

57. Language and ideology: semiologic transformation**Ziya Kıvanç KIRAC¹****APA:** Kırac, Z. K. (2023). Language and ideology: semiologic transformation. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö13), 976-983. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1379249.**Abstarct**

Human beings are born with language skills. However, the development of language is a result of human sociality and culture. Language is transmitted both vertically from generation to generation and horizontally between people. It is assumed that what cannot be expressed in language is not real. Therefore, meaning is only possible within the boundaries of a language. Through meaning, everything that happens becomes conceptualized and standardized. Language shows the meaning of reality through signs. In this way, language goes beyond being a means of communication. It becomes a tool of power struggle. Identifying and revealing the ideological influence in language necessitates different linguistic methods. Because by their very nature, signs transmit an infinite number of complex connections. Ideology, presented as a way of thinking correctly, establishes social relations and directs social action through signs. In this sense, signs are key concepts in the reproduction of ideology. On the other hand, the symbol, which is considered a sign, serves a different dimension of ideology. Symbols also convey meaning. However, their arbitrary construction takes ideology out of the definition of the reproduction of power. It gives ideology a dimension such as a mass movement, a grand narrative. Providing meaning to the masses and being a guide is a feature that ideologies establish with symbols. The aim of this study is to explain the possible links between reality, knowledge and ideology based on the distinctions between sign and symbol. In this way, a distinction is made between old-style knowledge and modern knowledge.

Keywords: Language, Ideology, Semiology, Sign, Symbol, Knowledge**Dil ve ideoloji: göstergesel dönüşüm****Öz**

İnsan bir dil becerisi içerisinde doğar. Ancak dilin gelişmesi insanın sosyalliğinin ve kültürünün bir sonucudur. Dil hem kuşaktan kuşağa dikey biçimde hem de insanlar arasında yatay olarak aktarılır. Dil ile anlatılamayan şeylerin gerçek olmadığı varsayılır. Bundan dolayı anlam ancak bir dilin sınırları içerisinde mümkündür. Anlam sayesinde olan biten her şey kavramlaşır, standartlaşır. Dil gerçeğin anlamını göstergeler yolu ile gösterir. Bu yolla dil, bir iletişim aracı olmanın ötesine geçer. İktidar mücadelesinin aracı halini alır. Dilin içerisindeki ideolojik etkiyi belirlemek ve onu ortaya çıkarmak farklı dilbilim yöntemlerini gerekli kılar. Çünkü göstergeler doğaları gereği sonsuz sayıda karmaşık bağlantı iletirler. Doğru düşünmenin bir yolu olarak sunulan ideoloji, göstergeler yoluyla sosyal ilişkileri kurar ve toplumsal eyleme yön verir. Bu anlamda ideolojinin yeniden üretiminde göstergeler anahtar kavramlardır. Diğer yandan bir gösterge olarak kabul edilen sembol ideolojinin farklı bir boyutuna hizmet eder. Semboller de anlam aktarırlar. Ancak keyfi biçimde oluşturulmaları ideolojiyi iktidarın yeniden üretilmesi tanımıyla çıkarır. Ona kitle hareketi, büyük anlatı gibi bir boyut

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kazandırır. Kitlelere anlam sunma, rehber olma özelliđi ideolojilerin sembollerle kurduđu bir özelliktir. Bu çalışmanın amacı gösterge ve sembol arasındaki ayrımlardan yola çıkarak gerçeklik, bilgi ve ideoloji arasındaki olası bağları açıklamaktır. Bu sayede eski tip bilgi ile modern bilgi arasındaki türeyiş ve işleyişe dair belli ayrımlar ve benzerlikleri açıklamaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dil, İdeoloji, Semiyoloji, Gösterge, Sembol, Bilgi

1. Knowledge and reality

One of the most important efforts in the process of entering modern times has been to create a system that can perceive reality as it is, instead of irrational factors such as superstition and myth, in order to reach the right knowledge. Reason will enable direct access to knowledge by unmasking the superstitious mask over reality. Thinking will secularize and develop intelligent designs of nature. Being outside influences such as religion and myth will make knowledge objective and it will become possible to establish a rational society. However, although the principles of Aristotelian logic and Bacon's idea of mathematical truth produced certain answers to the Enlightenment's understanding of objective realism, the mechanism of rational society could not become reality. Because over time, the idea that it is not possible to reach reality without certain systems of representation has developed. This point, together with all its other components, constitutes the starting point of the criticism of ideology. The popularization of ideology as a concept is actually the role it plays in the transformation of reality into knowledge. This role has a dual structure. The first is the theory that ideology masks reality and becomes a trump card of the power mechanism. The second is that ideology constructs truth instead of reality and thus creates an impact on the masses. In both cases, ideology's most slippery point of contact with social life is related to its determinations about everyday life. Even if there are those who argue that reality can only be reached by stepping outside the ideological influence, the difficulty in this regard is to determine what is ideological and what is not. The ideological gaze is called the new veil over reality. In this sense, ideology is both something that can be seen and felt, and something else that hides what should be seen. It both makes itself public through the symbols it uses and is also a signifier that replaces reality. This binary distinction poses various difficulties both in symbolic thought and in the definition of ideology. At this stage, it is first necessary to focus on the evolution of knowledge.

