https://doi.org/10.24101/logos.2019.10
Gauta 2018 11 16

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# SEMIOTINĖ IR KULTŪROLOGINĖ SKAITMENINIŲ FRAZEOSIMBOLIŲ RAIŠKA

## Semiotic and Culturological Passportization of Numeric Phraseosymbols

SUMMARY

The article presents a scientific argument for the semiotic-cultural passportization of the implementation of numeric phrasal symbols. First of all, the argument is based on Yu. M. Lotman's new understanding of semiosphere as the (functional) semiotic continuum and its correlation with the construct of the conceptual sphere of the cognitive-discursive paradigm. An assumption is made that both models have "diachronic depth", which is based on the cultural signs-symbols, of which the most ancient are numeric symbols. The basic principle of the semiotic and cultural passportization of numeric phraseosymbols has been formulated. It is the principle of organizing the world, which dates back to the Pythagorean concept of numbers. Through the analysis of the process of forming numbers, each national culture is interpreted.

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje pateikiamas mokslinis argumentas apie semiotinę-kultūrinę skaitmeninių frazeologinių simbolių raišką. Teiginys grindžiamas naujuoju Yu. M. Lotman aiškinimu apie semiosferą kaip tęstinį (funkcinį) semiotinį tęstinumą ir koreliaciją su tokia kognityvinės diskurso paradigmos konstrukcija kaip konceptuali sfera. Daroma prielaida, kad abu modeliai turi „diachroninį gylį", grindžiamą kultūriniais ženklais-simboliais, iš kurių seniausi yra skaitmeniniai simboliai. Formuluojamas pagrindinis semiotinių ir kultūrinių skaitmeninių frazeosimbolių principas. Tai Pitagoro numerologijos teorija grindžiamas pasaulio organizavimo principas, per kurio prizmę būtina analizuoti jų formavimo procesus ir tolesnį aiškinimą.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: semiosfera, skaitmeniniai frazeosimboliai, semiotinė ir kultūrologinė raiška, diachroninis gylis.
KEY WORDS: semiosphere, numeric phraseosymbols, semiotic and culturological passportization, diachronic depth.

## INTRODUCTION. AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC TRADITIONS OF SEMIOTICS

Modern Semiotics (in its cognitive-discursive transformation – my clarification – *R. V.*), according to Lotman continues to revise the basic concepts proposed at one time by its founders – representatives of two scientific traditions: 1) American (Pierce, Morris), who considered sign as the primary element of every semiotic system, and 2) European (Saussure et al.), who considered sign in the context of the antinomy of language and speech (text) (Lotman 1992: 12). Morris believed that the concept of sign could be just as fundamental for various sciences about man as the concept of atom is for physics, cell – for biology, etc. (Morris 1983: 37–38).

At the same time, it is necessary to agree with Lotman's opinion that "with all the differences between these two approaches, they share a common understanding of the process of semiosis, the essence of which, as their supporters believed, is the simplest, atomic element – the primary element, and all subsequent signs are constructed on the basis of similarity with this sign. Proceeding from this position, in the first scientific tradition the subject of study was an isolated sign, and more complex semiotic formations were considered as a sequence of signs. The second direction was associated with the aspiration to explore a separate communicative act as a primary element, and as a model of every semiotic act. The second direction was connected with desire to explore a separate communicative act both as a primary element and as a model of every semiotic act. As a result, an individual act of sign exchange was interpreted as a model of a natural language, and models of natural languages as universal semiotic models" (Lotman 1992: 12). And since Saussure considered semiology as a part of social psychology, he was convinced of the need to study the culture of society through language as the most important sign system.

Thus, the semiotic tradition established in the epoch of structuralism was based on a hierarchical principle – to carry out analysis from the simple to the complex, in which a complex object was analyzed as a sum of simple ones, that is, a structure consisting of simple and clearly-defined atomic elements with their subsequent complication was assigned to the ontological characteristics of the object.

