

A hundred introductions to semiotics, for a million students: Survey of semiotics textbooks and primers in the world

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Abstract. In order to estimate the current situation of teaching materials available in the field of semiotics, we are providing a comparative overview and a worldwide bibliography of introductions and textbooks on general semiotics published within last 50 years, i.e. since the beginning of institutionalization of semiotics. In this category, we have found over 130 original books in 22 languages. Together with the translations of more than 20 of these titles, our bibliography includes publications in 32 languages. Comparing the authors, their theoretical backgrounds and the general frames of the discipline of semiotics in different decades since the 1960s makes it possible to describe a number of predominant tendencies. In the extensive bibliography thus compiled we also include separate lists for existing lexicons and readers of semiotics as additional material not covered in the main discussion. The publication frequency of new titles is growing, with a certain depression having occurred in the 1980s. A leading role of French, Russian and Italian works is demonstrated.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this review originates from the tasks that every teacher of semiotics faces: What textbook should be used? What should be the essential literature recommended to students in introductory classes on semiotics? Or if the goal is to write an original textbook, which of the earlier ones could be used as best? Introductory courses in semiotics are taught in many universities internationally, and their number tends to grow as a part of study programmes in linguistics, media and communication studies, performance analysis, marketing, cultural theory, but also cognitive science, philosophy of science, biology, etc., along with a few extensive programmes entirely focused on semiotics. An increase in the number of introductory courses is especially notable in the countries where some universities provide a degree in semiotics, e.g., Italy, Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Brazil (Kull 2009).² What all these issues demonstrate is the need for an overview of semiotics textbooks. Indeed, at the University of Tartu as a semiotics centre, with its full-scope programme in semiotics (including majors on the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels), the need to address this topic is particularly acutely felt. Thus, our purpose is to give a (pluri)review of all existing introductions to semiotics. According to our knowledge, no such extensive reviews of the existing semiotics textbooks have been published so far. The question of semiotics textbooks has been only briefly discussed earlier (e.g., Danesi 1991; Kull, Salupere, Torop 2009; Nöth 2010). In some textbooks, a selected bibliography of the existing textbooks is given (e.g., Voigt 2008: 292–294), sometimes in combination with a more general overview of semiotics and its perspectives in various countries (e.g., Alvarez Sanagustín *et al.* 1992: 3–11), sometimes as part of the suggested materials for further reading (Volli 2000; Gensini 2002; Chandler 2002, etc.) What is worth mentioning separately is Klinkenberg's (1996) and Voigt's (2008) introductions, that also include lists of dictionaries, reviews, journals of semiotics, etc. at the end of the book.

In the present collective review, we attempt to cover all introductory textbooks of semiotics in the world we could find. Having formulated this aim, we certainly assume that our list of textbooks is neither complete nor all-encompassing – we have not been able to compile a full list for all languages. However, we expect the list to be quite exhaustive at least concerning the books published in English, as well as, e.g., German, Russian, French, Italian, Japanese, Finnish, Estonian. We have also included the translations we are aware of, although their record is seemingly quite incomplete.³

We have limited this review to the books which explicitly identify themselves as books about semiotics (or, sometimes, semiology), attempt to cover semiotics as a

² On teaching of semiotics, see also Pelc 1992; Spartz, Kramer 2006; Nöth 2010; Kull, Väli 2011.

³ The 19 authors of this article were able together to cover most of the languages in which textbooks of semiotics have been published.

whole, i.e. the general introductions, and were published between 1960 and 2010. This means that we have not included textbooks that deal with some particular branch of semiotics, e.g. only with sociosemiotics (e.g., Leeuwen 2005), visual semiotics (e.g., Sonesson 1988), biosemiotics (e.g., Hoffmeyer 2008), or literary semiotics (e.g., Simpkins 2001), semiotics of film, theatre, etc. Furthermore, we have not included various monographs on particular approaches to semiotics which offer a theoretical overview but were not written as introductory textbooks (for instance Deely 2001; Culler 1975, 1981; Petrilli, Ponzio 2005; many volumes from the series *Advances to Semiotics; Approaches to Applied Semiotics; Semiotics, Cognition, Communication; Tartu Semiotics Library*; works on the methods of semiotics, e.g. Manning 1987, etc.; works about the major figures in semiotics, e.g., Krampen *et al.* 1981; 1987). However, introductory textbooks that attempt to give a general overview while departing from a particular field or approach in semiotics (e.g., Peircean and pragmatist perspective in Tejera 1988; or semiotics of text in Pozzato 2004; or non-verbal communication in Leeds-Hurwiz 1993) are included. Further categories of publications that generally transcend the scope of this review include monographs on semiotics and its relation to other disciplines, monographs on the semiotic theory of a particular scholar or tradition, and articles or book chapters regardless of their relevance.

In addition to monographic textbooks, there are handbooks like encyclopedias, dictionaries, anthologies and readers (also compendia of reading materials for particular courses) that an introductory course in semiotics certainly has to take into account. Up to now, the number of this type of publications is relatively scant, which is why we briefly list them in Sections 2 and 3, before the review of textbooks and introductions.

2. Encyclopedias and dictionaries

The three-volume *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (published in three editions: Sebeok 1986, 1994; Sebeok, Danesi 2010), which gives a thorough overview of the terminology of semiotics in all its fields, has been a seminal work of reference ever since it first appeared. It was meant as a replacement for an earlier volume by A. J. Greimas and J. Courtés' (1966, 1982, 1993), *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary*, a work that, despite its title, is not limited to the theory of language, but succeeds in providing a quite broad definition of semiotics, while relying mainly on the tradition of semiology. Other early dictionaries of semiotics include Bense, Walther (1973) and Rey-Debove (1979).

The world's most extensive encyclopedia of semiotics is the monumental four-volume bilingual (English and German) encyclopedia edited by Posner *et al.* (1997). This weighty work attempts to exhaust all possible types of semiotics organized by subject areas, historically and geographically.

Winfried Nöth's *Handbook of Semiotics* (Nöth 1985, 1990, 2000) is written by a single author but owing to its historical approach and unusually profound and diverse references it belongs to the category of encyclopedias rather than that of monographs. This work has appeared in German (1985, 2000), English (1990), Croatian (2004) and Bahasa (2006).

Paul Bouissac's *Encyclopedia of Semiotics* (Bouissac 1998) is a good companion volume to the former ones due to its compactness. Further, Bouissac has started a *Semiotics Encyclopedia Online*.⁴ Paul Cobley's (Cobley 2001, 2010) reference book reflects the recent changes in the field.⁵ The *International Handbook of Semiotics* (Trifonas 2015) also dwells on some recent developments of semiotics.

In addition, some dictionaries with a large number of short entries on semiotic terms (Rey-Debove 1979; Dutz 1979; Colapietro 1993; Martin, Ringham 2000, 2006), and some lexicons of smaller distribution (Bellert, Ohlin 1978; Thellefsen, Sørensen 2007) have been published.⁶ Dimitriou (1978–1987) has published semiotic dictionaries in Greek; Ablali and Ducard (2009) in French; In Russian, Levchenko and Salupere (1999) and Mahlina (2009) have compiled smaller dictionaries with specific foci. *Dictionary of General Semiotics* which includes around 600 terms has been compiled by Louis Hébert (2012, only on the web).⁷

3. Anthologies and readers

This category comprises various anthologies and readers which assemble full key texts or extracts from significant texts in semiotics, often arranged in chronological order. Among the works of this type, the first one – and still one of the best – to be published in English was an introductory anthology by Robert E. Innis (1985) that also contains introductory comments on classic texts. Another collection titled *Frontiers in Semiotics* (Deely *et al.* 1986) is supplied with an introduction by John Deely and characterized by a broad treatment of semiotics. Another early anthology was compiled by Martin Blonsky (1985). In addition to excerpts from canonical texts, the laconically entitled four-volume

⁴ Its address is <http://www.semioticon.com/seo/>.

⁵ All these encyclopedias include exhaustive bibliographies. At least one annotated bibliography on general semiotics (in Portuguese) has been published as a separate title (Nöth, Santaella 1999). Achim Eschbach has compiled extensive bibliographies on semiotics (Eschbach 1974; Eschbach, Rader 1976; Eschbach, Eschbach-Szabó 1986, 2 vols.). A separate bibliography exists on the early Tartu–Moscow School (Eimermacher, Shishkoff 1977).

⁶ We have not included dictionaries which do not explicitly cover semiotics, despite including many semiotic terms (e.g., O'Sullivan *et al.* 1994.)

⁷ Hébert, Louis 2012. *Dictionnaire de sémiotique générale* (<http://www.signosemio.com/documents/dictionnaire-semiotique-generale.pdf>).

Semiotics (Boklund-Lagopoulou *et al.* 2002) embraces a more recent period, including post-structuralism and postmodernism. Yet another large four-volume anthology bearing the same title *Semiotics* (Bundgaard, Stjernfelt 2010) pursues similar tasks. The Russian language has produced a Tartu–Moscow School reader (Matejka *et al.* 1977, with an English foreword), and the many-faceted anthologies compiled by Juri Stepanov (Stepanov 1983, 2001). Clarke’s coursebook on Peircean semiotics of logic and language (Clarke 1987, see below) is accompanied by a reader (Clarke 1990); the two books can be used as instruction materials for a single course. Fedorova’s anthology (Fedorova 2005) and textbook (Fedorova 2004) are connected in a similar way. Canadian professors of semiotics have compiled two less voluminous collections of texts specifically designed for introductory courses in semiotics (Danesi, Santeramo 1999; Perron, Danesi 2003). An outstanding collection, adopted as a coursebook in several university courses in semiotics in Italian universities, is the double-volume anthology *Semiotica in Nuce* (Fabbri, Marrone 2000; 2001). There exist also anthologies in Arabic (Abu Zayd, Kasim 1986) and in German (Mersch 1998). Besides the anthologies of general semiotics, there are some of particular branches of semiotics, for instance one of the semiotics of culture by Janus and Mayenowa (1975), and Matejka *et al.* (1977). Recently, the first anthologies of biosemiotics (Favareau 2010) and zoosemiotics (Maran *et al.* 2011) were published.

All in all, approximately twenty readers and anthologies in general semiotics have been published so far.

4. Textbooks and introductions to semiotics: A comparative historical overview

The third group covers general introductions and textbooks in semiotics. These are usually monographic works which articulate the author’s point of view and understanding of semiotics. A number of introductions have been created in the course of teaching, driven by the practical need for study aids.

Leaving aside the otherwise influential books by Ogden and Richards (1923), Morris (e.g. 1946), as well as older classics such as Peirce, Saussure, Welby and few others, it can be noticed that the real institutionalization of semiotics started only in the 1960s, and was accompanied by the publication of the first general introductory books on semiotics.

Below, we provide brief synopses of a number of textbooks found in our bibliography, with a focus on the central notions, key authors discussed, the general structure and the proposed target of the books. We have grouped these into four periods: (1) from the 1960s to the early 1970s; (2) the late 1970s and the 1980s; (3) the 1990s and (4) the 2000s up to the present.

We have limited our bibliography to books published as hard copies. However, there exist also complete textbooks of semiotics that have been published only on the

web – Tuomo Jämsä’s introduction in Finnish,⁸ and Louis Hébert’s introduction to applied semiotics in English.⁹

4.1. First comprehensive introductions: the 1960s and early 1970s

Textbooks of semiotics do not appear in a vacuum; their publication reflects the roots of this discipline in different contexts. In the 1960s, semiotics had strong centres in French-, Italian-, German- and Russian-speaking cultures. Thus, it is to be expected that these were the main languages in which the first introductory semiotics books were written and published. Among these seminal textbooks one can find the introductions in French by Barthes (1964), Mounin (1970) and Guiraud (1971); introductions in Russian by Vetrov (1968) and Stepanov (1971); introductions in German by Bense (1967) and Nöth (1975); and one in Italian by Eco (1968). Among the books produced in the first decade of institutionalized semiotics were also a Chinese introduction to semiotics by Xiuhuang He (1965), and a Japanese one by Yoshio Sezai (1970).

It is remarkable that no English-language introductory books to semiotics were written at that time; furthermore, the first translations of the books of this period were not made into English either, except for the translations of Barthes 1964, appearing in English in 1967 and 1968.

– Barthes’s *Eléments de sémiologie* [*Elements of Semiology*] (1964)

This small book by Roland Barthes was the earliest in this group. It introduces the terminology of the French structuralist school departing from Saussure. The pioneering role of the work has been pointed out by Umberto Eco:

In 1964 Barthes published his “Elements of Semiology” in the fourth issue of the journal *Communications*. I consider it necessary to recall here what this short text, that was not aimed at anything big and that was a compilation by nature, meant for all of us who were fascinated by semiotics – it is this writing that forced us to work out our own approaches to sign systems and communicative processes, while Barthes himself was moving away from pure theory. If this book by Barthes had not existed, we would have managed to do much less. (Eco 1998[1968]: 4)

Barthes considers semiology as a part of translinguistics studying “great signifying unities of discourse” (Barthes 1995[1964]: 11), an area that is still trying to take definite

⁸ Jämsä, Tuomo, *Semiotiikan perusteet* (<http://oppimateriaalit.internetix.fi/fi/avoimet/8kieletkirjallisuus/semiotiikka/>).

⁹ Hébert, Louis 2011[2005]. *Tools for Text and Image Analysis: An Introduction to Applied Semiotics* (<http://www.signosemio.com/documents/Louis-Hebert-Tools-for-Texts-and-Images.pdf>); the 2011 version with the collaboration of Nicole Everaert-Desmedt.

shape. The elements of semiology presented in the book are extracted from linguistics: language and speech, signifier and signified, syntagm and system, denotation and connotation. After a theoretical explanation of his key notions, comparing linguistic and semiological approaches, Barthes introduces the semiological prospects of these terms (for example, the garment and the food systems). Barthes also discusses the problems of these notions when describing various systems. He considers reconstituting the functioning of the systems of significations other than language to be the aim of semiological research.

His main point of departure is Saussure's work, but he also refers to several other classics of semiotics such as Peirce, Hjelmslev and Morris, important authors being also Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty and André Martinet; he also mentions G. Mounin, P. Guiraud, A. J. Greimas. The work of Henri Wallon (1942) on sign typology and some ideas of Roman Jakobson (see, e.g., Barthes 1995[1964]: 21, 69–70) have also had a remarkable influence on him.