In the Middle Ages, the general idea was that knowledge was not formed through the senses, but through divine grace. Therefore, existence is linked to a divine causality. The universe must be divine. Any animal or plant gave birth to animals or plants of the same species; fire gave birth to fire and movement to movement. The universe, then, is a reflection of God. Knowledge is then analogical. This is why there was so much interest in analogy in the Middle Ages. However, some philosophers opposed this idea during the period. For example, Thomas Aquinas, close to Aristotle's philosophy, declared that no concept can be formed without receiving sense impressions, and secondly, that no concept can be reached without returning to the images that things leave in the imagination (Gilson, 2003: 127 & 292-293). Undoubtedly, this view is an opposition to both the Platonic view and scholastic thought. Later Kant approached the subject in a similar way. Knowledge is a notion with discursive and intuitive forms. This means that knowledge can be both schematic and symbolic. There is no intrinsic link between the inner intuition of things and the sign that indicates it. Concepts are images that are reconstructed in the mind. In this sense, words or visual signs are used to represent concepts. Kant supports this thesis with an interesting example. He says that there cannot be a resemblance between a despotic state and a mill, but it can be among the rules of thinking about establishing a resemblance regarding the causality of the two (2006: 230-231). With the Enlightenment period, different theories were developed on how the

external world could be perceived. In particular, discussions on thought, reason and ideas were influential in the emergence of modern sciences. The question of how the external world can be perceived is an issue that many philosophers have investigated. John Locke, one of the pioneering thinkers of the Enlightenment, attributed the source of knowledge to sensations in his work *An Essay on Human Understanding*. The human mind is a blank slate from birth. All we know about nature is possible through our external sensations. When man acquires the first sensation, ideas begin to form (1992: 93). We need words to convey thoughts to each other. The words we use help us both to form the ideas in our minds and to make comparisons. Words appear as images of our ideas (1992: 286). All our knowledge of external reality is the perception of the correspondence or discrepancy between our ideas (1992: 325). The mediating role of words and ideas is a key point for Locke. Because both concepts are signs. As a matter of fact, in the last chapter of the same work, he makes a tripartite division of sciences. Accordingly, the first scientific class is physics and the second is practical. The third group is semiotics. Words are the most basic class of signs. Investigating the ideas that constitute thoughts necessitates the investigation of signs (1992: 455).

2. Knowledge and sign

After the French Revolution, a new step was taken to investigate sensations and ideas and to build a science of ideas. Based on Locke, Condillac and Cabanis, the assumption that the senses were the only source of the formation of ideas opened a new door. With this new science called ideology, human thought and ideas could be studied objectively. The term, first coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy, was later subjected to various criticisms (Eagleton, 1996: 104). In the end, ideology and semiology seem to be disciplines that initially set out with the same goal. However, Locke and later linguists focused more on the conceptual correspondences of language in logic, while Tracy and his peers focused on social engineering to build a rational society after the Enlightenment. Despite its ambiguity and complexity, the concept of ideology continues to be a popular research topic in fields such as politics, history, sociology and communication. Indicators, on the other hand, have become key concepts for new research in many fields such as medicine, architecture, literature, communication and visual arts. Semiology, which has become a multidisciplinary concept, has developed with the contributions of many sociologists, communicators and linguists until today.

