

Abstract for

BreMM15: Second International Symposium on the Theory and Practice of Multimodal Research

Multimodal Text Interpretation: Modelling the Whole Process

Martin Siefkes, Chemnitz University of Technology

In systemic-functional linguistics as well as multimodality research, it is well understood that purely linguistic as well as conventional semiotic models, developed originally for language or other semiotic systems in isolation, are no longer an adequate basis when we move towards multimodal text analysis. Human beings have a remarkable ability to process the manifold sign types given in multimodal discourse, integrating them into a coherent interpretation; adequate models are needed for this highly complex interpretation processes.

A broad range of approaches has been proposed in the last years; the presentation will show that they can be integrated into a general model of multimodal interpretation. It is argued that multimodal text interpretation needs to be modeled as a multi-stage process, which includes the steps of determining reading order; decoding or inferring mode-specific semantic information; integrating information across modes (e.g. determining reference identity); considering relations between modes and their possible structural and semantic functions; using background knowledge to disambiguate between multiple possible readings; and considering narrative aspects and aesthetic evaluations. The presentation will outline a model that aims at an integration of aspects that are currently considered separately, such as the representation of multimodal discourse content (e.g. Bateman/Wildfeuer 2014), and the interactions between modes in multimodal texts (e.g. Liu/O'Halloran 2009).

The talk will also present a new pattern-based description format for multimodal interpretation. The format, tentatively called "multimodal interpretation patterns", will define different types of patterns: *process patterns* describing different approaches interpreters can choose towards multimodal texts; *semiotic patterns* that comprise meanings (and expressions) in various modes, as well as relations between modes; *functional patterns* for the 'division of labour' between modes in regard to textual and narrative functions; etc. Multimodal interpretation patterns provide a flexible description of various aspects of textual interpretation across modal borders.

Bateman, J. A. & Wildfeuer, J. (2014): "A multimodal discourse theory of visual narrative." *Journal of Pragmatics* 74, 180–208.

Liu, Y. & O'Halloran, K. (2009), "Intersemiotic texture: Analyzing cohesive devices between language and images". *Social Semiotics* 19(4), 367-388.

Siefkes, M. (in review), "Frames in Discourse. Connecting Frame Semantics and Discourse Analysis in an SDRT-based Model". Submitted to *Pragmatics & Cognition*.

Keywords:

multimodal text analysis, intersemiosis, interpretation, semiotics, pattern-based grammar