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PANEL ABSTRACTS
MULTIMODALITY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH AMERICA

This panel presents three ethnographic-oriented research studies in the field of multimodality and education in South America. The purpose is twofold. Firstly, we would like to share some topics, orientations and challenges common to South American research in this field to engage in dialogue with research from other contexts. On the other hand, we aim to discuss theoretical and methodological implications of adopting an ethnographic approach to multimodality in educational settings. Local issues of power, representation and access to (valued) semiotic resources cut across all three presentations. Manghi analyzes the design of a graduating ceremony in Chilean public technical education to show how multimodal resources are orchestrated to legitimate both the school and the graduating students and also to position these students in particular ways before other students and before the board of professors. Baeza Duffy explores how the enactment of a national law of inclusion in Chilean education makes particular meanings in two different schools and classrooms. Appropriation of the law leads to conflicting meanings of “inclusion”. The multimodal analysis of school and classroom practices shows how these conflicting meanings can be foregrounded or backgrounded by each school community, impacting the way social actors make sense of the law. Finally, Canale analyzes the inclusion of new technology in Uruguayan education and its consequences on the way in which the school subject English as a Foreign Language is constructed. Classroom interaction and work with the laptop impacts how the teacher and the students conceive learning, defying traditional ideologies which associate learning with print literacy and which construct the foreign language as the only legitimate mode to demonstrate learning in the language classroom. The panel hopes to contribute to theoretical and methodological discussions on the need for a close partnership between multimodal studies and ethnography to better understand the situated nature of meaning-making processes (Kress, 2011, 2015), with a focus on educational settings and contexts.

References


Traditional ideologies of learning foreground print literacy and promote verbal language as the only legitimized resource to communicate and demonstrate learning in the classroom. Within a socio-semiotic approach to learning, the concept of recognition hopes to expand what is legitimized as learning (Kress & Selander, 2012; Bezemer & Kress, 2016). This requires social actors to recognize that learning can be demonstrated through various semiotic modes and that literacy is a multisemiotic and multimodal phenomenon. This poses a big challenge to mainstream practices in language teaching, which tend to foreground language, background other modes and assess communication and learning as verbal phenomena exclusively. This presentation reports findings of an ethnographic study that explored the introduction of new technology in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom in Uruguay and its impact on how students and teacher oriented to learning. The analysis focuses on how students interacted with laptops throughout the academic year to expand their meaning-making resources and to design highly multimodal texts/signs, and on how these impacted the ideologies of learning in the classroom. To negotiate an alternative ideology of learning, the teacher and the students needed to: 1) redistribute semiotic labor between the (printed) EFL textbook and the laptop in the classroom, 2) redistribute expertise (EFL was not enough to complete classroom tasks successfully since students needed to learn how to use the software at hand), 3) design new tasks for assessing students’ work in order to recognize their multimodal doing. As a result, they negotiated the meanings of “EFL” so that learning the foreign language did not background learning as a multimodal business. Findings contribute to a better understanding of how recognition - as a socio-semiotic principle of learning - could be adopted in language teaching to better account for learning demands of the 21st century.

Keywords: Technology, language learning, ideologies of learning, recognition

References


MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NOTION OF EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION IN TWO CLASSES AND TWO EVENTS OF VULNERABLE SCHOOLS OF CHILE

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In 2016 the Chilean Government enacted the Inclusion Law, which eliminated for-profit education and established free and non-selective access to schools. Inclusive education is a social movement, whose challenge is positioning itself as a cultural, political project for the formation of knowledge and for the fight against educational exclusion (Slee & Allan, 2001). However, since the law does not solve the problems that affect the possibilities of moving towards an inclusive quality education, many debates have been generated in Chilean society related to the contents of the law and its enactment in the different Chilean schools. This study is framed in a larger project on School and classroom practices for inclusion (PIA CONICYT CIE 160009).

The objective of this presentation is to explore the multimodal critical discursive construction of the meanings of inclusion in community practices in two Chilean schools with a high degree of vulnerability. The qualitative methodology incorporates analytical tools of the Appraisal Theory and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis from Social Semiotics. Data collection is done from an ethnographic perspective. The corpus is comprised of field notes, videos and photos corresponding to two classes and two special events within each of the two communities. In this context we analyze the construction of different practices that favor or hinder inclusion from a multimodal approach, to denaturalize the semiotic resources - verbal and visual - through which the meaning of inclusion is constructed. Preliminary findings show the tensions that arise from the different interpretations and enactments of the law. The meanings constructed in each classroom practice and school point to different conceptions of inclusion for each social actor and for each community. Consequently, it is possible to find paradigmatic contradictions that maintain exclusion through practices made invisible by the communities themselves.

Keywords: Inclusive education, multimodal critical discourse analysis, appraisal theory, public policy, educational practices, exclusion

References


PUBLIC EDUCATION

Public education in Chile is still a segregated place that competes with paid private education. Technical professional education, which is attended by 40% of young people nationwide, is undervalued despite the policies on inclusive education and equity currently discussed. This study is part of a larger project on School and classroom practices for inclusion (PIA CONICYT CIE 160009). In this presentation we analyze from a social semiotic and multimodal perspective a graduation ceremony of a professional technical school, which decides to celebrate three generations of graduating students who have not formally graduated previously. The objective is to identify the semiotic options of design and production with which this community celebrates the value of finishing school, and of graduating from professional public technical training. From an ethnographic perspective, we construct a multimodal corpus of field notes, photographs and videos of the preparation and implementation of a graduation ceremony. The preliminary results show how the school changes for this occasion and different semiotic ensembles work for legitimating both the technical school and their graduating students. Color in chairs, flowers, dresses, on one hand, and spatial disposition and distance from the stage, on the other, are some of the resources that work to make interpersonal meanings, sometimes distancing the graduates to stand out as different from the rest, other times bringing them closer to the board of professors of the school to validate them as peers.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse analysis, social semiotics, inclusive education, interpersonal meanings

References


Understanding Young Readers' use of Semiotic Resources to Construct Meanings with Picturebooks

Dr. Frank Serafini, Dr. Lindsey Moses, Dani Kachorsky

Multimodal texts, in particular contemporary picturebooks, are used extensively in many literacy instructional frameworks, conveying meanings through the use of multiple sign systems, written language, design elements, and visual images. However, the primary focus in elementary reading education has been on the strategies and skills necessary for understanding written language. This lack of attention to visual images and visual systems of meaning presents serious challenges at a time when image has begun to dominate the lives of their students.

In this panel presentation, three literacy researchers discuss how design features, including typographic elements, speech bubbles, illustrations, and peritextual elements, serve as semiotic resources used by young readers to construct meanings in transactions with contemporary picturebooks. Drawing on a variety of theoretical frameworks, including miscue analysis, multimodal analysis, and interactional analysis, the presenters in this symposium analyze how young readers interacted with the visual, textual, and design elements of Mo Willems’ picturebook *We are in a Book!* (Willems, 2010). The purpose of this panel presentation is to utilize a variety of analytical frameworks to understand how young readers draw on the semiotic resources available for constructing meaning with contemporary picturebooks.

One researcher focuses on the challenges associated with using traditional oral reading assessments, in particular miscue analysis, and the lack of attention these assessments give to visual images and design elements in the reading process. Two researchers focus on the array of semiotic resources students drew upon when constructing meaning with picturebooks. Using eight students of varying language abilities as a bounded case, the researchers found that young readers utilize a broad range of semiotic resources rather than relying strictly on printed text in their readings of picturebooks.
INTERMEDIALITY AND LEARNING: MATERIALITY AND KNOWLEDGE REPRESENTATION ACROSS MEDIA BORDERS

This panel brings together multimodal scholars conducting studies at the intersection of media technologies, learning processes and knowledge representation. A considerable body of research has pointed out a need for systematic investigations into learners’ ever more pervasive engagement with new technologies and their technical competence in accessing, interpreting and authoring multimedia texts (cf. Buckingham 2003, Finch & Arrow, 2017; Marsh et al., 2017). To prepare the ground for such investigations, several complex issues concerning the relationship between media materiality and students’ learning need to be sufficiently, critically and empirically examined first: To what extent are the learners’ engagement, motivation and comprehension influenced by the design and use of multimedia learning materials? In what ways, based on what principles, can engagement with different media be effectively harnessed for teaching multimodal literacy or supporting learning in different curriculum areas?

By addressing such complex questions, our panel will highlight the urgent need to move beyond a focus on mere engagement with multimedia technologies and build a stronger understanding of how learners develop intermedial competence, which encompasses students’ and educators’ critical awareness of the affordances and functionality of multimedia connections and materials. Most importantly, the presentations of this panel will shed light on the development of intermedial principles for instructional design with potential for further empirical investigations.

(90 minutes)
Animated chemistry in elementary school classrooms

Kristina Danielsson

The transition from descriptions and explanations of science phenomena at the macroscopic level (what can be perceived by our senses) to explanations at the submicroscopic level (e.g. the particle level) has proved to be challenging for teachers and students, for instance that air expands when heated. I will present an ongoing project, "Animated chemistry – the new way of learning?", aimed at finding ways of meeting this challenge. Students in an elementary classroom (age 9/10) were engaged in activities involving a variety of semiotic modes and media to represent the science content (action, talking, writing, drawing, modeling) with the creation of stop motion-films as a final step to explain at the particle level what they had experienced with their senses. The possibilities and challenges related to such a design of a teaching and learning sequence will be discussed in relation to the concept of affordance.
Harnessing transmedia adaptations for multiliteracies education

Emilia Djonov

Contemporary early and primary school literacy curricula stress the importance of engaging young learners in exploring, creating and responding to multimodal texts in a range of different media: poetry, picture books, graphic novels, novels, film and interactive digital texts. While in preschool and the early grades the focus of literacy education is on children developing literacy- and learning-oriented language and learning how to read and write, in later years this focus expands to include learning about language and other modes. From the middle of primary school in Australia, for example, students are expected to develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of such multimodal texts and to use metalanguage to describe text structures and language features (https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english).

This paper examines the potential of engagement with adaptations of the same narrative in different media to raise young learners’ awareness of the affordances of different media and the modes they support, and provides a springboard for teaching students about these affordances. It presents principles for developing a framework for comparative multimodal text analysis that teachers can use to examine such adaptations and evaluate their potential for promoting critical and multimodal literacy. Central to the framework is Van Leeuwen’s (2008) model for examining ‘recontextualisation’ in discourse. It also draws on principles for distinguishing and analysing the affordances and use of different modes and media presented in Kress (2010), Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala (2017), and Tseng & Bateman (in press).

The value of such a framework is illustrated through the analysis of the recontextualisation of the narrative The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore from a short award-winning animated film (Joyce, 2011) to an interactive picture book app (Moonbot Studios, 2011) and finally a traditional picture book (Joyce, 2012), and the shared reading interactions with the traditional and interactive picture book versions of 16 dyads of university-educated mothers and their 4-to-5-year-old children.
Character structure, immersive function and learning effects: intermedial narrative comparison of filmic and graphic educational materials

Chiao-I Tseng

Several empirical studies have shown that understanding characters in narrative is one of the most significant elements in the meaning comprehension process because people’s overall narrative inferences are substantially mediated by characters. Characters’ actions, interactions and motivations are often regarded as the driving force for attention and often constitute the cognitive basis that readers’ and viewers’ empathetic emotions ride upon.

Through applying analytical methods developed recently for analysing character developments in multimodal texts (Tseng, 2017; 2018), I will systematically compare and contrast designs of character structures in filmic and graphic narrative materials for teaching and learning scientific subjects for children and for higher education as well as the educational materials with social, political themes.

I will relate the comparative results to the recent empirical research on narrative impact and critically evaluate the possible learning effects of using different constructions of character structures in teaching and learning different subjects of science and humanities. Drawing on the intermedial comparative analysis, I will conclude the presentation by suggesting that for enhancing learning effects and students’ engagements of topics being taught, one crucial mechanism lies in distinguishing different types of immersive narrative functions triggered by character structures.
What is understanding?

Theo van Leeuwen

The ideas in this paper form part of the development of a new Australian English secondary school syllabus. This syllabus seeks to make the distinctive disciplinary knowledge of English more visible by means of “textual concepts” such as intertextuality, representation, genre, narrative, connotation, character, style, and point of view, and aims to develop students’ conceptual understanding of English as a multimodal discipline. ‘Understanding’ is therefore a key word in the way the syllabus is conceived.

In this paper ‘understanding’ is seen as a subjective experience, a sudden surge of insight that yields pleasure and empowerment, a sense of seeing previously unnoticed connections and grasping how and why things are the way they are. Developing understanding, in the context of the English curriculum, is therefore developing students’ ability to make connections, to see similarities and differences (a) between the ways the same kinds of things are expressed in different semiotic modes (multimodality), (b) between the ways the same kinds of things are expressed in different kinds of texts (intertextuality), and (c) between the meaning potentials expressed in different modes and different kinds of texts and experience (meaning).

Textual concepts are eminently suitable tools for developing understanding in this way, because they can cross the boundaries between modes, between kinds of text and, ultimately, between texts and life. The paper will show how this can be achieved with the concept of ‘character’, that is, how ‘character’ can be, and is, expressed in different modes and different kinds of text, and how descriptions of character in texts may relate to experience.

Against the background of the history of the concept of character, including a consideration of the relation of the concepts of ‘role’ and ‘identity’ to the concept of ‘character’, examples will include the realization of character by avatars and movie actors and descriptions of character in journalistic and literary texts, and in psychological case studies.

References

POSTER ABSTRACTS
Brand Personification as Bonding: A Socio-semiotic Analysis of Three Packaging Cases

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Brand personification has been well investigated in marketing literature. However, it is still rarely studied from the semiotic perspective, which offers a lens to research how semiotic resources of products could be designed to personify the brand. Under the framework of systemic-functional socio-semiotics, brand personification is theorized as a semiotic process of Bonding, referring to the shared coupling of value and character. Two primary choices of bonding strategies are proposed: appreciation/judgment and affect. The source and target of appreciation/judgment are labeled as Appraiser and Appraised while those of affect are labeled as Emoter and Trigger. It leads to further considerations of how to construe the character as Appraiser, Appraised, Emoter, and/or Trigger. Then, the paper, drawing on visual and verbal grammars founded on systemic-functional socio-semiotics, proceeds to illustrate how semiotic resources are co-deployed to realize those bonding strategies via a close analysis of three packaging cases of a company, Uni-President. This study provides theoretical backup for the brand personification in marketing and serves as a useful guideline for brand personification design, in particular, multimodal communication in packaging.

Keywords: Brand personification, socio-semiotics, appraisal semantics, bonding, packaging
Nothing to add – nothing to take away?

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About the process of graphic abstraction

In the field of visual communication, abstraction is often made by graphic designers. Why is that made and what are the methods for that? I settle my design case in discussion.

In my poster presentation, I concern visual material designed for a project named PROMEQ, funded by the Finnish Academy. The aim for this project is to hear the voice of “people in challenging situations” and to promote their health and welfare. Four focus groups are:

-young people (not in education, not in employment or training)
-long term unemployed
-adult immigrants (as asylum seekers)
-older multi-users of social and health care

Within the communication material, I concern static images representing people in printed material, websites and social media. Images move from realistic photographs, where individuals are recognized, towards symbols representing the idea of the human being in general. I settle the imagery on a scale from realistic to simplified. There are different degrees of abstraction, and my aim is to show what these design decisions are based on.

For us, it is economical to classify things in categories. After categorizing in our minds, our mental representations become visible in the process of graphic abstraction. It means external visual simplification. Using prototypes is often economical within communication, but our aim was to avoid stereotypes used in referring to “vulnerable people”. Raising the level of abstraction was one means for avoiding stigmatizing our focus groups. Also framing photographs, letting viewers think about the rest, was another way to do that. Further, using illustrations instead of photos, as simplified silhouettes was a good way to modify images towards conceptual ones. The identity symbol was abstracted to the highest level.
Multimodal Analysis on Japanese Written Text as a Device that has been Made Social Dividing, Merging and New values

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In our presentation, we will examine the social function of Japanese written text from a perspective of the historical context of language education in Japan. Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) argue the importance of a multimodal approach not only for visual texts but also for written texts, and Fairclough (2000a) has made a similar proposal focusing on written texts which are displayed on a screen. Kress & van Leeuwen mentioned that the multimodal way of each language is not transparent and universally understood, but culturally specific (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996:3). Therefore we try to show and examine Japanese written texts which were really used in a common school course from the Meiji era up to the present by using frameworks of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. We hope our work will provide some ideas and concepts for the study of multimodal communication in a non-Western form of written text.

Japanese can be written in four types of characters, and they each have a different history of their own. Some of them are phonograms and the other is an ideogram. An example article which we will show contains a mixture of vertical and horizontal text. Before the Meiji Restoration, different text characters were used by the writers, depending on their social positions in Japan. After the Meiji Restoration, the restructured public educational system regulated these different writing systems into the common system which can be understood by all social classes. In the process of this regulation, some tabulated forms or tales were introduced from the West and were redesigned. Because of these historical contexts, when we read written text nowadays, we can make redesigned meaning and new values from these texts using some historical typefaces and forms of ancient Japanese as resources.

Keywords: Multimodal, members’ resources, social value, historical context

References


Activity Types of Semiotic Graffiti: Official and Unofficial Negotiation

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As a Special Administrative Region on the periphery of China, Macao offers special insights into Geosemiotics (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) especially in view of the multilingual and multicultural graffiti. The “participation in graffiti production may have important social, cultural and educational values” (Pennycook, 2010, p.139). The strategy of solving the paradox between graffiti as art and graffiti as vandalism by allowing permitted graffiti is adopted by the Macao government to some extent. The aim of this paper is to explore the official and unofficial negotiation by observing the interplay between languages and images, the activity types (Levinson, 1992), and the degrees of authorization of the graffiti in various places of globalized Macao, with the help of ethnographic methods such as observation and informal interviews. The commissioned colorful student graffiti in the Cotai Ecological Zones are compared with bottom-up political graffiti and we also draw evidence from other types of graffiti data such as student murals and hip-hop graffiti to confirm our speculations. The various types of graffiti correspond to certain activity types and embody corresponding interaction between language and images. It seems that the authorized graffiti are often multilingual, multimodal and colorful while the bottom-up graffiti such as the protest graffiti are less multilingual, more verbal and more lucid.

Keywords: Graffiti, multimodality, activity types, negotiation, Macao

References


Professional identity revisited

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Identity can be defined as a number of inherent qualities of an individual or a group that distinguish them from other individuals or groups. It has a personal, an interactive and a social dimension. It is who we are or more accurately who we want to be seen as. It is constructed and context-dependent, it can be shifted between various social or cultural situations. It can be managed. Taking into account the digital turn in communication an important part of one's identity is its online rendition – even though limited by a number of factors, still exerting a powerful effect on other users.

Since the Internet has become the ultimate arena for the display of oneself we decided to follow other scholars and examine what the social media reveal about the identity of a selected professional group, namely teachers. It was our objective to find out if the images and comments posted on Instagram, a popular online photo-sharing application and social network platform, comply with the notion of a teacher emerging from research in educational studies (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Søreide, 2006; Walkington, 2005; Beijaard et al., 2000).

In order to achieve this goal we applied a quantitative and then a qualitative analysis of the bimodal texts relevant to the subject matter. A social semiotic approach was employed with particular focus on the textual and interpersonal metafunctions of the of images and verbal messages: especially modality and composition (including information value, salience and framing) as we agree with Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) that each choice an author makes, either verbal or visual, is charged with meaning.

Hopefully, the results of the study will provoke a discussion about the teachers’ image and the changes it has undergone since the development of social media: a shift in the private/public domain and a remodelling of the master/student relationship in which the teacher seems no longer an absolute or statutory authority but a facilitator, a free spirit, a passionate professional or a person a student can or even should like.

References


SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS
Multimodal ethnography – understanding meaning making in practices and across contexts

Multimodal ethnography brings together social semiotics and ethnography. In this perspective, researchers are in particular concerned with: ‘accounts of cultural and social practices through prolonged fieldwork in a particular setting’ (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O’Halloran, 2016, p. 118).

Consequently, two things characterize this approach. First, the research emphasis on everyday practices and contexts, and second, the ethnographer documents these practices by collecting artefacts, writing field notes.

The question about the relationship between multimodality and ethnography has been raised a number of times during the last two decades (Dicks, Flewitt, Lancaster, Pahl, & Kress, 2011; Flewitt, 2011). Gunther Kress claimed that ethnography and social semiotics should be brought together to ‘mutual advantage’ in the article: ‘partnership in research’: multimodality and ethnography (2011). Here, he argued that social semiotics emphasizes ‘the ceaseless social (re) making of a set of cultural resources (Kress, 2011, p. 242 italics in original text). Kress argues that ethnography has the task to provide us with information about the setting that surrounds the social interaction. Also from a multimodal ethnographic perspective, other researchers have paid attention to materiality and multimodality (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), as well as literacy practices in diverse contexts (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005).

This symposium brings together three papers that discuss and develop multimodal ethnography.

Eva Insulander presents and discusses examples of how methods from the field of ethnography were used within the frames of a research project on learning and designs for learning. Øystein Gilje’s paper focuses on values of ethnographic fieldwork in relation to analyses of meaning-making practices across sites and contexts by following the individual learner or/and a semiotic artefact. Fredrik Lindstrand uses examples from two projects to suggest how ethnographical approaches can be used to encompass a focus on both functional/social and systemic aspects of semiosis in multimodal research.

Discussant: Professor Anders Björkvall, Örebro Universitet. Anders.Bjorkvall@oru.se

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Follow the signmaker – a multimodal lens on ethnographic fieldwork across contexts

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This paper presents and discusses a multimodal perspective on ethnographic fieldwork, which is carried out in various contexts over time. By discussing what it means to follow ‘the learner’ or ‘the semiotic artefact’ the paper discusses how sign makers are remixing and reconfiguring their semiotic work according to the diverse cultural and social practices that are negotiated and valued in each context.

A central debate in field of ethnography is the move from studies of a social phenomenon by focusing on one particular site to the understanding of meaning making across sites. George E. Marcus multi-sited ethnography (1995), highlights the importance of following the agent, or the (semiotic) artefact, among six perspectives on ‘what’ to follow across sites. This multi-sited ethnography also relates to the interest in new modes of online communication, and raises questions of ‘where’ the research takes place, a debate that has been fueled in the last decade in virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000; 2015) and digital anthropology (Horst & Miller, 2012).

Building on two collaborative research projects and ethnographies, Learning Lives (Erstad, Gilje, Sefton-Green, & Arnseth, 2016) and Knowledge in Motion (Erstad & Smette, 2017; Gilje & Erstad, 2014; Silseth & Gilje, 2017) this presentation give examples of how to ‘follow’ sign makers in informal and formal learning contexts, and how semiotic artefacts are made and remade across these contexts.

The analysis pays attention to how we can follow the semiotic artefact (Gilje & Erstad, 2016) and the signmaker. In doing this, the presentation gives examples of how to explore the complexity of following the learners and the semiotic artefacts, and see how they redesign (transduct and translate (Bezemer & Kress, 2008)) their semiotic work from one context to another.

References


Multimodal ethnography in educational research: examining the middle ages as a knowledge domain

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This paper presents and discusses an approach to multimodal ethnography that was used in a project called REMAKE. Representation, resources and meaning-making. The Middle Ages as a knowledge domain in different learning environments. The project examined representations of the Middle Ages in different learning environments, and how these representations were interpreted, transformed and re-designed by the participants (eg. Insulander, 2017; Insulander, Lindstrand & Selander, 2017; Insulander, Lindstrand & Selander, 2016).

The methodology involved observations during recurring visits to two classes in compulsory schools, and one class in upper secondary school. The researcher attended a series of lessons, starting from the introduction of the unit and continuing until its finish, a total of 5-10 lessons for each class. The empirical material consisted of video recordings of classroom interaction and visits to museums, a compilation of educational material as well as texts created by pupils. As a way to obtain information about summative assessment, short interviews were conducted with the participating teachers.

Our intent was not to make a detailed multimodal analysis of human interaction, but rather to study transformative processes and instances where modes and media were used by teachers and students. Thus, based on our objective, the approach did not involve detailed transcriptions of interaction. Our aim was to draw conclusions of the participants’ meaningmaking in relation to conditions of the particular setting. This involved a critical approach towards the situated cultures of recognition, attending to the agency of teachers and students (Bezemer & Kress, 2016).

Ideas about ethnography have changed over time. The term “ethnography” is in this case used to refer to a study which included some participant observation and unstructured interviews. The fieldwork lasted for a few weeks rather than for years or months. Video was used for documentation instead of making fieldnotes (cf. Hammersley, 2005). Our multimodal analysis illustrates how different learning designs produce different images of a knowledge area and create different opportunities for learning and assessment. Our approach may be described as being situated within a social semiotic approach to multimodality associated with the work of Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, Carey Jewitt and Jeff Bezemer (see eg. Jewitt, 2014).

References

Grasping action in multimodal transformative processes

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A multimodal and social semiotic (Hodge & Kress, 1988) approach to learning, focusing on semiosis and semiotic change, provides an important contrast to the fields of research that currently inform political discourse on education and learning. By conceptualising learning as socially situated processes of sign-making and approaching learners as meaning-makers engaged in semiotic work (Kress, 2003; 2010), social semiotics affords valuable possibilities to grasp the social and epistemological complexities of learning and education (Insulander & Lindstrand, 2013; Insulander, Kjällander et al., 2017). In a world of instability and change, this seems as crucial as ever (cf. Kress, 2008).

However, approaching learning in ways that utilise the potentials of social semiotic theory calls for a research design that opens not only for analyses of signs and resources, but also for grasping sign-making as a process of decision making in situ over time (cf. van Leeuwen, 2005; Lindstrand, 2010). Differently put, it is a matter of balancing the two sides of social semiotics: the functional/social and the systemic parts of semiosis (Machin, 2016).

Building on examples from two research projects, the paper suggests that ethnographical approaches may offer ways to orchestrate this in practice (see also Dicks, Soyinka & Caffrey, 2006; Dicks, Flewitt et al., 2011). One of the projects, Making difference (Lindstrand, 2006; 2009) used ethnographic approaches to show how understandings of aspects related to ideational, interpersonal and textual features of communication with moving images were construed gradually in the transition between different phases, modes and media in collaborative filmmaking processes. The other project, The Mission (Lindstrand, 2016), used ethnographic approaches to track how various elements from a convergent learning process about WW2 were used as resources in the collaborative production of a written fictive story.

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PAPER ABSTRACTS
The visual landscapes of our public spaces signify through architectural design and all various signage and objects, as well as their colour, layout and materiality. Resources such as writing, color, typography, image, objects and layout have never been as significant and available to everyone as in today’s societies, yet their use is generally highly regulated in public spaces. Urban visual landscapes are increasingly shaped by aesthetic choices made by design professionals, both as institutional public signage and urban décor, and as corporate-led image-branding design of chain shops populating city centres globally. This limits the kinds of social agents who shape public spaces visually and influences our tastes more generally, through hegemonic patterned uses of resources such as font, writing, image, objects and layout.

A few places still exist that are still relatively semiotically unregulated, though. The paper presents a social semiotic ethnographic approach to the investigation of vernacular sign-making in place, by examining the visual landscape of Kirkate Market in Leeds (UK), as an example of a semiotically diverse unregulated place. By analysing traders’ use of resources in their stalls, it shows the disruption of mainstream aesthetic tenets emerging from vernacular sign-making practices, and the distinctive socio-cultural value of these practices in semiotically unregulated places.

Findings show that vernacular sign-making can be driven by different principles than corporate-led professional design aesthetics, revealing not only different tastes but also different conceptions of public space, even in a business-oriented place like a market. The conclusions derive implications for the investigation of vernacular semiotics in public space.
Visual Hate Speech and Popular Culture: The Case of Islamophobic Memes
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Muslims have been the target of discriminatory attitudes – especially after 9/11- by certain sectors of society leading to what is known as ‘Islamophobia’. This feeling of exclusion has its most common manifestation in hate speech. Hate speech itself is a concept that has been approached from very different perspectives and despite the fact that no single universal definition of the notion exists, it could roughly be defined as all forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify forms of hatred towards individuals based on their membership in a group. In the technological society we live in, the most common channel of the expression of Islamophobia is, without doubt, social media giving rise to a new 2.0 variety— Cyber Islamophobia (Larsson 2007).

One of the most subtle ways to show hate speech is through humour, and especially humour on the Internet. In the realm of ‘Internet humour’, memes are a very frequently used resource. Memes are digitally created and shared images intended to be humorous that usually identify current events using popular culture references. However, memes are frequently used to reinforce social bonding rather than to share information, in a way in which one solidifies the in-group via the ridicule of others (Zappavigna, 2012) and, in this sense, they could be the perfect tool to spread online Islamophobia.

This paper analyses a corpus of 150 Islamophobic memes taken from social media (Facebook and Twitter) during the period 2014-2017 from a threefold perspective:

1. Describe the content of the memes applying the work on Visual Grammar Design (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996), Multimodal Analysis (Machin, 2007) and Visual Framing Theory (Rodríguez & Dimitrova, 2011; Geise 2017).
2. Analyse the ideology underlying them from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective (Fairclough 1995)
3. Establish the connections between memes and hate speech: are memes a normalised way to disguise hate speech?

