
Glossary of Semiotic Terms - Jackson Phillips

Abstract:

In this document I will provide definitions for the 65 selected terms from various sources. These terms have been listed in alphabetical order. There are two constraints that the provided definitions have to comply with: the first being that the definitions must be more or less consistent with established ideas within the field of semiotics, and the second being that the definitions resonate with me.

List of Terms:

1. **Biosphere** - The ecosystem comprising the entire earth and the living organisms that inhabit it. (Dictionary.com)
2. **Code** - The procedurally governed mechanism according to which something is encoded or decoded. (Class notes)
3. **Connotative Function (of communication)** - The effect the message has or is intended to have on the receiver. (Class Notes)
4. **Conceptual Metaphor** - A generalized metaphorical formula that undergirds a specific abstraction. (Danesi)
5. **Conceptual Metonym** - A generalized metonymical formula that undergirds a specific abstraction. (Danesi)
6. **Connotation** - An idea or feeling that a word invokes in addition to its literal or primary meaning. (Oxford Languages)
7. **Context** - The bit of reality or framework within which the communication is intended to occur. (Class notes)
8. **Conventional Sign** - A sign that is made by human ingenuity (Danesi)
9. **Denotation** - the literal or primary meaning of a word, in contrast to the feelings or ideas that the word suggests. (Oxford Languages)
10. **Deconstruction** - 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. (Danesi)
11. **Diachronic** - A diachronic analysis of something focuses on change in that something over time. (Class Notes)
12. **Discursive Symbols** - Groups of symbols that occur over a period of time. Hence, it is not possible to perceive the whole unit except through the cognitive process of short term memory. (California State University - Northridge)

13. **Emotive Function (of communication)** - The intent of an addresser in a communication act (Class Notes)
14. **Firstness** - Meaning derived from feeling or isolated perception. (Class notes)
15. **Haptics** - a science concerned with the sense of touch. (Merriam Webster)
16. **Gesture** - a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning. (Oxford Languages)
17. **Gesticulant** - The gesture unit accompanying speech. (Danesi)
18. **Grammar** - the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics. (Oxford Languages)
19. **Hyperreality** - an image or simulation, or an aggregate of images and simulations, that either distorts the reality it purports to depict or does not in fact depict anything with a real existence at all, but which nonetheless comes to constitute reality. (Collins Dictionary)
20. **Icon** - A sign in which the signifier has a direct (non-arbitrary) stimulative connection to its signified or referent. (Danesi)
21. **Image Schema** - The term used by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson to refer to the recurring structures of, or in, our perceptual interactions, bodily experiences, and cognitive operations that portray locations, movements, shapes, and so on, in the mind. (Danesi)
22. **Interpretant** - The process of adapting a sign's meaning to personal and social experiences. (Danesi)
23. **Index** - A sign in which the signifier has an existential connection to its signified or referent (that is, the sign indicates that something "exists" somewhere in time or space) (Danesi)
24. **Infinite Semiosis** - The idea that an infinity of further signs both proceed and precede from any given sign. (Stanford, based on Peirce)
25. **Kinesics** - The scientific study of body signals. (Danesi)
26. **Langue** - the system underlying speech activity (Saussurian notion). (Britannica)
27. **Metalingual Function (of communication)** - Any message that refers to the code used. (Class Notes)
28. **Modernism** - A set of ideas that includes progress, optimism, rationality, the search for absolute knowledge and the quest for perfection. (Class Notes)
29. **Myth** - A traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. (Oxford Languages)
30. **Narrative** - a spoken or written account of connected events; a story. (Oxford Languages)
31. **Natural Sign** - A sign that is produced by nature, such as a symptom. (Danesi)

