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**The Language of the Tartu–Moscow Semiotic School and the
Translations of Yuri Lotman’s Works in Brazil / *A linguagem da
Escola Semiótica de Tártu-Moscou e as traduções de Iúri Lotman no
Brasil***

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ABSTRACT

The use of codified and Aesopian language in the works of the semioticians who were members of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School was motivated by the desire to be *understood* by the School members and *not understood* by possible unwanted intruders from Soviet control organizations. One of the key terms they used was *secondary modeling systems*, which Vladimir Uspensky suggested to replace the word *semiotics*, associated with Western semiotics. By comparing Yuri Lotman’s essay Problems in the Typology of Culture (1967) to Lucy Seki’s translation of the essay into Brazilian Portuguese, which is part of the book *Semiótica Russa [Russian Semiotics]*, edited by Boris Schnaiderman, I intend to verify if particularities of the original text, which resulted from the historical and political context in which the essay was produced, were maintained in the translation.

KEYWORDS: Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School; Yuri Lotman; Soviet Language; Translation

RESUMO

*O uso de linguagem codificada e esópica nos trabalhos dos semioticistas que integraram a Escola Semiótica de Tártu-Moscou foi motivado pelo desejo de serem compreendidos pelo círculo e não compreendidos por possíveis intrusos indesejáveis dos órgãos de controle soviéticos. Um dos termos centrais utilizados pela Escola - os “sistemas modelizantes secundários” - foi sugerido por Vladímir Uspíenski com o objetivo de substituir a palavra “semiótica”, associada à semiótica ocidental. Ao cotejar o artigo de Iúri Lotman Sobre o problema da tipologia da cultura, de 1967, com a tradução para o português do Brasil de Lucy Seki, que integrou a coletânea *Semiótica Russa*, organizada por Boris Schnaiderman, objetivo verificar se as peculiaridades do texto original, que surgiram devido às condições histórico-políticas da sua criação, foram preservadas na tradução.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Escola Semiótica de Tártu-Moscou; Iúri Lotman; Linguagem soviética; Tradução*

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Introduction

The Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School was active in the 1960s-1980s. Not only was it one of the most significant semiotic currents of the 20th century, but it was also an interesting phenomenon. Surprisingly, semiotic studies flourished in the Soviet Union, which was under a regime deemed authoritarian and/or totalitarian today. What made that possible was a sophisticated survival strategy that, although it may not have been thought of and planned, became necessary as the School grew in power and influence. Among the characteristics of this strategy we find the openly apolitical claim of semiotic studies, hermetism (a relatively narrow and closed circle of researchers), and a language with specific characteristics (GASPÁROV, 1994). In fact, as we read works by “soviet” semioticians, we come across a style that is laden with foreign words, ellipses, and specific scientific terminology. With that in mind, we question whether these characteristics have been maintained or have simply disappeared when these works were translated into other languages. In order to answer that, we decided to analyze one of the texts written by Yuri Lotman, the leader (although he was never acknowledged as such) and founder of the School. The selected text is an essay entitled *Sobre o problema da tipologia da cultura*,^{1 2} one of the texts that comprise *Semiótica Russa*,^{3 4} edited by Boris Schnaiderman, who presented, for the first time, texts of Russian semioticians to Brazilian readership. The title of the collection calls our attention because of the adjective Russian (not Soviet), which is fairer due to the apolitical, anti-Soviet and dissident nature of the School.

The comparison between both the source text and its translation places this work in the field of comparative studies. A comparative study of discourse is a focus of the

¹ TN. This text has been translated into English as Problems in the Typology of Culture. As Vólkova Américo specifically analyzes its translation into Brazilian Portuguese, whenever there is a quotation from the essay, I will use the text in English and pinpoint specific details related to the translation into Brazilian Portuguese if necessary.

² LOTMAN, Y. Problems in the Typology of Culture. In: LUCID, D. (ed.). *Soviet Semiotics: An Anthology*. Translated by Daniel Lucid. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, pp.213-221.

³ TN. The book that brings the essay Problems in the Typology of Culture is titled *Soviet Semiotics: An Anthology*, edited by Daniel P. Lucid. It is important to point out that *Semiótica Russa* and *Soviet Semiotics* are two different essay collections. The former is comprised of 19 essays whereas the latter, of 24 essays.

⁴ LUCID, D. (Ed.). *Soviet Semiotics: An Anthology*. Translated by Daniel Lucid. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

research group called *Diálogo* [*Dialogue*] (Universidade de São Paulo – USP [University of São Paulo]), which correlates Bakhtinian studies with the fundamentals of the theory of discourse that was developed by French researchers, members of the CLESTHIA-Cediscor research group (Université Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle):

Cediscor research, in turn, presented the possibilities for comparative analysis of non-literary utterances, little present in the Bakhtinian work. Moreover, the assumption of discourse genre as *tertium comparationis*, relevant for the comparison of similar issues and for configuring the speech community, found Bakhtin's work on speech genres, allowing an enriching articulation of both theories (GRILLO; GLUSHKOVA, 2016, p.97).⁵

