

Artistic communication as an object of semiotics and linguistic aesthetics

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Abstract. The paper addresses the concept of artistic communication as a type of semiotic interaction in the discourses of art. Semiotic methodologies for modelling the sign and the communicative act, developed in the works of Gottlob Frege, Gustav Shpet, Jan Mukařovský, Roman Jakobson, Juri Lotman, Umberto Eco, Suren Zolyan, and some other semioticians, are discussed with a focus on the models of aesthetic sign and the corresponding models of semiosis in relation to artistic systems. The study focuses on the discourses of verbal art in its various manifestations (poetry, prose, drama, performance, spoken word, etc.) as material for a linguistic analysis of artistic communication. The paper specifically discusses the linguistic representations of artistic discourse within a model of aesthetic semiosis. The resulting model of artistic communication in verbal art is presented as a synthesis of Jakobson's scheme of communicative act and its important specification in Lotman's model of "literary communication". Based on the existing models of sign, semiosis, and communication (taking Jakobson's scheme as the main framework), a synthetic, linguo-aesthetic model of artistic communication is outlined, considering together the linguistic, semiotic, and aesthetic parameters of the artistic act.

Keywords: sign; semiosis; communication; aesthetics; linguistics; autocommunication; verbal art

Artistic communication is a particular kind of human communication that is peculiar to the discourses of art. Verbal art varying from classical prose and poetry to digital and electronic literature of the recent decades, verbal strata of drama, cinema and song cultures, various forms of spoken word performance, happenings and environments, visual and sound poetry, intermedia books, urban and street art involving verbal matter (graffiti, art activism, installations, etc.) – all of these old and new art practices imply a particular kind of aesthetic communication between the agents, or actors, involved. Each of these practices engages a specific aesthetic mode of the communicative act, where language works differently from ordinary speech or from other types of discourse (political, mass media, academic, religious, etc.).

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This paper aims to present some prerequisites for a linguo-aesthetic model of verbally manifested artistic communication based on particular models of sign, semiosis, and communicative act adjusted to the situation of art production, processing and reception. *Linguo-aesthetics*, or *linguistic aesthetics*,² is a complex approach to the study of aesthetic properties of language constituents in artistic use. Linguistic analysis of artistic discourse has been developing at the crossroads of semiotics, linguistics, and poetics.³ The foundations of linguistic aesthetics originated with scholars who aspired for an integration of the theory of language and theory of art, from Gustav Shpet⁴ and Roman Jakobson⁵ in the early decades of the 20th century, through the Prague Linguistic Circle (specifically, Jan Mukařovský⁶) to post-WWII semioticians and philosophers such as Nelson Goodman, Umberto Eco, Juri Lotman, Yuri Stepanov, and some others. Viktor Grigor'ev (2004) proposed the term 'linguistic aesthetics', rightly arguing that a full-fledged linguo-aesthetic approach is needed as complementary to the linguo-poetic one.⁷ Linguo-aesthetic methodology seeks to analyse the applicability of aesthetic categories, such as artistic form, artistic experience, or aesthetic object, to linguistic material. It elucidates the aesthetic parameters of verbal signs in the works of art. The particular focus of this approach is on *verbal* components of artistic discourse, whatever form or mode it may acquire – literary, visual, audial, cinematic, dramatic, performative, digital, environmental, etc.

The basic term 'artistic communication' requires immediate clarification. It is an English analogue of the term '*hudozhestvennaya kommunikatsiya*' used in Russian-language scholarship, referring to a particular way art communicates

² The term 'linguistic aesthetics', or its shorter form 'linguo-aesthetics', is made up by the analogy with the existing terms 'linguistic poetics' ('linguo-poetics'), 'linguistic pragmatics' ('linguo-pragmatics') and the like. In his letters, J. R. R. Tolkien spoke of 'linguistic aesthetics' in a much narrower sense – as a relationship between the sounds of words, their sense and our emotional reactions to them (see Smith 2006). The present treatment is more terminological, encompassing all levels and planes of language use in professional art and literature. 'Language' is understood in its broader semiotic meaning – not as a particular natural idiom, but as a system of (mostly) verbal signs constituting a work of art.

³ For a historical survey and theoretical foundations of linguistic aesthetics as the study of artistic languages, see Feshchenko, Koval' 2014.

⁴ Shpet's contribution to semiotics is highlighted in Freiberger-Sheikholeslami 1982; Grier 2009; Feshchenko 2015.

⁵ On Jakobson's aesthetic semiotics, see Winner 1987; on his semiotic theory of poetic analysis, see Coghill 2022. References to particular relevant works by Jakobson will follow below in this article.

⁶ See Steiner 1977 for Mukařovský's role in semiotics of art.

⁷ In a similar fashion, the term 'aesthetics of language' is used in a recent volume (Benthien, Lau, Marxsen 2018) relating to literary and media theory.

ideas and messages. The English rendering of the term *‘hudozhestvennaya kommunikatsiya’* is guided, primarily, by the English title of Lotman’s book *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (*‘Struktura hudozhestvennogo teksta’*). The whole range of terms based on the lexeme *‘hudozhestvennyj’* (including the term *‘hudozhestvennaya kommunikatsiya’*) in Lotman’s works means ‘more than just literary’, potentially referring to other kinds of aesthetic practices. And that is exactly the object of this study – how artistic communication can be modelled as a linguo-aesthetic phenomenon specific not only to literature but also to other language-related art practices and experiments.⁸

1. ‘Art’ as ‘language’/‘art’ as ‘communication’: From the history of metaphors, terms, and ideas

First rudiments of the communicative approach to what was metaphorically called the ‘language of art’ date back to the German and English Romanticists who sought to clarify the relationship between creator and creation in their interaction. The idea of a common *language of art* began to soar in Europe’s intellectual environment towards the end of the 18th century, in the works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing,⁹ Novalis,¹⁰ Wilhelm Wackenroder, William Blake and others. Such new ideas about the “language of art” and “the language of nature” rested on the philosophical postulate of the era of Romanticism, formulated by Friedrich Schlegel (in Chomsky 1966: 17): “everything through which the internal manifests itself in the external can be called language”. The German thinker believed, in a proto-semiotic manner, that poetry and painting are specific languages. According to Noam Chomsky (1966: 17), commenting on Schlegel’s idea, such a conception of language makes it possible to take a short step towards establishing a connection between “the creative aspect of language use and true creativity”. The Romanticists indeed took important steps towards understanding language as a creative medium in poetry, which allows modern scholars to speak of the “performative” dimension of the word as action in the works of the Romanticists

⁸ I have attempted to apply this linguo-aesthetic methodology in analysing Wassily Kandinsky’s “bitextuality” in verse and painting (Feshchenko 2013), the use of performative language in Conceptualist visual art and literature (Feshchenko 2020) and issues of “graphic translation” of modern visual poetry (Feshchenko 2019).

⁹ In *Laocoon*, Lessing speaks of ‘the language of poetry’ as opposed to ‘the language of painting’ as fundamentally different sign systems.

¹⁰ In one of his “Fragments”, Novalis (2012: 76) fancies a unity of ‘the language of nature’ and ‘the language of art’.

(see, e.g. Esterhammer 2002). It was these ideas that formed the basis of further theories of language as a creative action.

The Romanticist paradigm also gave rise to the theory of Wilhelm von Humboldt who dwelt upon the role of language in human communication,¹¹ and later, on a psychological and linguistic basis, to Aleksandr Potebnja's conception of "language as art and as creativity". Humboldt's Ukrainian follower was interested in the process of understanding in the transmission of thought through natural language, as well as in the process of perception and interpretation of a verbal (literary) work of art. These conceptions can be recognized as proto-communicative. Even if they do not consider all aspects of the communicative process, they take due account of the aesthetic factors of cognition and linguistic activity.

The Romanticist idea of the "languages of art" also arises in the writings of Walter Benjamin, a philosopher who was far from Humboldtianism but not from the Romanticist paradigm as a whole. In his 1916 essay "On language as such and on the language of man", he proceeds from the idea that the linguistic essence of things is their language ("what is communicated by the spiritual essence is its language") to discuss the languages of art as the essential languages of things and materials:

There is a language of sculpture, of painting, of poetry. Just as the language of poetry is partly, if not solely, founded on the name language of man, it is very conceivable that the language of sculpture or painting is founded on certain kinds of thing-languages, that in them we find a translation of the language of things into an infinitely higher language, which may still be of the same sphere. We are concerned here with nameless, nonacoustic languages, languages issuing from matter; here we should recall the material community of things in their communication. (Benjamin 1996: 73)

Art forms are treated as "languages" analogous to natural languages. Benjamin (1996: 73) especially emphasizes the semiotic nature of the languages of art:

¹¹ In one of his lesser-known articles "On the national character of languages" (1822), Humboldt again likens language to art in line with the Romantic paradigm (Humboldt 1963). To understand and interpret art that is not mediated by natural language, one still needs language, he writes. Language, like art, informs an idea of the invisible. Therefore, according to Humboldt, one can speak of 'languages of art' (*Sprache der Kunst*). On the other hand, Humboldt inverts the metaphoric formula 'language of art' when he writes, in his *Aesthetische Versuche*, about poetry as 'the art of language' (*die Kunst durch Sprache*). In this new formula, the term 'language' ceases to be used metaphorically, and the term 'art' acquires a meaning of 'craft' rather than 'fine art'.

[...] it is certain that the language of art can be understood only in the deepest relation to the doctrine of signs. Without the latter any linguistic philosophy remains entirely fragmentary, because the relation between language and sign (of which that between human language and writing offers only a very particular example) is original and fundamental.

