

LANGUAGE AS SEMANTIC GOVERNANCE: FROM PAVLOV'S SECOND SIGNALING SYSTEM TO AN ODAM TILI THEORY OF SOCIAL CONTROL

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Abstract: This article examines language not merely as a medium of communication but as a mechanism of cognitive mediation and social regulation. Starting from Ivan Pavlov's concept of the second signaling system, the paper argues that verbal signs function as specifically human signals that reorganize perception, abstraction, and response. Contemporary research in language and cognition, discourse studies, and behavioral framing supports the broader claim that linguistic form influences how humans categorize reality, allocate attention, infer norms, and act within institutional environments. Building on this literature, the paper introduces the Odam Tili perspective associated with Dr. Mahmudjon Kuchkarov, according to which language should not be reduced to an arbitrary symbolic code but understood as emerging from a deeper relation among embodied action, sound, and meaning. From this standpoint, language becomes not only a representational tool but a governing infrastructure: it can align perception with lived experience, or detach thought from it. The article proposes the concept of semantic governance to describe the regulation of individuals and societies through naming, framing, and discourse control. It concludes that any serious theory of power, cognition, or human freedom must treat language as a central site of social struggle rather than a secondary cultural ornament.

Keywords: Pavlov; second signaling system; language and cognition; discourse and power; framing; semantic governance; Odam Tili; social control

1. Introduction

Modern theories of social control usually focus on law, institutions, surveillance, economic incentives, and media systems. Yet one of the deepest infrastructures of control often appears too ordinary to attract sufficient theoretical attention: language. Language does not simply transmit information after perception has already taken place. It contributes to the organization of perception itself by structuring what is noticed, how it is categorized, which distinctions become cognitively stable, and what counts as legitimate interpretation. Contemporary journals in discourse studies, semiotics, and cognitive linguistics all frame language as closely tied to cognition, discourse, and social meaning rather than as a neutral channel alone.

This article argues that language should be treated as an instrument of semantic governance: a means by which both individuals and societies are cognitively steered

through naming, framing, discursive selection, and the regulation of legitimacy. The argument begins with Ivan Pavlov's concept of the second signaling system, according to which human beings do not encounter the world only through direct sensory stimuli but also through words as specifically human 'signals of signals.' It then places that insight into dialogue with research on language and cognition, framing, and discourse power. Finally, it introduces the Odam Tili perspective associated with Dr. Mahmudjon Kuchkarov as a theoretical intervention that radicalizes the issue by grounding language in embodied action, sound, and meaning formation rather than in arbitrary convention alone.

The central thesis is sharp but not extravagant: if words mediate human access to reality, then control over the verbal environment is partly control over the interpretive environment. If language is additionally rooted in embodied meaning, as Odam Tili proposes, then coercive or false language does not merely misinform. It disrupts the grounding of thought itself.

2. Pavlov and the second signaling system

Pavlov's concept of the second signaling system remains one of the most consequential, and still underexploited, foundations for a theory of language and social power. In the Pavlovian tradition, animals respond to direct sensory signals, whereas humans possess an additional verbal layer through which words function as 'signals of signals.' This verbal layer makes abstraction, generalization, and mediated anticipation possible. Official reference materials and later scholarly reviews preserve this basic point: language is not external decoration added to human life; it is a specifically human regulatory layer over sensation, cognition, and response.

That idea has profound implications. If human beings do not react only to what they directly see, hear, smell, or touch, but also to what words prepare them to perceive, then linguistic environments become environments of cognitive conditioning. Naming is no longer secondary. Naming becomes a mode of intervention in human apprehension itself. Pavlov's framework was developed within physiology, but its implications exceed physiology. It suggests that the verbal field is one of the principal sites where human reality is cognitively organized.

3. Language, cognition, and framing

Modern research strengthens rather than weakens that conclusion. Official descriptions of Cognitive Linguistics explicitly frame language as an instrument for organizing, processing, and conveying information, underscoring the close interaction between language and cognition. Related work in embodied and multimodal cognition further challenges the view that meaning is fully detached from action and lived experience.

Research on framing and discourse provides the social extension of that cognitive

insight. Journals such as *Discourse & Society* and *Discourse & Communication* define their scope in terms that directly connect text, talk, language use, and communication with social, political, and cognitive representations. That institutional framing within the field matters because it confirms that discourse scholarship already treats language as bound up with power, legitimacy, and social organization, not simply with sentence-level description.

The implication is straightforward. Once language is recognized as a medium that shapes interpretive boundaries, control over language becomes a form of governance. This control need not take the crude form of overt censorship. It can operate more effectively through framing, prestige labeling, repetition, semantic narrowing, and identity-linked discourse. The most durable control is often exercised not by preventing speech altogether, but by formatting in advance what counts as sensible, respectable, scientific, patriotic, extremist, or absurd.

4. From discourse control to semantic governance

This article uses the term semantic governance to describe the regulation of individuals and collectivities through naming, framing, categorization, and discursive hierarchy. A society is governed not only by what it is forbidden to do, but by the language in which reality is made available to thought. Official journal descriptions in discourse studies explicitly foreground the relationship between discourse structures, social structures, and cognitive social representations, which gives strong disciplinary support to this formulation.