References


Using variation and unpacking to help students decode disciplinary-specific semiotic resources

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In this presentation I will describe a social semiotic approach (Halliday 1978; van Leeuwen 2005) to the multimodal teaching and learning of a discipline that takes variation theory (Marton & Booth 1997; Runesson 2005) as its theoretical framing. Following Airey and Linder (2017:95) I define social semiotics as “the study of the development and reproduction of specialized systems of meaning making in particular sections of society”.

Learning at university level involves coming to understand the ways in which disciplinary-specific semiotic resources can be coordinated to make appropriate disciplinary meanings (Airey & Linder 2009). Nowhere is this more true than in undergraduate physics where a particularly wide range of semiotic resources such as graphs, diagrams, mathematics and language are essential for meaning making. In order to learn to make these disciplinary meanings, students need to discover the disciplinary affordances (Fredlund et al. 2012, 2014; Airey & Linder 2017) of the semiotic resources used in their discipline.

Fredlund et al. (2015) propose a three-stage process that lecturers can use to help their students:

1. Identify the disciplinary relevant aspects needed for a particular task.
2. Select semiotic resources that showcase these aspects.
3. Create structured variation within these semiotic resources to help students notice the disciplinary relevant aspects and their relationships to each other.

However, many disciplinary specific semiotic resources have been rationalized to create a kind of disciplinary shorthand (Airey 2009). In such cases the disciplinary relevant aspects needed may no longer be present in resources used, but are rather implied. In such cases the resources will need to be unpacked for students (Fredlund et al. 2014). Such unpacking increases the pedagogical affordance of semiotic resources but simultaneously decreases their disciplinary affordance.

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Multimodal Science and Engineering Teaching: Perspectives from 8ICOM
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The previous international conference on multimodality – 8ICOM – featured two sessions devoted to multimodal, social semiotic approaches to science teaching and learning (c.f. Halliday1978; van Leeuwen 2005, Airey & Linder 2017). What the papers in these sessions shared was the argument that such perspectives on science, and science teaching, can, at least in part, respond to calls to ‘democratize’ science education by recognising diverse sets of semiotic resources and, in so doing, seeking to address impediments to equal participation (Burke et al., 2017).

The 8ICOM science sessions were particularly noteworthy given the backdrop against which 8ICOM had been organised. In the months leading up to the conference, South Africa (and Cape Town, in particular) had experienced campus unrest aimed at ‘decolonizing’ higher education in that country. As part of this movement, the phrase #ScienceMustFall briefly trended on social media. This emanated from the claim that ‘science’ is a western, colonial construct that needs to be dismantled and replaced with the teaching of indigenous, African knowledge. Although the #ScienceMustFall slogan has since departed from the wider public consciousness, the questions it raises nonetheless remain: why, and how, should science be taught? Is science more than just a western colonial construction and, if so, why? And, what can the concept of multimodality offer by way of answering these questions?

In this paper, we offer an overview of the multimodal science papers presented in the two sessions at 8ICOM in the light of these questions. This is done with a view to assessing where the multimodality community finds itself regarding science education, and how it might address questions of the legitimacy of western science in the future. It is thus an attempt, as the conference theme suggests, to ‘move the theory forward’.

References
“It can cry, it can speak, it can pee”: Modality Values and Playing Affordances in Contemporary Baby Dolls’ Discourse

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Baby dolls have been in the toy market for more than a hundred years, since French firm Jumeau entered the toy industry in the 19th century and started producing ‘bébés’, considered the greatest phenomena of the toy market (FLEMING, 1996). The aim of this analysis is to shed some light on the multimodal properties provided by the aural, verbal and visual texts of the packages of Brazilian baby dolls through a careful look at their textual and contextual meanings, anchored on Kress & Van Leeuwen’s (2006) subsystem of modality (reality value), within the interpersonal visual metafunction. The analyses of the baby dolls’ packages point to roles suggested to young girls from very early age, varying from parenting roles they are asked to fulfill later in life as future mothers to medical abilities they are encouraged to master in order to care and nurture for their “children”.

Exploring academic argument in data visualizations

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In an age where more and more data are produced and circulated visually, and digital environments make the production of data visualizations increasingly accessible, it is important to develop critical tools for students to engage with these texts. Data can be represented through a range of modes (such as writing, visuals and numbers) and different information graphics (such as tables, charts, graphs). There are design choices to be made in terms of size, shape, colour and composition in order to represent a particular argument to a particular audience in the most apt way. Using a multimodal social semiotic approach, this presentation investigates rhetorical and semiotic strategies for realizing argument in data visualization texts. The strategies investigated include aspects such as use of colour, typography, graphics (like using a bar rather than a point on a graph); as well as the relation between academic argument and citation in information graphics. The effect of the underlying basis for comparison of data is examined, as is the selection and processing of data. The presentation investigates i) the semiotic encoding of ideational material and ii) the ways relationships are established within the discourse communities constructed in particular data visualizations. This has implications for the way we teach these text-types in Higher Education in order to produce critical citizens; both in terms of production and critical analysis.
Discourses in and around upcycled artefacts as instantiations of discourse

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This presentation looks at artefacts from a social semiotic perspective in order to explore global / local discourses instantiated in and circulating around ‘upcycled’ artefacts. Upcycled products tend to gain not only economic value in the process of being transformed from used, old things, but also ethical value through being created out of a responsibility for the environment and resistance toward mass consumerism. The aesthetic and functional values that are added in upcycling address the demands of different local and global markets. The focus of this presentation is how discourses in and around an upcycled artefact make it possible for it to move between cultural and geographical spaces, whilst both maintaining and transforming the meaning potential of the artefact. We look at discourses in artefacts as instantiated through explicit semiotic resources (specifically material, shape and colour). In thinking about discourses ‘around’, we apply Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes’ (2011) notions of authenticity and mobility, and use the concept of provenance (Adami, 2015; Björkvall 2018; Djonov and van Leeuwen 2011) to discuss how upcycled artefacts relate to other texts, semiotic domains, and practices. The data explored include artefacts made from different kinds of waste plastic bottles. We highlight the ways in which these artefacts draw on such varied phenomena as environmentalism, poverty reduction, Western functionalism, and trophy hunting. We demonstrate how an analysis of discourses and semiotic resources in an artefact as well as the discourses, narratives and practices around it can provide us with a number of insights regarding local authenticity, global mobility, and other meaning potentials of upcycled objects.

References


Truth, image and politics: the visual discourse of the "Alianza Cambiemos"

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One of the strategies of the presidential campaign (Garcia Beaudoux, V. et al., 2005) of 2015 in Argentina, of then candidate and now President, Mauricio Macri, was appealing to a "new way of making politics" based on the slogan: "talk less and do more." In this paper, we propose to investigate the sign making process of the visual discourse of the Alianza Cambiemos, focusing on the spots of the general election campaign in 2015. We research the function of images in Cambiemos discourse, used as a semiotic resource in confrontation with the common usage of speech in the political field.

There are different ways of making representations in visual communication, according to the multimodal approach within social semiotics (Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2004). As Kress and van Leeuwen have said, the representational metafunction is the one that refers to the participants represented, that is to say, the people, places and objects that can be seen within the image. Within this metafunction and depending on whether the participants are taking action or not, two types of structures can be distinguished: narrative and conceptual. The narrative images allow observers to create a story about the participants, in a more personal approach, since they include motion vectors; the conceptual images instead do not include vectors, and participants are usually grouped together to present to the observer the "concept" of who or what they represent, in more impersonal terms. These elements of analysis allow us to recognize semiotic strategies of identification (Fairclough, 2004) in the framework of a political structure that explicitly confronts and avoids the use of speech as semiotic resource.

A first approach indicates that a relationship is established between the images, the facts and the truth, in open confrontation with political speech, which is seen as a device of deceit.

References

The Resemiotization of the Notion of Educational Inclusion from the Official Voice: Multimodal Critical Analysis of the Website of the Chilean Ministry of Education

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In 2016 the Chilean Government enacted the Inclusion Act, which eliminated for-profit education and established free and non-selective access to schools. The official voice resemiotizes the Act (Iedema, 2003) and its power is present in semiotic practices by means of the promotion of some signs and meanings as well as the annulment of others (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). This study aims to describe the meaning making within the website of the Chilean Ministry of Education, in which the Inclusion Act is resemiotized. The qualitative methodology incorporates analytical tools of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, Social Semiotics and the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The corpus is comprised of static and dynamic multimodal texts (videos) of the web page, which are analyzed manually from a multimodal approach in order to denaturalize the semiotic ensembles through which the meanings of inclusive education are made. Among the preliminary results, on the one hand, the web page of the Ministry of Education resembles the concept of inclusion in an evoked way, through non-permanent banners that recontextualize four conditions in which inclusion occurs: a) free of charge education is expressed by means of an intermodal ensemble; b) the strengthening of public education, which is instanced through writing; c) gender equity that is represented multimodally; and d) the diversification of teaching, which is presented through speech. On the other hand, the web page shows a low prominence of the concept of inclusion, which contradicts the spirit of the Inclusion Act that seeks to expand the beneficiaries of educational inclusión and to promote structural changes of the educational system.

Keywords: Multimodality, public policy discourse, social semiotics, resemiotization

References


Promoting diversity and inclusion in public service announcements: a critical multimodal analysis of public campaigns

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Public communication campaigns are an essential part of our life. We live in the era of the “permanent campaign” (Perloff 2003), where campaigns are undertaken to influence people on every topic, ranging from personal to social issues.

Nowadays, hundreds of websites are devoted to campaign issues; therefore, the analysis will be conducted on a corpus of videos collected from the websites of some British and American non-profit organisations which create and promote public service announcements focusing on critical social issues.

As stated by Dozier et al (2001: 232) “public communication campaigns may be viewed as strategies of social control because one group has taken it on itself to affect the beliefs or behaviors of another group”. As a result, a critical analysis of multimodal discourse (van Leeuwen 2013) will allow us to investigate how diversity and inclusion (disabled people, immigrants, minorities, LGBT people, mentally ill persons) are represented in the collected videos and to what extent these announcements contribute to raising awareness, changing public attitudes and behaviour towards social issues.

Public campaigns can employ various communicative techniques and different materials, but they are all based on the art of persuasion relying on “argumentation, sloganeering, and emotional appeals in an effort to mold public attitudes” (Perloff 2003: 303). Since “language is an integral aspect of the persuasive transaction, with nonverbal behavior coming into play as an instrument for reinforcing the meaning and/or credibility of verbal messages” (Miller 2002: 5), this study will focus on the linguistic and visual manifestations of argumentation looking at the way in which they interact to produce a persuasive message. Against the theoretical framework of multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin 2013; van Leeuwen 2013) and visual argumentation (Birdsell/Groarke 1996; Blair 2004; Roque 2012), the research aims to explore how national organisations promote diversity and inclusion through verbal and visual argumentative-persuasive techniques and to what extent these strategies interact in the campaign material, also allowing for an expansion of the theory of multimodality.

Keywords: Multimodal critical discourse analysis, visual argumentation, public service announcements, diversity and inclusion

References

Picture books at college: a multimodal reading experience

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In spite of not being produced for instructive purposes, picture books (PB) have been largely used in formal educational environments to help children develop their communicative skills in their first years at school. Going beyond this aspect, researchers, such as Unsworth (2013), Serafini (2014) and Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013), to mention a few, have showed PB’s potential to provide a useful understanding of social relationship when readers integrate words and pictures in a multimodal reading performance. That potential also suggests that considering picture books as literature for children only may turn out to be a considerable misconception, which means different audiences are expected to engage with reading this multimodal genre in spite of their age. This presentation will discuss four undergraduate students’ reading performance and meaning-making production when reading the picture books Outside over there, by Maurice Sendak, and Fox, by Margareth Wild and Ron Brooks. The aim of this discussion is to show possible influences in which viewing and reading integration skills may have for the development of their visual literacy. Grounded in multimodality theories (KRESS, 2010; JEWITT, 2009) and some ideas from the Grammar of Visual Design (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006), the analysis of the results achieved showed a shift from reading the text only to reading the image and the text, which means students performed a multimodal reading by integrating different modes and semiotic resources and also started to use different semiotic resources to produce meaning. As a possible implication for teaching and learning English as a foreign language, in a Brazilian context, we suggest viewing as a skill that can be developed while reading multimodal texts, and therefore, should be included in language curricula; and we also positively evaluate the Grammar of Visual Design as a tool that can enhance and facilitate that kind of reading.

Keywords: Multimodality, visual literacy, reading, viewing

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The Grammar of Visual Design at College: teaching future teachers to read images

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Over the last twenty years, educators have been discussing the advances in communication and information technologies' impact on educational practices. Due to the increase in production, consumption and spread of multimodal texts, special attention has been given to the understanding of how text and images can be integrated. The Grammar of Visual Design (GVD), by Kress and van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006) has been one of the most useful and used tools to read images so far. Different studies have analyzed a variety of texts, such as advertisements, newspapers and teaching materials, among others, to show the grammar’s potential to enhance visual literacy. However, fewer studies have focused on the meaning-making production of its users while reading those texts. Grounded in multimodality (KRESS, 2010) and multiliteracies (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996), this presentation discusses the meanings made by eight undergraduate students while reading an advertisement before and after being exposed to the GVD categories and their consciousness development of their own visual literacy as well as their evaluations of the Grammar. That reading performance was part of a multimodal reading workshop, in the Brazilian English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching training context, in which the students were introduced to some GVD categories and engaged in visual analysis of different multimodal texts and shared their interpretations. At the end, the participants were asked to evaluate the Grammar as both a tool to read images and to be used in EFL classes. The results showed that students became aware of their visual literacy as they started adopting the GVD metalanguage to talk about multimodal texts, although resistance to some of its categories could be identified. They also evaluated the Grammar positively and indicated their intentions to use it as a tool to be used to teach their future students to read images.

Keywords: Multimodality, visual literacy, the grammar of visual design

References


Risk, indexicality and affordance at the international airport

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This paper explores international airports as semiotically highly regulated spaces for local and global flows of people. A key symbol of the postmodern world of constant transit (Fuller, 2002: 239) and institutional reflexivity (Giddens, 1991), airports are multimodally designed to simultaneously create flow through constant movement and to avoid potential risks and “what if”-scenarios. From this perspective, we approach the semiotics of international airport as colonized by the reflexive awareness of potential and unwanted future scenarios and failures (cf. Beck, 1992).

Our analysis draws on the concepts of indexicality (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) and affordance (Gibson, 1977; Ledin and Machin, 2018). As pointed out by Scollon and Scollon (2003: 22) “an index points to its meaning”, and the paper discusses how semiotic resources – with specific affordances – are employed in airport design in order to point to preferred paths of movements through logistic and commercial spaces, but also through the architectonically and experientially open – potentially dangerous – spaces that define modern airports.

Our data from 2017 consist of approximately 200 photos from four international airports in Europe. Through an analysis of the affordances of various semiotic resources in the design of these airports the paper explores 1) how resources with specific affordances are employed for indexically creating flows of human bodies through the commercial, security- and control-related airport spaces and 2) how a continuous movement between ‘unbound’ and ‘bound’ spaces (Stenglin, 2008) is instrumental to different kinds of risk management.

The paper ends with a discussion of how verbal, visual, and tactile recourses encourage a place-specific alacrity of travellers to govern themselves through flows. We suggest that the reflexive awareness of potential risks can explain why travellers stay loyal to the design instead of rebelling against the prisonlike (cf. Foucault, 1977) encapsulation in time and space of the modern international airport.

References


The smallness of small. The role of small texts and text elements in a big world

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When literature on visual meaning-making deals with salience, non-salience is often regarded as something negative (e.g. Van Leuween 2006, Bell 2001). Salience in a design is making meaning of importance, so how could non-salience be important? Still, we all know that tiny text elements such as a cross in the right or wrong box in a web form can have great importance. Also, making something small can in itself make meaning such as “small print” in a contract which one party does not want the other to read (cf. Schröter 2013). Small text elements have been important throughout history, from brands and other types of signatures on ancient artifacts to tweets and like-marks in the digital society. The function of packing several linguistic elements into more concentrated grammatical metaphors (Martin 1993) could be one possible way of studying smallness. Mainly focusing on ethnographic video data from a so called pulse-meeting at a workplace, where the participants use magnets on whiteboards, this presentation will include a discussion on possible meaning-making potentials or discursive powers of the smallness of texts and text elements.

The preliminary results indicate that smallness can have a function in relation to mediated actions (cf. Scollon & Scollon 2004). If a literacy event is to be performed swiftly, the text element associated with it often needs to be small, to focus and make possible the quick act of clicking, signing etc. Also other events in relation to small text elements serve as a confirmation or finalization of e.g. a process, such as putting a magnet in a certain area of the whiteboard. The presentation argues for ethnographic approaches to understanding texts.

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Meme as a Tool of Political Manipulation: Cross-Cultural Aspect in Multimodality

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In a national consciential warfare that accompanies any social crisis, propaganda plays a pivotal role in shaping a favourable response of the community or its part to the actions of one of the opposing actors (Kofman & Rojansky 2015). The latter’s stance of an addressee requires a non-trivial approach to win the fight for public opinion. One of them is psychological manipulation, i.e. social influence that aims to change the behavior or perception of others through abusive, deceptive or underhanded tactics (Braiker 2004: 7).

This comparative case study focuses on the Internet meme (Dawkins 2006) as an efficient multimodal tool of political manipulation by public opinion at the background of social crises triggered by Brexit in European Union and Ukrainian Revolution of Honesty in 2014-2015. Two corpora of the Internet memes are considered as integrated texts, whose parts (modes) are “interacting with and affecting one another” through the interrelated systems of information value, salience and framing (Kress & von Leeuwen 2006: 177).

The compared information value of corresponding memes proves similar (with top/bottom and left/right layouts preferred) due to the universally immanent nature of the meme as simple and easily digestible. Culture-specific differences are more obvious in terms of salience of precedent personalities and images. Moreover, whereas British memes manipulate with their national values, Ukrainian memes have an object of imposing new worldview on their target audience. In both corpora, the role of the semiotic code of colour is crucial as national shades are widely used. Compared in terms of framing, British and Ukrainian memes also differ. In British memes, verbal elements support visual code or make it explicit. The verbal elements of Ukrainian memes modify the initial familiar (memetic) meaning of visual information.

References


Computer based composition: modes and their meaning in a secondary school music classroom

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My doctoral research explored two secondary school pupils’ (aged 14) multimodal experiences of how they engaged in composing music while using computer technology. Defining how different modes – visual, notating music, musical sound, action and gestures – were used, interpreted and mediated by the pupils in the process of composition was key. Further, my research considered pupils’ verbal silences, which meant exploring meaning-making at the computer when the pupils were actively engaged in doing something other than talk and contributing new knowledge to an under-researched area. Camtasia™ – a computer screen capture program - was used to capture and record two pupils’ conversations, music and computer work during four sequential music lessons. A smaller camera offered a different visual perspective and videoed pupils’ interactions with the computer, musical equipment and each other. A reviewing process selected up to three silent episodes (each a minimum of 10 seconds long with no upper limit) which were used in the individual one-to-one interviews to delve deeper into decisions behind compositional and multimodal processes. Audio recordings of these conversations provided transcripts for thematic and multimodal interactional analysis. It has emerged that there are several combinations of modes that interact with the different stages of the musical composition and that using computer technology does not necessarily translate into musical understanding. In particular the pupils stated that the computer mouse was the most significant tool in completing the task which provided a platform for interpreting the action mode. The discussion will elaborate on these points by sharing pupils’ narratives that have been generated from their silent moments. Framing analysis from a musical and multimodal stance places the pupils’ narratives at the forefront of ‘what really goes on in music lessons’ and aims to support the teacher with curriculum planning using a multimodal perspective that can enhance musical learning.
Digital technologies in initial teacher education: shifting the focus from ‘the digital’ to ‘multimodality in contexts’

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Recent publications have tended to focus on the integration of digital technologies in South African teacher education. Professional teachers are expected to harness the benefits of these technologies in their teaching practice increasingly. However, poor uptake, outdated school and curriculum policies, as well as unequal access to technology have resulted in an unexpectedly slow adoption of technologies that could potentially increase student learning.

This issue in professional teaching practice could be addressed by exposing pre-service teachers to the kinds of digital technologies benefiting teaching and learning, during initial teacher education. However, the varied ways in which pre-service teachers engage in practices involving these technologies, the vast disparities between school contexts, and the anxieties and barriers connected to the digital in the classroom, present serious challenges during integration. These challenges could be addressed by refraining from focusing explicitly on ‘the digital’. Focusing on the digital, as was the typical practice in ‘computer literacy’ approaches, tends to decontextualize the digital, framing practices involving digital technologies as sets of transferable skills. The pre-service teacher is then expected to ‘master’ these skills without considering the classroom context and/or the learners. Emphasising the digital could also elevate anxieties and barriers.

Focusing on multimodality, rather than digital technologies per se, foregrounds teacher creativity and the consideration of learners’ agency, recognition of resources, access to academic discourses and design, within specific classroom contexts, while implicitly exposing pre-service teachers to the digital technologies relevant to the classroom. Multimodality thus alleviates decontextualisation and barriers, while fostering good teaching practices. This presentation will showcase some of the projects completed by English pre-service teachers during an integration attempt in 2017. These projects, ranging from videos to posters for classroom use, display traces of the consideration of modal affordances within specific South African contexts, as well as confident engagement with digital technologies.
Narratology in the analysis of multimodal legitimation: an introduction

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Previous studies on legitimation, multimodality and political discourse by researchers, such as Van Leeuwen, Van Dijk and Mackay, have suggested different but supplementary methods of legitimation analysis by providing a number of analytical frameworks. Multimodal legitimation research, however, seems to be in need of a better conflation of the theoretical backgrounds of disciplines, such as narratology. This article focuses on the multimodal discourse of three political advertisements of the political party New Democracy, filmed for the needs of the Greek legislative election of January 2015. What is investigated is the multimodal means by which New Democracy’s president, and Prime Minister at the time, Antonis Samaras attempted to legitimise his candidacy. In the present article, I employ the six-layer framework proposed by Mackay (2015) for multimodal legitimation analyses and I argue that multimodal legitimation research can benefit and get enhanced from the use of narratology and its analytical categories, such as perspective.

References

Using Multimodality in Science Learning: A Fijian Learning Space Perspective

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With changing Science Curricula, there is always a demand for context appropriate pedagogical approaches to the learning of science. This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of a multimodal approach used by students combined with the use of Talanoa. Talanoa is an informal conversation commonly used and culturally appropriate in a Pacific context. A total of 29 students ages 9-10 and their teacher participated in the study which collected data via learning space observation focusing on student interactions, activities and use of multimodality in their lessons. The findings indicated that doing drawings in science and Talanoa can encourage students to engage actively with the task. Additionally, use of culturally appropriate semiotic modes such as drawing, gestures, emotions and nonverbal communication cues such as the silence can enhance students’ ability to apply scientific learning to the local context and communicate their thoughts effectively. The overall findings highlighted the use of culturally appropriate semiotic modes and Talanoa can help to integrate diverse cultural experiences to challenge and extend students’ thinking.

Keywords: Multimodal, Talanoa, semiotic modes, science, culturally-appropriate
Investigating Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting from A Visual Communication Perspective

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As an indispensable tool in supporting interpreters’ memory during consecutive interpreting, interpreters’ notes play a key role as a mediator between source language (SL) and target language (TL). The aim of this study is to explore how interpreters retrieve information in the transition between note-reading and interpreting. This study argues that there are two languages (SL&TL) embedded in the texts, with the interpreters’ notes acting as a third visual language with their own logic and patterning that needs interpreting. Given the importance of the interaction between written and visual modes in the note-reading process, this study draws on visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) to analyse interpreter’s notes with a view to gaining a better understanding of how the linguistic and visual semiotic resources are deployed in the process of note-taking. In this study, interpreters’ notes are viewed as multimodal texts and will be approached from a social semiotic perspective to investigate how interpreters deal with the multimodal nature of notes. The analysis focuses on (i) the function of vectors and geometrical shapes, and (ii) the spatial disposition of signs, including layout and salience, found in the dataset. Initial results suggest that structures of interpreters’ notes present meaning like linguistic structures do, even though the visual language is not as transparent and universally understood.

Keywords: Consecutive interpreting, note-reading, social semiotics, multimodal
Interpersonal representations of Syrian refugees in images from the UK national print press: A short-term diachronic perspective

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Kress & van Leeuwen (2006: 140-143) proposed several systems of functional contrasts conveying interpersonal meanings in still-image: (i) relation between the represented participant(s) and the interactive participant along the horizontal axis (downwards [power-over], straight on [power-equal], upwards [power-under]); (ii) distance of represented participants in the image-frame (close-up [intimate], mid-shot, long-shot [impersonal]); and (iii) engagement (or not) with the represented participant(s) by the interactive participant (frontal angle [involved], oblique angle [detached]). These and others of Kress & van Leeuwen’s (2006) descriptive frameworks have been much critiqued, particularly for drawing some analogies to linguistic categories (e.g. Machin, 2007: ch. 8). Still, these descriptions have been found to be useful in research on still-image, particularly work in the critical tradition concerned with ideology and where informed by big data.

Here, a similar enterprise is undertaken: the representation of Syrian refugees during the recent Syrian refugee crisis is explored in terms of image depictions of Syrian refugees for the aforementioned interpersonal systems of Kress & van Leewuen (2006). The research is particularly concerned with short-term diachrony (Aarts et al., 2013), and therefore changes across time in patterns relative to interpersonal still-image systems. Using a dataset of thousands of images drawn from eight national newspapers in the United Kingdom, diachronic changes in patterns in interpersonal representations of Syrian refugees are found, in important part, to result from: (a) the occurrence of other and related prominent news stories (e.g. the death of Ala Kurdi; the UK’s referendum on EU membership); and (b) the political alignment of the newspaper. This said, more nuanced trends across time relative to individual interpersonal systems will also be discussed.

References


Playing the Archive: Multimodal Perspectives on Children’s Play

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In their studies of children’s play throughout the 1950s-1990s, folklorists Iona and Peter Opie aimed to capture the ‘kaleidoscopic vitality’ of UK playgrounds through extensive observations and surveys of play (Opie, 1993). Recognising the ephemeral and multimodal nature of children’s play continues to be an issue of particular importance as play changes in light of digital media and technologies. Young children’s contemporary playworlds are often a complex interweaving of physical and digital dimensions, with the border areas between ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ becoming increasingly blurred. The growing prevalence of virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality creates further opportunities for hybrid spaces where play shifts across boundaries of space and time in new ways.

A multimodal social semiotic perspective offers insights into the affordances of modes, both physical and digital, and new possibilities for playful meaning-making. ‘Playing the Archive’ (2017-2019) is an interdisciplinary research project funded by the EPSRC exploring archives, technologies and spaces for play. This paper will share interim analysis of the project’s fieldwork conducted in the playground of an inner-city London primary school for children aged 5 to 11. Using a range of ethnographic, participatory methods, we will consider how contemporary play is experienced multimodally in playgrounds, and will speculate on key elements of continuity and change in children’s play since the 1950s and 1960s. This process will explore children’s own multimodal and curatorial practices in both the data collection and in negotiation with the archive itself. As the project unfolds, these insights will be used to shape a virtual play environment based on the Opie archive and the development of experimental ‘smart’ playgrounds in two UK cities.

References

Multimodal Digital Story-creation, Affordances and Students’ Agency

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The availability of multiple ways of communicating and expressing ourselves has increased due to the digitization of society. These different ways of communicating also mean that we to a greater extent, use different modes as communication resources than we did before. Digital resources provide access to different modes within the same device. Given these changes in communicating, there is a need to explore how students in a school context are using these changing conditions for text creation. This study will explore how Swedish 11-12-year-old students use different modes while creating digital stories. The study will have a multimodal approach, which generally refers to the fact that representation, communication and interaction are more than verbal and treat the choice of modes as significant (Archer & Breuer, 2015). The existence of choice for students in text creation can be seen as students’ agency through choices (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). The unique affordances of modes give the sign maker the opportunity to choose which modes are best suited to conveying a special message, based on their interests and needs. This ongoing study will explore how students’ agency can be understood in relation to the affordances that the different modes offer when students create digital stories. The data collection consists of video recording of 26 students creating digital stories, and of the multimodal texts created by these students. Questions to be answered are: How do students use different modes in digital story-telling? What affordances do different modes offer and how can these be understood in relation to students’ agency?

References


Playing games with multimodalities: the usage of typography in the construction of digital games characters

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This Communication aims to present a pilot study investigating the construction of characters in digital games through the recognition of representative and interactive meanings in light of the Grammar of Visual Design by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). The research is exploratory and descriptive, utilizing qualitative criteria for the collection and screen shots analysis of the digital game Plants x Zombies. As a focus for this presentation, we will discuss the preliminary results of the analysis of five screen shots of the game Plants vs. Zombies, in which the typography is used as a semiotic way that favors the identification of the characters such as makers of the verbal processes displayed in these screen shots and the interaction between characters and players. In an educational scenario facing multiliteracies and multimodality, such results may indicate implications for English language teaching and learning mediated by digital games.

