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## “Time of Culture”: an Essential Category of Discourse Analysis

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*Discourse studies have been developing well both in Russia and abroad. The area might be considered quite theoretically and practically developed but I would like to claim that a very important aspect has been neglected, namely the “Time of Culture” of a particular discourse. The questions raised in my article pertain to the practical necessity of this new category of discourse analysis and the serious philosophic and linguistic background to the problem when the concepts of Zeitgeist by Hegel, the context of culture by Malinowski and the field by Halliday are used as a framework for the introduction of the new term. This article explores the aftermath of a number of events – the Newtown carnage at the Sandy Hook Elementary school in the USA, the financial crisis of 2008, the arrest of the famous whistleblower Julian Assange and the search for April Jones in an attempt to analyse how the changing semiotic landscape alters the interpretants of signs and shifts values. The essay argues that a new Time of Culture paves the way for a new discourse model and key signs which reflect the new intentionality and mentality of the general public. The wide scope of the article should not only appeal to linguists interested in discourse studies and pragmatics, but also to scholars and students in other scientific disciplines – PR studies, sociology, economics, cultural studies. A discursive profile of the ‘Time of Culture’ is built through examination of American and British electronic media data.*

*Keywords: social semiotics, time of Culture, zeitgeist, discourse analysis, field, chronotope, intentionality, interpretant, Julian Assange, the Era of Austerity, Barack Obama, the NRA, the Connecticut school shooting, April Jones, zombie.*

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### Introduction

My impetus for writing this article came from an observation of semiotic activity: riding on the wave of a major, or even minor, event, there is usually a flurry of media articles. These texts which are specific to a particular situation, prompt a change in the semiotic environment and usher in a period during which the focus

of culture (culture as a semiotised reality in Jury M. Lotman’s understanding (Lotman 1990)) will be targeted at the event itself or its aftermath. For example, at a certain period of time in December of 2010, semiotic activity of the British media discourse concentrated on the arrest of Julian Assange – the notorious founder of the website WikiLeaks – which

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published leaked US diplomatic cables earlier that year.

If we analyse the main players in this scenario and the relationships between them, we will be convinced that a certain discourse model was created, clearly characterised by two main components that can be labeled 'the victim' and 'the one who is after the victim'. The first category was filled with the discursive figure of Julian Assange who sought to represent himself and was accordingly portrayed as a victim of his whistleblowing activity. The other major player in the discourse was the US government which looked for revenge in relation to J. Assange's leaking secret state information that contained sometimes very sensitive remarks made by US diplomats about political leaders in the world. Swedish police who are investigating four allegations of sexual offences allegedly committed by Assange and who issued a European Arrest Warrant for him, can be understood as merely an instrument to have Assange extradited to the USA where he will definitely face serious charges resulting in a prison sentence which is comparable to that received by Bradley Manning arrested on suspicion of supplying the cables to WikiLeaks.

In view of the changes in semiosis which were triggered by these events we witness two important features. First of all, the sign *whistle-blower* has acquired quite a serious profile. It was formed from the phraseological unit *to blow the whistle on* whose meaning was based on a cognitive frame: somebody makes a lot of noise in order to attract everybody's attention to something or somebody. The one who blows the whistle is obviously a positively loaded figure on the axiological axis because he or she puts a stop to some unlawful activity. In its original context the whistle was blown by a policeman or referee, so the agent of the action becomes, a fortiori, as a 'good guy', a good figure acting in the public interest and safety. Compare the dictionary definitions of

'whistle-blower': Longman dictionary – someone who tells people in authority or the public about dishonest or illegal practices at the place where they work; Collins dictionary – a person who informs on someone or puts a stop to something, to blow the whistle on – to expose (wrongdoing or wrongdoers)).

The cognitive scenario which has developed this sign gives us knowledge of a stereotypical situation of whistle-blowing and can be described as follows:

the whistle-blower – the one who blows the whistle on something or somebody (the characteristics – he or she is good, neither money nor self interest but public safety and public interest motivated this action);

those who are informed – the general public, the authorities (the characteristics – they are oblivious of something important happening; without the whistleblower they wouldn't be aware of some serious wrongdoing or conspiracy);

the instrument of information – the technologically mediated environment – the internet, the mass media;

the information – this might be of a very intimate nature but is believed by the whistleblower to be deserved of public interest (in conclusion, the whistleblower judges 'bad' from 'good' and takes the risk if his system of values is in discord with the one existing in the general consensus of the moment);

the implications of activity – the whistleblower has complicated relations with the authorities, he or she may be harassed by them if they are trying to conceal the information or prevent it from entering the public domain (the way Bradley Manning was sentenced and treated in prison; Julian Assange who is taking refuge in the embassy of Ecuador; Aaron Swartz took his own life facing multiple felony charges – if convicted he could have gone to jail for thirty-five years, and owed over a million dollars in fines).

