections of the body so that detailed study of the various sections can be performed. The subfields of kinesics are the subfields are oculesics, proxemics, and haptics. There are several types of body movements within the field of kinesics, and there is opening for more discoveries.

5.0 Summary

We have defined Kinesics as the scientific study of gestures and body movement in communication. The utilization of gestures and body movement as a means of communication is from time immemorial - from Ancient time through the Middle Age to the present. The term, 'kinesics', was coined in 1952 by Ray Birdwhistell an anthropologist. Birdwhistell's study of nonverbal communication was influenced by the works of Margaret Mead. Thus, the scientific study of gestures and body movement in communication only began in recent time.

Five categories (types) of Kinesics were identified by Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen in 2004; namely, emblems, regulators, illustrators, affective display, adaptors. A sixth category, bipedics, was added in 2012 by Peter O'Reilly, to cater

for the section of the body which is not included in the earlier five categories, and which is very popularly employed in communication.

For an in depth scientific study of gestures and body movements, Kinesics is classified into subfields: oculusics, proxemics, and haptics. While kinesic deals with the study of the entire body, to an extent; oculusics, handles the movement of the eye and eye contacts; proxemics, studies the movement of the whole body (to create distance) during communication; and haptics, handles the significance of touch as a form of messaging during communication.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. What is kinesics?
2. What is the significance of the various types of kinesics often employed by communicators?
3. Trace the developmental stages of kinesics.
4. Discuss the subfields of kinesics.
5. The eyes are 'the windows to the soul.' Discuss.

7.0 References

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Unit Three: Seminal Paper 2 - Proxemics or Kinesics Investigation

Introduction

This unit affords you the application of what you have learnt on body language.

- Choose a text - a communication situation - of your choice.
- Do a kinesics or proxemics analysis.
- Your analysis should reflect and discuss the signification of kinesics or proxemics in the text.

Suggestions

Your text can be any form of advertisement, movie, a communication situation, literary text - poem or drama, cartoon, any form of picture, any professional symbol or logo and many more.

In your analysis, identify and discuss the signification of:

- The spacing, if any
- the posture, gestures,
- Facial expressions, and
- Bipedic gestures.