Among the tenets of discursive comparison that stem from the theory of the Bakhtin Circle, the researchers highlight *genre*, which is also considered central to CLESTHIA researchers, once discourse genres are “the most immediate places of articulation of language with culture and the workings of society” (GRILLO; GLUSHKOVA, 2016, p.83).⁶ They also underscore the study of “the literary work in the ‘great time,’ seeking its ties to works of the recent and distant past in order to identify visions and the assimilation of aspects of the world - traditional and innovative - shown in a privileged way in genres” (GRILLO; GLUSHKOVA, 2016, p.79).⁷

As to Lotman's translations in Brazil, the *tertium comparationis* is not only the genre (article or scientific essay), but also the fact that they are the same text, translated from one language into another. However, I posit that although the source text and its translation seem to be the same text written in different languages, they are utterances that belong to different historical-cultural contexts (great time) and are addressed to different audiences. The need to take into account the interdependence between discourse (semiotic phenomenon) and culture (context) is the point of intersection between the theoretical formulations of Bakhtin and the Circle, CEDISCOR, and Lotman (1988, p.213).⁸

⁵ GRILLO, S. GLUSHKOVA, M. Scientific Popularization in Brazil and in Russia: An Essay to a Comparative Analysis of Discourses. *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso*, v. 11, n. 2, pp.76-100, 2016. Available at: [<https://revistas.pucsp.br/bakhtiniana/article/view/23556/19237>] and <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/bak/v11n2/2176-4573-bak-11-02-0069.pdf>. Access on: 26 Dec. 2018.

⁶ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁷ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁸ For reference, see footnote 2.

The New Soviet Language

The decades before and after the Russian Revolution of 1917 were, in fact, revolutionary in several areas. There was a real cultural explosion which, according to Lotman (2009),⁹ was responsible for the process of cultural renewal. Actually, in pre-revolutionary Russia practically all spheres of art were marked by the emergence of avant-garde movements. Evidently the explosive processes of cultural renewal could not forgo being reflected in language. Innovations were embodied in the avant-garde poetry of, for example, Elena Guro, Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchenykh, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Their works are heavily laden with neologisms and are marked by semantic annihilation and the search for a new language.

The revolution further accentuated the “old” language’s inability to respond to the socioeconomic and cultural changes of the country. The frantic speed of these changes brought about the need to condense meaning and, therefore, abbreviate words. Even the country’s name, URSS, was an abbreviation. All the linguistic changes that occurred after the Revolution can be equated to the definition given by George Orwell to language under an authoritarian regime, viz., *newspeak*. As we know, Orwell’s *1984*¹⁰ was written under the influence of soviet discourse and Yevgeny Zamyatin’s novel *We*¹¹ predicted, in the 1920s, the social distortions of an authoritarian society and the concomitant linguistic changes.

In the years after the Revolution, the process of developing a new language occurred alongside the campaign to eradicate illiteracy. According to Lenin, the main goal of the campaign was to teach people how to read periodicals in order to further political agitation and make workers and peasants the subject of social change.

Historically, the fact that the spelling reform was introduced right after the Revolution, in 1917-1918, is emblematic. Although it had been prepared decades before, in the post-revolutionary context it became a clear delineation between the new Soviet language and the old, traditional, and retrograde language. Some letters were eliminated from the alphabet and spelling was simplified. In other words, in practical

⁹ LOTMAN, Y. *Culture and Explosion*. Edited by Marina Grishakova and translated by Wilma Clark. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009.

¹⁰ ORWELL, G. *George Orwell: The Complete Novels*. London: Penguin Books, 1983.

¹¹ ZAMYATIN, Ye. *We*. Translated by Mirra Ginsburg. New York: Avon Books, 1972.

terms the reform was not as revolutionary as one could have expected given the circumstances, but it had a considerable impact. It transcended its purely linguistic objectives and reached the political sphere: during the Civil War, which occurred after the Revolution, the changes instituted by the reform were ignored in the territories occupied by the White Army. Besides, during this period most emigrants rejected it as well. All this further corroborates this interpretation of the political nature of the spelling reform.

According to Boris Kolonitskii, a historian of the Russian Revolution, the genesis of the Soviet political language is the language used in the revolutionary period by the Bolsheviks, members of other political organizations, and even the White Army (2017, p.51). The strong influence of military vocabulary not only led to the consolidation of a new Soviet language, but also helped create, in the following decades, the image of URSS as an island that is surrounded and constantly attacked by enemies (ZEMTSOV, 1984).¹² These changes resulted in the elimination of “unwanted” words from the Soviet vocabulary, which is something Zamyatin predicted in his dystopia. Here are examples of words that stopped being used or were little used: “good,” “evil,” “existence,” “conscience,” “intuition,” “subconsciousness,” “beneficence,” “alms,” “donation,” “humanism” (TCHUDAKOVA, 2007) and religious vocabulary words. By looking up these words in bilingual dictionaries, such as the *Russian-Portuguese Dictionary* (VÓINOVA; STÁRETS et al, 1989), we can confirm that they are not dictionary entries. On the other hand, new words were created to describe phenomena of the new reality, such as *kolhoz* and *komsomol*. Other words acquired new meanings. For example, the word *nessoznátelnyi* literally means “someone who is not conscious”; it started to be used as someone who is “unaware” of the dominant ideology.

