

Research On Polycoded Texts In Semiotic Space

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Abstract: In the twenty-first century, the semiotic landscape of communication has transformed into a polycoded sphere in which verbal, visual, and symbolic codes intersect to create meaning. This study explores the linguosemiotic and cultural mechanisms underlying the construction and interpretation of polycoded texts within semiotic space. The research aims to conceptualise how different semiotic systems—linguistic, visual, acoustic, and symbolic—interact in culturally specific ways to generate communicative effects. Adopting a mixed qualitative methodology grounded in semiotic analysis, discourse theory, and multimodal linguistics, this research analyses 60 examples of polycoded texts drawn from advertising, digital media, and literary discourse. The findings reveal that polycoded communication is structured through a dynamic interaction of culturally coded sign systems, where meaning emerges from semiotic synergy rather than from single-mode representation. The analysis identifies three major interactional mechanisms—iconic reinforcement, symbolic convergence, and cultural recontextualisation—that regulate the coherence of multimodal messages. The study concludes that the interpretation of polycoded texts is culturally determined, context-sensitive, and ideologically mediated. Understanding these mechanisms contributes to semiotics, linguoculturology, and multimodal communication theory by clarifying how human cognition, culture, and symbol systems intertwine to produce meaning within globalised semiotic spaces.

Keywords: Polycoded text, semiotic space, linguoculturology, multimodality, meaning-making, cultural codes, semiotic interaction.

Introduction: Background and Relevance

Modern communication increasingly operates through polycoded texts—units that integrate verbal, visual, acoustic, and symbolic codes within a unified communicative structure. From digital advertisements and infographics to memes, film subtitles, and literary texts with visual paratexts, polycoded communication dominates the global semiotic environment. As human experience becomes mediated by screens and multimodal discourse, the need for a comprehensive linguosemiotic analysis of polycoded texts becomes urgent.

Earlier approaches in semiotics, such as those of Saussure and Peirce, focused primarily on single sign systems. Later developments in multimodal semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Jewitt et al., 2016) and cultural semiotics (Lotman, 1990; Eco, 1976) extended the concept of meaning beyond the linguistic sign to include image, gesture, space, and sound. However, despite extensive work on multimodality, the

linguocultural dynamics of polycoded texts—the way cultural codes shape semiotic interpretation—remain insufficiently theorised.

The study of polycoded texts is not merely linguistic or visual; it lies at the intersection of semiotics, cultural studies, and communication theory. These texts reflect how societies organise meaning through interaction between symbolic systems and cultural codes. Each element—lexical choice, colour palette, spatial composition, or typography—functions as part of a cultural grammar of meaning. Understanding this grammar is crucial for interpreting contemporary discourses that circulate globally through hybrid semiotic forms.

Problem Statement

Despite the proliferation of research on multimodal texts, there remains a conceptual gap regarding how polycoded texts function as cultural semiotic constructs. Most existing models (e.g., cognitive or technical) treat multimodality as a structural or

perceptual phenomenon, neglecting its linguocultural and ideological dimensions. Consequently, this study seeks to answer:

How do verbal and non-verbal codes interact within semiotic space to produce culturally conditioned meanings?

What semiotic mechanisms govern the coherence and interpretation of polycoded texts across cultural contexts?

How can a linguosemiotic model of polycoded communication be formulated to account for both meaning-making and cultural mediation?

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate the linguocultural and semiotic features of polycoded texts functioning within semiotic space. The specific objectives are:

To analyse the structural and functional composition of polycoded texts;

To identify the interactional mechanisms between linguistic and non-linguistic codes;

To explore how cultural codes and symbols influence meaning formation;

To propose a linguosemiotic framework for interpreting polycoded communication.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in the traditions of cultural semiotics (Lotman, 1990), multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), and linguoculturology (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1983). The concept of semiotic space is adopted from Lotman's semiosphere, where culture is viewed as an interconnected system of sign processes. Within this space, polycoded texts operate as boundary phenomena—zones of translation between different semiotic codes. The research also draws on Barthes' (1977) notion of anchorage and relay between image and text, and on Eco's (1976) idea of the open text as a culturally mediated interpretative field.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employs a qualitative, interpretative design combining semiotic analysis with linguocultural and discourse analysis. Rather than quantifying occurrences, the focus lies on interpreting sign interaction and meaning construction. The approach is inductive and hermeneutic, seeking to derive theoretical generalisations from the empirical analysis of representative polycoded texts.

