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**AXIOMATIC FUNCTIONALISM:
THEORY AND APPLICATION**

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Axiomatic Functionalism: Theory and Application

Axiomatic Functionalism (henceforth AF) is a highly distinctive and challenging approach in the European functionalist tradition. Though mostly dealing with natural languages, it cannot be just described as a linguistic theory. Nowadays, a theory is usually taken to mean “a proposed explanation of some (empirical) phenomena”. AF certainly seeks to provide explanations, but *theory* is given a different meaning and is put in contrast with its *application*, i.e. description of phenomena. The AF theory is an axiomatically and deductively built framework of notions and models whose purpose is to provide *a means* for producing descriptions of desired phenomena, whereas a description is an act of application of the theory to a particular range of phenomena in order to produce a meaningful account of it. AF encompasses both theory building and its application. That is why it should rather be called a linguistic paradigm or, more generally, an approach to linguistics. But even that is not accurate. Its focus is larger than linguistics – it deals with semiotics in general, for it views linguistics as a sub-discipline of semiotics, with linguistic notions being merely specialised semiotic ones. Consequently, AF is best described as a *semiotic paradigm*. The understanding of semiotics is largely saussurean: it is restricted to systems of conventions for communications. A theory of language is implicit in the AF theory and emerges from it.