Barthes' book is one of those most often translated, along with Cobley, Jansz (1997).

– Xiuhuang He's *Introduction to Semiotics* (1965)

This book was evidently the first (and for many years the single original) introduction to semiotics in Chinese. Its main emphasis is on the semiotics of language. After a chapter on the general semiotic account of language and language function, it dwells on pragmatics (including cognitive aspects and functional errors), semantics (including the analysis of semantic errors, and translation), and syntactics (including the analysis of logic), in this sequence.

– Bense's *Semiotik: Allgemeine Theorie der Zeichen* [*Semiotics: General Theory of Signs*] (1967)

This is a short but very dense and original introduction to Peircean semiotics. First, it gives an overview of Peirce's theory of signs (abstract semiotics), then moving on to the issues of ontology and epistemology of signs. Finally, Peirce's classification of ten sign types is applied to the signs of natural language as well as different types of language. The work is richly illustrated with comprehensive diagrams.

– Eco's *La struttura assente* [*The Absent Structure*] (1968)

In this book, Umberto Eco took a step further than Barthes by posing "a question about the nature of semiotic study"¹⁰ and its meaning. In other words, the kind of study

¹⁰ In discriminating between semiotics and semiology Eco here follows the schema by Louis Hjelmslev, calling the general theory of communication phenomena 'semiology' and individual sign systems 'semiotics'. In a more recent edition (Eco 2002) he has added semiotics to the subtitle and substituted semiology by structuralism.

in which all phenomena of culture are viewed as facts of communication, in which individual messages become organized, and understandable in relation to the code” (Eco 1998[1968]: 27). This book, originally published in Italian, laid the foundation for the English-language *A Theory of Semiotics* published in 1976.

The Absent Structure is one of the main works on theory of semiotics that demonstrates its status as a science. Eco consciously dissociates semiotics from linguistics or cybernetics or logic and focuses on visual communication phenomena of culture such as architecture and fine arts. Using visual communication as an example, he shows that any act of communication is oversaturated with socially and historically conditioned codes and therefore depends on them. Eco debates the epistemology of structural models, questioning whether structure is an object of study or an operational model, and introduces works of Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Derrida and others.

In addition to his philosophical interpretation of the main issues of semiology and semiotics, Eco dedicates a separate chapter to the basic terms of semiotics such as sign, symbol, code, meaning, communication process, etc.

According to Lange-Seidl (1986: 182), the German translation of this work under the title *Einführung in die Semiotik* (1972), “for many Austrians and West Germans [...] really was a first introduction to modern semiotics”. As Jürgen Trabant (1972: 13) has mentioned in the translator’s introduction to the German edition, the present version of the book is a completely revised version of the Italian edition, which has not been published in Italy in this form.

– Vetrov’s *Semiotics and its Main Issues* (1968)

Vetrov’s definition of semiotics reflects a common understanding of this discipline for Russian academic faculties as a general theory of signs and languages that makes semiotics an all-inclusive science. Vetrov points out that semiotics is not limited to the analysis of separate sign situations as is linguistics but, due to the broad definition of sign, it also covers non-verbal languages. In his view, semiotics must be a comparative study of signs and languages of various sign systems, from animals to cybernetic machines, and it must therefore be seen as a universal science that is methodologically applicable to other disciplines. Vetrov’s introduction to semiotics is a comprehensive overview of main problems and keywords of semiotics.

– Mounin’s *Introduction à la sémiologie [Introduction to semiology]* (1970)

In the introductory paragraph, Mounin declares that he is mostly interested in semiology as a research tool and that he is not concerned with the works of Peirce or Sebeok. Moreover, he does not give in-depth comments on animal communication although he mentions this field of studies in his overview. He compares several authors’ papers in the field of semiology, commenting on how functional or non-functional these studies are as regards their applicability on various materials. The book is a collection

of short studies in different fields (written in the 1950s and the 1960s) related to the topics of communication, signification, linguistic and non-linguistic systems, code and sign, literary (incl. science fiction) and theatrical studies. It also offers a critical introduction to the writings of Morris, Hjelmslev, Barthes, Lacan and Lévi-Strauss. The book does not provide a coherent definition of semiology; neither does it clearly explain the scope of its objects and research. In his short overviews, Mounin refers to the historical background, mentioning a number of influential predecessors of the semioticians discussed; thus the book requires some previous knowledge of semiotics to be thoroughly comprehended.

– Stepanov’s *Semiotics* (1971)

Stepanov defines semiotics as a science about natural and social sign systems. His multidisciplinary approach to semiotics is reflected in the chapters dedicated to several areas of semiotics: biosemiotics, ethnosemiotics, linguistic, abstract, and general semiotics. Almost a half of the book is dedicated to an attempt to describe the laws of general semiotics – the syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic ones, respectively.

Stepanov’s view of semiotics is mainly rooted in a convergence of linguistic and literary studies; he states that his book may be read even as a semiotic introduction to linguistics (Stepanov 1971: 3). The book stands out as one of the earliest works clearly formulating the role of biosemiotics as a part of general semiotics.

– Guiraud’s *Sémiologie* [Semiology] (1971)

Guiraud’s little book of a hundred pages lucidly introduces semiotics to a wide audience, although it sometimes appears as terse and dogmatic, *eo ipso* implying that the readers should already have acquired basic knowledge, so that they could decide by themselves whether a semiological analysis is sound. The author describes semiology as “the science which studies sign systems: languages, codes, sets of signals, etc.” (Guiraud 1975: 1) and discusses the scope of this science, considering its three aspects: systems of communication, forms of social communication, and modes of communication based on the use of sign systems. The book is structured according to these three aspects in the chapters on social, aesthetic, technical and scientific codes. The author also poses the question as to where to locate other types of communication, such as that of animals (zoosemiotics), machines (cybernetics), or living cells (bionics), rhetorically, without going thoroughly into the problem, thus leaving it up to the reader to decide.

– Carontini’s and Peraya’s *Le projet sémiotique: Eléments de sémiotique générale* [*The semiotic project: Elements of general semiotics*] (1975)

The book introduces a frame of synthetic theoretical concepts together with many methodological problems. The central authors are those who further developed Saussure’s theory (Barthes, Kristeva, Althusser); but also Peirce’s and Morris’s approaches

are thoroughly described. The authors' intention has been to allow a confrontation between the authors of different major schools. Starting from Saussurean general linguistics, it ends with a discussion of text semiotics and *semanalyse*.

– Nöth's *Semiotik: Eine Einführung mit Beispielen für Reklameanalysen* [*Semiotics: An introduction with examples for the analysis of advertising*] (1975)

Nöth's first introduction to semiotics was published in the series *Anglistische Arbeitshefte* within the framework of English studies (*Anglistik*). In line with this fact, all eleven advertisements analysed in this volume originate in the English language – most of them derive from the magazines *Life* and *Time*, but not all of them are of US or UK origin. The book explicitly presumes at least basic knowledge of linguistics from its reader. From linguistics, Nöth states, we can proceed to a general theory of signs. Treating both Peirce and Saussure, yet discussing the former more systematically than the latter, Nöth acknowledges that semiotics is a very heterogenous field, claiming, however, that many differences are but terminological ones. The author accepts arbitrariness as the organizing criterion of different types of signs, but argues that arbitrariness is best judged with reference to what he calls *Generalisierungskraft*. While there is no doubt that the generative capability of the symbol is beyond comparison, Nöth claims that the icon can generate more variations in meaning than the index, so that consequently the latter is to be regarded as the simplest of the aspects of the sign. In addition to Peirce and Saussure, we also find Eco, Morris, and Nöth's older colleague Walter Koch among the scholars most often referred to. The examples provided illustrate diverse semiotic functions and phenomena; all chapters include exercises or questions for discussion and suggestions for further reading.

– Trabant's *Elemente der Semiotik* [*Elements of Semiotics*] (1976)

The textbook focuses on introducing semiotics as a new discipline. Trabant begins by quoting various renowned scholars (Locke, Lambert, Hegel, Saussure, Morris and Klaus-Buhr) on what semiotics is. Philosophy and linguistics are seen as primary sources of semiotics, complemented by influences from cybernetic theory of information.

The first part of the work gives an overview of the foundations of the theory of signs (Saussure, Morris, information theory). The second part develops the notion of sign as action. Trabant is a proponent of developing semiotics based on the theory of action, which could also be read as a critique of the positions on semiotics cited in the first part of the work. Trabant uses speech act theory, Wittgenstein's approach and hermeneutics to formulate the basis of his theory. A semiotic approach, as he says, should not be based on information theory's concept of communication, but on communication as action.

– Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976)

First published in Italian as *Trattato di semiotica generale* (1975), this English edition remained one of most important and influential books on general semiotics for a long time. Several of its ideas were published in Eco's earlier book *La struttura assente* (1968) and its revised authorized version in German (Eco 1972).

Eco focuses on two major issues of the theory of sign: communication and signification. As he states, "the aim of this book is to explore the theoretical possibility and the social function of a unified approach to every phenomenon of signification and/or communication" (Eco 1976: 3). Up to today, *A Theory of Semiotics* is one of the few books which provides an integrated general theory of semiotics. Separate chapters have been dedicated to the theory of codes and the theory of sign production (including the critique of iconism).¹¹ For an untrained reader this is not an easy reading. The most often quoted passage of the book defines semiotics as a theory of lying.

4.2. Structuralism in transformation – the late 1970s and 1980s

In this period, the geography of published introductions increased considerably. These years also brought into existence the first English-language original textbooks in the field (Thomas 1973; Eco 1976; Hawkes 1977; Scholes 1982; Deely 1982, 1990; Silverman 1983; Berger 1984; Sless 1986; Clarke 1987; Solomon 1988; Tejera 1988), alongside with the first translations into English (Guiraud 1975, following Barthes 1967, 1968).

– Hawkes' *Structuralism and Semiotics* (1977, 2nd ed. 2003)

This book was the first volume published in the 'New Accents' book series of Routledge of which Hawkes himself is editor. Despite the critical and sometimes fierce responses (mainly because of its approach to the intellectual history of structuralism and semiotics) the book has received since its first publication, it remains one of the most influential introductory texts written on the general topics of structuralism and semiotics. In spite of its ambitious title, the whole scope of the book is reserved to a short, simple yet comprehensive, easy-to-grasp introduction to the history of intellectual movements involved in structuralist thought (beginning with forerunners of "structuralism" Vico, Piaget, Sapir, Whorf, proceeding with Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, and concluding

¹¹ Eco himself has mentioned regarding this book: "Looking back [...] at *Theory of Semiotics*, I discovered – that was evident – that it has two parts. The first part was not an achievement, I was simply trying to put together what already existed and to tell it better. The second part, the modes of sign production, was practically not studied by anybody. I was convinced I had written something interesting. Now recently in the last six or seven years some of my younger students started to write on those aspects, saying that they are the most interesting ones in the book" (from U. Eco's interview to K. Kull and E. Velmezova, Jan. 15, 2012).

with the “New Criticism”). The author is basically concerned with the application of structuralist methods to “critical” literary studies, as well as the the impact structuralist thought has had on literary study. The book includes a short introduction to the basic concepts of semiotics, with comments by the author. Interestingly enough, Hawkes’ book does not include a clear explanation on how the structuralist way of thinking relates to semiotics, except for one passage in the book that implies that semiotics and structuralism overlap, with semiotics being a field of sign studies and structuralism a method of analysis often used in semiotics.

– Pelc’s *Prolegomena to Semiotics* (1982)

This book by Jerzy Pelc, one of the most important Polish theorists in the humanities, is dedicated to the analysis of sign and signification process, defining the main subject of theoretical and applied semiotics. Pelc discusses the subject of semiotics itself by studying the triad “semiotics–semiology–semantics”, asking whether these are synonyms or three independent fields, three scientific traditions or individual approaches to one subject. The author’s explanation starts from a historical review of existing traditions and ends with an overview of the current state of human sciences in Poland, aiming to reveal the essence of common misunderstandings in the use of the three terms. Nevertheless, Pelc follows the terminology of “Slavic” tradition and even creates his own concepts by offering five separate terms: *semiotyka_w* – semiotics which separately studies processes of signification, syntactics, semantics and pragmatics or combination of them; *semiotyka_N* – theory or discipline, which studies derivatives of *semiotyka_w*, meta-semiotics; *semiotyka_t* – theoretical semiotics; *semiotyka_m* – methodological semiotics; *semiotyka_s* – applied semiotics.

Meanwhile, the author notes the need to introduce semiotics to a wide audience in order to assure its steady growth and value in the future. The book is easy to read, contains numerous clear explanations and examples and gives quite a broad overview of the main issues of semiotics.

– Scholes’ *Semiotics and Interpretation* (1982)

Scholes’ book could rightfully have the subtitle “Introduction to literary semiotics”, but we have included it in our review as an excellent example of a user-friendly textbook on applying semiotics in the humanities. The author is concerned about the pedagogical aspects of his work and stresses the importance of the students’ own interpretation: “the student’s productivity is the culmination of the pedagogical process” (Scholes 1982: 4–5). To achieve this purpose, the student must be exposed to models of interpretive texts. Scholes offers a useful and inspirational set of such models based on the ideas of Jakobson, Barthes, Riffaterre, Lotman, Todorov, Genette and other scholars. The addendum of this valuable book consists of a little glossary and a commented bibliography.

It should also be emphasized that Robert Scholes from the Department of English, together with Thomas Winner from the Department of Slavic Languages in Brown University (USA), led the first American study programme in semiotics between 1974 and 1987 until the establishment of the Center for Modern Culture and Media (Mitchell 1993).