## DEFINITIONS OF SEMIOSPHERE IN FUNCTIONALISM AND COGNITIVE-DISCURSIVE PARADIGM

With the development of functionalism, structural approach has gradually exhausted itself, and semiotics came to the conclusion that any systems (Anokhin 1978) in their functioning do not exist in isolation (immanent) form. They

function according to Lotman's belief as a "semiotic continuum" (Lotman 1992: 12), filled with different types of semiotic formations and at different level of their organization, among which close relations are established. The scientist called this continuum semiosphere.

In cognitive-discursive paradigm, the model of semiosphere began to be considered as the concept sphere (Maslova, Sternin, Popova, and others), consisting of "a set of concepts" of a particular culture. But, unfortunately, still debatable is the question of what such a set of concepts is, what relationships are established between concepts of different kinds, types, etc. There were numerous attempts by different researchers to explain the gnoseology of conceptual sphere from the standpoint of structural-semiotic model, i. e. from considering its organization from simple concepts to more complex ones, and they even introduced terms for their designation (Prikhodko and his followers; as well as earlier works in the field of studying artistic concepts (Kaganovskaya 2003). But their simplified understanding of the ontology of concept in general (taking into account only its current / modern structure or the structure that "unfolds itself" in individual authors' artistic model of the world) did not contribute to deciding which concepts should be classified as simple and more complicated, etc. The classification they proposed or, as they consider, the typology of concepts, is far from scientific justification. We are convinced that conceptual model of each culture can be represented only when a consistent and optimal typology of concepts is developed, based primarily on the ontological principles of their taxonomy, taking into account diachronic (or rather, panchronic), and not only contemporary nature of the concepts as mental formations that go back to the archetypes of glottogenesis (Klimov 1988).

## DYNAMIC MODEL OF SEMIOSPHERE: DIAHRONIC AND SYNCHRONIC SUBMODELS

And here a new view of Lotman on the understanding of semiosphere deserves attention as well, in particular, his idea that this model has a "diachronic depth, as it is endowed with a complex memory system without which it cannot function (develop). Dynamic development of elements of semiosphere (substructures) are directed towards their specifications and thus increase in its internal diversity. However, its integrity is not destroyed, as it is based on the invariant-variant principle being based on symmetry – asymmetry and demonstrating periodic change in the dominant flow of all life processes in all their forms (Lotman 1992: 13). Symmetry – asymmetry as the basic principle of semiosphere is considered by Lotman as dissection of a certain unity of the symmetry plane, resulting in the appearance of mirrored structures which are the source of further diversity and functional specifications of signs (see the theory of conceptual integration of Fauconnier and

Turner, in particular, a mirror integration network (mirror networks) as a special type of cognitive models). Cyclicity also implies rotational motion around the axis of symmetry.

Combination of these two principles is observed at various levels of semiosphere – from the opposition of mythological (cyclical) time and historical (directed) time (Lotman 1992: 21).

## CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN SEMIOTIC CONTINUUM OF CONCEPTOSPHERE

We assume that the most important role in the organization of semiosphere is enacted by symbols, as they express in the concentrated form cultural values and senses (in the concept sphere they are, above all, cultural concepts). Since the conceptosphere as a model of the semiosphere is a continuum in the form of a field model built on the invariant-variant principle, it is obvious that cultural concepts as cultural symbols will be its invariants, represented by diverse variants.

Scholars of cultural symbols claim that the most important function among their diverse invariants, including national ones, is performed by signs-symbols, their number is enormous in the universe of culture (semiosphere), since they differ from other signs by a high degree of conventionality (agreement) and conformity. And the main task of Cultural Studies and related sciences, that study symbols, is to develop their harmonious taxonomy, or, as it is said now, their *culturalogical portrait*. In this regard, we could offer the most optimal term *semiotic and culturological passport* to denote not only the register (corpus) of sings-symbols, but also information about each sign, substantiating the principles and criteria for their passportization.

