

The Formation of the Sign Theory in Uzbek and Russian Linguistics

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Abstract. *This article examines the formation of the sign theory in Uzbek and Russian linguistics, its scientific foundations, and stages of development. The study demonstrates that the sign theory is aimed at analyzing how attributes and quality features of objects, phenomena, and processes are represented within the semantic system of language. The research also analyzes the sign concepts in Uzbek and Russian linguistics, their main schools, methodological approaches, and the interaction of theoretical perspectives.*

Key words: *sign theory, semantic units, attributive sign, lexical-semantic system, cognitive linguistics, linguistic schools, methodological approaches.*

The Russian linguistic school plays a significant role in the formation of the sign theory. Since the early 20th century, Russian linguistics has made a notable contribution to the development of semiotics by conducting in-depth and systematic analyses of the nature of signs, their content and formal unity, their connection with cultural codes, and their functions in communicative processes. The Russian semiotic school presents units expressing signs as a multifaceted phenomenon. In their scholarly views, the Russian researchers recognize as key methodological principles: the unity of material and spiritual content, the meaning-contextual phenomenon, a means of preserving social and cultural experience, and a dynamic unit that can be reinterpreted in the communication process. In this way, Russian scholars have studied units expressing signs not only from a linguistic perspective but also from philosophical, cultural, psychological, and sociological viewpoints, making a substantial contribution to the development of general semiotic thought.

Interpretations of units expressing signs by representatives of the Russian semiotic school hold particular scientific significance for the formation and development of semiotic thinking. The analysis of these perspectives shows that the phenomenon of the sign is understood not merely as a single-layered entity but rather as a concept grounded in multi-layered and multidimensional methodologies. In the views of Russian scholars such as A. Potebnya, G. Shpet, and P. Florensky, emphasis is placed on the semantic, internal formal, and symbolic aspects of the sign. In this framework, a sign consists of its material form, spiritual and cultural content, and mental-imagistic structure. Consequently, linguistic units are not mere mechanical signals but embody historical, cultural, and contextual memory. The content of a linguistic sign is revealed not only within the system but also within its cultural context.

M. Bakhtin emphasizes that signs manifest new qualities in speech. This theory aligns with contemporary pragmalinguistics and discourse theory. The meaning of a sign is not static but is continuously reshaped in the course of communication, implying that the understanding of a sign is closely connected with the social-cognitive environment. This idea provides an important methodological foundation for the study of the dynamic semantics of language units. M. Lotman interprets a sign not only as a linguistic mechanism but also as a central element of culture. His

concept of the semiosphere illuminates the role of signs in preserving and transmitting social experience.

In conclusion, although the theoretical views of Russian semioticians on signs differ, they are unified by a single principle: the sign functions as a central model of human cognition, cultural memory, and communication. These perspectives provide a robust methodological foundation for contemporary linguistics and semiotic research, allowing for a deeper understanding of the nature of linguistic signs.

In studies on sign theory, the views of Uzbek scholars hold particular significance. Linguist N. Uluqov notes the following regarding units expressing signs. Language belongs to the means of transmitting information. First and foremost, any means that conveys information about itself and, at the same time, about other entities in reality — objects, events — that is, any material representations of social information, are considered signs. According to him, a sign is a material object, event, or action perceived by the senses. The concept of a sign is multifaceted and is analyzed within philosophy, logic, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. A material-ideal formation representing an object, property, or relation, possessing aspects of both expression and content, is called a linguistic sign.

Uluqov's approach closely aligns with that of A. Potebnya, a representative of the Russian semiotic school, in that the material-ideal formation corresponds fully to Potebnya's notion of the external form — the dialectical unity of material and content. While Potebnya regarded the sign as a psychological manifestation of meaning, Uluqov interprets it as a generalized category reflected in consciousness.

Uzbek scholar Z. Xolmanova, who has conducted research on units expressing signs, emphasizes that language is a system of signs. "Language signs allow distinguishing language from other means of communication and characterizing it as a social phenomenon. In general, language has served as the most important means of human interaction, conveying knowledge accumulated in society, culture, lifestyle, and labor activities." According to her, language signs, in turn, emerge as one of the main indicators that fundamentally differentiate language from other communication tools of humanity. We argue that such a distinction of linguistic signs demonstrates that language is a complex semiotic system with a social essence. Language develops and evolves inextricably connected with social life, social consciousness, historical experience, and cultural heritage. From this perspective, language signs function not only as tools expressing certain concepts but also as mechanisms regulating human socio-cultural needs, worldview, social relations, and cognitive activity. This multifunctional nature of language signs shows that language is not merely a communication tool but a social phenomenon arising in the process of society's intellectual and cultural development.

Professor A. Nurmonov emphasizes: "Language is the most important means of communication among people. It is the primary tool for transmitting information about certain events or phenomena in objective reality. There are also other ways of conveying information, such as means indicating traffic, signs signaling whether to cross the road, and so on. In this regard, language belongs to the set of tools serving to convey information. What they have in common is that they provide information about themselves and about certain entities or events in reality. Such means are called signs. In the process of understanding the surrounding world, humans represent reality in their consciousness through images, and this view of reality is expressed through signs. Any material representation of social information is a sign. The fact that language is a system of signs is its main feature and universal aspect."

