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**Semiotic Modes
in Commercial Communication.
A Comparative Analysis of Culinary Shop
Signs in Greece and Cyprus**

The culinary landscape

- Aim: Semiotic modes used in the shop signs of culinary business (restaurants, taverns, rotisseries) in Greece and Cyprus. In this context, we examine, comparatively, shop signs collected from the commercial center of Thessaloniki and Limassol, two European, Mediterranean cities, with a significant culinary tradition and a lively city center.
 - Shop signs' gastronomic discourse is multifunctional since their function is articulated on three axes: the communicative (informational), the economic (commercial), and the cultural (identity).
 - Koff (2013): some eating habits mould landscapes and semiotically "food can be linked to a language: we use it to communicate about ourselves, our concerns and attitudes, our intentions, and so forth".
 - For Danesi (2004), "using both verbal and nonverbal techniques to make its messages as persuasive as possible, advertising has become an integral category of modern-day culture designed to influence attitudes and lifestyle behaviors by covertly suggesting how we can best satisfy our innermost urges and aspirations through consumption".
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A semiotic widening of the landscape

- Landry and Bourhis (1997) consider as private signs the “commercial signs on storefronts and business institutions (e.g. retail stores and banks), commercial advertising on billboards, and advertising signs displayed in public transport and on private vehicles”.
 - Kress and Van Leeuwen (2005) mention that “the place of visual communication in a give society can only be understood in the context of, on the one hand, the range of forms or modes of public communication available in that society and, on the other hand, their uses and valuations”.
 - Leone (2009: 217) proposes the notion of *semio-geography* as “a sub-discipline that studies patterns and processes that shape human interaction with various environments, within the theoretical framework of semiotics”.
 - Lindström, Kull and Palang (2014) “[...] semiotics can provide adequate tools for analyzing processes of landscape formation, because they are always a result of multi-party communication and depend on the sign categorization of the participants”.
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The gastronomic discourse in public space

- Córdova, López-Gopar & Sughrua (2017) state that “[...] the semiotic landscape allows written language (discourse) to interact with other discourses (visual images, spatial practices, and cultural dimensions), thereby aiding the emergence of indigenous self-representation and cultural values and hence working toward language revitalization”.
 - Panaretou (2002), who examines the lexical features of a new discourse norm used in written newspaper texts about gastronomy, reports that modern gastronomic discourse is of particular linguistic significance due to characteristic features like
 - foreign words,
 - neologisms,
 - unpredictable lexical conjunctions, and
 - metaphors.
 - Grammenidis (2009): translation strategies change according the text genre and index's importance inside in the text we want to translate.
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A three level study

- The study of commercial signs takes place at three levels:
 - Linguistic
(verbocultural palimpsests and modern Greek dialect)
 - Translational
(interlingual or intersemiotic translation)
 - visual rhetoric
(metonymy)
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Definitions

- **Verbo-cultural palimpsests**, are established cultural expressions or words rewritten for impression purposes. It is A *verbal palimpsest* is a hidden (distorted) expression that recalls common memories and at the same time an educational door that opens with the aspects of culture and promotes everyday communication (Galisson 1994).
- Jakobson (2001 [1959]) defines **interlingual translation** or **translation proper** the interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.

Jakobson (2001 [1959]) calls **intersemiotic translation** or **transmutation**: “the interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal systems”.

- **Metonymy** “allows us to use one entity to stand for another” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).
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The linguistic dimension: (a) the verbocultural palimpsests in Thessaloniki's shop signs



- The shop sign “The Suspended Step of the Prawn” comes from a restaurant serving Fish Delly in the Center of Thessaloniki (Aristotelous region).
- The title of the film «το μετέωρο βήμα του πελαργού» (The Suspended Step of the Stork) by Theo Angelopoulos (1991) with Marcello Mastroianni και Jeanne Moreau has changed as «το μετέωρο βήμα της γαρίδας» (The Suspended Step of the Prawn).