In the 20th century, the philosopher and art theoretician Gustav Shpet, who, like his Kharkiv predecessor Aleksandr Potebnja, followed the steps of Humboldt, was one of the first to highlight the communicative nature of word and language. Shpet was convinced of the social nature of the word as a means of communication. In his book *Aesthetic Fragments*, he posited: “The word is *prima facie* communication. The word, therefore, is a means of communication; the message is a condition of communication.” (Shpet 2007[1923]: 207) Even before Karl Bühler and Roman Jakobson, Shpet distinguishes a triad of language functions: ‘semantic’ (and ‘synsemantic’), ‘expressive’ and ‘deictic’. Most likely, this classification of functions was based on Anton Marty’s linguistic theory. This Austrian philosopher of language was one of the first to propose the concept of language as an intentional social activity and a functional model for describing language.

Thus, the communicative approach to language was first outlined in philosophy even earlier than in philology. Importantly, Gustav Shpet associated this approach with hermeneutics of the *poetic inner form*, that is, essentially with artistic discourse, in terms of the deep semiotics methodology.¹² Shpet was not the only scholar working in this direction in his times. Many of his colleagues at GAKhN (State Academy of Artistic Sciences), such as Wassily Kandinsky and Alexander Gabrichevsky, specialized in what we would now call semiotic issues of art. Another member of GAKhN, Aleksej Tsires (1929), proposed a characteristic term for what they all were doing – the ‘artistic semiotics’ (*hudozhestvennaya semiotika*).¹³

Another philosopher of language from the early Soviet Russia, Valentin Voloshinov, proposed a socially oriented theory of language that encompassed the theory of artistic language, claiming that “a word taken wider, as a phenomenon of cultural communication, ceases to be a self-sufficient thing and can no longer be understood regardless of the social situation that has generated it” (Voloshinov 1926: 247). Artistic communication (in Voloshinov’s original version – *hudozhestvennoe obshchenie*) stands out along with other types of communication:

¹² See Feshchenko 2015; Bourgeot 2021.

¹³ For GAKhN studies on ‘art as language’ see the two magnificent volumes of Plotnikov, Podzemskaia 2017, containing both the original texts from the 1920s and their criticism in contemporary scholarship.

productivist, business-related, household-related, or ideological. He defines artistic communication as “a special type of communication, which has its own specific form. To understand this special form of social communication, realized and fixed in the material of the work of art, is the task of sociological poetics.” (Voloshinov 1926: 248) A work of art, according to Voloshinov, becomes such only “in the process of interaction between the Creator and the Contemplator as a significant moment in the event of this interaction” (Voloshinov 1926: 248). He sees the originality of aesthetic communication in its artistic tasks, which are different from other types of discourse, such as political or advertising discourses.

Russian Formalists, to whom Voloshinov was opposing his conception, introduced the notions of ‘language of literature’ and ‘poetic language’ on the borderlines of linguistics and literary theory. As early as in 1921, Roman Jakobson first used the term ‘aesthetic function of language’, which he would much later rephrase as ‘poetic function’. Jakobson’s colleague from the Moscow Linguistic Circle, Grigorij Vinokur, equated the concepts of ‘language in an artistic function’, ‘language as a material of art’ and ‘language as a work of art’. In the Formalist School, Humboldt’s formula ‘language as art’, describing language as a whole, was narrowed down in its content and began to refer to a special, “poetic” state of the national language. The language of literature was thought of as a “sublanguage” of natural language. Later on, in the 1920–30s, the conjunction of ‘language’ and ‘art’ was transferred from the terminological apparatus of linguistics to the adjacent field of art theory and history. In the works of the GAKhN members we can find terminological expressions such as ‘the grammar of art’ and ‘the language of things’ (Alexander Gabrichevsky), ‘the language of painting’ (Lev Zhegin), ‘the language of portrait image’ (Aleksej Tsires), and the like.¹⁴

At the next stage in the evolution of the conceptual complex ‘language and art’, the Formalist concept of ‘poetic language’ was transferred into the analytical apparatus of the Prague Structuralists (primarily through Roman Jakobson, Yuri Tynianov and Jan Mukařovský) and, later, into the metalanguage of European, American and Russian semiotics. Art was recognized as a semiological fact, and the artistic languages of various types of art were recognized as sign systems analogous to natural language. Hence such terms as ‘theatrical language’ (Juri Lotman), ‘language of cinema’ (Boris Eikhenbaum), ‘language of architecture’ (Umberto Eco), ‘language of music’ (Deryck Cooke), ‘language of fashion’ (Roland Barthes), and many similar ones. The art historian Ernst Gombrich, in his book *Art and Illusion* (1960), symptomatically uses the term ‘linguistics of the artistic

¹⁴ For a broader spectrum of thinking about sign and semiotics in the 20th century, see Ivanov 1976, 2008.

image', constructing it by analogy with the linguistics of a language sign. He would strongly insist on the idea that the expression 'language of art' should be more than just a scientific metaphor.

Another valuable contribution to elucidating the relationship between language and art was made in the 1940s by Ernst Cassirer who devoted a series of lectures to it, published under the title "Language and art". In the series, he considers language and art as two inherent human "functions" and "energies" that participate almost equally in our perception, cognition and intuition. Both have productive and constructive value. If language is a 'conceptual objectification' (it operates with 'concepts'), then art is a 'perceptual objectification' (it operates with 'percepts'). Accordingly, 'poetic language' is radically different from 'conceptual language', although, according to Cassirer (1979[1942]: 188–189), "the symbolism of language is not a mere semantic, but it is at the same time an aesthetic symbolism. Not only in the language of poetry but also in ordinary language this aesthetic element cannot be excluded." Cassirer tends to think that the aesthetic is present not only in the language of art, but also in colloquial speech. However, unlike those who tend to over-aestheticize language (like Benedetto Croce, for example), he clearly distinguishes between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic. Art places language in an aesthetic situation: "But as soon as we enter the aesthetic sphere all our words seem to undergo a sudden change. They are not only significant in an abstract way; they are, so to speak, fused and melted with their meanings." (Cassirer 1979[1942]: 159) On the other hand, art can be viewed by analogy with language: "In a certain sense all art may be said to be language, but it is language in a very specific sense. It is not a language of verbal symbols, but of intuitive symbols," Cassirer (1979[1942]: 186) concludes.

Thus, the conceptions of 'art as language' (i.e. as a system of signs) became generally accepted in the paradigm of structuralism and semiotics. This doxa was recognized even by philosophers who were far from linguistics, such as John Dewey, who, however, emphasized the untranslatability of the language of one art into the language of another:

Because objects of art are expressive, they are a language. Rather they are many languages. For each art has its own medium and that medium is especially fitted for one kind of communication. Each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as completely in any other tongue. The needs of daily life have given superior practical importance to one mode of communication, that of speech. This fact has unfortunately given rise to a popular impression that the meanings expressed in architecture, sculpture, painting, and music can be translated into words with little loss. In fact, each art speaks an idiom that conveys what cannot be said in another language and yet remains the same. (Dewey 1994[1934]: 211)

Dewey uses several nominations with the meaning of ‘language’ in this passage. First, he states that art is a ‘language’. By 1934, when this treatise was written, this concept was clearly understood as a ‘system of signs’. Further on, he contrasts the ‘language of art’ with other ‘tongues’, meaning national verbal languages. Unlike everyday ‘speech’, he goes on, art enters a different mode of communication, which allows it, as a ‘language’, to be translated into a ‘verbal language’. The idea of mutual translation of arts is put here on the rails of semiotic terminology. Finally, drawing from linguistic terminology, Dewey emphasizes that each of the arts has its own ‘idiom’.

In the second half of the 20th century, art was recognized as a semiological fact and the artistic languages of various types of arts were conceptualized as sign systems arranged analogically to language. In the 1960s, the American philosopher Nelson Goodman made a valuable attempt to put the semiotics of art into focus of the analytical philosophy of language. In *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Goodman 1968), he distinguished between verbal language as a sign system and representational non-verbal sign systems. Although the title of the book uses the then-popular formula ‘language of art’, in reality the author tends to separate these two concepts and to diversify the semiotic nature of these systems. This theory puts forward the “symptoms of the aesthetic” which characterize an aesthetic code or a symbolic system. At the same time, Goodman places art in the semiotic coordinates indicated earlier by Charles Morris: semantics, syntactic, and pragmatics. Goodman’s conception, which entailed a lot of criticism, nevertheless turned out to be useful in the field of the study of verbal-visual interactions and distinctions – what he himself called ‘showing’ and ‘telling’ as a follow-up to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s famous dictum “What can be shown *cannot* be said” (Wittgenstein 1922: 45).

In Soviet scholarship of the post-WWII era, the semiotic approach to art was first and foremost inaugurated by Juri Lotman, contemporaneously with his Western colleagues. A chapter of his classic book *The Structure of the Artistic Text* is characteristically titled “Art as language”.¹⁵ In it, he poses a fundamental semiotic question, whether we have “the right to define art as a language organized in a specific manner” (Lotman 1977: 7). If we consider language a communicative system, then, Lotman (1977: 7) argues, “in the same sense, we can speak of the ‘language’ of the theater, cinema, painting, music, and of art as a whole, as a language organized in a particular way.” He proposes to approach art from two different points of view:

¹⁵ Before Lotman, the formula ‘art as language’ was used in the title of a chapter of the book by the British philosopher Robin Collingwood *Principles of Art* (1938).

