

**John Flowerdew & John E. Richardson (Eds.) (2017). *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*. Routledge, 637 pgs.**

One thing's for sure: collective volumes are getting bulkier each year. This is especially the case with discourse and multimodality oriented works that attempt to keep up with the mounting advances across disciplines in terms of empirical applications, inasmuch as conceptual innovations. *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* is no stranger to this sweeping trend. I dare say that this is perhaps the most comprehensive volume to date on the critical strand of discourse analysis, and an essential point of reference for students and academic researchers alike who may wish to keep the fundamentals top-of-mind at all times. The *Handbook* lives up to its core promise as the thematic palette unfolds, namely "to provide an accessible, authoritative and comprehensive introduction to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), covering the main theories, concepts, contexts and applications of this important and rapidly developing field of study." The volume is divided into five parts, featuring all in all 41 individual chapters, spanning 600+ pages. The first part sets the conceptual stage for the ensuing methodological part which are followed by customized overviews of empirical applications in discrete domains in the broader media and cultural studies terrain. Although the underlying rationale behind this division is solid, in practice the boundaries between the conceptual underpinnings and the methodological operationalization of CDA concepts become blurred. For example, I would expect rhetoric and SFL to appear in the conceptual part, given that they have informed in variously identifiable ways major approaches in the CDA vernacular, such as Fairclough's CDA, Van Leeuwen's multimodal DA and Wodak's DHA. By the same token, the Interdisciplinarity part features chapters on politics and media studies, although journalism and legal discourse appear under the separate heading 'Domains and media'. Of course, this minor detail concerning the division of research labor by no means overshadows the richness of the contained information.

Interestingly, the volume features a chapter called Positive DA which seeks to balance the largely argumentative and confrontational nature of critical readings with constructive suggestions about social change, thus coupling a critical mindset with transformational discourses that promote social change in the context of power struggles. The chapter features examples from the extant literature where popular cultural artefacts were carved to this end, while exemplifying the power of critically minded reports in articulating dissent and motivating towards its collective voicing. Positive discourse analysis involves suggestions for the design of counter-discourses and it is geared towards social action through the transformation of semiotic resources. From a marketing point of view, positive discourse analysis presents considerable

potential in addressing how latent politics affect business decision making, as well as in comparing and contrasting foregone opportunities by dint of power plays premised on ego-battles. Indeed, as consistently found in boardroom simulation decision-making sessions, agreement on strategic alternatives is often established based on affiliation networks, rather than on an exhaustively thorough analysis of multi-source metrics. In these terms, positive DA may turn out to be an indispensable ally in deconstructing the so-called 'red tape' phenomenon. It would be very interesting to examine what alternative courses of action as counter-discourses might have been pursued were it not for embedded politics and structures of inter-dependencies. The critical scrutiny of marketing related decision making processes is partly addressed in the chapter on CDA and branding which adopts a highly reflexive approach with regard to underlying reader positioning mechanisms and manifest lexico-grammatical choices. In this context, SFL and social semiotics prevail in critically addressing the linguistic and metafunctional molding of branding discourse, both mono- and multimodally. The latter is exemplified by recourse to visual identity components (fonts, shape, size etc.), their selection criteria and their semiotic affordances.

Quite importantly, this handbook does not merely convey information about concepts, methods and fields of application, but offers lavishly background information as to the historical evolution of intra-disciplinary dialogues in an honestly self-reflexive attempt at laying bare its own 'power-play' whereby a relative share of voice has been allocated to some perspectives at the expense of others, thus practicing to the letter what CDA researchers 'preach'.

**John A. Bateman, Janina Wildfeuer & Tuomo Hiippala (2017). *Multimodality: Foundations, Research and Analysis: A Problem-Oriented Introduction*. Walter de Gruyter, 415 pgs.**

Multimodality related publications have been proliferating exponentially over the past ten years, with an impressive amount of multidisciplinary research currently forming its colorful canvass. Multimodality concerns the various modes wherein sociocultural, communicative and aesthetic artefacts and processes may be embedded, their meaning affordances and their multi-layered interactions. This volume seeks to differentiate itself from the already bulky literature of introductory monographs and collective editions by appealing mostly to first timers who wish to either quench their conceptual curiosity as to the fields of application of this ubiquitous concept or to put key concepts and methods in research practice. Despite its avowed introductory orientation, it does perform pretty well in covering and communicating research advances across

various fields of application, spanning social interaction, artistic performances, diagrams and infographics, films, web pages, social media, video games.

The book starts by defining 'mode' in a broader than usual manner, as a form of expression that impacts directly on how meanings are encoded and decoded. Indubitably, multimodality essentially modalizes expression while alerting participants in communicative predicaments to the subtleties involved in non-linguistically engraved stimuli, such as gaze, kinesics, proxemics, haptics. Although most of the evoked modes have been researched largely in a standalone manner in different disciplines prior to the advent of the multimodality stream, it was not until its consolidation as a coherent field that issues of multimodal interaction began to be addressed in a systematic fashion. Although equating modes with expression forms seems to be a fairly apt analogy for introductory purposes, in essence modes impact directly not only on the form, but also on the content of multimodal messages. For example, the tone-of-voice of an uttered sentence that is intended as an ironic reversal of its semantic content affords to resemanticize it.