## PRINCIPLES OF SEMIOTIC AND CULTUROLOGICAL PASSPORTIZATION OF NUMERIC SIGNS-SYMBOLS

The stated problem is undoubtedly impossible to be solved in one article, so we focus on the development of the semiotic and culturological passportization principles of one of the most ancient signs and symbols – numeric, mainly because they are basically mythological in nature, and constitute a large fragment of the naive model of the world, and hence conceptual, which, according to Apresyan, "reflects in every natural language ways of perceiving and conceptualizing the world, when the basic concepts of language evolved in a single system of views, in the so-called collective philosophy [...]" (Apresyan 1995: 39).

Determining the value of symbol in the development of cultural life, Averintsev gives the following definition of it: in the broadest sense, the symbol is an image perceived in the aspect of its significance, and a sign, in this case, represents the inexhaustible polysemy of the image (Averintsev 1971: 826). Based

on this definition of the symbol, we could assume that the symbol is a dynamic image, since its meaning cannot be reduced to one specific meaning / understanding. This is a set of semantic perspectives. And since "a symbol, according to Lotman, never belongs to any single synchronous state of culture" (Lotman 1992: 192), it always comes from the past and goes into the future, acquiring its multi-level character and multidimensionality, which generate its polysemanticism (Lotman 1992: 192).

And if we consider this understanding of symbols in projection on numeric symbols, which form, first of all, the sacred subsphere of semiosphere, more conservative than the profane sphere, then we could consider them to be one of the most stable fragments of cultural-conceptual continuum.

Our assumption is based on the works of Cassidy, Losev, Lotman, Toporov, and other scientists who have carried the number to the categories of culture and called it a sacred symbol. In Cultural Semiotics universality of numbers symbolization in global terms is explained, on the one hand, by anthropocentricity of the world perception and universal system of human development and, on the other, by the desire of man to understand the world and himself / herself directly through the sacred power of numbers.

According to Toporov's observations, "since ancient times, numbers have served as ways of describing the world order and the person orientation in it, hidden meaning and magical possibility of influencing everything around have been assigned to them [...]" (Toporov 1988: 629). Therefore, numbers with their symbolism are one of the fragments of the mythological model of the world and the basis of the semiosphere, reflecting both the cyclical nature of its design and the principle of symmetry – asymmetry.

Mythological model of the world is a special substructure of semiosphere, representing both the primary semiotic model of cognition and ordering of the surrounding world by a primitive man, as well as a peculiar reflection and interpretation of the universal vision of modern world.

As Averintsev wrote, it is the number that becomes an instrument / method and means of overcoming destructive chaotic tendencies and establishing relations of order in the model of the universe. For both ancient Greek and Byzantine culture, the idea of the world existence in space and time was associated primarily with the idea of order and harmony (Averintsev 1975).

The same understanding of harmony as a general regulating principle was among the Pythagoreans, and the number was considered by them as a tool for the implementation of this principle, i. e. it was the wording of its laws. Pythagoras considered orderliness, organization, symmetry, and therefore beauty to be the most important aspects of the universe. The Pythagoreans proceeded from their main thesis that "order and symmetry are beautiful and beneficial, and disorder and asymmetry, on the contrary, are harmful. But the beauty of the Macrocosm – the Universe, believed by the Pythagoreans, is revealed only to the one who leads a correct life, that is, to the one who maintains order in his

inner Microcosm. Consequently, the Pythagorean way of life assumed a cosmological, highly moral goal – to bring harmony of the universe into the life of man himself (Voloshinov 2010). For representatives of ancient philosophy, beauty and harmony were synonymous with reason. And if for Plato and Aristotle beauty was in the mind, for Pythagoras – in the number (Spirkin 1988).

The same philosophy is characteristic of the works of Cassirer, who in his three-volume work "The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms" expanded the concept of a symbol to an understanding of the human world, and considered a man himself as a "symbolic creature" endowed with the natural ability to order the chaos surrounding him with the help of symbolic forms (Cassirer 2002) and, directly, numbers.

