

○ **C. JONES AND E. VENTOLA (EDS.),
***FROM LANGUAGE TO MULTIMODALITY:
 NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE STUDY OF
 IDEATIONAL MEANING*****

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Jones and Ventola's edited collection provides a discussion of how meaning is made in text through the ideational function, and its interaction with textual and interpersonal meaning, as well as multimodal ways of making meaning. The book is very technical in parts, and assumes an in-depth knowledge of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and other associated frameworks; however it is valuable in exploring some difficult areas within the SFL framework and it is likely to be of use to textual analysts and scholars in the field.

The book, which focuses on construal of ideational meaning, contains four sections. The first concerns theoretical developments, including a look at methodological considerations in analysing transitivity and two approaches to dealing with difficulties in analysis. The second section moves on to interactions of ideational meaning with interpersonal or textual meaning. The chapters in this section deal variously with the grammar used to express emotion, how transitivity and APPRAISAL interact, and expression of temporal meaning. The section on applications to academic contexts contains chapters on constructing knowledge in science, and also in tertiary and secondary student writing. The final section considers ideational meaning in multimodal texts such as mathematics writing, digital art, movie posters, and political cartoons.

Thompson's very useful chapter proposes a number of tools for the analysis of transitivity for the purposes of unpacking the ideological assumptions of a text. These include transitivity concordances (the participant roles in which an entity appears in a text), transitivity templates (recurrent schematic transitivity structures) and Hasan's cline of dynamism (different roles construe entities as having greater or lesser dynamism).

Flowerdew shows that a corpus approach can valuably be used within the SFL framework. To illustrate she uses environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports to consider difficult to categorise processes. One example is whether 'associated with' is relational or material. She

found it to be overwhelmingly causal, with a negative meaning. She suggests that in the EIA context, 'associated with' is a milder and less challengeable alternative to 'caused by'. Thus when it appears in a reduced relative clause (e.g. "concentrations associated with back-filling"), it means "caused by" rather than its more usual dictionary meaning of "associated with".

O'Donell, Zappavigna and Whitelaw examine difficult to code process types, focusing on those variously coded by different coders as verbal, behavioural or material. They found a distinction between coders who code transitivity on a grammatical versus a conceptual basis. The processes that are difficult to code are "those that conceptually involve mental or verbal action, but syntactically don't involve projection" (p. 63). They suggest the need for explicit coding criteria, to obviate the need for coders to choose for themselves between syntactic or conceptual criteria.

Lavid's interesting contrastive study of English and Spanish expression of emotion finds a tendency for emotions to be expressed as a quality (I am sad) in English but as a process (it saddens me) in Spanish. Emotions are expressed transitively in English but both transitively and ergatively in Spanish. She puts this difference down to the inflected nature of English, where the subject must be preverbal.

Scott discusses the interaction of the transitivity system and the appraisal subsystem of JUDGEMENT, noting how meanings may be amplified through realisation in both systems. She analyses discussion in a news article and an internet site about a family's near drowning in the Phuket tsunami. The participants are very differently construed by the contributors in the two systems. For example, by comparison with the news article, the website contributors judge negatively both the PROPRIETY and NORMALITY of a participant's action in being unable to hold onto her child. Amplifying this meaning, the transitivity analysis shows that website contributors construe her as an actor who lets go of her child, while the news article emphasises her thoughts and fears.

Srinivas considers temporal meaning in scientific textbooks, noting that such meanings may be made circumstantially within the transitivity system or logically via temporal conjunctions. Comparing the two, she notes that only creation of temporal meaning through clausal means (i.e. via conjunctions) allows rhetorical development of the argument, while temporal meanings realised via circumstances function to enhance processes.

McCabe and Gallagher's welcome chapter on an under-researched topic considers development of complexity in the nominal group in undergraduate student writing. Their study compares construction of the nominal group by novice and proficient student writers

and suggests that teachers might usefully give attention to the nominal group as well as the more usual focus on processes.

Two chapters focus on the grammatical subject, the element by which a “proposition can be affirmed or denied” (Halliday, 1994, p.76). Montemayor-Borsinger shows how a physicist changed his representation of this element in later compared to earlier writing. In earlier writing he relied on “conventional” subjects, which use taxonomising grammatical metaphor. In later writing, the proportion of subjects that use reasoning grammatical metaphor (e.g. “A full understanding” and “This scheme”) is increased. This construal of abstractions as agents combines ideational and interpersonal meanings and is likely to be viewed as more objective by readers.

Comparing grammatical subjects in a corpus of student writing in a range of disciplines, Gardner considers how choice of subjects as either things or nominalised processes can be an indication of a text’s field or discipline. Mirroring prior findings of studies of different genres, in the student writing there was for example a greater preponderance of phenomenal subjects (e.g. “the cold war”) in English and History, compared to more epistemic subjects (e.g. “this theory”) in Psychology.

The final section of this volume considers analytical methods in respect of multimodal texts. Approaches to this are various and while these chapters draw heavily on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) grammar of visual design, use is also made of others, among them O’Halloran’s systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis framework, and analysis of visual metaphor.

Although O’Halloran’s framework for considering graphical, symbolic and verbal meaning in mathematics is technical and not accessible without reference to her prior work, the chapter is nevertheless valuable in its attempt to unpack meaning that is at the core of maths discourse and of so much discourse in the experimental sciences.

Heumer analyses an artwork aiming to represent online communication combining sound and visual and verbal modalities. The artwork uses the aural, visual and verbal modes to represent the individual and people in mass. For example the individual is represented in aural mode via a single voice realised like a friend’s, while people in mass representation are reflected in the murmuring of many voices. Similarly the individual is realised in visual mode via big fonts realised as single statements, compared to the mass representation of small fonts realised as visual patterns. Verbally use of the personal pronoun is contrasted to mass representation via ellipses and noun-phrases.

BOOK REVIEWS

Maiorani analyses how the visual and verbal elements of The Matrix trilogy promotional posters reflect the content of the movies, which concerned the boundary between what is and what is not real. Her multimodal analysis unpacks how the posters functioned to develop a 'matrix culture' and to sell products associated with the movies. In the movies the real world is shown to be a virtual reality, the invention of an artificial intelligence. The posters mirror this by embedding an advertisement for the movie into an advertisement for products associated with the movie.

In a fascinating analysis of the role of visual and verbal metaphor in political cartoons, Pinar Sanz considers newspaper political cartoons from the 2001 British election. These were based on three election billboards. The cartoons refer visually and verbally to the billboards. They also contain visual metaphors that need to be unpacked to understand all the meaning. For example, an election billboard comparing the allegedly soft on crime approach of Labour with the firmer approach of the Conservative Party is reconstrued in the cartoon with Tony Blair as a criminal stalking Margaret Thatcher and William Hague, depicted as a grandmother and grandson. These visual metaphors are reinforced verbally by verbal slogans

As might be expected in an edited collection, the quality of the contributions is variable. In addition, this is not a collection for a general audience; a level of technical knowledge is assumed in most contributions, and in one or two places I felt there was inadequate explanation of certain theoretical and methodological areas. The collection also has one or two problems at the editorial level, with for example errors in reproduction of tables and one instance of too small fonts. Nevertheless there is much to interest the specialist audience working in this area, who will I believe find this to be a very worthwhile collection.

REFERENCES

- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to Functional Grammar* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: the grammar of visual design*. (2nd ed.). London: Continuum.