Abstract

We propose to discuss online promotional texts presenting French-speaking European public universities. We suggest these descriptive texts (a particular academic institution being the semiotic object being referred to) combine homogenizing generic and interdiscursive regularities that assure the control of their interpretation: on the one hand, generic regularities show that the specific social practice of promoting universities online produces a speech genre that is highly patterned (when it comes to its morphosyntactic, stylistic and compositional features), on the other hand, interdiscursive regularities show that the descriptive procedures at play mobilize an exogenous discourse that is ideological in nature (i.e. European political discourse on higher education and research) and therefore mirrors the changing sociopolitical context the sampled institutions are embedded in. More globally, we suggest that a series of concepts originally developed by the traditional continental (French) discourse analysis (dialogism, interdiscourse, communication situation, etc.) deserve to be read and re-invested in light of Peircean semiotics.
Key words
peircean semiotics, dialogism, speech genre, universe of discourse, discourse analysis, academic institution

1. Introduction

Largely relying on Saussurean structuralism in Continental Europe, (French) discourse analysts have never evoked Charles Sanders Peirce’s theory of semiosis to shed light on discursive mechanisms at play in the production and interpretation of oral or written texts. Astonishingly, even enunciation theorists such as Austin, Searle, Benveniste and Kerbrat-Orecchioni – who introduced so-called “pragmatic” models in communication and linguistic studies – did not rely on Peirce either.

The distinguishing feature of Peirce’s semiotics is the triadic nature of semiosis whereas the structuralist conception of the sign is dyadic (the signifier and signified constitute the basic entities of Saussurean “semiosis”). For Peirce scholars, however, this important theoretical difference can explain a number of aporias relating to semantic theories (most notably, componential semantics) inspired by Saussurean structuralism since the 1970’s:

The relation instituted by the Sign is therefore triadic. It is an essential characteristic of the semiotic theory of Peirce. One does not incidentally see how a semiological theory could elude this logical necessity. (…) both the facts and logic support this triadic conception of the Sign. The Saussurean relation between signifier and signified rapidly soon appeared
be insufficient to describe linguistic facts.¹ (Deledalle in Peirce 1978: 217) (my translation)

While some scholars did intend to link Peircean semiotics with (traditional) textual analysis (see, e.g., Bruzy et al. 1980; Deledalle 1979; Eco 1979; Johansen 1985; Marty 1990; Réthoré 1993), their orientations have not gained much publicity as far as traditional Discourse Analysis is concerned. It seems to us, however, that if one considers Discourse Analysis to be the description of production and interpretation mechanisms relating to discursive practices in contemporary society, Peircean semiotics should not be neglected as it has been until now. In this article, we propose to reinterpret some of its conceptual tools in light of Peircean semiotics.

2. Discourse Analysis with Peirce?

Following Peirce, we can consider any global text or local speech utterance as a sign, defined as follows:

“A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen.” (CP 2.228)².

This well-known definition refers to the process of semiosis, which, according to Peirce, involves the association of an Object with the sign it has determined
(which can be a word, a cry, a painting, a sentence, a text, a whole book, etc.) by way of a new, mediating sign called the Interpretant of the first sign. In classical pragmatist terms – and in direct opposition to linguistic structuralism – the concept of Interpretant allows meaning not to be considered as something immanently fixed (i.e., the obscure signified), but as an effect of signs dependent on a context. Thus, with Eco (2014: 90), we consider that “interpreting [an] expression in context means magnifying certain interpretants and narcotizing others, and narcotizing them means removing them temporarily from our competence, if only for the duration of the current interpretation”.

Moreover, we cannot but consider the contextualized relations between an Object and its sign, and between a sign and its Interpretants, as micro-institutions which enable communication and mutual understanding between interpreters to take place properly:

We have considered the relation established between a sign and its Object [as mediated by way of the Interpretant] as a social institution, having all its characteristics: it is relative to a community and fulfills a certain number of social functions for this community (functionality of the institution), notably social communication (…); like any institution, it has a contingent aspect and an aspect of permanence and stability.3 (Marty 1990: 292) (my trans.)

