A Semiotic Framework for Projecting Comparability Issues of English and Ukrainian Christmas Carols

Key words: Christmas carol, sign, dimensions of semiosis, comparison, English/Ukrainian

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King…
("Hark! the herald angels sing")

Вже херувими славу співають,
Ангельські хори пана витають…
("Во Вифлеємі нині новина")

Semiotics being a broad field with immense variety in it, its conceptual apparatus may be well used by contrastivists, though the conceptual systems of various branches and approaches within the framework of contemporary semiotics differ considerably. Even if, since the 1970s, semiotics as a discipline has noticeably extended its limits, its potentially general models and conceptual system(s) are seemingly still being formed (Kull, Velmezova 2014, p.531). In this paper semiotics is defined as the doctrine of semiosis, that is, of all the processes in which something functions as a sign (Peirce 1998, p.411). Interpretation of semiotics as a semiosic doctrine implies that the latter provides theoretical foundations and conceptual instruments to integrate different approaches to understanding 'the action of sign' regardless of the nature of the latter. The present work's ambition is to suggest a **semiosis-based approach** to the contrastive analysis of Ukrainian and English Christmas carols as the latter represent an extraordinarily multifaceted objects of study for semiotics.

The list of primary tasks includes the following:

1) to outline a theoretical framework for the study of Christmas carols exploring the potential of Peirce's and Morris's ideas on semiosis and to substantiate three approaches to the analysis based on three dimensions of semiosis (Fig.1);

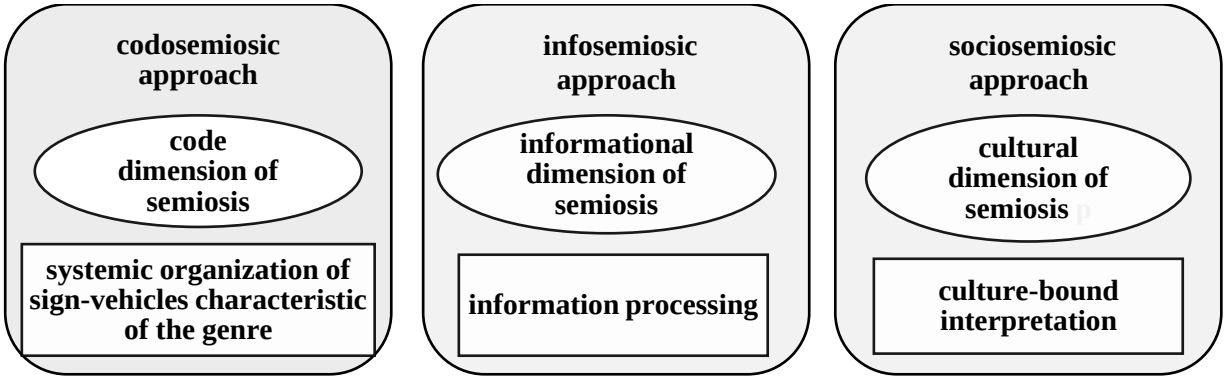

Fig.1. Semiosic approaches to the genre studies.

2) to characterize Christmas carol as a sign in the space of culture and to identify its genre features; 3) to study dimensions of semiosis from the standpoint of their potential for the comparative research of Christmas carols with special attention to: a) the nature of code units (code dimension); b) the relation of code units and external objects (informational dimension); c) the relationship of code units and internal objects (cultural dimension) (Andreichuk 2020); 4) to describe divergent and convergent features of English and Ukrainian Christmas carols applying the developed semiosis-oriented technique of the "dimensional" analysis.

The paper is structured in accordance with these tasks. At the initial stage of the research the author enters a dispute with Morris (Morris 1938) and suggests singling out code, informational and cultural dimensions. Further discussion concentrates on the comparative analysis of English and Ukrainian Christmas carols applying these dimensions and a detailed three-fold account is provided: 1) how carols are encoded, that is, ready for transmission and interpretation through the representation of a series of

conventional means that are characteristic of the genre and provide the framework in which the text acquires meaning in two different cultures; 2) how English and Ukrainian carols are differently classified considering their informative dimension; 3) how carols integrate in culture and provide understanding of the deepest problems of the surrounding world as well as the role of spirituality in their resolution.

The arguments are substantiated by references to different collections of English carols: The Oxford book of carols of 1928 (Dearmer et al., 1928) and the latest Benjamin Bloomfield's collection of 2024 (Bloomfield, Benjamin 2024). The Ukrainian carols were selected mostly from Volodymyr Hnatiuk's collection of 1914 (Hnatiuk 2019) and one of the 21st-century collections (Christmas Songbook, 2023).

Having discussed carols in English and Ukrainian cultural spaces applying code, informational and cultural dimensions of their semiosis as Tertium Comparationis the author emphasizes substantial differences in coding, typology and functional value of this genre for interpreters in present day historical conditions.

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