The linguistic dimension: (b) the modern Greek dialect in Thessaloniki's shop signs



- The shop sign «Αθιβολή» [**athivoli**] comes from a restaurant in the center of Thessaloniki (Ladadika region) that is specialized in Gretan cuisine that is considered as the original Mediterranean diet Culture.
 - It means in the Gretan dialect “thought” and “discussion”.
 - The map of the Creta confirms intersemiotically and as a synecdoche the above conclusions.
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The translative dimension in Thessaloniki's shop signs: interlingual and intersemiotic translation



- The shop sign
“Souvlakotherapy” comes from a Rotisserie serving meat (souvlaki) in the Center of Thessaloniki (Rotonda region).
 - Neologism base on the association of the words **“souvlaki”** and **“therapy”** which are interlingually translated in Greek as **“σουβλακοθεραπεία»** and intersemiotically by the images of a souvlaki and of a snake.
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The visual rhetoric dimension in Thessaloniki



- The shop sign
“Βασιλικός” [Vasilikos]
(Royal) comes from a
meze restaurant in the
center of Thessaloniki
(Ladadika region).
 - The letter «B» looks like a
frog wearing a crown that
is the visual metonymy
for the royalty.
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The linguistic dimension: (a) the verbocultural palimpsests in Limassol's shop signs



- The shop sign «μεζεδοπαγίδα» [mezedopagida] (meze catcher) comes from «ονειροπαγίδα» [oniropagida] (dream catcher) and is a tavern in Limassol.
 - It serves Cypriot cuisine and it is situated near the Old Harbor of Limassol.
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The linguistic dimension: (b) the modern Greek dialect in Limassol's shop signs



- The shop sign «το μελούι» [to meloui] belongs to a restaurant nearby the marina of Limassol and in cypriot means the “the honey”.

The translative dimension in Limassol's shop signs: interlingual translation



- The shop sign «η φωλιά του κούκου» [I folia tou koukou] is translated into English (interlinguistically) as “Cuckoo’s nest”.
 - It is situated in the commercial center of Limassol (Agios Andreas region) and is a restaurant serving meze.
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The visual rhetoric dimension in Limassol's shop sign



- The meze restaurant
«Ραστώνη» [rastoni] that means “indolence” is a restaurant that serves meze.
 - The name of the restaurant has been puted into a hammock that works as a visual metonymy for indolence .
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From the linguistic to the graphic dimension: graphic communication theory in context

- As Bringhurst (1997) remarks “[typography] can be used to manipulate behavior and emotions” since it visually represents language.
 - Typography give words a second extra meaning (Jardí, 2007).
 - Landa (2016): Creating or selecting a typeface for its aesthetic value and the impact it will have [...] is as important as creating or selecting an image. Every characteristic of a typeface contributes to communication.
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Example 1



Shop sign of the “Αγιολί” [ajoli] restaurant is a nice example of targeted design that promotes gastronomic discourse both commercially and socially —as discussed in the first chapter of this study— therefore satisfying the communication goals of the firm.

Delicate calligraphic typography that resembles handwriting acts like a signature that ensures authenticity.

The iconic element, incorporated as a graphic extension in the design, noticeably interacts with type interpreting the meaning of the word ‘ajoli’. Letterforms, subtly shaded in an elusive, pale blue on the intentionally tarnished background of the sign, refer to an older era, consequently evoking nostalgia.

Example 2



- ❑ Nostalgia is similarly challenged through the iconic element of the “τσέρκι” [tserki] shop sign (fig. 8), depicting a young girl playing hoop rolling. The “τσέρκι” game was favored among children in the old era. Her mid-20th century style outfit with regard to the outdated outdoor game induces memories and old narratives. Plain, thin, san-serif lowercase letterforms with wide counters are in accordance with the form of the metal hoop in order to promote visual harmony between the typographic and the iconic element of the sign.
- ❑ “Τσέρκι” [tserki] in Greek means metal hoop. Hoop rolling game is also called [tserki].

Concluding remarks

- The study of the shop signs of culinary business in the commercial center of Thessaloniki and Limassol confirms the remark of Lindström, Kull & Palang (2014) that “landscapes can be analysed with the same methodological devices as language, discourse or text”.
 - Gastronomic discourse in the shop signs of the two countries is characterized by *creativity* and *playfulness*, and the use of different cultural devices such as verbo-cultural palimpsests, dialectical elements, intersemiotic translations and visual rhetoric are all mnemonic devices.
 - Very often we observe a combination of modes such as verbo-cultural palimpsests and intersemiotic translation, or interlingual and intersemiotic translation, and rarely language metonymy and intesemiotic translation.
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Concluding remarks

- The abundant variety of typefaces in an ever-growing typographic design market and the ease of their dissemination in the digital era can induce choices, enhance creativity but can also perplex graphic communication.
 - The fact that two cities in different countries share same patterns in commercial communication/advertising shows that globalization could impose common devices though the consumer has to deal with particular cultural discourse, as the gastronomic discourse is, not only for the foreigners such as tourists, and immigrants (intercultural communication), but also for the natives (intracultural communication).
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