– Santaella’s *O que é semiótica?* [*What is semiotics?*] (1983)

Lúcia Santaella’s *O que é semiótica?* has been reprinted numerous times since it first appeared in Brazil in 1983 and is the best-selling book among her many publications¹². Despite its centrality in the Brazilian context, Santaella’s introduction has not been translated to any other languages. Published in a book series called “The First Steps”, it is meant to be a fairly brief introduction. It is written in an accessible style and makes frequent use of everyday examples. The reach of semiotics, says Santaella, is vast, but not infinite. Relying on the legacy of Peirce, who is described as “a Leonardo of the modern sciences”, is the dominant feature of this introduction to semiotics. His scheme for the sign, and his matrix for the sciences, is emphasized. Semiotics is treated in its relation to phenomenology, psychology etc. Saussure, however, is discussed only at the end of the book, in the section entitled “Other sources and pathways” – along with “The Soviet sources”. Santaella stresses that the convergence of three sources of semiotics in the creation of one unified field should not make us forget their distinct differences.

– Silverman’s *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983)

This book is not really an introduction but is intended as a methodological guide which claims the centrality of psychoanalysis to semiotics. The work covers the ideas of Saussure, Peirce, Barthes, Derrida and Benveniste, but the main heroes for the author are Freud and Lacan. Her point is that the human subject is the subject of central importance to semiotics. The book includes a post-structuralist (and feminist) introduction to the analysis of film and literature as studied in connection with viewers and readers. Thus, it represents an original approach for advanced-level students.

– Berger’s *Signs in Contemporary Culture* (1984)

This introduction to semiotics follows a playful approach, being illustrated with drawings (based on punning: con-tent, con-science, con-cussion etc.) by the author, and also clearly understandable explanations and excerpts from well-known texts (Shakespeare’s plays, Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe’s adventures, Charlie Chaplin’s movies, Andy Warhol’s soup cans etc.). Berger’s study does not aim systematicity; neither does it follow a chronological order nor lay an emphasis on either Saussurean or Peircean semiotics (if so, then it rather prefers the latter), but it still covers the main concepts

¹² It has sold around 150,000 copies altogether (Winfried Nöth, personal communication).

of semiotics – signs, codes, denotation, connotation, meaning. Without giving an overview of the historical or theoretical developments in the field, it helps newcomers to semiotics analyse the surrounding cultural artefacts as signs (e.g., signs of identity, signs of marketing, signs that lie). Berger concentrates only on the signs of human beings, without mentioning non-human animal signs or biosemiosis.

– Sless' *In Search of Semiotics* (1986)

David Sless seems to be best known for his claim that “semiotics is far too important an enterprise to be left to semioticians” (Sless 1986: 1) which is the opening sentence of the book. Indeed, one of the stated aims of his book is to make semiotics more accessible to a general audience by discarding obscure jargon. The book is easy to read, with each chapter concentrating on one topic summarized at the end of the chapter. All in all, it is a short and clear presentation of Sless's conception of semiotics. For the author, semiotics is first and foremost the study of communication and understanding. Within communication, there are two kinds of semiosis: one within the author/text relation and the other within the reader/text relation; researchers into semiotics must occupy one of these positions. Much of his book is devoted to the analysis of the different positions that can be taken by participants in communication. In this sense, as Sless claims, semiotics is not a science, as communication cannot be studied from a neutral position (Sless 1986: 38). Another problem that Sless explores is the question of meaning, which he defines as “the end product of semiosis” (Sless 1986: 91). The last two chapters of the book are dedicated to semiotic research and the founders of semiotics. While some aspects of the book could be considered outdated, it is noteworthy in its goal to guide the reader away from semioticians and towards semiotics.

– Clarke's *Principles of Semiotic* (1987)

This is a brief introduction to semiotics as a discipline on language and logic, written in an enjoyably lucid style. In this sense, it is a good coursebook on the Peircean school of semiotics from the point of view of a philosopher of language. Clarke starts his history of semiotics from the antiquity, concluding that semiotics was mostly applied in the field of medicine where a symptom stands for a disease. He discusses the views of Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans on linguistic semiotics, paying much attention to Sextus Empiricus. Mediaeval authorities noted include St. Augustine and William of Ockham. From the field of communication theory, a treatment of H. P. Grice and the theory of speech acts is included. In the final chapter, entitled “Language”, Quine, Frege and Kripke are covered. The textbook is accompanied by a reader featuring excerpts of texts from the authorities cited or otherwise useful in the same context (Clarke 1990).

- Heradstveit's and Bjørge's *Politisk kommunikasjon: Introduksjon til semiotikk og retorikk* [*Political communication: Introduction to semiotics and rhetorics*] (1987, 1992)

This book, written by two scholars of political science, is the only Norwegian introductory textbook on semiotics and has mostly been used in other disciplines, including media studies, political science, and sociology. The political issues included are illustrated with examples from the Arab-Israeli conflict. A central motif for the authors is the argument that semiotic theory can fruitfully be applied in analysing political language and media-related political discourse in particular. Nevertheless, the structure of this book is theoretical and concept-oriented in semiotic terms, its three parts treating the sign, the text, and the context as the general framework (one interesting discussion is the inquiry into the potential radicality of metaphor, and the conservative bias of metonymy). Rhetorics is presented as a subfield of semiotics — Aristotle is thus adopted as a semiotician *ante litteram* — and notions from philosophy of language appear side by side with notions taken from Peirce, Saussure and various post-modern thinkers. As a result, the approach to semiotic matters appears to be broad and pragmatic, but language – or, how social/societal events can be represented in language – is for the most part what it is all about. The authors suggest analysing politics in general as a process of communication and make no exception for terrorism.

- Tejera's *Semiotics from Peirce to Barthes: A Conceptual Introduction to the Study of Communication, Interpretation and Expression* (1988)

Victorino Tejera claims his introduction to be addressed to relatively advanced readers – “communication theorists, hermeneuticists, and culture-analysts, as well as to students of philosophy and literature looking for a basic, but well-developed, introduction to semiotics” (Tejera 1988: ix). The book's advanced introduction presented as an account of history of semiotics, especially that of pragmatism and structuralism, provides rather a thorough survey of the development of a set of ideas as definitive categories of semiotics. With the main emphasis on Peirce who is also cited extensively, Tejera puts much effort into uncovering the dialectics of the development of Peirce's ideas. In connection to these, Mead's theory of meaning as well as Dewey and Randall are discussed. Via these three and Habermas, Tejera establishes the somewhat surprising connection between Peirce's theoretically biased semiotics to Barthes and literary analysis. In the general context of semiotics textbooks and introductions, Tejera's clearly stands out by discussing the pragmatist context of Peirce and semiotics following that context (e.g., a part of sociosemiotics), while he arrives at semiotics of literature.

- Tarasti's *Johdatusta semiotiikkaan: Esseitä taiteen ja kulttuurin merkkijärjestelmistä* [*Introduction to semiotics: Essays on the sign systems of art and culture*] (1990)

The author's stated intention was to write an introductory work on semiotics that would not require preliminary knowledge in the field. As such, it is a useful text and has been used as a coursebook by Finnish university students in introductory courses to semiotics. The volume includes a concise 40-page overview of three approaches: (1) Saussurean, Prague School and Russian formalist semiotics; (2) Peircean semiotics; and (3) French structuralism. The abundance of interesting examples of the use of semiotic theory, especially from the field of music – Tarasti being a semiotician of music – is noteworthy. Lévi-Strauss is often referred to as an important authority throughout the treatment, as are Barthes, Lotman and Eco.

The rest of the book comprises essays on “sign systems of art and culture”, written and published by the author over 15 years. On the theoretical side, these include a treatment of Greimas's semiotics that draws parallels with Lotman, and several essays on structuralism and the work of Lévi-Strauss. The final part of the book has a more applied edge, making a call for landscape semiotics and involving treatments of the opera, Finnish and Brazilian cultures.

- Deely's *Basics of Semiotics* (1990)

This book has appeared in several (including bilingual, Deely 2005) editions and translations, and replaces Deely's earlier *Introducing Semiotic* (Deely 1982). The underlying theme of Deely's introduction is the historical development of semiotics as a field (or doctrine) of inquiry from Augustine via Poincaré and John Locke to Peirce and Sebeok. It also observes how the more-or-less semiotically minded thinkers relate to philosophers that were less so, Descartes and Kant included. Deely's conception of the sign entails that it mediates between physical reality and any experience of reality (as well as between reality as it exists in physical terms and reality as it comes into being by way of influence from the future). The fifth edition, published in 2009 by Tartu University Press, contains five new chapters into which he incorporates his by then developed thought about the human being as a semiotic animal (rather than a rational animal *pace* Aristotle or *res cogitans*, i.e. a thinking thing *pace* Descartes). A crucial distinction is that between objects (mind-dependent being) and things (mind-independent being) – a distinction Deely claims only the semiotic animal is capable of drawing. Deely sets out on a familiar terrain, with a depiction of literary semiosis, and further covers zoösemiosis (contrasted with anthroposemiosis), phytosemiosis and physiosemiosis. The more general exposition includes forays into the status of semiotics as an academic field, its subject matter (defined very broadly), history, and medium – the signs. The overall impression is that his historical account ends in the future, not in the present. John Deely is a prophet of a time to come and few, if anyone, have with such vigour and faith defended the thesis that semiotics matters not only

to semioticians, but to science and thinking as such. Taken as an introduction, *Basics* is a rather elaborate theoretical discussion, without including textbook-like features.

4.3. Specialization and combined approaches: the 1990s

Together with the publication of remarkably high-quality textbooks (e.g., Sebeok 1994; Johansen, Larsen 1994), this period is also characterized by the publication of popular introductions for a much wider audience (Cobley, Jansz 1997; Kreidlin, Krongauz 1997).

- Álvarez Sanagustín's (*et al.*) *Introducción a la semiótica: actas del curso de "Introducción a la Semiótica"* [*Introduction to semiotics: Minutes from the course "Introduction to Semiotics"*] (1992)

This Spanish introduction is a collection of essays, originally study materials for an introductory course in semiotics. This co-authored work is heterogeneous in its subject areas and approaches, but as a practical teaching textbook it has the aim to include various approaches and to introduce the 'multidisciplinary landscape of semiotics'. It includes linguistic and literary traditions (e.g. Jakobson, Eco, Lotman), semiotics of theatre and poetics, and an introduction to Peircean semiotics, using examples from Latin America.

- R. and C. Marty's *99 réponses sur la sémiotique* [*99 answers on semiotics*] (1992)

This small brochure is an interesting example of a French series of books consisting of 99 questions and short answers that cover the most basic facts of a field. The questions start with defining semiotics, the difference between semiotics and semiology, and the object of semiotics. The major part of the questions is devoted to Peirce's theory: his sign categories and classification, abductive argumentation, notions of text and narrator. Other theoreticians with whom Peirce's ideas are compared include Propp, Saussure, Barthes, Greimas, Hjelmslev, Prieto, and Ubersfeld (as semiotics of theatre is also touched upon). More extensive attention is also paid to the semiotics of proper names and semiotics of education.

- Leeds-Hurwitz's *Semiotics and Communication: Signs, Codes, Cultures* (1993)

This is an example of a textbook in semiotics written for students in a certain field – in this case, communication studies. This necessitates that the book is not as wide in scope as some other introductions to semiotics, covering only those areas that are important from the point of view of studying human communication. It introduces semiotics as a tool for communication studies, which helps to “close the gap between what we are able to do as social actors and what we are able to describe as social analysts [...]. It seems to me that some of the words needed [for explaining social behavior] are to be found

within semiotics” (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993: xii). Another characteristic of the book is its focus on practical analysis of human behaviour, as opposed to pure theorizing, which Leeds-Hurwitz finds the majority of American semioticians spend too much time on (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993: 12).

The book is divided into three major parts. The first part introduces the founders of the discipline, Peirce and Saussure, and “key semiotic concepts”, namely those of signs, the most important kind of which from the perspective of communication studies are symbols (communication, as understood in this book, uses symbols); and codes, with social codes getting the most attention. In the second part of the book, Leeds-Hurwitz demonstrates how these concepts can be used in describing social behaviour, analysing three examples of particular social codes: food, clothing, and objects. The third part of the book introduces the concept of culture in order to analyse the interrelations of different codes.

– Sebeok’s *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (1994; 2nd ed. 2001)

Thomas A. Sebeok’s introduction differs from the rest mainly because Sebeok pays less attention to the structuralist tradition, concentrating upon the study of the sign and building his approach upon the all-embracing concept of semiosis instead. He develops semiotics which is biologically informed, expanding semiosis to all ‘living things’ including all five kingdoms and their component parts. Sebeok delineates a typology of six species of signs as “the types of signs most regularly identified and commonly employed by semioticians” (Sebeok 2001: 39) – signal, symptom, icon, index, symbol and name – discussing their structure and functioning. He looks back to the medical origin of semiotics through the concept of symptom, stating that “their denotata are generally different for the addresser (i.e., the patient [...]) than for the addressee (i.e., the physician)” (Sebeok 1994: 24; 2001: 47) and that requires an interpreter. Looking at fundamental forms of semiosis, Sebeok finds that while symbol is primary within the human approach, iconicity constitutes a central principle of semiotic organization and patterning in living nature. He argues that non-verbal modes of knowing lie at the foundation of being, being more widespread than language, a unique ability of human communication, just like fetish signs are a unique illustration of human semiosis.

– Johansen’s and Larsen’s *Signs in Use: An Introduction to Semiotics* (1994, English ed. 2002)

Two Danish professors of comparative literature have authored a balanced approach to semiotics in which the concepts of discourse and narrative occupy a prominent place. Vivid illustrations and examples from different walks of life render the subject comprehensible, yet not oversimplified. A professionally compiled glossary and biographical sketches of persons covered in the book provide a useful supplement.

The title of the textbook “Signs in use” is, according to the authors, a “slight adaptation of a Peirce quotation, ‘signs are only signs *in actu*’” (Johansen, Larsen 2002: 114). Although the authors represent the Peircean (functional/dynamic) view of semiotics, they have managed to give a panoramic picture of semiotics as a discipline, which also incorporates the European tradition. Their successful strategy for overcoming the contradiction between the two main tendencies of semiotics is finding the dynamic aspects in the structuralists’ works.

The book is divided into seven chapters, where the reader is guided from the notions of the code and the sign through text and discourse to culture and its semiotic analysis.

The notion of semiotic threshold is not present in the book but at the very beginning of the first chapter the authors admit that semiotic competence is not the privilege of humans and give examples from the animal kingdom. The main focus of the book nevertheless is on the semiotics of text. Discourse analysis and its various methods, as well as modern narratology, are discussed quite thoroughly. Text is understood as semiosis rather than as a complex structure.

