

○ **T. D. ROYCE AND W. L. BOWCHER (EDS),
***NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE ANALYSIS OF
 MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE*****

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 2007, PP. V, 403)

Language has commonly been conceived as the central building block to meaning making, and to communication. Today, whichever way we turn, our senses are assailed by an array of signs and visual modes of communication, from mobile telephony to the internet, advertising, graphic novels and cinema. Technological advances force language to take a back seat in favour of images and sounds, and away goes the division between form and expression of meaning. The analysis of language which has so far shaped our human experience clearly needs to be expanded to investigate the complexities of multimodal discourse. This volume, edited by Terry Royce and Wendy Bowcher, moves precisely in this direction by mapping uncharted territory in the sphere of multimodality.

The first section of *New directions in the analysis of multimodal discourse* establishes the research focus on discourse and multimodal print-based text analysis from a theoretical perspective. Back in 1996, *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*, Kress and Van Leeuwen pioneered the analysis of images and extended the linguistic focus of discourse analysis to visual communication studies and media studies. As pointed out by Lim Fei, and emphasized by all contributors to *New directions*, multimodality research draws upon theories from language, semiotics and media studies that ‘are then integrated [...] and extended to formulate new theories that are applicable to the field’ (p.196). However, we are also cautioned against the temptation to naively adapt ‘linguistic theories across to the other semiotic resources’. In other words, the message that is being conveyed quite clearly throughout the book is that ‘new directions in the analysis of multimodal discourse’ do not consist simply in the application of linguistic analysis to a range of semiotic resources, but in the search for a principled approach that can explain ‘how these different modes can interact intersemiotically’ (p.ix). This is most aptly demonstrated by Lim Fei’s own proposal of an *integrative multisemiotic model* which seeks to synthesize the various research initiatives made in the field of multimodality into an overarching ‘meta-model’. The models proposed by the contributing authors all stem, however, from a general theory of meaning, namely Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL), which has proved to be productive for an understanding of other semi-

otic resources. This ‘social semiotic view of multimodal communication’ (p.ix) provides the vantage point from which to approach the challenge of coordinating the process of meaning making in an integrated way. It is from this perspective that research extends its boundaries in new directions, as is variously demonstrated by the contributing authors who provide illustrations of the applicability of these new insights across a range of contexts and semiotic modes.

In the first chapter, Matthiessen sets up the theoretical background and explores a framework for analysing *intersemiosis* in a multi modal page, revealing the interconnectedness of the different modes of expression in language and image. Matthiessen’s claim is that this framework is useful for understanding the mode-specific processes of texts as well as their relationships with one another, the positioning of the participants in the texts, the attitudes and judgments embodied, and the coherence between the different parts of the text.

In the following chapter, Royce explores the efficacy of *intersemiotic complementarity*, conceived as the relationship between the visual and the verbal modes, for understanding what features make these texts coherent. By way of illustration, Royce applies his descriptive framework to an extract from the Finance section of *The Economist* magazine, published in 1993, to demonstrate ‘the interrelatedness of systems of meaning’ (pp.103–104). The theoretical foundation of Royce’s framework draws upon Halliday and Hassan (1985), and the Systemic Functional Linguistic view of language as a complex construct of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. Royce’s framework of *intersemiotic complementarity* seems to be most productive, as several analyses of multimodal discourse expound on Royce’s model in subsequent chapters. Applications of this theoretical framework are explored in areas as diverse as writing and graphology, electronic publication of newspapers, ideology, computational concordancing, cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues.

For example, in ‘Mapping out the multimodal genres of traditional and electronic newspapers’, Bateman, Delin and Henschel take the concept of genre, as understood in SFL, a step further, attempting to identify some properties of *the genre space* (p.159) in order to account for the new blended genres which are now seen emerging in the front-page display of web-based newspapers publications. Later, and in a different context, Martin and Stenglin consider the ways in which an analysis of *space grammar* in relation to other modalities can enlighten the enactment of the reconciliation process between the Maori and the Pakeha people in the *Signs of a nation* exhibition in the Te Papa museum in Wellington (New Zealand).

Further on Bowcher applies Royce's methodological approach to analyze the interrelationship between images and written language in an article from an Australian sports magazine *Rugby League Week*, published in 1997, which reveals a view of 'bad guys and good guys' as an image of masculinity consistent with the dominant ideology in Western society.

In 'Multimodal scientific representations across languages and cultures', Bernard Mohan *et al.* use a similar framework in an attempt to address the question of whether similarities in scientific diagrams are interpreted in common ways by readers across languages and cultures. They argue that '[f]inding common features could lead us to a deeper understanding of the nature of multimodal discourse' (p.275), which is considered of practical importance for the circulation of knowledge throughout the scientific community. Their study compares variations of science discourse *within* a language, such as the division between 'time line' and 'causal line' interpretations (readers who interpret textual diagrams in a sequential line and those who interpret texts in a causal relation), with variation of science discourse *across* languages. Their findings indicate that variation in interpretation across languages is particularly challenging from a methodological perspective, and that Halliday's work on scientific discourse and Royce's multimodal analysis have the potential to give 'a revealing account of the relations between the texts and the graphic' (p.294). The implications of their study are far reaching for the learning of the discourse of science, given the role of Global English in the scientific community. From a pedagogical perspective, they point to the value of placing greater emphasis on the communication of science content visually, and on the relations between visual and verbal representations in multimodal and multilingual terms, bringing in 'aspects of the context of culture which learners bring to the learning situation' (p.294).

Finally, Royce, who contributes a second chapter to this volume, sees the application of his proposed framework to first and second language education in terms of expanding communicative competence. He takes up the issue in 'Multimodal communicative competence in second language contexts' to reaffirm his point that the need to give learners the knowledge and skills to develop visual as well as textual communicative competence in the classroom has remained unexplored. This seems very pertinent indeed, given the changes in communicative modes and conventions in recent years and the ascendancy of Web 2.0 technology in language classrooms. However, the linguistic and the visual are not approaches that need to be addressed separately: following both Halliday and Royce, the leading message is that this competency should be *intersemiotic*, focussed on 'becoming competent in interpreting and constructing appropriate meanings multimodally' (p.374). Application domains within the school curriculum are varied, and this approach

may be more obviously targeted to geography and business students who already operate multimodally, albeit without being consciously aware of it. The author, however, points to another important future locus for developing multimodal communicative competence, and that is within both ESL and EFL contexts, where the task is clearly to give teachers and students an increased awareness of the enriching experience that multimodal texts can bring into the language classroom. Royce provides specific examples of two actual teaching practices to illustrate how a focus on multimodality can be incorporated into lesson planning and classroom activities in a Japanese EFL context, and how such a focus can develop multimodal communicative competence in EFL contexts.

As stressed by the editors, this volume addresses multimodality from both theoretical and practical perspectives, and therefore will have ‘wide appeal to any researcher or educator interested in multimodality and its applications in social interaction’ (p.x). *New directions in the analysis of multimodal discourse* provides challenging ideas on how multimodality contributes to the creation of meaning, although this reviewer found the reading a little arid due to the density of the print and the dark reproductions. Was this presentation truly meant to be congruent with the book’s visually cryptic cover, which seems ironic given its cutting edge message, or, as suspected, is it the unfortunate result of a cost-saving effort? The cover could have certainly benefited from a more interesting design; similarly a dash of colour would have greatly enhanced the clarity of the illustrations.

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