First, it permits us to single out those characteristics which art holds in common with every language, and attempt to describe those characteristics in the general terms of a theory of sign systems. Second, it permits us, in light of the first description, to single out that which is inherent to art as a special language, and which distinguishes art from other systems of this type. (Lotman 1977: 8)

These are the two basic goals of semiotic inquiry into the language of art, which Lotman pursues with other members of the Tartu–Moscow school (Isaak Revzin, Alexander Pyatigorsky, Vyacheslav Ivanov, and others). Art is defined as a ‘secondary language’, or ‘secondary modelling system’, and the language a work of art as an ‘artistic language’. Considering the ‘language of art’ among other sign systems, Lotman arrives at the notion of the ‘language of verbal art’, elaborating the Formalist conception of poetic language towards a more communicative semiotic theory.¹⁶

Thus, to date, in semiotics as a study of sign systems, a number of approaches have been developed over the 20th century, which we can consider as *linguo-aesthetic* and which are addressed in more detail below. Gustav Shpet’s essentially semiotic conception was one of the first approaches of this kind. It was developed in the 1910s–20s independently of the Saussurean and Peircean traditions and it specifically emphasized the aesthetic dimension of signs in artistic discourse. In this conception, the aesthetic sign appeared as a dynamic entity in which the internal and external levels of the structure (internal and external forms, according to Shpet) interact. In the 1930s, Jan Mukařovský elaborated a theory of the artistic sign: a work of art was treated as a complex aesthetic sign, the main property of which is autonomy (self-referentiality). The Prague scholar contributed to aligning Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiology with the ideas of the Russian Formalist School about poetic language. Among the most important concepts, relevant for both linguistics and semiotics, developed by Mukařovský, were the concepts of ‘function’, ‘sign’, and ‘communication’.

In post-WWII semiotics, the issues of communicative transmission of artistic signs were raised in the West by Nelson Goodman, Roman Jakobson, Umberto Eco and other semioticians. In Soviet scholarship of sign systems, artistic and semiotic problematics were developed within the framework of two academic schools: the Tartu–Moscow school led by Juri Lotman and Yuri Stepanov’s *linguo-semiotic* school (the latter continued to develop into the Post-Soviet time). The approaches of these schools differ in the ways of operating with analogies between ‘language’ and ‘art’. In Lotman’s school the focus of research is the language of art as a language of the second order (‘secondary sign systems’),

¹⁶ Suren Zolyan (2022) scrutinizes Lotman’s use of the concept of ‘language’.

whereas the main object of Stepanov's interests is the verbal language itself in its aesthetic manifestations. Their main difference is the vector of research attention: in the former case – from culture as a sign system to specific sign systems; in the latter – from language as a sign system to other sign systems of culture. The Tartu–Moscow school explicitly inherits two traditions – “Russian theory” of the 1920s–30s (including Gustav Shpet, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roman Jakobson) and Prague structuralism. The methodology of Stepanov's school is more oriented towards French semiology (from Saussure to Benveniste and Barthes¹⁷) and the pragmatically oriented philosophy of language (from Wittgenstein to Austin). Yuri Stepanov's discourse-communicative approach is based on the understanding of a linguistic fact as a statement, and the totality of speech facts as a discourse. Structural methods are less typical of his school; more relevant are the methods of linguistic pragmatics and philosophy of language which are also applied to the analysis of artistic discourses. In spite of the difference in research focus and methodology, for both schools the language of art and literature is a priority.¹⁸

2. Models of sign and semiosis as a basis for modelling artistic communication

From the point of view of semiotic theory, *communication* is carried out through *semiosis* as a process of generating and interpreting signs. The following addresses some conventional and commonly-accepted *models of sign* and their corresponding *models of semiosis* in order to further adjust them to the theory of *artistic*

¹⁷ Building upon Charles Bally's functional stylistics, Stepanov analyses individual, “particular” messages in artistic speech, thereby making a transition from the paradigm of structuralism to the anthropocentric style of thinking, while semiotics itself is defined as “the study of the analogies between works of art and speech, and, consequently, the study of the common features of art and language” (Stepanov 1975: 4). He deals with the question of “how the transposition of a verbal expression into an iconic form is carried out” (Stepanov 1975: 4), hence, the correspondences between sign systems of various kinds. The emphasis here is on specific juxtapositions of verbal and non-verbal sign systems in their dynamic transitions.

¹⁸ In a broader aesthetic context, this orientation towards the language of art over the last century was part of a global and fundamental shift of what Jacques Rancière calls the “aesthetic regime of art”. Writing about several “scenes” from such a shift (specifically, about avant-garde cinema), Rancière (2013: xi) elucidates “how a performance or an object is felt and thought not only as art, but also as a singular artistic proposition and a source of artistic emotion, as novelty and revolution in art – even as a means for art to find a way out of itself”. In many avant-garde artistic and literary practices, language becomes a means for literature to find a way out of itself – and a way back into itself – in a revolutionized aesthetic regime of art.

discourse and *artistic communication*. The goal in this section is to arrive at an adequate representation of *artistic sign* as an aesthetic entity comprising its verbal constituents and of *artistic semiosis* as a prerequisite for communicative acts in verbal art.¹⁹ The focus will be on the discourses of verbal art in its various manifestations (poetry, prose, drama, performance, spoken word etc.) as material for a linguistic analysis of artistic communication.

Models of the sign date back at least to antiquity. In the late 19th century, the German logician Gottlob Frege proposed a logico-philosophical model of the linguistic sign as a dichotomy of meaning and sense; still, it did not yet take into account the communicative specifics of semiosis.²⁰ Nevertheless, it was a crucial conceptual step to subsequent semiotic models, as important as Charles Peirce's ternary model of the sign. Frege makes a distinction between the sense (*Sinn*) of the object and its reference (*Bedeutung*). Frege's model of reference is traditionally presented as a visual diagram depicting the elementary ternary structure of a sign, consisting of *sign*, *denotation* and *concept* (Fig. 1).

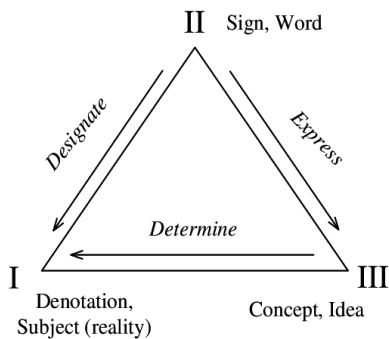


Figure 1. Frege's scheme of reference (reproduced from Lavrischeva, Stenyashin, Kolesnyk 2014).

In the real process of meaning making, the relations between these three elements can be considered in different directions: from sign to object, from object to sign, from sign to concept, from referent to concept, etc. Yuri Stepanov calls this circumstance “a generalization of the Frege triangle by rotation”. On the diagram, “we seem to rotate the triangle with the entities fixed at the apexes, leaving the semiotic names of the apexes intact (language – object – significatum)” (Stepanov 1998: 95).

¹⁹ The term ‘verbal art’ is used here in Roman Jakobson’s sense (e.g. in Jakobson 1985) as any aesthetic form of linguistic activity. The same meaning is maintained in the pioneering work on performance in verbal art (Bauman 1984).

²⁰ See Grodziriski 1990 for Frege’s impact on semiotics.

If we aim to apply this scheme to *artistic sign* as a linguistic entity, the problem immediately arises of what the 'object' or 'referent' of such a sign is. The world of artistic signs, in contrast to the world of ordinary linguistic signs is arranged differently in relation to both the 'body' of the sign itself, the 'concepts' signified by the sign, and the objects of the real world. Ordinary semiosis becomes problematic in artistic sign systems. Let us illustrate this difference by addressing two ways of dealing with a *word* as *lexeme*.

Alexander Reformatzky uses Frege's scheme in his introductory lectures on linguistics. He discusses the word '*sharik*' ('шарик' – 'sphere'), which in its direct meaning has a clear connection between word, object, and concept, whereas in the role of a personal name (dog's nickname *Sharik*) only a clear connection between word and object, without a clear connection with the concept of 'roundness' of a 'sphere'. In this diagram, C means 'word' (*slovo*), B – 'thing' (*veshch*), П – 'concept' (*ponyatie*) (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Reformatzky's scheme of reference. The captions to triangles read as follows: (1) *sharik* ('little ball'), (2) *Sharik* ('dog's name'), (3) *sharik* ('mongrel dog'). (From Reformatzky 1996: 37)

In both cases, the normal binding of name and object is performed. But what does this object-name connection become when it enters artistic discourse, namely the literary text?

Daniil Kharm's absurdist short story "The death of a little old man" begins with the following sentence: "*U odnogo starichka iz nosa vyskochil malen'kij sharik i upal na zemlyu*" ("A small sphere popped out of an old man's nose and fell to the ground") (Kharm's 1999: 725). Can we say with certainty that we identify the word '*sharik*' ('sphere') in this statement either with some object or with some clear concept? What kind of 'sphere' can 'pop out' of the 'nose'? For everyday communication, this statement is at least absurd: we can hardly imagine the physical properties of a *sphere* in such an absurd proposition, just as we can hardly associate it unambiguously with the concept of 'roundness', because further in

Kharms' story we are reading about 'a small square popping out of the mouth,' and about 'a wand popping out of the eye.' Therefore, the word '*sharik*' here is torn away from its referential and signficative meanings, acting as a special sign in a special, anomalous artistic world, in which such transformations of objects and words are possible.

Another, not so anomalous, example of the special functioning of the word '*sharik*' in literary discourse is Mikhail Bulgakov's story "Heart of a dog". Initially used as a dog's nickname (*Sharik*), it is transformed, according to the narrative, into its modified form, the surname *Sharikov*. The referent of the surname *Sharikov* becomes a new, transformed character who has changed his biological affiliation, the significatum being not the meaning of 'roundness', but the very name *Sharik* generated in the artistic text. Thus emerges a dual lexical unit '*Sharik-Sharikov*' with a bifurcated reference of interchangeable creatures ('human' and 'dog'), and intratextual dual signification (meanings of 'human' and 'canine').

Let us now correlate the Fregean triangle of the sign with what we can call the triangle of *poiesis*. By 'poiesis' we mean the process of generating an artistic form (as the subject of 'poetics'), by analogy with *semiosis* as the process of generating a sign (as the subject of 'semiotics'). We will make use of Gustav Shpet's (2007[1927]) theory of inner forms to see how an artistic sign is constituted as different from an ordinary linguistic sign.²¹

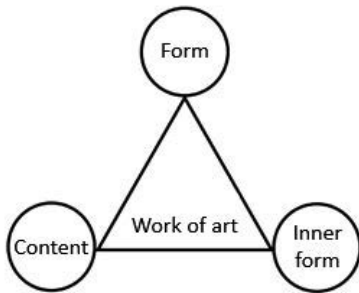


Figure 3. The structure of a work of art, according to Shpet.