The cognitive scenario which is started by the sign *whistle-blower* makes way for a shift of values because the new Time of Culture sheds different light at the antinomy Public – Private. It is well known that "Private" is one of the central values in the Anglo-Saxon world. Privacy lies at the core of all existentially important values from private individual freedom to a private way of life. I believe that there are grounds to conclude that axiological reference points are changing: information of a private nature, which has long been considered inviolable, now can be accepted and acknowledged to be made public in the public interest.

After being hotly discussed for a few days and still sending shockwaves through the semiosis, the topic of Julian Assange was dropped in December in the UK mass media only to be replaced by a new one. That new period was marked with a change in headline news both on the front pages and in broadcast news programmes; a fresh discourse began which could be dubbed "Snow disruption in the run-up to Christmas" and a number of words which were reiterated in the media – *the closure of Heathrow airport, cancelled flights, a backlog of passengers, slippery roads, etc* – emphasized the new axiological priorities – climate change, travel safety and emergency situation management in the UK.

The periods associated with a sharp change in the features of semiosis, which can be noticed by an altered intentionality of a social community, the appearance of new terms and new models of discourse, I would suggest be called 'Times of Culture'.

### **Theoretical background to the problem and the outline of research**

The theoretical foundation to this research is solid. In the first place I should mention the name of Hegel and his term of *Zeitgeist* (Hegel

1977) because the idea of human cognition being dependent on historically changing content lies at the core of the notion of Time of Culture. Translated as the spirit of the age, *Zeitgeist* denotes different cultures in history in terms of their spirits. Hegel proves that human cognition is conditioned by time and varies if analysed at a particular period in the development of a society. In Hegel's opinion, all aspects of human cognition of a period of time N – such as philosophy and political history, the form of state structure, art and religion – develop in accordance with a certain plan. In other words they are rooted in the same spirit of the age, which defines all the diversity of social life and principles of human interaction in that particular period. The idea of temporally conditioned distinct patterns of cognition is also echoed in the works of M. Foucault in the term – *episteme* (Foucault 2001; 2002).

However, while reflecting one important aspect of the content I intend to be contained within the term "Time of Culture" – a special cast of mind, a mode of thinking projected onto a certain object which embodies a particular cultural period and defines it – *Zeitgeist* in its original meaning refers to epochs in social history and doesn't suit our research purposes. We aim to set more narrow boundaries and limit the term a "Time of Culture" to the semiotic activity provoked by a certain event.

From a less philosophical and more practical perspective, B. Malinowski's "context of culture" is yet another important facet to the notion of Time of Culture. The relevance of Malinowski's "context of culture" to a "Time of Culture" is explicit: introducing methods of describing the context of culture Malinowski underscores the necessity of covering a wide social context during any analysis of a cultural sign. This chief principle method by M. Malinowski may be recapitulated as giving a description of any cultural artifact or linguistic term only after a direct analysis of the

ethnographic fact, an inquiry into natives' ideas, a study of behaviour, an analysis of ethnographic customs and concrete cases of traditional rules (Malinowski 2003: 136).

The importance of describing the semiotic context in which the text is embedded is also reflected in the term introduced by M. A. K. Halliday – "field" (Halliday 2002; 2003). Along with two other semiotic parameters of the context in which the discourse is located "tenor" and "mode", "field" provides a starting point for characterising the situation and moving from the situation to the text: "field is the social action: that which is 'going on', and has recognizable meaning in the social system; typically field is a complex of acts in some ordered configuration, and in which the text is playing some part" (Halliday 2006b: 54).

The idea of a discourse being integrated within various local contexts as well as within the broader frameworks of societal structure and culture is reiterated by a specialist on discourse T. van Dijk (Dijk 2011). Placing emphasis on the context, the linguist gives an illustrative example of a political debate discourse. Political debates demonstrate very clearly that discourse is not merely uttering words or grammatical sentences, but takes place in the context of a wider parliamentary debate between speakers of two political parties, at a specific date and historical moment. Dijk differentiates between different types of context and their characteristics: "where as the structures of informal conversations between friends may be controlled by only a few contextual parameters (such as the setting, their knowledge and their social roles as friends), news reports, parliamentary debates or courtroom interaction may need to be analysed in relation to elaborate social, political and cultural conditions and consequences" (Dijk 2011: 4).

