Uncovering the two conceptions of the linguistic sign in Saussure's lectures: An epistemological inquiry with comments on translational equivalence

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Abstract. The principal object of this study is constituted by two epistemologically distinct models of Ferdinand de Saussure's depictions of the linguistic sign. The first model pertains to a bilateral conception of the sign as an inseparable unity of two sides that evoke each other in the mind of individuals during their speaking and understanding activities. The second model, termed here as 'unilateral conception', has been deduced from Saussure's understanding of *parole*, where an idea establishes itself in a sound and a sound becomes the sign for an idea. A survey of related terminological distinctions derived from logic and philosophy as well as linguistic semiotics seems indispensable for presenting the positions of these bilateral and unilateral sign concepts in a typological matrix which could embrace all sign models originating in the sciences of language. The additional purpose of this study is to put forward the idea of epistemological equivalence to be achieved in translational practice. This supplementary focus of interest in particular concentrates around the question of how the translations of sign-related terms, selected from *Cours de linguistique générale*, reflect the epistemological awareness of their English-speaking translators.

Keywords: epistemology; equivalence; Saussure; sign; translation

1. Clarifying the terminological apparatus

To explain the term 'epistemology', this paper proceeds from the assumption that epistemology is the study of knowing how things and states of affair exist as material objects in reality (ontology) and how they can be approached as formal objects of cognition (gnoseology), thus constituting a subject matter for scholarly study (cf. Wąsik 2016: 4, 35–36, 56–57). In a philosophical sense, the knowledge about reality itself pertains to all inherent and relational aspects of an investigative

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object which exists independently of subjective perception, and the knowledge of this reality constitutes a cognitive model of the subject matter of study, as a set of relevant features of the investigative object comprising the material domain of scientists' research.

Before analysing in detail the epistemological positions of the two conceptions of the linguistic sign[2] detected in Ferdinand de Saussure's lectures, it is worthwhile making reference to two divergent understandings of language specified in terms of semiotics as a system of signs. Semiotically inclined linguists (cf. Wąsik 2016: 83) who make their object of study autonomous as an abstract and social means of communication, usually adhere to the definition of language as, firstly, a set of mental signs composed of two parts, a signifier and a signified (*signifié* and *signifiant*), evoking each other mutually through the bonds of associations in the minds of communicating individuals,[3] as might be deduced from the lectures of Ferdinand de Saussure (first edition 1916; second edition 1922; critical edition 1972 = CLG), available in two translations into English (1959[1916] = CGL–Baskin; and 1983[1972] = CGL–Harris); or, secondly, as a set of concrete verbal means of signification that are used by one individual for the purpose of communicating with another individual about observed or concluded extra-linguistic reality, in accordance with the functionalist conception of Karl Ludwig Bühler (1965[1934], available in English translation as Bühler 1990[1934]), elaborated lately by Leon Zawadowski (1966, 1975).

1.1. The ancient heritage of language and sign conceptions

Taken historically, contemporary disputes over the semiotic nature of language and thinking in relation to reality have their sources in three main philosophical traditions of investigative attitudes in the development of scientific thought: Platonism, Aristotelianism (modified through Cartesianism), and Stoicism. This is in agreement with the classification of selected theoretical trends in the development of science by Alexandre Koyré (1973[1961]) – cf. the distribution of French terms across the pages of his work: '*aristotélisme*' 24–49, 78–79, 209, 212, 216, 227, 240, 244, 411; '*platonisme*' 15, 24–49, 72, 79, 106, 191–192, 195, 212, 411; '*cartésianisme*' 167, 322; '*stoïciennes*' 26, '*stoïciens*' 27, '*stoïcien*' 28, '*stoïcisme*' 30.

Starting from Plato (427–347 B.C.), Greek philosophers postulated a dualistic assumption that speaking and thinking are subjective capabilities which form an

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[2]   It is worth adding that a historiographical overview bearing in mind the tradition of the sign theory has been offered *inter alia* by John E. Joseph (2006[2004]).
[3]   Saussurean dichotomies in presenting the nature of language and the linguistic sign have been also discussed in the light of structuralist semiotics by Joseph (2022).

inseparable unity called '*lógos*'.[4] On the basis of the belief that speech is a faithful replica of thought, the followers of idealist Platonism and idealism proposed to study the verbal performance of individuals, hoping to gain factual knowledge as to how the mind of humans works. It was probably the Platonic notion of *logos,* which might have inspired Ferdinand de Saussure (1922[1916]: 10) to introduce the category of *parole* underlying both speaking and thinking simultaneously (cf. Wąsik 2003: 85, 2016: 167).

In turn, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), a pupil of Plato, extended the original dyad, by adding the third constituent to speech and thought, namely the reality around the man who acquires, invents, or uses expressions for the things he knows and wants to communicate about. These expressions, however, depending on individual circumstances, may be true or false, effective, or unsuccessful. In comparison to Plato, Aristotle distinguished the thought about the reality from the expression of this thought in words (called '*lexis*'), as two heterogeneous, though isomorphic, phenomena (cf. Wąsik 2003: 88).

In the late Middle Ages, the Aristotelian triadic sequel gave rise to a triangle in the nominalist reinterpretation of the English scholastic philosopher William of Ockham (also spelled Occam; Fr. Guilelmus de Ockham, 1285–1347). In his *Summa logicae*, written in *ca* 1323 or between 1323 and 1326, Ockham replaced the translated terms of Aristotle: *res–intellectus–vox* ['thing–intellect–voice'] through *res–conceptus–terminus* ['thing–concept–term'] (cf. Ockham 1340, 1343[1323], 1951[1323], 1974[1323]). As Rostislav Pazukhin (1983: 61–63) has noticed, for Aristotle, concepts mediated between things and words, and in Ockham's depiction concepts were tied to things by a natural bond, and the relation between words and things was based on a convention. Later on, against the background of prevailing conceptualism, the idea of Aristotle was deviated by his rationalist continuators from the Port-Royal School in the so-called *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* ('A general and reasoned grammar') of 1660.[5]

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4   In the deliberations of the French mystical philosopher Simone Weil (1909–1943), the mere fact that '*lógos*' ('λόγος') has been translated into '*verbum*', indicates that something has been lost, because in her view '*lógos*' means first of all a relation, while for Plato and Pythagoras (of Samos, c. 570–c. 495 B.C.) it had been a synonym of the number or harmony. And since 'harmony' means also 'mediation', one might be entitled, following Weil's reasoning, to interpret the sense of the clause "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1) as 'In the beginning was the (incarnated) mediation' (cf. Weil 1943: 30, 33–37, 90, 94, mainly 223). For details related to the discussed authors and translation, see Wąsik 2016: 120–121.