- Danesi’s *Messages and Meanings: An Introduction to Semiotics* (1994, 2nd ed. 1998, 3rd. ed. 2004)

Marcel Danesi has taught a very popular semiotics course at the University of Toronto, and this textbook reflects his course. Danesi has been constantly developing his course and has published the updated versions regularly. The second edition (1998) is titled *Sign, Thought and Culture: A Basic Course in Semiotics*, and the third (2004) *Messages, Signs and Meanings: A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication Theory*. A completely reworked version for the general reader appeared in 2007 (see Danesi 2007). The author states that the purpose of the book is to provide students with a textbook “[...] that would introduce the technical, and often abstruse, subject matter of this fascinating field in a practical way, with plenty of applications of semiotic techniques to contemporary social discourses and lifestyle behaviours” (Danesi 1998: 5). Trying to avoid complicated terminology he wants to lead his readers to independent semiotic discoveries by using what each of them already knows intuitively. He defines semiotics as a study of the capacity to create and use signs for thinking and communication. The emphasis in the book is on media and mass communication.

- Kim’s *Caged in Our Own Signs: A Book About Semiotics* (1994, English ed. 1996)
- Kim’s objective is to introduce the basic concepts of semiotics and semiotic methodology for non-specialists in a readable way in order for them to be able to apply this knowledge to their everyday experiences. The first chapters introduce the basic constructs and frameworks for semiotic thinking (the structure of signs, production of meaning, construction of reality, codes and codification). In the second part of the book the

author “intends to contemplate with the reader on the modes, and their meanings, of mutual interactions between human beings and their semiotic environments in the so-called postmodern era” (Kim 1996: xiii). Providing numerous examples throughout the book that link theories to real-life situations Kim deals with symbolic systems constituting text: image, metaphor, narrative, myth, ideology. The main emphasis of this introduction is on the semiotics of communication, the main goal of the book is not only to explain semiotics and teach the readers to create signs of their own, but to help us to understand the surrounding world full of signs.

Kim (1996: 14) also writes: “Peirce’s model and Saussure’s model are only slightly different. [...] The object (i.e., referent) in Peirce’s model pertains to the signifier in Saussure’s model, and the interpretant (reference) in Peirce’s model pertains to the signified in Saussure’s model. [...] I resort mainly to the Saussurean model in [...] this book”.

- Keller’s *Zeichentheorie: Zu einer Theorie semiotischen Wissens* [*Theory of Signs: About Theory of Semiotic Knowledge*] (1995)

Although concentrating primarily on language, the book is diverse both in its structure and content. From exemplifying the semiotics of everyday life with the analysis of German middle-class apartments, the author moves on to Plato’s, Aristotle’s, Frege’s and Wittgenstein’s concepts of sign, addressing thereafter more specific questions of semantics, cognition, sign formation, the dynamics of symbols, icons and indexes and finally concluding with the topics of language change. Keller makes a distinction between the instrumental sign concepts of Plato and Wittgenstein, and the representational approach of Aristotle and Frege; the author himself departs from the instrumental approach. Keller’s intention has been to write a book which is not meant for an academic audience only, thus avoiding too specific terminology or complicated structure. In this respect, the book attains its goal and is a good example of how clarity need not mean being simplistic. Traditional semiotic theories are combined with modern trends in semantics, metaphor and symbol theories, while all this is cast into the author’s own original framework.

- Nöth’s *Panorama da semiótica: De Platão a Peirce* [*Panorama of Semiotics: From Plato to Peirce*] (1995, 2003)

A title somewhat related to Deely’s (1990, 2001) book, yet more modest. This introductory work consists of two volumes, with the more extensive second volume *A semiótica no século XX Semiotics in the 20th Century* having appeared in 2003. The fourth edition of the first volume appeared in the same year.

– Klinkenberg's *Précis de sémiotique générale* [*Basis of general semiotics*] (1996)

A thorough textbook, well usable in university courses. The author, a member of Groupe μ from Belgium, follows the structuralist tradition and pays considerable attention to rhetoric and visual semiotics. The book is structured according to the main concepts discussed. The chapters cover communication, signification, semiotic description, families of signs, and, remarkably, code plurality. Peircean concepts are virtually not used in this book. History of semiotics is not described and very few names appear in the text which is supplied with a good selection of suggested reading.

– Copley's *Semiotics for Beginners* (1997)

The introduction to semiotics written by Paul Copley and illustrated by Litza Jansz has become the most translated semiotics book in the world, having reached at least ten languages. Since 1999 its reprintings in English are titled *Introducing Semiotics* due to the new name of the whole series of “introducingbooks” into which it belongs. The 2010 edition uses the title *Introducing Semiotics: A Graphic Guide*.

In his preface to the Estonian translation, Copley (2002: 1–2) states that his motivation for writing the introductory volume came from the very limited understanding of semiotics in the United Kingdom. In the 1970s, semiotics was seen as an *ad hoc* or intuitive method applied solely to the study of literature, while in the British universities of the 1980s and 1990s, semiotics was known only through the works of Roland Barthes, some of which were already outdated.

In order to fill the void between the actual scope of the study of semiotics and the limited British view of the field in the 1990s, which saw semiotics as a product of the Paris School structuralist and post-structuralist approach, Copley made it his goal to provide an introduction of “the tradition of semiotics in a more global manner” (Copley 2002).

The book begins with a short overview of the prehistory of semiotics, including ancient philosophy and particularly Plato and Aristotle; thereafter, it discusses Medieval approaches to signs (St. Augustine, William of Ockham) and moves on to the more recent classics of semiotics who constitute the main focus of the book. Copley introduces the concepts of Saussure, Peirce, Morris, Jakobson, Hjelmslev, Benveniste, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Greimas, Derrida, Uexküll, Sebeok, Lotman, Eco and several others who contributed to the study of semiotics throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

The broad historical and geographical scope of the introductory work comes at a price: the readers should not expect to find in-depth explanations, as each person, school and concept is discussed only in as much detail as is necessary for a brief first introduction.

The illustrations by Litza Jansz deserve a special mention: the humorous yet truthful portraits of semioticians are complemented by diagrams providing visual support to the

theories. Due to the large number of illustrations, the book has even been compared to a comic book.

- Kreidlin's and Krongauz's *Semiotics, or an Alphabet Book of Communication* (1997, 2nd ed. 2004, 4th ed. 2007)

This Russian-language introduction meant for semiotics classes in primary schools, which is probably the first of its kind in the world, deserves special mentioning. The very existence of this textbook is a strong statement itself and it is well developed and thoroughly and thoughtfully presented to serve as a very basic, and at the same time essential, introductory textbook on semiotics. It provides a broad vision of what is semiotics – a science, as it says in the author's foreword, that has been invented and given its name by Peirce. The book, however, as the authors claim, is less about the science than about signs and sign systems, which themselves are languages of human communication. The notion of communication is developed to encompass an extremely wide range of human interaction and ways of life, including trade. It also offers a good outlook on communication theory. The book is rich in examples of different sign systems and perception phenomena, being simultaneously encyclopaedic and childishly simple. Even though it lacks some of the “deeper” and more theoretical topics raised, e.g., by Chandler's *Semiotics for Beginners*, it should still be noted that even without numerous and lengthy quotations, it can be the latter's rival to be reckoned with. Thus, Kreidlin's and Krongauz's book contains an excellent and easy-to-follow introduction to kinds and types of signs, which is a staple topic of virtually each introductory textbook, and in this particular case it has been executed elegantly before proceeding to the no less concise chapters on sign systems, paradigms, syntagms and signs in culture.

- Chandler's *Semiotics: The Basics* (1st Spanish translation from English online ed. 1998; 1st English ed. 2002, 2nd ed. 2007)

During many years David Chandler has been developing this textbook to accompany his lectures on an internet site¹³ where one could observe the evolution of the text. Initially, its title was *Semiotics for Beginners*, but the appearance of Copley and Jansz book of the same title (Copley, Jansz 1997) made Chandler modify the title of the web version of his book into *Semiotics for Absolute Beginners*, and later *Semiotics: The Basics* was used for the print version. Indeed, the presentation of the subject does make it intelligible also for absolute beginners, and it became also one of the best-known introductions to semiotics of the present time.

¹³ Its address: <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/>. The online version is still being updated from time to time. It is differently structured and includes somewhat more visual illustrations.

In the introduction the author says that the book grew out of his need to explain to his students what semiotics was. The approaches existing in 1994 were, in his words, all obscure and dull, whereas semiotics itself was nothing beyond comprehension. The book exclusively deals with human semiosis, leaving aside biosemiotics, computer semiotics and ecological semiotics. Neither does it discuss the semiotics of music and architecture. The book is targeted at Europe, its focus is explicitly set on the structuralist path and it also bears strong influence of media semiotics. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there would be no brief overview of, e.g., the Peircean sign. According to Chandler, the field of semiotics does not belong between the walls of academia exclusively, but could serve as a very useful “tool” in everyone’s everyday life.

The text is well structured and moves step by step from the models of sign via the ways of analysing structures to intertextual relations. The author has also added a couple of reflexive subparagraphs on the reasons of studying semiotics at all and on the limitations and strengths of the semiotic ways of perceiving the world. The book is supplied with a glossary and a list of suggested further reading.

- Danesi’s *Of Cigarettes, High Heels, and Other Interesting Things: An Introduction to Semiotics* (1999)

This is an excellent example of popularizing semiotics. The book introduces several semiotic concepts, using attractive examples from everyday life of humans. It describes scenes from the life of a young American couple, as if videotaped, and stopping the tape regularly, while introducing signifier, signified, sign, signification, language, metaphor, the meanings of space, the artistic nature of human species, media, etc. Danesi has proposed a delightful presentation of semiotics, one of very few really popular introductions.

- Schönrich’s *Semiotik: Zur Einführung [Semiotics: For Introduction]* (1999)

In its major part, the book is a theoretical elaboration of Peirce’s classification of signs and the principles of sign processes. Its subtitle as “an introduction” is somewhat misleading, as the book rather is an in-depth analysis of triadic processes of language and thinking. Although the author starts with a brief history of semiotics (from Hippocrates to Peirce), the rest of the book deals with various logical combinations of the object-sign-meaning entity. The author finds that so far semioticians have not been able to agree even on the status of their own discipline, which is due to the lack of a common understanding of the basic notions that describe semiotic processes. With his “*Semiometrie*”, the author tries to provide such a common ground by introducing some basic formulas for semiotic acts.

- Veivo’s and Huttunen’s *Semiotiikka: merkeistä mieleen ja kulttuuriin* [*Semiotics: From Sign to Mind and Culture*] (1999)

This textbook is presented as “the first systematic Finnish textbook in semiotics” (Veivo, Huttunen 1999: back cover). It combines a general introduction and definitions, parts on signs (including chapters on structuralism, post-structuralism and the pragmatic approach), sign work, communication, cultural semiotics and short history of semiotics. The section on signs consists of a chapter on structuralism that exclusively presents the (linguistic-semiologic) ideas of Saussure; the following chapter on post-structuralism (that is conceptualized as the strive to involve the context outside the sign) introduces the approaches of Lacan, Kristeva and Derrida. The third chapter is devoted to an introduction to Peirce’s concepts. The textbook’s merit lies in the inclusion of a broad range of examples from semiotics of language to semiotics of literature and texts. The style of Huttunen’s chapter on semiotics of culture that discusses the Tartu-Moscow School clearly differs from Veivo’s. A short 22-page history of semiotics that concludes the book includes João Poinot, John Locke, and Etienne B. de Condillac as forerunners of modern semiotics.

- Lidov’s *Elements of Semiotics* (1999)

Lidov’s book is a good theoretical study on general semiotics. The text is arranged to be useful to the novice, presenting the theory of semiotics in the context of classic sources. David Lidov understands semiotics as a comparative perspective of the artifacts of conscious life. This makes him also pay attention to the possibilities of the existence of unconscious signs. The authors he is using include, e.g., Hjelmslev, Martinet, Goodman. He speaks about structuralism as a supplement to pragmatism. Among other, he says: “I mention Greimasian theory because of its influence and suggestiveness, but I have not been able to discover any grounds for believing it” (Lidov 1999: 137). Lidov’s background in the theory of music gives advantage to represent different theories and models in clear and playful manner.

- Merrell’s *Signs for Everybody, or, Chaos, Quandaries, and Communication* (2000)

While this book purports to be about “semiotics for everybody”, one could argue that *Signs for Everybody* is not really an introduction to semiotics but an introduction to Peircean semiotics. Still, Peirce’s person plays a marginal role here compared to his philosophy. In fact, Merrell has chosen to avoid the history of semiotics altogether and present instead an explanation of the basic semiotic categories. Starting from a discussion of Peirce’s concept of the sign, he moves on to the categories of firstness, secondness and thirdness, the different types of signs, and the action of signs. After this, Merrell proceeds to the second major theme of the book: the criticism of binarism. For this purpose, he adopts terms and concepts borrowed from mathematics and quantum physics, attempting to show that life and semiosis cannot be described in purely linear and binary terms.

4.4. The search goes on: the 2000s

The number of original introductory books on semiotics that have appeared in the last decade is relatively high compared to the previous decades, which may indicate the growth of the field. In English, original books have appeared authored by Chandler (2002), Crow (2003), Hall (2007), Danesi (2007) (these four lay a strong emphasis on applied semiotics and visual examples, and target non-specialist audience); in Italian by Volli (2000), Calabrese (2001), Pozzato (2001), Gensini (2002), Magli (2004), Traini (2006); in Russian by Grinev (2000), Ageev (2002), Mechkovskaya (2004), Fedorova (2004), Solomonik (2004), Barulin (2002), Proskurin (2005), Nikitina (2006), Pocheptsov (2009); in Hungarian by Voigt (2008); in Czech by Doubravová (2002), Černý and Holeš (2004); in Danish by Kjørup (2002), in Turkish by Rifat (2009).