In this perspective, the role of habits is primordial: it is by way of contextualized, interpretative habits that adequate Interpretants are determined by particular signs:
Habit, which determines both the permanence of Interpretants and their relative necessity in collective life, is at the origin of interpretation and it is thanks to of habits that interpretative constants can be said to be laws. (Latraverse 1987: 58) (my trans.)

For instance, if in our cultural community, one utters /horse/ in a ranch, it is most likely that people will, by way of habit, actualize other signs – e.g., /brown animal/, etc., generally accompanied by a mental image (also another sign) of a prototypical horse – all of these being Interpretants of the first sign /horse/: the semiotic process by which particular signs give rise to Interpretants is theoretically unlimited but is always ended “pragmatically” with the help of interpretative habits. Moreover, we could compile statistical data regarding which Interpretants are usually mobilized in a given community as far as /horse/ is concerned, thus reconstructing the threads of a local encyclopedic universe of discourse relating to horses.

Now, numerous definitions of discourse and Discourse Analysis have been inventoried in academic literatures and although these two notions may refer to different conceptual frameworks depending on the theoretical assumptions one takes, scholars generally define discourse as oral or written texts interpreted in context and Discourse Analysis as the academic field studying texts in relation to their social context. In this perspective, we suggest that the theory of Interpretants and the recognition of the role of interpretative habits regulating their adequate selection has the potential to bridge Discourse Analysis with Peircean semiotics. Indeed, our conception of discourse centers around the discursive regularities evinced by an aggregate of texts – considered as “devices” aimed at generating Interpretants – coming from contextual
settings that we believe are analogous and assembled in a corpus. In agreement with a Peircean conception of semiosis, we believe that the role of the context is central to this point of view, it being conceived as a determiner of habits assuring the control of both the production and interpretation of discursive acts, resulting in the regularities which the discursivist intends to describe. Moreover, regarding this seminal role of the context, we believe that some of the theoretical contributions developed by Wittgenstein and Bakhtin – two authors regularly cited by discourse analysts – had been implicitly anticipated and can be taken into account by Peirce’s own theory of semiotic processes.

3. Context as determiner of discursive habits

When Wittgenstein (1968: 11e) stated that “the word ‘language-game’ (Sprachspiel) is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life”, this very “form of life” is what people first have to recognize before interpreting the “speaking of language” subsequently. We consider any form of life as a contextual setting which can be divided into at least (1) an instituted communication situation, defined as a spatio-temporal setting in which the linguistic signs were/are meant to be interpreted and (2) a universe of discourse (i.e., other complexes of linguistic signs) with which a communication situation is always associated, defined as other implicit or explicit discourses one text cannot but relate to. Let us take a brief look at these two notions and see how they can explain the productive and interpretative regularities one can find in a carefully chosen corpus (i.e., texts having been produced in communication situations that are
judged to be analogous so that contextual-situational variables can be controlled).

3.1. *Communication situations and speech genres*\(^6\)

With French discourse analyst Charaudeau (2014: 49), we understand that the constraints of the communication situation “give discursive instructions to the enunciation and reception instances so that the latter can stage and interpret the speech acts”\(^7\) (my trans.). Charaudeau adds that “it is these discursive instructions that assure a part of the mutual understanding of speech acts and preside over the regularity of the ways of speaking, below the possible variants due to various psychological and social factors: following this hypothesis, this is how speech genres are born”\(^8\) (my trans.).