2.2. Corpus and Data Selection

The corpus includes 60 polycoded texts selected from three domains:

Advertising discourse – 20 digital and print advertisements combining verbal slogans and imagery;

Digital communication – 20 social media memes and infographics;

Literary and artistic discourse – 20 examples of illustrated poetry, book covers, and film posters.

The selection criteria included: (a) the presence of at least two interacting semiotic codes; (b) cultural relevance; and (c) accessibility for interpretative analysis.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed three stages:

Semiotic decomposition: identification of primary sign systems (linguistic, visual, symbolic) and their internal structures.

Intercode analysis: examination of how these systems interact—through anchorage, relay, or symbolic convergence.

Cultural interpretation: mapping of the semiotic processes against cultural codes such as myth, national symbolism, ideology, and globalisation narratives.

Each text was analysed as a microcosm of the semiosphere, where meaning is generated through tension between codes and cultural contexts. Interpretations were validated through cross-cultural comparison and triangulated with existing semiotic frameworks (Eco, 1976; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Research Ethics

All materials were publicly available and analysed from a scholarly perspective respecting intellectual property. Interpretations were contextually grounded, avoiding ethnocentric or ideological bias.

RESULTS

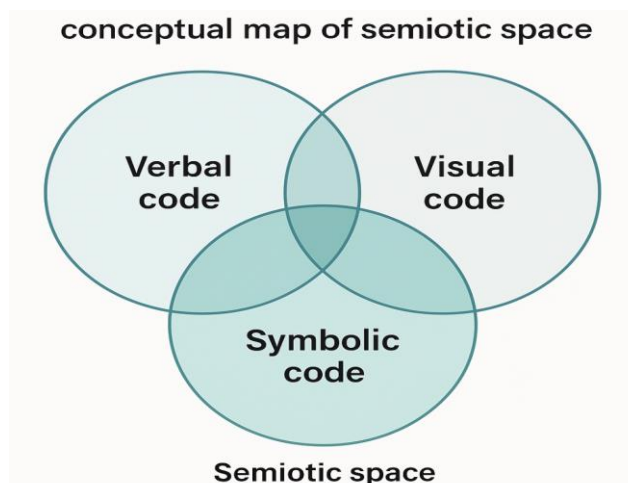


Figure 1. Conceptual Map of Semiotic Space

The Semiotic Architecture of Polycoded Texts

Analysis revealed that polycoded texts possess a layered semiotic structure consisting of:

Primary code (linguistic): the verbal component that frames propositional meaning;

Secondary codes (visual and symbolic): non-verbal elements providing emotional, cultural, or evaluative information;

Integrative code: the intersemiotic mechanism ensuring coherence between verbal and non-verbal layers.

This triadic architecture confirms that polycoded texts operate not through addition of modes, but through their fusion into a single semiotic whole. Figure 1 illustrates the dynamic interaction between verbal, visual, and symbolic codes that constitute the foundation of polycoded communication. The three intersecting circles represent distinct semiotic systems—verbal (language and text), visual (images, spatial organisation, and design), and symbolic (cultural signs, icons, and metaphors). Their overlapping area, shaded in turquoise, symbolises the semiotic space—a zone of intercode translation where meaning is generated through the integration of linguistic and cultural signs. This conceptual map emphasises that the comprehension of polycoded texts depends on the synergy of multiple sign systems operating within a shared communicative environment.

Mechanisms of Semiotic Interaction

Three dominant interactional mechanisms were identified:

Iconic Reinforcement: where visual imagery amplifies the semantic content of verbal text. For example, an advertisement slogan “Pure Nature” accompanied by a green landscape iconically reinforces ecological connotations.

Symbolic Convergence: where linguistic and visual codes merge into a shared cultural symbol, producing metaphorical meaning—e.g., the image of a bridge with the caption “Connecting Worlds” symbolises intercultural dialogue.

Cultural Recontextualisation: where borrowed signs (such as global logos or mythological symbols) are reinterpreted within local cultural frameworks, creating hybrid meanings that reflect globalisation processes.

These mechanisms function as semiotic regulators, ensuring interpretative coherence within the polycoded message.

Cultural Codes and Meaning Formation

The analysis demonstrated that cultural codes play a

decisive role in shaping interpretation. For instance:

In Uzbek and Central Asian advertising, gold and turquoise colour codes connote prosperity and authenticity, whereas Western audiences may associate them with luxury or spirituality.