– Volli's *Manuale di semiotica* [*Manual of semiotics*] (2000)

The textbook by Ugo Volli (2000; 2006; German translation 2002) is closely related to the author's special fields of interest, mainly media semiotics, communication studies and applied semiotics. The main notions analysed are communication, sign, and structure; one of the most important theoretical backgrounds is the school of Greimas and his concept of the semiotic square. A large part of the book is devoted to an introduction to textual semiotics and its terminology (narration, focalization, actantial models, modalities, enunciation, etc.), mostly based on the writings of Lotman, Uspenskij, Tomashevski, Eco, Genette, Propp, etc. One of the fields covered is also the "social life of texts" in culture, semiosphere, mode, myths, political sphere, public communication, TV, etc. Volli supports a broad understanding of the term 'text', analysing languages of arts of cinema, theatre, music, comic books. The last chapter is concerned with the debate on post-structuralism and British Cultural Studies against the background of semiotics. Here, the author expounds his view with regard to the main similarities and differences between semiotics and other approaches that view text, culture and discourse as fundamental concepts. Most of the chapters and subsections end with tips for further reading and references to other, often Italian, theoreticians who have discussed the terminology.

– Pozzato's *Semiotica del testo* [*Semiotics of the text*] (2001)

The textbook by Maria Pia Pozzato is a study of the concept of text; in each chapter, a prominent canonical writer's work is introduced. The major part is dedicated to the model of Propp (actantial analysis) and its reformulations and developments in the theories of Greimas (narrative grammar), whose works are also compared to the mythological analysis of Lévi-Strauss. From the works of Eco, the notions discussed are 'model reader' and the 'limits of interpretation'; this is followed by an analysis of Thomas Mann's book *Buddenbrooks*. The chapter on literary semiotics is devoted to Jacques

Geninasca, and the chapter on artistic text engages with the works of Juri Lotman and the Tartu–Moscow School. The other two important fields are sociosemiotics, and media and brand semiotics (including a separate study of semiotics and television), based on the works of Eric Landowski and Jean-Marie Floch. The textbook offers several exemplary analysis of brands (kitchen cleaning products) and commercials (perfumes), from the aesthetic, economic and consumer aspects adding up to an interdisciplinary analysis. Among other things, Pozzato also makes the interesting distinction between figurative and plastic semiotics.

– Roventa-Frumusani’s and Gaudreault’s *Pour connaître la science des Signes: Introduction à la sémiotique* [*Knowing the Science of Signs. Introduction to Semiotics*] (2001)

This introduction is meant primarily for students of communication and other students of therein, the humanities. In a chapter titled “Love and other subjects” both Saussurean and Peircean semiotics are described, with an emphasis on their development. The utterance is analysed with the help of Jakobson’s, Searle’s, and Adam’s theories, synthesising these into one. In the analysis of narrative behaviour, the approaches of Greimas, Bremond and Wiener are brought together. Propp’s functions are related to Maslow’s concept of needs. Theatre semiotics is given a separate chapter. Each chapter is supplied with exercises for the student, followed by thorough answers. The book includes glossary of terms.

– Bankov’s *Семиотични тетрадки* [*Semiotic Notebooks*] (Part I, 2001; Part II, 2004)

The first part of Kristian Bankov’s book is a synopsis of introductory lectures on semiotics delivered by the author at New Bulgarian University. It is structured as an overview of the history of semiotics, introducing the work of Saussure, Peirce, Propp, Greimas, Barthes, Eco, Lotman. Essential concepts of semiotics, such as sign and its types, semiology, *langue/parole*, semiosphere, semiosis, communication, etc., are introduced chapter by chapter. Bankov defines semiotics as a theory of interpretation, rather than the conventional ‘science of signs’. The book deals with semiotics of culture and sociosemiotics; the fields of biosemiotics, ecosemiotics, visual semiotics are left aside. He also describes the so-called ‘Semiotic Cold War’ between the French structuralist approach and American Peircean semiotics in the past decades and mentions that it is rather difficult to define the position of Bulgarian semiotics therein, since it includes two internationally recognized structuralists – Kristeva and Todorov – but is nevertheless strongly influenced by Eco’s writings. Every chapter is complemented with examples mostly from Bulgarian mass-media, explaining semiotic categories, ideas, concepts, areas of research and approaches. Bankov states that it was absolutely necessary for semiotics to be referred to as a science when it initially emerged decades ago, and nowadays semiotics still needs to be regarded/taught as a science

for didactic reasons. However, as a philosopher, he suggests semiotics to be a “simple philosophy” for everyone. The second part of *Semiotic Notebooks*, published in 2004, is a philosophical essay on the problems of human identity, personal and collective memory, human self-identification. Here, Bankov applies semiotic analysis to describe the dynamics of identification processes in a Western-type society.

– Ageev’s *Semiotics* (2002)

The book provides a brief introduction to the topic of semiotics. Although mentioning the work of Peirce, the author does not speak much about the history of the discipline. Insights into the notions of ‘sign’, ‘sign systems’ and a set of other essential categories are further complemented by chapters on computer semiotics and applied semiotics.

The author’s own interest in the field of cybertechnologies is manifested through hinting at the scope of practical application of semiotics in the analysis of storing and retaining of information, creation of automatized systems for coding and decoding of information through discussing both natural as well as artificial languages. The author seeks to substantiate the use of semiotics and, more specifically, the structuralist approach, in the field of his own interest of cognitive computer graphics.

– Gensini’s *Elementi di semiotica* [*Elements of semiotics*] (2002)

The small textbook by Stefano Gensini from the University of Rome is dealing mostly with semiotics of language and refers to many linguistic theories, also discussing the limits of semiotics and the relations to linguistics and semiotics. The book concentrates on the natural basis of semiosis and studies the modes of communication of human beings and other species, based on their different use of codes. Among the important authors of linguistics and semiotics discussed are Chomsky, Hjelmslev, Barthes, Eco, Humboldt, Jakobson, Lakoff and Johnson, Morris, Saussure, Vygotsky. Also the works of Darwin and Deacon are used as the basis for studying the differences between species, and their evolution. Gensini describes the origins of language and the development of the brain of different species (“language centre”). In terms of differences in sign use, the book gives examples of iconicity, arbitrariness, and conventionality. Describing the influence of creativity on the use of codes, Gensini differentiates between “regular”, “non-regular”, and “rule-based” creativity on the basis of the writings of Chomsky and Wittgenstein. Besides the development of language skills and the organs related to verbal communication, reference is also made to non-verbal communication and the study of gestures. Gensini describes the development of written language from the Egyptian ideograms to the contemporary versions of text and hypertext (“open text”) and studies the limits of the term ‘text’. The book is more an introduction to the studies of communication and language use, and less to semiotics in general.

– Kjørup's *Semiotik* [*Semiotics*] (2002, 2nd ed. 2006, 2009 – trans. into German 2009) A good Danish introduction to semiotics that provides a brief account of “profiling” semiotic studies as a scientific discipline. It covers major semiotic topics in semiotics (sign, language, speech act, discourse, sign system, denotation/connotation, etc.). In the first part of textbook (“Why semiotics?”) he has set the aim to explain the real value and importance of semiotic inquiry into the field of scientific activity. In the second part, Kjørup gives a short overview of both Peircean and Saussurean semiotics. In the final chapter the author proceeds with a glossary of semiotics which includes the key notions and concepts. Both Saussurean and Peircean semiotics are described.

– Pocheptsov's *Semiotics* (2002, 2nd ed. 2009)

The first half of the book by Pocheptsov, an expert in informational politics, communication and public relations, entitled “Basics of semiotics” provides an introduction to semiotics in which the author touches upon various aspects of basics and theory of semiotics, e.g. the question whether semiotics is a science or a methodology, relations between sign and symbol, language and communication, etc., supporting it with comprehensive references to major theorists of semiotics (Lotman, Eco, Barthes). Following Eco, Pocheptsov interprets semiotics as a type of universal analysis which is applicable within two already existing theories – theory of communication and theory of signification, although he limits its importance and does not go beyond the social aspects of semiotics. The author also refers to such semiotic universals as Peirce's trichotomy, Jakobson's model of communication, Lotman's binary oppositions, etc., although he observes them from the point of view of sociology and imagology. The examples focus on semiotics as a methodological attitude towards the social phenomena of campaigning, image making, and public relations.

The second half of the book entitled “Semiotics of Soviet civilization” can be seen as a case study, an example of semiotic analysis of a particular culture and society. As the author says, semiotic analysis results in a comprehensive view of the objects acknowledged by humans where the particular attention is given to the objects created by humans themselves.

– Crow's *Visible Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (2003)

With his book, David Crow has set an aim “to explore the mechanics of visual language in an attempt to help you understand how visual communication works” (Crow 2003: 8). The book is fairly relevant in this respect: the visual part of the book does not serve just as an object of analysis, but is used also as part of the language in which the author is delivering the message. The design, the layout and the illustrations are thus just as substantial a part of the book as the verbal message accompanying them.

The book starts with the introduction of Peirce's and Saussure's concepts of sign, followed by the introduction of some basic concepts of semiotic theory such as semiosis, value, code, etc. Crow's book further contains chapters concentrating on the relation between the text and an image, the formation of official and unofficial language, and symbolic creativity. The author has stepped aside from the traditional step-by-step logics of textbooks in their introduction of concepts, theories or history. Topics like the theory of trash and rubbish and the use of rubbish in arts do not necessarily bear a direct link to what was written before, yet provide necessary hints to the undercurrents of semiotics, to the not-so-widely-discussed topics that would deserve more attention from the community of semioticians. The chief value of the book lies in its ability to reach the addressed audience by bordering its semiotic field with the topics most relevant for people working with visual media and has thereby really used the medium as the message.

- Magli's *Semiotica: Teoria, metodo, analisi* [*Semiotics: Theory, Method, Analysis*] (2004, 2nd ed. 2005, 3rd ed. 2008)

Patrizia Magli's book does not cover the whole field of semiotics, but deliberately concentrates on a single section of it – the analysis of (artistic) texts. More precisely, it focuses on the theoretical thought of Propp, Hjelmslev, and Greimas (while several great names of semiotics, most notably Peirce, are made no mention of). The aim of the book is to give a simple, but not simplified overview of the analytical tools for “exploring the mechanisms by which texts function” (Magli 2004: 46). In other words, the work attempts to provide the reader with a clear framework for the empirical study of texts. The basis is built on the Saussurean notion of sign and on the relation between the content form and expression form. Step by step, the work gives an overview of the more complex levels of the structural organisation of texts.

The book is well structured and thus constitutes a quite clear introductory reading for students with at least some university-level academic background. The “textbookish” features include test questions and exercises after each chapter, and two exemplary analyses as an appendix.

- Mechkovskaya's *Семиотика: Язык. Природа. Культура* [*Semiotics: Language, Nature, Culture*] (2004, 3rd ed. 2008)

The author, a linguist from the Belarusian State University, provides a systematic course of semiotics in 20 lectures. The course begins with the basic notions of semiotics and the description of the place of semiotics in humanities and sciences followed by a review of the history of semiotics. Taxonomy of the classes of signs and sign systems is based on their ontogeny. Elementary signs (icon, index, symbol) are divided according to the modality, types of motivatedness and the level of conventionality. Several lectures

are devoted to a detailed analysis of structure and functions of particular sign systems (ritual, dance, music, literature, artificial languages, etc.). On the plane of content, the author distinguishes four aspects — denotatics, semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics (Mechkovskaya 2008: 218) with reference to G. Klaus and A. Suprun. In describing the sign systems of culture, she focuses on semiotic practices. The last lecture formulates some rules of development of sign systems, and speculates about the further role of semiotics as a methodology for the humanities.

– Solomonik’s *Позитивная семиотика [Positive Semiotics]* (2004)

Solomonik’s monograph focuses on the semiotic concepts that the author considers to be most important, such as sign, sign system and sign (semiotic) activities. His intention is to employ “the deepest layers of semiotic analysis” (Solomonik 2004: 3). As he notes, “in contemporary semiotics there are no single, or at least more or less coherent, views on the most important of its components, neither is there any agreement on what exactly constitutes semiotics as a science, what is semiotics’ object of inquiry/purpose and what semiotic methods of analysis actually are” (Solomonik 2004: 3). The uniqueness of Solomonik’s approach consists in his radical denial of already established paradigms of semiotic inquiry (for instance, he harshly criticizes Peirce’s “divisions of signs”). However, as he is aiming at the construction of positively re-stated semiotic, his ambitions go even further beyond a simple anathema to existing semiotic methods. He warns the reader, “I use only the most basic part of semiotic theory, revising it according to my own views [...]. In such a situation, there are many benefits that enable me to build, as it seems, something integral ‘from scratch’. I would therefore like to warn the reader that most of the findings and conclusions, which he will find below are the fruits of my very own ideas and thoughts. I have no one to refer to” (Solomonik 2004: 4). However, while developing semiotic theory from an “integral” point of view, Solomonik is more concerned with ontological and epistemological groundings of “positive” semiotics than with “semiotics proper”.

– Proskurin’s *Essays on Current Semiotics* (2007)

This is a small, 75-page booklet, “conceived as an introduction to the field of today’s semiotics” (Proskurin 2007: 4), and, according to its subtitle, *The Textbook to the Course of “Semiotics”*. The book consists of two parts. The first part, “Semiotic retrospective”, gives a brief many-sided overview of the central concepts in semiotics, relying on Peirce, Saussure, Uexküll, Sebeok, and others. The second part, “Semiotic perspective”, describes Proskurov’s main research area – Indo-European ethnosemiotics.

– Danesi’s *The Quest for Meaning: A Guide to Semiotic Theory and Practice* (2007)

Danesi is the author of several introductions to semiotics. This one, a newly written version of the *Messages and Meanings* (1994, 1998, 2004), is quite human- and

language-centred. Its scope becomes clear already from the book's introduction, where Danesi repeatedly stresses the nature of semiotics as a discipline mainly focused on understanding human species and its sign processes.

Chapter 1 introduces the main trends, ideas and people in semiotics, ending with the Saussure-Peirce duo. Chapters 2–6 deal with the theoretical and methodological apparatus, outlining the essential concepts: sign, structure, code, text and representation. Chapter 7 is dedicated to applied semiotics and attempts to implement semiotic theory in order to improve understanding of the aspects of everyday life (food, clothing).

Each chapter ends with a list of topical books and, separately, web resources. The book concludes with a laconic glossary.

