

Abstract

The following is a list of terms and their definitions pertaining to semiotics. While each of these terms may have multiple meanings, some of which are outside the prevue of semiotics, the only definitions provided are those that have semiotic value of some kind. Each of these definitions were borrowed from or distilled from authoritative sources (OED, Danesi, Merrriam-Webester). The goal of this document is provide these terms, and their semiotic-oriented definitions, in as brief and succinct a manner as possible, while still providing salient content that can be referenced for future use.

Glossary of Terms

- 01) biosphere: an environment or habitat to which a species has become adapted.
- 02) code: a system of signals or symbols for communication
- 03) conative function (of communication): a function of communication that is focused on influencing the behavior of the addressee.
- 04) conceptual metaphor: a generalized metaphorical formula that undergirds a specific abstraction.
- 05) conceptual metonym: a domain of associations that are used in a formula to elicit an abstraction.
- 06) connotation: the idea or feeling that a sign evokes
- 07) context: the environment surrounding a sign or its meaning
- 08) conventional sign: a sign created by humans and is not naturally understood
- 09) denotation: the literal interpretation of a sign
- 10) deconstruction: the view that texts can be deconstructed into a series of differences, thus they do not refer to anything outside themselves
- 11) diachronic: the study of signs and sign changes over time
- 12) discursive symbols: a symbol that occurs over a period of time
- 13) emotive function (of communication): the addresser's emotional intent in communicating something
- 14) firstness: meaning derived from bodily and sensory processes
- 15) haptics: the study of touching patterns during social interaction
- 16) gesture: semiosis and representation by means of the body (a domain of body language)
- 17) gesticulant: gesture unit accompanying speech
- 18) grammar: a set of rules governing strings of signs and symbols, and the meaning those strings impart
- 19) hyperreality: when a simulation of reality cannot be distinguished from the reality it simulates (denotatively or connotatively)
- 20) icon: a sign that has a direct connection to the signified (ie, a sign that "looks like" what it represents)
- 21) image schema: a recurring structure within our cognitive processes which establishes patterns of understanding and reasoning
- 22) interpretant: the meaning derived from a sign
- 23) index: a sign that has a temporal or spatial relationship to the signified

- 24) infinite semiosis: when the signified is also a sign for something else that is signified, which itself is a sign for something else, and so on...
- 25) kinesics: the study of body language
- 26) langue: the abstract, systemic rules and conventions of a signifying system
- 27) metalingual function (of communication): the ability to communicate about communication
- 28) modernism: a cultural movement that celebrates progress, optimism, narrative cohesion, structural unity, etc.
- 29) myth: a fundamental form of sense making in which the characters are gods, heroes, and mystical beings; the plots are about heroes, the origins of things, or meaningful human experiences; the settings involve metaphysical worlds juxtaposed against the real world.
- 30) narrative: something told or written
- 31) natural sign: a sign produced by nature
- 32) oculosics: the study of eye movement (a domain of body language)
- 33) object: what a sign refers to
- 34) paradigm: a model or pattern for something that may be copied; a group of ideas about how something should be done or thought about
- 35) paradigmatic: the actual signs used a sign system, text, or code
- 36) parole: the use of signs
- 37) phatic function (of communication): the part of communication that keeps open the line of communication itself
- 38) poetic function (of communication): a communicative function based on poetic language
- 39) postmodernism: a cultural movement that highlights pessimism, the end of progress,
- 40) poststructuralism: (in semiotics) the idea that signs do not encode reality but construct it
- 41) presentational symbols: a symbol that is a “complete unit” – can be understood on its own, right then and there.
- 42) proxemics: the study of the physical space between people and what it means
- 43) referential function (of communication): what is being spoken of
- 44) representamen: the physical part of the sign
- 45) representation: a mental state or concept regarded as corresponding to a thing perceived
- 46) secondness: meaning derived from relations or differences
- 47) semiotics: the study the meaning and use of signs
- 48) semiosphere: an environment of signs, codes, and texts
- 49) semiosis: the comprehension and production of signs
- 50) signifying order: the communal system providing the signs that influence and guide representation within a specific culture
- 51) sign (think something relatively abstract): something that stands for something else
- 52) sign (think Peirce): the “product” of the interplay between the representamen, object, and interpretant
- 53) sign (think Saussure): the “product” of the interplay between the signified and signifier
- 54) signal: anything that serves to trigger a reaction from something else
- 55) signified: the part of the sign that is referred to
- 56) signifier: the part of the sign that is referring to something else
- 57) structuralism: 1) the study of structures generated by semiosis 2) a mode of knowledge that is interested in the relationships of a sign or system rather than the isolated components of that same sign or system.

- 58) symbol: a sign that represents a referent through cultural convention
- 59) symptom: a sign from the body or an underlying condition
- 60) synchronic: the study of signs at a specific point in time
- 61) syntagm: a unit consisting of signs that are in sequential relationship to one another
- 62) syntagmatic: structural relation that guides the combination of signs or parts of signs in a coherent and consistent way
- 63) text: a “larger sign” put together in terms of a specific code
- 64) thirdness: meaning derived from conventional rules, or rules governing social/cultural interactions and practices
- 65) unlimited semiosis: when the signified is also a sign for something else that is signified, which itself is a sign for something else, and so on...