

## ЯЗЫК, СОЗНАНИЕ, КОММУНИКАЦИЯ

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### **Triadic nature of visual image as a basis of visible component representation in communicative space**

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The article is devoted to the research of the nature, structure and mechanisms of emergence and existence conditions of visible component representation in order to clarify the principles of the functioning of visual image in communicative space. The understanding of these processes is important for the solution of the problem of the identification of organization principles in communicative space, where the creation of images mobilizing irrational connotations comes to the first place. Based on the triadic nature of a sign in the concept of C.S. Pierce, the author proposes her own methodological strategy for the study of the nature of the representation of visible component, expanding the theoretical potential of semiotic analysis of an image as an iconic sign. The proposed methodology is based on the cornerstone of the philosophy of Pierce (phaneroscopy) – essentially triadic of a sign (sign, object, interpretant) in connection with the categories of existence and cognition (Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness). With this approach, a sign is considered as a “matrix” for the creation of visual images. The relevance of the proposed research lies in the description of the triadic nature of visual image in communicative space. It is proved that a visual image is not an inherent iconic sign. It should be considered as a representation of visible component in the sequence of movement of three modes of existence (possibility, actuality and reality). The proposed triadic model of the representation of visible component made it possible to reveal the processes of formation of visual image in communication. The key provisions of the triadic sign theory allowed concluding that the processes of the formation of visual images in the modern culture of representative expansion, when one image becomes the image of another image and expresses it are interrelated.

**Keywords:** image, visuality, representations, semiotics, Charles Sanders Pierce, triadic nature of a sign, communicative space

The research relevance is due to the complexity and ambiguity of modern reality. We are talking about a situation where the diversity of information and the speed of communication do not so much expand the horizons of personal development but create new challenges for humanity. It can be argued that semiotic reality is the source where people borrow ideas and even patterns of behavior and the rules of human society.

At the modern speed of information exchange, a consistent perception of information replaces imagery. Modern person no longer looks to classify facts arranging them in a sequential chain. The world of images is becoming the main way of world cognition. The dominance of imagery over rationality affects not only the ways of information organization, but also the nature and “anatomy” of the whole society. More than 80 million photos are published daily on the Instagram social media platform alone, and 3.5 billion photos and videos are “liked” every day [Highfield, 2016]. The growth of communication through images stimulated the growth of visual, rather than textual consumption of information, significantly accelerated by the younger generation. The author has the understanding that the desire to see and understand our society through images is not a new phenomenon. However, today the speed and impact of visual and digital technologies are significantly different.

The transformation of the communicative space towards ephemerality and instability takes place under the influence of imagery due to the fact that in the modern information stream, two aspects are paradoxically combined. On the one hand, the diversity of information destroys both personal and cultural meanings. On the other hand, information flows create meeting points where people meet and contact. This is the success of social networks.

In the information flows that form the communicative relationships of space, the image is not just described, it is reflected and perceived. The image acquires special cultural and social significance. There are many examples that demonstrate how visual images affect the communicative space. For example, Lin Prøitz, in her article, cites an example of a change in the dominant vocabulary on Twitter as a reaction to the image of a “tiny drowned body”, as a result of which the discussion about “migrants” turned into a discussion about “refugees” [Prøitz, 2018, p. 549]. Thus, visual images show us their transformational quality, since they can change public opinion and mobilize a person for certain actions.

Contemporary reality is mainly the reality of images. They were present and they are always present in the communicative space. However, the researchers describe modern reality as a reality with the dominance of the visual and the visible, as the world of play [Debord, 1999] and the endless self-reproduction of signs [Baudrillard, 2006], etc. Many works devoted to the functioning of the modern communication space analyze the situation of total significance provoked by the dominance of the visible in communications, associated with the advent of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others platforms, which allowed quick and wide distribution of images from camera phones – from selfies and memes. It is proved that the popularity of using social networks largely depends on a personal need to visualize one’s reality [Boczkowski, Matassi & Mitchelstein, 2018].

The study of the structure of the visual image as a metaconstruction will reveal the nature of the dynamics of the visible in the modern communicative space, which is a positive step towards rethinking the mechanisms of the construction of realities and pseudo-realities.

## Purpose

The article analyzes the triadic nature of the visual image in order to clarify the situation: what is image, what is its structure, what are the ways of its occurrence and existence in communications, what structures are at the base of the representation of the visible, ensuring its dynamics in the communicative space and determining the situation with its mass replication before meeting with the really visible.

