

Semiotics and Structuralism

1. Semiotics: the study of signs
2. Structural linguistics: the hidden rules of language
3. Structuralism: examines the overarching systems or structures by which human culture is organised

Semiotics:

Symbols represent a mental code which frames cultural reality and convey information

Peircean semiotics has three components:

- Sign: something perceived by interpreter
- Object: subject matter of sign (exists beyond the interpreter)
- Interpretant: meaning of the sign (connection between sign and object made by the interpreter)

Sign: Peirce identified three types:

- Symbol: sign & object connected through cultural convention or interpretation
- Icon: sign & object connected by similarity
- Index: sign refers to object through an actual, real connection

Structural Linguistics:

Saussure explored the hidden rules structuring language, which he argued was made of signs: the union of a “concept” and a “sound image”. The **sign** comprises:

- The signifier (spoken word)
- The signified (concept)
- Meaning of a sign: the association between the sound image and the concept
- Hence the sound “cat” in English means the thing “cat”

Structuralism

Levi-Strauss examined the hidden rules organising society. A key concept/organising principle is binary opposites

TASK: analyse the following images using the concepts outlined above.