Based on the *ordering principle of sacralization of numbers*, we can assume that it is this principle that should be fundamental in their semiotic and culturological passportization as signs-symbols of culture in general and of each national culture in particular.

## PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SEMIOTIC AND CULTUROLOGICAL PASSPORTIZATION OF NUMERIC PHRASEOSYMBOLS

The issue of passportization of scientific information about the object under study was discussed in modern cultural science as a methodological need to confirm objectivity of its research results. And it is not by chance that new epistemology of the XXI century is based on the explanatory principle – a fundamental principle of cognitive approach (Kubryakova 1995), which is designed to provide scientific and evidence base of the studied object of culture.

The emerged methodological trend in cultural studies related to the compilation of the passport of the research object was developed in the context of such problems as "cultural (Bartel) / sociocultural portrait" of a city, region, etc., although scientists themselves say that "the concept of cultural portrait is not a full-fledged part of theoretical and methodological arsenal of cultural science, since it has not yet received a scientific definition" (Kudinova 2016). But at the same time, they recognize that this concept has a great and promising potential for using it and filling it with scientific sense in complex works claiming to create a complete model of the object being studied, based on a broad understanding of culture as a system of products (artifacts – both of material and spiritual culture,) human creativity: from technology to ideology (Ibid.).

Considering traditional definition of a portrait as "images or descriptions of a person or a group of people existing in reality now or in the past", we point out that it correlates with the system of scientific ideas of the symbolic paradigm of cultural science (Great Soviet Encyclopedia). Indeed, in order to present historical-culturological interpretation of the concept of portrait, it is necessary to

operate with a categorial term-apparatus of semiotics, and above all, with such categories as "sign" and "symbol" (Lotman, Makovsky, Toporov et al.).

This means that in order to compile a portrait of any object of cultural science, its sign-symbolic nature should be disclosed taking into account historical factors, that is, we are convinced, we should develop a semiotic and culturological passport. Therefore, introducing a new concept into the use of culturalogical semiotics, we especially want to emphasize that this passport in diachronic and even panchronic as well as synchronic aspects is an open evolutionary-dynamic system of characteristics (ontological, gnoseological, epistemological) of the studied cultural object, in this case – numbers. This approach is aimed at the implementation of cultural claims concerning complex consideration of cultural objects.

As part of the development of the procedure for the semiotic and culturological passportization of signs and symbols, it is possible to follow the evolution and ordering of the axiosphere (value system) and mentality of the people by the example of those symbols that are the most stable / conservative in semiosphere, for example, numeric symbols.

We assume that the semiotic and culturological passportization of numeric symbols should include 1) logical-semiotic (conceptual), historical and cultural (figuratively dominant) and axiological (value) information about each number, since numbers, being fixers of culture's memory, transfer plot patterns and other semiotic formations from one cultural layer to another.

This is especially characteristic of phraseosymbols with numeric symbolism, details of which in phraseological sources are not sufficient for reconstructing mechanisms for transforming a number as a mathematical symbol (serving, as a rule, in a broad sense to indicate the order for counting or quantity) into a culture symbol with its endless multitude of senses. We believe that passportization of logical-semiotic, historical, cultural and value characteristics of phrase symbols with numeric symbolism in particular will help explain the mechanisms of rethinking / transformation of Pythagorean symbolism of the number as a carrier of the world order, harmony, balance in general, and not its complete loss in stable nationally-marked cultural signs – products of phraseogenesis of a specific ethnos (Vasilenko 2009).

The category of number that establishes various relationships between objects or their parts, properties, characteristics, etc., as part of stable phrases, acquires special sign-symbolic characteristics in particular culture. And since the number is a conductor, a code in the process of symbolic sense-making, it has a high semiotic potential, the sources of which are in the subspheres of mythology, religion, astronomy, philosophy, etc.