5   *Grammaire générale et raisonnée, contenant Les fondements de l'art de parler, expliqués d'une manière claire et naturelle*; *Les raisons de ce qui est commun à toutes les langues, & des principales différences qui s'y rencontrent; Et plusieurs remarques nouvelles sur la Langue Française.* À Paris, Chez Pierre Le Petit, Imprimeur & Libraire ordinaire du Roy, rué S. Jacques, à la Croix d'Or.

A slightly modified version of the Aristotelian triad originated from René Descartes's (Renatus Cartesius') conception of man as a thinking substance extended through corporeal substances in his organism and environment. Exposing the philosophy of idealist rationalism against sensualist empiricism, this conception was announced in the famous slogan, expressed in his *Discours de la Méthode* (published anonymously in Leyden in 1637): "*Je pense, donc je suis*" ('I am thinking, therefore I exist'; Descartes 2011[1637]: 22), and repeatedly confirmed in two subsequent works published in Latin: *Meditationes de prima philosophia* of 1641 and *Principia philosophiæ* of 1644.

The readers of Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* are familiar with the illustrious dictum "*Ego sum res cogitans, id est dubitans, affirmans, negans, pauca intelligens, multa ignorans, volens, nolens, imaginans etiam et sentiens;*" (quoted after (Descartes 1670[1641]: 15, Meditatio III)) = "I am a thinking (conscious) thing, that is, a being who doubts, affirms, denies, knows a few objects, and is ignorant of many,—who loves, hates, wills, refuses, who imagines likewise, and perceives;" (Descartes 1901[1641]: 31).

However, less known is the statement, "*ego cogito, ergo sum, sive existo*" ('I think, therefore I am, or exist') because it has been documented in the Latin translation[6] of *Discours de la Méthode* as a chapter "*Dissertatio de Methodo*" of the collected volume *Specimina Philosophiæ* (cf. Descartes 1644b: 20–21). In relation to the principle of *cogito*, what is mostly quoted is the first part of the judgement: "*Ego cogito, ergo sum, est omnium | prima & certissima, quæ cuilibet ordine philosophanti occurrat*" ('I am thinking, therefore I exist, is the whole thing, the first and

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M. D C. LX. Au Privilège de sa Majesté. Cf. also subsequent editions: *Troisième Édition revue & augmentée de nouveau*. Paris: Pierre Le Petit, 1676; *Édition critique présentée par Herbert E. Brekle.* Nouvelle impression en facsimilé, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog (*Grammatica Universalis* 1), 1966. Although published anonymously, the authorship of this grammar of Port-Royal has been ascribed to Claude Lancelot (1615–1695) and Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694). As Jacques Bourquin (1991: 346) points out, "The grammar belongs to the rationalist current of thought […] deeply influenced by René Descartes (1596–1650)." For detailed information, see Crystal 1987: 84.

6   For the aim of historiographical evidence, it is worth inquiring about the name of a translator of *Discours de la Méthode*. This kind of investigative question has been posed by Corinna Lucia Vermeulen (2007) in her research project submitted as doctoral dissertation to the University of Utrecht under the title *René Descartes. Specimina Philosophicae. Introduction and Critical Edition. Inleiding en kritische editie (met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)*. In "Chapter 1: The history of the *Specimina philosophiae* before 1644" (on pages 1–14), Vermeulen provides the sources of the claim identifying the potential translator of Descartes's work as Etienne de Courcelles (1586–1659). Especially valuable for scholars interested in quotation sources, is the text of *Dissertatio de Methodo* on pages 105–152.

most certain, which occurs to anyone philosophizing in an orderly way'; Descartes 1644a: 7, 8).

This mind-to-body-attachment of man found its expression in the separation of *substantiâ corporeâ* from *substantiâ cogitans* (Descartes 1644a: 29) or *res extensa* from *res cogitans* (Descartes 1644a: 41). In consequence, Descartes's rationalist view of the human mind contributed to the development of the so-called Cartesian epistemology, assuming the existence of pure thinking in mental words about mental things, while confirming Ockham's mental language conception, in which *propositiones mentales* ('mental sentences') were counterpoised to *propositiones vocales* ('spoken sentences'; cf. Wąsik 2014: 92, 2016: 177).

While characterizing the object of our epistemological inquiry in a historical context, it is worth alluding to Eugenio Coseriu's (1967: 81–112) claim that Saussure's mentalist depiction of the sign, "*Le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom, mais un concept et une image acoustique*" ('The sign unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and an acoustic image'; Saussure 1922[1916]: 98), as the oneness of two inseparable sides being in equal degree psychic, probably originates in the late rationalist phase of Aristotelian thought known under the label of Cartesianism. It should be noted, however, that Saussure was inconsistent in his psychologist approach to the sign as a unity of two mental sides: *concept* (interpreted as 'mental idea' or 'notion') and *image acoustique* ('acoustic image', interpreted later as 'sound image' or even 'sound pattern' by translators of CLG; cf. Wąsik 2016: 188).

Against the heritage of Aristotelian trichotomous reasoning, one should separately consider Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of the sign, which is outlined within the framework of either a triadic relation or a triad. In the first framework, Peirce speaks about the meaning:

> I will sketch a proof that the idea of meaning is irreducible to those of quality and reaction. It depends on two main premises. The first is that every genuine triadic relation involves meaning, as meaning is obviously a triadic relation. The second is that a triadic relation is inexpressible by means of dyadic relations alone. Considerable reflection may be required to convince yourself of the first of these premises, that every triadic relation involves meaning. (CP 1.345)

In the second framework, he speaks about the representation, claiming that "a thoroughly genuine triad" should be entirely separated from the worlds which are governed by the laws of facts or qualities since "it exists in the universe of representations". For Peirce "representation necessarily involves a genuine triad" as far as "it involves a sign, or, representamen, of some kind, outward or inward, mediating between an object" (quoted after CP 1.480).