## Material presentation

During the study of this issue, the author relies on the key provisions of visual semiotics, the study of the image and its visual representation. R. Arnheim introduced the concept of visual thinking [Arnheim, 1974]. Describing visual thinking, he operated with spatial and semantic characteristics. For the purposes of this study, we referred to the ideas of visual semiotics, about which Umberto Eco wrote: “to explain what we see with what we can not see, but thanks to which we see the similarities between the subject and its image” [Eco, 2006, p. 177]. It is necessary to pay attention, that, as a rule, the approaches to visibility do not consider the dynamics of a sign itself and the process of creation of values. At the same time, the level of the problem situation associated with the study of the structure of the image in the communicative space makes us again turn to the studies on semiotics in the paradigm of C. Peirce.

Nowadays the discoveries of C.S. Peirce in logic and semiotics are seen in a new light, as the first step to understanding the procedural nature of a sign in the determination of the way of the “life” of a sign. Recent studies on Peirce’s semiotics are associated with the names of Nathan Houser, Catherine Legg, Peter Skagestad – the key figures of the PEIRCE GROUP (<http://www.iupui.edu/~arisbe/>). The methodological aspects of Peirce’s work are actively discussed in the journal “Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society” (<https://www.jstor.org/journal/trancharpeirsoc>). Peirce’s distinction was the rejection of linguistic universalism (the semiology of F. de Saussure), that is why many researchers of visual representations address his work. The reference to the works of Peirce allows considering the image as a complex and multi-level phenomenon, in contrast to the linguistic sign.

The analysis of modern communicative processes from the position of Peirce’s semiotics is a positive step towards rethinking reality, producing hyperreality in the form of a kaleidoscope of visual images. In this context, we are interested in the work of Richard Atkins, who proposed using the theory of existential graphs to study moving ways of thinking [Atkins, 2017]. In this regard, the reflection of a visual image throws into question the classical idea of reflection (which is based on a phenomenological approach). The naturalistic understanding of the visual image as an image of a real or fictional object has been replaced by an understanding of the image as a metaconstruction experienced along with other types of experience.

### **Interpretant as the basis for the formation of visual images in communicative space**

The article describes the “work” of the visual image as a semiotic metastructure and as the basis for the representation of the visible in communicative space. In this regard, we formulate the problem situation of this section as follows: on the one hand, semiotic processes in communications are continuous processes, and on the other hand, it can not be denied that a description of these processes is possible through a description of the final states as the results of a specific process. At the stage of the process, the status of a sign changes in terms of its quality and potentiality, actual implementation and regularity or purposefulness. The determination of the sequence of changes of this status is the first task of the study.

The process of image formation is considered as a semiotic process in which signs and sign systems fall into one *tempoworld*. This is a moment “now”, it is defined in continuous time as a point on a straight-line segment: when the flow of experiences is interrupted, something happens that leads to a stop. The realization of the whole at all is possible, then only when the “now” happens. A feature of the process of infinite multiplicity of visual images in the communicative space is that it is formed through its “quality points”. We mean moments that fix the essence of the refraction of time in a stream of signs by the following: when a certain point is indicated, the moment is “now”, which makes it possible to capture the elusive in the processuality of the world around us. The visual image has dynamism and the ability to transform meanings, which determines the degree of “meeting” of heterogeneous semiotic processes in communicative space and becomes a source of coherence, i.e. the condition for the formation of a huge number of types of structured collective behavior.

For the purposes of this article, it is important to state that in the process of the formation of a visual image as a semiotic structure, it is not specific signs that are important, but interpretants formed in the process of communication as the basis of visual image.

The concept of interpretants is considered from the position of the semiotic approach of C.S. Peirce. The interpretant is the result of the action of a sign, “something that is produced in the mind of the interpreter”, that is, in the classical sense, the interpretant can be replaced by the concept of meaning, which in our case is fundamental and important for further reasoning. Peirce (1909) emphasizes the correlation of his concept of “interpretant” with the definitions of “meaning”, “significance” and “sense”. Thus, the interpretant has a wider and more complex meaning than that which we are used to put in the concept of “meaning”, as a more familiar definition associated with the verbs “interpret”, “explain”, “describe”, etc. Under the *meaning* of something we will understand the full range of possible interpretants. In this context, the interpretant is a kind of semiotic meta-unit, metaconstruction, identical to the triadic structure of a sign (according to the concept of C.S. Peirce) in its potentiality and purposefulness in communication processes.