We have already been convinced that the time and place of a discourse are of a paramount

importance to its analysis. Time is usually perceived through the help of its two key attributes – linearity and circularity. While relying on the recent research of how our perceptions of time are reflected (Coventry 2009; Galton 2011; Tenbrink 2011) or not reflected (Casasanto 2012) in discourse, I set another perspective – how time is incorporated in our cognition and understanding of reality. Thus we are forced to remember the term *chronotope* or "the spacio-temporal matrix of a narration" (M. Bakhtin 1984; 2003). As a research tool it is still quite popular with researchers (Perrino 2011). However the content of the term "chronotope" is limited to the boundaries of text, while to specify the wider semiotic environment of text more precisely we will need the algorithm of analysis of a Time of Culture of a particular discourse.

Of course our work is not the first engagement with discourse in view of its integral link to culture. Recently a number of prominent researchers emphasised that discourse studies should take a somewhat new direction and establish the link between discourse and cognition and society (Dijk 2009), or seek a culturally conscious and reflexive approach beyond the discipline's taken-for-granted multidisciplinary (Shi-xu 2007; Shi-xu 2012). In general, recent years have seen an enormous demand amongst policy makers for new insights from different areas of science with a particular emphasis on the ways people's behaviour might be influenced (Dolan, 2012; Seymour 2012). The key areas of interest require that researchers should not only offer theoretical insight but prove that their work can be translated into practice. It is nowadays a common truth that research must provide and articulate a multidisciplinary framework. At the same time, present times offer a number of serious challenges for cultural and economic sciences as they have faced a crisis of ideas and have been trying to navigate a way

out (Ang 2011; Chang 2011; Clarke 2011; Gunkel 2011; Hayward 2010).

Making some preliminary conclusions, I can state that Time of Culture is a semiotic structure which influences the form of a similar discourse. Time of Culture could be compared to a Russian doll when there are many small Times of Culture enclosed inside a bigger one. While there is always a major event which sets the angle for interpreting reality in a specific way, like the war in Iraq, or the financial crisis, there are more minor events which influence the structure of semiosis in a more subtle way. Of course we should take into consideration that in today's technologically mediated society there are events which are started on and significantly enhanced by social networks (e.g. Reddit, Facebook, etc) or events which simply occur in the news. From this point of view W. Teubert's idea "by taking an active stance in constructing the reality they share, people can take part in moulding the world" (Teubert 2008) makes sense.

### **Intentionality and values.**

#### **Practical illustration to theory**

One of the most recent examples of how Time of Culture directs the production of discourse is the shocking event in Connecticut, USA – the Newtown carnage at the Sandy Hook Elementary school when 20 children, and 6 adults trying to protect them, were killed. For a certain period of time it became the centre of semiotic activity prompting the appearance of a certain discourse which could be called "the Connecticut school shootings".

The analysis of the discourse shows how the intentionality and values of a society can change drastically under the influence of Time of Culture. It is not an overstatement to say that this particular Time of Culture "the Connecticut school shootings", sent repercussions through the American system of values as it flared a hot debate

over the change of gun laws. American society has been divided into two opposing groups. The supporters of the reform have issued calls for tighter controls with US president B. Obama proposing sweeping changes to gun ownership, while the pro-gun political organisation kept quiet for a while and then offered their own version of interpretation of the distressing events. As a result the discourse "the Connecticut school shootings" which illustrates the main tendencies of the new Time of Culture eclipsed two sub-cultures. The research shows that the discourses of the two opposing groups are based around two different antagonists.

The main proposition of those against the sale of assault rifles which have repeatedly been used in cases of violent crimes against innocent people in US (the Connecticut school shootings, the shooting at a cinema in Aurora, Colorado etc.) is gun violence to be curbed by the introduction of additional restrictions on the sale or possession of guns. Those calling for serious measures to be taken blame the pro-gun lobbyists, saying that there is blood on their hands (See Fig. 1.). Here we come across the second main player of the Time of Culture "the Connecticut school shootings" – the NRA.

