

Charles Forceville, information about lectures at Vilnius University, April 2019

Lecture 1 (April 29, 3 p.m., Krėvės Room)

Title: “Theorizing visuals & multimodal discourse: Systemic Functional Linguistics and Relevance Theory perspectives.”

Abstract: “Multimodality,” the study of how different semiotic resources combine to make meaning in discourses and messages, is quickly beginning to gain momentum as an independent discipline within humanities research. Currently, by far most work focuses on the combination of the visual mode and the written-verbal mode. Most of this work is rooted in semiotics (for a survey see Chandler 2017), in Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (e.g., Kress and van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]) and in “geosemiotics” (Scollon and Scollon 2003). Carey Jewitt’s (2014 [2009]) handbook further galvanizes the discipline. Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala’s (2017) textbook draws on SFL research, but also discusses other approaches.

In my view, multimodal discourse is nonetheless still in need of an overall theory of communication. My own candidate for this is “relevance theory” (RT) (Sperber and Wilson 1995; Wilson and Sperber 2012). This theory has hitherto almost exclusively focused on spoken, face-to-face communication, but offers opportunities for expansion to multimodal mass-communication (Forceville 2005, 2014, in prep.; Forceville and Clark 2014).

In this presentation, first some ideas on multimodality from an SFL perspective will be presented; after that I will sketch how RT is to be developed into an umbrella-theory that can accommodate – indeed, will *need* to accommodate – the best ideas and insights from older theories. Examples I will discuss in this latter part will be from logos & pictograms, visual instructions, advertising, and cartoons.

References

Bateman, John, Janina Wildfeuer, and Tuomo Hiippala (2017). *Multimodality: Foundations, Research and Analysis – A Problem-Oriented Introducton*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

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Forceville, Charles (2005). Addressing an audience: time, place, and genre in Peter Van Straaten’s calendar cartoons. *Humor* 18: 2-278.

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Jewitt, Carey, ed. (2014). *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen (2006). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Scollon, Ron, and Suzie Wong Scollon (2003). *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World*. London: Routledge.

Sperber, Dan, and Deirdre Wilson (1995). *Relevance Theory: Communication and Cognition* (2nd ed.). London: Blackwell.

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Lecture 2 (April 30, 5 p.m., Room 107)

Title: “Black’s (1979) interactivity theory of metaphor, applied to print advertising and billboards.”

Abstract: Lakoff and Johnson (1980) completely changed metaphor studies by claiming that metaphors are first of all a matter of thought, and only secondarily a matter of language. A consequence of accepting this idea is that metaphor can be expressed in other modes than language, such as gesturally (e.g., Cienki and Müller 2008, Müller 2008), visually (e.g., Forceville 1996), as well as multimodally (e.g., Forceville 2016).

Whereas Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were intent on demonstrating that the metaphors human beings “live by” are structural, embodied ones, Max Black was primarily interested in creative, novel metaphors. My own early work is primarily indebted to Black (1979): it attempts to adapt his model to make it usable for the analysis of creative visual and multimodal metaphors.

In this presentation I will briefly introduce Black’s theory, and discuss a substantial number of visual and multimodal metaphors in the genre of print advertising and advertising billboards.

References

Black, Max (1979). More about metaphor. In: Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (19-43). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cienki, Alan and Cornelia Müller, eds, (2008). *Metaphor and Gesture*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Forceville, Charles (1996). *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*. London: Routledge.

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Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Müller, Cornelia (2008). *Metaphors Dead and Alive, Sleeping and Waking: A Dynamic View*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bio line The key theme in the research of Charles Forceville (Film/Media Studies, University of Amsterdam) is the question how visuals convey meaning. Committed to cognitivist, socio-biological, and relevance-theoretic approaches, he writes on multimodality in various genres and media (documentary film, animation, advertising, comics & cartoons, pictograms & traffic signs). In 1996, he published *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising* (Routledge), and an online course on pictorial and multimodal metaphor (2004-2013), accessible at <http://semioticon.com/sio/courses/pictorial-multimodal-metaphor/>. With Eduardo Urios-Aparisi he co-edited *Multimodal Metaphor* (Mouton de Gruyter, 2009); with Tony Veale and Kurt Feyaerts *Creativity and the Agile Mind* (Mouton de Gruyter, 2013); and with Assimakis Tseronis *Multimodal Argumentation and Rhetoric in Media Genres* (Benjamins, 2017). A monograph proposing how relevance theory can be extended to account for visual and multimodal mass-communication is in preparation for Oxford University Press. Under his guidance, students of HKU Utrecht have been making a series of short animation film on narratology, available on YouTube (2014-2019). Forceville has profiles on Researchgate and Academia.edu.