There are different views on how language renders the external world comprehensible. There is a widespread view that the connection between man and reality can only be grasped through language. Some views consider language within the system of logic. For example, Husserl argues that there should be apriori grammatical laws in order to prevent ambiguity. Language should be formed by rules determined by a rational grammar. Grammar resembles geometry in this dimension. Husserl argues that we can only reach the truth through experience and that meaning is conveyed through language. In this sense, meaning precedes language (2007: 57). In fact, Thomas Hobbes had adopted an approach that emphasized experience between reality and concept much earlier. He argued that we can reach the facts through signs rather than the objects themselves. Knowledge of things depends on the correct use of signs. Since signs are antecedents of the conclusion, the more they have been observed, the more true they are. Therefore, knowledge of things depends on the correct use of signs (2010: 33). This view is a convergence with medieval linguistic nominalism and Ockham's school in particular. Much later, structuralism, which emphasizes that language is a social product and aims to arrive at universal laws, will focus more on culture and accumulation. Structuralist thought bases the analysis of the social process on the similarity between language and society. For example, Edward Sapir argues that language is a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, each language reflects reality differently. People can perceive

reality within the limits of the language they speak. In each language, the relations between meaning and concept are established in different ways. Like any creative endeavor, it changes consciously, though not consciously, to the extent that the religions, beliefs, customs and arts of various communities change. Language is not instinctive but social. Therefore, in its historical evolution, it changes and transforms as a reflection of the same needs. Language is a way of describing reality symbolically. And in this way, reality becomes ready for communication (1933: 161-163). There are also different views on the symbolic dimension of language. For example, Lacan mentions three basic structures when describing the human mind: Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. We cannot directly access the reality of the external world. Language is an obstacle in front of our access to reality (2014: 22-24). What is striking in early linguistic studies is that grammar was treated like geometry. The relations between language, reality and meaning were analyzed analogically. Over time, linguistic studies focus on the functions of language such as signaling and pointing in terms of reality, meaning and grammar. This is because words represent objects and phenomena and in fact stand in their place. Words can also signify other things at the same time. The first focus of semiology is on the derivation of words and the possible links between signifier and signified. At the same time, words are analyzed not in isolation but as a string in their mutual relations with other linguistic entities. It is thought that the connection between human and reality can be established in this way. Saussure, one of the pioneers of semiology, argues that there is no direct connection between the word and the object. In this case, language is not a substance but a form. It is only a system in itself. Especially in Saussure we find this new form of linguism. In his work, Saussure followed a more abstract rationalist line based on positivism as opposed to historicist linguism. Although he recognizes that language has a social dimension, he insists that it has a separate structure from all other institutions. Language is a system of signs that show concepts. In this case, a semiotics can be designed regarding the place of signs in social life. Language should be thought of entirely in terms of the relationship between signs. Signs that elicit the desired response in a situation are memorized and reused. Language is a collection of traces in memory. People do not need to master the whole language. They need to adapt to a model of the language. Different languages do not contain different signs. Each language organizes the relations between signs differently. In this sense, each language offers a different world view (Saussure, 1998: 40-47). The basic assumption of structuralism is that language constructs human beings and society. Meaning is produced by language. Sentences are not constructed to describe life and experiences. On the contrary, we have meanings because we have a language.

3. Sign and ideology

In the 1960s, the study of signs began to include visual readings and approaches adapted to other fields. For example, Barthes broke new ground by applying the methods of linguistics to a wide range of fields from fashion to advertising, from visuals to myths. According to Barthes, who looks at every aspect of social life as a series of signs, objects, images and behaviors cannot do so independently, even if they convey a message and meaning. Every sign system necessitates language (1993: 106). On the other hand, it is seen that language has started to be analyzed within the relations of power and hegemony, not logic. There have been many attempts to explain the relationship between language and ideology from a structuralist perspective. This field, also known as critical analysis of ideology, is also known as critical studies. This view aims to reveal the possible ideological connotations behind the innocent appearance of sentences (Mc Lellan, 2012: 75-76). Language is no longer considered in terms of grammar, but in the interrelationship it forms with the concept of discourse within a given system. This is where ideology comes into contact with the sign. According to Hall, language is divided into referential language and constructionist language. Referentially, language conveys the meaning of reality. The real world becomes the origin of its own truth. Constructivist language, on the other hand, sees reality as the result