Semantic governance works by shaping the preconditions of judgment. A policy described as ‘security’ rather than ‘suppression,’ ‘reform’ rather than ‘discipline,’ or ‘stability’ rather than ‘containment’ enters public cognition with different normative force before substantive evaluation even begins. The issue is not merely rhetoric in the ornamental sense. It is the linguistic preformatting of social interpretation. Once such frames are stabilized, they reduce the need for direct coercion. Subjects who internalize the available semantic map often reproduce the relevant order voluntarily.

At the individual level, semantic governance shapes what appears dangerous, shameful, progressive, backward, normal, or unthinkable. At the collective level, it helps determine which positions are granted legitimacy and which are stigmatized before any open contest of arguments occurs. Language thus becomes one of the least visible yet most effective infrastructures of rule.

5. The Odam Tili intervention

This is where the Odam Tili perspective associated with Dr. Mahmudjon Kuchkarov enters as a theoretical intervention. In contrast to theories that reduce language primarily to arbitrary code, Odam Tili proposes that language is more fundamentally rooted in a living relation among movement, sound, and meaning. From

this perspective, language is not merely a symbolic wrapper placed over already finished thought. It emerges from embodied action and vocal-semantic differentiation. The theory therefore shifts attention from language as convention to language as a grounded process of human world-formation.

This is not an established mainstream consensus, and it should be presented as a theoretical proposal rather than as a settled result. Yet it is a consequential proposal because it deepens the politics of language. If language is rooted in embodied meaning-making, then social domination through language is not limited to misinformation, propaganda, or ideological framing. It can also produce cognitive estrangement by severing discourse from lived grounding.

From the Odam Tili standpoint, the most dangerous linguistic environment is not simply one in which lies circulate. It is one in which the social language available to people no longer corresponds to the structure of lived reality. Under such conditions, individuals may continue to speak fluently while losing the capacity to inhabit meaning truthfully. They no longer use language to clarify experience; they are compelled to use language to overwrite experience.

6. Language as a tool for governing the individual

The individual is governed by language not only because language carries commands, but because language carries categories. Categories organize perception before explicit reasoning begins. If a person learns to interpret events through a pre-installed grid of prestige, shame, fear, legitimacy, and deviance, then language has already done regulatory work before law or punishment appear. The second signaling system becomes a social steering system.

This is one reason why educational institutions, media systems, bureaucracies, expert cultures, and digital platforms all rely so heavily on linguistic standardization. They do not simply want users to receive information. They want them to inhabit the appropriate interpretive frames. The outcome is not only compliance at the level of behavior, but compliance at the level of thought-form.

From an Odam Tili perspective, such compliance is especially severe when imposed language loses grounding in embodied meaning. At that point, the person's lived experience and socially authorized vocabulary can begin to diverge. The result is not merely confusion. It is an internal fracture between perception and permissible interpretation.

7. Language as a tool for governing society

What is true of individuals is amplified at the social level. Societies are stabilized by shared semantic orders: recurrent ways of naming threats, duties, loyalties, enemies, virtues, progress, decline, science, and common sense. These semantic orders do not

merely reflect social power. They help produce and preserve it. Official journal scopes in social semiotics and discourse studies explicitly emphasize semiotic resources, practices, discourse, communication, and social processes, which reinforces the suitability of treating language as part of governance rather than as a neutral mirror.

A society that cannot critically examine its own naming practices becomes unusually vulnerable to manipulation. Its public sphere may remain noisy and apparently plural, yet still be tightly governed through a narrow range of authorized frames. In such circumstances, control is exercised less by banning words than by defining in advance which words confer legitimacy and which words trigger exclusion.

This is why language is one of the central battlegrounds of freedom. Political sovereignty without semantic sovereignty remains incomplete. A population that does not control the language in which its reality is classified will often find that its reactions have been governed before its decisions have even begun.

8. Discussion

The argument developed here yields three main conclusions.

First, Pavlov's second signaling system remains highly relevant because it identifies verbal signs as a uniquely human regulatory layer over direct experience. That insight provides a foundational bridge between physiology, cognition, and social theory.

Second, contemporary scholarship in discourse studies, semiotics, and cognitive linguistics supports the broader proposition that language is tied to social representation, cognition, and meaning-making, making it inadequate to treat language as a neutral vehicle alone.

Third, Odam Tili contributes an original and stronger theoretical claim: if language is grounded in embodied action, sound, and meaning, then false, coercive, or prestige-coded language may do more than bias communication. It may interfere with the grounding conditions of thought. This claim still requires a broader empirical program to test its strongest formulations. But as a theoretical intervention, it is valuable precisely because it presses discourse theory beyond rhetoric and toward anthropology.

9. Conclusion

Language is not merely how societies speak. It is one of the primary ways they are governed.

Pavlov's second signaling system already implied that humans inhabit not only a sensory world but also a verbally mediated one. Contemporary work in discourse studies, semiotics, and cognitive linguistics confirms that language helps organize cognition, social representation, and meaning. Odam Tili radicalizes this by arguing

that language is not simply symbolic convention, but a grounded, embodied process of meaning formation.

If that is correct, then the struggle over language is not secondary to politics, psychology, or philosophy. It is central to all three. A society that does not understand the governing power of language will continue to be governed through language. A society that does understand it may begin to defend the deepest layer of freedom: the freedom not only to speak, but to mean.

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