The notion of “speech genre” has been vastly commented by French discourse analysts (see, *e.g.*, Charaudeau 2014; Maingueneau 2014; Rastier 2011). According to Bakhtin (1986: 79), one of the very first scholars to have broadened the study of *genres* beyond the literary realm, “if speech genres did not exist and we had not mastered them, if we had to originate them during the speech process and construct each utterance at will for the first time, speech communication would be almost impossible”. He further adds:

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(\ldots) \text{a speaker is given not only mandatory forms of the national language (lexical composition and grammatical structure), but also forms of utterances that are mandatory, that is, speech genres. The latter are just as necessary for mutual understanding as are forms of language. Speech genres are much more changeable, flexible, and plastic than language}
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forms are, but they have a normative significance for the speaking individuum, and they are not created by him but are given to him. Therefore, the single utterance, with all its individuality and creativity, can in no way be regarded as a completely free combination of forms of language, as is supposed, for example, by Saussure (and by many other linguists after him), who juxtaposed the utterance (la parole), as a purely individual act, to the system of language as a phenomenon that is purely social and mandatory for the individuum. (Bakhtin 1986: 80)

Thus, recognizing an instituted communication situation is a conditio sine qua non to react socially and discursively to a given speech act, considered as an excluded third between la langue and la parole: as such, it is the lieu of generic regularities (morphosyntactic characteristics, stylistic features, etc.) which a discourse analyst shall strive to describe.

Besides, a communication situation being itself a complex of signs, the addressee has to recognize and acknowledge this situation before concentrating on the meaning of the (written or oral) text of which it can be a result. Therefore, the communication situation is also a link in a chain of signs in itself, those links and their respective interpretation being taught through social life. Wittgenstein was referring to no other reality when he specified that “the teaching of language is not explaining, but training” (Wittgenstein 1968: 4e), depending on the context of the “language-game”.

3.2. Universes of discourse

Besides the communication situation and its direct influence on the speech genre, the universe of discourse, as a contextual parameter, is also primordial
for the interpretation of any (complex of) utterance(s). Once again, Bakhtin/Voloshinov (Voloshinov 1973: 72) sensed this importance when he coined the notion of *dialogism*:

> Any utterance – the finished, written utterance not excepted – makes response to something and is calculated to be responded to in turn. It is but one link in a continuous chain of speech performances. Each monument carries the work of its predecessors, polemicizing with them, expecting active, responsive understanding, and anticipating such understanding in return.

This dialogic nature of discourse is essential if one proposes to understand the mechanism of production and interpretation of a given set of linguistic material:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of the utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (Bakhtin 1981: 276)

More interestingly, dialogism is consistent with a Peircean conception of semiosis: “in the Peircean view, every sign, hence every linguistic utterance, is necessarily contextualized, because it always comes after, during, and before other utterances [and] it largely takes its meaning after its place in the chronology” (Réthoré 1993a: 395). A particular process of semiosis never begins *ex nihilo*; a sign is never interpreted (at least correctly and for an adult being) without the habit necessary for its understanding and is always a
response to an antecedent sign for which it became its Interpretant. Here, the importance of what Peirce called the “collateral experience” of a given Object can describe what is at stake when one considers the interpretation of any sign: “(...) by collateral observation, I mean previous acquaintance with what the sign denotes” (CP 8.179). More precisely, as far as symbolic signs are concerned, Peirce considered that existing symbols necessarily had to grow out of anterior ones (see, e.g., Nöth 2014): this unlimited, intertwining semiotic chain is what enables mutual understanding to happen between two sets of utterances. Texts, for instance, as macro-signs, constitute the links in a longer chain of macro-signs bound together to form a particular embracing universe of discourse, guiding, as a contextual dimension, the adequate Interpretants one must mobilize to interpret them.

Here, we can draw a parallel between this notion of universe of discourse and the notions of interdiscourse (“interdiscours”) and discursive formation (“formation discursive”) used by French discourse analysts since the 1970’s. An interdiscourse can be understood as “the totality of discursive unities (belonging to previous discourses of a same speech genre, or to discourses contemporary to other speech genres, etc.) with which a particular discourse enters in an implicit or explicit relation”9 (Maingueneau 2009: 77) (my trans.), while a discursive formation refers to different utterances, emerging from heterogeneous situations of communication and, consequently, different speech genres, belonging to a same semantic (and ideological) scheme, defined as a “system of semantic constraints” (Maingueneau 1984: 45). The main difference between the two notions is that the discursive formation is a category constructed by the researcher while an interdiscourse is a necessary
constituent of any speech act embedded in any communication situation. Inevitably, texts belonging to particular discursive formations – nebulae of texts sharing a same Object – interacting with specific interdiscourses, will generate specific Interpretants instead of others, by way of both particular productive and interpretative habits, as evinced by the interdiscursive regularities one can link between two (or more) sets of texts.

