

## INTRODUCTION: STUDIES IN MULTIMODALITY

In July, 2008, during the 35th International Systemic-Functional Conference at Macquarie University, in Sydney, Australia, Prof. Kay O'Halloran delivered a plenary talk entitled "Multimodality around the world: Past, present and future directions for research". Prof. O'Halloran argued, back in 2008, that multimodality was not just a fad. Two months later in Florianópolis, Brazil, during the IV Latin American Systemic-Functional Conference (ALSFAL), Prof. Theo van Leeuwen and Prof. Carmen R. Caldas-Coulthard gave their plenary talks based on studies in multimodality, drawing attention to the ubiquitous presence and use of different semiotic resources, or modes, in contemporary society.

It was then only seven years since the publication of Kress and van Leeuwen's seminal book *Multimodal discourse: the modes and media of contemporary communication* (2001) which, coupled with their previous book *Reading images: the grammar of visual design* (1996/2006), propelled a whole new area that had been pointed to by Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge (*Social Semiotics*, 1988) and Michael O'Toole (*The Language of Displayed Art*, 1994), for instance.

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Five years later, as we are now comfortably sitting in what might be partially seen as the ‘future of multimodality’ as envisioned by Prof. O’Halloran and other authors in their previous work, we can see that the area has flourished fast as it has raised the interest of researchers from different traditions and places, which can be verified through a range of academic activities around the topic.

The International Conference on Multimodality, for instance, which emerged from a small initiative by Prof. Eija Ventola, when still in Salzburg in 2002, moves in a steady pace to its 7th edition in Hong Kong in 2014. Similarly, MUST (Multisemiotic Talks, initiated by Prof. Eija Ventola as well) reaches its 5th edition (in Hong Kong in 2013, after four editions in Finland). A quick glance at the program from previous editions of these two events can provide us with a perspective of the development in the field in terms of theoretical research as well as regarding the analysis of a rich variety of “modes and media of contemporary society”. Furthermore, the inauguration of the Master Programme in *Language Sciences: Multimodal Linguistics* at the University of Bremen, Germany, developed under the guidance of Prof. John Bateman, who also contributes to this volume, perhaps marks a milestone to this process of maturation of the field, and that it is here to stay, as argued by Prof. O’Halloran and illustrated by Prof. van Leeuwen and Prof. Caldas-Coulthard.

The collective effort of researchers around the world and a large range of publications have contributed to the establishment of multimodal studies as a valid area of investigation. In Brazil, different post-graduate university programs have integrated studies on multimodality in their theoretical scopes, such as the research carried out, for example, by Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza and Walkyria Monte Mór at the University of São Paulo; by Luiz Paulo da Moita Lopes and Branca Falabella Fabrício at the Federal University of Rio

de Janeiro; by Desirée Motta-Roth, Graciela R. Hendges and Roseli Nascimento at the Federal University of Santa Maria; and by Celia Magalhães and Sônia Pimenta at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, as well as several others, including those who are also contributors to the present issue of *Ilha do Desterro*. The international link between the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), and the University of Sydney, Macquarie University and the University of New South Wales started to flourish with research and study periods by Brazilian researchers, sponsored mainly by the Brazilian funding agencies CAPES and CNPq, in collaboration with Len Unsworth, Frances Christie, Jim Martin, David Butt and Louise Ravelli. Similarly, Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard, from UFSC, has also established international links with different researchers in the area.

In this sense, this special issue *Studies in Multimodality* is an attempt to offer readers a glimpse of research in the area of multimodality produced in Brazil as well as in other parts of the world. This volume opens with the article “*Re-configuring image-language relations and interpretive possibilities in picture books as animated movies: A site for developing multimodal literacy pedagogy*” by Prof. Len Unsworth. Based on systemic functional linguistics and inter-image analyses of children’s picture books, Prof. Unsworth compares two excerpts from the book and movie versions of *The Lost Thing* to discuss the use of metalanguage related to multimodality and its relevance for multimodal literacy development. In the article “*Multimodal analysis of film within the GeM framework*”, Prof. John Bateman applies the GeM (Genre and Multimodality) framework to the analysis of film as a non-static narrative multimodal document. In their paper, “*Integrating systemic-functional and cognitive approaches to multimodal discourse analysis*”, William Feng and Elaine Espindola suggest the combination of SFL theory and the

study of metaphors from a cognitive perspective as a contribution to our understanding of the visual semiotic mode. In the article “*Text Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis: A multimodal analysis of a magazine advertisement*”, Sidnéia Ferreira and Viviane Heberle analyze a magazine advertisement from a text linguistics perspective and integrate it with both multimodal as well as critical discourse analysis to unveil sociocultural issues of postmodern society. The next paper, by Fábio Bezerra and Roseli do Nascimento, offers a timely review of projects conducted by a number of multimodal research labs around the world, describing research projects developed so far which reflect not just advancement in our analytical tools, but these labs’ contributions to the field in consolidating methodologies and pushing the boundaries of multimodal research. Sonia Pimenta and Cláudia Natividade apply multimodal and cultural studies theories to discuss the construction of masculinity in media texts and advertisements. In her article entitled “*Composition and framing in modern and post-modern Time print ads: What has changed and what these changes might mean*”, Sidnéia Ferrreira relies on the concepts of composition and framing to analyze and compare print ads to demonstrate how they have changed across time. Finally, Danielle Almeida presents readers with an interview with Associate Professor Louise Ravelli, from the University of New South Wales, Australia, in which they discuss three-dimensional spatial texts and emphasise the relevance of Systemic functional and multimodality frameworks. The issue also contains two book reviews on related topics in the area.

This volume, thus, brings contributions which reinforce the idea of multimodality not only as a theory, as it has been currently characterized, but as a social phenomenon that cannot be dissociated from technological revolution. The studies also suggest

that multimodal studies cannot and should not be carried out in isolation, but reveal to be a challenging interdisciplinary effort that will benefit from collaborations both institutionally as well as from and across different areas of knowledge.

We would like to thank the members of our university staff for their time and effort to make this issue possible. We would also like to give the warmest thanks to each of the referees who, as part of the editorial board of this special volume, invested time in critiquing and writing valuable comments for improving the quality of these academic articles, dealing with the pressure and short deadlines that were sometimes necessary. Most importantly, we sincerely thank all our contributors for their willingness to share their ideas with us.

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