– Hall's *This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics* (2007)

Divided into 75 key concepts discussed through examples, Sean Hall's 'user's guide' is an attractive introduction to semiotics that is targeted at the most general audience. On the one hand, the use of visual examples, explanatory texts on various levels and the careful structuring of the material enables the book to serve as a useful tool for talking about semiotics even to children. On the other hand, the several levels of explanations go considerably deeper into the concepts, while avoiding details and contradictory definitions unnecessary for non-academic user. Inside the general field of semiotics, the general stance of the book is close to communication studies and discourse analysis.

– Voigt's *Bevezetés a szemiotikába [Introduction to Semiotics]* (2008)

Voigt provides the reader with an original Hungarian-language treatise on the development of semiotics as a discipline within Western thought. The contribution of Peirce and modern logic to semiotics has merited a whole chapter, yet the treatment of structural linguistics as a component of semiotics through various European schools is remarkably more thorough. The author has devoted several chapters to Hungarian semiotics and long passages to developments within the Hungarian culture. Voigt's work, richly illustrated with diagrams and schemata (e.g. a table on developments in Western thought noteworthy for semioticians), includes a thorough bibliography and an overview of the state of the art in semiotics – schools, journals, universities and national traditions. On the whole, it is useful as a handbook on the theoretical and institutional development of semiotics for the novice, which does not rule out its use as a university coursebook.

Table 1. Main introductory textbooks to semiotics (in the chronological order of the first editions).

Author(s) and title	Language(s) and edition(s)	Key notions	Key classics	Main fields covered (scope of semiotics)	Structuring principle (based on: concepts; research fields; chronology; schools of thought; combined; etc)	Target group, level of difficulty (advanced, intermediate, beginner); general approach (theoretical, practical, philosophical)
Barthes <i>Éléments de sémiologie</i>	language & edition French (1964) Italian (1966, 1992) English (1967, 1968, 1977 1995) Spanish (1971) Portuguese (1971) Russian (1975) German (1979) Arabic (1986) Chinese (1987) Persian (1991)	key notions language (<i>langue</i>) and speech (<i>parole</i>); signifier and signified; syntagm and system; denotation and connotation	key classics Saussure, Hjelmslev	main fields language and the sign systems of human everyday life	book structure concepts	target & level theoretical for intermediate
Bense <i>Semiotik</i>	German (1967)	Peirce's basic notions	Peirce	ontology and epistemology of sign, linguistics and theory of text from point of view of ten types of signs	centered around Peircean semiotics	theoretical
Eco <i>La struttura assente</i>	Italian (1968) German (1972) Russian (1998)	code, structure, communication model, denotation and connotation, signifier and signified	Lévi-Strauss, Saussure, Hjelmslev, Peirce	communication theory, visual semiotics, structuralism	combined	advanced level, theoretical approach
Vetrov <i>Семиотика и ее основные проблемы</i>	Russian (1968)	sign and sign systems, language and speech, development of language	Peirce, Locke	models of communication, biosemiotics, cybernetics	concepts and research fields	theoretical with examples for beginners

Mounin <i>Introduction à la sémiologie</i>	French (1970)	semiology of communication, systems of communication (incl theatrical), code, symbol, sign	Saussure, Hjelmslev, Barthes, Lacan, Morris, Lévi-Strauss	human and animal communication, signification systems, linguistic and non-linguistic communication	concepts and research fields, some historical background	theoretical for intermediate
Stepanov <i>Семiotics</i>	Russian (1971) Hungarian (1976) Japanese (1980, 1997)	sign, sign systems, syntactics, semantics, pragmatics	Peirce, Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss	bio- and ethnosemiotics, language and literature, logic, psychology	research fields combined with historical overview	theoretical for intermediate
Guiraud <i>Sémiologie</i>	French (1971) Spanish (1972) English (1975) Serbian (1975)	sign, code, communication	Saussure, Barthes, Jakobson	communication theory, language and sign systems	concepts, Jakobson's communication model, Saussurean approach	general theoretical approach, for "advanced beginners"
Walther <i>Allgemeine Zeichenlehre: Einführung in die Grundlagen der Semiotik</i>	German (1974)	Peirce's basic notions	Peirce	sign theory, application of semiotics in mathematics, architecture, design, aesthetics	Peirce's classification of signs and its elaborations	advanced, philosophical (logics)
Eco <i>A Theory of Semiotics</i>	Italian (1975) English (1976) Spanish (1980) Korean (1985) Greek (1989) Czech (2004)	code, coding, boundaries and thresholds, content and expression, sign production	Peirce, Saussure	semiotics is related to the existence of codes; zoosemiotics is partly included but not elaborated	concepts related to codes and sign-production	advanced, theoretical
Nöth <i>Semiotik: Eine Einführung mit Beispielen für Reklameanalysen</i>	German (1975)	index, icon, symbol, non-verbal text	Peirce, Saussure, Morris, Koch, Eco	semiotics of advertisement, the general theory of signs (mentions zoosemiotics in passing)	from theory to applied analysis (case study)	theoretical/practical for scholars/students familiar with linguistics

author & title	language & edition	key notions	key classics	main fields	book structure	target & level
Carontini & Peraya <i>Le projet sémiotique: Éléments de sémiotique générale</i>	French (1975) Portuguese (1979) Spanish (1979)	linguistics, communication, ideology	Saussure, Barthes, Kristeva, Althusser, Peirce, Morris	general linguistics, ideology, text	major concepts, from Saussure to Althusser	students and young researchers
Trabant <i>Elemente der Semiotik</i>	German (1st 1976, 3rd 1996) Japanese (1979) Portuguese (1980) Italian (1980)	sign, mark, communication	Humboldt, Peirce, Saussure, Morris, Bühler, Kamlah-Lorenzen	linguistics, communication	brief history of sign theories, sign regulation, speech act theory	intermediate level
Hawkes <i>Structuralism and Semiotics</i>	English (1st 1977, 1983, 2nd 2003) Czech (1999)	structure	Vico, Piaget, Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Jakobson, Greimas, Todorov, Barthes	literature, linguistics, anthropology	history of structuralist way of thinking, impact on literary studies	introduction to structuralism aimed at literary studies
Greimas <i>Sémiotique et sciences sociales</i>	French (1976) English (1990)	discourse, syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels, double articulation, binary oppositions, social production of meaning, narrativization	Saussure, Propp, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes	social sciences (law, economics etc.)	universal methodology of social sciences	intermediate and advanced levels
Caprettini <i>Aspetti della semiotica</i>	Italian (1980)	communication, text, sign, model	Peirce, Saussure, Morris, Jakobson, Lotman, Buysens, Avalle, Segre	semiotics of communication and text	main concepts	intermediate

Deely <i>Introducing Semiotic</i>	English (1982)	logic, language, knowledge, experience, being, umwelt	Aristotle, Poinot, Locke, Frege, Maritain, Romeo, Sebeok	anthroposemiotics, and (partly) zoosemiotics	history since Ancient world, doctrinal concepts, extensive appendices and notes	philosophical, advanced
Scholes <i>Semiotics and Interpretation</i>	English (1982)	text, narrativity, code, decoding, fiction, intertext	Barthes, Todorov, Genette, Jakobson	poetic text	concepts for analysis, sample analyses of poetic texts	intermediate
Pelc <i>Wstęp do semiotyki</i>	Polish (1982)	semiotics, semiology, semantics, sign	Peirce, Frege	logic, linguistics	concepts	philosophical, for beginners
Santaella <i>O que é Semiótica</i>	Portuguese (1983)	language (<i>lingual/linguagem</i>), sign	Peirce (Saussure)	semiotic aspects of culture and nature; signs as metaphysical/epistemological categories	centered around Peircean semiotics	theoretical introduction for beginners
Silverman <i>The Subject of Semiotics</i>	English (1983)	post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, sexuality	Saussure, Freud, Lacan	literature, film theory	post-structuralist and psychoanalytic approach	theoretical and methodological guide for advanced level
Berger <i>Signs in Contemporary Culture</i>	English (1984)	signs, codes,	Peirce, Saussure, Propp	visual semiotics, semiotics of popular art, media semiotics	based on the notion of sign in different everyday practices	beginners level, practical approach
Sless <i>In Search of Semiotics</i>	English (1986)	communication, message, author, reader, text, semiosis	Peirce, Saussure, Barthes	human communication	based on concepts	beginners level
Clarke <i>Principles of Semiotic</i>	English (1987)	language, sign, natural sign, comsign, speech acts, pragmatics	Peirce, Morris, Sextus Empiricus, Augustine, Quine, Frege, Kripke, Grice	semiotics and philosophy of language	based on concepts, also history	intermediate level

author & title	language & edition	key notions	key classics	main fields	book structure	target & level
Heradstveit & Bjørge <i>Politisk kommunikasjon: Introduksjon til semiotikk og retorikk</i>	Norwegian (1987, 1992) Swedish (1996)	propaganda, denotation/connotation, text/context, symbol and metaphor, political signal, political language, cultural code, communicative acts	Saussure, Peirce, Eco, Fjellmslev, Barthes	semiotics of politics, semiotics and philosophy of language, political media studies, theory of semiotics and rhetorics	theoretically concept-based (sign, text, context)	theoretical with practical political examples, for beginners, aimed at various disciplines
Tejera <i>Semiotics from Peirce to Barthes</i>	English (1988)	triads, symbolic interaction, language, communication, interpretation, expression,	Peirce, Mead, Buchler, Dewey, Randall, Habermas, Eco, Barthes	pragmatism, semiotics of literature, triadic nature of semiotic processes, general scope of Peirce's theory, applicability to scientific discourse, artistic communication and social interaction	structured on the basis of different approaches, all related to Peircean theory	theoretical, advanced
Deely <i>Basics of Semiotics</i>	English (1st 1990, 4th 2005, 5th 2009) Portuguese (1990) Spanish (1996) Romanian (1997) Ukrainian (2000) Estonian (2005, 2009) Chinese (2010)	anthroposemiosis, postmodernity, semiotic animal, sign, umwelt	Augustin, Locke, Peirce, Poinot, Sebeok, Uexküll	anthroposemiosis, zoösemiosis, phytosemiosis, physiosemiosis	mainly concept-based, partly by research field (from the most obviously semiotic to the programmatically semiotic)	theoretical approach (historical as well) with philosophical perspective, intermediate or advanced level
Tarasti <i>Johdatusta semiotiikkaan</i>	Finnish (1990, 1992, 1996, ..., 2009)	structuralism, post-structuralism	Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, Peirce	structuralism, theory of signification, music, visual semiotics	structured along schools of thought and research fields	for beginners, with a strong practical tendency towards semiotics of culture

Alvarez (et al.) <i>Introducción a la semiótica</i>	Spanish (1992)	discourse, communication, analysis of text	semiotics of culture (discourse, theatre, poetics)	main literature, current problems, a few main fields; derived from collection of lectures	beginners, theoretical
Marty & Marty <i>99 répons sur la sémiotique</i>	French (1992)	sign classification, code, actantial model, textual analysis, semiotics vs semiology, narrative	textual semiotics, literary semiotics, semiotic methodology, semiotics of name	based on main concepts and key terms	beginners, general theory
Leeds-Hurwitz <i>Semiotics and Communication</i>	English (1993)	sign, code, symbol, social code, culture, communication	semiotics as a theory of communication	based on main concepts	for beginners in semiotics, with a focus on practical application
Sebeok <i>Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics</i>	English (1994, 1999, 2001) Spanish (1996) Romanian (2002)	sign, signal, symptom, index, icon, fetish, language, modelling system	biosemiotics, semiotics as a life science, human semiosis, linguistic communication; non-verbal communication	structured along concepts	for professionals, students and general public
Johansen & Larsen <i>Signs in Use</i>	Danish (1994) Croatian (2000) English (2002)	sign, language, meaning, narrative, discourse analysis, text, dialogue, sign processes	semiotics of text, cultural semiotics	structured along concepts and research fields	for intermediate level college course
Kim <i>Caged in our own Signs: A book about Semiotics</i>	Korean (1994) English (1996)	structuralism, poststructuralism	semiotics of communication and everyday life	based on concepts	for beginners in semiotics, with practical examples
Danesi <i>Messages and Meanings</i>	English (1994, 1998, 2004) Indonesian (2012)	sign, meaning, language, metaphor	nonverbal and verbal signs	concept of sign, nonverbal signs, language	beginners

author & title	language & edition	key notions	key classics	main fields	book structure	target & level
Keller <i>Zeichentheorie: Zu einer Theorie semiotischen Wissens</i>	German (1995)	language signs, language change, metaphors, metonyms	Plato, Wittgenstein, Aristotle, Frege	semiotics of language	combined; historical approaches, concepts	intermediate; theoretical
Klinkenberg <i>Précis de sémiotique générale</i>	French (1996)	code plurality, semiotics, semiology, code, sign, object, communication, signification, semiotic modelling, visual icons	does not concentrate on authors, follows the concepts (but not much Peircean)	communication, pragmatics, rhetoric, semiotic methodology, linguistics and semiotics, visual semiotics	concepts, notions, terminology	advanced, theoretical
Cobley & Jansz <i>Semiotics for Beginners</i>	English (1997, 1998, 2003, 2007) Finnish (1998) Japanese (2000) Spanish (2001) Estonian (2002) Indonesian (2002) Korean (2002) Romanian (2004) Arabic (2005) Croatian (2006) Chinese (2009)	sign, semiology, structuralism, post-structuralism, semiotics	Saussure, Peirce, Hjelmslev, Barthes, Greimas, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Derrida, Benveniste, Morris, Uexküll, Sebeok, Lotman, Jakobson, Eco	all kinds of sign systems in nature, language and culture	combined	beginners and intermediate; theoretical
Kreidlin & Krongauz <i>Семiotика, или азбука общения</i>	Russian (1997, 2004, 2007)	codes, natural languages, context of situation, form and content of sign, social contract, classifications of signs, communication theory, sign systems, syntax of signs	Peirce	verbal and non-verbal signs and human communication, sign systems, examples include insect communication	types of signs in communication, sign systems in communication and culture	beginners
Schönrich <i>Semiotik: zur Einführung</i>	German (1999)	Peirce's classification of signs	Peirce, Goodman	theory of sign and signification, language and thinking	typology of signs	advanced, theoretical