However, for Lotman (2009),¹³ grounded in Tynyanov’s ([1924] 1977) classical scheme of historical and literary development, a moment of explosion is followed by a new moment when a large amount of new stored information has to be organized and maintained. This would be, therefore, a moment of dogmatization. In the mid-1920s the explosive changes that characterized the first period of the Soviet State ceased and a

¹² ZEMTSOV, I. *Lexicon of Soviet Political Terms*. Edited by Gay M. Hammerman. Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1984.

¹³ For reference, see footnote 9.

tendency toward rigidity and conservatism prevailed in almost all spheres. The same happened in the language sphere. Within it different languages started to be formed and fossilized. A good example is political discourse, mainly represented by the speech of Stalin and subsequent Soviet leaders. Generally speaking, political language played a central role in Soviet semiosphere and had an impact on all the others, causing the fossilization of every cultural language. Language formulae were then devised and repeated both in official speeches and in writing. They were later on called “Sovietisms.”

An extremely interesting case that surely deserves to be studied in depth is the presence of Sovietisms in the literary texts produced during the Soviet period. An example is Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* (1997),¹⁴ in which Sovietisms play the role of the alien word (using Bakhtin’s terminology), giving them an ironic tone. Therefore, it is essential that translations take them into account (VID, 2016, p.144). The use of Sovietisms is also prominent in the oeuvre of Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015, although her literary output belongs to a later period of the history of URSS.

As to documents found in Russian archives, the growing influence of Sovietisms is observed, for example, in the reports done by Valentin Voloshinov when he was a graduate student at the ILIAZV – Institut Srovnánelnoi Istórii literatúr i iazykóv Západa i Vostóka [Institute of Comparative History of Literature and Languages of the West and East]. The military language of Soviet propaganda is not found in his first four reports – only in his fifth, written in 1930. This date is not random: “The authoritarian word (‘shock brigade’) invades Voloshinov’s utterance, which must be submitted to the first Five-year plan (1928-1932) imposed by the Stalinist regime and its economic goals in all areas of Soviet society” (GRILLO; VÓLKOVA AMÉRICO, 2017, p.361).¹⁵ At the same time, socialist realism becomes the only form of Soviet literary creation.

Writer, politician and literary critic Marietta Tchudakova calls this process an “illness” and states that the task of politicization of language became easier with the radio, which broadcast speeches of Soviet politicians all day and in every corner of the

¹⁴ BULGAKOV, M. *The Master and Margarita*. English translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. London: Penguin Books, 1997.

¹⁵ GRILLO, S.; VÓLKOVA AMÉRICO, E. Valentin Nikolaievitch Voloshinov: Documented Details of his Life and Works. *Alfa*, v.61, n.2, pp.339-366, 2017. Available at: [http://www.scielo.br/pdf/alfa/v61n2/en_0002-5216-alfa-61-02-0255.pdf]. Accessed on: 26 Dec. 2018.

huge country (TCHUDAKOVA, 2007). During World War II, for example, Stalin's speeches, comprised of short and catchy phrases, were radio-broadcast to the entire territory of the Soviet Union throughout the whole day. Their impact was impressive.

As a result, Thudakova still observes that, at the end of the 1950s, the "vocabulary of Soviet civilization" was developed and that "the destruction of the language of the Russian Human Sciences occurred or was terminated" (TCHUDAKOVA, 2007).^{16 17} In this context, she cites Boris Eikhenbaum's diaries written at that time, in which he expresses the feeling of despair that language's impotence produces:

I believe I should give up on the idea of writing a scientific book. This language does not exist and there is nothing that can be done about it. Language is not individual. The language of literary studies does not exist because in this area there is no scientific thinking; it stopped existing [...] When writing, I cannot use the "terms," and language no longer exists (EIKHENBAUM *apud* TCHUDAKOVA, 2007).¹⁸

Thus, the Soviet language became standardized, rigid, imperative, and authoritarian. It provoked a feeling of "ideological sterilization" in the "ordinary" speakers of the language (TCHUDAKOVA, 2007), and all this made possible the emergence of *another* language.

The Russian literary language was so contaminated by official Soviet discourse that in the 1950s it was not possible to use it on a daily basis anymore. During the Thaw period, after Stalin's death, the rigidity of the prior period was relaxed. The soil for the rise of a new literary language was prepared. Still according to Tchudakov, the *intelligentsia* played a decisive role in these changes. Firstly, "banned" words were

¹⁶ TN. I will provide the English translation of a quotation when the work is not originally published in English or when there is no published English translation of the work.

¹⁷ In the original in Russian: "словарь советской цивилизации"; "совершилось (или завершилось) разрушение языка русской гуманитарной науки." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "vocabulário da civilização soviética"; "ocorreu, ou foi finalizada, a destruição da linguagem das ciências humanas russas."

