
Glossary of Semiotic Terms...

1. **biosphere**
 - a. Referred to as *nature*. The physical environment to which an organism adapts (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

2. **code**
 - a. (1) A code is a specific set of paradigmatic and syntagmatic conventions according to which texts are produced and interpreted. (2) A code is a procedural system for generating and interpreting texts.

3. **conative function (of communication)**
 - a. The effect of a message on the addressee (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

4. **conceptual metaphor**
 - a. A metaphor (phrase/sentence) in which illustrates a specific idea or concept. A conceptual metaphor is useful to explain and illustrate a complex and/or abstract concept.

5. **conceptual metonym**
 - a. A generalized metonymical formula that undergirds a specific abstraction (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

6. **connotation**
 - a. Referred to as *sense*. Associated with personal experiences, which may be “shared” to different degrees among individuals – refers to associations surrounding the signs.

7. **context**
 - a. The environment (physical and social) in which signs are produced and messages interpreted (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

8. **conventional sign**
 - a. A sign that is made by human ingenuity (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

9. **denotation**

- a. Referred to as *reference*. Associated with the dictionary meaning of a word.

10. deconstruction

- a. The view that texts can be deconstructed into a series of differences (oppositions) and, thus, that they do not refer to anything outside of themselves in any 'true' fashion (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

11. diachronic

- a. A *diachronic analysis* of something focuses on change in that something over time. Involves studying how sign systems changed over time.

12. discursive symbols

- a. Combinations of bits of meanings that flow together.

13. emotive function (of communication)

- a. The emotive function focuses on the addresser. The addresser's own attitude towards the content of the message is emphasized. Examples are emphatic speech or interjections (MIT Media Lab).

14. firstness

- a. The form of meaning derived from feeling, or isolated perception (Peirce).

15. haptics

- a. The study of touching patterns during social interaction (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

16. gesture

- a. The meaning of a metaphor (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

17. gesticulant

- a. The gesture unit accompanying speech (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

18. grammar

- a. The set of rules that explains how words are used in a language (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

19. hyperreality

- a. An inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality.

20. icon

- a. A sign that represents meaning by virtue of some form of resemblance to its object (Peirce).

21. image schema

- a. (1) An image schema are the recurring patterns of our perceptual interactions, bodily experiences, and cognitive operations that encode locations, movements, shapes, and so on in the mind. (2) Forms a lower-level cognitive infrastructure on which the higher-level processing of conceptual metaphor is grounded.

22. interpretant

- a. The process of adapting a sign's meaning to personal and social experiences (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

23. index

- a. A sign that represents meaning by relating to its object in spatially or temporally or by some other act of perception (Peirce).

24. infinite semiosis

- a. The term coined by Eco to refer to the way in which, for Peirce (via the interpretant), for Barthes (via connotation), for Derrida (via freeplay), and for Lacan (via 'the sliding signified'; *see* slippage of meaning), the signified is endlessly commutable—functioning in its turn as a signifier for a further signified. In contrast, while Saussure established the general principle that signs always relate to other signs (*see* relational model), within his structuralist model the relationship between signifier and signified is portrayed as stable and predictable (Oxford Reference).

25. kinesics

- a. The study of body signals. Kinesics was first studied by Ray Birdwhistell, who borrowed terms and techniques from linguistics to characterize the recurring motions that made up meaningful signaling, in the belief that these motions cohered into a system that was similar to the grammar of language, hence the system came to be referred to as 'body language.'

26. langue

- a. Abstract knowledge of how certain signs and their relations can be used and interpreted.

27. metalingual function

- a. A communicative function by which the code being used is identified (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

28. modernism

- a. A set of ideas that values and includes: progress, optimism, rationality, the search for absolute knowledge, quest for perfection, etc.

29. myth

- a. A story that aims to explain the origin of life or of the universe in terms of some metaphysical or deistic entity or entities (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

30. narrative

- a. Something told or written, such as an account, story, or tale (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

31. natural sign

- a. A sign produced by nature (such as symptom) (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

32. oculusics

- a. The study of eye behavior.

33. object

- a. What a sign refers to (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

34. paradigm

- a. Explains how signs relate to each other. Used to designate a category of signs each of which is significantly different – in reference to text, *paradigmatic dimension* refers to the categories of signs used in the text which shows what is potentially present is the most salient thing (*Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi)

35. paradigmatic

- a. *Paradigmatic relationships* are about substitution – involves signs that can replace each other.