In fact, what is decisive for the definition of the sign is its capacity to stand for an object and its ability to create in the mind of its user or recipient an equivalent sign, called an interpretant of the first sign. Cf. the widely quoted statement from Peirce's division of signs (1897):

> A sign, or **representamen**, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the **interpretant** of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its **object**. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes †1 called the **ground** of the representamen. (CP 2.228)

Still, in another place of his deliberations, Peirce speaks about representamen, the *genus proximum* of the sign (*sic*!), while appealing to the notion of a triadic relation:

> A **Representamen** is the First Correlate of a triadic relation, the Second Correlate being termed its **Object**, and the possible Third Correlate being termed its **Interpretant**, by which triadic relation the possible Interpretant is determined to be the First Correlate of the same triadic relation to the same Object, and for some possible Interpretant. A **Sign** is a representamen of which some interpretant is a cognition of a mind. (CP 2.242)

The Aristotelian idea about the mediating role of the human mind between things and words through thought may still be found in the conception of the sign as a constituent of a semantic triangle, popularized in linguistic debates under the name of the 'Ogden–Richards triangle'. In its original depiction, the relationships between three constituents of the triangle were presented by Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards (1949[1923]: 11) as follows: [1] *symbol* – [2] *thought (or reference)* – [3] *referent*, described as CORRECT: [1] symbolizes (a casual relation) [2], ADEQUATE: [2] refers to (other casual relations) [3], and TRUE: [1] stands for (an imputed relation) [3] (cf. Wąsik 2003: 90).

In addition to Plato and Aristotle, among those who gave the main input to the theory of sign and meaning in Antiquity were the Stoics.[7] In the Stoic teachings, signs had been specified as corporeal phenomena, which revealed through

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7   The school of Stoics was founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium (ca. 336–264 B.C.). The main source of knowledge about their teachings, including those of Chrysippus, were critical treatises of Sextus Empiricus (ca. 200 A.D., *Against the Logicians*), one of the representatives of the Sceptics, a philosophical school of ancient Greece which maintained that real knowledge of things is impossible.

conditional implications something that was real but not necessarily evident. What is relevant for epistemology is that for Stoics all signs existed materially either in a sensible or intelligible form of both the cosmic and the human soul in the activities of speaking and thinking individuals, and only the meanings of the signs were inferred through logic.

In the Middle Ages, the Stoic way of separating language from reality had found its continuation partly in the philosophy of St Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus, A.D. 354–430), Bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa and one of the Latin fathers in the early Christian Church, who placed signs among things the function of which is to signify other things. What is remarkable is St Augustine's definition: "*Signum est enim res praeter speciem, quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem venire,* […]" ('A sign is that thing which, besides the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else beyond itself to come under one's knowledge, […]"; Augustinus 1958[397], *De doctrina Christiana*, *Liber secundus*, I. 1.; my translation, Z.W.).

It was also Stoicism that had been revitalized in a positivistic concept of a unilateral sign conceived as something that stands for something else, which had been proposed by Karl Bühler in his book *Sprachtheorie* (1934). Bühler defined the verbal sign as "the phenomenon susceptible of sense perception, normally an acoustic phenomenon" ("*das sinnlich wahrnehmbare, gewöhnlich akustische Phänomen*"; cf. Bühler 1990[1934: 25, 40]: 31, 47). To Bühler, the essence of the sign as a sensorial phenomenon lied in its representational function. Bühler postulated to study only those features of the sign which were seen as relevant from the viewpoint of their semantic function when being used as a tool of communication between the two sides of a speech event (cf. Bühler 1965[1934]: 25–40).

The unilateral sign and its counterpart, the object of reference, were portrayed also as belonging to two realms, the mentalist and the concretist, i.e. to the realm of thought, on the one side, and the realm of observation, on the other, by Wiesław Łukaszewski, a Polish psychologist. In an article on concepts and conceptual systems from a psychological point of view Łukaszewski (1974: 75) claimed that, before being uttered in words, the linguistic signs firstly appear in the mind of speaking individuals and as such they are referred by them to a concluded reality of sensible perception. From such a viewpoint even the concepts or notions as mental images or schemes might be considered as signs.

Thus, it could be concluded that the history of semiotic ideas has been shaped, in the first phase, by the interplay between the Platonic duality of the 'word as a unity of speech and thought' and the Aristotelian trichotomy of 'word, thought and thing'; in the second phase by the post-Aristotelian Cartesian duality of the

body and the mind, stressing the twofold modes of being of a word and a thing in the rational and empirical universes, respectively; and in the third phase by the Stoic way of treating the word as an entity which refers to the thing as a fragment of reality which might be absent at the particular.

1.2. The semantic quadrangle as a tool for measuring the epistemological status of the sign

An overview of semiotic thinking (discussed in detail in Wąsik 2016: 166–175, 203–204) has shown that there are divergences in understanding the nature of the sign. To explain the source of such divergences, it is important to explore which names are ascribed to the constituents or the entities of the domain of semiotic objects.

In some interpretations, the constituents of semiotic objects are regarded as two sides of the same sign, the *signifier* and the *signified* (*signifié* and *signifiant),* and in other they are detached as separate entities of the sign and its *designate* (or *significate*). Furthermore, the constituents are explained in synonymous terms of *repraesentans* and *repraesentatum,* such as, for example, *signans* and *signatum*, *significans* and *significatum*, *signum* and *significatum*, *signum* and *signatum*, *designator* and *designatum*, and the like.

What these terminological mixtures look like is best visible in the numerous interpretations of the semantic triangle, just mentioned above. Some have been merged in combination with Saussure's bilateral sign, cf., in particular, (Nils) Gustaf Stern 1963[1931]: 37: [1] *word* – [2] *meaning* – [3] *referent*; Stephen (alias István) Ullmann 1952: 22: [1] *name* – [2] *sense* – [3] *thing*; Lyons 1968: 404: [1] *form*—*<WORD>*—[2] *meaning (concept)* – [3] *referent*;. Pierre Guiraud 1976[1972]: 21: [1] *symbol, both a signifying form and its acoustic image* – [2] *reference, i.e. a signified concep*t – [3] *referent, i.e. a named thing* (my translation, Z.W., cf. Guiraud 1972[1955]; Wąsik 2003: 90–91, 2016: 174).

