

Juri Lotman in Arabic: A bibliography

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The research projects of the great 20th-century scholar Juri Lotman brought about an epistemological turn in humanities and social sciences, affecting not only the West, but also the East. In this context, the interaction of Arab researchers with Lotman's semiotic model became manifest in the translation of his works and applying his concepts in the analysis of literary and cultural texts. This paper attempts to highlight the tracks of translating Lotman's works from Russian-language originals into Arabic, and observe their domains of application, finally resulting in a bibliography of Lotman's works translated into Arabic.

Lotman in Arabic: Translation of translation

Translation is the primary mechanism for a dialogue between cultures. Attention to Lotman's semiotics emerged in the 1970s, but the translation of his works followed several paths, which, for historical reasons related to colonial dependence, were dominated by French and English as mediating languages between the original Russian text and the Arabic target text (see Fig. 1).

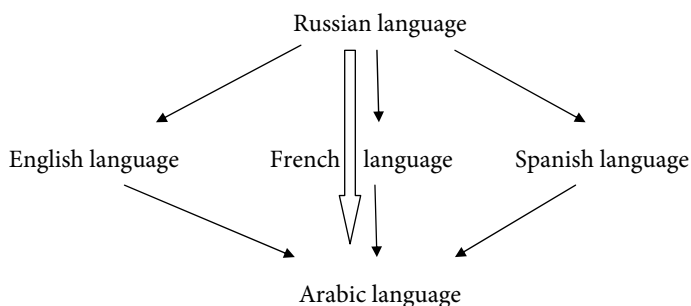


Figure 1. Paths of translating Lotman's works into Arabic.

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Translation of translation has made Arab researchers deal with Lotman's work selectively and unsystematically: the researchers select what helps them to analyse a phenomenon or a text without understanding the epistemological context of Lotman's theory. With this in mind, we could distinguish the following application domains of Lotman's thought (see Table 1):

- (1) poetic studies;
- (2) narrative studies;
- (3) religious studies;
- (4) cultural studies;
- (5) visual studies;
- (6) cognitive science and philosophy of nature (semiosphere theory).

Table 1. Application domains of Lotman's thought.

	Poetic studies	Narrative studies	Religious studies	Cultural studies	Visual studies	Semiosphere theory
1970						
1980						
1990						
2000						

Note the dominance of poetic and narrative studies, due to the importance of poetry and narration in Arabic culture. Religious studies have not been represented any more since the end of the 1990s: the experience of the Egyptian thinker and theologian Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid (1943–2010) is an example of the conflict between the concept of 'religious text' and the concept of 'cultural text' (the definition of text in Tartu–Moscow semiotics), resulting in a decline in the employment of Lotman's concepts in religious discourse analysis for fear of being banned, or imprisonment, exile or even death²; cultural studies saw a boom in the 1980s before returning wavered with transitions and conflict known in the Arab world. Visual studies are still in infancy, and

² Many Islamists could not accept Abu Zaid's ideas and interpretation. As a consequence, while the plaintiffs' suit was dismissed in the First Instance Court, the Court of Appeals decreed on 14 June, 1995 that Abu Zaid was an apostate and that consequently he had to be separated from his wife. Two weeks before that (31 May, 1995), the Cairo University Council had decided to promote Abu Zaid to full professorship after his second application for promotion. However, since Abu Zaid would have found it difficult to live, meet students, teach and do research with a cohort of bodyguards constantly around him, he and his wife decided to flee to Europe and he accepted the invitation from Leiden University in the Netherlands to be a visiting professor.

finally researchers are beginning to apply the theory of semiosphere in analyses of the natural world and cognition (umwelt). Overall, the lack of communication between Arab universities makes assessment of the presence of Lotman's semiotic in scientific research very difficult.

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