

Course Title: Issues in Translation Studies
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Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodality and newspaper genres

- ▶ Caple (2009, 2010) and Knox (2007, 2010) explore how newspaper genre are changing due to new technologies, focusing on multimodal features.
- ▶ Caple highlights image-nuclear news stories, which consist solely of a photograph with a headline or brief caption and function as complete, standalone texts. Knox, meanwhile, examines newsbites—online items that pair a headline with an image and link to a full article.
- ▶ Unlike newsbites, image-nuclear stories do not direct readers to any extended coverage.

- ▶ Caple (2009) notes that image-nuclear news stories use striking visuals to engage readers. She found that the accompanying headings often employ idiomatic expressions related to the image's content.
- ▶ For instance, a photo of drought in China was paired with the headline “Dry hard with a vengeance”, a play on the movie title Die Hard: With a Vengeance.
- ▶ Caple argues that such references assume readers' familiarity with cultural allusions, allowing newspapers to foster a sense of cultural and social solidarity with their audience.

- ▶ Caple (2010) identifies three key components of image-nuclear news stories: the Heading (above the text), the Image (central focus), and the Caption (smaller font, usually beside the image).
- ▶ The image, together with the heading, guides the reader's understanding and relies on intertextual references, often drawing on films, TV, music, literature or sports.
- ▶ Such allusions require specialized cultural and world knowledge for the text–image relationship to be fully effective.

- ▶ The image-nuclear news story featuring artwork by Chinese artist Sui Jianguo includes the three typical components: Heading (“Give the ladies a big hand”), Image and Caption.
- ▶ The caption provides context, specifying the event (women walking past the gallery) and location (a former factory in Beijing turned art gallery).
- ▶ The heading plays on the idiom “to give someone a hand”, creating a humorous contrast between the enormous sculpture of a hand and the small women, and relies on readers understanding both the literal and figurative meanings of the phrase.
- ▶ Additionally, comprehension requires knowledge of Chairman Mao and his significance in Chinese culture.

Multimodality in film and television genres

- ▶ Multimodality has been applied to film and television genres. Iedema (2001) offers a framework combining film theory and genre theory, analyzing texts at multiple levels: frame, shot, scene, sequence (from film theory) and generic stage, work as a whole (from genre theory).
- ▶ For example, the opening of Barack Obama's 2008 victory speech can be examined at the frame level, focusing on a single moment when he delivers his opening lines, highlighting how multimodal analysis can capture meaning in both visual and verbal elements.

- ▶ In the selected frame of Obama's 2008 victory speech, he is alone on stage with the U.S. flag behind him.
- ▶ The close-up shot of his head and shoulders creates a sense of social closeness with the audience.
- ▶ The horizontal framing, with Obama centered, and the flag in the background, situates the speech's context and sets the orientation for the rest of the address.

- ▶ Obama's gestures, gaze and language in the 2008 victory speech are designed to connect with his audience.
- ▶ The scene occurs on election night, 4 November 2008, at Grant Park, Chicago.
- ▶ The camera sequence begins with a waving U.S. flag, moves to a centered shot of Obama until he says "tonight is your answer," and then shifts to a podium shot with multiple flags and audience members photographing him.
- ▶ At the generic stage, this is the speech's introduction, and the work as a whole is classified as an expository victory speech, characterized by its rhetorical style, context, and intertextual links to prior presidential victory speeches.

- ▶ Baldry and Thibault (2005) and O'Halloran (2004b, 2021) emphasize the role of context in multimodal analyses of television and film.
- ▶ Baldry and Thibault link genre analysis to context of culture and context of situation, stressing the need to consider social and historical events, broadcast timing, and target audiences.
- ▶ O'Halloran similarly argues that contextual factors are essential for understanding multimodal texts.

Multimodality and film trailers

- ▶ Maier (2011) examines multimodality in film trailers, particularly comedies. She identifies stages that are implicitly promotional (providing story-related, diegetic information) and explicitly promotional (mixing story content with non-diegetic elements like voice-overs, evaluations, and recommendations).
- ▶ While not all trailers include every stage, most combine these elements. Maier emphasizes that voice, music, images and text work together to achieve the trailer's primary function: promoting the film.

Carrying out multimodal discourse analysis

- ▶ Multimodal discourse analysis follows similar steps to general discourse analysis, but focuses on how different modes contribute to meaning (Jewitt et al. 2016).
- ▶ The process begins with data collection, followed by logging the data—summarizing it and adding notes to provide contextual understanding. Researchers can also include initial thoughts or observations that can be explored further in the detailed analysis.

- ▶ For multimodal discourse analysis, video data should be repeatedly examined focusing separately on sound, vision, and both together.
- ▶ For print or web-based texts, each mode (e.g., words, font, layout, images) should be analyzed for its contribution to overall meaning, in relation to contextual notes.
- ▶ Analysts must then select extracts for detailed study, as full datasets are usually too large.
- ▶ The selected features can be compared with the broader data to assess typicality. Detailed analysis may differ from standard discourse analysis, reflecting the multimodal nature of the data.

- ▶ Baldry and Thibault (2005) offer guidelines for transcribing and analyzing multimodal data across printed texts, web pages, and film/TV genres.
- ▶ They introduce the concept of clusters—groupings of items—and cluster analysis to examine how these elements are interconnected, arguing that meaning arises from the relationships between clusters rather than individual parts.
- ▶ In film and television, they analyze shots, phases, transitions, and the interaction between soundtrack and images, showing how features like music provide contextual grounding. Their approach links context of situation, genre, and context of culture in multimodal analysis.

- ▶ Prior (2014) and Street, Pahl, and Rowsell (2009) emphasize using ethnographic methods to understand the production and consumption of multimodal genres.
- ▶ Molle and Prior (2008) studied graduate student assignments in architecture, music, and engineering, combining interviews, course documents, class observations, and text analysis.
- ▶ They found that students' texts were inherently multimodal, with visual and verbal elements integrated rather than separate. Their research highlights the importance of examining both the final multimodal products and the processes of their creation and reception.

Limitations of multimodal discourse analysis

- ▶ Iedema (2001) highlights several limitations of multimodal discourse analysis, including the time-intensive nature of the work and its interpretative aspects.
- ▶ Analyses often focus on the final text rather than its production or audience reception, meaning analysts' readings may differ from actual reader or viewer interpretations (McHoul 1991).
- ▶ Multimodal approaches may also underemphasize certain linguistic features considered in other discourse analyses and can struggle to connect findings to broader social issues (Jewitt 2017).
- ▶ These limitations can be addressed by linking analyses to social theories (e.g., Machin and van Leeuwen 2007) and using ethnographic data to understand production, consumption, and contextual factors.

Summary

- ▶ The chapter provides an overview of multimodal discourse analysis, examining how texts that combine multiple modes, like words and visuals, create meaning.
- ▶ It covers the theoretical background, examples of analyses, and the connections between genre, speech acts, and multimodality.
- ▶ A genre-and-multimodality framework is proposed for exploring layers of meaning, alongside suggested steps for conducting analyses. The chapter also addresses the limitations of multimodal discourse analysis.

Thank You ...