Rozhdestvensky and Communication Theory

Russian Evolution: Russian Reflections
A Conference on the work of Professor Yuri Rozhdestvensky: his Contribution to Linguistics, Rhetoric, Communication Theory, Semiotics, Poetics and Narratology

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Rozhdestvensky

a sideways glance at communication
division of labour

distinct points of view on communication
participants from different functional categories
‘medium theory’

Marshall McLuhan
‘medium theory’

Eric Havelock
‘medium theory’

Elizabeth Eisenstein
‘medium theory’

Walter J. Ong
‘medium theory’

Jack Goody
printed discourse

- creator = a collective team
- audiences
- the reader – and other readers
- continuous presence of the text author in the receiver's life (through the personal library)
Textology

“A philology specialist who studies a text of a printed work, no matter what culture and time it belongs to, has to always consider printing laws”.

philology vs. linguistics

Roy Harris (2001: 118):

“Linguistics is a term of no great antiquity. It came into fashion in the nineteenth century when scholars began to distinguish between various possible approaches to the study of language and languages. Many, including Saussure, insisted on a distinction between traditional philology, focused on the study of literary and other texts (particularly those of earlier periods) and a more general form of inquiry which sought to study languages themselves, irrespective of whether they had produced texts of literary or cultural importance, or of whether they had produced any texts at all”.

Linguistics established itself by insisting on the primacy of speech (not writing) as its object (2001)

*segregational* - the notion that communication systems are one thing, what people do with them another (1996)
Saussure (1916)
Lotman
Tartu School

Modelling systems

Symposium on the structural study of sign systems – Moscow, 1962

“The idea that all aspects of human culture, however obscure, or disreputable, are proper subjects for semiotic study”

First Summer School on ‘secondary modelling systems’, Kaariku, August 1964
Sebeok (1988)

‘In what sense is language a “primary modeling system”? ’ in H. Broms and R. Kaufmann (eds.) Semiotics of Culture, Helsinki: Arator, pp. 67-79
Early hominids

*Homo habilis*, about two million years ago - possessed ‘language’, grammar or modelling ‘device’ in their brains.
early hominids

*Homo erectus*, about one and a half million years ago), with an increased brain size over his/her predecessor, also possessed the capacity
However

verbal encoding and decoding abilities only came into use about 300,000 years ago with early *Homo sapiens*.

humans therefore possessed the capacity for language long (nearly a million years) before they started to implement it through speech for the purposes of verbal communication.

prior to this: non-verbal communication
Speech

an exaptation of the language capacity

So:

not a matter of ‘language’ conceived as ‘chatter’

not even a matter of communication conceived as message transfer (as might be discerned in just the non-verbal communication of hominids)
Language

an acute and developing cognitive capacity to differentiate
In sum, only in the genus *homo* have verbal signs emerged; apes, for example, simply cannot speak. But hominids have more than just the *anthroposemiotic verbal*; they also possess the *zoosemiotic non-verbal*. As Sebeok points out, evolutionists have traced the expanding brain size of early humans, through *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens sapiens*. The range of activities and tools that each utilized suggests that they also possessed the capacity for differentiation and, concomitantly, language.

The minds of early humans, it appears, were sufficiently developed to be able to process different kinds of information. They could, in their mental operations, harbour distinct fragments of information, each of which was placed in discrete compartments in the manner described by some theories of language.
primary modelling system
SECONDARY MODELLING SYSTEM
TERTIARY MODELLING SYSTEMS
General philology

- Text production
- Distinction between the discourses of the hard sciences and the human sciences
- Definitions of culture
- Differences of spoken and written language
- Fiction and non-fiction
- Authorship
Non-verbal communication
Holism
functionality and relationships
Does not rely on the primacy of speech
Спасибо
References