Veivo & Huttunen <i>Semiotiikka</i>	Finnish (1999)	text, sign, communication, literature	Peirce, Eco, Saussure, Lotman, Greimas	literary semiotics, semiotics of culture	main fields	beginners and intermediate; theoretical
Merrell <i>Signs for Everybody</i>	English (2000)	Peirce's categories	Peirce	human communication from the point of view of Peircean semiotics	based on concepts	beginners; theoretical
Volli <i>Manuale di semiotica</i>	Italian (1st 2000, 2nd 2003, 3rd 2006)	sign, structure, text, narrative	Peirce, Greimas, Eco	communication studies, pragmatics, textual semiotics, structuralism, applied semiotics	based on concepts	intermediate, theoretical (some practical examples)
Roventa-Frumusani & Gaudreault <i>Pour connaitre la science des signes</i>	French (2001)	signification and communication, code and message, knowledge and action verbal and non-verbal, event, narration	Barthes, Benveniste, Greimas, Peirce, Jakobson, Searle	sign theory after Saussure, Peircean semiotics, communication theory, semiotics of theatre	combined, overview of concepts and research fields	intermediate
Pozzato <i>Semiotica del testo</i>	Italian (2001)	text, discourse, artistic text	Greimas, Propp, Lévi-Strauss, Eco, Lotman, Genette, Landowski	communication, textual analysis, semio-narrative, literary semiotics, sociosemiotics	based on concepts, combination of theoretical and practical	intermediate, theoretical (theories of text), offers practical examples
Chandler <i>Semiotics: The Basics</i>	English (1st 2002, 2nd 2007) Spanish (1998, 1999, 2001 – translated from online version) Korean (2006) Arabic (2008)	representation, signification, denaturalization, code	Saussure; Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Kress	anthroposemiosis, Saussurean and post-Saussurean (European) semiotics	based on concepts	for beginners; a popularising approach

author & title	language & edition	key notions	key classics	main fields	book structure	target & level
Gensini <i>Elementi di semiotica</i>	Italian (2002)	sign, code, communication, semiosis, language	Saussure, Jakobson, Peirce, Morris, Eco, Prieto, Deacon	linguistics, semiotics, communication studies, mind and language, animal and human communication, symbolic species	chronological (language development), theoretical	beginners
Pochepsiov <i>Семioticsка</i>	Russian (1st 2002, 2nd 2009)	code, language, semiotic reality, sign and symbol, message and text	Lotman, Eco, Fiske, Ivanov, Barthes	social semiotics, imagology	main concepts, semiotic analysis of Soviet civilization	for wide audience
Ageev <i>Семioticsка</i>	Russian (2002) Latvian (2005)	signs, sign systems, communication, semiotic models	Peirce, Lotman, Bakhtin, Baudouin	basic principles of semiotic methods, cybersemiotics, applied semiotics	application fields	beginning general reader
Kjørup <i>Semiotik</i>	Danish (2002) Swedish (2004) German (2009)	signs, language, sign systems, classification of signs	Peirce, Saussure	general semiotic theory	concepts, definitions	semiotics for beginners
Crow <i>Visible signs: an Introduction to Semiotics</i>	English (2003)	from code to habitus, from rubbish to an open text	Peirce, Saussure, Barthes, Eco, Bourdieu	visual semiotics	concepts, research topics	beginners; combined approach with a practical touch
Magli <i>Semiotica</i>	Italian (1st 2004, 2nd 2005)	text, discourse, expression plane and content plane	Greimas	semiotics of (artistic) text	based on concepts	intermediate; combined approach (to semiotics of text) with a practical dominant
Mechkovskaya <i>Семioticsка</i>	Russian (2004)	classes of sign systems, elementary and complex signs, degrees of conventionality	Peirce, Saussure, Shpet, Morris, Jakobson, Piaget, Vygotsky, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Lotman, Ivanov	all kinds of sign systems in life, language, culture, and machines	terms, schools, classes of sign systems	beginners to intermediate, philologists

Nikitina <i>Семiotика</i>	Russian (2006)	sign, communication, sense (<i>смысл</i>), meaning	Saussure, Hjeltmslev, Lotman, Eco	sign systems of human culture	combined; course of lectures	beginners
Proskurin <i>Essays on Current Semiotics</i>	English (2007)	sign, sign types, language	Saussure, Uexküll, Sebeok	from biosemiotics to ethnosemiotics	from the concept of sign and its features of sign; methods and applied aspects in a separate last part	university students, beginners, both theoretical and applied
Hall <i>This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics</i>	English (1st 2007, 2nd 2012)	75 key concepts of semiotics (with an emphasis on communication)	uses a range of authors from semiotics and social sciences almost without mentioning them	communication studies, media studies, visual semiotics, visualising semiotics	concepts and their visualisation	beginners, non-academic 'dummies'; practical approach (with touch to everyday cultural puzzles)
Danesi <i>The Quest for Meaning</i>	English (2007)	sign, structure, code, text, representation	Saussure, Peirce	human species and its sign processes	combined	beginners; theoretical, with practical examples
Voigt <i>Bevezetés a szemiotikába</i>	Hungarian (2008)	logical semiosis, linguistic semiosis, semantic semiosis, cultural semiosis, sign, code, meaning	Saussure, Peirce, Jakobson, Propp, Greimas, Bakhtin, Eco, Barthes, Lotman	history of semiotics in Western thought, modern logic and linguistics as sources of semiotics, schools and institutions of semiotics	overview of different schools and single authorities as well as institutions organised chronologically	an intermediate-level comprehensive university coursebook, strong focus on theory

5. Observations and discussion

The current review is limited only to the introductions and textbooks on general semiotics (205 titles, including translations), which means that we have not included books on specific branches of semiotics. Some of these textbooks we have described *de visu* and submitted to a more detailed analysis. Thus, above we gave brief reviews of 58 books: 12 published in the 1960s and early 1970s; 12 from the late 1970s and 1980s; 18 from the 1990s; and 16 from the 2000s). Table 1 provides a concise comparative account of 57 books.

5.1. Main trends: some numbers

Altogether we could find 132 original books from the period 1960–2009 that we identified as introductions to semiotics (plus 23 general dictionaries and encyclopedias in semiotics, and 16 readers and anthologies in general semiotics). From these, at least 20 titles have also appeared in translation, some have been translated into several languages. Original textbooks in semiotics have been written and published in at least 22 languages. Taking also into account the translations (altogether 32 languages, see the bibliography), we can observe the following publication dynamics: in the 1960s – 7 books; in the 1970s – 45 books; in the 1980s – 37 books; in the 1990s – 54 books, in the 2000s – 62 books (see also Table 2, and Fig. 1).

Table 2. The number of introductory books published. The two last rows give the data for published lexicons and readers. Only first editions are taken into account.

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	sum
original titles	5	27	27	34	39	132
... in English	0	3	9	8	6	26
... in French	1	7	1	5	1	15
... in Russian	1	2	0	1	9	13
... in Italian	1	4	2	1	8	16
... in other languages	2	11	15	19	15	62
translated titles	2	18	10	20	23	73
encyclopedias and dictionaries	0	6	3	5	9	23
anthologies and readers	0	2	5	4	5	16
sum (original+translated+lexicons+readers)	7	53	45	63	76	244

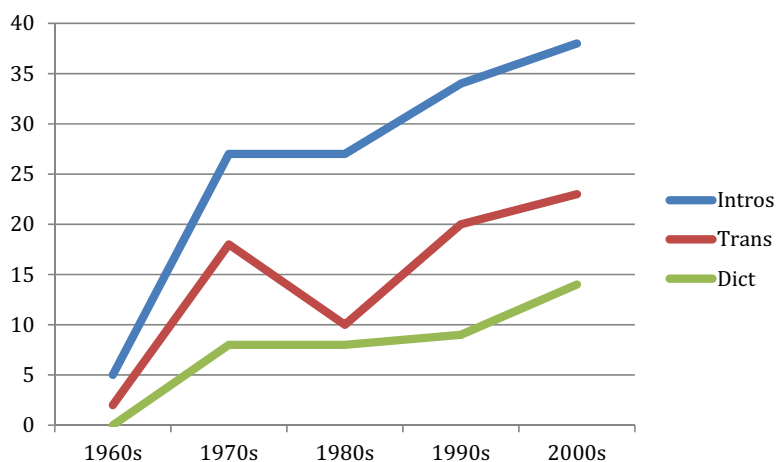


Figure 1. Dynamics of semiotics textbook publication during five decades (first editions only). *Intros* – all original titles of introductions and textbooks in general semiotics; *Trans* – translations; *Dict* – dictionaries and readers.

The publication dynamics allows to draw some conclusions. First, the number of new books published per decade is growing. The growth has not been smooth, however – the 1980s witnessed a setback.

If the original books are divided into three groups according to language: (a) English, (b) French, Russian, and Italian, and (c) all other languages, it appears that the trends we observed in the sum curve are not the same for the subgroups (Fig. 2). English-language books and Group (c) reached their maximum in the 1990s, without any setback in the 1980s. The French-Russian-Italian group, however, behaves completely differently – there was a rapid growth in the 1970s that was reduced to almost zero in the 1980s, and started to grow again since the 1990s. Interestingly enough, the translation activity (Fig. 1) follows a curve quite similar to that of the French-Russian-Italian group.

Our interpretation for this is as follows. The leading centres in semiotics have been situated in these three language areas – French, Russian, and Italian¹⁴. In these regions, semiotics was institutionalized earlier than elsewhere, already in the 1960s. The depression after the “post-modern peak” of the 1970s was also most marked in these countries, and the whole new growth since the 1990s comes mainly from the same regions. The translation activity curve obviously follows that of the leading thought. In the Anglo-American region semiotics became institutionalized a bit later and its growth demonstrates a certain inertia. Similarly, the production of semiotics

¹⁴ Our method of analysis cannot make specific claims about small languages or countries.

dictionaries, encyclopedias and readers does not follow the quick changes occurring in the leading regions. We can also hypothesize that since the French–Russian–Italian group demonstrates growth in the 2000s, a new growth in English-language semiotics will follow soon.

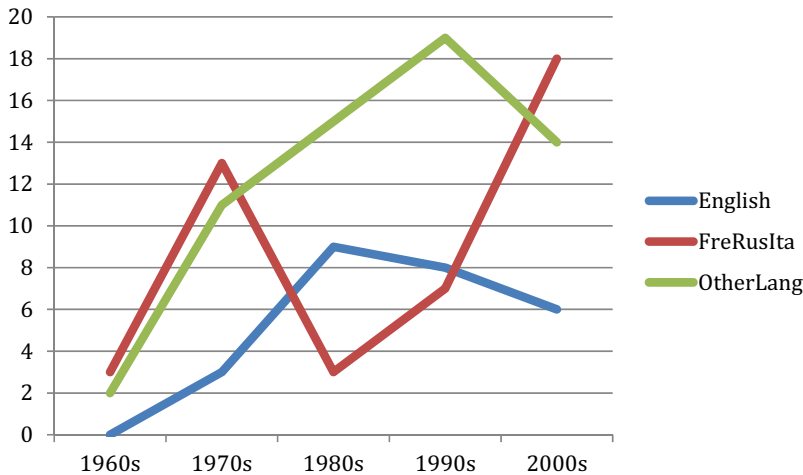


Figure 2. Dynamics of publishing textbooks in semiotics in different languages during five decades: *English* –English; *FreRusIta* – French, Russian and Italian; *OtherLang* – all other languages.

5.2. General observations and remarks

Below, we describe some of our observations regarding the trends noticeable in the ‘introductions to semiotics’ over the 50 years. We have focused on seven questions.

(a) *Whether semiotics is seen as a science, philosophy, doctrine, or method.*

Notwithstanding the fact that for several decades semiotics has been the subject of ardent academic discussion and scientific scrutiny, there still is some ambiguity as regards its principal designation in contemporary human sciences: what is semiotics *per se* – is it a scholarly method, a pure scientific discipline, a theory, the general systems theory apparatus, a philosophy, a methodology, a doctrine, an elitist knowledge, a practice, an approach, or just a basis for inter- or transdisciplinarity? This problem has been exciting theorists since the first introduction to semiotics appeared, although giving clear definitions or making references to its status is rare.

It is difficult to summarize the main trends regarding the issue, thus a certain discrepancy can be noticed. The approaches to the status of semiotics vary from country to country and according to the tradition and the authors’ background.

Among the adherents of the scientificity of semiotics are East European (Vetrov, Stepanov, Ageev, Pelc) as well as Italian (Pozzato, Volli, Magli) and some French scholars. Here, the German tradition (Bense, Schönrich, Walther) stands out as an alternative, referring as it does to semiotics as a theory and/or a philosophy. Some authors stress the importance of semiology as primarily a method, an analytical tool (Mounin). The adherents of semiotics as a doctrine (Sebeok) or philosophy (Deely) are predominantly American.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, when the formation of certain fundamentals of semiotics gave way to detailed investigations of the main subfields of semiotics, the overwhelming majority of authors declined to formulate the status of the field, as expressed for instance by Sless (1986: 1): “semiotics is far too important an enterprise to be left to semioticians”. It is noticeable that semioticians themselves insist upon its scientificity, whereas those not directly affiliated with semiotics rather see it as a supplementary approach to other sciences. (Still, Chandler (2002: 214) bluntly states, “Semiotics is not, never has been, and seems unlikely ever to be, an academic discipline in its own right.”)

At the same time, the definition of the status of semiotics is often rooted in the etymology of terms where semiology as any *logos*-oriented faculty has more of a likelihood of being called a science than semiotics and linked with the problem of the Saussurean or Peircean approaches to semiotic phenomena: the Saussurean one as linguistics-bound, thus more scientific; the Peircean one as philosophy-bound, thus as if less scientific.

Eco’s view on this that semiotics is like medicine does not seem to be widely known as yet.

(b) *Are the introductions mainly based on Saussurean or Peircean, or mixed (synthetic, or compilative) approaches; whether the term ‘semiotics’ or ‘semiology’ is used.*

This is, whether a background of linguistics or logics is dominating. We may assume that European semiotics has preferred the former and American semiotics the latter point of departure. However, “it is accurate to say that semioticians today use a blend of Saussurean and Peircean concepts and techniques at various stages of analysis and for diverse purposes” (Danesi 2007: 22). This seems to be true particularly in case of textbooks.