Keywords: Multimodality, multiliteracies, digital games
Designs for learning as political and social achievements: Recognising the use of semiotic practices in children's visual representations:

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Drawing visual data from three museum education projects (Diamantopoulou, 2007; Diamantopoulou & Christidou, forthcoming; Kress & Selander, 2012) this paper aims to make a case for assigning prominence and recognition to the 'rhetorical' (political) aspect of communication outlined in Kress's theory. This is in order to best account for learners' interaction with the institutional context within which they operate, as well as broaden our understanding of designs for learning.

Most of the visual representations of children arise in institutional contexts. However, limited attention has been paid to the deeply political act of negotiating meaning making while operating within such contexts (Mavers, 2009). The paper presents instances of analysis of three visual representations prompted and framed by the institutional discourses of two educational programmes and one museum exhibition respectively. It argues for the need to use the same set of multimodal social semiotic tools to account equally for both the rhetorical and design aspect of multimodal representations, moving multimodal analysis away from descriptive accounts of how modes are coming together. It also foregrounds the need to account for those 'semiotic practices' that are involved in the negotiation of the interpersonal aspect of communication between the meaning maker and the institution.

Through the concept of 'semiotic practices' – suggesting the diverse responses to institutional practices framing communication – this paper explains the ways in which meaning makers exercise agency accounting for their varying positions to the institutional authority. Recovering the visual traces of 'semiotic practices' in these drawings, the paper discusses the importance of examining children's designs for learning within the context that prompted and framed them (i.e. pedagogies, curricula, exhibition designs and educational activities).

The theoretical underpinnings and prompts for this exploration have been: (i) the concept of learning as a social achievement, as it arises in Kress's work and the scholarly work of the New Learning Group (Bezemer et al, 2012), (ii) Kress's concept of the dual aspect of communication as rhetoric and design (Kress, 2010) and the author's PhD thesis on the semiotic practices of learners (Diamantopoulou, in prep).

References


Semiotic artefacts in multimodal events: picture books and other props in library storytime sessions

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Storytime sessions at public libraries are complex multimodal events that engage young children and their families in the shared reading of picture books, singing and dancing, reciting nursery rhymes, storytelling, and craft. Picture books and other objects (puppets, toys and musical instruments) are integral to many of these activities.

Studies of multimodality have examined both objects such as picture books or learning spaces and events such as classroom interactions. Multimodal studies of objects tend to treat these as ‘texts’ and ignore the ways in which an object may be integrated in specific events. Multimodal analyses of events, on the other hand, tend to account for this integration but pay surface attention to the integrated objects themselves.

In this paper, I view the picture books and other objects integrated in library storytime as ‘semiotic artefacts’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2005). A ‘semiotic artefact’ is a material semiotic resource that embodies selections from various modes (e.g. spoken language, visual design, texture) and media (e.g. aural, visual, tactile), and can itself be deployed for meaning-making alongside other semiotic resources. I argue that this perspective provides a promising foundation for studying and evaluating the interaction between the meaning-making potential of objects and its instantiation in semiotic practices such as storytime. To support this argument, I draw on the analysis of examples selected from a data set of 57 storytime sessions recorded at Australian public libraries, and extracts from interviews with their presenters, and consider the potential of picture books and other objects to support the key goals of storytime – to foster language and literacy learning, love of reading, and a sense of belonging to a community of readers.

References


From static texts to personalized dynamic advertising: What has changed and how does it influence our understanding of the notion of text?

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There is no denying that in linguistics, the notion of ‘text’ has undergone a major change within the 20th century. Visualizations and audio have gained influence not only in a cultural sense by means of digitalization and mass media but also in any scientific field having dealt with "plain texts" before. The iconic turn and multimodality as the “contemporary semiotic practice” (Kress & van Leeuwen) are just the outcome of what has been present in texts ever since.

A diachronic analysis of Coca Cola Advertising since the very beginnings in the 1880s until the 2000s shows how images have always been part of our communication system and how they developed over time changing the interplay between all modes in the ads enormously. Opening the borders for interdisciplinary research, the examination is based on linguistic methods chosen from semantics, pragmatics and syntax (e.g. Kress’ and van Leeuwen’s communicative function of colour or Stöckl’s sub-functions of persuasion), and complemented by cultural philosophical knowledge about images (e.g. Gombrich’s opposition of nature and convention). Yet in times of Smart Data and new technology, there still is more than meets the eye. Therefore, I would like to launch the discussion about the notion of text and semiotic resources all over with regards to modern, dynamic and data based text composing principles.

My study does not only challenge linguistic analyzing methods within the context of multimodal artefacts, it also reveals the power of the unsaid in terms of visuals as sublime carriers of core values and in terms of collected data for personalized, data driven texts.
Seeing knowledge through field: Multimodal meaning in science

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The sciences are well known for their highly multimodal discourse. But characterising how such a range of semiotic resources build science’s highly technical knowledge has remained elusive. From a Systemic Functional perspective, scientific disciplines are largely devoted to field. They build large and elaborated ‘content’ meanings that enable description, explanation and prediction of physical phenomena. But despite their orientation to field, discussions of science to this point have largely focused on the grammatical, discourse semantic and genre-based features of science. In contrast, this paper introduces a recently renovated model of field in Systemic Functional Semiotics (Martin and Doran in press). This model has been explicitly developed to account for the range of field-specific meanings made across the highly multimodal discourse of science, including language, image, mathematics, chemical and nuclear equations, animations, gesture etc. (Doran in press). It suggests multimodal discourse may present meanings statically through relations between items, or dynamically through the unfolding of activities. Additionally, it models the gradable properties often ordered into large arrays, quantitatively gauged and/or positioned within a spatio-temporal frame. Through this model of field, we can build a semiotic understanding of content knowledge that is integrated with the elaborate Systemic Functional descriptions available for numerous semiotic resources, and offer a unifying description for considering why various semiotic resources are used for certain disciplines, with various genres and to construe various meanings.

References


Complexity and context-dependence in multimodal texts: Semantic density and semantic gravity for images and language

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Abstract-concrete, symbolic-iconic, simple-complex... such terms are often used to characterise multimodal discourse and the knowledge it organises. This variation is crucial to the unfolding of texts and the development of social fields, however presented as discrete categories they often obscure more than they reveal. Moreover how these variables are realised across a range of different semiotic resources and how we can ‘see’ them in multimodal texts remains relatively underexplored. To grasp this issue, this talk will introduce the dimension of Semantics from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton 2014). In particular it will focus on the concepts of semantic density (SD) and semantic gravity (SG). Semantic density considers complexity of meaning; stronger semantic density (SD+) indicates higher complexity, whereas weaker semantic density (SD–) indicates less complexity. Semantic gravity conceptualises context-dependence of meaning, where stronger semantic gravity (SG+) indicates more context-dependence, and weaker semantic gravity (SG–) indicates less context-dependence. Importantly, rather than presenting simple binaries, semantic density and semantic gravity conceptualise complexity and context-dependence as continuous gradations; hence stronger and weaker semantic density (more and less complexity), and stronger and weaker semantic gravity (more and less context-dependence).

These concepts are becoming widely enacted within linguistics, education and a range of other fields as a means of identifying both nuanced text variation and highly-valued practices. But as yet, much of the focus has been on monomodal linguistic texts. In contrast, this paper will consider shifts in SD and SG across language and image, using case studies from science teaching. In doing so, it will introduce a new ‘translation device’ for enacting semantic density and semantic gravity in images to complement that for English discourse introduce in Martin and Doran (2017a, b). This tool will enable a more fine-grained understanding of the shifts in abstraction and complexity that occur through images, and will offer a principled basis for considering the role of language and image in building knowledge.

References


MULTIMODALITY IN THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT: THE STATE OF THE ART

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In this paper, we present a panoramic view of contributions to and the unfolding of the Multimodality Approach in the Brazilian context. Since our study is under a Social Semiotic perspective, we begin with the postulations of Kress (1997; 2010); Kress & van Leeuwen (2001); and Bezemer & Kress (2008; 2016), seeking to interact with the sociosemiotic perspectives of the communications in order to understand the semiotic landscape, the possibilities and the availability of the semiotic modes. In the second moment, we describe how this perspective has been placed in the Brazilian scenario, answering the following questions: when were the first studies on Multimodality published in Brazil? What kind of publications can we find (papers, thesis, etc.)? What are the most common themes found in such studies? Where in Brazil are the researchers located? What kind of material has been analyzed (video, print images, websites…)? What kind of methodology has been used? The quantitative part of this paper used two main search engines: Google Scholar and the online database of CAPES – The Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel, an institution funded by the Brazilian Government, responsible for both evaluating and regulating universities and faculties. After organizing and categorizing the results, we noticed a growing number of publications as well as an engagement in understanding the complexity of communication in the use of the various semiotic modes in the production and orchestration of meanings.

Keywords: Multimodal approach, social semiotics, Brazilian context

References


Multimodality in L1 steering documents and classroom practice: Nordic status and research implications

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This paper presents findings from project Multimodal literacy practices in L1 (abbr. MultiL1), which aims at establishing a coherent research agenda for exploring literacy practices in L1/Language arts in Nordic countries. MultiL1 claims that the understanding of language and literacy has been extended due to the development of communication technologies and that this holds important implications for teaching and learning literacy within school and in L1 in particular (Green, 2018; Kress, 2004; Ongstad et al., 2007). Theoretically, MultiL1 draws on a social semiotic understanding of literacy and learning (Bezemer & Kress, 2016) as well as didactic/curriculum theory conceptualizing subjects on programmatic and enacted levels (Deng & Luke, 2008). The project asks the following research questions: What characterizes multimodal literacy practices in Nordic L1 subjects grade 7-9 (age group around 12-16)? Methodologically, MultiL1 conducted two qualitative studies: a comparative analysis of current national steering documents in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and a conceptual review of empirical classroom research in the four countries comprising 46 included studies.

Analyses suggest that there is a discrepancy between the programmatic and realized curriculum (Elf, Gilje, Olin-Scheller, & Slotte, in press). The curriculum analysis finds that multimodal composing now ‘counts as knowledge’ in all Nordic L1 subjects on secondary level. Moreover, students’ development of multimodal literacy practices in L1 is part and parcel of literacy reforms in the four Nordic countries. However, the review study reveals that multimodal teaching represents 1) a major cultural change for L1 teachers; 2) is dominated by receptive, not productive practices; and 3) that the evaluation of multimodal production is experienced as particularly challenging for L1 teachers. Considering implications, teachers call for the development of common criteria for multimodal evaluation. We argue that research could focus more on the intrinsic link between multimodal production, microdiscursive evaluation practices and knowledge production.

References


Interacting with data visualizations in the news media

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Data visualizations (DVs), in the forms of charts, diagrams, maps etc., represent a visual form growing in prevalence and impact in many contemporary genres (Kennedy et al. 2016). Particularly interesting is the development of (often innovative forms of) DV in digital, public media – like online news sites (Cairo 2017). A news story on an epidemic outbreak will today be expected to be accompanied by a diagrammatic and cartographic representation of statistical, historical and geographical information. Sometimes these visual representations work in a stand-alone format, connected to news stories only by links. Other times, they are integrated in news packages together with verbal and photographic elements. But they always involve specific orchestrations of visual, verbal and numeric resources, interplaying in complex semiotic structures (Engebretsen & Weber 2017). This paper asks: How can data visualizations be described as multimodal text forms, and what are their effects on the readers of online newspapers?

Theoretically, the study leans on investigations from several corners of the field in question. Starting from a basic description of DV as a semiotic and discursive resource (Bertin 2011, Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) it will discuss the interplay between meanings and feelings in the context of DV interaction (Kennedy et al. 2016; Lemke 2015). However, the main focus is on the reception of DV in the context of news media. A user study with mixed data from 10 respondents informs an investigation of skills, habits and attitudes regarding young people’s interactions with data visualizations.

References


Multimodal situated configurations in a physics interactive learning environment dealing with circular motion

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The aim of this presentation is to contribute to the theorizing of disciplinary learning from a social semiotic perspective. The particular exploratory focus being reported on being the physics of circular motion in an introductory, university level interactive classroom. Our starting point for this work is that all disciplinary learning has critical features that need to be discerned in a meaningful, reflective way (Fredlund et al. 2015a; Eriksson 2014). A circular-motion learning situation is used to explore how such reflective discernment (Eriksson et al. 2014) is brought about in response to the semiotic landscape (Jewitt 2008) of the learning experience as a function of both experienced variation (Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton, 2015) and constituted translation (Bezemer & Kress 2008; Kress 2010). Against this backdrop, analysis of preliminary data that consists of audio and video recordings of students engaging with the object of learning in a classroom interactive environment vis-à-vis the forms of representation that make up the teaching and learning environment will be presented. This data analysis characterizes the arising multimodal situated configurations (Jewitt 2008), which will be discussed in terms of the theorizing presented by Fredlund et al. (2015b) for enhancing the possibilities for learning physics.

References


Spontaneous use of dance in an astronomy activity

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In science education, there has been recent interest in the ways that the body plays a part in the process of thinking and, concurrently, how learning activities can be designed to explicitly incorporate more embodied engagement. In this paper, we present a case study of an instance where two students spontaneously recruited their bodies as they came to understand the celestial mechanics in an astronomy activity. Working on an open-ended task in a technologically-rich environment, the students instinctively held hands and leaned outward to metaphorically account for the centrality and reciprocity of gravitational forces. Their embodied engagement included a multimodally-rich coordination of talk, gaze, posture, body placement, and haptically-responsive touch in a manner similar to a partnered dance. With an interpretive lens which combines social semiotics, embodied cognition, and conceptual metaphor, we examine the ways in which dance functioned as part of the students’ reasoning about astronomy, as well as reflect on the how the environment afforded the opportunity for such a metaphorical, embodied representation to be recruited in the process of learning.
Multimodal representations of meaning are beginning to be the norm in today’s classrooms. The Internet era, with its use of varied modes to communicate information (visual, linguistic, audio, gestural, spatial or the interplay between or among these modes), has paved the way for educational institutions to consider students’ multimodal designs as evidence of learning. In tertiary classes, for example, multimodal compositions such as PowerPoint presentations, digital stories, short videos and web designs are increasingly becoming common end-of-term projects, instead of only term papers or essays, which mainly use words to convey meaning. On the other hand, drawing pictures by hand inside the classroom as a form of composition is usually thought of as belonging in the realm of children’s literacy practices. This study argues that illustration can be a legitimate form of multimodal composition in the tertiary classroom, especially where access to technology may be limited and when students’ ideological positions on issues are to be explored. Using critical multimodal discourse analysis, this study explored how four groups of tertiary English language learners in one class in the Philippines interpreted Edwin Arlington Robinson’s poem, Richard Cory, through hand-drawn illustrations. Critical analysis of the illustrations using Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) theory of author representation and positioning in images revealed that students unquestioningly reproduced the same ideological stance as the author. The findings of the study suggest the importance of introducing students to theories of how ideological positions are revealed in images. Without knowledge of such theories, students’ compositions may let prevailing discourses go unchallenged. Implications of the affordances and limitations of illustration as an alternative form of composition in an English-language learning class will also be discussed.
Developing Multimodal Literacy in Students – A Pedagogical Approach

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In this presentation, I will introduce the basic tenets of multimodal literacy and argue that the increasing multimodal nature of our communicative landscape presents implications for literacy education. I will describe a project to develop instructional strategies for teaching multimodal texts in the Singapore Secondary School context that is informed by research in the Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SFMDA) approach to multimodal texts (O’Halloran & Lim, 2014) and situated within the Learning by Design Framework (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). The frameworks and approaches developed for critical viewing are based on the pioneering work in multimodality by O’Toole (2010) and Kress & van Leeuwen (2006). This is later extended by Tan, Marissa and O’Halloran (2010), Lim, O’Halloran, Tan, & E. (2012), and Lim & Tan (2017). The frameworks are structured along the metafunctional organisation of meaning and adopt a genre-based approach to multimodal texts. They provide scaffolds for students to access the meanings made in multimodal texts by introducing the features and typical functions of the text, as well as highlighting the common strategies used in these multimodal texts to make meaning. The approaches also leverage educational technology for collaborative annotation, discussion, and production. The goal is, as expressed in the Singapore Ministry of Education English Language Syllabus 2010, for students to actively construct meaning from multimodal texts, comprehend closely and critically a variety of different types of texts, and think critically to become critical viewers.

References

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The influence of multimodal ensembles on EFL students’ audio-visual comprehension

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During the last decade innovations in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have tremendously influenced how people interact with each other. A proliferation of new forms of discourses have been constantly emerging and contributing not only in the development of communication, but also in how languages are taught and learnt. Printed elements have been replaced by digital resources (Jewitt, Bezemer, Jones, & Kress, 2009), which bring together diverse modes of communication. As a consequence, the idea of interaction just through written or oral words has been transformed into a more multimodal one in which other modes such as gestures, music and images are also taken into consideration in the process of meaning-making. In educational contexts, digital language materials (e.g., Ipac, blogs, social networks and vodcasts) are gaining importance as they are seen as potential tools that promote an innovative, attractive and motivating multimodal approach to language learning. Since multimodality focuses on multimodal ensembles (Jewitt, 2013; Jewitt and Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010), I would like to focus on how they may enhance language students’ audio-visual comprehension. This presentation will be based on the description of some extracts from a multimodal analysis carried out on two language learning vodcasts from the British Council. Making use of ELAN as the main multimodal annotation tool, I will report on the different orchestrations of modes contained in both vodcasts and how I was able to elaborate comprehension tests according to the ensembles that appeared in both vodcasts. These tests were necessary to check the impact of each ensemble on students’ comprehension. The results corroborated the main hypothesis of this study: when there was a greater number of orchestrated modes, EFL students’ audio-visual comprehension improved. The conclusions refer to the importance of multimodality and the implementation of audio-visual materials to improve students’ listening skills.

Keywords: Multimodal ensembles, language teaching materials, digital tools, audio-visual comprehension

References


Images of climate change in science textbooks - Negotiating the social and physical complexities of anthropogenic climate change within the school science discourse

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The disciplinary discourses of the natural sciences traditionally represent natural phenomena as something happening in neutral chains of causality without connection to human culture (Halliday & Martin, 1993, Veel, 1998). However, anthropogenic climate change is not wholly a natural phenomenon in the traditional sense, but rather something that arises where human culture intersects with nature (Ekström & Svensen, 2014, p. 18). This duality makes it a challenging topic for school science discourse and education, yet also a possible source for renewal (Knain, 2015, p.111).

In this paper, we aim to explore the choice of modes in representing these dual aspects of anthropogenic climate change, and whether these choices can be related to modal affordances. We investigate the epistemological commitment (Bezem and Kress, 2008) involved in language-image interactions that are not necessarily relationally expositional (Martinec and Salway, 2005).

Our starting hypothesis is that the need for technical precision in representing the physical aspects of climate change tend to overshadow the social aspects in written modes as well as multimodal diagrams, and that the textbook images frequently counterbalance this by focusing on the interpersonal aspects of the social issues involved, such as victims and consequences. The textbook images may therefore function to anchor the text as a whole in an environmentalist discourse.

Keywords: Disciplinary discourse, environmentalist discourse, socio-scientific issues (SSI), school science textbooks

References


Physician-patient communication: an integrated multimodal approach for teaching medical English

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The aim of this paper is to propose an alternative pedagogical method for teaching physician-patient communication, which integrates traditional ESL/EFL speaking activities with four main techniques employed in Gestalt psychotherapy/counselling (Mann 2010 and references therein), namely the Empty Chair technique, the Making the Rounds exercise, the Exaggeration task and Empathic Listening. The existing medical English teaching materials tend to focus almost exclusively on the verbal meaning component of language, with activities aimed at building learners’ knowledge of technical vocabulary, terminology, and fixed expressions to be used in a variety of different contexts and types of interactions. They seem to disregard the fact that communication is an embodied phenomenon (Kress 2009) involving not just our linguistic and cognitive capacities, but also our ability to properly use non-verbal elements, such as facial expressions, hand gestures, body movements and posture. The latter elements seem to play a particularly important role to establish rapport and trust in the physician-patient relationship and to promote patient’s compliance (Candlin & Crichton 2013, Franceschi 2017). Therefore, a more holistic, multimodal approach is called for in order to better develop learners’ relational communication skills and emotional awareness, thus teaching them to speak not just effectively but also affectively. A number of applied teaching strategies are presented here in order to show how future doctors may be helped to improve their communicative competence both at the linguistic and extra-linguistic level.

Keywords: Medical English teaching, multimodal learning, non-verbal communication, counselling techniques

References


Analysing school science group work in terms of multimodal text development and its interplay with the context of situation

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Social semiotics terms the immediate environment in which a text functions the ‘context of situation’ – an instance of the context of culture. The context of situation is defined by three parameters, FIELD, TENOR and MODE, which can be operationalized by the WHAT, the WHO and the HOW of a text functioning in a science classroom (Knain, 2015). Text and context mutually enable and constrain each other in acts of meaning. For something to be a text, it must both hang together internally and cohere externally in terms of the three contextual parameters (Halliday & Hasan, 2013). In this paper, we argue that although group work in science classes can be seen as joint text development, what is actually developed is often not a text, but a trajectory of different multimodal texts, each with its own text-context relationship. This is because the students sometimes jump between different topics, which point to different values of the context-parameters. We present an analysis of video recorded student group work where the students produce a trajectory of multimodal texts and move between different contexts of situation – as judged by the values of the contextual parameters. But there is one main thread that they continuously return to. This thread is both internally cohesive and coherent with a (developing) context of situation, and thus constitutes a text. Our analyses suggest that a factor that helps in enabling the students to return to this main thread is a drawing that they produce. A number of aspects of visual grammar are used as indications of the continuous transformation of both the text and its context of situation, including framing, foregrounding and backgrounding. We suggest that this process of multimodal text development is likely to be characteristic for learning trajectories.

References


MULTIMODALITY, SOFTWARE STUDIES AND CONTRIBUTORY MODES – A CRITICAL DISCUSSION

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Editing software are semiotic artifacts with affordances in terms of templates, smart art, special effects, photo editing tools, as well as a number of available fonts and special characters. There is an increasing interest among scholars in multimodality to investigate editing software as semiotic artifacts, and how they are used in order to make meaning and communicate in diverse contexts (Engebretsen, 2010; Knoblauch, 2008; Kvåle, 2016; van Leeuwen & Djonov, 2013; Zhao, Djonov, & van Leeuwen, 2014). Most of these studies have looked at PowerPoint and to some extent Word, software that are crucial in literacy practices in everyday life as well as work.

This paper elaborates on this research by looking into how people make semiotic choices in the process of investigating and using editing software for visual media, like photography and moving images. Editing software for moving images has become crucial, covering a range from in-built editing software in smartphones to advanced editing software for professional purposes (Bezemer & Kress, 2017) and incorporates selections from different semiotic modes and media, including contributory modes like graphics and special effects (Burn & Parker, 2003; Zhao et al., 2014, p. 355).

By drawing on video-data of how agents compose and orchestrate semiotic resources in an editing software for moving images, this presentation discusses the contributory modes in the software (Burn, 2014) and how these are used in order to make meaning by agents solving particular tasks in a specific context. The overarching aim of the paper is to discuss the relationship between software studies, which is often said to lack a unifying social theory of meaning making (van Leeuwen & Djonov, 2013), and a multimodal semiotic approach to how agents engage in editing software to make meaning.

References


Digital competence and multimodality in Swedish curricula: possibilities, challenges and tensions

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The presentation focuses on recent changes in the Swedish curricula for compulsory school and explores to what extent and how multimodal meaning-making is conceptualized. The changes are supposed to adjust education to a digitalized society and support students’ in their development of “adequate digital competence”.

Digitalization potentially facilitates multimodal meaning-making, providing students with a wide range of opportunities through modes and media. Meanings are shaped in new and hybrid formats, and acknowledgement and understanding of the semiotic choices and intentions of students, as well as the potential of multimodal design (Serafini, 2012), become an equity issue (Sofkova Hashemi, 2017; Bezemer & Kress, 2016). Previous studies of multimodality in teaching and assessment show that teachers do not have enough, or accurate, competences to teach or assess multimodal meaning-making on a modal specialized level. Even if teaching encourages the use of several modalities and multimodal meaning-making, most attention is given to the verbal written text in the assessment of students’ work (cf. Oldham, 2005; Matre et al., 2011; Godhe, 2014; Silseth & Gilje, 2017).

We present an analysis of if, and how, the recent changes in the Swedish curricula for compulsory school relate to and support multimodal meaning-making. Content analysis was used to categorize the changes as additions, changes or deletions (Boyatis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis shows some support for the inclusion of multimodal meaning-making, implicitly pointing to other modalities than the verbal and to a redefinition of the concept of ‘text’. However, the majority of the changes address the ‘use of digital tools’ as a technical skill. Based on the analysis, questions concerning the implications for teaching, teacher education and possibilities for redefining knowledge and learning (cf. Lankshear & Knobel, 2009; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), are raised and discussed.

References
Teaching and assessment of digital, multimodal texts – exploring the possibilities to support educational practices

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Two parallel ongoing studies in lower and upper secondary school, aiming to explore and develop teachers’ professional competence regarding teaching and assessment of digital, multimodal meaning-making, are presented and discussed in this presentation. The goal of the projects is to develop models for teaching and assessment practices linked to digital, multimodal meaning-making.

In a practice-close design-based approach, teachers and researchers meet regularly in workshops with the aim to illuminate established meaning-making practices and teachers’ understanding, teaching and assessment of multimodal texts. The predominance of the verbal mode in education (Godhe, 2013; Öman & Sofkova Hashemi, 2015) is being challenged by digital multimodal texts, and the presence of multiple semiotic systems in the representation of meaning needs to be recognized. Moreover, teaching and assessing multimodality requires an understanding of semiotic specialization (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996/2006; Serafini, 2012; Bezemer & Kress, 2016). In the workshops, teachers and researchers try out different models that explicitly focus on multimodal meaning-making (e.g. Beame, 2009). Multimodal and digital aspects of meaning-making are addressed in relation to teaching goals and curricula, in order to develop a common knowledge as well as concepts and a metalanguage needed to be able to describe contemporary meaning-making. In-between workshops the teachers try out the models in their classrooms and in the following workshop the models are refined based on their classroom experience.

The presentation discusses preliminary findings from the studies focusing on the aspects of multimodal teaching and assessment that appears to be most problematic. The contribution of a common metalanguage for teachers’ understanding and competence in teaching and assessing multimodal meaning-making is also highlighted. Moreover, to what extent and how the models that have been tried out were helpful in developing the teaching and assessment practices in the classrooms will be discussed.

References

Analyzing Videos of Dynamic Preschoolers. Complexities and Challenges from a Social Semiotic Multimodal Perspective

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Multimodal research in Early Years school settings is challenging due to the complexity of the environment and the preschoolers’ nature. Preschools are often open and dynamic spaces that rapidly transform according to the needs of students and teachers. Such vibrant spaces align with the preschoolers’ nature, which is curious and lively, and with pedagogic principles that encourage very young learners to be autonomous. The use of video recordings for research is hence complex and challenging. The spaces can change physically and significantly during the research period or even conceptually during a single session. The classroom material is considerably vast and is mostly at preschoolers’ reach. The highly active movement of the preschoolers and the nature of their interaction, which is often energetic and simultaneous to equals, add to the complexity. This paper analyses the complexities of analyzing videos of preschoolers during autonomous and collaborative activities through an exploration of the analysis process of a selection of extracts. The extracts analyzed include preschoolers using Beebots and iPads as productivity tools for learning in an adult-free work space. This paper aims to unveil complexities and challenges that preschoolers’ interaction presents to a multimodal analysis. It is argued that the complexities and challenges are a consequence of the multimodal analysis potential. It is suggested that outlining a set of rules aiming to reduce the complexities and challenges that choices and not-choices entail affects the potential to uncover (in)visible and (un)recognizable sign complexes that are unique and specific to the meaning-maker’s agency, the interpreter(s) agency, the context in which they are produced and the orchestration of meaning-making as well as the transformative engagement in which the interaction takes place.

Keywords: Early years, multimodality, multimodal video analysis, preschoolers’ interaction

*I have received the support of the project ‘Knowledge for Network-based Education, Cognition & Teaching (KONECT)’ financed by the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad: Proyectos I+D del Programa Estatal de Fomento de la Investigación Ciéntífica y Técnica de Excelencia (EDU2013-43932-P)*
Rhythm and dialogue as parts of multimodal cohesion and the interplay between the modes in picture book apps

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I investigate picture book apps as literary, multimodal texts, with a theoretical basis in the combination of social semiotics and literary reception theory as developed by Wolfgang Iser. However, in this presentation, the theoretical focus will mainly be on social semiotics. According to Theo van Leeuwen (2005), there are four types of multimodal cohesion: rhythm, composition, information linking and dialogue. I would like to elucidate how the dimensions rhythm and dialogue are vital for the multimodal cohesion and the interplay between the modes in such texts. Rhythm and dialogue also serve to illustrate some of the particular features of the picture book app as a medium. This will be seen in relation to two specific picture book apps, *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* and *Close Closer Closest*, in which the two categories come forward in quite different ways.