The most remarkable divergence occurs in the interpretations of the term 'symbol' used by Ogden and Richards. For that reason, a beginner in the field of linguistic semiotics has to choose from amongst different proposals. When considering the proposals of these leading linguists the practising semiotician has to decide whether 'symbol' is a word, a name, a form of the word, or whether it should be considered as oneness in two manifestations, i.e. *both a signifying form and its acoustic image*. John Lyons has introduced the term 'word' as a unity of form and meaning, whereas Pierre Guiraud has treated 'the physical form' and 'its mental reflection' as two sides of the symbol. While Lyons has related the 'form' to a mental counterpart of the word, i.e. to mental meaning, Guiraud has regarded it as a concrete part of the bilateral sign in Saussurean outlining.

To identify divergences in the formulations of a semantic triangle, one has to check the ontology of its constituents in comparison to those distinguished in particular conceptions of a unilateral sign, where its *sign(ans)* and *(de)signatum* form separate entities (cf. Wąsik 2003: 91, 2016: 175).

When examining Pierre Guiraud's (1974[1971], 1975[1971]) sign conception where separate entities are to be distinguished in the definition: "*un signe est un stimulus – c'est-à-dire une substance sensible – dont l'image mentale est associée dans notre esprit à celle d'un autre stimulus qu'il a pour fonction d'évoquer en vue d'une communication.*" (Guiraud 1971: 29), one can easily understand why it has been impossible to place the four constituents into the angles of a triangle. Following the introduction of numbering in the translated definition of the sign according to Guiraud, the prospective reader may notice that there are in fact four detached elements: the sign is a stimulus (1), that is, a sensorial substance, the mental image (2) of which is associated in our mind with the image (3) of another stimulus (4), and the function of which is to evoke the latter for communication (Guiraud 1974[1971: 29, quoted in Wąsik 2016: 175). These elements could be labelled in detail as (1) the sign itself, (2) the mental image of the sign, (3) the mental image of the referent, and (4) the referent itself.

As results from the discussion, instead of a semantic triangle, the semiotician has at his or her disposal a semantic quadrangle. To avoid any psychological or logical connotation, it might be convenient to use the term 'sign' for the *repraesentans* and the term 'referent' for the *repraesentatum* of the sign as the most neutral ones.

Assuming that the main task attributed to a sign is to represent something else that lies beyond the sign itself, one has to determine the existential status of both of the *repraesentans* and the *repraesentatum* to which it corresponds. In the light of such a distinction, an epistemologically oriented observer may notice in all conceptions of semiotic objects and the objects of their reference – investigated in terms of two constituents, (1) and (2), existing (a) concretely and (b) mentally, that is, residing both in the (extraorganismic) sensible reality and (intraorganismic) intelligible reality of communicating individuals – the occurrence of four common elements: (1a) an externalized *repraesentans* (= sensible concrete *sign)*; (1b) an internalized reflection of the *repraesentans* (= intelligible mental *sign*); (2a) an externalized *repraesentatum* (= sensible concrete *referent*); and (2b) an internalized reflection of the *repraesentatum* (= intelligible mental *referent*). In consequence, instead of a semantic triangle, widely recognized among the theorists of sign-and-meaning-related disciplines, one should rather speak about an idea of a semantic quadrangle (cf. Wąsik 2016: 203).

Accordingly, the epistemological positions of the sign and its referent within the frame of a semantic quadrangle might be assessed as oscillating between (A) extreme concretism, where "concrete *sign* stands for concrete *referent*"; (B) moderate concretism, where "concrete *sign* evokes mental *referent*"; (C) moderate mentalism, where "mental *sign* is referred to as concrete *referent*"; and (D) extreme mentalism, where "mental *sign* is associated with mental *referent*" (cf. Wąsik 2016: 175, 210–211).

2. Exposing the subtitle terms with special reference to translational equivalence

As to the evaluative aspects of translational practice, the category of epistemological equivalence is considered at a word level following the classificatory proposals of Mona Baker (1992: 11–12).[8] However, in agreement with the claim of Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, the notion of equivalence will be associated not only with a semantic search for corresponding expressions which are listed in bilingual dictionaries as "the need for creating equivalences" should arise from the situations to which the translated texts refer, because the entries in the dictionaries cannot always be recognized as exhaustive (cf. Vinay, Darbelnet 1995[1968]: 255–256).

In fact, the equivalence-oriented translation could be viewed as a kind of procedure that "replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording" (Vinay, Darbelnet 1995: 342). Applying the terminological distinctions of Vinay and Darbelnet, introduced in the first French edition of their work in 1958, we become aware of the fact that to arrive at translational equivalence the stylistic impact of the source-language text should be maintained in the target-language text. This estimated impact might eventually be redefined, following Eugene Albert Nida's (1964: 159) proposals, as a dynamic correspondence based upon "the principle of equivalent effect" between the terms functioning in appropriate texts of source and target languages.

In the light of pragmatics, it is worth mentioning that according to Juliane House (1977: 203), the terms being translated should have the same argumentative or expository force. To be added is also the conviction of Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber (2003[1982]: 200) who state that the equivalent effect occurs in a situation where a translator seeks to translate the meaning of an original term in such a way that the target language wording will exert the same communicative

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8   For selected details see the encyclopedia entry 'equivalence' (Kenny 1998).

impact on the target text addressees as the original source language wording did upon the source text addressees.

Entering the domain of material study, this paper takes for granted that the epistemological commitments of translators depend on the view about the mode of existence and cognoscibility of objects to which the translated terms in question refer. This view might undoubtedly be stipulated by the translators' choice of investigative attitudes acquired through education or borrowed from the resources of opinions prevailing at a specific epoch in the development of a given discipline.

3. Exploring the duality of pattern in Saussurean sign conceptions

Based on selected quotations (grouped under Roman numerals below) from the French original and their English translations, the objective of this research is to point out that the dualistic view of verbal sign encountered in the text of Saussure's CLG adheres to two different, though concatenated philosophical traditions: the Cartesian and the Platonist ones. On the one hand, the concept of sign as a twofold unity of two inseparable sides, '*signifié*' and '*signifiant*', in which both parts are mental in equal measure, is explained against the background of absolute rationalism; and on the other hand, the term '*parole*', where an idea establishes itself in a sound and a sound becomes the sign of an idea, is confronted with Plato's '*lógos*', which comprises human capacities to speak and thinking simultaneously.[9]

In one of the chapters of his lectures (collected, *nota bene*, by his pupils), dealing with the problem of linguistic value, Saussure has explicitly shown his adherence to the Platonist unity of (extraorganismic) expressions and (intra-organismic) thoughts. Nonetheless, Saussure's understanding of *parole*, where an idea is established in a sound and a sound becomes the sign for an idea, should not be equalized, despite their close relationship, with the bilateral sign, which unites not a thing and a name but a concept and an acoustic image (cf. Wąsik 2016: 119, 167–169).