¹⁸ In the original in Russian: Думаю, что надо пока оставить помыслы о научной книге, – писал Б. Эйхенбаум. – Этого языка нет – и ничего не сделаешь. Язык – дело не индивидуальное. Литературоведческого языка нет, поэтому ч(то) научной мысли в этой области нет – она прекратила течение свое"; "Писать `терминами` не могу, а языка теперь нет." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "Acho que devo desistir da ideia de escrever um livro científico. Essa linguagem não existe e não há nada que possa ser feito a respeito. Língua não é algo individual. A linguagem dos estudos literários não existe porque nessa área não há pensamento científico, ele deixou de existir [...] Não posso escrever usando os "termos" e a língua não existe mais."

disguised in the texts that apparently followed Soviet discourse. Secondly, there emerged “refined forms of Aesopian language, reflected mostly in the ‘verbal disguise’ of the narrated plots: thus, behind a narrative on censorship or any other form of violence during the Russian Empire, it was possible to infer criticism against totalitarian regimes” (TCHUDAKOVA, 2007).¹⁹ Concurrently, a relatively small group of intellectuals started to create, in their works, a new discourse of the humanities, aside from the Soviet vocabulary. In some cases, Sovietisms were clearly avoided; in others, they were given new meanings (TCHUDAKOVA, 2007).

In sum, as a result of the “massive attack of propaganda on literary language,” its foundations collapsed. This led to the emergence of the “‘language of resistance” (KHÁZEGUEROV, CHMELIÓVA, 2015, p.205),²⁰ which is characterized by the use of jargons and less complex language. These changes can be equated to Perestroika. Valentin Voloshinov’s words related to the dialectic nature of the ideological sign are worth remembering here. According to him, it manifests more clearly in times of deep social crisis.

In actual fact, each living ideological sign has two faces, like Janus. Any current curse word can become a word of praise, any current truth must inevitably sound to many other people as the greatest lie. This inner dialectic quality of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crises or revolutionary changes. In the ordinary conditions of life, the contradiction embedded in every ideological sign cannot emerge fully because the ideological sign in an established dominant ideology is always somewhat reactionary and tries, as it were, to stabilize the preceding factor in the dialectical flux of the social generative process, so accentuating yesterday’s truth as to make it appear today’s. And that is what is responsible for the refracting and distorting peculiarity of the ideological sign within the dominant ideology (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, pp.23-24).²¹

¹⁹ In the original in Russian: “выработка изощренных форм эзопова языка, выразившегося по большей части в словесном переодевании излагаемых сюжетов: так, за обличительным повествованием о цензуре или ином насилии при царизме должно было угадываться обличение автором тоталитарных порядков.” Vólkova Américo’s translation into Portuguese: “formas refinadas da linguagem esópica, refletida, em grande parte, na ‘superação verbal’ dos enredos narrados: assim, por trás de uma narrativa sobre a censura ou outra forma de violência na época do Império Russo, era possível adivinhar uma crítica dos regimes totalitários.”

²⁰ In the original in Russian: “язык сопротивления.” Vólkova Américo’s translation into Portuguese: “linguagem da resistência.”

²¹ VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

The Tartu-Moscow School as a Semiotic Phenomenon

This is the context in which the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School and its language emerged. According to Nikolai Bogomolov, the School is usually thought to be in opposition to official Soviet culture, which actually is not untrue. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that, for the School members, Soviet culture was not unilateral and homogeneous. On the one hand, it included official Soviet culture, which was either denied or carnivalized; on the other hand, this culture was an organic continuation of the forbidden and forcibly forgotten Russian culture, such as religious art and icons. In sum, the so called marginalized, dissident and anti-Soviet culture also represented an inseparable part of the Soviet phenomenon (BOGOMÓLOV, 2014, p.600).

Among the works that approach the Semiotic School as a semiotic phenomenon, we highlight Iliá Kalinin's article titled *The Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School: A Semiotic Model of Culture / A Cultural Model of Semiotics*.²² One of his key statements is that the School researchers' selection of topics they would study was well-thought-out.

Soviet Semiotics is a typical case in which a scientific project that emerged and developed within the context of a severe ideological control over the production of historical knowledge not only solved its immediate scientific problems, but also acted as a means of intellectual resistance to the official historical myths, as a form of their direct or latent demystification. Besides, more complex and ambiguous mechanisms lay behind the practice of semiotic studies in the Soviet Union. Soviet semiotics used different historical periods not only as the object of historical analysis, but also as a means to reflect on their own historical context, on the conditions behind the approach to their semiotic descriptions (KALÍNIN, 2009, p.2).²³

²² In the original in Russian: "Тартуско-московская семиотическая школа: семиотическая модель культуры / культурная модель семиотики." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "A Escola Semiótica de Tártu-Moscou: um modelo semiótico da cultura/um modelo cultural da semiótica."

²³ In the original in Russian: "Советская семиотика представляет собой характерный случай, когда научный проект, возникший и сложившийся в рамках жесткого идеологического контроля над производством исторического знания, не только разрешает свои непосредственные дисциплинарные задачи, но и выступает как способ интеллектуального сопротивления официальным историческим мифам, становясь формой их прямой или подспудной демистификации. При этом за практикой семиотических штудий в Советском Союзе стояли более сложные и двусмысленные механизмы. Советская семиотика использовала отдельные исторические эпохи не только как объекты исторического анализа, но также как фигуры рефлексии над собственным историческим контекстом, над условиями, стоящими за направленностью самих семиотических описаний." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "A semiótica soviética é um típico caso quando um projeto científico, que surgiu e se formou no contexto

Peter the Great's reforms, for example, were used as a pretext to criticize the Soviet myth of modernization or conservative rhetoric. The Decembrist revolt of 1825 called attention to the dissidence of Russian intellectuals. Besides, the very understanding of reality as a set of signs can be analyzed as a reaction to a historical trauma. In this sense, the "total semiotization of reality [...] represents an attempt to resist information entropy represented by the tedious reproduction of ideology and dominant cultural myths" (KALÍNIN, 2009, pp.3-4).²⁴ If the School itself is analyzed as a semiotic phenomenon, its unacknowledged leader, Yuri Lotman, "begins to acquire the traits of a cultural trickster who creates, or at least transforms, the world structure" (KALÍNIN, 2009, p.21)²⁵ or even of a prophet.