When it comes to dialogue, music and interactivity are crucial in these picture book apps. The music often creates bridges between pages and is therefore important in the dialogue between the modes. The interactivity in the apps calls the reader to specific actions. This sometimes creates a dialogue that reinforces or creates literary or artistic devices like foreshadowing, but can in some cases lead to a break in the coherence, when the activities move too far from the narrative. The rhythm of these book apps arises in the order and speed in which they are read, but also in the narrative's timely organisation. The music represents rhythm in a fundamental way, having specific rhythmical elements. In this way, the rhythm and dialogue form a coherence in the picture book app. This will be further elaborated on in the paper presentation.

References


Towards the metafunctional configurations of movement and music

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The metafunctional hypothesis - that there are three complementary and simultaneous general functions in the process of semiosis - is used frequently as a point of departure when describing semiotic modes and analysing multimodal texts in social semiotics. The concept of metafunctions first arose as an empirical claim about clause systems in language - that they cluster into three groups of interdependent systems according to meaning making function i.e. the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions (Halliday 1969, 1973). A critical observation that Halliday (1978) identified was the correlation between metafunctions and situational variables of social context. Metafunction has become a central theoretical dimension in Systemic Functional Linguistics and was used as a key heuristic in the description of the grammar of images (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996), and other social semiotic descriptions of various modes. Thus, the metafunctional hypothesis played an important role in developing a theory of multimodality that recognises that the same meanings can be made across different semiotic modes. However, ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings are not identical across modes. The use of synonymous yet distinct labels (e.g. O’Toole, 1994; Ravelli, 2006) and varying “analogizing strategies” (Martin and Stenglin, 2007: 234) across metafunctional descriptions of modes reflect this. Van Leeuwen (1999: 189-190) postulates that different modes have different metafunctional configurations.

This paper aims to contribute to the development of the metafunctional dimension of multimodality theory by exploring ideational and interpersonal resources in the modes of music and (embodied) movement. It will examine how these resources are realised and co-articulated in each mode. There will be a focus on systems based on experiential meaning potential derived from qualities of movement. By comparing the realisation and co-articulation of ideational and interpersonal resources across these modes, I will attempt to draw preliminary sketches of their metafunctional configurations.

References


Re-reading Hjelmslev’s notion of sign and its application in multimodal discourse analysis—focusing on animation in the educational context

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In his Prolegomena to a Theory of Language (1961), Hjelmslev further develops Saussure’s conception of sign, the bonding of signifié and signifiant, which is illuminating in theorizing multimodal studies. Despite being reviewed by many linguists and semioticians (e.g. Barthes, 1977), this challenging volume still remains underexplored in many of the key ideas. One of the key conception is purport defined as a common factor among different languages. It is “an amorphous ‘thought-mass’, an unanalyzed entity”, “ordered, articulated, formed in different ways in the different languages” (50-51). By exploring a relatively new semiotic system of animation, particularly animation in the educational context, it is found that the concept of purport might also be used to extract common factors among different semiotic modes. Just as each language lays down its own boundaries within the purport, different semiotic systems also lay down their boundaries within the purport. A salient difference between language and animation lies in the representation of ‘circumstantial information’. Many languages (e.g. English, Chinese) set boundaries of different circumstantial information, including manner, location, etc. By contrast, animation doesn’t set boundaries within the purport: all the ‘circumstances’ are fused with the dynamic changes, which makes this information not circumstantial but essential elements. Hjelmslev’s other important notions including commutation are also used to develop the expression and content plane of animation. A re-reading of Hjelmslev’s notion of sign is expected to bring new light to the study of semiotic systems other than language, and more importantly, facilitate our understanding of the synergy between different semiotic systems in one multimodal text.

References


Animation and the remediation of school physics

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Building on earlier work on animation by Leão (2012) and Djonov and Van Leeuwen (2015, forthcoming), this paper investigates the affordances of animation for representing concepts that play a crucial role in the year 7-10 physics curriculum in Australia.

After discussing the representational affordances of animation in general, the paper will focus on the affordances of Explain Everything, a whiteboard software which is widely used in Australian schools.

While this software is particularly useful for animating motion, some types of movement are less easily animated, for instance simultaneous movements (e.g. the movement of particles in a liquid) and movements that involve a change of quality (e.g. evaporation).

The paper will then discuss how a class of 14- and 15-year-old school students attempted to overcome such constraints.

It will conclude with some methodological remarks on the developing social semiotic approach to semiotic technology, focusing in particular on the importance of interrelating the analysis of specific softwares with the analysis of their use (cf Kvåle, 2017).

References


Looking at videogames, children’s pictures books and museum exhibits multimodally: an integrated multiliteracies project

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Since the New London Group (1996) emphasized the need to integrate various modes of meaning-making, including the visual, the audio and the spatial modes in educationally relevant projects, several researchers have provided significant studies related to multiliteracies (Unsworth, 2001; 2008; Unsworth & Thomas, 2014; Jewitt & Kress, 2008), for instance. Considering the array of different modes in social semiotic multimodal theory, this paper looks at three meaning-making social artefacts in contemporary society, namely videogames, children’s picture books and exhibits in museums. These three kinds of artefacts are envisaged as part of an integrated multiliteracies project, based on systemic functional linguistics and the grammar of visual design. In terms of videogames and children’s picture books, the analysis focuses on the verbal and visual resources used to portray the characters (participants) and their corresponding actions, as well as the interaction with the players and readers. The analysis of museum exhibits, on the other hand, concentrates on the representational and interactive meanings, related to spatial discourse analysis. Educationally speaking, the integrated proposal may contribute to make students aware of the multiplicity of meaning-making resources and of innovative ways to produce and interpret multimodal meanings.

References


Artefacts as central to computer programming in early childhood education settings

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This article presents the results of an analysis of how principles of computer programming are elaborated and used as a means to initiate interest for both computer programming and for mathematics to four and five-year-olds. The aim of this study was to broadly elaborate on how to understand programming as a new feature in preschools (Mannila, 2017). Multimodality was considered a relevant analytical tool in order to understand the interaction and communication going on in the sequences of education on computer programming, since children's language use is not focused on in preschool learning processes (Kress, 2003, Selander, 2017).

The data collection consists of video recordings, interviews with teachers as well as of analysis of the documentation and the arguments for widely initiating programming as a tool in all early childhood education settings in this municipality. The video recordings were done in one early childhood education unit in a Swedish preschool during 2017-2018 and are the main data used here.

The analysis shows how programming creates great interest amongst the children, shown by the children’s patience and willingness to follow the content of the sequences. They do this meaning making through a continuation of use of modes relevant to the sequence and to each other. The analysis shows how modes such as pointing, gaze direction and body position are central to how the education sequences are done and how a learning process is here constituted. The affordances of these modes are analysed. The modes mentioned are strictly related to a common artefact that is programmed, for example lego blocks, musical instruments or a robot. Related to children’s meaning making, artefact focused activities such as play do not always include gaze contact which often is considered as a central aspect of human communication, and thereby perhaps seen as central to learning processes. Programming as a learning content can thereby be discussed to in some aspects happen outside the human body, but since the teachers are using the body as a ‘tool’ to program, bodily communication is still happening. Bodily communication and learning can be said to have a special meaning in children’s learning where language is not established as a normative focus in learning processes. The results show that girls and boys are equally active in the sequences. What this means to the programming content is analysed and discussed elsewhere.
Multimodal expressions of identities in websites of South Asian diasporas

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In the context of contemporary social changes of the global and networked society, new media technologies have brought about a reorientation of communication possibilities for representation and meaning. As contemporary communication has become increasingly multimodal (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001), and as technology gets acknowledged as what people make of it in a cultural context (Pauwels, 2005), websites are becoming potential sites for digital representations and cultural expressions. These new forms of electronic mediation have become particularly evident in various websites of diasporic communities of Southeast Asia, more recently. The current paper forms part of a larger study that investigates digital forms of cultural expressions in websites of South Asian diasporas in Hong Kong and Singapore. To study the diasporic communities’ configuration of semiotic resources in their websites, the paper deploys the multimodal social semiotic analysis framework (Kress, 2009) to analyse multimodal aspects of diasporic websites by addressing the following questions: i) What are the different modes and semiotic resources used in websites of South Asians in Hong Kong and Singapore? ii) What kinds of discourses of representation and cultures are articulated in websites of these diasporas? As findings indicate the significance of multiplicity of modes for representation through sign-makers’ agency in the shaping of meaning online, the analysis shows how diasporic websites seek to undo stereotypical and naturalized discourse of communities (Mitra, 2001) through the multimodal expressions of their identities and cultures.

Keywords: Multimodality, identity, websites, South Asian, diasporas

References


Runes in gold. Analyzing bracteates as multimodal texts

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Some of the very first texts in Scandinavia were so called bracteates, a kind of medal produced in the 5th and 6th century AD to be worn as golden jewelry around the neck. About 1000 gold bracteates have been found from this period, and a little more than 100 make use of multimodal resources that combine visual elements with runes. The interpretation of this kind of texts is much debated. Several visual elements recur, for example quadrupeds, birds, fish and human heads in profile. The sequences of runes are short, and some of them relatively common, for example alu (‘ale’?) and laukar (‘leak’?). Furthermore, other signs are used, such as crosses, swastikas, dots and Latin letters. There is substantial archeological and runological research on bracteates. However, it has focused on either iconographic classification of motives and visual elements or interpretation of single bracteates. In my paper, I present a pilot study aiming at a deeper understanding of bracteates as multimodal texts. The more specific aim is to evaluate how the principle of concurrent semiotic systems can be applied to identify the visual and orthographic elements that are critical for meaning making (O’Toole 1994; Kress 2010). The data consists of a smaller corpus of bracteates which are visually characterized by a combination of head in profile and quadruped (from Axboe et al 1985–1989). This type has traditionally been interpreted as a representation of the god Odin (Hauck 1975). Later research has opened a critical debate (cf. Wicker 2015), and one of the alternatives that has been put forward is that the motive concerns the sun (Andrén 2014). Thus, I want to finally discuss how a social semiotic multimodal analysis may contribute to the multidisciplinary discussion about interpretation and social function.

References


Audio description and multimodality: Accessing meaning-making in popular scientific texts

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The paper focuses on the production and reception processes in audio description of a Swedish multimodal popular scientific journal Forskning och Framsteg (Research and Progress). The contents of the journal are made accessible for blind and visually impaired audiences by producing an audio version. When interpreting the printed version and transforming it into an audio version, the processes of reception and production coincide. The meaning-making processes are uncovered with the help of a think aloud protocol.


First, the printed journal is analysed in accordance with Unsworth (1997), focusing on how the resources of text, images and graphics are deployed in scientific explanation and how the meaning is constructed by the visuals. Second, the interpretative process of meaning-making is uncovered by think aloud protocols. In order to produce an aural version of the complex text, the interpreter must assess what to describe, how to describe it, and when to describe it (Holsanova 2015). He combines the contents of the available resources, makes judgements about relevant information, ways of verbalizing it, fills in the gaps missing in the interplay of the resources and re-arranges the order of information for optimal flow and understanding. In this way, he contributes to multimodal literacy (Walsh 2010, Kress & Jewitt 2003). The aural version of the journal is finally compared to the printed version to show how the semiotic interplay has been realized for the end users.

References


A Comparative Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Sino-US Front Page News Reports

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It is widely acknowledged that with the development of modern technology and media, multimodality has become the apparent characteristic of this age. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2001), the multimodal approach integrates language and language related resources such as image, sound, gesture, movements, etc. This integrative approach finds its root in everyday communication in which people make use of various semiotic resources to make and negotiate meaning.

By now, the grammars of many semiotic modes have been well sketched, most of which are based to some degree on the semiotic theories of Halliday and therefore share a common approach, for instance, the grammars of action (Martinec, 1998), of images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), and of sound (van Leeuwen, 1999). At the same time, a great variety of concrete texts which comprise words, image, sound, etc. have been carefully analyzed, for example, Thibault (2000), Iedema (2001), Baldry & Thibault (2006), Kress et al, (2001), Gu Yueguo (2006), etc.

A great deal of work has been done in the field of news analysis by researchers, among whom van Dijk and Fowler are the most famous, though they mainly focused on news texts. Kress and van Leeuwen are the pioneer researchers who advanced an analytical framework for the analysis of newspaper front pages (1998).

Based on the above achievements in the study of multimodality, the author proposes an integrated framework for the analysis of front page news reports, which consists of three modes: front page layout, news text and news photograph. This paper chooses 30 front page news reports respectively from Chinese and American newspapers. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches with statistic results demonstrated by tables and figures, it conducts a multimodal discourse analysis in order to comprehensively compare the similarities and differences in their meaning representation, and to further explore the different journalistic cultures in the two countries.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse analysis, front page news reports, similarities and differences
A Study on Appraisal Resources in Argumentative Essays by non-English Major

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Argumentative writing requires authors to analyze, discuss, and resolve controversies in a way that is clear, convincing, and considerate of diverse points of view. However, it is difficult for non-native English speaking students to construct interpersonal meaning in argumentative writing. Based on Appraisal theory, this study mainly investigates the employment of Appraisal resources in English argumentative essays written by Chinese non-English major postgraduates. To begin with, this study explores the overall distribution of Appraisal resources in argumentative essays and finds that Engagement resources, as the most frequently used ones, play a crucial role in achieving the rhetorical purpose of argumentative essays. The pattern of more Engagement than Attitude and Graduation could be regarded as the characteristic of the argumentative genre. Afterwards, this research compares and contrasts Appraisal resources across the high-rated and low-rated argumentative essays and explored how Appraisal resources co-articulate to achieve the rhetorical purpose of argumentative essays. The study finds that the two sub-corpora differ in the following aspects: the preference for Appraisal resources, the number of Appraisal resources, the realizations of Appraisal resources, and the interplay of Appraisal resources. The findings of this study can contribute to successful argumentative essay writing and offer some pedagogical implications.

Keywords: Appraisal theory; argumentative writing; non-English major MA students
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MULTIMODALITY IN MULTIMODAL LANGUAGE
TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENGLISH CLASSES OF CHINESE SCHOOLS

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This research is about the qualitative study of multimodality based on multimodal language teaching and learning in English classes of Chinese schools. The author regards it as qualitative research based on the perspectives of educational research. The main aim of this investigation is to study the phenomena of the application of multimodality and visual semiotics in English classes in China to find out how different modes combine to work, what the processes of meaning made by modes are, and what they affect in teaching and learning processes. In terms of multimodal language teaching and learning, the author plans to take vocabulary teaching and learning as the main subject. According to the previous authoritative studies in the education field, the importance of multimodality attracts the attention of scholars. In China, the application of multimodal language teaching is popularly used in the classroom. The author will take fundamental concepts and theories of multimodality into vocabulary teaching and learning in English classes of Chinese schools.

Thus, the author plans to investigate and collect data from selected schools including a primary school, a secondary school and a high school. Both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used in the research data collection. But it mainly focuses on the qualitative methods including classroom observations, small empirical studies in the class, field notes or journals, and semi-structured interviews. Therefore, through this study, the purpose of this research is combining the application of multimodality with language education to investigate what kinds of modes are used, what meanings these modes make, how these modes work together, how about effects of teaching and learning in English classes of Chinese schools, and analyzing what the current situation of the application of multimodality in English classes nowadays in China, and its development in the future.

Keywords: Multimodality, modes, language education, meaning made, English vocabulary teaching and learning, English classes, Chinese schools, qualitative study, educational research
Contextualization of Compositional Modes: A multimodal study of traffic signs in China

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This decade is hailed for a multiplication of multimodal investigation in languages, signs and discourses, yet little research zooms in on the semiotic modes of large-scale traffic signage in public space as a driving navigator (Yang, 2012; Dai, 2015). Meanwhile, in the traffic-engineering realm, traffic signs have been approached from a range of aspects including ergonomics (e.g. Park & Kim, 2013; Ruta, Li & Liu, 2010; Jimenez et al., 2008), signing system (e.g. Shinar & Vogelzang, 2013; Liu, 2005) and readership propensities (e.g. Kirmizioglu & Tuydes-Yaman, 2012; Xie & Parker, 2002; Al-Madami & Al-Janahi, 2002). These aspects presuppose a level of decontextualized lab results than messages subject to reality and culture, neglecting their real-life visual effects as an ingredient of the meaningful whole.

This study explores the compositional features of traffic signs in Mainland China by adopting Geosemiotic System (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and Visual Grammar Theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Vector and line feed are analyzed to demonstrate the transporting visuality encountered by in-seat drivers and reading procedures possibly executed by them in the Chinese traffic context. The data have been collected in Guangzhou, a hub city and commercial center in China with colossal traffic volume and diverse sign users. It is found that multifority in composition characterizes the overall Chinese traffic signing system where decontextualized information (e.g. morphological uniformity) is much preferred (MUTCD, 2009; RTSM, 2009).

This study suggests that while China with its high-end traffic signs makes inroads into a user-friendly linguistic landscape, compositional modes of signs may be contextualized and implemented willy-nilly by the traffic management. Specifically, in reducing proceeding length and enhancing semiotic legibility, multimodal uniformity of public signs shall be considered before people erect them in place.

References
East Meets West? Identifying points of contestation when mediating understandings about Eastern picturebooks with children

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Picturebooks draw on a reader’s knowledge about social and cultural meanings to contribute to the interpretive possibilities of the narrative in a variety of ways. They also rely on a reader’s background of understanding how images work to make meaning. However, in multicultural societies such as Australia, it is common for school children to engage with picturebooks from a multiplicity of cultures. As teachers mediate children’s understandings, one challenge they are faced with is understanding how best to help children read and interpret images from Eastern cultures. The Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016) draws heavily on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) semiotic theory when teaching visual language. Yet, Kress and van Leeuwen clearly identify their framework as one devised from a Western perspective. This presentation takes as its starting point a study which examined the ways in which Vietnamese culture is represented in 3 children’s picturebooks. This study used an integrated framework developed from current western perspectives for visual analysis (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kalantzis et al., 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Serafini, 2014). The process of analysing visual texts created by Eastern illustrators raised a number of critical issues about such Western frameworks. Our analyses illuminate the relationships among the narrative genre, picturebook images, and thematic interpretation of the texts, and how the latter can be problematic when the dominant Western “ways of looking” at images are the only ways teachers might mediate such texts with their students.

Keywords: Vietnamese culture, children’s picturebooks, semiotic theory, multimodality, non-western images

References


TEACHERS AND LEARNERS CONSTRUCTING MEANING FOR NEW WORDS IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Meaning construction for new words is one of the main activities in foreign language classes. There are still few studies on how meaning is constructed for new words with the help of modes (e.g. verbal expression, gestures, use of space and objects) in the multimodal communication of a classroom. The aim of the present study is to use analysis of communicative situations to identify the participation opportunities of teachers and learners in meaning construction for new words in the foreign language classroom. The present study is based on audiovisual material – two Estonian and two French classes (with the duration of 90 minutes each). In total, 110 communicative episodes were selected and transcribed for the analysis. The approach applied in this research is micro-level multimodal discourse analysis. The results show that the participants – the teacher and the learners – can be active or passive meaning constructors for a new word depending on how they use modes. Three models of communicative situations are created based on the results. The paper introduces the models by presenting some examples of communicative situations. The results of the study may help teachers to consider the possibilities of activation of participants in the classroom while planning their language classes.

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Supporting students sense-making with images in History

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Images play a central role in the learning and teaching practices of History. Commonly found in textbooks, lectures and in students’ own texts and presentations, pictures are used to represent historical events, people, objects and settings. As historical sources often with a rich potential for multiple interpretations, images are also central in introducing students to interpretive practices such as historical analysis and source criticism (Wineburg, 1991). Moreover, with the move from page to screen, the availability of digital images increases, providing teachers with a wide range of visual resources to include in lectures and task design (Gillen et al., 2008; Twiner et al., 2013). Yet, despite the many uses of images in the teaching and learning practices of History, few studies have analytically scrutinized how they are attended to and used in classroom interactions.

Based on a sociocultural approach to multimodality (Ivarsson, et al., 2009; Wertsch, 1991), the current study will address this issue by directing analytical attention towards classroom interactions where images are the central artefact. Our aim is to provide insight into how one particular type of image - propaganda drawings – become structuring resources in interactions and how the teacher facilitates and supports students in their sense-making. The empirical basis of the study is a case study in which upper secondary school students worked on a project about the Interwar Period. Our primary data is transcribed video recordings of classroom interaction, and our analytical procedure is interaction analysis, implying the sequential analysis of interaction between interlocutors (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Based on our (ongoing) analyses we will conceptualize students’ sense-making with images as a process of transduction (Bezemer & Kress, 2008). Further, we will discuss the role of the teacher in orchestrating multimodal connection making.

References


Museums are transforming the way they engage with their audiences and often adopt a critical approach towards existing collections and exhibition making. Having the potential to provide contesting perspectives on current topics, many contemporary exhibitions address migration stories (MacDonald, 2003). As exhibitions often combine several modes and media, they may be demanding for visitors to interpret. Building on a social semiotic approach to multimodality (Bezemer & Kress, 2016; Kress, 2010) and a model for analyzing multimodal texts (Danielsson & Selander, 2016), this paper explores how the conceptions of migration, borders and memory represent themselves multimodally in exhibitions-as-texts. I look at how different semiotic resources are used and discuss the potentials and constraints for making meaning – the meaning potential. Three Swedish exhibitions from 2015 were selected for systematic analysis and comparison, namely: The Legacy, Narratives About Escape; Borders; and Migrants and Refugees. These had in common a goal to discuss migration and to get visitors to critically reflect on their own perceptions and attitudes. The Legacy provided more neutral, even playful information about the migration of a particular group (cf. Lanz, 2016). Negative as well as positive minority identities were displayed primarily in metaphors. In Narratives About Escape, the ambition of breaking with prejudice against immigrants was visible at all levels of the text. Coherence was created between the different parts and modes, which meant that interpretation was potentially straightforward. Borders, Migrants and Refugees was more complex by comparison and challenged the visitor through multiple messages at all levels of the text, also through several numbers and complex maps that challenged social constructions (cf. Poehls, 2011; Sutherland, 2014). An abundance of abstract information was given, mixed with suggested solutions that demonstrated clear standpoints about the positive aspects of migration, but without avoiding conflicts. The paper demonstrates how exhibitions often tell several stories at the same time and provides insights into how values and political ideology are represented.

References


Offense and Defense in German Populist Rhetoric: A Multimodal Case Study of AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)

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The German federal elections of 2017 experienced a considerable rise in right-wing populism, closely linked to the political party AfD, which achieved a striking success with 12.6% of the votes. Two media that played an important role in the pre-election communication campaign are Twitter and political TV talk shows. In this case study, we focus on quantitative and qualitative methods to expose characteristics of recent German populist rhetoric on Twitter and in talk shows.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

One of the most popular political talk shows on German public TV, “Hart aber fair”, demonstrates an oscillation of AfD politicians between defense (when confronted with former AfD hate speech1) and offense (normalizing populist ideas). We analyse their performances as a mediated, face-to-face and hence multimodal interaction (Bateman et al., 2017: 239f), and we will show 1) whether their communication style differs (multimodally) from that of other politicians, and 2) how their performance differs between defense and offense.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Social media platforms such as Twitter also play an important role in today’s political communication (Diekmannshenke, 2016). The pre-election period was often marked by aggressive discussion. We have collected a rich corpus of over 125,000 German tweets about politicians, by politicians, by their supporters, and by far-right influencers that spread hate speech. Using statistical AI techniques from Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning (ML) we expose the differences in rhetoric.

Since social media are increasingly multimodal (Marx, 2017: 144ff), with users expressing themselves with emoticons, by sharing photos or videos, and so on, we also qualitatively explain what, why and how emoticons, memes and symbolism contribute to online German populist rhetoric.

References


The Norwegian picture book *Bim: Northern Light Dream* (Bim og drømmen om nordlyset) was first published in 2013, and later came as a free app. It tells the story about the bear cub Bim, who decides to stay awake for the Arctic Night. All bears hibernate, but Bim wants to see the northern lights. The book is a co-production by sisters Stine Haugseth and Trude Haugseth Moe from Tromsø, Norway. Photos by Francesco Galbiati form the background whereupon print and drawings have been included.

This book is clearly targeted at the tourist market. It comes in German, Italian, English and Norwegian, and is sold in museums and tourist shops, in addition to local bookstores, and makes a nice souvenir or gift for tourists to bring back home to relive the northern lights experience. At the same time, it is a children’s book built upon known narrative patterns such as the home-away-home motif, and the helper who enables Bim to fulfil his dream. Moreover, there is a certain air of myth or fable when the other animals tell Bim how they perceive the northern lights.

I propose to use social semiotic multimodal analysis to explore selected spreads from *Bim*, asking first how modes separately and in interaction create a novel that straddles (adult) tourist interest and children’s interest. Secondly, I ask what the medium of the app changes in comparison to the book, in terms of choices in design afforded by technology. I will argue that the app is more clearly aimed at children than the book. I am considering interviewing one of the co-authors to get a glimpse behind the page and the screen. I could ask about the process of making the book, the choices made in assembling modes, and in developing the story through both photos, drawings, printed text and finally in the app with its animations, sounds, and the narrator’s voice.

References


Multimodal social semiotic and other semiotic approaches to designed material artefacts – similarities, differences and possibilities

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Since the turn of the millennia the intricate question of the semiotics of designed material artefacts has been dealt with within a number of different academic disciplines like Design Studies (Mattozzi, Proni), Material Culture Studies (Dant, Kean, Knappett), studies in marketing and branding (Batey, Danesi, Heilbrunn) and latest but not least also within multimodal social semiotics (Björkvall, Björkvall & Karlsson, Wagner).

Although these different approaches all pursue the same objective, a more specific and precise theoretical understanding of the semiotics of things – the mutual awareness and exchange is remarkably low. In this paper the above mentioned different approaches will be brought together and mapped in relation to each other. This will be done with special regard to propound a placement and characterization of multimodal social semiotics of artefacts within an overall semiotics of things.

A key finding of the comparison of multimodal social semiotics in relation to the other semiotics treatments of artefactual meaning making is that the former maintain a very open approach to the semiotic resources which could be prompted by things. However other disciplines tend to assert more or less restricted or all-embracing typologies to chart and arrange commonplace semiotic resources usually occurring in symbolic and material interaction with things.

The case will be made that multimodal social semiotics of artefacts could benefit theoretically by including such typologies in analysis without losing the flexibility and sensitiveness towards actual meaning making processes.

References

Multimodal depth in film: A proposal for a multimodal and sound-oriented approach to intersemiotic analysis

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Film is an inherently multimodal medium. Despite this, film studies and film musicology alike have a tradition of approaching the discussion of formal interaction in film as a question of how well the image track and the music relate to each other, rather than as a question of complex multimodal intersemiosis (for example in epitomic works such as: Carroll (1996); Eisenstein and Leyda (1969); Gorbman (1987)). Even though this reductive theorisation has been questioned and challenged by media and (film) musicology scholars (e.g. Chion, 1994; Cook, 1998; Langkjær, 2008) and from within the field of multimodality (e.g. Bateman and Schmidt (2013); Tseng (2013)), the notion that film = audiovisual = moving image + music, is still largely dominant.

Following Walter Murch and Iben Have’s ideas about an audiovisual dimension (Chion, 1994; Have, 2008), I want to propose that the formal interrelations in film can be analysed according to a multimodal dimension and that the depth of this dimension is decided by the level of dialogue in the multimodal complex. Rather than seeing film as an addition of images and music, I propose that film consists of a number of visual modes (e.g. lighting, viewing perspective, facial gestures) and a number of auditory modes (e.g. dialogue, instrumentation, and musical harmonics), which are orchestrated as different ‘voices’ (drawing on Bakhtin’s ideas of dialogue and polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981)). The intersemiosis is a result of a dialogic interrelationship of all of these voices, or modes. It is my working hypothesis that a high level of dialogue equals a more complex meaning potential and thus a deeper multimodal dimension, whereas a low level of dialogue equals a more straightforward meaning potential and a flatter multimodal dimension.

Keywords: Multimodality, film analysis, semiotics, intersemiosis

References


A multimodal study of the textbooks for the doctoral course of English for Academic Communication in mainland China

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The study investigates the multimodal resources and the relations between images and texts in the two textbooks for the doctoral course of English for Academic Communication under the framework of multimodal content system and Martinec’s system of logico-semantics by conducting a detailed coding process of content analysis. This study reveals that there is a shortage of multimodal and design features in the two textbooks considering the results of the analysis of visual, text block and layout. Besides, logico-semantics for images and texts are mostly realized by exemplification, but some images and texts form no relation. These findings have important implications for EAP textbook design and EAP teaching in China.