Louis Hjelmslev (1953[1943]), confirmed Saussure's duality of the sign, but regarded its two sides, the *signifié* and the *signifiant* as two 'functives', that is,

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9   The discovery was communicated for the first time in the author's paper "*Parole* and the bilateral sign: Between Platonism and Cartesianism in Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*" given at the XXXIst Societas Linguistica Europaea Annual Meeting: Langue and Parole in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspective, St. Andrews, Scotland, August 26–30, 1998.

expression form and content form that are interconnected by a sign function. By this, Hjelmslev rejected the notion that the sign is something that stands for something else. In his view, the sign is not an expression that points to a content outside the sign itself, but a two-sided entity which acts in two directions: "outwards", i.e. to the substance of expression, and "inwards", i.e. to the substance of the content.

The Hjelmslevian view of the sign, inspired by Saussure's *parole*, resembles the Platonic *logos*, but also reflects the Aristotelian way of delimiting the substance from matter through the form. Being a Platonist, Hjelmslev believed that language functions formally unite the internal mental facts with the external physical facts which humans have at their disposal (Wąsik 2016: 120–121).

Sydney MacDonald Lamb (1984: 78), a follower of Hjelmslev in terms of connectionism, interprets the sign as a relation between content and expression or, using Saussure's terms, between a *signifié* and a *signifiant*. Still, Lamb does not follow Saussure's depiction of the sign as an object of two sides implying each other, since, as he explains, a sign in particular is often a sign for more than one *signifié* (cf. Wąsik 2016: 120).

3.1. The sign as a mental wholeness of two mutually linked sides

On the basis of selected quotations below (I, II, III), an inquisitive reader may notice that the following examples of a dyadic character of the linguistic sign reveal *de facto* the existence of a tetradic (fourfold) semiotic framework, considering *repraesentans* and *repraesentatum*, i.e. the sign, as a vehicle, and its referent manifested both in its intraorganismic and extraorganismic reality. What s/he might read here is thus Saussure's claim that the sign should be understood not as a *concrete repraesentans* and a *concrete repraesentatum* but a *mental repraesentans* and a *mental repraesentatum* which mutually imply or, in other words, trigger each other.

3.1.1. Stressing the implicational nature of the linguistic sign in the brain

I

> *Le point de départ du circuit est dans le cerveau de l'une, par exemple A, où les faits de conscience, que nous appellerons concepts, se trouvent associés aux représentations des signes linguistiques ou images acoustiques servant à leur expressions. Supposons qu'un concept donné déclenche dans le cerveau une image acoustique correspondante : c'est un phénomène entièrement psychique, suivi à son tour d'un procès physiologique : le cerveau transmet aux organes de la phonation une impulsion corrélative à l'image : puis les ondes sonores se propagent de la bouche de A à l'oreille de B : procès purement physique.* (CLG: 28–29)

Suppose that the opening of the circuit is in A's brain, where mental facts (concepts) are associated with representations of the linguistic sounds (sound-images) that are used for their expression. A given concept unlocks a corresponding sound-image in the brain; this purely psychological phenomenon is followed in turn by a physiological process: the brain transmits an impulse corresponding to the image to the organs used in producing sounds. Then the sound waves travel from the mouth of A to the ear of B: a purely physical process. (CGL–Baskin: 11–12)

The starting point of the circuit is in the brain of one individual, for instance A, where facts of consciousness which we shall call concepts are associated with representations of linguistic signs or sound patterns by means of which they may be expressed. Let us suppose that a given concept triggers in the brain a corresponding sound pattern. This is an entirely psychological phenomenon, followed in turn by a physiological process: the brain transmits to the organs of phonation an impulse corresponding to the pattern. Then sound waves are sent from A's mouth to B's ear, a purely physical process. (CGL–Harris: 11–12)

3.1.2. The linguistic sign as a two-sided psychological entity

II

Le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom, mais un concept et une image acoustique. (CLG: 98)

Le signe linguistique est donc une entité psychique à deux faces, […]
Ces deux éléments sont intimement unis et s'appellent l'un l'autre. (CLG: 99)

The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. […]
The linguistic sign is then a two-sided psychological entity. […]
The two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other. (CGL–Baskin: 65–66)

A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. […]
The linguistic sign is, then, a two-sided psychological entity, […]
These two elements are intimately linked and each triggers the other. (CGL–Harris: 66)

III

Nous proposons de conserver de mot signe pour désigner le total, et de remplacer concept et image acoustique respectivement par signifié et signifiant; ces derniers termes ont l'avantage de marquer l'opposition qui les sépare soit entre eux, soit du total dont il font partie. (CLG: 99)

I propose to retain the word sign [signe] to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified [signifié] and signifier [signifiant]; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts. (CGL–Baskin: 67)

We propose to keep the term sign to designate the whole but to replace concept and sound pattern respectively by signification and signal. The latter terms have the advantage of indicating the distinction which separates each from the other and both from the whole of which they are part. (CGL–Harris: 67)

3.2. On the mediating role of language in relation to thought

As Saussure's lectures exhibit, the sign is not only to be seen in the rationalist sense as a unity of two mental sides: *concept* ('concept', interpreted also as 'image' or 'notion') and *image acoustique* ('acoustic image'). Quotations IV, V, VI, VII, and VIII, provide evidence that one of the chapters devoted to the question of the linguistic value shows explicitly the author's adherence to the Platonist unity of (external) expressions and thoughts.

3.2.1. Language as a system of pure values acting as an intermediary between thought and sound

IV

Pour se rendre compte que la langue ne peut être qu'un système de valeurs pures, il suffit de considérer les deux éléments qui entrent en jeu dans son fonctionnement : les idées et les sons. (CLG: 155)

To prove that language is only a system of pure values, it is enough to consider the two elements involved in its functioning: ideas and sounds. CGL–Baskin: 111).