For Bogomolov (2014), among the forms of resistance created by the School was a persistent overcoming of prohibitions, when, for example, they discussed works that were forcibly forgotten or published papers about them, such as the ones about the Absurdist poets and writers from the OBERIU.²⁶ Secondly, they created their own scale of cultural values that could substitute the official scale (BOGOMÓLOV, 2014, p.599).

If Kalinin's and Bogomolov's observations are made at a distant time, Boris Gasparov's article titled *The Tartu School of the 1960s as a Semiotic Phenomenon*²⁷ represents an "inside" view, that is, a view from a member of the School. In 1994, an

de um controle ideológico severo sobre a produção do conhecimento histórico, não só resolveu os seus problemas disciplinares imediatos, mas também agiu como um meio de resistência intelectual aos mitos históricos oficiais, tornando-se uma forma para a sua desmistificação direta ou latente. Além disso, por trás da prática dos estudos semióticos na União Soviética estavam os mecanismos mais complexos e ambíguos. A semiótica soviética utilizava certas épocas históricas não só como objeto de análise histórica, mas também como meios de reflexão sobre o seu próprio contexto histórico, sobre as condições que estavam por trás da orientação das descrições semióticas."

²⁴ In the original in Russian: "В этом смысле тотальная семиотизация реальности, осуществляемая в рамках семиотического подхода, является попыткой противостояния информационной энтропии, задаваемой унылым воспроизводством доминирующей идеологии и господствующих культурных мифов." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "semiotização total da realidade [...] representa uma tentativa de resistir à entropia informacional representada pela reprodução tediosa da ideologia e dos mitos culturais dominantes."

²⁵ In the original in Russian: "Так, фигура Ю.М. Лотмана начинает приобретать черты культурного трикстера, создающего или хотя бы структурно преобразующего мир." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "passa a adquirir traços de um trikster cultural que cria ou ao menos transforma a estrutura do mundo."

²⁶ TN. According to Roberts (1997), OBERIU is "an abbreviated form of 'Ob'edinenie real'nogo iskusstva', meaning 'The Association for Real Art'" (p.1). Reference: ROBERTS, G. *The Last Soviet Avant-Garde: OBERIU - Fact, Fiction, Metafiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

²⁷ In the original in Russian: "Тартуская школа 1960-х годов как семиотический феномен." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "A escola de Tártu dos anos 1960 como um fenômeno semiótico."

essay collection titled *Yu. M. Lotman and the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School*²⁸ was published in Russia. The second part of the book was dedicated specifically to the memoirs of the School members. The memoir with the greatest repercussion was Gasparov's, for most critics deemed that his description of the School as hermetic and esoteric was an exaggeration. However, I believe that Gasparov's observations stand true if we take into consideration the first period of the School, between the 1960s and the early 1970s.

Gasparov emphasizes three main characteristics of the School: its hermetic nature, the variety of its participants, and their feeling of alienation. Only a reduced number of people participated in their periodical meetings, which were called Summer School, and in the regular editions of *Sign Systems Studies*.²⁹ All these characteristics also reflected in language, which Gasparov called "esoteric scientific language" (1994, p.284).³⁰

The Language of Soviet Semiotics

In the studies dedicated to Russian semiotics published in the last decades, not only is the Tartu-Moscow School considered a semiotic phenomenon, but its language also becomes an object of analysis. An interesting fact about the language of Russian semiotics is that it was addressed to at least two addressees: "our own" audience, that is, the restricted circle of researchers who were members of the School or were interested in semiotic studies, and the "someone else's" and potentially dangerous audience, that is, people who could be unwanted intruders from the government's control organizations. Therefore, this language aimed to be understood by the first group and not understood by the second. The coexistence between the "language for oneself" and the "language for others" was already an object of reflection by semioticians. Thus,

²⁸ In the original in Russian: "Ю.М. Лотман и тартуско-московская семиотическая школа." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "I. M. Lótman e a Escola Semiótica de Tártu-Moscou."

²⁹ TN. According to the journal's web page at <http://www.sss.ut.ee/index.php/sss/index>, "The journal Sign Systems Studies was established in 1964 by Juri Lotman (initially as Труды по знаковым системам - Σημειωτική), and is thus the oldest international semiotic periodical. Originally (until 1992) a Russian-language series, it is now published in English, and has become a central institution in the semiotics of culture."

³⁰ In the original in Russian: "эзотерический научный язык." Vólkova Américo's translation into Portuguese: "linguagem científica esotérica."