According to the scholar, each linguistic element — whether a word, morpheme, phraseological unit, or other linguistic unit — performs the function of transmitting and expressing a specific meaning. These units act as carriers of information reflecting objective events or objects and deliver coded representations of reality in the human mind to the external world. Through their content and expression, linguistic signs convey social experience and cultural memory to members of society, which distinguishes language from other information systems, such as traffic control signals or pictograms.

Thus, analyzing units expressing signs reveals their material-ideal nature, semantic function, and communicative potential. Language, in turn, emerges not only as a means of transmitting information but also as a universal semiotic system that shapes social consciousness, thought, and cultural heritage. Professor A. Nurmonov also highlights that the study of sign theory gave rise to the independent discipline of semiology and that linguistics should be included within the scope of semiology.

Z. Xolmanova identifies two main characteristics when defining a sign. The first characteristic of a sign is perception. This means that for a sign to be perceived, it must have a certain material basis. The material basis of a sign can vary: sound (acoustic), vision (optic), taste (gustatory), and others. The second characteristic of a sign is that it conveys information about itself and about another object.

Among Uzbek linguists, A. Mamatov interprets semiotics as closely linked to culture. According to him, "...at the same time, culture values diversity. Although culture — the system of signs — cannot independently develop, language and culture are different semiotic systems." Moreover, it can be said that culture structurally resembles language. While language and culture exist as different semiotic systems, they complement each other, interact, and define each other's semantic domains. While language, as a system of signs, serves as a means to express and transmit meaning, culture manifests as a collection of spiritual and social values formed through signs. In this sense, culture does not create independent signs but codes and transmits its meaning through existing sign systems (language, symbols, stereotypes, rituals, etc.).

Linguist A. Khojiyev states: "A sign is produced by relating a certain thing to another thing or sign, and by naming it based on some feature. For example: qizilishton. The bird is called qizilishton because of a distinctive feature present in the bird itself. A sign is not a word-formation unit." In linguistics, a sign is a semantic criterion that allows describing, differentiating, or naming objects and phenomena in relation to other objects or phenomena. The nature of a sign is such that it reflects a specific characteristic of an object in reality in the human mind, and on the basis of this reflected feature, meaning is assigned to linguistic units. However, a sign does not itself serve as a word-formation unit. It is not morphological but a semantic category. Thus, a sign is an important explanatory category in the nominative processes of language, but it is not a structural-morphological unit.

In Uzbek and Russian, units expressing signs are an essential component of the linguistic system, serving to express various properties, external appearance, states, or relationships of objects. In both languages, adjectives act as the primary means of expressing signs. However, there are certain differences in their formation, semantic scope, and grammatical properties. In Uzbek, a sign is often expressed through adjectives, adjectival forms, nominalized adjectives, comparative units, and several affixes that form adjectives. In Russian, specific categories and types of adjectives, cases and gender forms, as well as short and full forms, further expand the possibilities of sign expression.

In Uzbek, signs are also actively expressed through the word-formation system. For example, words indicating color, shape, or property are often formed as independent lexical units, such as adjectives + nouns. Examples like qizilishton, qoraqo'zi, uzunquloq show that the main sign highlights a distinguishing feature of the object. In this process, the sign functions not as a separate word-formation unit but as a semantic motivator. In Russian, expressions such as окрашенные признаки, внешние особенности, or характерные черты are often expressed through adjectives and adjectival forms: красногрудый, белокрылый, длинноносый, which are formed synthetically and serve to name the sign and object as a unified entity. In Uzbek, such units are often formed analytically, whereas in Russian they are formed synthetically.

There are also significant differences in the grammatical properties of units expressing signs. In Uzbek, adjectives are an invariable class and do not change according to case, number, or possession; they perform the function of marking only in a syntactic relationship before a noun. In Russian, adjectives change according to gender (род: муж., женск., средн.), number (ед., мн.), and case (падежные формы), allowing the grammatical adaptation of the sign to the noun. For example,

Красная птица, красного петуха, красные цветы, etc. This demonstrates that in Russian, sign expression has a grammatically structured system.

The semantic scope of units expressing signs in Uzbek and Russian also exhibits certain differences. In Uzbek, signs are primarily based on natural, external appearance and properties. National worldview and folk perceptions also play an important role. For example, units such as qo'yliqiz, sarg'ish, cho'zinchoq are associated with national realities. In Russian, units expressing signs often encompass vague, psychological, and emotional states as well. Units like Угрюмый, торжественный, искренний, прозрачный, смысл expand the semantic range of sign expression.

Additionally, in Uzbek, adjectives often serve to name entities metaphorically. For example, qizilishton — a bird with a red chest. In Russian, complex adjectives (сложные прилагательные) are used to form units with a higher degree of descriptiveness and precision, such as темно-зеленый, широкоизвестный, труднопроходимый. In Uzbek, such units are expressed more analytically: to'q yashil, o'ta qiyin, juda mashhur.

In conclusion, although units expressing signs in Uzbek and Russian share a common functional purpose, there are significant differences in their formation methods, grammatical possibilities, and semantic scope. Uzbek tends to create signs analytically, relying on semantic motivation. Russian, on the other hand, has a morphologically rich system with extensive synthetic formation possibilities. Therefore, a comparative analysis of the two languages contributes to a deeper understanding of the principles of national-linguistic cognition, classification, and word-formation mechanisms of units expressing signs.

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