The NRA stands for the National Rifle Association (the NRA) which has more than 4m members in America. They advocate free gun ownership and in the tragic events of December 2012 choose a number of virtual and evasive subjects of responsibility:

1) they accuse Hollywood and video games for creating a culture of violence in the United States;

*And here's another dirty little truth that the media try their best to conceal: There exists in this country a callous, corrupt and corrupting shadow industry that sells, and sows, violence against its own people. Through vicious, violent video games . and the blood-soaked slasher films that are*



Fig. 1

*aired like propaganda loops on "Splatterdays" and every day, and a thousand music videos that portray life as a joke and murder as a way of life (Wayne LaPierre, executive vice-president of the National Rifle Association) (LaPierre 2012).*

2) they blame the media for demonising lawful gun owners;

*Rather than face their own moral failings, the media demonize lawful gun owners, amplify their cries for more laws and fill the national debate with misinformation and dishonest thinking that only delay meaningful action and all but guarantee that the next atrocity is only a news cycle away (LaPierre 2012).*

3) on a more concrete note they point the finger at the government and its failures: to create a national database of the mentally ill, and prosecute those who illegally possess guns, and eventually to protect the children.

*The truth is that our society is populated by an unknown number of genuine monsters — people so deranged, so evil, so possessed by voices and driven by demons that no sane person can possibly ever comprehend them. They walk among us every day. .. A dozen more killers? A hundred? More? How can we possibly even guess how many, given our nation's refusal to create an active national database of the mentally ill? (LaPierre 2012).*

The NRA's main opponent may be claimed to be Gabrielle Giffords:

*I was shot in the head while meeting with constituents two years ago today. Since then, my extensive rehabilitation has brought excitement and gratitude to our family. But time and time again, our joy has been diminished by new, all too familiar images of death on television: the breaking news alert, stunned witnesses blinking away tears over unspeakable carnage, another community in mourning. America has seen an astounding 11 mass shootings since a madman used a semiautomatic pistol with an extended ammunition clip to shoot me and kill six others. Gun violence kills more than 30,000 Americans annually.*

*We saw from the NRA leadership's defiant and unsympathetic response to the Newtown, Conn., massacre that winning even the most common-sense reforms will require a fight. Achieving reforms to reduce gun violence and prevent mass shootings will mean matching gun lobbyists in their reach and resources (Giffords 2013).*

I am quoting the two people who present two hostile discourses to each other on purpose, as they point out that the watershed line between the two discourses is drawn along completely different patterns but nevertheless the Time of



Fig. 2

Culture has imposed a number of key signs which unmistakably reveal its main characteristics. In other words the analysis of the two discourses will inevitably indicate that they belong to the same Time of Culture.

The key signs are *violence, kids, guns, to protect, to disarm, to prevent more tragedies*. The vector of interpretation is oppositely directed, with the NRA pointing the finger at those who are against free gun ownership, and the anti-gun subculture pressing the responsibility on the pro-gun lobby. However this is still one and the same discourse model which is easily identified with the Time of Culture "the Connecticut school shootings", in which we find three main categories: *the culprit of the tragedy* – Adam Lanza that may be presumed to be a kind of instrument of violence, not the active agent: *guns* – which are believed by both parties to be the most powerful agent in the discourse; and *the victims* – who are unmistakably accepted as innocent vulnerable and unprotected people. The discursive efforts of the two parties involved are concentrated on finding the one who is to blame and keeping similar tragedies from occurring again.

The two parties produce discourse differently yet within the same boundaries set by the Time of Culture. The symbolic figure of the discourse

model constructed by the 'anti-gun' group is a parent losing his or her child in the tragic shootings and the discourse may be claimed to be produced from the name of a parent (Fig. 3). The parental figure is marginalised in the discourse model of the pro-gun group, and their symbolic leader could be claimed to be the Gun itself (Fig. 4) – a powerful protection from all foes.

The two groups create their semiotic environment according to the discourse models they produce. When in rural upstate South Carolina the President, along with his Vice President, spoke about plans to implement gun regulations via an Executive Order and through congressional action, he invited four young children, who had written to the president about on subject of guns, and seated them next to the podium. A parent stood behind each child. It is clear that the main priority of the anti-gun activists is the safety of children.

Paradoxically enough, the safety of children is stated as one of the main concerns of the pro-gun group. Having a gun as a means of protection from danger is claimed as an individual right of every American citizen:

*"Law-abiding gun owners will not accept blame for the acts of violent or deranged criminals," said Mr LaPierre. "Nor do we*



Fig. 3

*believe that government should dictate what we can lawfully own and use to protect our families.*" (LaPierre 2012).