4. An example: online promotional texts of universities

It is hard to deny that both academic practices and the conception of European universities have changed radically in the last two decades. A focus on research evaluation, an emphasis on university-industry collaboration, an imperative to internationalize the research activities and the recruitment of researchers and students, an extreme massification of higher education, the political attempt to create a “research market” in a “European Research Area”, the imperative to publish in leading scientific journals, etc are all new practices that university professionnals have to face. For many scholars, the primary structural cause of these institutional changes has been the rise of neoliberalism as a political ideology that permeates a growing number of social spheres, including (secondary and higher) education (see, e.g., Harland 2009). A state-sponsored embeddedness of European universities in a global knowledge economy implies the building and fostering of numerous alliances with a range of extra-academic actors, whether other universities, the local industry, governments, NGOs, future students, potential fundraisers, citizens or the mass media (see, e.g., Jongbloed at al. 2008) and the development and care of these alliances are increasingly thought to be critical to sustain both the university’s traditional
and newly-imposed missions in a competitive environment.

For these institutions, this new state of affairs has generated new communication regimes in which “information activities (...) have expanded considerably in terms of the number of employees involved, [and have] undergone professionalization as well as upgrading in status” (Engwall 2008: 46). In consequence, most European universities now capitalize on communication strategies derived from the corporate world, a decisive activity in promoting the institution. Moreover, one aspect of the “glocalization” of universities being both their local and global positioning in the higher education landscapes, the use of traditional communication resources is being challenged: contrasting with the “old” media (i.e. television, the press, the radio, the postal mail, the leaflet, etc.), information and communication technologies (ICTs) have now become indispensable ingredients of the communication apparatus. More importantly, among those ICTs, the World Wide Web (and the social networking platforms it enables: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) has now become one of the most important communication tools available to universities, and the institutional website constitutes a radical “showcase” to reach an audience across borders, to foster contacts or to inform about the institution, at a lesser cost. As a delineated, physical receptacle of specific discourses, the university website deserves to be thoroughly studied.

In this second part, we propose to link the theoretical notions we explored in the first sections with a reflection on a corpus of online texts presenting (Francophone) European universities extracted from their institutional websites.
4.1. Generic regularities

In this case, the given communication situation is defined by a computer-mediated arrangement through which institutional writers, as a collective entity, wish to present and promote an academic institution to a predefined set of publics via the web. Since the addressees deliberately visit these web pages, we are in a different setting than a commercial advertisement scheme: they understand the communication contract at play and usually do want and are predisposed to obtain information concerning the given institution of their choice. Consequently, according to semiotic habits they have been used to integrate, the addressees expect a particular speech genre to be enacted and recognized, following which they will interpret and correctly comprehend the purpose of the message.

As complexes of signs (i.e. hypersigns or macro-signs), these relatively short texts are meant to present in a positive light the universities as a whole and are, as such and before everything, descriptive texts. We suggest that the speech genre associated with this type of online discursive activity – which concerns any organization presented online, not only universities – can be paralleled with that of the paper promotional brochure presenting organizations; its numeric nature does not change the basic, generic characteristics present in traditional brochures. Accordingly, the utterances evince patterns affiliated with other web-mediated promotional texts of other institutions or enterprises characterized by morphosyntactic, stylistic and compositional features that fulfill the communicative purpose at play and thus regulate the production of such texts. For instance, as regards our corpus and
Proceeding non-exhaustively, we have detected the overall use of 1) the present tense, appropriate if one wishes to attribute existing and perennial features to an institution, 2) an impersonal style, the mark of a constructed omniscient enunciator 3) appositions, as descriptive pre-constructions of the subjects of numerous predications, 4) intrinsically positive adjectives (i.e. “strong”, “prestigious”, “best”, etc.), 5) enumerations, to synthesize the features a university can be associated with, 6) numbers, to numerically characterize those features, 7) additive prepositions and adverbs, etc. Those regular features are far from being trifling; they fulfill a particular communicative objective, i.e. describing the institution to be valorized.