In order to realize that the language itself can be nothing other than a system of pure values, one need only consider the two elements which are involved in the way it functions, ideas and sounds. (CGL–Harris: 110)

V

Le rôle caractéristique de la langue vis-à-vis de la pensée n'est pas de créer un moyen phonique matériel pour l'expression des idées, mais de servir d'intermédiaire entre la pensée et le son, dans des condition telles que leur union aboutit nécessairement à des délimitations réciproques d'unités. (CLG: 156)

The characteristic role of language with respect to thought is not to create a material phonic means for expressing ideas but to serve as a link between thought and sound under conditions that of necessity bring about the reciprocal delimitations of units (CGL–Baskin: 112).

The characteristic role of a language in relation to thought is not to supply the material phonetic means by which ideas may be expressed. It is to act as intermediary between thought and sound, in such a way that the combination of both necessarily produce a mutually complementary delimitation of units. (CGL–Harris: 110)

<div align="center">VI</div>

> *On pourrait appeler la langue le domaine des articulations, […]: chaque terme linguistique est un petit membre, un articulus où une idée se fixe dans un son et où un son devient le signe d'une idée.* (CLG: 156)

Language might be called the domain of articulations, […]. Each linguistic term is a member, an articulus in which an idea is fixed in a sound and a sound becomes the sign of an idea. (CGL–Baskin: 112–113)

Linguistic structure might be described as the domain of articulation, […]. Every linguistic sign is a part or member, an articulus, where an idea is fixed in a sound, and a sound becomes the sign of an idea. (CGL–Harris: 111)

3.2.2. Language as an indivisible sheet of paper with thought on the *recto* and sound on the *verso*

<div align="center">VII</div>

> *La langue est encore comparable à une feuille de papier ; la pensée est le recto et le son le verso ; on ne peut découper le recto sans découper en même temps le verso ; de même dans la langue, on ne saurait isoler ni le son de la pensée, ni la pensée du son ; on n'y arriverait que par une abstraction dont le résultat serait de faire de la psychologie pure ou de la phonologie pure.*
>
> *La linguistique travaille donc sur le terrain limitrophe où les éléments des deux ordres se combinent ; cette combinaison produit une forme, non une substance.* (CLG: 157)

Language can also be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front and the sound the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time; likewise in language, one can neither divide sound from thought nor thought from sound; the division could be accomplished only abstractedly, and the result would be either pure psychology or pure phonology.

Linguistics then works in the borderland where the elements of so und and thought combine; their combination produces a form, not a substance. (CGL–Baskin: 113).

A language might also be compared to a sheet of paper. Thought is one side of the sheet and sound the reverse side. Just as it is impossible to take a pair of scissors and cut one side of paper without at the same time cutting the other, so it is impossible in a language to isolate sound from thought, or thought from sound. To separate the two for theoretical purposes takes us into either pure psychology or pure phonetics, not linguistics.

Linguistics then, operates along this margin, where sound and thought meet. The contact between them gives rise to a form, not a substance. (CGL–Harris: 111)

VIII

> *La pensée, chaotique de sa nature, est forcée de se préciser en se décomposant. Il n'y a donc ni matérialisation des pensées, ni spiritualisation des sons, mais il s'agit de ce fait en quelque sorte mystérieux, que la « pensée-son » implique des divisions et que la langue élabore ses unités en se constituant entre deux masses amorphes. Qu'on se représente l'air en contact avec une nappe d'eau : si la pression atmosphérique change, la surface de l'eau se décompose en une série de divisions, c'est-à-dire de vagues ; ce sont ces ondulations qui donneront une idée de l'union, et pour ainsi dire de l'accouplement de la pensée avec la matière phonique.* (CLG: 156)

Thought, chaotic by nature, has to become ordered in the process of its decomposition. Neither are thoughts given material form nor are sounds transformed into mental entities; the somewhat mysterious fact is rather that "thought-sound" implies division, and that language works out its units while taking shape between two shapeless masses. Visualize the air in contact with a sheet of water; if the atmospheric pressure changes, the surface of the water will be broken up into a series of divisions, waves; the waves resemble the union or coupling of thought with phonic substance. (CGL–Baskin: 112)

Thought, chaotic by nature, is made precise by this process of segmentation. But what happens is neither a transformation of thoughts into matter, nor a transformation of sounds into ideas. What takes place is a somewhat mysterious process by which 'thought-sound' evolves divisions, and a language takes shape with its linguistic units in between those two amorphous masses. One might think of it as being like air in contact with water: changes in atmospheric pressure break up the surface of the water into series of divisions, i.e. waves. The correlation between thought and sound, and the union of the two, is like that. (CGL–Harris: 110–111)

4. Formulating constatations on the translation of Saussurean bilateral sign conception

The subject matter of discussion in this subsection dealing with the issue of translational equivalence constitutes the two sides of the linguistic sign called '*concept*' and '*image acoustique*' or alternatively '*signifié*' and '*signifiant*'. These pairs of parallel terms belonging to the semiotic heritage of Saussure's lectures, which became a focal point of semiotic structuralism in Europe, did not have uniform interpretations among linguists and later sociolinguists and anthropologists in languages other than French.

4.1. Epistemological criteria for taking stand to the occurrence of translational equivalence

To answer why the original terms of Saussure's rendered in word-for-word translations such as 'concept' and 'acoustic image' may be subsumed as belonging to epistemologically different logical domains of existence, it is necessary to explain 'token' and 'type' along with 'image' and 'concept' distinctions against the background of the distinction between two kinds of psychologism introduced by Leo Zawadowski (1966: 32, 234; cf. also 1975: 13–16), who critically assessed the claim that language constitutes a part of the mind (psyche). In accordance with this distinction, the first kind of psychologism,[10] imaginational psychology, which is (mental) image-focused or imagination-focused, pertains to the mental activity of visualizing the shape of cognized and perceived phenomena and events as individual tokens. The second kind, conceptual psychologism, considered as a concept-focused psychologism, exposes the mental recalling of characteristic (or similar) features of phenomena and events being formed and concluded as general types.

From the psychologistic point of view, a mental image, or idea, of a concrete object evoked by a concrete sign, to which it refers, is a mental product of imagination, whereas the imagination itself is to be understood as a mental process involving, in the consciousness, an evocation of the images of objects and situations, which, at a given moment, do not affect the human sensorial organs, but are based on past perceptions and/or fantasies. In turn, the psychologist definition states that the concept is an assumed mental equivalent of the set of characteristic properties of the object to which a given sign refers (cf. Wąsik 2009: 441).[11]

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[10] For the history of the term 'psychologism' see Braunstein 2012. Psychologistic definitions of intension (connotation) and extension (denotation) of the name proposed by John Stuart Mill (1974[1843]: 98) might be useful here as well.