And those who support gun ownership demonstrated their views in a symbolioc way when they went onto the streets en masse on the "Gun Appreciation Day" in January 19th, 2013 with assault rifles on their shoulders.

Being the key verb in the discourse matrix *to protect* is attached to two different interpetants – in the view of the pro-gun lobby it is to protect with guns, while in the anti-gun discourse it is to protect from guns. That is why the suggested measures differ: strict restrictions on gun ownership are juxtaposed in the discourse matrix to the free right to have a gun to protect yourself and protect the most vulnerable group – the children at school – with heavily armed officers.

It is worth mentioning that models of discourse which are prevalent during a particular Time of Culture could be investigated from two directions –coming from above and coming from below (discourse formed at the grassroots) (Fairclough 2006). And the analysis of forums and "have your say" sections printed in the Internet articles are in full accordance with the tendencies which I have commented on.

It is easy to be convinced that the new Time of Culture sets quite vivid semiotic priorities creating a new model of discourse. Apart from that, the Time of Culture "the Connecticut school

shootings", puts interesting accents on values. In addition to the fact that for some people an obvious value of their children's and their own safety, in view of an attack from a domestic and unexpected enemy, has been highlighted as the utmost existential priority, and the long standing American value 'freedom' has acquired some new shades. The most distinct collocations which come to mind when one mentions the value of individual freedom, are the freedom of assembly, the freedom from discrimination, the freedom of speech, of movement, of education, of thought, and of association. The freedom which hasn't been so well voiced is the freedom of gun ownership. But the semiotic processes after the Connecticut school shootings pushed this facet of freedom into the limelight.

When pro-gun activists compare banning assault rifles to creating control similar to the regimes of Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot, they directly refer the ban on guns to the infringement of their freedom guaranteed by the second amendment to the Bill of Rights: "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed" (Fig. 2; Fig. 3). It is a very interesting realisation of freedom which is still to be researched within American discourse.

A Time of Culture is a structure of semiosis that distinguishes this period from another by such markers as intentionality and





Fig. 4

mentality. Intentionality is a notion belonging to phenomenology so it might seem strange that I connect it, along with mentality, to a semiotic structure. But these notions, which denote directedness of mind, and a way of thinking typical for a certain period of time, allow the nature of interpretants to be revealed that form in this or that Time of Culture. In this particular example of the Time of Culture “the Connecticut school shootings”, the tragic events coincided with Christmas festivities, and interestingly enough the Christmas tree revealed a new interpretant, which can undoubtedly be connected to it through the intentionality introduced by the changed Time of Culture – the feelings of horror, disbelief, and personal tragedy.

In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre at a school in Newtown, Connecticut, a Christmas tree memorial was created, a makeshift shrine where there was one tree for every murdered child. A line of 26 Christmas trees for the 26 victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre were put up as a poignant reminder of those who missed the holiday season. There were candles, bouquets of flowers, Christmas daisies and poinsettias, scores of teddy bears with sodden fur. All the familiar ornaments of the season of joy, that in the western world are associated with happy times with your

family, lost their traditional interpretants, and became terrible reminders of tragedy and loss.

Another example of this kind, which can also be linked to a Time of Culture, which evolved after very tragic events, is the interpretant attached to the colour pink after the Time of Culture that could be dubbed “The search for April Jones”. April Jones was a little girl who was snatched near her family home in a quiet neighborhood in Wales in the UK, and never found again. April was last seen on 1 October last year, and some days later Mark Bridger, 47, was arrested and charged with murder, child abduction and attempting to pervert the course of justice. April’s disappearance sparked one of the largest police searches in UK history. The community of the local town as well the general public were praised for their help as hundreds volunteered to participate in the search for the missing girl.

Pink was April Jones’ favourite colour and when the girl was abducted, April’s mother asked everyone who cared and wished well for her to wear a pink ribbon. The appeal was heard as the local area Machynlleth was immediately draped in pink. The colour was used in ribbons and other publicity material since April Jones’ disappearance: people in the town released pink balloons to mark a week from when April went missing; the town clock in Machynlleth and in



Fig. 5

the seaside tower in Blackpool were lit up in pink to mark the third week.