Keywords: Multimodality, logico-semantics, EAP textbooks, China
A discourse-based approach to analyze image-text relations in children's picture books

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In children’s picture books, words and images interact to make meanings in new ways. Based on Martinec & Salway’s (2005) network of logical semantic relations between texts and images: elaboration, enhancement and extension, this paper adopts a discourse-based approach to analyze image-text relations complementary to existing grammar-based approaches. Intersemiotic consequential and temporal relations are also found in contemporary picture books, which can hopefully shed light on decoding multimodal children's picture books.
Gesture and the Acquisition of L2 English Tense and Aspect

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As an important category of nonverbal behaviour, gesture is defined as the spontaneous, synchronized, and meaningful hand and arm movements produced by people when they speak (McNeill, 2005). “Gestures are spatio-visual phenomena influenced by contextual and socio-psychological factors, and also closely tied to sophisticated speaker-internal, linguistic processes” (Gullberg, 2008: 149). Gestures are closely linked to speech and mind, and they can offer valuable insights into the processes of L2 acquisition, like L1 transfer, processing difficulties, and interlanguage.

Conceptualization of time in mind can be expressed by verbal language through multiple means including morphological means (i.e. tense and aspect markings on verbs) (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000). Conceptualization of time in mind can also be expressed by nonverbal gesture. People first conceptualize abstract time as space in mind, and then map the concrete spatial representations onto gestures. These gestures, expressing temporality and occurring simultaneously with oral temporal devices such as tense and aspect marking, are called “Temporal Gestures” (Cooperrider et al, 2014: 1781), the intersection and linkage between gesture and tense-aspect system.

Previous research into L2 tense and aspect acquisition has mainly focused on verbal modality and neglected the nonverbal gesture modality. To study through gesture can add a more vivid and comprehensive dimension of teaching, learning, acquiring, and processing L2 tense and aspect. The study looks into the acquisition of L2 English tense and aspect through the lens of gesture. Combining both qualitative and quantitative, offline and online research methods and techniques from sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and language education, it discovers: 1) the roles of pedagogical gesture in teaching and learning L2 English tense and aspect; 2) the online processing of L2 English tense and aspect as reflected in sensitivity to and inhibitory control of temporal gesture-speech incongruencies; 3) the acquistional trajectory of temporal gesturing as a developing system in its own right.

References


Teaching EFL Secondary School Students to Critically Read Literary Classics: a Discourse Analysis of “The Merchant of Venice”

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This study conducts a discourse analysis of excerpts of “The Merchant of Venice” in secondary school English textbooks used in an EFL context, shedding light on how to teach EFL secondary school students to critically read literary classics. The general theoretical framework consists of genre and register analyses in the light of systemic-functional linguistics. In the process of genre analysis, some specific concepts and tools used include communicative purposes, generic structures, episode analysis, critical literacy, character perspective chart, etc. In the process of register analysis, some specific concepts used include field, tenor and mode. To illustrate some data, examining comments and narration in the excerpts reveals the predominant traditional bias against Shylock, a protagonist of the play, and it leads to the advocacy of critical literacy which takes multiple perspectives into consideration and one of whose tools is character perspective chart. The demonstration of the use of character perspective chart exposes the absence of some critical information such as the historical background of prevalent discrimination against Jews which can to some extent justify Shylock’s behavior, and this brings the traditional bias towards Shylock into question. Moreover, the mode of the texts is written discourse in itself, and since “The Merchant of Venice” is a play, it is of multimodality: the written discourse can be adapted to physical performance and spoken discourse, and different modes can complement different perspectives to facilitate more comprehensive and thorough interpretations. To be concrete, pedagogical implications include: to lead students to watch movie versions, to ask students to change their roles from receptive readers to productive writers by rewriting the story from the perspective of Shylock, and to organize role-play activities such as drama and “readers’ theatre” so that students can become productive performers and put themselves into different characters’ shoes.
Krampus, Hollywood and the semiotics of fear

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Fear is one of the major emotions that humans can feel. In addition to being a psychological state, “fear has a physiology” (Burke 2005): it causes particular muscles in the human body to contract, makes the hair bristle and accelerates the heartbeat. Apart from the physical appearance of fear in a frightened person, humans have always desired to visualize their fear, giving it a concrete shape. This has led to the evolution of many monsters, like ghosts, vampires or Krampus.

Krampus is an ambiguous figure with unclear, probably heathen origins. It has many regionally variant manifestations. One of its most eminent forms is that of a hybrid creature with a furry humanoid body with goat hooves and Capricorn horns. Originally it was the devilish companion to Saint Nicholas and visits families, farms and households between the fourth and the sixth of December to punish lazy, disobedient children and servants. In Austria, Bavaria and Switzerland, hordes of up to several hundred disguised Krampusses parade through towns and villages to celebrate the cultural tradition of the Krampus in professionally organized community events.

In the course of time, Krampus has undergone various semiotic transformations. Most recently, its figure has been transformed by film monsters like orcs or skeleton pirates. As a result, traditional mask carvers have begun to model their wooden Krampus masks on such films. Traditional regional companions to Krampus, e.g. Perchts (two-faced witch-like creatures, often with long, carved beaks) have likewise been replaced by more globally known creatures like vampires and black angels. That this is not such a modern phenomenon as often claimed was shown by Koenig (1983), who photographed wooden Krampus masks called "concentration camp inmate" and "the Hunchback of Notre Dame", dating back to the 1940s.

In December 2015, Universal Studios released a horror movie called "Krampus", which introduced the figure of Krampus to an American audience not familiar with Saint Nicholas' companion. Therefore, the tradition of Krampus had to be re-semioticized to make it easier to understand for an American audience. Consequently, Krampus became "Santa Claus’ Shadow", and his mythological companions transformed into more familiar Hollywood monsters like child-devouring horror clowns or monstrous ginger-bread men.

In this paper, I will give an overview of the semiotic rise of Krampus as a mythological horror figure and analyse the recent processes of re-semiotization that this ancient figure has undergone. I will show which mythologically unrelated figures are exploited in the staging of Krampus as a modern horror monster and which other semiotic modes (sound, smell, fireworks) are employed in the mise-en-scène of a 21st century Krampus parade.

References


All-Encompassing Theory and “MM+EM” Interpreting Teaching

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Based upon the All-Encompassing theory and the methods of modern information technologies, this study explores the application modalities of “MM+EM” interpreting teaching. This holistic modality is based on the “1+4” multimodalities (MM) of interpreting teaching with all-encompassing network and the extended modality (EM) constructed, i.e. the application modalities of “MM+EM” interpreting teaching. The application modalities of “MM+EM” are ones with students-centered, teacher-guiding and the use of modern information technologies to create situational training environments. EM is constructed by the application of modern SP and ISM etc. in interpreting teaching after the “1+4” MM as the originality of experiencing worlds. The practices of interpreting teaching in the classrooms and out of them, the tests to the student interpreters and the calculations through SPSS, show that the application modalities of “MM+EM” have achieved good results with its new methods, which go beyond time and space. With the more perfect and popular development of SP and ISM etc., the application modalities of “MM+EM” are hoped to spread to the whole country.

Keywords: The all-encompassing theory, “MM+EM”, interpreting teaching, multimodality, ISM
Types of agency and language learners’ screen-based semiotic work

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Whilst many researchers agree that the role of learner agency is central in a learner’s semiotic work (e.g. Bezemer and Kress, 2016) including the work of language learners (Lantolf, 2000; van lier, 2008), much less research has focused on the relationship between screen-based semiotic resources and agency in computer-mediated communication (CMC) language learning scenarios. Given that communication through a screen plays a greater role in modern society than ever before (Liou, 2011), research in this area is important.

Following this, we present the notion of ‘types of agency’ that emerged from case study research on the agency of language learners (Knight, Barberà and Appel, 2017) whilst carrying out spoken interaction tasks using a CMC tool. The types identified highlighted the relationship between what learners could do/chose to do and could not do/chose not to do with the screen-based (semiotic) resources in relation to their motor, sensory (visual) and language systems. This led to types of agency emerging, namely directional agency, representational agency, organisational and strategic agency. Whereas all types involved speech they also involved the use of a screen-based image and/or text, and/or navigational buttons. Directional agency involved the somatic mode of physically clicking; representational agency involved learners’ relationship with the topic and organisational and strategic agency involved the use of spoken language for task management and completion.

Results confirm that learner agency is not monolithic (Mercer, 2012) but rather different types of agency can relate to screen-based resource-use for specific purposes. In addition to the screen being considered ‘a layer’ (Goodwin, 2013) in the action of task completion, results suggest that some screen-based resources can also be orientated to by learners as potential ‘others’ (Raudaskoski, 1999). Specifically with navigational resources, learner-learner CMC can momentarily resemble triadic participation, whereby resources act as social agents (Knight, Barberà, Dooly, forthcoming) in the discourse.

Keywords: Learner agency, screen-based resources, language learning, tasks, computer-mediated communication (CMC)
Dialogic Reading as a Tool for Fostering Language – An Example of Applied Multimodality

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Picture books are multimodal texts in which the interplay of pictures and written language is of crucial importance (i.e. Moya Guijarro 2014; Painter, Martin & Unsworth 2014). The written language is often read aloud by adults to children, making joint picture book reading a complex multimodal interaction with several modes to be considered. Dialogic Reading, a well-known tool for fostering language development, is a form of joint picture book reading that aims at stimulating oral language production by children through various evocative techniques (cf. Whitehurst et al. 1994; Mol et al. 2009). Recently, Dialogic Reading has been reevaluated in a series of research projects by developmental psychologists (i.e. Ennemoser, Kuhl & Pepouna 2013) in which it could be shown that Dialogic Reading improves language and literacy development very effectively when implemented systematically. To make the experimental results replicable in kindergarten routine, a manual is in development in which the developmental psychologist’s findings are paired with linguistic knowledge on language and literacy acquisition as well as on multimodality and multilingualism.

In this talk, the question will be approached of how the ineluctable multimodality of Dialogic Reading has to be considered for the development of said manual. This provides the impulse for the corollary question whether a manual like this is an example of Applied Multimodality – and what can be understood as Applied Multimodality in the first place.

References


Action competence by way of a representation focus

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Whereas there is much research on teaching and learning in school science focusing on science as a body of knowledge (i.e. concepts, models and theory complexes), less research is done into science as part of complex environmental issues when focusing on representation practices. A key goal of education for sustainable development is for students to develop action competence (Jensen & Schnack, 1997; Sinnes, 2015) and agency in transformation processes (O'Brien & Sygna, 2013). In transformation processes, students have the potential of developing reflexivity leading to a capacity for change. Identity is an important part of action competence. Individuals’ access to different types of knowledge, and different experiences and interpretations of these, contribute to the identity “work” across acts of meaning in representation practices. The presentation will address the issue of how action competence can be developed and analyzed when students are working with environmental issues supported by a multimodal representation focus. Thus transformational learning is investigated by transformations of semiotic resources. The main research question is: How can agency and action competence be analyzed by a representation focus? Representations need to be construed in the intersection between culture and self, and through intersubjective dialogue. This also means transforming and negotiation social norms as genres in the situation (Bezemer & Kress, 2015). Key rationales for the study is UNESCO’s (2017) framework for implementing ESD in education and design principles developed by Tytler et.al. (2013). These principles are developed into principles for working with socio-scientific issues (Sadler, Klosterman, & Topcu, 2011) by Knain et al. (2017). A framework for analyzing action competence is presented with examples of analysis from upper secondary classrooms. Analysis of interaction trajectories focusing on students’ transformations of and interaction with multimodal texts are presented. The study is part of the REDE project (Representation and participation in school science) at the University of Oslo.

References


Digital collage as play material for students’ composing of multimodal picture books

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In this project, contemporary picture book aesthetics has been an inspiration for designing reading and text creating processes at a third-grade level in a Norwegian primary school. In this presentation, I will investigate what kind of potential a digital collage technique has for students’ meaning making processes in their shaping of narrative picture books.

Many contemporary picture books contain digital collages, which means that the creators experiment with and combine different kinds of visual material, like for example photography and drawings in an interplay with written text. Druker (2008) defines the picture book collage as «a broad aesthetic principle of combination and synthesis» (s. 46).

The study is conducted as a qualitative Educational design research project (EDR). This means that knowledge about students’ multimodal meaning making is gained through a process of related and iterative interventions, developed and reflected in close collaboration between researcher and teachers.

Based on the main theoretical frameworks for the study (multimodality and social semiotic theory and picture book theory), I will provide multimodal analyses of selected spreads from the student’s picture books – combined with a view on the sign making process and the affordances of the digital artefact used. The students use a digital drawing tool for iPad, which offers the opportunities to integrate photography and digital drawings in different layers, to cut out, copy and enlarge objects, and modify backgrounds – all in a dynamic text creation process.

The analyses of the final picture books show that playing with and combining different materials create surprising expressions and work as catalysts for fantasy. It also leads to develop a metalanguage about narrative and multimodal composing. To create multimodal characters and environments in this way, gives the students an opportunity to communicate atmospheres and create emotionally engaging stories, which they would not have been able to communicate by writing alone.

References


Multimodal narratives on teaching Spanish as a foreign language to students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

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This study aims to analyze a multimodal narrative (van LEEUWEN, 2005; ALANEN, R.; KALAJA, 2013) of a Spanish student as a foreign language learner, diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The study was carried out within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor theory, drafted primarily by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and subsequently expanded by Kövecses (2005, 2010) and Faith (2007), in relation to the cultural variability and the Idealized Cognitive Models, respectively, and by Forceville (2009), about the Multimodal Metaphor. This research is a qualitative case study (CHADDERTON and TORRANCE, 2015) and the procedures for this data collection are: researcher's observation (STAKE, 2011), multimodal narrative collection (MELO-PFEIFER, 2015; P, 2016) and semi-structured interview (ARNOLDI, 2006). For data triangulation (STAKE, 2011), the following instruments are used: fieldnotes (FLICK, 2009), audio recordings (STAKE, 2011) and reflective sessions (ABRAHÃO, 2006). The results of this study show that the student with Autistic Spectrum Disorder produces visual-verb metaphors and multimodal metaphors, which indicates that source and target domains are conceptualized and produced in different ways. Therefore, the use of multimodal narratives in teaching a foreign language to learners who have symptoms of Autistic Spectrum, through this study, indicates that the work with a multimodal approach in a foreign language classroom produces multiple senses that go beyond semiotic resources focused only on oral expression or written production. This practice, therefore, contributes to the process of school and social inclusion and the reduction of attitudinal asymmetrical barriers (AMARAL, 1998), which prevent the establishment of an inclusive education.

Key words: Multimodal narratives, multimodal metaphor, autistic spectrum disorder, teaching and learning foreign languages
A social semiotic perspective on multimodal language practices for teaching Coriolis acceleration in engineering dynamics

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This paper describes and explains lecturers’ multimodal language practices in an undergraduate engineering dynamics course at a South African university. Engineering dynamics uses physics and mathematics knowledge to understand motion and forces in the context of engineering mechanisms. This paper draws on a wider study of language use in the first of two compulsory dynamics courses for students enrolled in a four-year professional bachelor degree in mechanical engineering or mechatronics. Consistent with reports in the literature (e.g. Fang, 2014), students describe the course as ‘horrible’ and ‘difficult’, with difficulties having significant implications for progression and subsequent curriculum coherence.

The analytic focus of this paper is lectures on the topic of ‘Coriolis acceleration’, a key dynamics concept. While the ‘digital turn’ affords new possibilities for using time, space and texts in education (Mills, 2016), the lecture – and lecture recordings made available to students on course websites – remain central in undergraduate education in contexts characterised by resource constraints (Thesen, 2007), diverse student intakes and disruptions to classes. Transcribed recordings of two lecturers’ classes are analysed from a social semiotic perspective, using the concepts of mode, the three metafunctions of language (ideational, interpersonal and textual), rhetorical move, and contexts of culture and of situation (e.g. Kress, 2014; Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn and Tsatsarelis, 2001; Morgan, 2006). The micro-level analysis explores how different language modes act textually to produce coherent conceptual and interpersonal meanings. Contextual documents and interviews with the lecturers are used to explain lecturers’ choices. This understanding of lectures’ multimodal language practices – which are key to the ‘semiotic landscape’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) of the dynamics course – poses questions in the wider study about who may be included in/excluded from participation in engineering dynamics.

References


Transduction practices in the learning of stereochemistry: towards developing a multimodal theory of emergent learning

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In disciplinary learning classrooms, access to the intended object of learning is constituted through the affordance of discerned disciplinary relevant aspects, which are distributed across semiotic resources (Airey & Linder 2009; 2017; Eriksson et al. 2014; Fredlund et al. 2015). From a multimodal perspective this means that such learning needs to be seen in terms of getting to be able to interpret and use the meaning potential of these disciplinary-specific semiotic resources (Kress 2010; Jewitt 2008). The aim of this presentation is to use this framing to make a theoretical link to the complex system notion of emergence as characterized for educational practices by Davis & Sumara (2006). The data environment is interactive learning with stereochemical molecular-structure identification exercises, which takes place in a five-week introductory level organic chemistry course. The data environment is chosen because of the apparent dynamics (Linder 2013) that the stereochemistry curriculum presents—the disciplinary relevant aspects are microscopic and thus their discernment and affordance requires semiotic mediating tools to facilitate visualization transduction (Bezemer & Kress 2008; Kress 2010). The analysis shows how, through transduction, students in group-work situations combine disciplinary convention with own alternative invention to create semiotic resources that they are able to engage with in a meaningful way, both concretely and visually.

References


Signs of multimodal genre awareness in young YouTubers' online engagements

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In Sweden, big efforts are currently being made in what is referred to as the "digitization of school" (cf. Government of Sweden, 2017) and in the work to support media and information literacy (MIL) at a more general level. Since many young people today are deeply engaged in various forms of digital media on the one hand (Swedish Media Council, 2017) while lacking commitment to their education on the other, a focus on digitization and media literacy could perhaps bridge these motivational gaps – at least to some extent, for some pupils. However, instead of listening to and acknowledging children's knowledge and experience within this field there seems to be a tendency to frown upon their engagements in digital media and to describe their activities on digital platforms as potentially harmful.

This paper presents results from of an on-going pilot project, Learning in Digital Wastelands (Lindstrand, 2018), on children's learning and designs for learning (cf. Selander & Kress, 2010; Bezemer & Kress, 2008) in digital arenas outside school. The aim of the project is to investigate meaning-making and designs for learning in digital contexts outside school where children and young people are engaged in multimodal sign-making practices (Kress, 2003; 2010). An incentive is, perhaps naïvely, that this may offer new perspectives on resources and designs for learning suitable for children today.

More specifically, the paper presents a multimodal analysis of the opening sequence of a video posted on YouTube by a nine-year old. By contextualising the video and its modal configuration and orchestration through comparisons with other YouTube videos referred to by this young producer, the paper claims that the video indicates a high level of multimodal genre awareness. As a conclusion it is suggested that a curiosity in what children do outside school could give great leads in terms of how to take pedagogy further and work within genres, modes and media that are relevant to children today. Who knows what genres will be dominant tomorrow (cf. Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2002)?

References


Student teachers’ perspective of representations in science teaching and learning

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Representations such as writing, speech, graphs, diagrams, gestures and simulations are important tools for teaching and learning in science (Knain, 2015). Representations are also valuable tools for making student understanding visible for sharing, discussion and mentoring.

In this study, our aims were to study student teachers’ conceptualization of representations as tools for student learning, the importance of representations related to their own field of science and their experiences with representations during teaching practice. We performed focus group interviews with student teachers before and after teaching practice, along with group discussions on selected representations. We also studied exam papers from a small number of student teachers focusing on representations. The data was analysed by thematic analysis using software for qualitative analysis, ATLAS.ti.

Preliminary findings suggest that before teacher practice the student teachers were familiar with the concept of representations and the importance of representations as tools for learning in science. They were aware of challenges related to interpretation of representations, and that different representations and combinations of representations can support student learning in science. During teacher practice the student teachers seem to have developed a greater awareness of the nature of representations, what students need to know and that they should be able to interpret and make their own representations. However, student teachers also report on limited possibilities to focus on representations during their teacher practice.

We conclude that working with representations for teachers and student teachers is related to the development of an awareness of representations as fundamental tools and forms of expression in science learning. An important task is to enable the student teachers to study their own teaching practice by building a bridge between subject, pedagogical content knowledge and teaching practice, creating a “third space” as an arena for the student teachers’ professional development as teachers.

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Education, 88(6), 901-914.
Kinetics: looking at text-based mobile communication multimodally

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This paper is concerned with the appropriation of the affordances of text-based communication in digital media to evoke associations with multimodal communication, specifically visual, auditory and haptic experiences accompanying observed nonverbal phenomena and actions.

Through the analysis presented in the paper, I identify a user-initiated language development serving to express multimodal meanings within a written medium often simplistically treated as mono-modal. Multimodal meaning-making is achieved in text-only digital discourse in the form of discursive enactment expressed by *kinetics* defined as typographically marked graphical representations of actions and observable phenomena in digital communication, and characterised by a set of formal and functional features which distinguish them from mere description of actions and phenomena. Rather than describing, kinetics trigger associations with nonverbal communication from prior experience. Syntagmatically, kinetics form part of the organisational structure of messages in which they occur based on their functional relationship as attitudinal indicators whose scope extends over the preceding stretch of text. In terms of intentionality, kinetics demonstrate a complex relationship to the discursively constructed alterae personae of communicators.

I conclude by recommending that instances of discursive enactment expressed through kinetics should be analysed in the context of their multimodal meaning-making potential and seen as linked to the emergence of the phenomenon of discursively evoked multimodality.
Who am I? A multimodal self-presentation by newly arrived young immigrants

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Many of the young immigrants who recently have arrived in Europe have neither competence in English nor in the majority language of the country that they have come to. When they start school, they, as all young people do, want to communicate and present themselves to the classmates and the teachers. Oral language is the natural mode of meaning when people meet in most new settings. In this case, the lack of a common language makes communication difficult. Other modes of meaning need to be explored (Mills, 2016; Mills, Davis-Warra, Sewell, & Anderson, 2016).

In this project, we investigate how newly arrived immigrants, 15 – 17 years old, use multimodal texts to make presentations of themselves. Their texts consist of images made by their mobile devices and written language (short verbal texts written in the majority language, in this case Norwegian, and in the students’ mother tongue). The photos are of important things or activities in the students’ daily life. The multimodal texts are presented in the classroom, and also in an exhibition organized in school where students from other classes, teachers and members of the community board are the audience. The exhibition consists of one multimodal text from each student.

In this paper, we present our analysis of the students’ multimodal texts and pay special attention to the interplay between image and language (Blunden, 2016; Painter, Martin, & Unsworth, 2013). In addition, we discuss how multimodal texts like these can serve as a self-presentation when language cannot be the prominent mode. We also want to comment on the use of exhibition to give these students a voice in their new community (Walker Rettberg, 2014).

References


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As part of an on-going research work related both to mapping and reflecting upon the latest multimodal strategies of communicating and disseminating academic knowledge (Maier and Engberg, 2013 and 2014; Engberg and Maier, 2015, 2016 and forthcoming), this paper explores the adjusting strategies employed in the transition from research-based articles to other generic forms when remediating knowledge for different audiences in different contexts. The digital context of the Harvard Business Review represents the source of the present empirical evidence which includes articles and related digital materials (e.g. videos, webinars, “Explainers”, animation films, etc.) targeted at academics and/or practitioners.

The research work is founded on a multimodal approach in order to deal with and reflect upon how knowledge is managed through specific knowledge building processes when addressing audiences motivated by different needs and expectations. We focus on the semiotic modes’ interaction in the hypermodal generic networks in order to identify the impact of the semiotic interplay upon the adjusting strategies employed. Furthermore, we demonstrate how the level of complexity of the knowledge communicated in the articles and their related digital materials may be investigated. Thus, we combine the multimodal perspective with a perspective upon knowledge management concerned with the complexity and explanatory quality of the knowledge communicated and disseminated in the digital context of Harvard Business Review.

The communication and dissemination of academic knowledge will continue to evolve in ways that can be unforeseen at the present moment due to rapid technological developments, and therefore we consider that keeping pace with these developments might be one of researchers’ biggest challenges in years to come.

The findings of this research work are primarily meant to contribute to a better understanding of the multimodal adjusting strategies required today and in the future when academics have to address various audiences and have to manage knowledge accordingly.

References


Identifying Features of Multimodal Structures Used in Modern Mass Media Discourse

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When we read modern English-language newspapers and magazines, we periodically come across structures which would be unrecognizable for readers a century ago. It may involve a portion of a word-combination, a sentence or a text that contains within it certain graphic characters or symbols having various structural, semantic, or pragmatic values.

Conventional alphabetical symbols are customarily dominant in those words, but the insertion of even one symbol which differs from this pattern instantly gives the word a totally different, multimodal character; this alters the way readers are likely to react to the text containing this structure. In tandem with this, special stylistic effects can be achieved using this technique, but a certain level of background knowledge and specialized literacy is needed to decipher these structures and to comprehend to writer’s intention.

In the majority of cases a pictogram, graphic symbol or a modified letter which is substituted for a single letter is complete in itself, but it becomes an integral part of a word, or even a complete text. The most common patterns of using alphabetical characters in combination with other entities to create a multimodal ‘word’ involve the insertion of pictograms, punctuation marks, figures, mathematical symbols, or pictures, or else a modified, amalgamated or unexpectedly supplemented form of some letter, to achieve a specific effect.

These processes affect the classical paradigms and theories relating to signs and sign systems, and were the catalyst of our desire to make a personal contribution to the development of a theoretical and methodological foundation for multimodality studies in the twenty-first century.
The diverse range of semiotic resources which are employed in modern written communication involves a number of processes for which an in-depth theoretical and methodological basis has not yet been devised in modern linguistics.

This research shows the necessity of creating a classification of the graphic elements used in modern English communication. They have been placed in several distinct groups in terms of their common features, in order to study the structure, form and meaning with the prospect of identifying their true value and the possibilities they open up in the field of communication.

On the basis of available mass media resources we identified non-verbal devices and divided them into several groups on the basis of common features. These groupings are the following: segmentation; supplementary graphic effects; font and colour; non-pictorial and non-photographic graphic elements; iconic elements; and infographics.

Each item has distinctive features, but when several items or patterns are combined they produce special effects, changing the meaning of the meaning which is implied by the text or text fragment. The aspects which deserve further consideration include the development of possible text models based on the affordance of the modes, and the choice of an appropriate methodology for studying them.

In our research, on the basis of the dominant component, we single out two types of models—monomodal models and multimodal models. The monomodal category is further divided into graphic and visual forms; the multimodal ones are subdivided into graphic and graphic-visual categories. All of these subtypes can be further subdivided in terms of the dominant multimodal component, such as iconic, ideographic, diacritical, symbolic, and others. Each has its own structure and peculiarities. All these modes, as well as the textual models which they produce, will be presented in detail.
Recently there is an emerging comment tool provided by most video-sharing websites in China. Comments sent by using this tool appear, instead of under the videos, on the video screen (Figure 1), which enables video audiences to send their comments and read other users’ comments without pulling down the screen. Such comments are called “Dan Mu” which is the *pinyin* of Chinese characters “弹幕”. This paper intends to investigate how Internet users apply various semiotic resources provided by the tool to accommodate online communicative needs, and at the same time construct online identity and community. By adopting ethnographic observation and concepts taken from multimodality, it is found that despite various modes involved when using the tool (color, written texts, sound and moving image, etc), the meaning making process of Dan Mu is basically a process of keeping cohesion between one multimodal ensemble (audience-generated comments) and another one (either user-generated or institution-generated videos). However, taking color as an example, the paper tries to illustrate that it is by no means an easy task to achieve this cohesion. There are various norms that need to be followed in order to send a Dan Mu in the “right” color. Furthermore, the paper suggests that these norms are multilayered, interwoven with each other: norms for Dan Mu forms and contents, for combination of multiple modes, for social-cultural considerations.

**Keywords:** Mode, multimodality, online comments, norms, colors
If it looks like a duck. Names as shared signifiers for discussing “cuteness” in healthcare robotics

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“Cuteness” emerged as a key value within the Smooth Project [7], which targets the design of a robot to facilitate daily tasks in retirement homes. The Smooth project is planned from 2017 to 2020 and it follows a user centred design approach [4]. During the first stage, observations and interviews were conducted at the home and three scenarios were established for the robot. The first two scenarios are of a practical nature such as collecting laundry and garbage from the residents’ rooms, the third scenario is social, as the robot should accompany the residents to the dining room at the time of their meals. During the second (current) stage, different designs were explored through 3D and 2D digital visualisations. These visualisations were discussed in two co-design workshops and email exchanges within the research team, which includes: academics, stakeholders (local companies and institutions), and end users from the home. Data for this study were gathered through field notes during the workshops and discourse analysis of email exchanges [2]. A testing workshop with an initial prototype is planned at the home for spring 2018.