The patterns of interpretants are the moment of reaching agreement on the meaning of an image. The process of creating an image is not only a process of creating messages together, but also at the same time expressing ideas and feelings. Aron Wilson argues that Peirce's semiotics can be used in the discourse on fictional objects. He emphasizes that representing the invisible implies a real relationship

to it [Wilson, 2017]. Thus, we examine the visual image as a sign structure, which is formed as the actualization of human experience through the creation of stable relationships in communications that give rise to an unconventional meaning.

### **Formation of a visual image in communications: opportunity, actuality and reality**

As it was mentioned above, the interpretant determines the sign character in the relationship between a sender and a recipient in the communication processes. Interpretant is the potential of a sign, the conceptualization of the relationship “sign / sign”, “sign / object”, “sign / interpretant” in a subsequent sign (for example, a person’s reaction to a perceived sign; explanation of the meaning of one word using other words, etc.). This process is virtually endless.

A visual image is created in the diversity of intersection of interpretants. Images play important roles in many areas of human life. A person sees the world as a multitude of images (individual and collective). Actually, the concept of image is a complex and multifaceted concept, it is a representation of the invisible (it can be an object or an event). This approach is based on the study of internal thought processes – cognitivism, which originated in the middle of the XX century. In Russian psychology, L.S. Vygotsky, V.P. Zinchenko, S.L. Rubinstein and others studied the issue of an image. An image is considered as a reflection of any object, subject or event. This theoretical position does not contradict the key provisions of the semiotics of C.S. Peirce, since the researcher considered the process of cognition as a process of mediating reality with signs. Peirce “placed philosophy between mathematics, to which he attributed the most abstract types of theoretical research, and less abstract spheres of cognition (for example, physics, chemistry, biology and psychology) [Kolapietro, 2008, p. 122]. Peirce saw the unique role of sign systems in that the abstract basis of a sign is a necessary condition for the existence of logic and thinking in the process of cognition. He was one of the first to describe the function of a sign as an intermediary in the cognitive process, emphasizing that the process of cognition is determined by our interests. The specificity of human cognition of the world is that the cognition process is not carried out by an isolated subject; there is always previous experience and joint actions in which a general idea of the world is developed.

However, a visual image is not a frozen structure. In the proposed study, the representation of the visible is ensured by its triadic nature. This is the sequence of movement of three modes of being (possibility, actuality and reality) as the ways of the existence of a visual image in a communicative space.

In order to prove this statement, we again turn to Peirce’s theory of signs, in that part, which deals with the ability of a person to express thoughts through signs. A sign is considered as an internal, mental phenomenon, through which reality is represented, as a “self-existing” phenomenon, functioning only as a means of replacing one or another real or ideal content. Peirce introduces the notion of “perfect triad” in the outline for the article, “One, Two, Three: Kantian Categories (1886)”, 1886. Peirce defined the main categories of the “mode of being” as a sequence of clarification of “Ideas”: Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness” (Peirce, 1898). We consider these provisions in more detail.

Firstness is the concept of being, which is considered as a pure presence, free creative spirit, creating quality in opportunity. For Pierce, “Firstness” is “quality in opportunity,” uncertain quality. At this level, an object is identified, but not defined. Pierce saw in the Firstness the necessary premise of experience. C. Pierce interpreted Firstness as “a way of being of what is, as it is,” that is, it is a category of immediate, pure possibility, “not yet differentiated quality and independence” [Nöth, 2001, p. 18–19]. Thus, Firstness can be considered as “quality in opportunity”. At this level, objects are not defined, but they can be identified. C.S. Pierce regarded this phaneron as a necessary but insufficient prerequisite for experience, generating the most diverse ideas embodied in pure forms of a sign.

Secondness is an idea perceived in relation to other ideas, a fact of existence. The level of “Secondness” is the level of the existence of things when the freedom of an idea is limited by “resistance to reality”, reflecting some stability to a thing, forcing it to be seen in multiplicity and individuality, that is, relations are established inside a thing and with reality. Secondness is a being in relation to the second. This is the category of the Other [Cantor, 2018]. If a phaneron (or phenomena) of the Firstness contains pure possibilities, then the Secondness phenomena belong to the world of facts. Consequently, Secondness is the level of existence of things when it is possible to see things and relationships in their multiplicity and individuality. This is an idea perceived solely through “attitude to...” through the existing opposition, the fact of correlation with another reality. The “resistance to reality” is opposed to free play of spirit, which ensures the stability and constancy of our perceptions.

Thirdness is a measure of reality, (for example, through verification procedures) a rule according to the established law. At the level of “Thirdness” the idea at this level has the status of reality. Thirdness establishes a relationship between the first and second. “This category of universal, regular, continuous, ordinary component, communication and, finally, sign” [Barulin, 2000, p. 263]. Pierce defined Thirdness as the level of the determination of patterns in which common relationships are established within signs for the law to enter reality.