Machynlleth mayor Gareth Jones said: "The town council owns the clock and we were asked if it could be lit up in pink to mark the third week of April's disappearance and we readily agreed. People are trying to get back to some sort of normality, but we still have hope and we must hold onto that." Councillor Michael Williams said the gesture showed the country the "ongoing love there will always be for April and her family".

Some other examples of pink used in this meaning included pink baubles which were asked to be put on Christmas trees as a tribute to April. A family spokesman said: "We would like to request that everyone puts a pink Christmas bauble on their tree for April".

Apart from the concrete connection to April, pink can be believed to have acquired the meaning of hope and support.

Finishing this practical illustration of the aforementioned points, I would like to mention that there has been research in sociology on the issue of how social categories are shaped by social experience (Waxman 2012). Analysis of the discourse in a particular Time of Culture shows how social experience functions in construction of interpretants through the change

of intentionality and mentality. The shift of values may be understood as the response of a person to challenges which are not limited to existential ones such as death, solitude, dependence of the nature and the society (Baeva 2012), but also situational. All in all Times of Culture serve as prisms through which we interpret texts of certain period in time.

#### **Provisional algorithm for a linguistic analysis of a Time of Culture**

Finalising the practical findings of my research, I state that Time of Culture is characterised by three main parameters: a specific model of discourse, key signs and intentionality. A Time of Culture is event-centered, which means that it encircles an event which will give its name to a period of culture and to the discourse which represents it. It is worth mentioning that a Time of Culture is not limited to a discourse but it is clear that discourse manifests a Time of Culture in the most vivid way. A Time of Culture may vary in its length – lasting from one or two days (e.g. "Arrest of Julian Assange") up to a number of years (e.g. "After 9 / 11"). An example of a large scale Time of Culture "After 9 / 11" indicates very clearly: a

new Time of Culture has been characterised by certain discourse dominants, or key terms – in this case *fighting for freedom* and *war on terror*. A universal feature of the key terms is that they effectively summarise the ideological spirit of this particular Time of Culture. And when I say "ideological" I mean the hierarchy of both the ideas that evolve naturally, on the spur of the moment (e.g. "terrorist violence has proved to be a part of our life", "we have to confront terrorism") and the ideas that are exerted from the discourse of power ("we have to show the world the true value of freedom", "we have to declare war to terror on its territory").

As I have already emphasised, a Time of Culture always introduces a change of values and a shift of priorities and interests. This is clear in both long-lasting and short-lived Times of Culture. For example, the arrest of Julian Assange led to a rethink of the opposition of values "Public versus Private"; while in the post 9/11 semiotic period, the value of Freedom underwent a serious transformation. Its meaning in the political discourse of the president of the country G. W. Bush was shifted from "freedom" as corresponding to an individual freedom to "freedom" as correlating to a collective freedom which needs to be defended and requires sacrifice (Smirnova 2008).

At this stage of my research, I will offer a provisional algorithm for the linguistic analysis of a Time of Culture. I believe that the following number of steps will be sufficient in the investigation of discourse and its correspondence to a particular Time of Culture:

1. To identify the central event which gave the momentum to the semiotic activity and describe the social context;
2. To identify the macroproposition of the discourse and determine the illocutionary force;
3. To identify intentionality and to point out the antagonist;

4. To identify semantic, pragmatic and syntactic dominants of the discourse;

5. To identify the main strategies and tactics.

As a short illustration of the practical application of Time of Culture, I will use an example from the "Era of Austerity", which started in the summer of 2007 when the global financial crisis broke out. This period of time that I will limit to the discourse in the UK is unmistakably characterised by certain expressions: *the recession, a slowdown, the prospect of a double-dip recession, the economic downturn, the shrinking of the economy, stagflation, high levels of unemployment etc.* These signs describe the general context of the "Era" and explain the mood of anxiety and frustration that still exist.

The macroproposition of the discourse is obvious: "we need to avoid defaulting on our debt", "we have budget deficit problems", "we have a massive debt that has to be repaid". One of the key elements in the discourse matrix is the term "spending cuts": "The government is forced into tax increases and spending cuts to avoid economic turmoil and the collapse of the financial system".