Fig. 3 provides a tentative schematization of Shpet's model representing the process of *poiesis* expressed in a work of art in the form of a minimal triad of *form*, *content*, and *inner form*. A work of art has, firstly, a form – it can be static or dynamic, complete or unfinished, sequential or fragmentary, abstract or figurative,

²¹ Shpet primarily appeals to literary discourse in analysing 'inner poetic forms'. Some of his colleagues from GAKhN later applied his approach to other artistic practices (Wassily Kandinsky and Lev Zhegin to painting, Nikolaj Zhinkin to cinema).

etc. The artistic form refers to some content which can be located both in the outer world and in the inner world of the artist him/herself and, in certain cases, even within the form itself (the case of *self-reference*). Finally, an essential element of the artistic process is the inner form. Often this is a channel that connects form and content, sometimes it is a separate “layer” of a work of art, but, in a general sense, the inner form is always a “conductor” between the artist’s intention (the world of the author) and the embodiment of this intention in the form of the work (the world of the work). In the inner form, according to Shpet’s theory, we have a certain law, or algorithm, for constructing a work of art, a rule for its formation.

Shpet gives the following definition of the ‘inner form’: “Inner forms lie between outer and objective forms. It goes without saying that this ‘between’ is nothing but a kind of relation between the indicated limits, which constitute the changing, living terms of this relation. [...] it is a dynamic relationship in its very essence” (Shpet 2007 [1927]: 93). He calls the ‘content form’ (*predmetnaya forma*) what appears in our scheme as ‘content’. Elsewhere, he identifies the inner form with the “inner idea” of creativity: “A work of art is the product of some purposeful creation, i.e. verbal creativity, guided not by a pragmatic task, but by the inner idea of creativity itself [...]” (Shpet 2007[1927]: 142). The ‘inner poetic form’, according to Shpet, is an element peculiar only to works of art, in contrast to the ‘inner logical forms’ that exist in other types of discourses, such as scientific or philosophical. To understand a scientific notion in an academic text one needs to make clear logical connections with other notions, without any “hidden meanings” implied. “Understanding” a work of art, he claims, is a dynamic (communicative) realization of the meaning of an inner form. In artistic communication, the movement of one’s consciousness from the perceived sign to its inner meaning is consistent with a specific creative design of the text (with the idea of the whole work of art as an original system of signs) which is actualized by the ‘inner poetic forms’ of this work. Shpet does not give any particular linguistic illustrations of his reasoning. However, the idea is nonetheless clear: when we read or analyse a work of verbal art (a poetic text, for example), a particular verbal sign (sound sequence, word, repeated pattern, etc.) in a text should never be treated univocally: its meaning is in each individual case motivated by formal and semantic dominants within this particular text. For instance, each particular word, phrase, verbal image or metaphor in the first stanza of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (“the journey of our life” / “death is little worse”, “a gloomy wood” / “wild woodland”, “lost” / “found” / “discovered”, “how hard it is to say” / “the very thought of which” / “I’ll speak of what I else,” etc.) is charged both with the generic paradoxical concept of ‘divine comedy’ which serves as a framework of the ‘inner poetic form’ for the whole text as well as the many “refractions” (phonic, lexical,

grammatical, semantic) it goes through as the lines of the poem unfold. Words in a poetic text (or other work of verbal art) are not arbitrary signs but deeply motivated signs involved in a dynamic process of sense-production.

A somewhat different treatment of the nature of *artistic signification* was proposed by Jan Mukařovský who understood a work of art as a complex sign, “consisting of a sensual symbol created by the artist, of a ‘meaning’ (= aesthetic object) residing in the collective consciousness, and of an attitude towards the designated thing, striving towards the general context of social phenomena” (Mukařovský 1994: 194). This schematization is vaguely reminiscent of Peirce’s triad of icon, index and symbol, and most likely is its approximate projection onto the realm of art. The aesthetic sign, unlike other types of sign, in Mukařovský’s conception, is an “autonomous” and “non-communicative” message associated with a special type of authorial subjectivity (Mukařovský 1976[1934]). Such a sign does not fully correspond to the ‘expressive sign’ in Karl Bühler’s classification (partly taken over by the Czech linguist and art scholar). An aesthetic sign is not a tool, it does not affect any reality, as a symbolic sign does, but it reflects reality as a whole. Reality, reflected in its entirety, is also arranged in an aesthetic sign in accordance with the author’s subjective image of the world, Mukařovský believes.

In the late 1930s, Peirce’s follower, the American semiotician Charles Morris developed a behaviourist theory that presented art as a space of iconic signs that have a special “value”. *Iconicity* in his conception differs from the mere similarity of the signifier to the signified (Morris 1939: 420–421). But iconicity, it is emphasized here, is not a sufficient characteristic of the artistic, since it in itself determines any kind of pictorial representation in general (for example, a road sign is also iconic). Only when the designatum of an iconic sign becomes a “value” (value) does the sign become aesthetic. Value is not contained in objects as such, but is generated by the act of perception. This conception places the aesthetic sign in the process of interpretation, thus linking the two dimensions of sign systems – the semantic and the pragmatic. The dynamic and variable nature of aesthetic connotation was later pointed out by Svend Johansen (1949) within the glossematics theory and, later, by Roland Barthes (1977) within the semiotics of the image.

Semiosis, according to Charles Morris (1938: 3), is a “process in which something functions as a sign”. We can then think of *artistic semiosis* as a process in which a work of art, or any part of it, functions as a sign.²² Now let us project Shpet’s scheme of *poiesis* onto the Fregean scheme of the linguistic *sign*, as a result of which a scheme of artistic semiosis can be drawn (Fig. 4).

²² For Peircean perspectives on aesthetic and artistic semiosis see Heusden 1996.

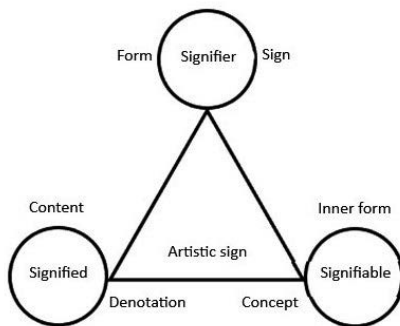


Figure 4. Scheme of the artistic sign.

The world of artistic signs that is formed in a work of art can be represented as the relationship between the *signifying* form, or sign vehicle, the *signified* content, or reference, and the uniquely *signifiable* inner poetic form, or artistic concept, serving as a generating principle in aesthetic meaning making. In Bulgakov's story discussed above, the oscillation between the human and the canine rendered by the words 'Sharik–Sharikov' would be exactly this inner poetic form expressing the author's primary semantic mechanism of text generation.

In introducing the term 'signifiable' (in a newly understood English form with a meaning of 'potentiality' expressed by the suffix '-able') we want to stress the dynamic and prospective, as well as personal and idiosyncratic nature of any act of artistic semiosis. A *signifiable* in our sense is an oscillating unity of meanings (never a univocal reference) contained in a set of verbal forms. In Daniil Kharms' text discussed above the idea of 'sth popping out of sth' would be a *signifiable* for all other lexical units used in the story ('sphere', 'nose', 'square', 'wand', 'eye', 'ground', etc.). A signifiable, then, is a semiotic device of dynamic interaction between the signifiers and the signified of verbal units in an act of artistic semiosis. This procedural and fluctuating nature of signification in artistic discourse was stressed by Julia Kristeva's (1984) term '*signifiance*', an intentional – and often subversive – process of signifying and sense-production in a poetic (and more generally, artistic) text.

In this resulting scheme, the *signifiable* (derived from the process of intentional and creative "signifying" by the author) acts as a subjective instance. The process of meaning making in an artistic sign always includes a component of inner form (without which ordinary semiosis can do) as a special, authorial binding of form and content of the sign. However, this is only a scheme of semiosis, which requires detailing from the standpoint of artistic communication. Semiosis, as mentioned above, is a prerequisite for communication as the transfer of sign, meaning, and sense from one person to another.

3. Models of communication and their aesthetic extensions

Another major model of semiosis – that of Charles Sanders Peirce – introduced a more subjective aspect to Frege’s scheme. What in the Fregean triangle was called ‘significatum’ Peirce names the ‘interpretant’. The interpretant is the way the sign is used by the subject or the way the sign affects the subject. Semiosis, according to this conception, is carried out in the community of producers and interpreters of signs. In this scheme, the emphasis is on the interpreter, i.e. the person receiving and perceiving the sign. Peirce’s model turned out to be very popular in the Anglo-American tradition of semiotics, including the semiotics of art. Most attention is paid in this tradition to the perception of the sign, not to its generation. From our point of view, *artistic semiosis* equally encompasses both processes – generation *and* perception; or rather, it is based on a complex interaction between these two processes and the very structure of the sign. What Peirce’s model lacked, though, was a due account of all aspects of the communicative process, so that semiosis would be modelled as a component of communication.

Karl Bühler’s conception became the first properly linguistic model of a *communicative act*. The German linguist and psychologist was also one of the first to raise the question of a ‘speech event’ as the initial moment of linguistic activity, the participants of which are the sender as the subject of the speech act, the recipient as the addressee of the act, and the object, or situation, in question (Fig. 5).

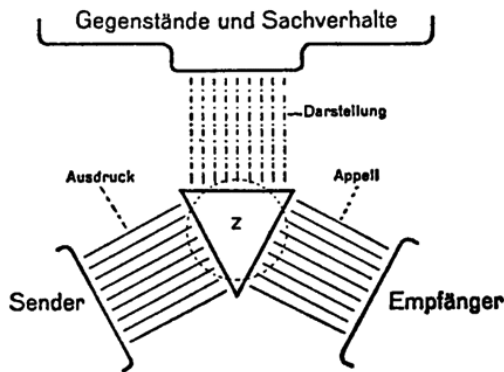


Figure 5. Bühler’s organon model. *Gegenstände und Sachverhalte* = objects and states of affairs; *Darstellung* = representation; *Ausdruck* = expression; *Appell* = appeal; *Sender* = sender; *Empfänger* = receiver (Bühler 2011[1934]: 35).