4.2. Interdiscursive regularities

If the generic features of a text refer to the form in which a textual sign is shaped, the interdiscursive features refer to the semantic load with which a said text is charged. In this case, to construct such a promotional discourse, we suggest the writers had to mobilize an existing universe of discourse they knowingly or unknowingly endorsed, a fact which ultimately poses important questions about the supposed, traditional autonomy of universities. In this case, we can detect interdiscursive correspondences between those promotional texts and exogenous texts promoting the neoliberalization of higher education in Europe such as the European Commission communications – which have been studied and digested by a growing number of education, political and sociology scholars (see, among others, Cussó 2008; Bruno 2008; Bruno et al. 2010). In Peircean terms, we might say that we have an endophoric iconicity between
these texts: “The domain of the object of a verbal sign is not only the exophoric
domain of the thoughts and experiences represented by words, but there is also
the endophoric domain of the other words to which the verbal sign refers in the
web of its intra- and intertextual references, that is, the domain of the verbal
and contextual knowledge necessary for the interpretation of the verbal sign in
a text and in the system of language” (Nöth 2008: 79). In an earlier text, Nöth
(1999: 614) already argued that “in addition to (…) intratextual iconicities,
there are the intertextual iconicities, which refer to patterns of sameness in
other texts: quotations, allusions, and other intertextual relations exemplify this
mode of textual iconicity”. We suggest that these texts share a relatively
homogeneous discursive formation which will ultimately command certain
Interpretants to be mobilized instead of others when one interprets the complex
of textual signs it is composed of.

We can never be sure as to which Interpretants are effectively actualized
by interpreters but we can nevertheless determine which Interpretants cannot
be actualized, given the universe of discourse the studied texts are embedded in
and their intratextual constraints\(^{10}\). Thus, by using textometric tools enabling
the detection of collocations, repeated segments or distributions of particular
families of words, we can numerically detect “patterns of sameness” (\(i.e.
chains of characters\)) between two sets of texts, suggesting that these utterances
cannot do anything but generate the same set of Interpretants.

This is best exemplified by the emphasis on \textit{excellence} and \textit{quality}. The
following utterances are taken from a European Commission communication
(2003: 18) untitled \textit{The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge}:
A combination of the absolute need for excellence, the effects of the precariousness of resources and the pressure of competition, forces universities and Member States to make choices. They need to identify the areas in which different universities have attained, or can reasonably be expected to attain, the excellence judged to be essential at European or at international level – and to focus on [their] funds to support academic research. This type of policy would make it possible to obtain appropriate quality at national level in certain areas, while ensuring excellence at the European level, as no Member State is capable of achieving excellence in all areas.

The references to excellence and quality are numerous in the promotional texts. Here are four examples taken from the corpus:

(1) L’Université du Luxembourg (UL), institution de petite taille à rayonnement international, vise l’excellence en recherche et en formation. [The University of Luxembourg (UL), as a small-sized institution with a global outreach, aims at excellence in research and education.] (text of the University of Luxembourg)

(2) L’ensemble des formations préparées à l’Université de Poitiers s’appuie sur une recherche d’excellence. [All curricula prepared at the University of Poitiers rely on a quest of excellence.] (text of the University of Poitiers)

(3) Outre son offre de formation pluridisciplinaire et l’excellence de sa recherche, l’Université Paris Descartes se caractérise par la richesse de son histoire et de son patrimoine. [Besides its interdisciplinary training curriculum and the excellence of its research, Paris Descartes University is characterized by the
richness of its history and that of its heritage.] (texte of Paris Descartes University)