32. **Oculesics** - The study of the communicative role of the eyes in nonverbal communication (Oxford Reference)
33. **Object** - What a sign refers to. (Danesi)
34. **Paradigm** - Category of signs in which each is significantly different in terms of content. (Class Notes)
35. **Paradigmatic** - A structural relation between signs that keeps them distinct and therefore recognizable. (Danesi)
36. **Parole** - (1) the speech of the individual person (Saussurian notion). (Britannica) or (2) concrete instances of the use of langue (Wikipedia)
37. **Phatic Function (of communication)** - This is any habitualized communal message designed to establish, acknowledge, or enforce social relations. (Class Notes)
38. **Poetic Function (of communication)** - Any message constructed to deliver meanings iconically or poetically. (Class Notes)
39. **Postmodernism** - A set of ideas that includes exhaustion (end of progress), pessimism, irrationality, and disillusionment (with the idea of absolute knowledge and the quest for perfection). (Class Notes)
40. **Poststructuralism** - A movement that held that language is not a transparent medium that connects one directly with a "truth" or "reality" outside it but rather a structure or code, whose parts derive their meaning from their contrast with one another and not from any connection with an outside world. (Britannica)
41. **Presentational Symbols** - Symbols pictured as complete units. (California State University - Northridge)
42. **Proxemics** - The branch of knowledge that deals with the amount of space that people feel it necessary to set between themselves and others. (Oxford Languages)
43. **Referential Function (of communication)** - Any message that is constructed to convey information. (Class Notes)
44. **Representamen** - In Peircean theory, the physical part of a sign (Danesi)
45. **Representation** - The process by which referents are captured and organized in some way by signs and texts. (Danesi)
46. **Secondness** - Form of meaning derived from relations, or differences among perceived facts. (Class Notes)
47. **Semiotics** - The study of all phenomena surrounding signs. (Class notes)
48. **Semiosphere** - The world of signs, codes, and texts to be differentiated from the biosphere (the physical life-supporting environment). (Danesi)
49. **Semiosis** - The comprehension and production of signs (Danesi)
50. **Signifying Order** - Barthes' term for structural levels of signification, meaning, or representation in semiotic systems. The first order of signification is that of denotation: at this level there is a sign consisting of a signifier and a signified.

Connotation is a second order of signification (though not secondary in significance) which uses the denotative sign (signifier and signified) as its signifier and attaches to it an additional signified.

51. **Sign (abstract)** - Something that stands for something or someone else in some capacity (Danesi)
52. **Sign (Peircean)** - The Peircean sign is composed of a representamen, object, and interpretant, and the relations between them. (Class notes)
53. **Sign (Saussurean)** - Composed of both a signifier and a signified, the Saussurean sign focuses on the relation between the two. (Class notes)
54. **Signal** - An emission or movement that naturally or conventionally triggers some reason on the part of a receiver (a second type of natural sign). (Danesi)
55. **Signified** - In a Saussurian sign, the signified is the “something else” for which the physical structure or signifier stands for. (Danesi)
56. **Signifier** - According to Saussure, the signifier is the part of a sign that has structure (a distinctive, recognizable and recurring physical form) that is used to stand for something else. (Danesi)
57. **Structuralism** - The study of the structures (signs, texts, codes) generated by semiosis (Danesi)
58. **Symbol** - A sign that represents a referent through cultural convention. (Danesi)
59. **Symptom** - Natural signs produced by the body to alert an organism to the presence of some altered physical state within it. (Danesi)
60. **Synchronic** - A synchronic analysis of something focuses on that something at a particular point in time, usually the present. (Class Notes)
61. **Syntagm** - An orderly combination of interacting signifiers which forms a meaningful whole (sometimes called a ‘chain’). In language, a sentence, for instance, is a syntagm of words (Oxford Reference)
62. **Syntagmatic** - A structural relation that guides the combination of signs or parts of signs in a coherent and consistent way.
63. **Text** - the main body of a book or other piece of writing, as distinct from other material such as notes, appendices, and illustrations. (Oxford Languages)
64. **Thirdness** - The form of meaning derived from conventional rules, rules governing social/cultural interactions and practices. (Class Notes)
65. **Unlimited Semiosis** - The generation of successive signs by recognizing interpretants as signs. (Class Notes)