This scheme of language as an organon gave rise to what would be called ‘the functions of language’. What interests us most in this case is the function that

Bühler called 'expressive', associated with the speaker's expression of his/her feelings, thoughts and emotions. Accordingly, the linguistic sign in the expressive function is a "symptom", or index, as it is associated with the sender and the expression (*Ausdruck*).²³ Although Bühler himself does not associate this function with the *artistic* process, he outlines an important distinction between at least three types of speech: expressive (which is closest to artistic communication), representative (closest to scientific communication) and appellative (closest to everyday or political discourse).

Elaborating the modelling of an act of artistic communication, we can place the triangle of artistic semiosis in the centre of Bühler's scheme, exactly where he left the empty triangle. As a result of this step, *the structure of the artistic sign would be inscribed in the structure of the communicative act* (Fig. 6). The sender of the message is the author of the *artistic utterance*, the recipient is the reader, listener, or viewer. The dotted circle indicated in the organon scheme would mean the possibility of actualizing different sides of the artistic sign in the dynamic interaction between the author and the reader. To create an artistic utterance, sign, or text, the author can refer in different directions to the form, then to the content, then to the inner form of the text or sign, then to the addressee. The reader will also have access to different sides of the artistic sign and, depending on the way the author created the sign, perceive and interpret the artistic sign in the most adequate way, but always preserving the freedom of choice. This circulation of sides (components) of an artistic sign is the essence of an artistic utterance.

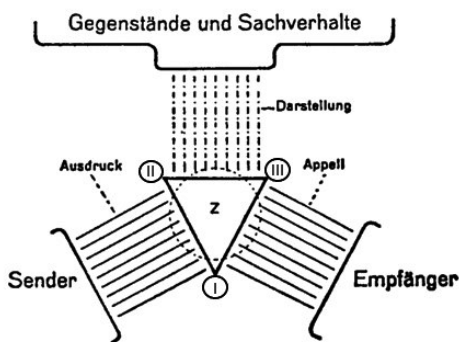


Figure 6. Basic scheme of artistic communication based on Bühler's organon model. Rotating triangle apices: I – form (according to Shpet), or sign (according to Frege), or signifier (according to Saussure); II – content (according to Shpet), or meaning (according to Frege), or signified (according to Saussure); III – inner form (according to Shpet), or sense (according to Frege), or signifiable (according to my terminology).

²³ Apparently, Bühler borrowed the term 'expressive function', just like Shpet, from reading the works of Anton Marty.

Moving on, let us turn to the development of Bühler's model within the studies of *poetic language*. Here we are already stepping on the ground of artistic communication *per se* and those attempts that sought to model its structure.

Roman Jakobson's model formulated in the essay "Linguistics and poetics" (Jakobson 1960) became the first model of communication in which the artistic message had a distinct status and function (Fig. 7). Departing from what he deems the focal question of *linguistic poetics*, "What makes a verbal message a work of art?" (Jakobson 1960: 350), Jakobson tries to solve two theoretical problems: (a) to single out the *differentia specifica* of verbal art in relation to other types of art and (b) to differentiate verbal art from other types of speech behaviour. However, he sees the solution of these problems not in the analysis of the actual aesthetic qualities of a work of art – as Shpet, Mukařovský, and others did before him – but in the specified structure of the information channel, through which artistic communication operates. Hence Jakobson's main conclusion regarding the poetic function in communication: "The set (*Einstellung*) toward the MESSAGE as such, focus on the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of language." (Jakobson 1960: 356) *Poetic function* (as different from others: referential, emotive, conative, phatic and metalingual functions), he emphasizes, is not the only function of verbal art, but it is dominant and constitutive. In other types of communication, the poetic function may also appear, but only as an additional one in relation to others.

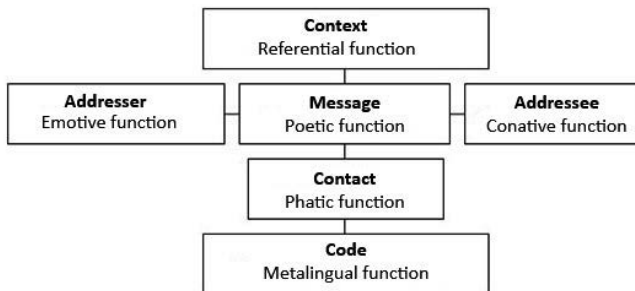


Figure 7. Jakobson's scheme of a communicative act (according to Jakobson 1960: 353–357).

Jakobson associates the poetic function of language with artistic language as a subcode of the universal language code. At the same time, his conception does not clarify how the message in the poetic function is actually constituted, how it relates to the sender and the recipient, and how artistic communication

works specifically. These questions were addressed by other scholars developing Jakobson's model. Among them, the main ones are Umberto Eco and Juri Lotman who worked out their models almost simultaneously in the 1960s.²⁴

Umberto Eco (1972) proposed a specification of Jakobson's model, introducing new elements (such as 'signifying message', 'signified message', 'subcode', etc.) and new connections between elements into the scheme of a human communicative act (Fig. 8). Based on this scheme, Eco deduces the parameters of the *aesthetic message* in artistic communication. First, he claims, a message with an aesthetic function, unlike others, is characterized by ambiguity and self-reflexivity (Juri Lotman comes to similar conclusions). In addition to these characteristics, the aesthetic message is often redundant at the level of signifiers, which leads to information intensity. Eco cites Gertrude Stein's well-known poetic phrase "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" as an example in which excessive repetition violates the expectation of language. It is also redundant at the semantic level – each time being repeated, a 'rose' can mean different objects; this phrase does not result in denotative clarity and certainty, exactly due to its poetic function.

As the message becomes more complex, "self-reflexivity (focus on itself) finds its expression in the isomorphism of all levels of the message" (Eco 1972: 105). The network of such isomorphic correspondences at the levels of form and content constitutes the "specific code of a given work". Eco calls this special, unique code of the work of art an 'aesthetic idiolect'. This notion suggests that, in an aesthetic message, the *inner code* of the work, enciphered by the author, creates an isomorphism of the entire formal-content structure of the text. Eco does not use the concept of the inner form of a sign, but, in fact, the aesthetic idiolect as an inner code means the same for him, only in terms of linguistics and information theory. The author encodes the message in his/her own unique idiolect, sends it over a communication channel to the recipient who decodes it based on his/her own expectations and violations of expectations from the sender's code. Eco also uses the notion of 'aesthetic information' transmitted in a message with a poetic function in addition to the 'semantic information' that is transmitted in any communication process.

Another valuable extension of Jakobson's model of language functions that is relevant for linguistic aesthetics, is Suren Zolyan's treatment of poetic function in the modal perspective. According to this conception, the communication scheme can be supplemented by modal constructs, "which are essential for describing

²⁴ For relationships between Jakobson's and Lotman's theories see Avtonomova 2009 and Pilshchikov, Sütiste 2022. Umberto Eco himself wrote on Jakobson's (Eco 1987) and Lotman's (Eco 1990) role in semiotics.

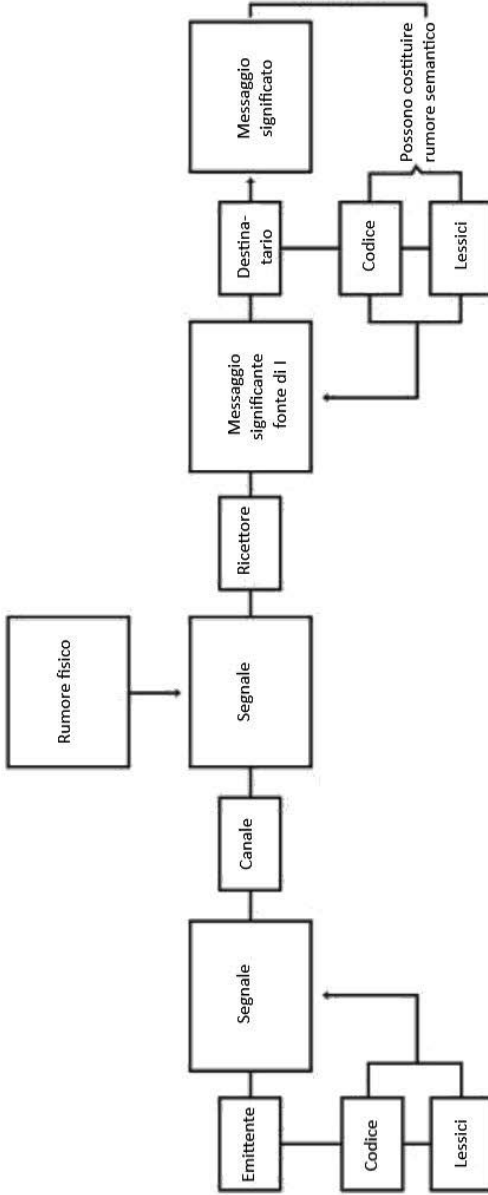


Figure 8. Eco's scheme of a communicative process (Eco 1972: 58). *Rumore fisico* = physical noise; *Lessici* = lexico-codes; *Codice* = code; *Emittente* = sender; *Segnale* = signal; *Canale* = channel; *Ricevitore* = receiver; *Messaggio significante* = signifying message; *Destinatario* = addressee; *Messaggio significato* = signified message; *Possono costituire rumore semantico* = can constitute semantic noise.

the poetic function, as a reference to possible and even impossible worlds/ contexts, semantic dependence on possible/impossible contexts, a description of an addressee that 'should be there', an orientation towards a channel that does not exist, or a message referring to a possible context" (Zolyan 1999: 642). In this view, the poetic function appears not as a focus on maintaining a certain link in the communicative act (the message itself), but as transforming the entire communicative process and its components (addressee, addresser, communication channel, code, etc.). For example, the splitting of a reference (the emergence of a dual reference) in *artistic communication*²⁵ may be accompanied by a splitting of the addressee/addresser (double addressee-addresser) or of the communication channel itself (doubling the communication channel, as in the case of a spoken poetic text in relation to its written form).