(4) Entité culturelle, de formation et de création de valeur(s) ancrée sur son histoire et fédérant, grâce aux coopérations tissées, des ressources pour aujourd'hui et pour demain, notre université investit dans l'excellence académique de ses formations pluridisciplinaires, l'encadrement personnalisé, la recherche de qualité, l'innovation, l'ouverture sur le monde et les échanges internationaux, les infrastructures, la vitalité culturelle et associative pour la seule cause qui vaille, qui est l'humain. [As a cultural and educational entity creating value(s) rooted in its history and, thanks to forged partnerships, uniting resources for today and for tomorrow, our University invests in the academic excellence of its interdisciplinary curricula, a personalized supervision, a quality research, innovation, an openness to the world and to international exchanges, the infrastructure, the cultural and community vitality for the only cause that is worth it, the human cause.”] (text of the Université de Savoie)

Many other references (that is, specific chains of characters) relating to excellence and quality can be found in the promotional texts and the frequency of these words is one of the highest in the corpus. Moreover, /excellence/ and /quality/ are also “specific terms” which means that their frequency is statistically significant compared to their frequency in a controlled corpus. Let us take the utterance (1) which states that /L’Université du Luxembourg vise l’excellence en recherche et en formation./. Which Object can this linguistic Representamen be associated with?
First, /L’Université du Luxembourg/ is a proper noun and is therefore interpreted, according to Peirce’s trichotomy, as a Rhematic Indexical Legisign, which designates an existing institution (that can be located at a certain place and at a certain time in history – it has buildings, people working in them and an official localization one can send letters to) as the subject of the subsequent predicate asserting the said institution /aims at excellence in research and education/. This second part does not designate anything but predicates an attributed reality to the designated university: in doing so, it shall generate at least one iconic Interpretant (Rhematic Iconic Sinsign in Peirce’s terms) corresponding to a mental image which, among others, translates what “aiming at excellence in research and education” means. Nevertheless, in this case, this iconic Interpretant might be hard to mobilize or, at best, unreliable since one has not necessarily had a “collateral experience” (be it a definition, an image or another complex of signs) of the Object which /aiming for excellence in research and education/ refers to. Apart from the proper, conventional Interpretants one can generate regarding university /research/ or /education/, we only know that /aiming for excellence/ in those domains is positive because the context determines that we are dealing with promotional, valorizing texts. This is the semiotic power of numerous promotional utterances found in the corpus: as such, they are intrinsically positive without referring directly to the appropriate universe of discourse they nevertheless connect from and that gives them an additional meaning, i.e. a particular ideological discursive formation. Indeed, in this case, we suggest that /excellence/ and /quality/ (in research or education) can be associated with Interpretants corresponding to a well-studied neoliberal discursive formation;
these words, along with others such as /international/, /partnerships/, /innovation/, /ranking/, etc., are part of an isotopy of competition and imply a certain number of emerging practices in universities: for instance, evaluation of research and education, elaborate partnerships with other institutions considered to be “prestigious”, changing trends in teaching methods, stricter ways of financing (applied) research, etc. In the end, the signification of /excellence/ and /quality/ is captured pragmatically, in the change of practical habits in the “real world”. In this context, then, this particular utterance-assertion (as a Dicent Symbolic Legisign), among many others relative to other European universities, reveals the promotion of a competitive state of affairs in academia and the Object gets clearer: the University of Luxembourg aims at being the best in its domain so that it can have a (hypothetical) role to play on a competitive international scene. We insist that this interpretation is not to be considered as absolute but can nevertheless be deemed valuable – as far as it is not convincingly refuted by the (scholarly) community.

5. Conclusion

We hope that the discursive patterns we briefly drew attention to shed light on the regulated, non-random nature of these promotional texts. We suggest those regularities stem from 1) a series of habits determining the generic features of these texts and 2) a series of interdiscursive correspondences between the said texts and a political interdiscourse integrated in a common (ideological) universe of discourse. Thus, contemporary universities are the objet of a multitude of discursive productions, belonging to
different horizons and speech genres, integrated in a common discursive formation.