The intentionality is something which we have to look very thoroughly at. If we compare the two discourses produced by the two opposing parties in Parliament – the Conservative party and the Labour party, we will be convinced that intentionality is where political battles take place in reality. The intentionality that the discourse experts of the party in government are trying to maintain is "costing too much to the economy", "sweeping changes are needed", "difficult decisions to take", "no easy solutions", "everybody should share the pain", "the measures to be taken are tough but fair". By not disputing the macroproposition "we have budget deficit problems" the opposition party – the Labour – try to polarise the intentionality by objecting to

the fairness of the measures. The main emphasis is placed on such attributes of the measures as *detrimental, futile, irresponsible, unfair*.

It is remarkable that the main strategy used to confront the accusations of the opposition is shifting the blame back onto the other party by claiming that the decisions are especially difficult because of the legacy left by Labour. This is a clever thing to do because it is entirely focused on intentionality, and does not touch the main proposition "spending cuts is the only way out of the predicament" or dwell on the details, and instead revokes the feeling of disillusionment and disappointment that many Britains felt towards Labour towards the end of their time in office.

This short analysis is only the tip of the iceberg concerning the "Era of Austerity" in the UK and the discourses which represent it. However it is apparent that the playing field is not the economic measures themselves but effective manipulation of the mood of the masses. The Time of Culture the "Era of Austerity" has brought a dramatic change to everything, including discourse with the revival of debates on such issues as social inequality and moral devaluation seen in the uprising of the Anonymous movement and the Occupy Wall Street movement.

*"The recent financial crisis has shattered lives and spread misery far and wide. The magnitude of damage has produced the desire for the economic equivalent of a truth and reconciliation commission. Yet the efforts to get the story right have pointed as much to a crisis of narrative, of theory, even of facticity among the standard-bearers of monied matters, public punditry and policy self-justification"* (Martin 2010).

Public intentionality can be evaluated by the social riots which swept across England in August 2011. Specialists admit that sudden explosions of street violence and disorder are

often explained simplistically as 'mindless criminality' (Monaghan 2012). While at first sight the 2011 riots resemble former incidents of rioting in twentieth-century Britain, the researchers suggest they should be located and interpreted in a larger historical, social, economic and political context. When making conclusions and predicting implications, the research workers came to the conclusion that the material condition of Society, which has been transformed in accordance with the underlying acquisitive logic of capitalism, played a crucial role in alienating a large swathe of young people, and undermining their capacity to lead useful and meaningful lives, and that the potential for hopelessness, resentment, frustration and outbursts of anger has significantly increased as a consequence (Grover 2011; Monaghan 2012; Scambler 2011; Varul 2011).

This findings strike the right cord with our research as there is strong evidence for these economic and cultural processes received from the analysis of the Time of Culture the "Era of Austerity". To be more exact, there is a very unusual and strong interest in zombie culture. In February 2013 the Science Museum in London held a number of events which explored the science of consciousness through the example of a zombie outbreak. Among the experiences on offer at the 'ZombieLab' was an Academy which taught people how to act like a zombie. There were also tasks that people could undertake to prove they were not a zombie.

Besides the popularity of zombie killing games, TV and cinema, some other activities have become appealing to young people, like zombie parades when people fill the streets dressed up as zombies, and zombie running events where people are chased through the trees by costumed "flesh eaters".

As cognitive linguistics has already proved, people recruit conceptual materials for metaphorical purposes (whether consciously or

not) not only from bodily experience but also from the immediate cultural context (Kövecses 2010). In research conducted by Sudworth, with the help of scholars, there is evidence that zombies speak to austerity Britain in a way other monsters don't. And the reason for that was well explained by Nick Pearce, director of the left-leaning think tank the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR):

"Even before the global economic crisis we saw young, unskilled young men finding it much harder to get a foothold in the labour market," he told me, "and since the crisis we've seen a rocketing of youth unemployment." "There is something in the idea that if you can't see a future, if you don't have a sense of progress for yourself personally, then you are stuck in the present tense, and this would lend itself to the notion of a kind of recurrent nightmare of repeatedly being a living-dead." (quote by Sudworth 2011).

What are the prototypical features of a zombie? Besides some magic spell or a supernatural force used on them we can say that a zombie's behavior is unmistakably recognised by lifelessness with only the semblance of life, automation. And this gives us the clue to the metaphor of monotony and emptiness of the life of many, especially unskilled and uneducated, young men in the Era of Austerity.