Juri Lotman, who accepted Jakobson's theory as the most adequate communicative model, clarified some of the components of his functional scheme in relation to literary communication and to art as a communicative system. In particular, he distinguished between the synthetic 'sender code' and the analytical 'recipient code': "In order for an act of artistic communication to take place at all, the author's code and the reader's code must form intersecting sets of structural elements. For example, the natural language in which the text is written must be comprehensible to the reader. Non-intersecting parts of the code form that province which is distorted, creolized, or by any other method reorganized in the passage from writer to reader." (Lotman 1977: 25) According to Lotman's theory, a common code, in principle, cannot exist due to, at least, the ambiguity of an artistic sign, whereas communication in literature is built as a constant dynamic recoding of an aesthetic message between the sender and the recipient. Moreover, the message in artistic communication is always to a large degree a result of building an individual creative model of the world (a poetics), in contrast to ordinary language in conventional communication where more often than not speakers exchange messages without necessarily conveying a creative system of values and signs.

Compared to Jakobson, Lotman pays more due attention to the aesthetically active, i.e. creative, factors of artistic communication. In addition, his communicative model allows for such an important mechanism in the development of artistic discourse as *autocommunication*, i.e. addressing the message by the

²⁵ And in poetic communication as a particular variety of artistic communication. Émile Benveniste (2011, in his posthumously published papers from the 1960s) and Algirdas Greimas (1972) were the first to use the notion of 'poetic communication'. From a semiotic perspective, Roland Posner (1982) defines 'poetic communication' as a type of linguistic communication that has an aesthetic function.

sender to the sender as a two-way transmission of information in a creative act of interaction peculiar to artistic texts. Reception of code, rather than reception of information, is, according to Lotman, a characteristic feature of aesthetic activities.²⁶ In artistic communication (literary, cinematic, or other), a text may communicate with itself with the help of discourse markers, producing a dynamic relationship between text and metatext. In this case, we can say that autocommunication is a mechanism of the *signifiable* that makes the *signifier* and the *signified* one and the same entity – a text or a linguistic unit referring to itself on a meta-level, as in Jorge Luis Borges' short stories, Dmitry Prigov's conceptualist texts, or Jean-Luc Godard's meta-reflexive cinema.

The following will foreground the focal points of Lotman's autocommunication model, relevant for an integrated theory of artistic discourse.

4. Self-reference and autocommunication as constituents of artistic semiosis and artistic communication

Proposing his pioneering scheme of reference, Gottlob Frege did not point out the possibility in which the sign itself could act as a referent or an object. However, he noted cases when a concept can serve as a referent – in scholarly texts, a scientific concept serves as the subject of reflection. Ferdinand de Saussure does not allow such a possibility in his conception of the sign, either: the signifier and the signified are located on different planes, not assuming mutual overlap.²⁷ In Charles Ogden and Ian Richards' theory of reference, which is the development of Frege's scheme towards the psychologization of the semiotic process, there is no place, either, for a symbol that refers to itself. Even in analysing literary material, the two English linguists remain within the framework of a static triangular model that separates the instances of meaning to different apexes of the signification triangle.

The idea that a sign can signify itself came from literary discourse, namely from avant-garde poetry and criticism. The slogan of the Futurist poets about "the word as such" was not slow to resonate in the theory of the Formalist school about the poetic word as "a word turned upon itself". Poetically transrational

²⁶ Lotman especially foregrounds the 'plurality of artistic codes', as a specific feature of artistic communication. Moreover, he notes, "the receiver must not only decipher a message with the help of a particular code, but must determine the 'language' in which the text is encoded" (Lotman 1977: 24). This precisely is the process of auto-communication based on the aesthetic function of language as its centredness on the language and message as such.

²⁷ See Daylight 2017 for a discussion of Saussure's model of speech communication and its reception/critique by Jakobson.

words, such as ‘bobeobi’,²⁸ ‘euy’,²⁹ ‘dyr bul shchyl’³⁰ and the like, do not have a direct or clear referent; their meaning and significance is in their sounding, the sign vehicle consisting of just letters and sounds. This, however, is only an extreme case, a case of experiment. In reality, as members of the Formalist school claimed in the wake of the Futurist revolution, any poetic word at least partly refers to itself, since it detains the reader’s attention on its structure. In a 1923 article, a member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle, Grigorij Vinokur, pointed at the inner dynamics of the structure of the sign and the fact that Roman Jakobson later called the ‘introvertedness’ of the sign. In poetry, the sign itself becomes the referent: “poetic creativity is the work on the word not only as a sign, but as a thing that has its own construction” (Vinokur 1923: 109). Later, in the 1940s, Vinokur (1959: 392) described this feature of the poetic sign as “a property of the poetic word, which can be called its reflectivity, that is, its inclination towards itself”. This argument was reiterated and elaborated by Roman Jakobson and Yuri Tynianov in their contribution to the *Theses du Cercle Linguistique de Prague*: “From the thesis that poetic speech is directed at expression itself it follows that all the levels of a system of language that play only an ancillary role in communicative speech acquire a greater or lesser autonomous value in poetic speech. [...] the organizing feature of art by which it differs from other semiotic structures is an orientation toward the sign rather than toward what is signified.” (Theses 1982[1929]: 15, 18) Thus, Futurist poetics, Formalist theory of literature and Functionalist theory of language introduced the property of invertedness into Frege’s scheme of the sign’s reference. As discussed above, Shpet’s dynamic model of signification in poetry allows to rotate the Fregean triangle by swapping parts of its structure. The invertibility of the sign allows for the sign vehicle to take place of the referent.

Following the logic of moving from the structure of the sign towards the structure of the communicative act, let us now consider the connections between the referential theory of reflexivity (*self-reference*) and the communicative scheme of reflexivity (*autocommunication*).

When a sign enters the communicative process, different parts of its structure can be actualized for different elements, or links, of the communicative chain. According to a simpler scheme by Bühler, these elements can be represented by the sender, the recipient, and the subject matter (the situation). In Jakobson’s more

²⁸ From Velimir Hlebnikov’s poem: “Bobeobi pelis’ guby, / Veeomi pelis’ vzory, / Pieeo pelis’ brovi, / Lieeej — pelsya oblik, / Gzi-gzi-gzeo pelas’ tsep’. / Tak na holste kakih-to sootvetstvij / Vne protyazheniya zhilo Litso.” Roman Jakobson (1921) concludes an early essay discussing this semi-*zaum* poem.

²⁹ Aleksej Kruchenyh’s poetic example of a *zaum* word consisting of vowels only.

³⁰ From Aleksej Kruchenyh’s *zaum* poem: “Dyr bul shchyl / ubesh shchur / skum / vy so bu / r P’.

specified scheme, these elements are the addresser, the addressee, the code, the channel, the context, and the message. Accordingly, it is possible to represent many different actualizations of a sign in a communicative act. For example, in some cases, the form of the sign itself can be focalized for the addresser: the moment of creating the text composition is actualized. In other cases, the form of the sign may be foregrounded in relation to the code (transformation of language in the artistic message) or the channel (material location of the sign on the text medium). Such cases appear in artistic discourses which are more focused on the form (corporeality, materiality) of the sign – in Futurist or Lettrist poetry, in Conceptualist art, etc. In discourses oriented towards the denotative plane, the denotative moments of the sign are actualized – in early Soviet literature of the fact, in documentary literature or cinema, in Realist prose, in photography, etc. Then there are types of artistic discourse that work more with the significative or symbolic plane of semiosis – the literature of Symbolism, on the one hand, experiments with semantics in literature of the absurd, on the other.

Autocommunication, i.e. reversibility of the communicative process to the sender of the message (the author of the text) is a special type of communication which is realized in artistic discourse *par excellence*. While self-reference is a procedure that connects a sign with meaning through inverting the sign upon itself, the process of autocommunication allows for feedback between the addresser and the signified message, where the addresser eventually becomes the addressee.

Juri Lotman introduced the notion of autocommunication, departing from Jakobson's model. He proposed to consider two different channels, or directions, of message transmission, in the mechanisms of language and culture. The first, most typical, vector is 'I-S/HE', "in which the 'I' is the subject of the communication, the possessor of the information, while the 's/he' is the object, the addressee" (Lotman 1990: 21). Another vector is 'I-I', when the subject transmits a message to him/herself. Paradoxically, Lotman notes, there are quite a lot of such situations in culture: from diary entries and self-reflection in thought to the inner speech of characters in a literary text: "In the 'I-I' system the bearer of the information remains the same but the message is reformulated and acquires new meaning during the communication process. This is the result of introducing a supplementary, second, code; the original message is recoded into elements of its structure and thereby acquires features of a new message." (Lotman 1990: 22) Lotman draws a scheme of this recoding (Fig. 9).

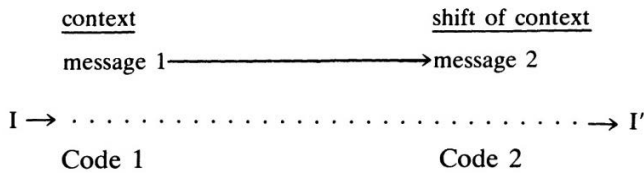


Figure 9. Lotman's model of autocommunication (Lotman 1990: 22).