[11] For consultations see *inter alia* the encyclopedia entries 'Concepts' (Rey 1998) and 'Imagination' (Kind 2017) where imagining is distinguished from conceiving and supposing: Rey, Georges 1998. Concepts. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor and Francis, https://

4.2. In search of the equivalent of the French term *'concept'*

The question arises whether the French term '*concept*' might eventually be translated into English not only as 'concept' but also as 'notion'. At this instant, one has to be aware that the English terms 'notion' and 'concept' are not necessarily synonymous but may also have equivocal connotations. In Note 4 to his paper "The semantic conception of truth and the foundations of semantics", Alfred Tarski (1944: 370) expressed such doubts, formulating the following comment: "The words 'notion' and 'concept' are used […] with all of the vagueness and ambiguity with which they occur in philosophical literature […], sometimes they refer simply to a term, sometimes to what is meant by a term, and in other cases to what is denoted by a term." It is apparent, therefore, why the term 'notion', etymologically pertaining to 'knowledge' and/or 'cognition' [cf. the derivatives of Latin '*noscere*' ('to come to know') or '*notificare*' ('to make known')], having their roots in the Greek '*gignóskein*', has never been applied in the translation of Saussurean terms (cf. the entry 'notion' in Random House 1997[1995]).

As a result, the English 'conceive' as a verb of action could be rendered by the paraphrase 'to grasp the meaning' or 'to understand'. The English term 'concept' [derived from Latin '*conceptum*' ('something conceived'), originally neuter of '*conceptus*', Past Participle of '*concipere*'; cf. Old French '*conceivre*', having its roots in the Latin '*concipere*' ('to take fully', 'take in'), composed of '*con-*' + '*-cipere*', a combinatorial form of '*capere*' ('to take')] refers to the meaning (connotation) of a name, mental equivalent of the set of characteristic features for objects, to which the name is referred, that is, their designates in particular (cf. the entry 'concept' in Random House 1997[1995]).

4.3. The replacement of Saussurean *'image acoustique'* with 'sound image' or 'sound pattern' in English

Regarding the English translation of the French '*concept*' and '*image acoustique*', their word-for-word translations in terms of 'concept' and 'acoustic image' had functioned in popular writings of linguists and semioticians until the time when the two respective terms, in both compared translations of CLG, were first rendered as 'concept' and 'sound-image' by Baskin, and then replaced with 'concept' and 'sound pattern' by Harris. To explain his reasons for rendering the term '*image acoustique*' not as 'acoustic image' but as 'sound-image' Baskin made the following observation in an editorial footnote:

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www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/concepts/v-1.; Kind, Amy 2017. Imagination. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor and Francis, https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/imagination/v-2.

> The term *sound-image* may seem to be too restricted inasmuch as beside the representation of the sounds of a word is also that of its articulation, the muscular image of the phonational act. But for F. de Saussure language is essentially a depository, a thing received from without […]. The sound-image is par excellence the natural representation of the word as a fact of potential language, outside any actual use of it in speaking. The motor side is thus implied or, in any event, occupies only a subordinate role with respect to the sound-image. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 66)

Harris's proposal of introducing the term 'sound pattern' appears to be suitable for subsuming both sides of the bilateral sign under the same epistemological position. It is remarkable that both 'concept' and 'sound pattern' belong to the conceptual psychologism, as far as they refer to the types of similarities between particular tokens of the sign-constituents. With reference to the position of earlier English terms in Baskin's translations, it should be noted that the English 'sound-image' and the original French '*image acoustique*' remain in the same domain of imaginational psychologism; whereas both the English 'concept' and the French '*concept*' are to be subsumed under the heading of a conceptual psychologism.

A problem similar to the one with the translation of its constituents occurs also with the definition of the linguistic sign as a two-sided psychological entity (to put it exactly, as a psychological entity with "two facets") translated from the original: "*Le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom, mais un concept et une image acoustique*". There is, however, a noticeable exception in the English translation by Roy Harris, rendering the statement whose word-for-word translation "The linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and an acoustic image", having been known from popular citations as a literal, word-for-word translation, as "A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern."

The interpretation made by Harris refers to the idea of a *linking* relationship assumed to exist between the two sides of the linguistic sign. Compare, in this respect, the first part of Baskin's translation: "The two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other" with Harris's: "These two elements are intimately linked and each triggers the other". However, the same cannot be said about the second part of the sentence as regards the equivalence at a word level, as one conveys the French phrase '*s'appellent l'un l'autre*', by the English 'each recalls the other' (CGL–Baskin) and the other by 'each triggers the other' (CGL–Harris).

The exact meaning of the French phrase '*s'appellent l'un l'autre*' is 'evoke each other'. With regard to Harris's 'These two elements are intimately linked', it can be added, at the margin of this particular study devoted to the analysis semiotic terms only, that the English word 'intimately' can be seen rather as a literal substitute

for the French '*intimement*' than an equivalent at a word level (Respective page references are provided under the subsection 3.1.2 "The linguistic sign as a two-sided psychological entity").

4.4. The linguistic grammatical and ontological nature of the two sides of the sign in translations

When engaged in the translation of the two sides of the bilateral sign, one has to take for granted that both the *signified* and the *signifier* might be rendered in terms of imaginative reflections evoked by sensorial-perceptive features of things and names in the consciousness of sign-utilizers. A linguistically and grammatically trained translator could also expect a word-for-word rendering of the French '*signifié*' and '*signifiant*' by 'signified' and 'signifying' in English. They might also come to the conclusion that '*signifiant*' in French represents a gerund form derived from the verb and functioning as a noun. As a matter of fact, 'signifier' and 'signifying' are two distinct word forms. The grammatical category to which the word 'signifier' belongs is an adverbal noun composed of the word stem 'signifi-' (from the word basis 'signify') and an inflectional affix '-er'.