The book presents conceptual issues and challenges alongside methodological ones in a balanced manner, thus providing a useful compass to multimodality neophytes as to which concepts/methods are most appropriate for distinctive fields of empirical study. Methodological guidelines are provided for qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods oriented research, in a manner that is informed by both social sciences, and textual linguistics. Perhaps the methodological section becomes over-pedantic in some respects, especially where basic background information is presented about the mathematical formulas underpinning various statistical tests. This comes at a marked shortage of more crucial territories that might be expected to be covered at a considerable length alongside issues of transcription, coding and analysis of multimodal data, namely the use of CAQDAS software (cf. George Rossolatos, 2018. *Interdiscursive Readings in Cultural Consumer Research*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing) Furthermore, interpretive research is presented as being more untrustworthy compared to quantitative research, despite the availability of trustworthiness criteria for qualitative research in general which differ markedly in essence and scope compared to quantitative research, but also given that no quantitative research piece is bereft of assumptions and the interpretation of findings. On another note, the authors appear to be quite critical of multimodal studies that do not feature *inter-rater reliability* scores, despite the fact that dual coding is mostly employed in media and marketing content analytic studies, but neither in applied linguistic and rhetorical studies, nor in discourse analysis oriented ones (and the same holds for the vast majority of the *Handbook* authors' papers).

Nevertheless, the reader benefits considerably from the adoption of the vivid metaphor of 'canvasses' that is used for portraying the methodological transition between the requisite steps involved in multimodal analytic projects, which are summarized in an eight-step procedure involving (1) the selection of a class of communicative situations to be studied and the particular focus that is to be adopted (2) the decomposition of the media of the communicative situation to derive a hierarchically organised range of canvases and subcanvases (3) mapping out the multimodal genre space (4) selecting from the data the activities that are being performed and identifying the semiotic modes that may be using the canvases for those activities (5) triangulate the research problem with respect to other works on the targeted modes, genres and situations (6) perform the analysis using relevant media and genre frameworks (7) looking for patterns and explanations in analysed data (8) discussing the findings. The ensuing overview of applications in discrete research fields illustrates with reference to indicative studies in each area of specialization that attending to multimodality issues is no longer conceivable as an 'add-on', but as an essential component of almost every research piece that displays the requisite sensitivity to co-textual aspects of any sociocultural phenomenon's discursive articulation (alongside variously operationalized dimensions of context). Let us recall that the emphasis on co-textual considerations was a key innovation in Halliday's opening up of grammar to sociocultural practices. Perhaps a more extensive treatment of the issue of multimodal literacy might have afforded to contextualize more concisely the issues that were identified earlier in moving multimodal research beyond the regime of textual analysis. Additionally, the authors appear to be quite judgmental as regards the pertinence of some semiotic perspectives in filmic analysis, such as structuralism which they deem to be *passé*, despite the fact that advances in structuralist semiotics have been made consistently until today, that Bordwell's film theory on which they draw quite extensively recognizes structuralist semiotics as the main metalanguage for filmic analysis, that Bateman has drawn on Metz's film semiotics for offering a version of the *Grande Syntagmatique*, and that the majority of quantitative statistics amply employed in the social sciences are of structuralist epistemological orientation. Furthermore, Hjelmslevian structuralist semiotics were instrumental in the development of SFL. As regards the components of filmanalysis methods, the authors focus on an introductory level on production techniques, however no mention is made of profilmic elements, as a film's expressive resources, rather than syntactical inventory. Although production techniques are responsible for both semantic and syntactical cohesion, their salience by no means overrides that of the featured actors, settings etc. Production values in film criticism is a separate topic than actors' performance, the relevance and elegance of the settings and the plot as such. Issues of film narratology must be

addressed in tandem with production techniques in order to yield a comprehensive picture of how meaning is produced in film. Multimodality is hardly addressed in the most crucial chapter on filmic analysis, save for production techniques. Production techniques do not constitute modes, but aspects of filmic syntax. For example, the contiguous placement of two co-evolving scenes suggests some sort of meaningful interdependence. This is afforded by editing, but editing as such does not afford the meaning of the scene which rests with the featured actors, their actions, the settings and other props. What is quite alarming, however, is the evoked method for gauging filmic effectiveness. This is presented here as being solely dependent on eye tracking and neuroscientific imaging (i.e. brain scans). I would tend to think that all this trouble in analyzing textually an art form should at least be coupled with a corresponding method (i.e. textually oriented) of researching consumer effects. This brings us back to the multimodal literacy issue which has been spuriously under-represented in this otherwise quite comprehensive volume. Reducing effectiveness to brain flashes, on the one hand, presupposes a precarious overlap between mind and matter (i.e. brain) and a largely falsified naturalized epistemology. On the other hand, it offers little in terms of identifying what semantic and syntactic filmic aspects were conducive to such brain 'flashes'. Was it the speed of alternating shots/reverse shots that intensified the spectators' adrenaline? Was it the sheer appeal of a famous actor? Both in varying degrees? All neuroscience can offer is a reductionist outcome without any interpretive link to the textual underpinnings of the spectacle.

The prominence of textual approaches in designing and monitoring the effectiveness of multimodal structures becomes even more compelling in the case of consumer experiences. Especially in the face of a burgeoning experiential economy and the constant quest for revamping cultural practices, 'mode' constitutes an indispensable parameter for cultural innovation that mandates a systematic approach to the design and management of cultural spectacles and experiences as multimodal phenomena.