He illustrates this type of communication with Fyodor Tyutchev's poem "Dream at sea", in which the author's psychological self-observation manifests itself: "*Ya, sonnyj, byl predan vsej prihoti voln; Ya v haose zvukov lezhal oglushen*" ['Sleepy, I was abandoned to the full caprice of the waves; I flew deafened in a chaos of sounds'] etc. In poetic verse, the principles of autocommunication start working even at the formal level:

The signal that we have to treat a text not as an ordinary message but as a code model are rhythmical series, repetitions, supplementary text organizations, all of which are quite superfluous from the point of view of 'I-s/he' communication. [...] Rhythmical-metrical systems take their origin not in the 'I-s/he' system but in that of the 'I-I' system. (Lotman 1990: 30)

The verse form, thus, organizes the space of autocommunication in the communicative space of a natural language. With the help of poetic means, the addresser (the poet) reorganizes the code of his/her own message in order to discover for him/herself and subsequently for the reader an updated code for deciphering. As a result of artistic communication through autocommunication, a special communicative mechanism is created that is inherent in aesthetic processes:

Art is born not from the 'I-s/he' system or the 'I-I' system. It uses both systems and oscillates in the field of structural tension between them. The aesthetic effect arises when the code is taken for the message and the message as a code, i.e. when a text is switched from one system of communication to another while the audience keeps awareness of both. (Lotman 1990: 32)

The writer's self-translation of a literary text is a good example of autocommunication, as Peeter Torop (2008) has shown. Translating him/herself into another language, the writer continues to subjectivize by means of another language. In this regard, the source/target dichotomy loses its relevance and dialogic relations between twin texts take its place. According to Lotman's semiotic model, the

translation of a text can be considered as ‘I–s/he’ communication: the translator receives a message from the author and recreates the text on the author’s behalf. Self-translation corresponds to the ‘I–I’ model, in which the addressee and the addressee are the same: the author receives a message from him/herself and translates it into another sign system on his/her own behalf. Unlike more typical person-to-person ordinary communication, the process of autocommunication – and self-translation as its artistic manifestation – the information itself is subject to change, which is achieved through a new code that defines a “context shift” (Lotman 1990). At the same time, in agreement with Lotman’s model, the transformation of information leads to the transformation of its carrier (“restructuring of the ‘I’”, in Lotman’s terms).³¹

Autocommunication, as we have seen, is one of the most characteristic mechanisms specific to artistic discourse, related to the transfer of signs in the process of artistic communication. This mechanism ensures the actualization of the aesthetic function in communicative semiosis. Autocommunication as the reversibility of the addressee–code–message connection is a dynamic manifestation of reflexivity in artistic discourse on the part of the author-sender-addresser.

5. Towards a linguo-aesthetic model of artistic communication

Let us now summarize some of the results of the analysis of existing models of artistic communication with a view to present a synthesized model, taking into account the linguistic, semiotic, and aesthetic parameters of the artistic act. Based on the models of sign making and meaning making in artistic discourses, we can make a linguo-semiotic specification of the model artistic communication as a result of verbal creativity and interaction of the author (artist) and the reader (viewer, listener) through a work of verbal art as a message constituting a sign system.

We have undertaken to superimpose, within the framework of one schematization, Karl Bühler’s psychological scheme of communication and Gustav Shpet’s schematization of the structure of the aesthetic sign. Roman Jakobson’s information model specifies Bühler’s model and introduces additional links into the communicative chain. The most important of them in *artistic communication* is the *message*. However, as Umberto Eco and Juri Lotman further elucidated, although the poetic function focuses on the message for its sake, the message

³¹ Aspects of Lotman’s autocommunication model are productively discussed in Han 2014; Pilipoveca 2016.

does not work in isolation even in poetic discourse: it is associated in a specific way with other instances of the communicative process – the context (a special poetic reference), the code (a special way of transforming the language), the communication channel (as a rule, a method of transmitting a message which is remote in space and time from the addresser and addressee) and the participants in communication (the addressee, mediator or addresser, differently subjectified in artistic communication).

If we correlate the scheme of semiosis with the scheme of communication, then Shpet's triangle of an artistic sign can be considered as a message actualized in the communicative act. The structure of the sign itself will correlate with the structure of the communicative act, namely: the form of the sign – to the message itself; the content of the sign – to the context of the message; and the internal form of the sign – to the code. Considering that, according to Eco, the code in artistic communication is the inner code ('aesthetic idiolect'), then Shpet's idea of the inner poetic form as a generative algorithm of a work of art is projected onto the process of forming an artistic message from the transforming context (referential world) of the author's artistic code (Fig. 10).

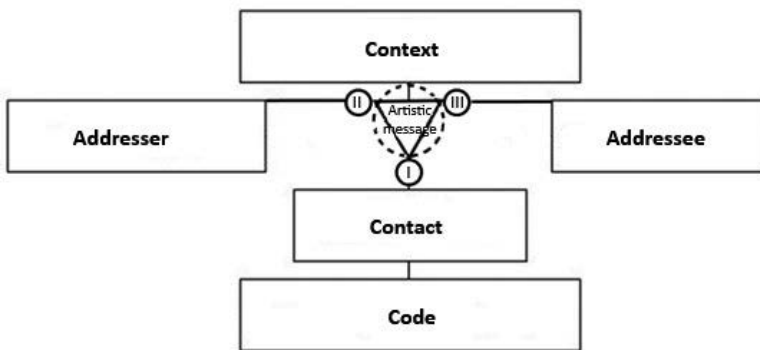


Figure 10. Synthetic scheme of artistic communication, based on Roman Jakobson's communicative scheme. Rotating triangle apexes: I – form (according to Shpet), or sign (according to Frege), or signifier (according to Saussure); II – content (according to Shpet), or meaning (according to Frege), or signified (according to Saussure); III – inner form (according to Shpet), or sense (according to Frege), or signifiable (see p. 580 above).

The schematization presented here allows us to consider a work of art as part of an actual communicative process that specifically foregrounds the inner structure of the artistic message. Gustav Shpet's scheme of poiesis, whose key factor is 'inner poetic form', thus contributes to Jakobson's modelling of communication

in general, specifying the structure of the aesthetic message in the process of artistic communication. The structural aesthetic qualities of a sign (text, object) turn out to be correlated with communicative links in the “loops” of artistic communication. Generalizing in this form the model of artistic discourse in action, we get access to its deep semiotics as a process of transmitting a sign between the participants of the communicative process.

In one of the articles on the nature of poetry, Roman Jakobson (1987: 378) expresses the idea that the message in poetic speech is not just the word as such, but the word as a combination of its poetic components, including the ‘inner form,’ “when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and inner form, acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality”. As this synthetic model demonstrates, an artistic message differs from others in that it opens possibilities for the receiver to actualize freely different moments of its structure (outer or inner, formal or semantic). This is the basis of aesthetic interpretation: a text of art is always an ‘open work’ (according to Eco) containing multiple vectors of its communicative circulation. For example, Alexej Kruchenyh’s seemingly nonsensical verse “*Dyr bul shchyl*” cited above, has, since its first publication in 1913, entailed various interpretations in terms of its sound shape, possible semantic meanings, and inner lexical forms. Being an avant-garde artistic verbal message, it has opened multiple ways of communicating itself.

At the same time, the channel of conveying an artistic message is non-linear – it is not transmitted once and for all as a ready-made packaged product for accurate interpretation. An artistic message can circulate between the addresser and the addressee in different circles, or cycles. When it is generated, different feedback chains can be actualized: either the sender–message connection, or the message–addressee connection, or the addressee–addresser connection (the case of autocommunication), or the connection between components of the structure of the message itself (the case of self-reference). When an artistic message is perceived, these connections can be reconfigured differently, but the addressee can use the same connection cycles, forming a message for himself or herself as meaningful. At the same time, there can be no ultimate addressee in poetry, which is why the artistic message is potentially never fully interpreted.

It is the *inner structure* of the text or art object as a sign system, consisting of three sides (three apexes of the triangle ‘artistic message’ presented above), that distinguishes the artistic message from other types of communication. Let us observe two short illustrations of this idea.

Here are images of two similarly organized texts. One (Fig. 11) is an ordinary Soviet-time library card. The other (Fig. 12) – a series of card poems by the Moscow Conceptualist Lev Rubinstein who printed them as *samizdat* publications.

The same form of the text is realized in essentially different language functions and communicative situations – ordinary (utilitarian) in the first case, aesthetic (poetic) in the second. The second text is not only a poem made of verses, but also an aesthetic object entering into artistic performance. Linguo-aesthetic analysis allows to demonstrate how the structure of this artistic text (each particular card of the series) as a sign and its specific functioning as such in the process of artistic communication are interconnected, i.e. generated by the sender and interpreted by the recipient. The ordinary library card description indexically refers to one particular object (a book on a library shelf), whereas the poet’s card text, although being a chain of ordinary phrases, triggers the recipient’s imagination and symbolic interpretation.

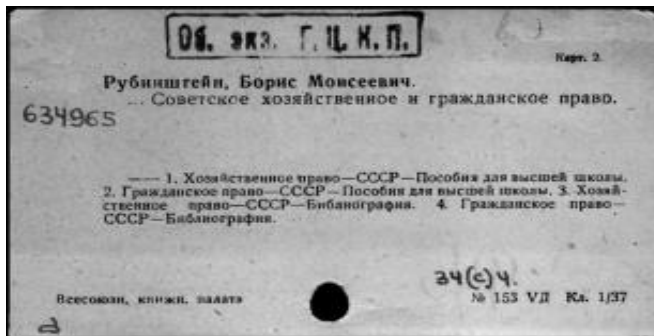


Figure 11. Ordinary library card.