Pierce’s universals exist as a pure opportunity, as the essence of things and as concepts of things. Such an approach forms the person’s ability to cognition, constructs the mental space of perception. The main condition is that an object must be known to an interpreter, for example, it can be an imaginary world, an object, some personality [Lukianova, 2010].

Thus, the structure of an image is determined by the sequence of movement of the modes of being, by analogy with the structure of an interpretant as metaconstruction. This makes the visual image the same metaconstruction, since knowledge of reality is possible due to image, and the triad “sign – object – interpretant” characterizes any sign situation that is a semiosis process. As a result, an image exists as an object of representation, and a sign itself, its perception and interpretation by a person are included in this process for the purpose of cognition, which is determined by the ability of an image to be in the process of constant formation in the Pierce “three-dimensional semiotics” format.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it becomes important to understand the process of image formation in communicative space as a phased process of image formation in its potentiality (possibility), actual implementation (actuality), commitment (reality) in sociocultural communications. Many images and texts

form in different projections semiotic configurations of communicative space – a complex network of semiotic interdependencies arising from the subtlest intersection of one's own experience and the traditions of society.

Such an approach forms a person's ability to cognition, constructs a symbolic space. In this space, visual images are created in the following sequence: experiencing a thing in the process of recalling (in the form of a dim idea), direct sensory perception of a thing (as a "bright idea"), comprehension of a thing, idea of a thing, fixed in the "usual" meanings of words and rules of actions with this thing, revealed through reasoning. Since Pierce is focusing on the analysis of logical relationships, the process of perceiving a sign connected with it is necessarily considered as a sign of a language in communications [Lukianova, 2010]. This is a logos word, that is, a word that has become a thought in a verbal sign for consciousness, and this is the reality of thought. Therefore, we are not talking about some generation of signs in total (conceivable semiosis), but about some "intention", which turns a thing into an object of thought through the process of meaningfulness.

The last one is a process of the elimination of doubts about a particular state of affairs, which allows achieving confidence in certain rules of action with a thing, as the conceivable result of a communicative act. Clarifying the concept of "reality," Pierce concludes that the sensory consequences of things should be studied, since the main action of a thing is to produce beliefs (that is, opinions that many agree with).

As it was already mentioned, according to this distribution, Firstness is the concept of being, which is considered as a pure presence, free creative spirit, creating quality in opportunity. Secondness is an idea perceived in relation to other ideas, a fact of existence. Thirdness is a measure of reality, (for example, through verification procedures) a rule according to the established law. Such a correlation allows revealing the sequence of stages of the representation of the visible as the being of representation, as the idea of everything. At the same time, we must understand that this process can be present as a single point now and recognition will become instant (like a familiar face in a crowd of people) or gradual, like the process of the creation of an opinion about "migrants" and "refugees".

### **Research relevance**

A visual change in culture is the reality in which we live today. The studies conducted as part of Visual Studies involve many social and human sciences. The discussion on the process of the creation of a visual image mainly exists around several controversial issues. The first one relates to the visual presence of a person in modern reality, his look at himself, understanding his own self. The concepts of "optical unconscious", "sight", "look" in the works of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan and Foucault laid the foundation for the understanding the role of visuality in modern culture. Barthes and Deleuze wrote about visual phenomena such as film and photography. These were significant works for the disclosure of the visual phenomenon itself. An image is no longer regarded as a model of reality (L. Wittgenstein), it becomes an independent reality In the discussion of meaning visuality in narrative cinema (or photography) as art (R. Breckner, L. Mulvey, G. Pollock) the question of using the concept of representation instead of the concept of reality arises, as a phenomenon dependent on cultural and social contexts.

The third question concerns the “iconic twist” as V. Savchuk notes: “...the iconic twist shifts the focus of attention from what the image represents besides itself, or through itself, to what it represents. In other words, what is the image itself, what are its structure, construction, mechanisms of occurrence and conditions of existence, what concepts is the basis for the representation of the visible?” [Savchuk, 2013, p. 98]. The main thesis of the supporters of the iconic twist – everything is an image. There is a contradiction in this statement about which Savchuk speaks, referring to Jacques Rancière: “If there are only images, then there is nothing other than images. If nothing else exists than images, then the very concept of an image loses its content and the image no longer exists” [Ibid.]. Moreover, an image is actually equated with an iconic sign (in the interpretation of Pierce). The unconditional significance of all these questions is that they give us an understanding of visualism as an interdisciplinary field of research.