36. parole

- a. The concrete utilization of the code to represent something. Parole belongs to each individual within the community

37. phatic function (of communication)

- a. A communicative function by which contact between addresser and addressee is established (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

38. poetic function (of communication)

- a. A communicative function based on poetic language (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

39. postmodernism

- a. A set of ideas that values and incorporates: exhaustion (end of progress), pessimism, irrationality, disillusionment (with the idea of absolute knowledge and the quest for perfection), etc.

40. poststructuralism

- a. A movement in semiotics countering the structuralist notion that signs encode some aspect reality (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

41. presentational symbols

- a. They participate in, or are similar to, the things they symbolize. Often takes form of an image or icon, meaning sacred “image” or “likeness” and is more than representative in a purely conventional space.

42. proxemics

- a. A branch of semiotics and anthropology that studies the symbolic structure of the physical space maintained between people (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

43. referential function (of communication)

- a. A communicative act in which there is a straightforward connection between the act and what it refers to (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

44. representamen

- a. The form is the *representamen* - something that does the representing within the triadic model of the sign (Peirce).

45. representation

- a. The process by which referents are captured and organized in some way by signs or texts (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

46. Secondness

- a. The form of meaning derived from relations or differences among perceived facts (Peirce).

47. semiotics

- a. The study of meaning – examines and analyzes meaning behind all sorts of things such as, sounds, texts, images, etc, and understand it in a way Central aim of semiotics is to investigate, decipher, document, and explain the what, how, and why of signs, no matter how simple or complex they are.

48. Semiosphere

- a. Referred to as *culture*. The world of signs, codes, and texts to be differentiated from the biosphere (the physical, life-supporting environment) (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

49. semiosis

- a. Semiosis is the innate ability to produce and comprehend signs in a species-specific way.

50. signifying order

- a. Barthes' term for structural levels of signification, meaning, or representation in semiotic systems. The first order is denotation and the second order is connotation (Oxford Reference).

51. sign (think something relatively abstract)

- a. A sign is something that stands for another thing to a mind. Signs are thus closely tied to social needs and aspirations – a fact emphasized by many semioticians.

52. sign (think Peirce)

- a. "A sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. Peirce's model posits three components in sign constitution...
 - i. The representamen – something that does the representing
 - ii. The object – the concept that the representamen encodes, something cast outside for observation
 - iii. The interpretant – the mental effect produced by the sign, or the capacity sense made of it in light of personal/social experiences.
 - iv. Example: representamen – coffee; object – "a hot drink"; interpretant – "black, strong, sweet" or "something to help wake up in the morning"

53. sign (think Saussure)

- a. Saussure developed the arbitrary binary model of the sign – a structure with two components, physical and conceptual – signifier and the concept that the sign elicits, the signified.
- b. Saussure went on to suggest that of all sign systems, language is ‘the most complex and universal,’ and that this is so because ‘There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language.’

54. Signal

- a. A type of natural sign studied much more extensively than symptoms by semioticians today is the signal. The bodies of all animals produce signals automatically for conveying specific physical needs or simply as reactants to specific stimuli (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi)

55. signified

- a. The concept that appears in our mind when we encounter the signifier.

56. signifier

- a. Is the material manifestation of the sign, like the sound of a word.

57. Structuralism

- a. The study of the structures (signs, texts, codes) generated by semiosis (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

58. symbol

- a. A sign which represents meaning by relating to its object in manner that is determined by social/cultural convention (Peirce).

59. symptom

- a. A natural sign produced by the body to alert an organism to the presence of some altered physical state within it.

60. synchronic

- a. The study of sign systems at a specific point in time (usually the present). A *synchronic analysis* of something focuses on that something at a particular point in time, usually the present.

61. syntagm

- a. Explains how signs relate to each other. A syntagm is used to designate something more general of signs.
- b. **Example:** Two sentences using the exact same words (syntagms), but with very different meanings because of the word order.
 - i. “John ate an octopus”

ii. "An octopus ate John"

62. syntagmatic

- a. A *syntagmatic relationship* are about positioning – involves a sequence of signs that together create meaning – refers to the arrangement of the signs in the text.

63. text

- a. A 'larger sign' put together in terms of a specific code (*The Quest for Meaning*, Marcel Danesi).

64. thirdness

- a. The form of meaning derived from conventional rules, rules governing social/cultural interactions and practices (Peirce).

65. unlimited semiosis

- a. The interpretant itself tends to become a sign, which entails a representamen, an object, and an interpretant, which itself becomes a sign... The generation of successive signs by recognizing interpretant as a sign is referred to as *unlimited semiosis* (Peirce).