This study builds on multimodality [3] and digital ecologies ([5] and [1]), to explore the symbolic function of verbal language in shared meaning making, regarding the aesthetic and interactivity of the robot. At the same time, the robot is understood as an embodied system contextualised within a digital ecology that encompasses social activities, individuals and physical artefacts with different roles [6]. In this study animal names, such as: penguin, bear, giraffe, and swan, acted as shared signifiers, enabling the research team to decode the different visualisations of the robot and explore its aesthetics, functionalities, and possible interactions.

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Multimodal evangelism, or, is everything really multimodal? Reflections on multimodality and gender

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Multimodality has proved to be a fruitful methodology in many areas, from plant science (e.g. Cross and Decambiaire 2017) to the performing arts (e.g. Atã and Queiroz 2017). Recently, it has been shown that the intersection of multimodality and gender is also a productive research area (Machin, Caldas-Coulthard, and Milani 2016; Maxwell and Mittner 2018). One result of the various wanderings of multimodality is the potential for the new disciplines to feed back into multimodality itself. Gender studies offers critical reflections on power relations, embodied knowledge, the ramifications of white supremacy, and ecological challenges as matters of political and social transformation. But is multimodality as a research area ready for – or even in need of – such reflection?

A multimodal analysis of the work of gender reveals that gendered structures, gender bias, and gendered meaning are all carried out across a variety of modes. Moreover, a social-semiotic approach reveals how deeply these are rooted in society and in what ways not only bodies, language, and representation but also – as for example in the field of music – sound, voices, instruments, and stylistic choices are greatly influenced by gender. Nevertheless, in this period of reflection which we are currently witnessing within multimodality, the questions ‘is everything really multimodal?’ and ‘is multimodality really everything?’ need to be seriously considered. Gender studies (particularly Black and postcolonial gender studies) tells us that for an equal and non-discriminatory meeting among different parties, the interchange has to be two-way (hooks 1992, Ahmed 2017). Such a notion is also essential to multidisciplinary collaboration, which is becoming increasingly encouraged and rewarded by national and international policymakers (Maxwell and Benneworth 2018).

Therefore, as it seeks to move forward in today’s research environment and society, can multimodality learn from gender studies that essentialist binaries such as ‘male’ and ‘female’– or ‘us’ and ‘them’ – are exclusionary and unhelpful? Or is it time to close ranks and establish the identity of multimodality more firmly in order to better understand its place in the academy and beyond?

References

Embodied collaboration in a film production practice with iPads

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The aim of the present study was to examine students’ interactions in a film production practice with iPads in the upper level of the Danish primary school (grades 4-6) through Sigrid Norris’ multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a, 2012a). This analytical method is applicable for analyzing how social actors construct meaning systems in specific social actions (Norris, 2004). There is a great need for applying this analytical perspective in education studies where digital technology is a learning resource because the technologies enable new ways of making meaning. Many schools in Denmark have invested in iPads and the Danish school curriculum encourages teachers to include digital technology in their teaching (Undervisningsministeriet, 2014). Through video observations, I have looked at the situated interplay between the students’ use of modes in a collaborative film production practice. Through Norris’ concept of system of representation, I analyze the students’ choice of modes in an interaction, and I draw on Norris’ concept of multimodal configuration to analyze which modes may take on special importance in the specific context (Norris, 2004, 2011a, 2012a, 2014). My findings indicate that the students’ meaning systems were constructed through embodied interaction, and especially the students’ ability to collaborate through the gaze and the hands was of great importance (Møller, 2017). My analysis shows that the touchscreen and the screen size of the iPad bring potentials and challenges into film education, which we have to consider. My study gives rise to discussion of a renewed awareness of media technologies in film production practices, and on this basis to discuss film didactic. My contribution to this conference especially will highlight how my study contributes to developing Norris’ multimodal (inter)action analysis in connection with collaborative and digital literacy practices.

References


Cultivating a multimodal gaze: A classroom research study in a higher education English Studies program

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To explore the learning potential of a course in multimodal discourse analysis, I designed a course for BA and MA level university students in English Studies at a Hungarian university. My main objective was the development of their multimodal literacy and the cultivation of a multimodal gaze in the participants of the course. As an English language teacher, researcher and editor I noticed the need for building knowledge about multimodality. These students are mostly unaware of the multimodal aspect of the world that surrounds them and lack the language to talk and write about their multimodal experiences. Although they are expected to interpret and produce multimodal texts, their multimodal literacy is rarely developed explicitly. During the semester I collected data with the help of writing tasks and questionnaires which I then analyzed qualitatively. Based on these findings I present the most beneficial tasks and course materials. My findings indicate the relevance of such a course in teacher education and the importance of developing skills in social semiotic multimodal analysis in language learners and teacher trainees.
‘How do you illustrate the atmosphere of a story?’ A multimodal social semiotic approach to making illustrated books for language learners

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Making illustrated readers for foreign language (FL) learners is a complex intersemiotic process which is negotiated among editors, illustrators, authors and the directors of publishing houses. Both the ideational and textual metafunctions (Halliday, 1978; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) of such texts are affected by the participants in this creative process. Assumptions made by the editors about the needs and literacy development of the language learner and their knowledge of the affordances of illustrations and image-text relations influence the creative process of the illustrator, whose understanding of the purpose of the materials shapes their visual work. The editor is often more interested in the verbal aspect of the narratives while the illustrator is more concerned with the visual elements. The communication between the two, that is their ability to express their opinions, expectations and approaches, often leads to misunderstanding and confusion. This paper will illustrate how the editors’ and illustrators’ communication, knowledge and beliefs shape the content of these books. A series of interviews and questionnaires were conducted with editors and illustrators of such materials. Based on the findings of the study, I propose a set of multimodal strategies that bookmakers can apply in their creative process to foster better understanding of the choices they make. A multimodal social semiotic approach to creating multimodal texts aimed at FL learners can contribute to the production of books with rich meaning-making potential and pedagogical affordances.

References

Crossword puzzles including the small drawings inside them are a Finnish speciality. The puzzles are like games for entertainment and problem-solving. The pictures in them are simplified, most often black-and-white, and solving their meanings is the idea of the puzzle. In my presentation, I ask: What are the typical features in the puzzle imagery; what is the structure of the imagery and in which way do the pictures refer to the content they represent?

I first classify the pictures according to Peircean sign classes: icon, index and symbol. This classification is fulfilled using metonymy and metaphor. After that, methods for graphic abstraction are paid attention to: how pictures are simplified and how they represent items and ideas. There are certain principles found in using lines, shapes and perspectives. Colours do not make the pictures clearer but are used for interest and entertainment. Similarities to other visual imagery, such as cartoons can be found. Humorous style is also used.

The graphic abstraction is based on mental images and organized in categories. In pictures, differences between categories are emphasized. Prototypes and stereotypes are common. The pictures have to be very ordinary although cryptic pictures might be more interesting for problem-solvers. Connotations of words become visible through simplified images.

I collected the material between 2013–2016 and continue to solve new puzzles. The study pays attention to the imagery that is conventional and renews itself very slowly. Crossword puzzles serve as a cultural container.
Children making meaning of mathematics textbooks - a multimodal study

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This ongoing study focuses on the meeting between child and textbook. Mathematics textbooks are a common teaching resource. Over 75 percent of primary school children, worldwide, are taught mathematics from textbooks, and in Sweden more than 90 percent use textbooks in their mathematics education (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Arora, 2012). In order to analyse the textbook as a resource for meaning making and children’s meaning making, the concepts of theoretical semiotic potential and actual semiotic potential (van Leuween, 2005) will be used. The former concept is understood as the meaning the mathematics textbook has been designed to offer, and the dichotomous concept, actual semiotic potential, as the meaning the individual discovers in her encounter with the textbook. A delimitation to Swedish primary school year 1 (children 7-8 years) will be done, and both digital and printed textbooks will be included. The data consists of video material, and documents in the form of children’s representations. The video material is comprised of 18 children working with printed textbooks, and approximately the same amount working with digital textbooks. A multimodal analysis will be done. This study aims to explore the relationship between the designed and the discovered. The expected outcome of the study is that the mathematical content the textbook was designed to offer is not always what the children in fact discover. This is of great concern for teachers as well as textbooks authors and illustrators. Knowledge of how the relationship between theoretical semiotic potential and actual semiotic potential appears is of interest, and can in the long run support teachers’ planning and implementation of their mathematics teaching.

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Theorising “New” Semiotic Resources: Paper

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Within the social semiotic multimodal paradigm, handling modes such as wording, images, sound and colour is relatively straight-forward since well-developed grammars of those modes already exist (e.g. Halliday 1994; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; van Leeuwen 1999, 2011). However, when trying to develop a comprehensive framework for multimodal analysis of the novel (Nørgaard in press), I faced the challenge of handling the materiality of my object of analysis, including paper. While some might think of paper in the novel as a semiotically insignificant canvas for the literary narrative, my collection of literary data proved this perception wrong. In my presentation, I will explore the meaning-potential of paper in the novel and consider how this semiotic resource may be systematised within a multimodal framework. My talk will point to challenges involved in handling “new” semiotic resources – new in the sense that they have previously not typically been perceived as semiotic and new in terms of being handled within a social semiotic multimodal framework. Amongst the topics to be discussed are the development of system networks for “new” semiotic resources and the phenomenon of symptoms that turn into signs.

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On the Relations between Modes: How Writing Systems can Affect Visual Semiosis in Multimodal Texts

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The aim of the paper is to demonstrate that visual semiosis is culturally specific while there are some aspects that are universal. Visual images that are seemingly transparent and easy to decode actually require a framework that is specific to the particular context in which each multimodal text comes into being. The paper explores what determines visual semiotics in relation to linguistic factors of the culture in question. Specifically, the impact of the writing system of Japanese on its counterpart of visual semiosis will be focused on. In Japanese multimodal texts, there still exists a strong sense of directionality of left to right although most textual formats take the horizontal, left to right directionality as in English counterparts.

The paper will therefore draw attention to some Japanese examples which can signify this conventionally prominent directionality of writing and explore how that tendency is manifested in how visual semiosis appears to be conditioned in multimodal texts. For example, the distribution of meaning in the left/right domain of multimodal texts will be discussed in relation to the possibly underlying conditioning of writing systems of right to left. I would also like to address the significance of (visual and writing) directionality as a crucial dynamic that determines the overall meaning making of multimodal texts. Questions to be addressed are how the meaning distribution of left and right manifests certain negative-ness and positive-ness and authority in multimodal texts.

The paper points to that current social semiotic multimodal theory, which is primarily based on Anglophone semiosis in its selection of textual data, could and should now be expanded and developed in relation to the language mode with an emphasis on the impact of one mode on another.
Multimodal communication through puppets in a project with refugee children

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Over the last years Europe has experienced the greatest mass movement since the Second World War. Nearly a million displaced people fleeing home due to conflicts, economic devastation, human rights violation and persecution, crossed Greece seeking a better future in the Western and Northern European countries. In most cases, societies mobilized and responded to the crisis by supporting refugees in many aspects, such as children’s education. In Greece since October 2016, many refugee children attended the Greek educational system. Needless to say that education for refugee children who have missed years of schooling or had no previous access to it proved to be a rather complicated issue, which was aggravated by the transitory stage of their living. Organizing catch-up programs to meet the needs of the children in education, while at the same time empowering them to overcome trauma and stress was imperative. Therefore, prior to and in parallel with the official courses in schools, informal education activities took place in many refugee camps implemented by Universities, NGOs and volunteers. In this context, we designed a six months’ project called “Literacy through Drama” taking into account that a collaborative environment that is devoid of fear of failure could result in stronger linguistic outcomes (Krashen, 1988˙ Payne, 2011). The project, which was implemented in a reception class in a public school of Volos (Greece), aimed at facilitating children’s literacy by creating an opportunity for authentic situations in a more playful and less schoolish manner (Almond, 2005˙ Calvert, & Sheen, 2015). A large part of the project was carried out through puppets. Their use, in a setting of learning interaction, served as a mediating tool to engage children, explain abstract ideas, and demonstrate processes and concepts, facilitating thus the learning process. The puppets, as a multimodal medium, encouraged children to co-operate, to express themselves in a creative way and to communicate in many modes overcoming language borders. During the making of the puppets and their animation, the factor of ‘stress’ was significantly decreased and therefore children improved their communication skills and their creativity. The puppets stimulated children through play to think up unexpected linguistic constructions or harmonies, longer monologues and dialogues, to play with different voices, to use all available resources for communication.

The paper discusses multimodal communication practices adopted by the participants during the project, especially focusing on interactions between children and between children and tutors while using puppetry (puppets, persona dolls and others). Video recordings of the sessions were analyzed by means of a multimodal framework to provide an insight into the ways refugee children conveyed meanings through the ‘voice’ of the puppets. Children used a variety of representational modes to communicate, such as named languages (children’s native language, English and Greek), facial and body expressions, gestures and gaze while animating puppets. Through puppets’ animation, children were empowered to express themselves in many modes and to produce stronger linguistic outcomes.
When words and graphs move the eyes: How do experimental eye-tracking data complement with an opinion-based survey?

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Multisemiotic texts composed of different semiotic systems are widely employed in academic and professional environments. Graph/word texts have been identified as fundamental written discourse tools in the construction and transmission of specialized knowledge. Nevertheless, research on multisemiotic texts constituted by words and graphs has been scarce with only a few exceptions. In light of this background, the objective of this presentation is twofold. On the one hand, eye movement behavior was studied in seventy-seven high school Chilean students, in order to determine the effects on reading of causally related texts in Spanish, composed of words and graph. On the other, a twenty-four-question survey on reading habits was administered to 989 university students of five professional careers focusing on reading practices on multisemiotic digital/paper texts. Our general aim was to put together in a broad complementary panorama declarative knowledge (survey) and procedural knowledge (eye tracking measures). The general results partially confirmed our hypothesis: the findings show a concentration on reading words more than graphs, and point to a main speed-up effect when the causal connective is explicit, but the graph is omitted. Complementarily, the major findings of the survey point to a preference for paper format in academic environments, rather than focus on digital texts. Moreover, words more than graph artefacts are selected, when reading for study purposes. These declarative tendencies tend to occur irrespective of the discipline. Interestingly, both approaches complement in a preference for reading words, more than focusing on graphical information.
Multimodal awareness in writing centre tutor training in higher education using visual narratives

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Global citizens have diverse resources available to draw on to make meaning. However, having the ability to use their resources in particular contexts is often where power and inequality surface. “Multimodal communicative competence involves the knowledge and use of language concerning the visual, gestural, audio and spatial dimensions of communication, including computer-mediated-communication” (Heberle, 2010: 102). ‘Multimodal competence’ could be considered essential, given today’s diverse communities and the varied mediums in which they communicate. Tutors located within writing centers in higher education have a significant role to play within this larger global context. They not only help students to negotiate meaning within modes such as writing, image, and speech, but also should be experienced in using and negotiating meaning in these modes themselves. In South Africa, where diversity of cultures, people and languages is rich, a key to understanding how to develop ‘multimodal competence’ could be explored by examining multimodal semiotic resources. To respond to this context, the author has developed a doctoral research project, which examines how a group of writing tutors develops themselves as writers and facilitators. They do this through an exploration of musical, visual and written resources in the construction of a personal writing journey video narrative. The data collected will include video and audio recordings, and tutor produced and selected images and written texts. The data will be analyzed using a framework of semiotic metafunctions developed from Halliday (1978) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). The preliminary data will be used to explore how engagement with multimodal resources as a training method stimulates thinking about academic writing, and could provide a window into how this thinking shapes person-to-person interaction and meaning making.
Multimodality and Creativity through Transmedia Storytelling in the Malaysian Higher Education Context

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The technological advancements of the 21st century have elevated the art of storytelling and allowed for stories to be told and disseminated through multiple modes of meaning. The demands of a generation of audiences that are multiliterate digital natives also require that storytelling is multimodal, engaging, interactive, immersive and personalised. Transmedia storytelling is the creation of story worlds through the use of multiple media platforms that provide participatory, immersive, interactive and multifaceted storytelling experiences for audiences. Transmedia storytelling has been used in the entertainment and media industry as an effective tool for advertising, marketing and branding. Increasingly, transmedia storytelling is being applied in the education sector as a pedagogical tool. This paper explores the pedagogical applications of transmedia storytelling in developing multimodality and creativity among tertiary students in Malaysia. The paper details the development of multimodal literacies through the conceptualisation and presentations of transmedia storytelling campaigns by tertiary students for a literature and media course. Through the conceptualisation of transmedia storytelling campaigns, tertiary students were found to have engaged with visual, spatial, linguistic, literary, audio, gestural and technical modes of meaning and have developed creative thinking skills. As research on pedagogical applications of transmedia storytelling is in its infancy in Malaysia, this paper paves the way towards utilizing transmedia storytelling as a pedagogical tool to develop multimodal literacies and increase knowledge and scholarship of transmedia storytelling in the Malaysian tertiary environment.

Keywords: Multimodality, transmedia storytelling, literature and media, higher education, Malaysia
Motivation in ESP Multimodal Practice

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Multimodality has made educational institutions reappraise traditional aspects of the education environment and institutions that teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) seem to increasingly include multimodal perspectives in their curricula. Multimodality research questions now are positioned alongside more traditional ESP research questions; “questions of language forms in monomodal frames” (Prior 2013:520): How do students react when facing the whole interaction of modes? Does meaning conveyed through space, visuals and language simultaneously make understanding easier? It seems therefore pressing to research if a multimodal approach to ESP learning motivates students more than traditional approaches. This paper details the study that is being conducted in the Polytechnic University of Cartagena (UPCT), Spain and that explores L2 motivation of undergraduates that study Technical English following a multimodal pedagogy that mainly draws on the use of TED Talks. These crafted talks offered by leading experts on a wide range of fields, have unveiled as a set of guidelines for compelling communication. They incorporate a set of modes (language, gesture, body language, and visuals) that work together ‘in order to produce a greater meaning than either mode could on its own’ (Rowsell 2013:147). It is by addressing the different verbal and nonverbal modes that teachers can unveil how speakers at TED achieve compelling communication whilst being effective onstage. Students, in turn, if able to realize how different modes are orchestrated in these talks, might be encouraged to voice their ‘Ideas worth spreading’ in a Ted-style. The angle from which this study will research motivation of L2 students is Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System (2009) which relies on the theory of possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986). This paradigm encourages a viewpoint of L2 motivation from the lens of learners as future L2 users.

Keywords: Multimodality, motivation, possible selves, verbal and non-verbal modes

REFERENCES


Employing affect as a semiotic resource in multimodal theorizing

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All meaning making is embodied (Kress, 2010: 77). The ‘affective turn’ (Koivunen, 2000) in the social sciences has for nearly two decades engaged in challenging the binary models of thinking that detach interpretation from sensation and mind from body. Despite multimodal endeavours within this area, ‘sensoriness’ is still “not a strong focus of most multimodal approaches” (MODE 2012) and affect often remains a missing piece in the puzzle in multimodal theorizing.

Some affect theorists (e.g. Massumi 2002) claim that the logic of affect does not translate into semantic models of explanation, while other scholars locate affect within discourse: Koivunen argues that analysing affective encounters means “to examine media forms, representations and narratives, cultural framings and meaning-making processes” (Koivunen et al. 2000:7). Also Wetherell and Ehlers & Krupar demonstrate that affect indeed is operational, and not only constructed through representations, practices, and interpersonal relations, but also “socially and materially arranged; and, […] conditioned through sets of conventions” (Ehlers & Krupar 2014: 388).

In the presentation, I empirically draw on the Swedish breast cancer awareness and fundraising campaigns by examining the role of affect and how it can be incorporated into multimodal analysis. Informed by a social semiotic approach as well as different ‘turns to affect’, I will try to illustrate how affect can be studied as part of discourse, relying in particular on the concept of affective practice by Wetherell (2012).

Keywords: Affect, multimodality, social causes

References


Multimodal teaching and learning in Greek History class as an alternative to traditional educational approaches

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Multimodal teaching and learning introduces the logical sequence and harmonious semiotic cooperation of multiple modes so that a comprehensive semiotic message is successfully given (Kress, 2003, 2010; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Walsh, 2009). The Greek Educational system in general is considered to be strictly textbook oriented. This research focuses on the analysis of teaching History through the principles of multimodality in theory and practice in the fourth grade of the Greek Primary School as an alternative to traditional textbook oriented teaching approaches. The first part of the research analyzes the basic principles of multimodal literacy in History that are directly linked to education and can be applied in the classroom (Walsh 2009, 2011).

The first part also includes:
• Content analysis of 4 chapters of the official Greek History textbook of the fourth grade.
• Semiotic analysis of the same text.
• Multimodal analysis of the same content.
• Analysis of the embeddedness of the given educational content in the final layout of the History textbook.

The second part of the research includes:
• Observation and analysis of the educational process of 10 teachers attempting to apply the basic principles of multimodality in History class, using previous semiotically analyzed chapters of the History textbook.
• Descriptive and inductive analysis of the given data.
• Correlation of results.
From the analysis of the observations we conclude that the use of the textbook is predominant in the teaching of History in the fourth grade. We conclude that both male and female teachers find it difficult to smoothly integrate basic principles of multimodal teaching and learning in the educational process and to move away from traditional textbook oriented approaches. In the final part of the paper suggestions are given for the successful introduction and implementation of multimodal teaching in History class in praxis.

Keywords: Multimodality, history, education pedagogy, visual literacy, multimodal literacy, communication, teaching history, multimodal analysis, content analysis, multilevel analysis, embeddedness, effective communication, effective teaching

References

Since the financial crisis in 2008, the social practice of financial counselling has changed considerably. The very nature of counselling has been drastically transformed and the working conditions of banking professionals have become increasingly individualized. A consequence of these changes is a move from traditional pay structures to a system of individualized performance-based pay arrangements. One factor, which has both initiated and continues to push this process, is technological innovation. In addition, this factor threatens to deskill workers (Ellis and Taylor, 2010), for instance, with the increasing use of artificial intelligence ('bots') in the financial counselling profession.

The aim of this paper is to critically examine how financial counselling is resemiotized through new digital technologies. The digital solutions are used in various situations, such as person-to-person meetings or online usage. The study is part of an ongoing project that examines how customized IT-systems are built, designed and used and furthermore, how they shape social practices of the private financial sector.

The paper applies a new methodology that combines semiotic technology (Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2017) and software engineering (Sommerville 2016) to explore the technical and social-semiotic aspects of digital counselling services. Data are drawn from a pilot study of a major Danish bank, and the study combines data type analysis, semiotic analysis and ethnographic field studies.

The paper presents preliminary findings from this study, and then proceeds to discuss its implications. Specifically, the mapping out of how new features of counselling systems are designed, i.e. data mining techniques that generate a vast amount of information about customers. Subsequently, the paper also aims to investigate how these new digital features are perceived and used by managers and professionals as well as how physical and digital realities are integrated in the counselling situation.

The paper contributes with new knowledge and innovative methodology by presenting how the professional practices and identities of banking professionals, as well as the social relations to colleagues and customers, are affected by new digital tools.

References


Using student-selected precedent and guiding themes in landscape architectural meaning-making trajectories

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In social semiotics any meaning-making process, the selection of appropriate resources for a particular situation, by definition is considered ‘design’ (Kress, 2010). Moore’s explanation that landscape architectural design “is a snapshot of what we believe and value at a particular time in response to a particular problem and context” (Moore, 2010, p. 132), is not unlike meaning-making as described by social semiotics, with the clarification that landscape architectural design is an iterative and ongoing process. During the design process, the use of ‘guiding themes’ can assist a designer to make appropriate choices for each particular project. While guiding themes can be used to assist designers to select appropriate semiotic resources or to provide coherence to existing landscape spaces, the range of these semiotic resources can be described as ‘precedent’. Precedent is described as the repertoire or library of design ideas that landscape designers make use of when designing. Expert designers typically have a large range of precedent resources from which to draw on when designing (Björklund, 2013). While (particularly first year) students may not have a large range of landscape architectural precedents available, their experiences, skills, ideas, procedures, norms and materials are all semiotic resources that can be drawn on during the landscape design process. The larger study investigates the semiotic resources of diverse students learning to produce texts in, and move between, spatial, visual and verbal modes while learning to design a spatial model, in the context of the Diploma in Landscape Architecture at a South African Higher Education institution. This specific paper seeks to focus on how precedent and guiding themes are used by students to transform semiotic resources in an ongoing trajectory of a landscape architectural design project.

References


Assessment of multimodal academic numeracy practices

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The importance of the role of academic numeracy practices in higher education is increasingly being recognized. Many academic disciplines make significant demands on students’ academic numeracy practices, even in disciplines such as Law and Humanities, which may not appear to be quantitative in nature. Quantitative disciplines, such as Engineering and Sciences, also make complex demands, for which traditional mathematics courses do not always prepare students adequately. Texts in quantitative disciplines are constructed using written language, images such as information graphics (charts, maps or diagrams), and mathematical notation. The primary function of information graphics is ‘to consolidate and display information graphically in an organized way so a viewer can readily retrieve the information and make specific and / or overall observations from it’ (Harris 1999:198).

This paper focuses on meaning-making across writing and information graphics in a multimodal task in a university entrance assessment in South Africa. This assessment attempts to develop an understanding of the extent to which prospective higher education students are prepared for the academic numeracy practices they face. This is important if teaching and learning is to be optimal. Prospective student responses to the task will be analysed. This analysis will examine the academic numeracy practices of the incoming students. The practices include drawing inferences, perceiving logical relationships, evaluating cause and effect, ordering and sequencing, and constructing hypotheses. This analysis will enable a better understanding of the extent to which these students’ academic numeracy practices are aligned with the academic numeracy practices expected in higher education. The findings will inform the way in which future university entrance assessment tasks could be developed, which is important in a developing country like South Africa where there is a large need to increase diversity of access into Higher Education in a context where there has been inequitable access in the past.

References

This paper aims to discuss English language teaching in basic education in the Brazilian context by means of multimodality and the contribution of the textbook in this mediation process. Considering that multimodality is present in all the texts that circulate socially, from the written to the gestural language, it becomes elementary to observe how the potentials of significance can be explored and worked in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, we resort to the contributions of Kress (2010); Kress and Bezemer (2008) and Cope & Kalantzis (accessed on December 24, 2017) to observe the semiotic landscape of the texts, more precisely the materialized texts in the textbooks, considering that the students, especially the ones from the public school, count with the textbooks that bring social practices of the language from a gamut of textual genres: comic strips, lyrics, online profiles, web pages, cartoons, letters, e-mails and others in which multimodality is present, allowing us to explore it by the written, sound, gestural and visual way. It is important to emphasize that the students are exposed to a series of literacy events outside of the school environment, varying their attitudes and actions that most of the time are daily to all of them, like: playing video game, reading e-mails, participating in chats in social networking, listening to music, checking online news, researching, etc. contributing, in this way, to the learning of the English language. In this context, the semiotic landscape of the textbook contributes to the agency of the students, involving them in the different textual genres and different styles of communication, so that they are able to use the English language in the different contexts of their daily life.

References


Commercial illustration – a process of adaptation of meanings

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This presentation is based on an article, which is in process and is aimed to be a part of my doctoral thesis in graphic design.

Compared with (fine/free) art, illustration as an applied art has a less independent nature. As an image, illustration has a certain object, which it illustrates. It has to go through a process with several actors. An illustrator as a designer modifies her/his ideas in co-operation with a client. This study is focusing on the way in which a designer’s original, often relatively intuitive ideas are adapted for a client’s purposes in the case of a postage stamp design process.

Concerning my position as a researcher, the point of view is a practitioner’s one: I examine this particular process from within by making detailed notes during the sketching rounds and the changes made in stamp designs. These different drafts and versions of designs function as empirical data for this research.

As a researcher-designer, interested in semiotics, these theories are inevitably a part of my knowledge, even if some stages of the design process seem to be more spontaneous and even accidental. From a semiotic point of view, all the design elements convey meanings – in the case of graphic design, they can be supposed to be more or less intentional and controlled. Theories of visual grammar and multimodal semiotics offer the lens through which the design solutions and changes in them are examined: What are the meanings aroused and how are they created by different semiotic resources such as colours, composition and typography, and by wider concepts of style and technique as well as the objects depicted. As a result, it seems that in the case of a commercial illustration, the meanings are pushed towards unambiguous, soft and neutral ones.

Keywords: Illustration, graphic design, practice led design research, postage stamps, multimodal semiotics, semiotic meanings
Moving in and out of being “on record” by gaveling

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We analyze video recordings of an experimental set-up in which two participants at a time work together in order to make sense of different visualizations of German prosody. The participants are instructed to familiarize themselves with and evaluate several types of prosody visualization systems. The participants are learners of German as a Foreign Language and read example sentences aloud paying special attention to producing the correct intonation as indicated by the visualization. The participants move through different subtasks; 1) discussing their understandings of the notation system in question, 2) practicing reading the sentences, and 3) taking turns producing an “on-the-record”-version of each sentence. The participants themselves negotiate when to move from one subtask to the next. Intended to facilitate the phonetic analysis by providing a clear auditive signal prefacing the on-the-record talk, the participants are asked to mark their “on-the-record”-talk with the strike of a hammer (“the gavel”).