For instance, Johansen and Larsen (2002: 6) declare that their book “unlike most introductions, emphasizes the importance of bridging between European and American semiotics based on the theories of, respectively Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce”. V. Tejera’s statement (1988: ix) about his book: “Barthes “semiological” terminology, derived from F. de Saussure, has been assimilated without violence into that of Peirce’s semiotics” also deserves attention.

There is a great difference, though, between (a) books that remain explicitly true to Peirce (such as Santaella 1983; Merrell 2000); (b) books that are innovative within a Peircean framework (such as Deely 1990); (c) books that include Peirce along with

other figures (such as Eco 1976; Heradstveit, Bjørge 1987; Marty, Marty 1992; Copley 1997; etc.), and (d) books that almost avoid mentioning Peirce's work (e.g., Mounin 1970; Klinkenberg 1996; Magli 2004).

In Germany the Stuttgart school (e.g., Max Bense, Elisabeth Walther) has relied solely on Peirce's theory of semiotics as a basis of explaining sciences as well as art, calling their approach the basis theory of semiotics (*semiotische Basistheorie*). The authors who belong to the school have worked on explicating connections between Peirce's various typologies of signs, providing thereby some additional meta-categories.

As regards terminology, a certain language-based division can be observed, as French and Spanish often use 'semiology', whereas English, Russian and German traditions rather prefer 'semiotics'.

The Greimasian approach means using the term 'semiotics', while following the Saussurean tradition. A similar usage is quite common among Italian authors.

What is certainly remarkable is that Peirce's approach was described already in the very first introductory books of the 1960s, despite of the fact that the wider study of Peirce among semioticians only started in the late 1980s, together with a turn towards a more process-based semiotics.

(c) *Didactic aspects: do the books include semiotic problems and exercises for students.*

The books can be divided on the basis of their presumed readership. In some texts it is clearly stated, in others it can be assumed. Various texts that are titled as textbooks do not offer exercises or questions for students, but often refer to further reading on the concepts or theories covered in the chapters (e.g. Volli 2000). Many of the books are rather theoretical (by Deely, Santaella, Eco, Copley), and in a way contradict their title (e.g. some of the German introductions to semiotics which are clearly on an advanced level of logic – Schönrich 1999; Walther 1974, 1979).

Books by Heradstveit and Bjørge (1987) and Nöth (1975) are built around numerous concrete case studies that appear throughout the text. Also Pozzato (2001) dedicates separate chapters to analysing examples of literary texts and commercials. Magli's (2004) and Johansen and Larsen's (2002) books offer also didactic exercises. Magli (2004) gives many test questions at the end of each chapter (answers can be found in the preceding text), and also analytical exercises such as "set the boundaries of a particular text", "bring out the repeating motifs in this text" etc. Johansen and Larsen (2002) provide sample analyses to explain the methodology of semiotics. Hall's (2007) very concise book can be highlighted as an example of a didactically elaborate book following the approach of problem-based learning (72 problems, well structured). Similarly, the book by Marty and Marty (1992) formulates 99 basic questions of semiotics and gives short, clearly understandable, yet by no means simplistic answers.

A large project for introducing semiotics courses in high schools was developed in the Greater Boston Area. It started in 1977 and was led by Donald W. Thomas¹⁵. This resulted in a four-volume set of study materials in semiotics (Thomas 1977, 1978, 1982, 1983).

Kreidlin and Krongauz (1997) have written quite an exceptional textbook, as it offers a wide range of exercises primarily directed towards primary school children. Exercises complement the theoretical part of the textbook by illustrating the described sign-systems-related phenomena or linking their personal observations with the semiotic theory. Similarly, also Berger (1984) gives examples from everyday life and pop culture to illustrate the various sign functions.

Alvarez Sanagustín *et al.* (1992) offer another example in the form of a compendium of lecture materials based on a collectively read course, which also includes a chapter on the previously printed textbooks.

In general, one can say that the introductory books have become more and more to resemble textbooks, which is quite logical, as in the 1960s and 1970s semiotics had to introduce itself as a new discipline for which giving background knowledge and general information was necessary, while in the 1990s and especially in the 2000s new centres for teaching semiotics as a separate discipline not related to linguistics or communication or media studies anymore were established and a demand for textbooks grew. Together with semiotics becoming a kind of a fashionable term, the demand for basic books that would apply modern pedagogical approaches arose (such as Marty, Marty 1992, or Cobley, Jansz 1997, or Hall 2007).

(d) *Applied aspects: Which of these books include guides for practical semiotic analysis?*

The methods of empirical semiotic research, in which the qualitative methods are generalized so that these could be used in case of quite different sign systems (see Manning 1987; Berger 1984), have appeared in introductory books since the 1980s, and show a tendency of becoming increasingly more important. At first applied semiotic analysis was used in examples of literary text analysis (Scholes 1982). Berger's (1984) book also stands out for his comic approach and numerous visual and pop-culture-related examples. Several other books include sample analyses (Lidov 1999; Leeds-Hurwitz 1993; Heradstveit, Bjørge 1987; Merrell 2000). In the past decade, some good examples of visual semiotic analysis have been published (Crow 2003) and visual examples have been used for sample analyses (Hall 2007). Pozzato (2001) and Magli (2004) reserve separate chapters for examples of different textual analyses. The book by Roventa-Frumusani and Gaudreault (2001) includes concrete practical tasks for students. Nikitina (2006) describes three different semiotic methods: the linguistic (theoretical), the experimental, and the hermeneutical (rhetorical analysis, interpretation) one.

¹⁵ Thomas, Donald W. 1983. *A Course in Semiotics for High Schools*. Project Report #10 (Grant #NEH ES 27221-77-300.) Bedford: Project Semiotics.

There are very few textbooks that would take the position of a methodological guidebook or even tool-kit of semiotics (exceptions are, e.g., Scholes 1982; Silverman 1983). In most cases, the guidance and instructions for carrying out semiotic analyses are not a strong side of the semiotics textbooks observed. A great exception is Louis Hebert's (2011, available as e-book only) *Tools for Text and Image Analysis: An Introduction to Applied Semiotics* which provides detailed descriptions for the methods of semiotic analysis.

(e) *How wide is the scope of semiotics as described in each case?*

The scope of semiotics as covered in introductory textbooks is rather wide and varied. Besides the most common fields of communication, structuralism, literature and language, it often includes also biosemiotics and sociosemiotics.

While episodic in general, the very first appearance of biosemiotic chapters can be found already in the books by Vetrov (1968) and Stepanov (1971). In contrast, the field of sociosemiotics appears explicitly relatively late. For example, the elaborate discussion on discourse appears only in Johansen and Larsen (1994), discourse in the context of sociosemiotics in Pozzato (2001), and sociosemiotics tied to imagology in Pocheptsov (2002). Nevertheless, many concepts central to the social dimension of semiotics (e.g. text, communication, pragmatism, interaction, aspects of politics and propaganda, etc.) are independently present earlier than that.

Also semiotics of culture as a separate field distinct from semiotics of communication, literature and language can be found relatively late (in Santaella 1983; Tarasti 1990; Veivo, Huttunen 1999). While introduction of pop culture, media and film as objects of semiotics was interpreted through the general cultural context of the 1980s (e.g. Berger 1984), it might be more surprising that a chapter on semiotic problems of linguistics did not appear before the mid-1970s, while the first introductory books are characterized by their much more general scope.

The popular image of semiotics is reflected in the tendency to concentrate on communication, media, literature, visual examples and tricky examples from everyday behaviour in textbooks targeted at beginners. The fields and approaches of biosemiotics and sociosemiotics are explicitly presented mostly in books targeted at intermediate or even advanced levels (e.g. biosemiotics in Deely 1990; Sebeok 1993; Stepanov 1971; and the sociosemiotic approach in Tejera 1988; Pozzato 2001).

While an explicit discussion of the semiotic threshold can be found in Eco (1976), more elaborate and critical discussion follows in Deely (1990) and Sebeok (1993). In some books, the semiotic threshold is stated without a longer discussion (e.g., according to Hall 2007, the meaning is created in society).

The 2000s see an increase in the semiotics of everyday behaviour, which, as material, does not broaden the theoretical scope, but widens the practical applicability of semiotics.

(f) Which are the national or geographical differences.

We should ask about the general inclinations and methods presented in textbooks of semiotics worldwide: are there differences deriving from geographical or language-based “borders”. The question of language and geography brings up questions of cultural heritage, invasions, translations, and mythology of thinking – or the principles on which describing of the world as a united whole is standing. Textbooks in semiotics seem to express the authors inner need to provide some mapping tools to help to reach an understanding of what is hidden behind our language and signs, and from that point of view, we are not free from the ideologies that have been shaping the mind the understanding of writer. Differences by country and language exist and are worth paying attention to.

For instance, most of the textbooks in Italian focus on the semiotics of text, using sources such as Greimas, Propp, Eco, Lotman, communication and media studies (Pozzato 2001; Magli 2004; Volli 2006), as well as sociosemiotics, including the semiotic analysis of everyday objects, brands and commercials. Biosemiotics and treatment of non-human species are usually missing. Gensini’s (2002) book in Italian is an exception, but he rather studies animals in order to compare their anatomical apparatus to that of humans and understand how the ability of speaking and language skills develop. Still, he also mentions the distinctions between human semiosis and non-human animal semiosis.

At first sight, the French School seems to be dominated by structuralism (Barthes 1964) and an evolution of Saussurean thought in connection with the Prague School and Russian formalism (Kristeva, Althusser). This, however would sadly underestimate the breadth of the intellectual base of textbooks in French – there are many texts which comprehensively describe vast areas of semiotic theories, models and terminology (Roventa-Frumusani, Gaudreault 2001; Klinkenberg 1996), and already the influential dictionary by Greimas and Courtés (1979) attempted to include the views of different schools.

Textbooks in German (e.g., Bense 1967) more often than others do not forget to use and develop the works of Peirce, Frege, Locke, Lambert, Hegel and Morris.

Textbooks in Denmark and Norway attempt to synthesize structuralism and pragmatism, developing the vast area of semiotic research from language-based models (Kjørup 2002) to practical political analysis (Heradstveit, Bjørge 1987).

Writers of Russian-language textbooks tend to describe the diversity of tendencies in the sphere of theory of semiotics, though building it on preferably language-based models (from animals to cybernetic machines) (Vetrov 1968; Barulin 2002; Mechkovskaja 2004; Nikitina 2006). Russian authors propose their original approaches to the basic semiotic theory (e.g. Solomonik 2004) maybe more often than others.

(g) What is said about the future of semiotics?

A potential of the field can be demonstrated via the formulation of the not-yet-solved problems, the tasks that are required. Differently from interview books (e.g. Bundgaard, Stjernfelt 2009; see also Kull, Velmezova 2014), textbooks do not use this opportunity often.

6. Conclusions

- (1) Quite a rich variety of introductory textbooks on semiotics has been published in English, Italian, Russian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Japanese, and Danish. In most other languages there exist few (if any) books which would meet the needs of an introductory semiotics course.
- (2) The whole area of sign systems (living and technical) is covered in a relatively small number of books (by Stepanov, Vetrov, Sebeok, Deely, Gensini, Danesi, Santaella, Mechkovskaya, Barulin, Cobley, Proskurin, Voigt).
- (3) It is important to note that when choosing a coursebook for an introductory course on semiotics some texts are preferable bearing in mind students who have no previous knowledge of the field (e.g. Kreidlin, Krongauz). Some books work well to systematize the topics studied (e.g. Cobley), others are good for independent reading (e.g. Barthes; Johansen and Larsen) or for revising the whole material before the exam (e.g. Klinkenberg, Mechkovskaya, Barulin, Hall), whereas many texts are actually the authors' contemplations on important semiotic topics (e.g. Bense, Caprettini, Schönrich).
- (4) We can observe a division into writing either practical or theoretical introductions. The practical books are usually very clearly structured and offer plentiful visual materials (graphics, photos, diagrams), together with exercises for students – books by Berger, Hall, and Danesi are good examples here.
- (5) Most of the books mix the Peircean and the Saussurean models. Both classics were included already in the 1960s, and we have not been able to detect any clear general trend towards preferring either of these schools in the textbooks on semiotics.
- (6) We can observe a steady tendency towards an increase in the publication of introductions to semiotics.

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Сто введений в семиотику для миллиона студентов: обзор учебников по семиотике по всему миру

Чтобы оценить состояние учебных пособий по семиотике в настоящее время, мы даем сравнительный обзор вышедших за последние полвека (т.е. с начала институализации семиотики) учебников по семиотике. В обзоре охвачены более 130 книг на более чем 22 языках. Из них примерно 20 вышли и в переводах, поэтому в библиографии представлено 32 языка. Отдельно перечислены антологии и лексиконы. Сравнительный анализ выделяет основные тенденции, которые характеризуют развитие семиотики. В течение всего наблюдаемого периода наблюдается постоянный рост в издании учебников, с незначительным спадом в 1980-е гг. Выделяется ведущая роль французско-, русско- и италяязычной семиотической литературы.

**Sada sissejuhatust semiootikasse, miljonile tudengile:
Ülevaade semiootika õpikutest ja sissejuhatavaist
raamatutest maailmas**

Et hinnata semiootika õppematerjalide praegust olukorda, esitame maailmas viimasel pool-sajandil (s.o. alates semiootika institutsionaliseerumisest) ilmunud semiootika üldõpikute ja sissejuhatuste võrdleva ülevaate ning vastava bibliograafia. Sellesse kategooriasse kuulub enam kui 130 originaalraamatut enam kui 22 keeles. Neist raamatuist umbes 20 on ilmunud ka tõlgetena, mistõttu kokku on bibliograafias esindatud 32 keelt. Eraldi loendeis on toodud seniilmunud semiootika leksikonid ja antoloogiad. Võrdluses näidatakse ka mitmeid tendentse, mis iseloomustavad semiootika arengut nende raamatute alusel alates 1960ndaist. Uute õpperaamatute ilmumise sagedus on olnud aastakümneti kasvav, ajutise langusega 1980ndail. Esile tuleb prantsuse, vene ja itaalia semiootikakirjanduse senine juhtroll.