The scientific novelty of the proposed study is in the fact that the key concepts of the representation of the visible are determined: the image exists in the communicative as an object of representation due to the dynamics of a sign in the structure “sign – object – interpretant” (C. Pearce), which characterizes any sign situation that is a semiosis process. In the process of formation, an image is formed as an interpretant – metaconstruction – a kind of semiotic meta-unit, identical to the triadic structure of a sign (according to the concept of C.S. Pearce) in its potentiality and purposefulness in communication processes. In the process of formation, it is not a sign itself that is important, but its perception and interpretation by a person as a process of the actualization of experience in communicative space by the creation of sustainable relationships in communications that give rise to a unconventional meaning.

Becoming a sign structure, an image in communicative space actualizes the virtual interdependence between a sign and meaning. In this matter, we agree with the conclusions of Guagnano and Mininni, who consider meaning as a subjective givenness (appearance) of consciousness, in relation to other senses, acquiring value relevance in culture [Guagnano & Mininni, 2018]. The formation of the actual visual image in communications goes through three key stages: potentiality (opportunity), actual implementation (actuality), determination (reality). It is concluded that the basis of the representation of the visible is the idea of C.S. Pierce about the process of sign generation. The principle of the Pierce Tertiary is conceived as a universal and moving category of representation, complementing Firstness and Secondness. Phenomenologically, Tertiary (or in another terminology Trinity. – *N.L.*) [Lukianova, 2010] is represented by a triad, which in reality becomes the law of quality or fact. This is an intelligible dimension (hypostasis) of reality, in which essences, universals are ordered into any sets.

## Conclusion

Many visual images are involved in communications. Moreover, each image is embedded in several semantic chains that form a kind of a “web” in a variety of relationships. On the one hand, an image of any action refers to the meanings of such actions that determine the activities of each person: these are either images that are personally significant, motivating a person to specific actions, or images that we know and that happen to other people. On the other hand, one image flows into

chains of recognizable images. Visual images intricately intersect and occur one on the background of the other, gathering into each other like a nesting doll. It is important that each image taken separately is an integral indivisible component of communicative space. A visual image, observed on one scale as the unit structure of a communicative space, in another dimension contains many other representations of the visible. Thus, if a certain image becomes known and emotionally significant for a sufficiently large number of people, then it will go into many patterns of their behavior (for example, hairstyles and costumes by “Beasts”).

All the above mentioned aspects allow describing the formation of a visual image as the processes of representation of the visible through the reflection of objects and phenomena of the external world in human mind in a certain sequence of stages: potentiality, actual realization, commitment in sociocultural communications. The conceptual novelty of the proposed research is the conclusion that the triadic nature of a visual image is the basis for the representation of the visible, clarification of what an image itself is and explanations of image design in the communicative space as an expression of ideas and feelings and at the same time as the result of cognition.

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### **Триадичная природа визуального образа как основание репрезентации видимого в коммуникативном пространстве**

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Статья посвящена исследованию природы, структуры, механизмов возникновения и условий существования репрезентаций видимого для прояснения принципов функционирования визуального образа в коммуникативном пространстве. Понимание этих процессов является важным для решения задачи по выявлению принципов организации коммуникационного пространства, в котором на первое место выходит создание образов, мобилизующих иррациональные коннотации. Опираясь на триадичную природу знака в концепции Ч.С. Пирса, автор предлагает собственную методологическую стратегию исследования природы репрезентации видимого, расширяющую теоретический потенциал семиотического анализа образа как иконического знака. Предлагаемая методология опирается на краеугольный камень философии Пирса (фанероскопию) – три трихотомии знака в связи с категориями бытия и познания (Первичность, Вторичность, Третичность). При таком подходе интерпретанта становится не только значением какого-либо термина, а некоторым результатом мыслительных процессов по поводу знака. Знак рассматривается как «матрица» для создания визуальных образов. Новизна предлагаемого исследования заключается в описании триадичной природы визуального образа в коммуникативном пространстве. Доказано, что визуальный образ не является собственно иконическим знаком, он должен рассматриваться как репрезентация видимого в последовательности движения трех модусов бытия (возможности, действительности и реальности). Предложенная трехчастная модель репрезентации видимого позволила раскрыть процессы становления визуального образа в коммуникациях. На основании ключевых положений триадичной теории знака сделан вывод о закономерностях в процессах становления визуальных образов в современной культуре образной экспансии, когда один образ становится образом другого образа и выражает его.

**Ключевые слова:** образ, визуальность, репрезентации, семиотика, Чальз С. Пирс, триадичность знака, коммуникативное пространство

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