We are particularly interested in the way the participants move in and out of subtask three, producing “on-the-record” utterances, and in finding out what the phonological and embodied characteristics of “on-the-record-talk” in an experimental setting are. Additionally, we aim to describe the practical methods participants use to move in and out of “on-the-record-talk”.

Our analysis revolves around the coordination of verbal and embodied resources participants use to mark when “on-the-record”-talk is being done, focusing on the use of said hammer. Our preliminary analysis shows that the hammer is used as a tangible tool to perform several actions, such as functioning as a “talking stick” that signals whose turn it is to talk and as a type of “metronome” that establishes and maintains a rhythm for reading aloud and turn-taking.
Security and danger – how to foster public behaviour by way of visual representations

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In her book, *Purity and danger* (1966), Mary Douglas analysed the concepts of pollution and taboo, which she related to thinking about “us” and “outer boundaries”. I will here discuss visual representations of security and danger for air flight passengers. My starting point will not be "concepts", but the leaflets one would find on any aeroplane today.

Transport concerns serious aspects of security, and passengers are thus fostered in relation to certain aspects. In most leaflets on aeroplane security, one will find information about how to:

- close and open the security belt
- sit on the chair
- put on life vests
- use the oxygen masks
- – and when you are allowed to – use electric devices
- act if you have to leave the aeroplane in case of a severe situation/accident

The information has to be serious, objective, general, trustworthy, and relevant. From this point of view, my focus will be on what is emphasized.

Another aspect that I will discuss is how the information is presented. The representation of something – the information linking – entails aspects like: What is given and what is new? What is seen as central? (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; van Leeuwen, 2006). I will also discuss what the information wants the reader to do during certain circumstances, what I call activity linking (Selander, 2017, 2018). How can we for example interpret significant differences between the following pictorial information on how to behave if smoke occurs in the aeroplane?

The third level of analysis will be how this information relates to over-arching ideas about security and danger in our societies, and to how the society is divided in terms of power, status, and life-styles etc. (Douglas, 1986, 1996).
Heroes and Saviours: The Bengali Hero in Children’s Comics during the Bangladeshi Struggle for Liberation, 1971

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Heroic comics targeted towards children have been frequently used in conflictual situations, especially since the Second World War (DiPaolo, 2011; Riches et.al, 2009; Rifas, 2017; Watkins, 2000). This paper undertakes a comparative multimodal examination of the Bengali hero in two children’s comics, published in West Bengal, India, during the Bangladeshi War of Liberation 1971. The volatile relationship between India and Pakistan suffered another blow when the pogrom in East Pakistan by the West Pakistani army was vehemently condemned by India, ultimately leading to the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, concluding with the birth of Bangladesh. The Indian state of West Bengal extended its solidarity to the ethnolinguistically similar East Pakistan’s plight (Ahmed, 2004; Pramanik, 2010; Shamshad, 2017). The phenomenon was significantly reflected in West Bengal’s contemporary mass media (Pramanik, 2010).

The paper investigates and compares two comic strips - Batul the Great and Poober Akash Laal (the eastern sky is red) published in the special festival issues of popular Bengali language children’s periodicals Shuktara and Kishore Bharati respectively. With the help of a combination of the Social Actors Approach of Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Semiotics, the various visual and linguistic methods employed in the production of the Bengali hero in the two comics have been examined. The analysis revealed the use of attires, physical attributes, languages and dialects in the delineation of the social actors. Additionally, visual devices like fonts, speech bubbles, frame, mis-en-scene, etc. have also been extensively used.

The comics, produced by Indian Bengali artists for Indian Bengali children (primarily residing in West Bengal), served to raise awareness about the conflict among their young readers, and endow them with a sense of ethnolinguistic pride overlooking borders. In addition to contributing to the limited knowledge of Bengali language comics in the context of conflicts, the study also offers an insight to the complex functioning of identity in a diverse, multicultural canvas, like that of India.

References


Multimodal Content Analysis

Dr. Frank Serafini
Stephanie Reid

Traditional content analysis allows scholars to conduct systematic analyses across a broad, yet manageable corpus of selected, or meaningful, matter (Krippendorf, 2004). Once a research question has been established, Rose (2001) asserted there are four basic steps to traditional content analysis: 1) establishing the corpus and its rules for inclusion/exclusion, 2) the development of coding categories, 3) the coding of all data in the corpus, and 4) the analysis of the results. The researcher searches across the corpus, looking to infer nonmanifest characteristics and construct patterns common across the data corpus (Krippendorff, 2004).

Although this description seems rather linear in fashion, the actual development and employment of coding categories is actually a recursive and iterative process requiring revisions and further analysis to be successful.

For this paper presentation, two literacy researchers will present an adaptation of traditional qualitative content analysis that works in an iterative fashion to construct categories and themes across a significant body of multimodal phenomenon. Focusing on a selected corpus of metafictive, or postmodern picturebooks, the presenters will describe and share their analytic techniques that blends grounded theories and other interpretive analytical procedures with content analysis using a study on metafictive children’s picturebooks as an example.

Multimodal content analysis, as described in this presentation, requires researchers to draw upon specific analytical frameworks and an analysis of the data itself to construct a series of templates that help researchers systematically observe and analyze multimodal phenomenon at the site of the phenomenon itself. The process of coding, constructing categories, and inferring nonmanifest themes requires researchers to revisit, discuss, rethink, and analyze a selected data corpus over and over before arriving at any trustworthy conclusions or results.
Interpersonal and interactive meanings in TED speech videos

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At present, most researchers focus on the study of multimodal text, while they give less attention to the study of dynamic multimodal discourse. TED speech video is a typical dynamic multimodal discourse with great communicative meaning. The purpose of this study is to explore how the interpersonal and interactive meanings are constructed and what the relationship is between different modalities in TED speech videos. Based on the interpersonal function of systemic functional grammar and the interactive function of visual grammar, this study adopts both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the research data. Through investigating the relations between the different modalities in TED speeches, it can be found that the auditory modality formed by language is the main modality. Visual modality plays a supporting role in TED speeches. The relations between visual modality and auditory modality can be divided into three kinds: reinforcement, extension and interpretation. Visual modality and auditory modality work together to construct meanings in TED speeches.
Brand Image Projection from Multimodal Metaphor and Metonymy - A Comparative Analysis of HUAWEI’s Chinese and Overseas Video Advertisements

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Most of the multimodal metaphor and metonymy analyses have been concerned with their cognitive construction, while few people have carried out comparative studies from the intercultural perspective. Based on Cognitive Linguistics, this paper analyzes how multimodal metaphors and metonymies project HUAWEI’s distinct brand images within four video ads of HUAWEI mobile phones (two Chinese and two overseas versions). By taking Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions into consideration, the result reveals that the Chinese versions place emphasis on collectivism and morality while the overseas ones focus on individualism, innovation and achievement. HUAWEI build different brand images to meet cultural demands of local markets, which provides implications for international enterprises to employ effective speech strategies in trans-cultural communication. The combination of Cognitive Linguistics and intercultural theory makes contributions to the fusion of different perspectives in multimodal discourse analysis.

Keywords: Video ads, multimodal metaphor, multimodal metonymy, brand image projection, intercultural communication
The exhibition ‘Gestures – in the past, present, and future’

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The exhibition presents some results from the MANUACT research project. It is the first ever exhibition that traces human gestures as a means of communication, starting from their relations to traditional crafts to the future of gesture control. The exhibition presents current gesture research in its many facets and practical applications, explains the function of (both symbolic and co-speech) gestures in human communication, and outlines the rapidly growing importance of gesture control (e.g. in smart homes, interaction with self-driving cars, and human-robot interactions). It also discusses risks and fears related to these technological developments, for example of robots replacing humans at work.

The exhibition centres on the scientific perspectives of the MANUACT project, but combines them with artistic installations, and fascinating interactive exhibits (specifically developed for this exhibition by the Ars Electronica Futurelab, a worldwide leader in media art). Difficult and little-known academic research is presented so that it can be (literally) grasped. Forms of presentation have been found that appeal to both children and adults. Artistic research forms an integral part of the exhibition.

http://manuact.org/en/
http://www.gesten-im-museum.de/home/en/
https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/tu/pressestelle/aktuell/8233/en
https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/tu/pressestelle/aktuell/8464/en
Interim Representation as a Pedagogic Strategy in Civil Engineering Education

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Academic disciplines draw on particular forms of meaning-making; in many cases, including the science and engineering disciplines, these forms of meaning-making are highly abstract. One of the challenges facing university students who aspire to join such disciplines is mastery of these abstract forms of meaning-making. Often, the ‘semiotic leap’ which students must take in order to access these abstractions is vast and acts as a hindrance to student success.

It is thus necessary for educators to seek out and deploy strategies for facilitating students’ access to these abstract forms of disciplinary meaning-making. One such strategy is the use of interim representations. Interim representations rely on the semiotic notions of transduction (Kress, 2000) and re-semiotization (Iedema, 2003). They draw on less abstract forms of meaning-making in order to lessen the semiotic leap expected of students, thus acting as a semiotic bridge that facilitates students’ access to the more abstract representational mode.

This paper discusses three examples of the pedagogic use of interim representations in a tertiary diploma in civil engineering offered by a university in Johannesburg, South Africa. In the first example, an educator uses tabulation as a bridge to accessing complex mathematical expressions. In a second example, another educator uses pictorial drawings to help students access a tabulated representation. In the final example, it is demonstrated that textbooks, too, make use of interim representations in order to facilitate their student-readers’ access to highly abstract forms of meaning-making.

The significance of these interim representations is then discussed. This significance lies in their use as a pedagogical strategy aimed at enhancing student access to educational practices within higher education, in that they “materialize, preserve, and facilitate the intermediate steps in knowledge production” (Juhl and Lindegaard, 2013: 25).

References


Fake news and memes

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While the use of ‘Fake News’ may crisply delineate political factions, appearance of the expression inside internet memes (IM) may deliver a more widespread and effective assault on agencies reared on public trust. Hence, ‘Fake News’ may be an iconoclastic emergence of weaponized propaganda delivered, in part, by IM’s to mass audiences. IM’s are multimodal artifacts featuring ideological singularities designed for ‘flash’ consumption, often composed by numerous voices echoing popular, online culture (Milner, 2013). However, some IM’s may be ‘weaponized’ by targeting specific recipients or agencies to be deliberately and continuously associated with a particular ideology for the purpose of damaging that target’s public credibility. This study proposes that IM’s when used for attacking agencies of public trust constitute a form of ‘weaponized’ propaganda or what I call weaponized iconoclastic multimodal propaganda (WIMP) discourse. Additionally, this study attempts to define ‘Fake News’ internet memes (FNIM) as model examples of WIMP discourse by asking the following questions: 1) What power relations and ideologies do FNIM’s harbor? 2) How might the manifest ideologies and power relations in FNIM’s qualify as WIMP discourse? 3) What specific agencies have been targeted by FNIM’s and by whom? A corpus linguistics assisted critical multimodal analysis of a pool of FNIM’s drawn from three social media platforms revealed targeted agencies and from what political canons they likely emerged. Findings indicate that FNIM’s were specifically directed, implying that other forms of WIMP discourse could be used as polestars for influencing online trajectories of public discourse.

Keywords: Fake News, critical multimodal analysis, internet memes, propaganda
Multimodality and Persuasion: A Mixed Methods Study of How Students Interpret Multiple Modes in a Digital Video

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Although a majority of research on youth’s multimodal literacies focuses on how they orchestrate modes to achieve a various goals and designs (e.g., Gilje, 2010; Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010; Smith, Kiili, & Kauppinen, 2016), recent attention has also been devoted to understanding how youth interpret multimodal texts (e.g., Rowsell & Burke, 2009). This research is particularly important for exploring the ways youth analyze the avalanche of multimodal persuasive messages they encounter in their daily lives.

The proposed presentation builds upon this research by examining how upper secondary school students (ages 16 to 20) identified and interpreted the multimodal means used in a persuasive video. Students (n = 404) analyzed a YouTube video where two comedians demonstrated the importance of vaccinating children. Students were asked to identify the main message of the video and to indicate the three most important communicative modes for meaning making from five options (sounds; facial expressions and gestures; movements; texts; and visuals). Next, they were asked to describe how these three modes were used in the video to communicate its main message. In order to compare students’ answers, those (n=217) who selected the modes regarded as the most important for persuasion (e.g., sounds, visuals, and movements) were selected for further analysis. Through mixed methods, students’ multimodal analyses were approached from three angles: 1) richness of description of multimodal means, 2) inclusion of interpretive or evaluative elements, and 3) interplay between the modes. Examples of students’ multimodal analyses will be presented illustrating patterns and how they varied in their richness and depth. Considering that a majority of research from a social semiotics (Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005) perspective is qualitative, this presentation contributes by expanding analysis to mixed methods and a large sample of participants. Furthermore, this presentation will discuss empirical, theoretical, and methodological implications.

References


Multimodal Interplay of Tropes in Tourism Advertising

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This paper is a continuation of previous research based on the semiotic analysis of slogans in tourism advertising (Sušac, 2013), where dominant metaphorical concepts in the destination branding were isolated on a global scale. Here, it represents a shift from the previous monomodal to a multimodal approach to the analysis of the selected corpus, with a particular focus on the interplay of verbal and pictorial metaphors and metonymies, from contextual to hybrid ones. In other words, the objective is to examine to what extent there is a compliance of the already analysed verbal signifiers and the pertaining concepts with pictorial resources, which also include a variety of typographic solutions. Two types of relationship are identified, the functional one, directly connected to the verbal part of a multimodal message and the expressive one, which features a much looser connection between them. The largest number of the analysed advertisements make part of the promotional activities of Croatian Tourist Board in recent years. In addition, particular emphasis will also be placed on the paradigmatic analysis of marked and unmarked signs that support or break the dominant values of the social environment in which particular promotional texts are created.

Keywords: Metaphor, metonymy, typography, slogans, tourism advertising, markedness

References


Making meaning, making signs: Semiosis through the lens of deaf-hearing interaction

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This paper investigates ways in which deaf and hearing interactants communicate and understand each other when diverse cultural backgrounds, different experiences of sign and spoken language, and of being deaf or hearing are in play. We analyse ways in which multimodal resources are used in a situated way, in contexts where there are sensory and communication ‘asymmetries’ in terms of language access, experience and skills and the use of hearing technologies.

Using a social semiotic approach to multimodality, analysis of video-recorded data of interactions among deaf children and hearing adults identifies how actors use semiotic resources and communicative strategies to co-construct situated understanding beyond cultural and linguistic barriers, and to fulfil their communicative needs.

The analysis of interaction in a context where participants have different visual/gestural and auditory/oral experience of representation of meaning enables to identify (more immediately than in spoken interactions) communicative strategies that interactants use to co-create signs by drawing on a range of multimodal resources; these co-created signs then become part of the interactants’ shared repertoire for meaning-making.

We discuss ways in which these findings deepen understandings of (1) deaf/hearing communicative practices and (2) principles of semiosis enabling human communication in general. We outline the practical implications for education in particular and for facilitating communication practices in shared deaf/hearing spaces and multilingual/multicultural contexts.
Multimodality in Social Practice: Unravelling Contextual Ambiguity of Fashion in Museums

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Museums have been exhibiting fashion accessories since the 1930s as a way to preserve and document cultural history. However, the recent development from ‘dress museology’ with a focus on societal representations to ‘fashion museology’ (Melchior, 2014) with a focus on contemporary designers has stirred considerable controversy about corporate sponsorship, curatorial independence, and historical accuracy (Steele, 2008). By collaborating with designers, museums seek to reach a wider audience and increase media attention, while the fashion corporations working with them seek to represent themselves in a less commercial context. The result is a ‘visitor-oriented’ and ‘sensuous experience’ (Melchior, 2011), with an ‘increased emphasis on contextualization’ (Anderson, 2000).

This paper seeks to demonstrate that the multimodal experience fashion museology presents to visitors reflects a shift in the social practice of museum exhibition, creating an ambiguity that critics are responding to. Spaces that were previously associated with educational contexts have been recontextualized as part of a branding activity. Consequently, ‘museum myths’ (Skjulstad, 2014) are appropriated by retail culture, and the narrative of fashion as told through museum exhibits has been transformed.

By comparing these narratives as multimodal discourses (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Ravelli & McMurthrie, 2015), our analysis shows how dress museology and fashion museology construe very different experiences, and hence their contexts for visitors, despite being located in very similar spaces. The paper then proposes a stratified model of context (Martin, 1992; Tann, 2017) to provide a theoretical framework for understanding contextual ambiguities and their implications for discourse, as well as a way to locate multimodal integration in social practice.

References


The value of viewing modalities in a digital story résumé

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Multimodalities within a digital story are created for the specific aim of educating the audience. The construction of a digital story has many educational benefits; but what are the benefits from viewing a digital story?

This study investigated the viewing of a digital story as a digital story résumé in a mock job interview; what happened after young adults who have a learning disability created their digital story résumé? It explores an important gap in digital storytelling; what meaning does the viewer extract from the digital story after it is viewed?

The research is presented using the theoretical framework of a new literacy and of a community of inquiry to investigate how the community, namely the viewer (employer) and the creator (applicant) in a mock interview setting, use a digital story résumé to stimulate communication between them as a community.

Using the lens of the inquiry cycle (Bruce & Bishop, 2008), a link is afforded between theory and pedagogical practice by “exploring the intersection between learners' lived experiences and community engagement” (Bruce and Lin 2009, p. 14).

The study concludes that the digital story résumé enabled the viewers to make a comprehensive more informed employment decision about the creator.

The opportunity for prospective employers to view the modalities within the digital story résumé, using an iPad tablet sitting alongside the creators, provided them with background information (that they both heard and saw) that acted as an important stimulus for a more in-depth conversation. This purpose built experience enabled both the viewers to exercise their professional recruitment knowledge, and the creators to present themselves as viable candidates for employment. The viewers were able to gain a better sense of the character of each creator as they gathered insight into their aptitude and preferences towards particular employment positions.

This format afforded a much quicker relationship structure to be built between the interview participants than in a more traditional interview format where the participants typically have a short time to build a relationship and communicate with each other.

References


Teaching vocabulary to EFL learners: a multimodal corpus approach

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This research aims at exploring the possibility and effectiveness of using a multimodal corpus approach to teach vocabulary to EFL learners. It is a case study carried out in a top Chinese university, with 32 freshmen from an English listening and speaking course. The researcher provided students with a small film corpus to learn vocabulary. The way of teaching is based on the social semiotic framework of multimodal communication, which means that students are taught to pay attention to the representational, interactional, and compositional meanings realized by various semiotic resources, including language, image, gesture, facial expression, music, space and so on. It is found that the multimodal corpus approach is much more popular with the students than the traditional linguistic approach because it creates a variety of contexts and impresses students with vivid meaning-making practices. The effectiveness of this approach depends on systemic design of the multimodal corpus, focused teaching of the targeted vocabulary, and persistent input from students. Based on this research, the presentation will consist of three parts: first, a brief introduction to the theoretical framework; second, illustration of the research data and methodology; and the last part is about the research findings and implications.

References


Aesthetical Taste Discourses in Web Design

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The main aim of this article is to conceptualize four main taste discourses, which flourish in contemporary web design, taking a point of departure in the visual semiotic resources that form the groundwork of aesthetical and stylistic expressions. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defined in 1979 in the book *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* three main taste discourses: ‘Legitimate taste’, ‘Middle-brow taste’ and ‘Popular taste’. These categories are still relevant to utilize, however in a moderated form in regard to the conceptualization of aesthetical taste discourses in contemporary web design. However, the criteria of what is considered good and bad taste within the various taste discourses have changed during the last 40 years and the borders between them have been subject to smooth transitions. In addition to the taste discourses in the sense of Bourdieu I have included one more: ‘Postmodern avant-garde taste’. In regard to this fourth taste discourse I draw on the reflections of Jean Francois Lyotard on ‘the sublime’.

Through my research I have arrived at a number of characteristic aesthetical styles within contemporary web design, which form the groundwork of exemplifying these four predominant taste discourses. This research is a further development of the styles, which were conceptualized by design researcher Ida Engholm’s Ph.D. dissertation of the history of Design from 2003 and Curt Cloninger’s *Fresh Styles for Web Designers* from 2002. The new styles that I consider predominant in the 2010’s consist among others of three mainstream styles: ‘Digital modernistic style with trash or retro elements’, ‘Grid style’ and ‘Cell phone style’, which all can be considered middle taste in the sense of Bourdieu. Among the styles that deviate stylistically from mainstream design I discuss ‘Modernistic Swiss style’ and ‘Branding style’, which are conceptualized in regard to the legitimate taste. Moreover, I introduce a newer sub cultural style: ‘Web Brutalism’ in regard to both popular taste and post modernistic avant-garde taste.

References

MULTILITERACIES AND MULTIMODALITY: A FOCUS ON ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING

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This work aims to reflect on the semiotic landscape of communication and its changes because of the characteristics of contemporary society, marked by continuous and rapid transformations, becoming increasingly technologized or digitized (LANKSHEAR & KNOBEL, 2007). The work deals with multiliteracies and multimodality (KRESS, 2003) for the teaching context and questions what such changes mean in the conception of what will become a literate subject in this new communicational landscape. It focuses on the discussion of the new conditions for literacy and how it is conceived in the current literature, bringing the perspectives of the studies of the New Literacies, Multiliteracies and multimodality. In this perspective, the work brings, in its discussion, how literacy events can be created and considered in the appreciation of the text as well as interpreting the social and cultural contexts of circulation and production of design and statements. More specifically, the work encourages the way in which texts, which circulate socially as well as the chosen way and means, bring the representation of the subjects in conditions of social vulnerability, treated as refugees. In these parameters, this paper approaches as well as defends the perspective of teaching that considers the multimodal dimension of the communication, the negotiation of meanings, the production of meanings, not being restricted to a teaching perspective centered in the materiality of the language. As a result, it can be seen that multimodality and multiliteracies can support the pedagogical task of developing students’ explicit understanding of a diversity of multimodal systems and their design. It is necessary to move away from a monocultural and monomodal vision of literacy. Multimodal texts can be used by teachers in the classroom as a basis for critical engagement, design, or explicit teaching of how modes construct meanings in specific genres.

Keywords: Multiliteracies, multimodalities, teaching

References


Multimodality in the teaching of Social Sciences in the Spanish educational system: current landscape, challenges and proposals

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This paper addresses the research lines we are currently developing in a Research Project entitled *Multimodal Literacy and Cultural Studies: Towards a citizenship education in postmodern society*, in the subject of Didactics of Social Sciences at the Faculty of Education of the University of Malaga.

This project focuses on a quadruple difficulty stemming from scarce or non-existent student knowledge on the following topics: the introduction of media culture in classrooms; connecting with the present day; the application of inter-disciplinarity and the visibility of otherness.

Some of the hypotheses raised revolve around:

- A lack of development of literacy in the teaching-learning process. Students are educated via media but they are not made to think about the media.

- Popular culture excluded from subjects, either as material or as a resource, or as content in itself. Students neither contemplate, examine nor reflect in the classroom on the reality of media that surrounds them.

- The invisibility of otherness as a controversial issue that must be addressed in the teaching-learning process to develop the competence of empathy.

- The very limited practical dimension given to subjects: students should be able to take part in the production of their own knowledge through role play and digital technologies.

The objective of this paper is to present the proposals that we are implementing at different educational levels: these initiatives advance multimodal instruction, leading to educational innovation in school subjects.

References


Towards Multimodality: Transmedial Nature of Film

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The aim of this paper is to discuss the development of narratology as a discipline in respect to film as a form. Such critical analysis draws from the works of Genette to concrete changes brought about by the debates between Chatman and Rimmon-Kenan to Bordwell’s poststructuralist concerns. There are at least two levels which point to relations between the principles of a narrative construction and understanding the image: a) icons, symbols, and literary figures on a connotative level, and b) space and time on the level of frame and shot.

Narrative form is most common in fictional films. Film embodies the stories we experience in our lives and presents them by a cause-effect chain relationship that occurs in time and space (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004). This paper provides the following two transmedial aspects of a film. Firstly, there is a multimodal nature of film as a form. Due to Genette’s narrative schemes, special emphasis is put on interpretation of modes and context as central to communication. Therefore Chatman’s work *Story and Discourse* comes into consideration. Secondly, the model for construction of the storyline cues follows the paradigmatic and syntagmatic approach, stemming from structuralist criticism in relation to understanding the image. In the end such an approach traces back to the works of Eisenstein and Metz and is reflected in the contemporary work of researchers concerned not only with the multimodal nature of film but also with other (non)digital texts (e.g. Kress and van Leeuwen, Burn, Nørgaard, Bateman and Schmidt, etc.).
Multimodality in digital visualizations used in education; how semiotic and technological affordances interplay in meaning making

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This paper will take its outset in a project investigating how students in upper secondary school read, understand and learn from digital visual representations in the subject of social sciences. Data visualizations available from the Internet, such as Gapminder or national statistics (i.e. Statistics Norway) are applied in project based learning in Norwegian upper secondary schools, and this project aims at exploring the affordances of data visualizations as well as study empirically how they function in a context of learning.

Meaning-making from such digital visualizations depends not only on the interpretation of the multimodal text appearing on the screen, but also on the understanding of the interactive choices available with digital technology, and on conventions established in statistics and graphic design.

The question this paper sets out to discuss is: How do digital visual representations of numeric data combine semiotic and technological resources for meaning making? This question will first be answered through a comparative analysis of examples from two digital resources used in the classrooms we have visited (Gapminder and Statistics Norway). The main question in the comparative analysis will be how the multimodal design of semiotic resources is integrated in the interactive digital design allowing the users to choose variables and different ways to display them.

In the next instance this will open a theoretical discussion of how these examples may inform our understanding of the concept of mode. According to Gunther Kress (2014, p. 64) “modes consist of bundles of (highly diverse) features”, some of which are mode specific, others are resources that work across modes. With new semiotic practices appearing in digital media, we may need to “readjust our terminologies and theoretizations accordingly” (van Leeuwen 2015, p. 102).

References
Image Creation and Localization on the Corporate Homepage: a Multimodal approach

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With the increasing world-wide e-commerce proliferation, leveraging the web presence and localization of companies is considered as online advertising for the company and one of the quickest ways for the company to tap the global markets, the design of the corporate homepage, is hence vital to the image-building of the company. This paper explores the construction and localization of corporate images on its homepage, aiming at helping to enhance the global presence of companies and thereby expand their internal and external markets. Informed by the multimodal approach, Systemic Functional Linguistics and theories of User Experience (UX), this paper compares and analyzes the image of Huawei, a multinational telecommunication company ranking in the top global 100 in July 2017 and 3rd in the world in mobile phone shipments in 2015, as presented on the corporate homepage, with a focus on how the verbal and the visual codes work together to create and transfer meaning and construct the corporate image. The Chinese and English advertisements of HUAWEI Mate10 are extracted from homepages respectively for analysis, of which the Chinese advertising is deemed as the source text, and the English version is the localized, given that HUAWEI is a China-based company. The analysis reveals that the two advertisements for the same product select different information for and display distinct patterns of presentation in the image creation and localization process, and give weight to the interaction between the visual and the verbal texts. The findings of the comparative analyses are then discussed in relation to the rationales proposed by Garrett (2010). It is then argued that the creation and localization of online corporate images should be made in a user-centered manner, so as to be better tailored to the needs of the target market.

Keywords: Corporate image, multimodality, user experience, web localization

References

Visualizing English as a Symbol: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Early Education Program Flyers in China

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Utilizing tools from Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) inter-semiosis framework and Halliday’s (1994) systemic functional grammar, this study explores how the English language is visualized as a symbol of internationalization and modernity in the early education program flyers in China as multimodal discourse. While it is widely perceived that English is closely related to internationalization and modernity in countries of the expanding circle (Kachru 1985), little has been said with reference to this symbol being discursively and multimodally construed. Flyers from ten well-known early education companies in China are collected in that the expectations of Chinese parents for their children are displayed nowhere better than the early education program flyers, an arena where expectations as naturalized ideologies of the country are reflected and construed. Multimodal discourse analysis reveals that two types of discursive practice, i.e. code-switching with embedded English elements and images of white children as native English speakers are employed to visualize English as a symbol, which is interwoven into and enhanced by semantics realized through other modal elements such as layout, color of the pictures, distance of characters in the pictures, and the language. The study adds insights into understanding the discursive construal of ideology of the English language in the contemporary Chinese consumerist culture.

References


An Embodied View of Physical Signs in News Cartoons

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The centric position of the body in cognition has long been the paradigm for theories of embodiment; its research, however, has been with two limitations: 1) many studies have primarily worked on a specific, single dimension of the body, lacking a dynamic and comprehensive perspective; 2) the multimodal nature of embodied cognition has been tremendously under-estimated, particularly in terms of the multimodal representation of physical signs. In view of the above two problems, the present research, selecting news cartoons as its research objects, takes a multi-layered perspective to viewing the semiosis of physical signs, for the role of the “body” amid the semiotization process might differ in different layers of representation. It is revealed that: 1) on the formal layer, physical signs, which depend on the perceptual senses, are realized by virtue of embodied simulation, which can help divert interpreters’ attention from the form to the cognitive content; 2) on the conceptual layer, the semiotization of physical signs can be considered as a modularization process, absorbing modules from different sources and then being integrated as a whole, which can be explained by metonymy and multimodal metaphor theory; 3) on the contextual layer, the referent of the “body” is believed to be gradually replaced by its contextual symbolic meaning, which, by nature, arises from the process of reinterpretation of physical signs in specific cognitive situations.