Lotman, in his article *The Text and the Structure of Its Audience* (1982),³¹ points out two types of discursive activity: (1) discursive activity directed toward an abstract addressee whose memory capacity is typical of any speaker of the given language; (2) discursive activity targeting an actual interlocutor, who is known and has a name (LOTMAN, 1982, p.82).³² The second type of discursive activity does not require the provision of details in the text. As the interlocutor already knows them, the “text will develop elliptical constructions, a localized semantics, and tend to use a ‘domestic’ and ‘intimate’ lexis” (LOTMAN, 1982, p.83).³³ These remarks can surely refer to the language of Russian semiotics.

In the same article, Lotman suggests the concept of “image of the audience”: not only is a text oriented toward specific addressees, but it also affects them, transforming their image in it. When a normalizing code is imposed on the audience, it “becomes the norm for its own image of it” (LOTMAN, 1982, p.81).³⁴ These dialogical relations (Lotman refers to the Bakhtinian concept here) are only made possible due to the common memory shared by the addresser and the addressee. Extending the concept of the image of the audience to the activities of the School, we need to point out that the oeuvre of the Russian semioticians, despite being oriented toward a very specific audience, actually aimed at a positive transformation of their surrounding context. It is not by chance that at the end of the 1980s, when the organs of censorship let their guard down, Russian semiotics left the “ivory tower.” During this period Lotman recorded a series of lectures for Soviet television. Titled *Talks about Russian Culture [Bessiédy o rússkoi kultúre]*, they aimed to discuss semiotics and Russian culture in a simple and accessible language. Similarly, Lotman’s writings from 1980 to 1990 were less coded, the language used became increasingly clear, and countless examples were provided, helping readers understand them.

Based on Gasparov’s remarks, we can pinpoint the main characteristics of the language of Russian semiotics during the first period of the School, that is, from 1960 to 1970:

³¹ LOTMAN, Yu. *The Text and the Structure of Its Audience*. *New Literary History*, v. 14, n. 1, pp.81-87, 1982. Available at: [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/468958>]. Accessed on: 28 Dec. 2018.

³² For reference, see footnote 31.

³³ For reference, see footnote 31.

³⁴ For reference, see footnote 31.

- Official Soviet language and political-cultural issues of the time were not found in the writings of Russian semioticians. Zemtsov (1984)³⁵ refers to the freedom of the Soviet language as language dissidence.
- Many texts that came to be published were brief and summarized. As semioticians were not sure if they would have another chance to publish their works, many works were not fully developed and were thus summarized. The best example is *Theses for a Semiotic Analysis of Culture (An Application to Slavic Texts)* [In Portuguese: *Teses para uma análise semiótica da cultura (Uma aplicação aos textos eslavos)*] (MACHADO, 2003, pp.99-132).
- The words that were potentially dangerous were substituted. At first, even the word “semiotics” was avoided and substituted with “secondary modeling systems,” a term coined by Vladimir Uspenskij (VÓLKOVA AMÉRICO, 2015, p.128).
- A substantial portion of the works of the semioticians used language that tended to be strictly scientific. The use of words that were little understood by lay readers showed how controlled and hermetic language was. Here are examples of terms commonly found in the texts from the 1960s: monotypic system; hierarchically complex; discrete linear; principle of continuous homeomorphic organization, among others.
- The codification of Semiotic language also occurred through the widespread use of foreign words, which reveals a general Occidentalist tendency of the School. The Estonian city of Tartu, one of the School centers and the city where Lotman worked, was on the periphery of the Soviet map, which gave more freedom to the researchers who worked there. Besides, for Soviets, Baltic countries in general and Estonia and Tartu in particular were somewhat Western. The Occidentalist tendency, thus, was observed in language: many terms used by semioticians were foreign words that were simply transliterated; they were unknown words in the Russian and Soviet science language (GASPÁROV, 1994, p.285).
- Aesopian language was also used frequently. It is correct to say that Russian culture and literature mastered its use because of the rigor of censorship from its

³⁵ For reference, see footnote 12.

inception. In the case of the School, an analysis of an apparently distant historical event could allude to Soviet contemporaneity, granted the reader is scholarly and attentive.

As we have observed, the term “code” acquires a singular importance in the aforementioned cases: the texts written by Russian semioticians were literally codified and not every reader had the competence and the necessary keys to decode them (GAPÁROV, 1994, p.287).

The Original and the Translation

In comparative studies, the relationship between the original text and its translation is rather singular. We could say that the text originally written in Russian and its translation into Portuguese are the same. However, current studies on translation point to the relevance of the different contexts in which the original text and its translation were written and circulate; they also underline the creative role of the translator (VENUTI, 1996, pp.99-100).³⁶

In Brazil, the works of Lotman and Russian semioticians in general came to be known especially through the effort of Boris Schnaiderman. It seems that Lotman’s first text to be translated in Brazil was *A estrutura do texto artístico* [The Structure of the Artistic Text],³⁷ which was presented as Jasna Paravich Sarhan’s Master’s thesis in 1978 under the advisement of Boris Schnaiderman. The book is fundamental for the definition of ‘text,’ a key concept in Lotman’s oeuvre, although the term refers specifically to literary texts.

