

Multimodal discourse

- ❖ Multimodality entered linguistics through the groundbreaking work of Kress and Van Leeuwen in *Reading Images* (1996) and *Multimodal Discourse* (2001).
- ❖ Visual expression is playing a vital role in various aspects of our daily life. Unlike in the past where language used to be in the central position, now the interplay of text, image, gesture or even music is becoming the mainstream.

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- ❖ Multimodality seems to operate in opposition to monomodality. The most highly valued genres of writing (literary novels; academic treatises, official documents and reports, etc.) came entirely without illustration, and had graphically uniform, dense pages of print.
- ❖ The desire for crossing boundaries inspired twentieth-century semiotics.

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- ❖ Texts which linguists study create meanings not only through language but also through visual features and elements such as images, colour, the layout of pages, even through material objects and architecture.
- ❖ The multimodal resources are available in a culture used to make meanings in any and every sign, at every level, and in any mode.

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- ❖ Kress and Luween move away from the idea that the different modes in multimodal texts have strictly bounded and framed specialist tasks.
- ❖ In a film, images may provide the action, sync sounds a sense of realism, music a layer of emotion, and so on, with the editing process supplying the 'integration code', the means for synchronising the elements through a common rhythm (Van Leeuwen, 1985).

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- ❖ A number of authors have been highly critical of multimodal work which has sought to apply linguistic concepts directly to visual communication (Bateman, Delin, & Henschel, 2004).
- ❖ Forceville (2007, 2010) has observed that at its most extreme some of this work has tended towards concealing what is taking place behind complex terminology and that dense levels of analysis have led to little more than mundane observations.

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- ❖ Other authors explore how images and other forms of communication are simply not composed of the same elements as language but that nevertheless there is a useful place for a social semiotic approach to nonlinguistic communication (Machin, 2009).
- ❖ Cobley and Rantviir (2009) argue that multimodality has yet to show it can deliver on some of the things it promised beyond what is already established in other areas of sociosemiotics.

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References

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