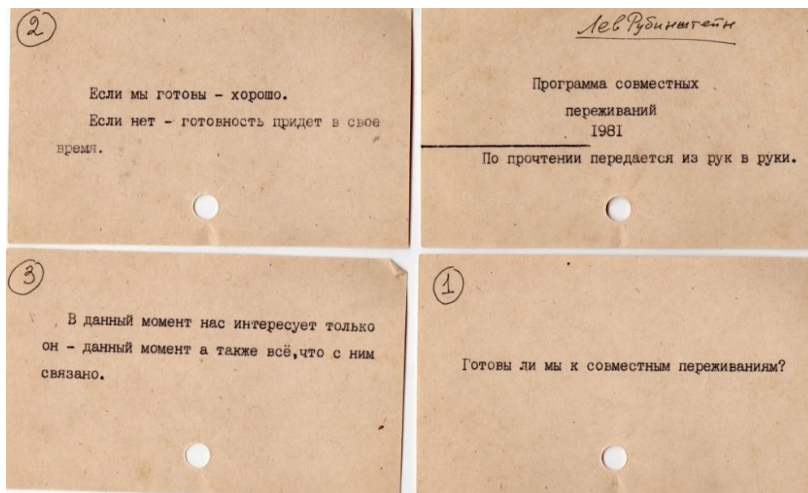


Figure 12. Lev Rubinshtein. Programme of Shared Experiences (1981).

Another example of the difference of artistic message from the other kinds is the following two banners. The first (Fig. 13) is a Soviet-era slogan, the second (Fig. 14) is an object of artistic activism created in 2012 by the Laboratory of Poetic Action, a group of Russian poets/artists, as part of the anti-Putinist campaign. The function of the former statement is clearly political and propagandistic; the latter, while maintaining the same form, is artistic (created as an art performance), hence allowing for ambiguous interpretations. The latter message can be interpreted both as a direct political statement of one group of the public against another ('Вы – нас' ['you – us']), and as a polysemantic artistic statement, where polysemy is already inherent in the Russian verb 'представлять' (in at least three meanings: 'imagine', 'represent', 'introduce'). The communicative situation of this artistic message engages the recipient (spectator) in a play of word and phrase meanings (and layers of meanings) within its linguistic structures.



Figure 13. Soviet propaganda banner “Lenin’s name is forever”. Moscow, 1970s (Reproduced on-line as part of the article “*K chemu prizyvai i chto obeshchali narodu lozungi v SSSR*” [‘To what did Soviet banners call people and what did they promise’].³²)

³² See <https://dzen.ru/a/W6jre3O5SACqf3TG>.

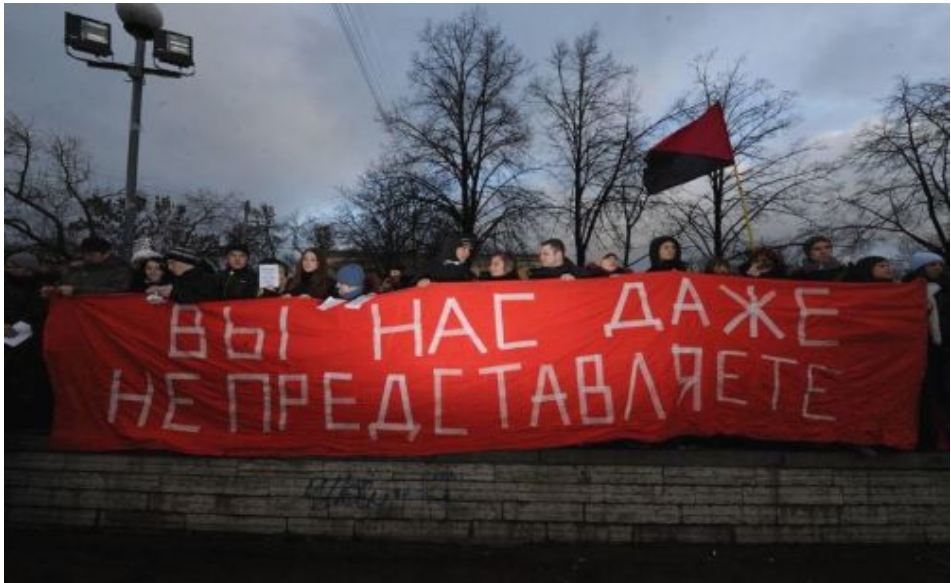


Figure 14. “You don’t even represent (imagine, introduce) us”. Laboratory of Poetic Action. Moscow, Bolotnaya Square, 2012. (Reproduced on-line as part of the article “*Vy nas dazhe ne predstavlyae’te’: Evgeniya Pishhikova – o geroyah Bolotnoj*” [‘You don’t even represent us’: Evgeniya Pishhikova – on the heroes of Bolotnoj].³³)

Thus, a sign becomes artistic if it allows its structure to turn in different ways to different moments of interpretation. A philologist or critic who interprets an artistic message is also a participant in artistic communication; as an interpreter, he/she can focus on different aspects of a sign or a communicative process. This is exactly what Roman Jakobson meant to say in his “Closing statement” on linguistics and poetics cited above (p. 583).

The synthetic model presented here, based on Roman Jakobson’s scheme of communication with adjustments from Juri Lotman’s autocommunication submodel, relates to any act of verbal artistic communication, written or spoken, created or performed. Artistic practices of the last century – and even more so of the last decades – often combine verbal and non-verbal components in synthetic forms of representation and performance (e.g. conceptual art, installation, environment, performance, song and music concert, street art, etc.). This linguistic model of artistic communication can be applied to similar new forms and formats of artistic discourse in different media environments, where verbal elements play a role in the aesthetic experience. It provides additional semiotic and linguistic tools

³³ See <https://openuni.io/course/6-course-5/lesson/20/material/643/>.

for the analysis of various types of artistic discourse, the literary being just one of the kind. Refinement and application of this model opens up prospects for further study of linguistic and artistic phenomena within the framework of the linguo-aesthetic approach, 'linguo-' refers to the linguistic aspects of artistic texts and 'aesthetic' – to the study of artistic discourses. This kind of approach is not limited exclusively to poetic texts, but may apply to various forms, genres, and modes of verbally manifested artistic discourse, including the newly emerging ones, such as digital art or performance writing. Another vector of linguo-aesthetic research can be focused on poly-discourse interactions of various types within multi-media artistic practices. The linguistically grounded model of artistic communication may be juxtaposed with other types and modes of communication and semiosis in human (or human-machine, or machine-machine) interactions.

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La communication artistique comme objet de sémiotique et d'esthétique linguistique

L'article aborde le concept de communication artistique en tant que type d'interaction sémiotique dans les discours artistiques. Les méthodologies sémiotiques de modélisation du signe et de l'acte de communication, développées dans les travaux de Gottlob Frege, Gustav Špet, Jan Mukařovský, Roman Jakobson, Juri Lotman, Umberto Eco, Suren Zolyan et quelques autres sémioticiens, sont discutées en mettant l'accent sur les modèles du signe esthétique et les modèles correspondants de sémiosis en relation avec les systèmes artistiques. L'étude se concentre sur les discours d'art verbal dans ses diverses manifestations (poésie, prose, théâtre, performance, spoken word, etc.) comme matériau d'une analyse linguistique de la communication artistique.

L'article discute spécifiquement des représentations linguistiques du discours artistique dans un modèle de sémiosis esthétique. Le modèle de communication artistique dans l'art verbal qui en résulte est présenté comme une synthèse du schéma de l'acte communicatif de Jakobson et de sa spécification importante dans le modèle de « communication littéraire » de Lotman. La différenciation faite par Lotman entre le « code de l'expéditeur » et le « code du destinataire » est particulièrement importante. Comparé au schéma de Jakobson (par ailleurs novateur et fondateur), le modèle de Lotman prend en compte les facteurs esthétiques de la communication littéraire. L'un de ses facteurs clés est l'autocommunication, c'est-à-dire l'envoi du message par l'expéditeur à l'expéditeur lui-même comme une transmission bidirectionnelle d'informations dans un acte créatif d'interaction propre aux textes artistiques. La réception du code, plutôt que la réception de l'information, est, selon Lotman, un trait caractéristique des activités esthétiques. Ce mécanisme assure l'actualisation de la fonction esthétique dans la sémiosis communicative.

Basé sur les modèles existants de signe, de sémiosis et de communication (en prenant le schéma de Jakobson comme cadre principal), un modèle synthétique, linguo-esthétique de communication artistique est esquissé, considérant globalement les paramètres linguistiques, sémiotiques et esthétiques de l'acte artistique. À la différence des méthodologies linguo-poétiques (développées par les formalistes russes, les structuralistes de Prague, les sémioticiens de Tartu-Moscou, et d'autres linguistes), l'approche linguo-esthétique permet une compréhension et une analyse plus nuancées de toute une gamme de manifestations d'art verbal, y compris des pratiques contemporaines telles que la poésie numérique, la performance, le *street art*, etc.

Kunstiline kommunikatsioon kui semiootika ja lingvistilise esteetika objekt

Artikkel tegeleb kunstilise kommunikatsiooni mõistega kui ühe semiootilise vastastiktoime tüübiga kunstidiskursustes. Gottlob Frege, Gustav Špeti, Jan Mukařovský, Roman Jakobsoni, Juri Lotmani, Umberto Eco, Suren Zolyani ja mõnede teiste semiootikute teostes välja töötatud semiootilisi meetodikaid märgi ja kommunikatsiooniakti modelleerimiseks käsitletakse sõnakunsti diskursustes, võttes arvesse selle erinevaid ilminguid (luule, proosa, draama, taideetendus, etluskunst jne) kui kunstilise kommunikatsiooni lingvistilise analüüsi materjali. Eelkõige vaadeldakse artiklis kunstidiskursuse keelelisi

representatsioone esteetilise semioosi mudelis. Tulemuseks saadud sõnakunstis aset leidva kunstilise kommunikatsiooni mudel esitatakse Jakobsoni kommunikatsiooniakti skeemi ja selle Lotmani „kirjandusliku kommunikatsiooni“ mudelis esitatud olulise täpsustuse vahelise sünteesina. Olemasolevatele märgi, semioosi ja kommunikatsiooni mudelitele toetudes (kasutades peamise raamistikuna Jakobsoni skeemi) visandatakse sünteetiline, keelelis-esteetiline kunstilise kommunikatsiooni mudel, võttes üheskoos arvesse kunstiakti keelelisi, semiootilisi ja ka esteetilisi parameetreid.