or effect of the way things are made sense of. Expressions create a recognition effect in the target people. This means unquestioning acceptance of the rules on which the way words are organized depends (Hall, 103-104). In this case, instead of thinking of words in terms of concepts, we begin to think of concepts in terms of words. Meaning is no longer about how things are. It is about how things acquire meaning. It is not the structure of reality that determines meaning, but its function in the social process. As Eagleton puts it, a concept becomes associated with a practice rather than a reflection of a certain state of mind. This is where the discursive and semiotic dimension of ideology emerges. It is no coincidence that the complex connections between ideology and sign were first shaped by Marxism and language studies. Because consciousness belongs to a more idealist tradition. However, sign and discourse are social and practical. The content of a worldview is the effects of concepts rather than the type of language they belong to (Eagleton, 1996: 270). More precisely, ideology is a tool that serves power. Where there is a struggle for power, there is a struggle for sovereignty. Therefore, ideology ensures the maintenance of sovereignty. Ideology is not science in this case. It is a false consciousness that enables the system to reproduce itself by masking social contradictions. According to Voloshinov, if we purify consciousness from its signifying ideological form, nothing remains. Signs and their social position are so intertwined that this is reflected in the language spoken. Conflicting ideological views are expressed in the same language. This shows that the sign has become a field of class warfare (2009: 10-12). What is important here is to know the causal symptoms that will constitute a starting point for semiological reading. In Zizek's discourse, symptoms are decoded with keys that Hall and many other philosophers call codes. In Umberto Eco's discourse, a coded form refers to a coded function. A laser light can cut as well as a surgical knife. However, it gives no clue to a non-medical professional about its cutting function. It is possible to know the correct code by being inside that system (2019: 114). Semiological reading investigates what signs conceal while showing something. This is what critical theory and Marxist theories in general have in common. Language allows not only to perceive the object, but also to define the subject (the other, the other). Thought is expressed by using words not haphazardly but as a result of a context of the imagination. Social consciousness is also formed by discursive practices. Whoever or whichever social group determines the discourse of society also controls the consciousness. Opposition movements try to break the power of the dominant discourse. Thus, discourse becomes a battlefield between asymmetrical power centers. In this sense, discourse is the weapon of both sides. Meaning creation occurs around the meaning core of each group. At the center of discourse analysis are the intersection points of language and ideology. As Van Dijk emphasizes, discourse plays a role in the use of language and the reproduction of communication. Ideologies are also constituted by texts and semantic practices. Therefore, texts and speeches are reflections of ideology as much as language (2019: 292-294).

In the ideological reading of texts, some concepts taken from Saussure constitute important formulas of semiological reading. Although Saussure also made other distinctions such as language and speech, signifier and signified. The relationship between langue and parole points to a part-whole based on a kind of analogy. However, especially the diachronic and synchronic analysis of language has been one of the starting points of ideological readings. In addition to the diachronic studies focusing on the development of language over time, language has now begun to be analyzed synchronically (Saussure, 1998: 141-144). Barthes analyzed these concepts outside of texts and named non-verbal signs as metaphor and metonymy. Metaphors are read through similarity, while metonymies are read with the connotation of closeness. Signs that have a literal meaning substitute reality with their metaphorical or metonymic similarities. Ideologies are formed not in the plain meaning but in the connotation. Eco, who applies signs to the field of architecture, talks about the intertwining of metaphorical and metonymic connections. He also argues that signs are not just something that shows something else and has a fixed

lexical meaning in this sense, they also need to be interpreted (2019: 117). Thus, Eco goes beyond structuralist theories of signs. Derrida, who argues that the true reflection of language is not similarity but difference, is another example. According to him, meaning is formed according to the signifier, not the signified. He especially emphasizes that metaphors, that is, metonyms, can be the real meaning itself. At this point, meaning is constantly postponed (2014: 26). However, although semiotics uses models that can be considered complex, it has scientific content in the field of language. Because language makes very precise references to the real world that can be deciphered. Its ability to convey a message and refer to certain areas of certainty allows it to contain multiple meanings (Williamson, 2000: 89). In ideology readings, the spiral between signifier and signified can be interpreted with scientific data, just like in language. The world of ideology is an environment where the signifier and signified exist in absolute form. At the same time, this world is presented as devoid of a historical beginning and end. It is assumed to already exist in social reality. In this way, ideology is accepted by people as a natural conception. According to Barthes, myths are things that naturalize history by using an ideological sign system. Based on this idea, Barthes also evaluated signs through images. This new view supports the assumption that ideologies have the power to create images. In particular, the analysis of advertisements in terms of signs contributes to a new criticism of ideology through consumption habits (1993: 70-75).

4. Symbol, sign and ideology

Foucault argues that in the pre-Enlightenment period, knowledge was dominated by the law of similarity, while with the Enlightenment, an abstract concept such as reason came to the fore. He says that analytical knowledge, which was previously based on representations around the concept of historical time, was destroyed and replaced by scientific knowledge. Like all other sciences, linguistics has become more synthetic within the notion of rationality (2017: 493-494). The use of synchronic structural analysis as well as the historical method in textual studies supports this view. In ideology readings, both metonymic and metaphorical concepts are often established. Especially Marxist theories establish the connection between language and ideology through diachrony. In this sense, metonymy is formed by the substitution of a part for a whole system. The crown signifying royalty is an example of this. Using the concept of class exploitation instead of the real meaning of the whole history is also a kind of metonymy. This reading of the part as a substitute for the whole puts us in touch with the realities masked by ideology. In metonymy, an image or sign means something that connects itself as a part and to another part or expresses its relationship to a whole of which it is a part (Lakoff and Johnson, 2005: 67-68). For example, an eagle can be used metonymically as a substitute for the nature of which it is a part, or for endangered animals. Metonymic expressions can be systematically read as signs.