Solving the task of passportization of numeric phraseosymbols, we will try to make initial passport of individual phrases from the point of view of logic and the situation in question, its historical, cultural and value contexts. And although this approach may probably be quite subjective and does not claim to be an exhaustive result, but we are con-

vinced that it has a scientific perspective and deserves further development.

If we talk about the possibility of numeric components to express the Pythagorean symbolism of order, then it is possible to rely on research of Panfilov, who suggested that initial stage in the process of the abstract concept of world discretization was formation of the concepts "one" and "more than one / many" (Panfilov 1975). Levy-Bruhl expressed a similar point of view, discussing the essence of the category of quantity, reflected in the consciousness of "primitive" peoples, which, in his opinion, was based on the sensory perception (feeling) of the number of a certain multitude (Levy-Bruhl 1994).

For example, making a passport of phraseosymbols with the number *Seven* as its component on the basis of their logical-semiotic parameterization, first of all, before uncovering figurative meaning of a phrase with this number, it is necessary to provide information about the number Seven in general to understand its ontological and epistemological symbolic essence, through the prism of which further semantic transposition of its meanings was carried out in various cultures.

Such initial information about the number Seven is collected in the dictionaries of symbols authored by Curlot, Makovsky, Tresidder et al. In particular, the last source presents optimal synthesized information about nature of the number "seven", which is the key to explanation of the mechanisms of numeric phraseogenesis, where its primary symbolism was perceived as a designation of the cosmic and any other order, as well as the completion of the natural cycle.

The importance of the number "seven", according to the information in the dictionary article by Tresidder, can be traced, starting with the first attempts at astronomical observations, when the ancients could see by the unaided eye seven "wandering stars" – the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn, which served in many cultures as names for the days of the week. This information became the source of the logical-semiotic motivation of a numeric phrase for English-speaking peoples – Seven-league (d) boots, where Seven is a code whose main meaning "about six directions of movement in space plus center" (Carlot 1994: 578) has been rethought in the whole phrase to figuratively designate the one who has omnipotent power, literally "rules over space".

Historical and cultural motivation of the next phrase "*The seven deadly sins*" goes back to the religious information "about the seven steps of hell", which was often embodied, according to the information in the dictionary article by Tresidder, in art, especially in Renaissance and Baroque paintings, where images of the seven deadly sins served as a "moral warning" against Evil. This information served as a source of semantic transposition of religious information into moral and ethical, and the phrase became a symbolic sign for characterizing "unforgivable (immoral) actions of man" for many nations, since not only in Christianity but also in Islam the number "seven" symbolized the myth of the seven steps of hell, as well as the seven doors leading to heaven.

Historical and cultural motivation of the numeric sign-symbolic phrase *"A fool may ask more questions in an hour than a wise man can answer in seven years"* dates back to the Jewish mythological tradition about the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, as well as to other cultures, where the "seven" was associated with intellectual power.

## CONCLUSIONS

The given separate examples of numeric phrase symbols confirm the idea formulated in the article about the need to compile a passport of each such phrase that is actively used in cultures of different nations, where their logical, semiotic and historical and cultural information will be presented as a source of symbolic motivation and, most importantly, as an indicator of people's perception of values. The information about the numeric phraseosymbols that have acquired sign status is stored in the minds of representatives of a particular culture. A numeric symbol is a mediator between different spheres of semiosis, as well as between semiotic and extra-semiotic reality and plays the role of a "semiotic condenser," according to Lotman (Lotman 1992: 199).

Therefore, the passport of numeric phraseosymbols should include most comprehensive information about a specific number and its sign-symbolic function in various phrases. Criteria for the selection of meaningful information about numeric phraseosymbols are such data as historicity, conventionality, civilizational dynamics, national-cultural motivation, contextuality, situationality. In general, certification of such a fragment of semiosphere will contribute to scientifically reasoned explanation of the secondary processes of phraseosymbolization (the method of actualization in human's mind of a particular image, idea or feeling) of sacral concepts, which include numbers, and high productivity of the process of their semiosis.

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