The Era of Austerity has found a "talking" symbol for itself in the *zombie* sign. It can even be renamed as the zombie apocalypse of capitalism as this period post-2008 was characterised in the review for the new drama *Money – The Gameshow* at the Bush Theatre, London which engagingly explores the build-up to, and the aftermath of, the 2008 financial catastrophe. It seems the sign "zombie"; does more than simply describe and embody in a bloody make-up image the inner feeling of frustration and despair, it epitomizes the state of the things in the Era, first and foremost being financial problems. Thus,

financial experts talk about zombie companies, zombie firms, zombie businesses, zombie employees, zombie workers and zombie banks. The characteristic "living dead" is an integral nature of the interpretants of these signs – troubled companies or businesses which stay afloat only because there is unconditional help from the state, if denied aid they will immediately go bankrupt, while the procedure of their liquidation is called zombie slaying. The term 'zombie' applies to households as well – zombie households, which means those overburdened with debt. It is essential for our research that another key sign of the Era is closely connected with zombie sign – it is inequality or unfairness or injustice: Angus Armstrong, director of macroeconomic research at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, argues the problem of 'zombie' households lumbered with too much debt to go out and spend, is linked to growing inequality over the last 30 years (Armstrong 2013). And it is not a coincidence that the members of the Occupy Wall Street Movement who protest against such things often dress up as zombies.

### Resume

"Time of Culture" is a category of discourse analysis which enables a researcher to move not only from the semiotic environment to a discourse but also from a text to the circumstances of its production. In the first instance "Time of Culture" sets rules for the successful generation of effective discourse – to create a key term, to productively include it into a matrix of discourse, to define the intentionality of the social community and connect it with a key term via powerful interpretants. In the second instance, when the movement is from text to the "Time of Culture" of its creation, the full description of the "Time of Culture" gives ground to the explanation of the interpretants.

The practical reasons for the introduction of the new term "Time of Culture" are related to

the techniques of effective discourse production. It is important for discourse to penetrate the public domain and be accepted as personal, not imposed from above, by generating it with the intentionality of the social community, or as communications experts call it – keeping in touch with the public and following public opinion. The intentionality might become a stone over which the producer of discourse might stumble. If a discourse expert manages to direct intentionality in the right way, and sustain

it, the discourse is destined to be a success, and vice-versa.

Discourse that is produced effectively is accepted as well as the cluster of values it contains. On the other hand, ineffectively produced discourse risks being rejected, which will be disastrous for the producers if they are a party in power. I claim that a discourse expert has to have a good awareness of the Time of Culture and the principles of concordance with it when creating a certain discourse.

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## **Время Культуры как необходимая категория анализа дискурса**

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*В России и за рубежом исследователи давно и успешно занимаются изучением дискурса. Эту область лингвистики можно считать весьма развитой как в теоретическом, так и в практическом отношении. Однако хотелось бы привлечь внимание к одному, зачастую игнорируемому, аспекту исследования конкретного дискурса, а именно к Времени Культуры дискурса N. Основной целью написания статьи можно признать обоснование практической необходимости этой новой категории анализа дискурса, а также выявление серьезной философской и лингвистической теоретической базы к формулировке данной проблемы, которая опирается на концепцию *Zeitgeist* Ф. Гегеля, «контекст культуры» Б. Малиновского и «поле» М. Халлидея. В статье предпринимается попытка иллюстративно показать, как изменение семиотического ландшафта влияет на интерпретанты знаков и ценности. В связи с поставленной задачей анализируются такие разноплановые события, как трагедия в школе Энди Хук Элементарии города Ньютаун в США; финансовый кризис, который повлек за собой глобальную эру строгой экономии; арест известного борца за правду Джулиана Ассанджа; поиски пропавшей в Великобритании пятилетней девочки Эйприл Джоунс осенью 2012 года. В статье доказывается, что новое Время Культуры, связанное с отдельным событием, открывает путь новой модели дискурса и новым ключевым знакам, которые отражают новую интенциональность и ментальность социума. Анализ широкого материала и охват большого количества разных источников, в том числе социологических и экономических, позволяют утверждать, что статья может быть интересна не только лингвистам, но и PR-специалистам, социологам, экономистам, культурологам. Исследование основывается на анализе американского и британского медиаресурса.*

*Ключевые слов: социальная семиотика, Время Культуры, дух времени, анализ дискурса, поле, хронотоп, интенциональность, интерпретанта, Дж. Ассандж, эра строгой экономии, Б. Обама, Национальная стрелковая ассоциация, трагедия в школе штата Коннектикут, Эйприл Джоунс, зомби.*

*Научная специальность: 09.00.00 – философские науки.*

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