One of the important problems in the classification of signs is the relationship between symbols and signs. In Peirce's famous classification, symbols are treated as signs. Unlike a sign, a symbol cannot be reduced to its constituent atomic elements. It cannot be reduced to its own signifier, whether verbal or non-verbal, nor can it be reduced to the signification that follows it (Campagna, 2021: 199-200). A symbol is disconnected from what it represents. It is often created arbitrarily. It represents another reality by replacing it. In this sense, the symbol depends on repetition, while the sign depends on interpretation. According to Jung, the symbol has an unconscious side that can never be explained with certainty. When the mind tries to discover it, it drifts into irrational thoughts. Since human beings cannot define an abstract/divine being, we give it a name based on belief, not on concrete evidence (Jung, 2020: 16-17). New concepts such as identity, nationality and nation have been added to the sacred of modern man. The modern sacred sprouts within a modern belief: ideology. As a result of the Enlightenment and the breakdown of the influence of religion, ideologies emerged as new guides to

meaning. An object often replaces an idea. The eagle now represents freedom, power. At the same time the eagle becomes the symbol of a football team. Purple is known as the color of aristocrats. In the Middle Ages some flowers symbolized nobility. Colors symbolize different emotions on flags. At the same time the flag, the anthem and the border are the most important symbols of the nation state. Ideological language makes frequent use of symbols. It is a metaphorical language. They are simple formulations to describe a complex world. Everything can be a symbol for everything else. Some symbols are created by association. But many others arise completely arbitrarily. Symbols that are not used by a group, community or mass are forgotten over time. They are tied to repetition and rote memorization. For example, rituals are full of repeated symbols of a belief or ideology. Holidays and festive ceremonies serve as a reminder of what is considered sacred. Myths are important symbols of ideologies. Even language itself is an arbitrarily assembled system of symbols. Symbols are mobilizing. They are stimulants. They appeal to emotions. The notion of ideology here is no longer the same as in critical analysis. Equipped with symbols, ideology is now read as mass movements.

According to Ryan and Kellner, ideology is a metaphorical method of reflecting life in relation to a particular construction of social reality. Metaphors impose an ideal or higher meaning on an image. The process by which the real object acquires a higher meaning through metaphor goes hand in hand with the process by which certain ideal meanings are reduced through ideology to correspond to certain ways of perceiving reality. By eroding the foundation of the idealizing claims of social metaphors, metonymic connections hasten the movement of real forces and possibilities to eliminate all the inequalities, sanctified by ideological metaphors, to abolish social boundaries, and to undermine baseless notions of property, social conformity, and individual self-identity (2022: 39-40). The way we think has a formative impact on our language and science, as well as on the way we express ourselves on a daily basis. Our everyday concept system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. That is, everything we think and do in everyday language is metaphor-laden (Lakoff and Johnson, 2005: 145). Metaphorical language arises from the need for symbolization. People who cannot come into direct contact with reality use language, which is a system of symbols. Symbolization is defined as another dimension of the human being. Ideologies are narratives that have emerged as an answer to our search for meaning. That is why they describe complex nature with generalizations that appear to be very simple. In other words, symbolic expression is more a field of political communication. It is a unique subject that should be read within the propaganda activity. Symbols are not semiological but semantic tools because of their capacity to carry and create meaning. The transformations that take place within the structuralist form of language are related to culture, ideological reproduction and the influence of linguistics.

5. Conclusion

The issue of how signs are formed within language relations in the construction of reality is a scientifically current issue. On the one hand, ideology is a semiological activity as a mechanism for reasserting power. On the other hand, it makes use of symbols as a string that mobilizes the masses. A sign survives by being interpreted and a symbol by being repeated. The sign and symbol, which appear as two different aspects of language, refer to two different aspects of ideology. Ideology is subject to semiological reading both as an implicit tool of class struggle. On the other hand, ideologies, as grand narratives of modern times, are semantic guides laden with symbols that respond to people's search for meaning. The contact between language and ideology will remain topical in the fields of modern linguistics and political communication.

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