The essay collection entitled *Semiótica russa* [Russian Semiotics], a watershed in the dissemination of the works of Russian semioticians in Brazil, was edited by Boris Schnaiderman and published in 1979. The essays that comprise it belong to the first period of Russian semiotics, which is characterized precisely by a total seclusion from the rest of the Soviet universe. They were written by different exponents of the School, such as Lotman, who is the author of two essays in the collection. In the Introduction,

³⁶ VENUTI, L. The Scandal of Translation. *Tradterm*, v. 4, pp.99-110, 1996. Available at: [<http://www.revistas.usp.br/tradterm/article/view/49897/54006>]. Accessed on: 05 Jan. 2019.

³⁷ The bibliographic reference of the English version of this text is: LOTMAN, Yu. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Translation by Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1977.

Boris Schnaiderman seeks to define the path of the emergence of the “semiotic consciousness” in Russia and the Soviet Union, prior to the activities of the School. Among the names and theoretical trends, which he calls “lost links,” we find Veselovsky, Potebnja, Russian formalism, Florensky, Propp, Jakobson, Bakhtin, Voloshinov, Medvedev, Vygotsky, Marr, Eisenstein (SCHNAIDERMAN, 2010). Lotman’s 1967 essay *Problems in the Typology of Culture*, translated directly from Russian into Portuguese by Lucy Seki, opens the collection. It is a pragmatic text that presents the fundamentals of the semiotics of culture. Lotman describes culture as an extremely complex mechanism in which cultural texts (this is when the famed term “secondary modeling systems” starts to be used) follow a certain hierarchy (1988, p.214).³⁸ As Lotman contrasts The Middle Ages and the Renaissance, historical periods rich with different cultural codes, he showcases how the same semiotic object can be interpreted differently (1988, p.220).³⁹

I have selected three excerpts to be analyzed. In my opinion, they illustrate the particularities of the language of Russian semiotics of the 1960s.

Excerpt 1

<i>Original text in Russian</i>	<i>Text in Brazilian Portuguese</i>
<p>При этом следует указать еще на одно существенное обстоятельство: важным свойством культурных текстов является их семантическая подвижность — один и тот же текст может выдавать разным его «потребителям» различную информацию. Не вдаваясь в анализ природы этого интересного явления, делающего культурные тексты глубоко отличными от текстов на естественных и тем более научных языках, отметим одну из его причин: вся иерархия кодов, составляющая тот или иной тип культуры, может дешифроваться при помощи идентичной кодовой структуры или кодовой структуры иного типа, лишь</p>	<p>É preciso indicar ainda um ponto importante: peculiaridade substancial dos textos culturais é a sua mobilidade semântica: um mesmo texto pode fornecer a seus diferentes “consumidores” informações diferentes. Sem penetrar na análise da natureza deste interessante fenômeno, que torna os textos culturais profundamente diferentes dos textos nas linguagens naturais e, mais ainda, nas linguagens científicas, apontemos uma de suas causas: toda a hierarquia de códigos que compõe este ou aquele tipo de cultura pode ser decifrada por meio de uma estrutura de código idêntica, ou por meio de uma estrutura de código de outro tipo, apenas em parte interferindo com a que foi utilizada pelos</p>

³⁸ For reference, see footnote 2.

³⁹ For reference, see footnote 2.

<p>частично пересекающейся с той, которой пользовались создатели текстов, или же совсем ей чуждой (LOTMAN, 1994, pp.58-59).</p>	<p>criadores do texto, ou ainda, por meio de uma estrutura completamente alheia a ela (LOTMAN, 2010, p.35).</p>
<p><i>Text in English</i></p>	
<p>In addition, semantic mobility is an important property of cultural texts; the same text can furnish different information to its various “consumers.” I shall not analyze the nature of this interesting phenomenon, which renders cultural texts profoundly different from texts in natural languages, not to mention those in scientific languages. I shall limit myself to pointing out one cause for this mobility: the entire hierarchy of codes that constitutes this or that type of culture can be deciphered either with the help of an identical structure of codes, or with the help of a structure of another type of codes that intersects only partially with the one used by the text’s creators or else is completely extraneous to it (LOTMAN, 1988, p.215).⁴⁰</p>	

The first excerpt exemplifies the coded language of Russian semiotics in different planes. In the semantic plane, one of the key ideas of the essay is presented: the claim that we need to master certain cultural codes to correctly decipher and interpret a text. Lotman declares that it is possible for the same cultural text to be interpreted differently by different readers. We believe that these conclusions, which were fundamental to his semiotics of culture, were reached because of the context in which his works were written, that is, the need to take into account at least two addressees for his texts. It is interesting to read that, among the languages of culture, scientific language is less prone to offer different information to its “consumers.” This statement is opposed by the very semantic content of the essay, which also belongs to the sphere of cultural languages.

In the linguistic plane, we highlight the second sentence: a long sentence with coordinate and subordinate clauses, which is typical of scientific language in general.⁴¹ Besides, he used several words and expressions of foreign origin, such as semantic mobility, hierarchy of codes, deciphered, identical structure of codes. It is a true invasion of foreign words. In other words, the opposition between our own and someone else’s, comprehensible and incomprehensible, and decipherable and undecipherable is manifest in the semantic and linguistic planes; however, this occurs only in the text in Russian. Although the translation was done directly from the Russian

⁴⁰ For reference, see footnote 2.