Keywords: Physical sign, semiotization, modularization, embodiment, news cartoon
When the object is the speaker: a test case for multimodal analysis

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Rhetoric has long had explanatory power in multimodal analyses and theoretical considerations of multimodality. Given this history, an examination of multimodal artefacts which share one rhetorical device could test the ‘edges’ of multimodality theory by probing the functionality, materiality and communication (Bateman, Wildfeuer, & Hiippala, 2017, p. 89) of these objects.

The rhetorical device shared by these artefacts is ‘prosopopoeia’, a class of metaphor “endowing inanimate objects with speech” (Shelestiuk, 2006), that is, a kind of personification. Prosopoetic objects are inscribed with a text such as “AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN” (“Alfred ordered me to be made”). This first-person text (“MEC”, “me”) can be considered with other modes, such as the visual and tangible, but there is an uncanny twist. The function of the rhetorical device is to simultaneously emphasise the “thingness” of the object, but also its “personhood”. So Mock (2016) is right when he claims “the creators’ desire to give the artefact a speaking identity … directs the audience to focus on the materiality of the object itself”, but it is also true that the first person voice of the artefact directs the reader to focus on their own relationship with the object, the personal connection.

This ambiguous effect of prosopopoeia is mentioned in Wheeler (2015), but in this presentation I would like to extend a multimodal analysis to the inscription’s placement in space. My contention is that where the inscription features on the object, or where the inscribed object is located in its context, can heighten the rhetorical effect of the prosopopoeia. There is an optional and playful element to these inscriptions: they can be discovered by the reader, or be overlooked without penalty. What might this mean for the concept of a communicative situation?

References


Using Information Experience Design and Multimodality to make sense of experiences in physical and virtual curated spaces

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This paper will show how our use of multimodal theory in relation to the discipline of Information Experience Design (IED) that we teach and direct at the Royal College of Art contributes to the development of the multimodal paradigm.

Information Experience Design is a new, hybrid field unrelated to informatics or commercial ‘user experience’ where research is undertaken using theories of information and experience drawn from the social sciences, physics, computer science and communications research (including multimodal social semiotic theory). The discipline is forward thinking centring on multisensory forms of analysis and understanding, that have been made necessary by the proliferation of technologies and the growing capacity to gather data, which has raised questions about how people experience information, and how information is both communicated in and generated from embodied experiences. IED makes use of advances in digital technologies, combined with analogue making to produce a range of multimodal data that is then analysed in order to design means for people to experience data in innovative ways such as through physical-digital installations.

After outlining IED we will draw on our interests in physical and virtual curated spaces to show how we have combined multimodality with hands-on methods of drawing, animation and making to inform changes in the museums and digital games industry. Specifically, Walker’s work focuses on visitor interactions with museum displays that incorporate both physical and digital exhibits. Yamada-Rice will draw examples from her commercially-funded study on children’s interaction and engagement with a wide range of virtual reality content and devices.
Intercultural Blending in English Digital Storytelling

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Valuing digitally-mediated multimodal composing as a newly developed literacy practice, this research investigates how English language learners (ELLs) serve as multimodal designers when working on one type of multimodal composition, digital storytelling. Grounded in “literacy as social practice,” and the notion of “designing,” (The New London Group, 1996, 2000) it explores how ELLs negotiate sociocultural, historical and ideological orientation to the digital storytelling project, re-contextualize culturally and linguistically diversified resources, and dialogue with the local and the global community during the process of multimodal composing. Study participants include 39 ELLs who work on group English digital stories and introduce aesthetics and culture stories of their local community to the global audience. Data collections include students’ digital stories, interviews, class discussions, questionnaires, and documents.

This presentation plans to discuss one of the preliminary findings of the study and focuses on ELLs’ intercultural blending practices in digitally-mediated multimodal compositions. How students select, utilize, and orchestrate local and global cultural resources in their digital story to demonstrate ideas to their global audience will be reported. For example, in their video composition situated in Qi-Shan, a town that was greatly impacted by the 921 earthquake in southern Taiwan, students struggled to arrange Taiwanese (e.g., local resources) and English (e.g., global resources) in their story. How to take advantage of the affordances of the Taiwanese oral narrations, the English oral narrations, and the English subtitles to reach the global audience and to uncover the local cultures of family relationships remain crucial for the students. In addition, images and dialogues emphasizing a stubborn father (e.g., local resource), a gossiping neighbor (e.g., local resource), and a caring daughter (e.g., local resource) are orchestrated to present the image of home (e.g., global resource) and what it can mean to the global audience. The relationships between local and global resources in relation to multimodality and designing will be discussed.

References


A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Unreliable Narrative in Detective Films

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Booth (1961) first introduces the notion of the unreliable narrator and regards it as a storytelling device. As we enter into an age of digitalization, unreliable narrative is most likely to be developed with the utilization of diversified modes. Therefore, the current research aims to explore how unreliable narrative is instantiated verbally and visually in filmic discourse, especially detective films. As we know, one noticeable feature of the detective film is that the narrative provided by a character is not likely to be completely sincere and some vital information may be misrepresented to viewers in a tricky way to distance them from the truth. In the current study, data comes from Agatha Christie movies and Multimodal Analysis Video software is utilized to annotate the video clips and visualize the patterns of system choice by different narrators. Under the theoretical framework of Metafunction of Systemic Functional theory (Halliday, 1978), the current study mainly discusses the interpersonal meaning realized by different systems such as SPEECH FUNCTION, MODALITY and POLARITY in language and visual elements such as GAZE, CAMERA DISTANCE and VIEWING PERSPECTIVE. It is discovered that distinct patterns of choices are made by the unreliable narrator in terms of the above-mentioned SYSTEM, or combination of different SYSTEMs. The system choices made in their conversations and expressions reveal to a large extent what the author/director wants to convey to the reader/listener about who is trustworthy. Furthermore, deeper meaning and effects arising from unreliable narrative is further pursued in the discussion. Along with examples, the findings are elucidated clearly to unveil the complex meaning making process in unreliable narrative in detective films. Hence, this study is expected to facilitate our understanding concerning multimodality in storytelling.

References


Aligning Human and Machine Perspectives on Multimodality: Epistemological Questions in an Age of Artificial Intelligence

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The starting point of social semiotic multimodality was the moment researchers discovered that the signs used by humans were complex. Complexity here means that different aspects - often called “semiotic resources” - work together and interact with context resulting in regular, yet fuzzy patterns (cf. Halliday 1985, Kress & van Leeuwen 1990, Kress 1993).

A very conclusive account of how humans use semiotic resources comes from Clark (1996), who develops a taxonomy of conventional and non-conventional signs turned “common ground” - the basis and starting point of interaction. Clark reveals that all signs are context first, and that they are moulded into signs either by the very interaction they are used in or by the total of human interactions produced in similar situations. The regularity induced by the potential and limitations of human interaction is called “perceptual salience” by Clark. Similar mechanisms are described from a cognitive linguistics perspective by Langacker (2008).

While all of the abovementioned work displays very sound reasoning and an unquestionable theoretical foundation, data-driven empirical research into human signing is still a rare occurrence. This author did one such study in the 2010-2013 time span (Zehrer 2014). I used iterative pattern search to detect patterning in successive interactions. Now I revisit my material using the more sophisticated machine-learning tools on the market today (see Krüger 2017), and hope other researchers do, too.

Two of the key questions that arise with such new tools are: What differences are there between the patterns machines detect and the ones that humans actually conventionalise and use as signs? And what do the possible differences tell us about our model of human interaction - and about meaning-making? Finally, we will also have to re-consider the character of multimodality research as a human vs. a technical discipline.

References


Activity Types of Semiotic Graffiti: Official and Unofficial Negotiation

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As a Special Administrative Region on the periphery of China, Macao offers special insights into Geosemiotics (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) especially in view of the multilingual and multicultural graffiti. The “participation in graffiti production may have important social, cultural and educational values” (Pennycook, 2010, p.139). The strategy of solving the paradox between graffiti as art and graffiti as vandalism by allowing permitted graffiti is adopted by the Macao government to some extent. The aim of this paper is to explore the official and unofficial negotiation by observing the interplay between languages and images, the activity types (Levinson, 1992), and the degrees of authorization of the graffiti in various places of globalized Macao, with the help of ethnographic methods such as observation and informal interviews. The commissioned colorful student graffiti in the Cotai Ecological Zones are compared with bottom-up political graffiti and we also draw evidence from other types of graffiti data such as student murals and hip-hop graffiti to confirm our speculations. The various types of graffiti correspond to certain activity types and embody corresponding interaction between language and images. It seems that the authorized graffiti are often multilingual, multimodal and colorful while the bottom-up graffiti such as the protest graffiti are less multilingual, more verbal and more lucid.

Keywords: graffiti, multimodality, activity types, negotiation, Macao

References
Towards a social semiotic framework for researching literacy practices: Integrating multimodal analysis and Jacobson’s functional linguistics

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Linguistic/cultural diversity and the development of new technologies have been shaping children’s literacy development and challenged traditional language-based approaches to literacy research (New London Group, 1996; Kress, 2003). To respond to the challenges that face literacy studies, this paper proposes a social semiotic framework for researching literacy practices, drawing upon social semiotic multimodal theory (e.g. Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2008) and Jacobson’s (1960) model of linguistic communication.

The proposal of this framework is based on the assumption that children learn literacy through interacting with other human beings. Therefore, the framework takes Jakobson’s model of verbal communication as its grounds, and integrates the many elements of literacy practices into the model. The framework can be represented as:

Context
Social actor ……………………….Text……………………………Social actor

Medium

Mode

As is illustrated in the figure, the framework takes into account the social actors who are learning literacy and those with whom they interact, the socio-cultural and situational contexts of the interaction, the modes of meaning making used in a literacy practice, the texts used for literacy teaching and learning, and the media platforms through which multimodal texts are presented.

I will discuss this framework using data collected for my PhD project (Zhang, 2017) as well as analyses and discussions of these data in previous publications (Zhang, Djonov, & Torr, 2016a, 2016b). The data include the shared readings of a picture book by preschool-aged children and their mothers as well as the practice of reading the same book in children’s television programmes.

This paper provides literacy researchers with a cogent framework for analysing literacy practices, which meets the challenges facing literacy research at the present time when children engage with multimedia discourses and their path to literacy involves using more than one mode of meaning making. I will also discuss the applicability of social semiotics in the analysis of literacy practices.

References

A cultural taxonomy of online video-sharing: A contrastive analysis of YouTube and Chinese-language platforms

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While multimedia platforms such as YouTube have been widely studied in various fields, native video portals in Asia remain largely unknown. This project aims to bridge this gap by introducing an increasingly popular viewing system in Japan and China, known as danmu (or danmaku). This knowledge is important as it sheds light on emerging technologies in social media and how it shapes social and semiotic practices.

Danmu is a collaborative video annotation system that overlays users’ comments on the video, in a horizontal scroll moving from right to left (Figure 1). Comments are sent asynchronously by anonymous users, but they are embedded in the video and appear at the points of insertion, performing a direct response to the plot, character, music, etc. This content and visual interrelation simulates a synchronous co-viewing experience for the audience.

Figure 1. A danmu video

This paper considers danmu as a semiotic technology, i.e. technologies for meaning-making (Van Leeuwen & Djonov, 2013). Following previous studies on semiotic software like PowerPoint (Zhao, Djonov, & van Leeuwen, 2014), we analyze danmu as a semiotic practice comprising three dimensions - the video player’s design, the insertion of a comment, and the projection - and two semiotic artefacts, the composition of the multimedia player and the annotated video produced by users. We illustrate how the multimodal affordances (i.e. visual, audio and textual resources) enable ordinary users to maximize their online participation, recreating the original video with supplementary and entertaining information.

This study derives from the first author’s work on the role of danmu in language and intercultural learning. By adopting a social semiotic approach, this study innovates the research in applied linguistics and discourse analysis, and contributes to the most recent development of the multimodal paradigm.

References


This article adopts a multi-analytical perspective to examine engagement in an evolving science communication website, drawing upon the theoretical construct of genre (Martin 1992) and tools from multimodal discourse analysis informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Engagement strategies for academic discourse (Hyland 2005) are also drawn upon for my analysis. The website has evolved to engage readers from a “verbal nucleus” inherited from traditional news to a “hypermodal nucleus” that caters to the information consumption style of social media, and further to a “scifopost” that integrates social media post into the design. The evolution is driven by the shift from a “deficit” model to a “democracy” model in science communication and a larger cultural shift in the nature of knowledge creation and transmission. Furthermore, the more malleable multimodal resources as compared with verbal resources spearhead the shift from channels for science information to entertainment and engagement, which in turn triggers a similar shift of functions in verbal resources.

**Keywords:** Multimodal engagement, online science news, social media, deficit model, democracy model, webpage design

**References**


The Social Semiotic Recontextualization of One Scene of The Danish Girl — from Novel to Script to Film

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This presentation focuses on the method of doing recontextualization for different genres from the social semiotic perspective. A scene of The Danish Girl which represents the resolution of the male protagonist's gender confusion is selected for detailed study. More precisely, the presentation will discuss the relation of adaptation (Desmond & Hawkes 2006), recontextualization (Van Leeuwen 2008) and resemiotization (Iedema 2003) first. After that, how the scene in David Ebershoff’s novel (2000) is recontextualized into the film script by the screenwriter (Coxon 2015) and how the latter is recontextualized into the film by the film director Tom Hooper (2015) with the help of social semiotic resources will be explored.

This presentation aims to investigate factors that influence the selection of semiotic modes and cause the change of genres in the process of recontextualization through comparing the similarities and differences in the method of presenting the selected scene in the three types of texts. The presentation also attempts to propose criteria for future adaptation work.

**Keywords:** Genre, social semiotics, adaptation, resemiotization, recontextualization, The Danish Girl

**References**


Interplay between the verbal and the visual realization of stance markers in the discourse of broadcast news reports

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Although aspiring to the claim of “objectivity”, it is impossible for news discourse to achieve an absolute objectivity in news practice. Thus, the expression of stance, closely related to news discourse studies, has become a focus of attention from scholarship. The discourse of broadcast news reports is featured with its televisual attributes and thus practiced through interaction between the visual and the verbal messages. The expressions of stance marked in the discourse of broadcast news reports are usually realized through the interplay between the visuals and the verbal messages. By drawing upon CCTV-News reports as data, the paper applies the taxonomy of word-image relation proposed by Meinhof to explore how stance markers are realized through the interaction of visual-verbal. This paper identifies three types of stance markers in the discourse of broadcast news reports, which includes “co-reference between visual and verbal”, “verbal-oriented authorial voice” and “image-oriented voice attributing to the participants”.

Keywords: expression of stance, the discourse of broadcast news reports, word-image relations, journalistic objectivity
ON MECHANISMS OF SENSE FORMATION AND TEXTUALIZATION IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Human activity is based on such values as sense and meaning. All the forms of representation of this activity (culture, history, literature, art, politics, law, etc.) can be considered as semantic ensembles. At the same time, the problem - what unites these so different "senses of meaning" or "meanings of meaning" – still remains insufficiently clarified. The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary description of this diversity can explicate general patterns of the various manifestations of semantics and semantification, and provide an opportunity for mutual understanding also between different humanities.

Meaning production is understood as a result of the conjunction of linguistic and extra-linguistic systems in the process of social interaction and communication. This can be described as a mechanism for correlating multimodal text and set of actual and latent contexts with sets of its possible values (interpretations, worlds, texts) and discourses (language games). With this approach it becomes possible to relate logical and semantic characteristics with cognitive ones. Semantics of the text appears as a dynamic context-dependent value, function of its linguistic, cognitive and referential characteristics. The dynamic approach allows us to reflect on the capacity of texts to generate new values within processes of its generation and functioning. Verbalization and construction of mental representations are considered as mutually influencing multi-stage processes. Understanding is not limited to operations on signs and texts, but by patterns of behavior and interpersonal interaction.

A multimodal Text, not a sign, is the basic unit of communication and the main object and instrument of a consistent process of creation-transfer-preservation-transformation of information. This theory can become the basis for social semiotics dealing with not only signs and texts, but also with semantic aspects of social behavior. This new version is to be a synthesis of social semiotics with interpretative sociology, assigning meaning to complexes of verbal and nonverbal actions.
Wall-texts and signs of learning

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What kind of texts does one find on the walls in Norwegian classrooms in the fifth to seventh grades? This is the question that forms the basis of my project. Wall-texts are something one probably finds in most classrooms, but, at least in the Norwegian context, no systematic surveys have been made of these texts.

These wall-texts are part of a school context and an interesting approach is to try to understand what they say about learning. Here it is interesting to draw on Kress and Bezemer’s definition of learning as transformative engagement. They describe learning as "the inevitable outcome of any and every engagement with the (socially made) world" (2016, p. 37). In line with their broad view of learning, they also have an inclusive view of how learning is made evident. An important part of their study is to describe different signs of learning.

Bezemer and Kress do not primarily write about a school context, but how they describe learning implies a challenge to the school. (s. 61) In an almost programmatic formulation they write: "In a social semiotic approach, the aim is to document, analyze and evaluate what is learned, not what is not learned. It is to notice and render visible learning that often goes unnoticed, and that, in being taken for granted, has been too often still remains invisible" (s. 61)

As this abstract is written, I am collecting my material and do not know exactly what I will find. However, it seems that Bezemer and Kress’s open attitude towards what signs of learning can be and how knowledge "looks", will offer an interesting way to look at my data. Traditionally school knowledge has been closely connected to verbal (and especially written) language. Hopefully, my project can help to discover and reflect on how other modalities also can be signs of learning.

References

Academic argument within multimodal representations – A study of students’ communication within a blended learning environment in higher education

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Academic literacy practices are changing, due to an overall digitized development in higher education (Lea 2004; Beaufort 2007). During the last decades, several research studies have claimed the importance of providing new digital learning resources to students in higher education. Many research studies emphasize the role ICT plays in students’ learning process and the opportunities it provides to students’ multimodal communication in higher educational practices (Browns et.al, 2008; Taffs & Holt 2013). In an on-going research study, the purpose is to explore how multimodal academic arguments are represented by students. Drawing on both social semiotics (Kress 2003; Archer & Huang 2017) and socio cultural theory (Bakhtin 1991; Matusov 2011), the study will contribute to knowledge about how students’ academic arguments operate and are made salient within and across modes in multimodal compositions. The purpose of the study is embodied in the following overarching research questions: How can arguments and opposing arguments in the students’ multimodal representations be interpreted? And in what ways do the use of different modes afford meaning in the students’ arguments? The research strategy is influenced by net ethnography (Kozinets 2010) and the data consist of writing essays, podcast talks and Power-point presentations which were documented by digital resources. The data were collected within a graduate course in the context of higher education and the students were engaged in different learning assignments by using digital learning resources. An analytical description of the students’ academic argumentation within multimodal representations will be emerged by using the above theoretical frameworks. The analysis will focus on how the mix of different modes within the students’ audio-visual representations will influence academic arguments and the potentials of meaning making. In this paper, I will present a tentative conceptual framework for combining theoretical concepts from different origin and discuss challenges in the data analysis.

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Educational technologies and formative assessment

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Digital devices are ubiquitous in western society and digitalization affects our society in different ways. This requires in turn that teachers’ instructions are being developed and adapted to meet these revisions. As far as the teacher’s instructions are concerned it is for example about designing learning environments that emphasize learners’ creativity, innovation and problem-solving and also developing their digital competence. Even though the use of digital tools demands a change in teaching, it also requires change in how teachers assess students’ work. Educational technologies can play a vital role in supporting teachers to develop their assessment practice. As learners’ activities such as pathways, discussions and texts becomes increasingly accessible when working in digital learning environments, these ‘signs of learning’ create an increased opportunity to follow their learning processes.

Previous research show that formative assessment has positive impact on students’ learning (see for example Black & Wiliam 1998; 2009; Wiliam, 2011). However, teachers often testify that it is a time-consuming way of working (Vingsle, 2017), and studies investigating the impact on students’ learning are also underrepresented (Winstone et al, 2017). Educational technologies could support teachers and reduce their workload when assessing students’ work. There are critical voices raised concerning the use of technologies in schools and that they might regulate and steer teachers’ work. Previous research has shown that teachers tend to view the software as an own actor and depend on the technologies to assess students’ work (Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015).

The aim of this study is to explore, analyse and discuss the design of educational technology and how these can support or hinder teachers’ assessment practices and feedback strategies.

References

KEY-NOTE ABSTRACTS
The Politics of Texture in Contemporary Capitalism

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As a semiotic resource, texture is widely used by global corporations and other institutions to infuse a variety of media and artifacts with connotations like authenticity, locality, intimacy, and diversity. However, little has been said on texture’s relationship with key semiotic demands of contemporary capitalism such as the need to communicate distinctive identities within generic formats and to foreground difference within homogeneity.

Drawing from scholarship on the semiotics of texture (Djonov and Van Leeuwen, 2011), in this keynote I therefore address the politics of texture. I focus specifically on how different kinds of visual and material texture are mobilized in four contemporary sites of semiotic production. These are: the brand, the city, the photograph, and the visualization. With examples from original research on corporate branding, urban regeneration, stock photography, and data visualization conventions, I then go on to argue that texture is deployed across contexts in ways that promote concrete forms of attachment to a variety of media while also leaving substantial inequalities unchallenged.

Finally, I introduce the concept of ‘texturization’, a process that works to add visual and material cues invoking the experiential qualities of media and other semiotic artifacts. In doing so, I link this concept with that of stylization, a process which often entails techniques aimed at subtracting ‘inappropriate’ traits from multimodal texts in the pursuit of normative identities (Cameron, 2000).

These two concepts and processes may seem to be at odds with one another, with stylization being more readily recognizable as a power-laden way to achieve status in contemporary capitalism. However, I posit that texturization ought not only to be seen as an emergent development of stylization, but that it may also be a more insidious process due to its entanglement with vernacular, emplaced, and embodied semiotic practices. Ultimately, here I argue that both processes and their relationship have important implications for a social semiotic understanding of texture in its own right. As a whole, the keynote also aims to make a critical contribution to multimodal theory’s growing agenda in areas like materiality and the politics of semiotic production.

References:


Tasting excellence: serial multimodality and metamodal strategies in Noma’s presentation of self

Robert Hodge
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This presentation combines two concepts, serial multimodality and metamodality, developed through an analysis of textuality surrounding Noma, Denmark’s most famous restaurant. Noma as a site poses some interesting challenges for multimodal practice and analysis. How can Noma use multimedia resources to communicate what can be supposed to be the essence of its message, excellence as an attribute of something eaten and tasted? What kind of multimodal analysis can identify these strategies and their possible effects?

Serial multimodality describes the processes involved in the generation and circulation of complex texts whereby different multimodal structures are transmitted and transformed into new meanings and effects at different stages. For instance, the Noma multimedia package contains both speech and writing, but the speech is recorded audio, whereas the written text does not reference a prior spoken text. Images record specific dishes, primarily as visual images but also communicating effects of taste, all combining to signify a less sensual meta-signifier ‘excellence’.

For this complex package of multimodalities to work, makers and receivers of the multimedia package need means of labelling the functions and effects of the different modalities and integrating them in a functional though possibly fissured whole. For this process I use the term meta-modality, modelled on and inspired by Bateson’s theories of meta-communication.

For Bateson normal communication occurs across at least two modes, in his case verbal and non-verbal. He envisaged these two primary modes as having different primary functions carried by contradictory messages, with metacommunication loops assigned the task of assigning meanings and values to different messages across different modes. Weakness in these metacommunication loops led to damaging dysfunctionalality, according to Bateson, manifested as schizophrenic minds, communication and relationships.

In this talk I look at Noma’s communication from this double perspective. Can analysis show a subtle but effective control over the relevant forms of serial multimodality? Or could an organization achieve international success by exploiting what might be dysfunctional strategies of communication and uses of modality? Or could both be true, in different respects for different purposes?
Multimodality – a theory-dependent standpoint or a common sense view on communication?

Anna-Malin Karlsson
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Social semiotics has a proud tradition of multimodal analysis and theorizing, based partly on Halliday’s systemic-functional model of language and grammar. Whether this results in a language-biased approach to multimodality can be (and has been) discussed. However, it is clear that a systemic mindset, where meaning-making is construed as organized by strata, metafunctions and more or less distinct modes, differs from a more purely interactional and emic approach, such as the ethnomethodological (eg. Goodwin 2000, Mondada 2007). Another theoretical paradigm where multimodality is central is Mediated Discourse Analysis (eg. Norris 2004). Here, the nexus of meaning-making and the historical body of meaning-makers are foregrounded, rather than the interplay between modes and their potentials.

Understanding multimodal meaning-making seems difficult without theory, or at least without theoretical assumptions about what meaning-making is about. Furthermore, multimodal approaches to discourse have in many cases emerged as a development of existing theories of language, communication or social interaction. This has resulted in parallel strands of multimodal research, with very little contact in between.

In this talk, the similarities and differences between systemic, ethnomethodological and socio-historical approaches to multimodality will be explored, and the affordances of the different theoretical assumptions to provide explanations and solutions will be tested on authentic communicative cases. Is there a potential for building a theoretically eclectic multimodal field, based on similar-enough standpoints and concurrent empirical findings? Would a less theoretically rigid and more ‘common sense’ conception of multimodality facilitate multidisciplinary and practice-based collaboration, and even strengthen a general multimodal conception of communication?

References


Stepping back to look ahead. Speculating on developments and uses of Social Semiotic Multimodal theory

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The framing paragraph that prefaces the announcement of this conference suggests that things in this corner of the academic world have developed with remarkable speed. It may be useful, maybe necessary – still barely two decades into this form of work – to pause for a moment and to look at the social environments and the prompting occasions that have framed and continue to frame that still very brief history. It will reveal similarities as well as decisive differences even in that brief period, and these can be helpful in speculating about the short to medium term future of the field. Central in that will be serious reflection on a remarkable shift of “the social” in that period: from seeming stability to near overwhelming provisionality. That can help to explain the consequences for the semiotic landscape, bringing it starkly into focus. Equally essential will be reflections on the relation between the development of “the social” and the rapid transitions in technologies affecting this field. There, the essential question is: “Who is to be master in our field? “The social” or “the technologies”? ”

Recognizing stark social, semiotic and technological differences over that period, it remains essential nevertheless not only to notice “breaks” but also to point to continuities; to look beyond fragmentation to that which has remained and is likely to remain stable, even if at some level of generality. It may be that most of us who work in this field have left whatever had been “our” “mainstream” for good reasons. Such dissatisfactions are a major resource in shaping satisfactory approaches and tools.

My talk will, in some part, be a quite personal reflection on that development. I hope that can be useful in raising the questions which are likely affect the thinking of all of us in this domain. In particular it may make it possible to focus on and work for continuities, and, in that, continue to work for integration – socially and semiotically – in our current work. As part of this reflection I will present a very brief outline of an integrated approach to some of the questions I have raised.
Organization/s and intersemiosis: a plea for the old; a pitch for the new

Louise Ravelli
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While the various theoretical frameworks and approaches to the description and analysis of multimodal communication each offer their own insights, social semiotics offers a particular focus on social aspects of meaning which has proven to be highly productive. Social semiotic approaches themselves can vary, but they are largely underpinned by an understanding of meaning as being metafunctional, following Halliday’s linguistic model. This paper aims to push forwards, by going backwards a little, revisiting the metafunctions and how they mean in multimodal contexts. With a particular emphasis on the organizational (/textual) metafunction and spatial discourse analysis, I hope to show how an understanding of the metafunctions has been both brought forward and extended in new domains of multimodal communication research. At the same time, however, many gaps remain, and an incursion into the realm of organizations and organizational theory highlights the need for significant theoretical extensions, not least in the direction of intersemiosis.
Networks – A Social Semiotic Approach

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Departing from the theory presented in Reading Images (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006), this lecture will outline and exemplify the basic ‘narrative’ and ‘conceptual’ models that underlie contemporary visualization – linear processes, cycles, flowcharts, analytical models, classification models (including lists and trees), tables and networks.

It will then present a social semiotic history of the network model, showing how it evolved from a 1920s American approach to the quantitative analysis of social relations which replaced the ‘social’ with the ‘interpersonal’ and saw society as a community of equals in which status derived from popularity, to an all-encompassing approach to visualizing the relation between items of information on the basis of the frequency of otherwise meaningless associations, rather than on the basis of semantic relations.

The lecture will illustrate how this model underlies contemporary visualizations such as mind maps and word clouds, and evaluate the way visualization is used in linguistics and its multimodal offshoots, including the onion diagrams and networks of systemic-functional linguistics and discourse analysis.

The lecture will end with a plea for a critical and historically grounded approach to the study of contemporary visualization.