Moreover, we suggest these texts altogether redefine the semantics of the term /university/: what is at stake with these descriptive assertions present in those thousands of pages are those synthetic statements bringing new “information” regarding the analytical concept 11 of university, therefore modifying the Interpretants one can (habitually) actualize out of that very sign. Indeed, the ground selected by the descriptive texts corresponds to the features a neoliberal ideology attributes to a “model European University”.

Lastly, we hope to have shown that some core concepts of (French) Discourse Analysis can also be interpreted in Peircean terms: the importance of context (i.e., communication situation and universe of discourse) is deeply rooted in Peirce’s pragmatic theory of semiosis, the role of habits can explain the regularities found in the production and interpretation of texts and the concept of Interpretant, compared to that of signified, is an operational tool when dealing with meaning. In the end, we hope Peircean semiotics will ultimately get its rightful place in Discourse Analysis circles.

Note

1 “La relation instituée par le signe est donc triadique. C’est là une caractéristique essentielle de la théorie sémiotique de Peirce. On voit mal d’ailleurs comment une théorie sémiologique pourrait échapper à cette nécessité logique. (...) les faits et la logique militent en faveur d’une conception triadique du signe. La relation saussurienne signifiant-signifié est apparue très vite comme insuffisante pour décrire les faits linguistiques.”

2 According to the traditional citation scheme, the numbers refer to the Collected Papers of C. S. Peirce published by Harvard University Press; the first number refers to the volume while the following numbers refer to the paragraph.
Nous avons considéré la relation établie entre un signe et son objet comme une institution sociale parce qu’elle en présente tous les caractères : elle est relative à une communauté et remplit pour cette communauté un certain nombre de fonctions sociales (fonctionnalité de l’institution), notamment la communication sociale (…) ; elle présente comme toute institution un aspect contingent et un aspect de permanence et de stabilité. Étant donné l’acception habituelle du terme nous pourrions qualifier chacune de ces relations de ‘micro-institution’.

L’habitude, qui fait autant la permanence des interprétants que leur relative nécessité dans la vie collective, se trouve au fondement de l’interprétation et c’est d’elle que les constantes interprétatives tiennent leur caractère de loi.’

A word between two slashes refers to its Representamen (as signifier), out of context, before it is integrated in a particular process of semiosis.

We have decided to use the syntagm “speech genre” instead of “discourse genre” to be consistent with Bakhtinian literature (see below).

“Les contraintes de la situation de communication donnent des instructions discursives aux instances d’énonciation et de réception pour que celles-ci mettent en scène et interprètent les actes de langage”.

“Ce sont ces instructions discursives qui assurent une partie de l’intercompréhension des actes de langage et qui président à la régularité des manières de dire, en deça des variantes possibles dues à divers facteurs psychologiques et sociaux : ainsi naissent, selon cette hypothèse, les genres discursifs.”

“(…) l’ensemble des unités discursives (relevant de discours antérieurs du même genre, de discours contemporains d’autres genres, etc.) avec lesquelles un discours particulier entre en relation implicite ou explicite.”

Eco (1990: 60) states that “we can (…) accept a sort of Popper-like principle according to which if there are not rules that help to ascertain which interpretations are the ‘best ones’, there is at least a rule for ascertaining which ones are the ‘bad’. This rule says that the internal coherence of a text must be taken as the parameter for its interpretation”. We might add that an “external coherence” is also at play for that matter, the external coherence referring to the context.

“Analytic statements, such as ‘Women are female adults’ or ‘Fathers are male parents’, convey no information because their predicates only explicate what is already by its definition logically implied in their subject terms. For a proposition to convey information, it needs to be a synthetic statement, which denotes an object and attributes a predicate to it which is not yet inherent in the definition of the subject term” (Nöth 2012: 109).

References


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