⁴¹ TN. The second and third sentences of the text in English, which begin with “I shall...,” are one long complex sentence in Portuguese.

language, these features of the original text were practically erased in the translation because the words that are clearly of foreign origin in Russian lose this attribute in Brazilian Portuguese.

Excerpt 2

<i>Original text in Russian</i>	<i>Text in Brazilian Portuguese</i>
Знаки становятся символом лжи, а высшим критерием ценности — искренность, освобожденность от знаковости. При этом основной тип знака — «слово», которое в предыдущей системе рассматривалось как первый акт божественного творения, становится моделью лжи (LOTMAN, 1994, p.61).	Os signos tornam-se símbolos de mentiras, e o mais alto critério de valor é a sinceridade, a libertação do sígnico. Ao mesmo tempo, o principal tipo de signo – a “palavra” – considerada no sistema anterior como o primeiro ato da criação divina, torna-se protótipo da mentira (LOTMAN, 2010, p.39).
<i>Text in English</i>	
Signs become the symbol of falsehood, and the highest criterion of truth is sincerity, emancipation from the use of signs. Moreover, the fundamental type of sign, the “word,” which in the preceding system was considered the first act of divine creation, becomes the model of falsehood (LOTMAN, 1988, p.218). ⁴²	

Excerpt 3

<i>Original text in Russian</i>	<i>Text in Brazilian Portuguese</i>
Человек, запутанный в словах, теряет ощущение реальности. Поэтому истина — это точка зрения, не только вынесенная во внезнаковую (внесоциальную) сферу реальных отношений, но и противопоставленная словам. Носитель истины не только ребенок, дикарь – существа вне общества, но и животное, поставленное и вне языка (LOTMAN, 1994, pp.61-62).	O homem, embaraçado nas palavras, perde a sensação da realidade. Por isso a verdade é um ponto de vista não só elevado à esfera extra-signo (extra-social) das relações reais, mas posto também em oposição às palavras. Portadores da verdade não são apenas a criança, o selvagem – seres que se encontram fora da sociedade, mas também o animal, colocado, além disso, fora da língua (LOTMAN, 2010, p.39).
<i>Text in English</i>	
Man, entangled in words, loses his sense of reality. Truth is a view-point not only situated in the sphere of real relations beyond signs and society, but actually opposed to words. The bearer of truth is not only the child or savage, beings who find themselves outside society, but also the animal, which even finds itself outside language (LOTMAN, 1988, p.219). ⁴³	

⁴² For reference, see footnote 2.

⁴³ For reference, see footnote 2.

Excerpts 2 and 3 have few words of foreign origin and no long sentences. Their most important feature is in the semantic plane. Lotman refers to the opposition between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, stating that the latter was responsible for the devaluation of the sign and, consequently, of the word, as its main representation. For Lotman, this idea exerted a huge impact on Leo Tolstoy's literary and philosophical oeuvre and was expressed particularly in his novel *Kholstomer* (1886), to which Lotman refers in the same paragraph of excerpt 3. Evidently, in the context of the Soviet Union of the 1960s, conclusions drawn about the false nature of the bearer of truth, as well as his marginal and extra social position, are very suggestive. Aesopian language is used here with great mastery.

Thus, we must pose the following question: if we take into consideration Voloshinov's well-known assertion that every sign is ideological and social in nature (1986, pp.9-15),⁴⁴ would Lotman be disagreeing with him when he stated that, in certain periods of time, the concept of truth – which can be understood as a sign – can be found in an extra social position? It seems that there is no disagreement here because when Lotman stated that, in the Renaissance, truth was believed to belong to the extra social sphere, its close connection to the ideological and social sphere becomes more evident.

Although the comparison between the original and the translation of only one of Lotman's essays is not enough to draw more general conclusions, it allows us to make some important remarks. If we think again about the concept of *tertium comparationis*, suggested by the CLESTHIA-Cediscor research group, we can then declare that they are not the same text, once the context of their creation and dissemination is different.

Generally speaking, the language used in Lotman's works – even the ones written in the 1960s – tends to be clear, which makes them different from the works of other semioticians. The use of examples when he explains theories is also a trademark of his writings, but even so we can identify some of the aforementioned particularities in his texts.

The text in Portuguese maintains the main linguistic features of the original text: no Sovietisms and, semantically, no historical and political references to their time; long complex sentences and a complex “esoteric” terminology. As to the wide use of foreign

⁴⁴ For reference, see footnote 21.

words, it was attenuated in the translated text. Besides, for a reader who is ignorant of the context of Lotman's output, it is not clear why language is complex and political, and historical references of the time are not found in the text. The striking characteristics of the original text are erased in general: they are either invisible or fused with the general characteristics of the genre 'scientific article.' This is due to the fact that the context in which the texts of the Russian semioticians are translated and read is different. However, it is imperative that we take into consideration the circumstances of the development of this important semiotic trend so we can have a solid understanding of the works from this period. At the end of this essay, Lotman states that "[w]e may thus presume that semiotics not only arises from a certain scientific movement but also expresses the structural characteristics of the cultural code of our time" (1988, p.220).⁴⁵

Image 1. Meeting on a Boat: Fourth Summer School, 1970



Source: Sergey Neklyudov's personal archive

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⁴⁵ For reference, see footnote 2.

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