The same symbol (e.g., an eye, a heart, or a hand gesture) acquires divergent meanings across cultural spaces depending on shared mythological and ideological traditions.

Thus, the meaning of a polycoded text is never universal; it is semiotically and culturally relative, constructed within interpretative communities.

Semiotic Density and Interpretative Load

The research also identified that polycoded texts differ in semiotic density—the degree of complexity arising from the number of codes and their interactional depth. Higher semiotic density increases interpretative load, requiring greater cultural competence from the reader. For instance, intertextual memes rely on shared cultural memory to activate humorous or critical readings.

The Semiotic Space Model

From the data emerged a conceptual model of polycode functioning in semiotic space. It can be described as a four-layered system:

Cognitive layer: perception and decoding of multimodal signs;

Cultural layer: interpretation through shared symbols and myths;

Communicative layer: interaction between author and reader/viewer;

Ideological layer: embedding of discourse within systems of power and value.

Meaning in polycoded texts arises not linearly but through feedback loops among these layers—making semiotic space dynamic, heterogeneous, and culturally stratified.

DISCUSSION

Polycoded Texts as Cultural Mirrors

Polycoded texts act as mirrors of cultural mentality. Through visual-verbal interaction, they reproduce and transform collective values. For instance, advertisements promoting “modernity” often juxtapose technological imagery with traditional motifs, symbolising a dialogue between innovation and heritage. This hybridisation demonstrates how semiotic space mediates between global and local cultural identities.

Semiotic Interaction and the Principle of Synergy

The findings confirm that meaning in polycoded texts

results from semiotic synergy—the productive tension between modes. When verbal and visual codes are congruent, the message becomes persuasive and emotionally resonant. When they conflict, interpretative ambiguity emerges, stimulating critical reflection. Both harmony and tension contribute to the polycode's cultural vitality.

The Role of Cultural Competence

Cultural competence emerges as a prerequisite for decoding polycoded messages. Readers interpret signs not in isolation but through their cultural repertoires—knowledge of myths, symbols, idioms, and social norms. The same polycoded text may thus generate multiple interpretations depending on the viewer's cultural background. This interpretative plurality aligns with Eco's (1979) concept of the open work and Lotman's (1990) view of culture as a dialogue of semioses.

The Ideological Dimension of Polycoded Communication

Beyond aesthetic and communicative functions, polycoded texts also convey ideological messages. Visual-verbal combinations often naturalise particular worldviews—for example, associating technological progress with masculinity or depicting consumption as happiness. Through their multimodal form, such texts construct a persuasive semiotic reality that influences public consciousness. Therefore, the study of polycoded communication must include a critical semiotic perspective attentive to power and ideology.

Towards a Linguosemiotic Framework

The integration of linguistics and semiotics allows for a comprehensive model of polycoded communication. Language provides linear syntax and propositional content; non-verbal codes provide spatial and affective dimensions; cultural context mediates between them. The linguosemiotic framework proposed here treats meaning as a product of:

Intercode coherence (structural harmony);

Cultural resonance (symbolic relevance);

Contextual adaptability (pragmatic function).

This framework situates polycoded texts at the centre of human communication in the semiosphere, bridging verbal discourse and visual culture.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that polycoded texts function as complex semiotic constructs in which verbal and non-verbal codes interact within a culturally mediated space of meaning. Their interpretation depends not only on cognitive integration but, more crucially, on the interplay of cultural codes, symbolic

repertoires, and ideological frameworks.

The research identified three principal mechanisms—iconic reinforcement, symbolic convergence, and cultural recontextualisation—that structure meaning within polycoded communication. The proposed Semiotic Space Model illustrates that meaning arises through a multi-layered interaction of cognitive, cultural, communicative, and ideological processes.

From a linguocultural perspective, polycoded texts reveal how societies negotiate identity, ideology, and value through semiotic synthesis. They serve as cultural mirrors, reflecting and reshaping collective consciousness. The findings contribute to the development of linguosemiotics and cultural semiotics by clarifying how signs operate within the complex web of global communication.

Future research may expand this framework by applying corpus-based multimodal analysis and cross-cultural experimentation to map differences in semiotic perception across linguistic communities. As digital communication continues to evolve, understanding polycoded texts within semiotic space becomes essential for interpreting the symbolic dynamics of our globalised world.

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