In the same way, within the framework of conceptual psychologism, making a reference to the knowledge about the characteristic sets of tokens and types of signs as well as their designates, one is entitled to assume that both the signified and the signifying sides have mental equivalents of these sets in the consciousness of their users, namely, the conceived minimal mass of differential features of a referent should have as a counterpart the conceived minimal mass of differential features of a sign-vehicle. However, such a distinction does not exist in the domain of logical, philosophical or psychological terminology, as the concept (in other words, a conceived, that is, mental reflection, of characteristic features) of the *sign* standing for the concept of the *designate* (cf. Wąsik 2014: 103, 2016: 110).

4.5. Incompatibility in the English substitutions of the French terms '*signifié*' and '*signifiant*'

From the position of the semiotic tradition, Harris' replacement of the Saussurean terms '*signifié*' and '*signifiant*' by the terms 'signification' and 'signal' appears as epistemologically incompatible. In contrast, the same cannot be said about the deduced meaning of the English terms 'signified' and 'signifier', introduced by Baskin, which have functioned in semiotic treatises as translational equivalents of the French terms '*signifié*' and '*signifiant*' both before and after 1959.

A potential reader of Saussurean lectures in translation has to be aware that 'signification' ontologically connotes an act of indicating the object of reference,

that is, the process of referring to assumed meaning, content, importance or sense of a given sign, whereas 'signal' implies a token of a concrete type of the sign that evokes feelings, reactions of sign-utilizers or indicates either the observed or concluded representation of its reference in the extra-semiotic reality. Consequently, the difference between 'signification' and 'signal' lies in their belonging to two different modes of existence in the logical-rational and behavioural-physical domains.

5. Final remarks

The main objective of this article was to increase the reader's awareness that Saussure's lectures encompass two layers of epistemologically incompatible conceptualizations. Therefore, from the point of view of the typology of semiotic objects, special attention is paid to the duality in the Saussurean concept of the linguistic sign, in which (1) the concept of '*parole*' has given rise to the concept of a unilateral sign based on the principle of unidirectional implication '*aliquid stat pro aliquo*' ('something stands for something else'), and that (2) the concept of a bilateral sign as a mental oneness of two sides mutually implying each other has had nothing in common with the metaphor of a sheet of paper whose two sides of represent only correlated masses united in the realization of language by *parole*.

In concluding remarks, the necessity of a metaphorically called ecumenical[12] translation is postulated, in which the familiarity with the scholarly traditions and the knowledge of the epistemological connotations of disciplinary-specific terms within the boundaries of competing schools of scientific thought might constitute the core of the translator's attention. Hence, the critical approaches to translational practice, with special orientation to the question of epistemological awareness of scientists, appear to be useful.

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[12]   Some worthy examples of attempts at resolving the problems of ecumenical translations might be found in Joseph, Velmezova 2018. Interested readers may be familiar with the basic terms related to the conception of language as a system along with its realization in tokens of spoken texts elements, and the linguistic ability of humans to communicate by linguistic signs as text types, which have been discussed with respect to English translations in an article by Claire-Antonella Forel (2018), in which she also refers to her earlier article on CLG (Forel 2012). Forel exposes the difference in the linguistic education in the United States and Britain. Baskin has been influenced by structuralist terminology and Harris by practising authors of school grammars and dictionary makers.

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Odkrywanie dwóch koncepcji znaku językowego w wykładach Saussure'a: dociekania epistemologiczne z komentarzami na temat ekwiwalencji translacyjnej

Głównym przedmiotem niniejszego opracowania są dwa odmienne epistemologicznie modele przedstawiania znaku językowego przez Ferdynanda Saussure'a. Pierwszy model odnosi się do koncepcji znaku bilateralnego jako nierozerwalnej jedności dwóch stron, które wywołują się nawzajem w umyśle jednostki podczas jej czynności mówienia i rozumienia. Drugi, określany tutaj jako koncepcja znaku unilateralnego, został wydedukowany z rozumienia *parole* przez Saussure'a, gdzie idea ustanawia się w dźwięku, a dźwięk staje się znakiem dla idei. Przegląd wzajemnie powiązanych rozróżnień terminologicznych wywodzących się z logiki i filozofii oraz semiotyki lingwistycznej okazał się niezbędny dla przedstawienia pozycji tych koncepcji znaku bilateralnego i unilateralnego w matrycy typologicznej, która może objąć wszystkie modele znaków wywodzące się z nauk języka. Dodatkowym celem niniejszego opracowania jest przedstawienie idei ekwiwalencji epistemologicznej, jaką należy osiągnąć w praktyce translacyjnej. W związku z tym ten dodatkowy punkt zainteresowania koncentruje się w szczególności wokół pytania, w jaki sposób tłumaczenia terminów odnoszących się do znaku, wybranych z wykładów studentów i wydawców, zatytułowanych jako *Cours de linguistique générale*, odzwierciedlają świadomość epistemologiczną ich anglojęzycznych tłumaczy.

Saussure'i loengute kahe keelemärgikontseptsiooni esitlemine: epistemoloogiline uurimus kommentaaridega tõlkeekvivalentsuse kohta

Käesoleva artikli peamise uurimisobjekti moodustavad Ferdinand de Saussure'i keelemärgikirjelduste kaks epistemoloogiliselt erinevat mudelit. Esimene mudel puudutab bilateraalset kontseptsiooni märgist kui inimeste teadvuses nende kõnelemis- ja mõistmistegevuste käigus teineteist esile kutsuva kahe poole lahutamatust ühtsusest. Teine mudel, mida siinkohal nimetatakse 'unilateraalseks kontseptsiooniks', on tuletatud sellest, kuidas Saussure mõistab kõnet (*parole*), milles idee kehtestab end helina ja heli muutub idee märgiks. Selleks, et esitada bilateraalse ja unilateraalse märgimõiste positsioone tüpoloogilises maatriksis, mis hõlmaks kõiki keeleteadustest pärinevaid märgimudeleid, tundub möödapääsmatuna ülevaate andmine sellega seotud terminoloogilistest eristustest, mis on tuletatud loogikast ja filosoofiast ning lingvistilisest semiootikast. Lisaks on käesoleva uurimuse eesmärgiks esitada idee epistemoloogilisest ekvivalentsusest, mida tõlkepraktikas saavutada. See lisafookus keskendub eriti tugevasti küsimusele, kuidas „Üldkeeleteaduse kursusest" valitud ning märgiga seotud terminite tõlked peegeldavad nende inglise keelt kõnelevate tõlkijate epistemoloogilist teadlikkust.