MULTIMODALITY IN LINGUISTIC RESEARCH

Workshop series at the Department of English and American Studies

31 May 2017
Campus Neues Palais | building 9 | room 1.15

MARK TURNER   Case Western Reserve University
Voice, gesture, action: Tools for the modern study of human multimodal communication

The study of human communication has historically been focused on text, for the simple reason that these data are available. Of course, human communication is fundamentally multimodal, dynamic, personal. This talk will explore new methods for advancing the study of human communication to include everything beyond the slightly weird medium of text, and a consideration of theoretical tools for multimodal construction grammar.

JOHN A. BATEMAN   University of Bremen
The analysis of multimodality: Semiotic foundations and consequences for methodology

The scientific study of multimodality has developed in fits and starts since the early work of Barthes in the 1960s. Theories and methods have been drawn from contributing disciplines and are not always applicable to aspects of multimodality lying beyond their own disciplinary orientations. Although significant advances can be expected from many current directions, particularly those embracing empirical, experimental and corpus-based research paradigms, progress is hindered by a lack of foundations concerning the nature of multimodality as such and dialogue across approaches remains rare. For many communicative situations we encounter in contemporary society, fragmentation of this kind is problematic. Modes and media are mobilised flexibly in combinations that do not readily fall within traditional areas of concern. This demands stronger theoretical and methodological guidance that can allow multimodality to take on a foundational role for meaning-making of all kinds. In this presentation I sketch the more general approach to multimodality that we have been developing in Bremen over the past ten years, where multimodality is defined semiotically with respect to both materiality and discourse. Characterisations of the semiotic capabilities of diverse materialities are then used as methodological guidance for systematically approaching both established and novel communicative situations.

Bateman, J. A., Wildfeuer, J. & Hiippala, T. (2017). *Multimodality Foundations, Research and Analysis. A Problem-Oriented Introduction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

CHIAO-I TSENG   University of Bremen
Narrativised space and genre space: A new approach to multimodal communication and transmedial comparison

In this talk I will present a new approach to analysing two levels of space in multimodal narratives: *narrativised space* and *genre space* (Tseng 2013, 2017, forthc.).

Narrativised space deals with how different degrees of narrative complexity in multimodal artefacts such as film, comics and graphic novels can be distinguished. I will argue that this analytical method provides the empirical basis for comparing different degrees of cognitive loads of the viewers in their narrative prediction processes. I will also suggest that this approach directly contributes to the frequently discussed issue of how to define the so-called puzzle, i.e. demanding, narratives.

For genre space, I will show how the perennial dilemma of genre hybridity and fluidity can be systematically analysed on the basis of the frameworks of multimodal discourse structures.

Moreover, drawing on the multimodal approach applicable to different visual media, I will address the significant issue of transmediality, namely, systematic narrative comparisons across different media. This talk will show the potentials of the multimodal approach for pursuing empirical investigations of the much-debated transmedial topics such as media affordances and constraints, transmedial adaptation, etc.

In this presentation I will particularly demonstrate the analytical compatibility of the approach to multimodal narrativised/genre space and the blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner 1998), as the two models offer much for the studies of the viewer's active cognitive performances. I will demonstrate this compatibility through exemplifying how the viewer is led by an abstract level of narrative structures in navigating through embedded and embodied space and how the abstract structures can be mobilised beyond media boundaries and genre boundaries.

Fauconnier, G. & Turner, M. (1998). Conceptual integration networks. *Cognitive Science*. 22(2):133-187.

Tseng, C. (2013). Analyzing characters' interactions in filmic text: A functional semiotic approach. *Social Semiotics:* 23, 587-605.

Tseng, C. (2017). Analysing *narrativised space* in moving images: A multimodal discourse approach to narrative complexity and transmedial comparison. *Multimodal Communication*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/mc-2016-0029

Tseng, C. (forthc.). Beyond the media boundaries: Analysing how dominant genre devices shape our narrative knowledge. To appear in *Discourse, Context & Media*.

In the workshop, we will discuss theoretical and methodological questions concerning the scope and potential of multimodal approaches in linguistic research.

For attending the talks, a quick (but binding) registration via e-mail until 24 May is required. Please write to Milene Mendes de Oliveira (mendesde@uni-potsdam.de) or Anna Finzel (finzel@uni-potsdam.de) and inform your full name, affiliation, and the talk(s) you intend to attend.

Program:
10.15-11.45: Mark Turner
11.45-13.00: Lunch break
13.00-14.30: John Bateman
14.30-15.00: Coffee break
15.00-16.30: Chiao-I Tseng
16.30-17.00: Discussion