

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2020.22.2.32>**МУЛЬТИМОДАЛЬНЫЕ ТЕКСТЫ В ВИЗУАЛЬНОЙ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ**

Обзор

Павлина С.Ю. *

Нижегородский государственный лингвистический университет им. Н.А. Добролюбова, Нижний Новгород, Россия

* Корреспондирующий автор (pavlina.svetlana[at]mail.ru)

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается визуализация политической коммуникации в свете теории мультимодальности. Выделяются типы используемых в политических кампаниях мультимодальных текстов на основе статичности или динамичности представленных в них визуальных образов. К группе визуально статичных текстов принадлежат политические плакаты, значки и наклейки, визуально динамичными являются теледебаты, политическая телереклама и др. Визуально динамичные тексты представляются более сложными в семиотическом плане. В них выделяются вербальный, цветовой, иконический и музыкальный коды, искусное сочетание которых делает текст экспрессивным и содержательно емким.

Ключевые слова: мультимодальность, визуализация, код, политическая коммуникация.

MULTIMODAL TEXTS IN VISUAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Review

Pavlina S.Yu. *

Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University named after N.A. Dobrolyubov, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

* Corresponding author (pavlina.svetlana[at]mail.ru)

Abstract

The article explores visualization of political communication assuming a multimodal perspective on it. The types of multimodal texts used in political campaign are established. They include still and moving visuals. The research analyses a repertoire of modes employed in shaping politically important information in well established still visuals encompassing campaign poster, buttons and stickers. Moving visuals such as TV political ads and televised debates have a more complex semiotic structure than still ones. Their persuasive power is amplified due to the interaction of verbal, colour, iconic and musical modes, which are carefully orchestrated to reach the voters.

Keywords: multimodality, visualization, mode, political communication.

Introduction

Recent decades are characterized by a visual turn in communication. Visuals have become key elements of political landscape since they shape meanings in an impressive way, attracting the recipients' attention and transmitting politically relevant information. Their persuasive power stems from the interaction of different modes involved in meaning making. It is evident that the natural language is only one of a diverse range of modes employed in creating and delivering messages. The meaning is constructed in ensembles that draw on and consist of different modes that include speech, body language, images, objects, gaze and other thing that contribute to meaning. Each of these elements is characterized by some potential for communication. [Bezemer, 2012].

Describing the present day tendencies in communication, scholars postulate that it is marked by the increase in complex ways of information presentation, when the texts become semiotically heterogeneous and visual in nature [Jewitt, 2009; O'Halloran, 2011]. Building on it, Kress assumes that visual information has a greater pragmatic potential than verbal one since the interaction of semiotically divergent components produces a more potent meaning [Kress, 2010]. It also explains the rise in multimodal texts usage in political landscape as the rhetorical potential of a verbal element is enhanced by vivid pictorial components bound to affect the viewers.

The importance of visual aspects of political communication can be explained by a rapid pace of life, when recipients have limited time to consume information. Long reads are no longer popular and people have just enough time to grasp the title and a picture. It brings to focus the employment of bright, attractive visual images capable of riveting and retrieving the recipients' attention. Researchers report a visual turn in print media and digital communication, stipulating that multimodality has acquired a particular power in an epoch of profound social, economic and technological transformations where developments have redesigned the communicative landscape, in particular with the fast growth of digital media [Muller, 2007].

Multimodality provides a new broad framework to understand the way messages are shaped in all types of communication, including the political one, and to investigate the diversity of modes that are used for meaning-making.

Multimodal perspective on text analysis

The reigning paradigm in modern linguistics presupposes a broad treatment of the term *text*. It is no longer seen as a linear construct containing only signs of a natural language. Printed texts are presented graphically; they rely on their layout, font and colour – the elements that belong to different semiotic modes. Speech contains not only purely linguistic elements but also some acoustic components, such as pitch, intonation, volume, etc. So it is possible to conclude that texts tend to be heterogenic so it allows for a multimodal perspective on their analysis.

The term multimodality describes a set of diverse semiotic resources or modes used in different discourses which include written texts, speeches, gestures, pictorial elements, etc. In a nutshell, they are composed of signs belonging to various semiotic systems.

An important property of multimodal resources is their connection with a broad cultural context. They are treated as meaning making tools that articulate the socially relevant meaning in conformity with the requirements of different communities [Bezemer, 2012]. Multimodal texts are embedded in a certain culture at a specific period of time; so each of the modes makes references to social, political and cultural contexts to shape the meaning relevant for the recipients that share this cultural knowledge.

Another attribute of multimodality is its inter-semiotic character. Meanings made in one mode can contribute to meanings built in other modes, which results in a text that is not just a set of senses mechanically added to each other but an amalgam of meanings, different by nature, which are re-used, reshaped and played upon to bring about an impressive whole.

Modes within a multimodal text assume a position which can differ from the standpoint of dominance. With the advent of digital communication speech started to lose its functional load, the pictorial mode is assuming a more prominent role in interactions. It allows Adami to conclude that these changes in the semiotic landscape contribute in an important way to the visibility of multimodality as an inherent part of modern communication [Adami, 2015].

From the political communication perspective multimodal texts can be viewed as a powerful tool to transmit values and shape ideologies. Their capacity to stimulate the voters to make the necessary political decisions can hardly be overestimated.

Visuals in British and American political communication

Multimodal texts perceived through a visual channel belong to two classes: still visuals and moving visuals. Still visuals encompass campaign posters, buttons, stickers, leaflets, banners and billboards, while moving visuals include TV political interviews, televised debates, political TV advertising.

Still visuals enjoy a broad popular appeal because they can be placed in public space and attract attention of a great number of voters. In the US political posters have been in use since Lincoln's time, in the UK they became a hallmark of political landscape at the end of the XIX century. Stickers and campaign buttons are signs of political activism with a long tradition. Political still visuals express the intended message in a laconic and expressive manner. They shape the public opinion in two ways, either creating a positive image of a candidate or a party or criticizing the political opponents. This allows for establishing two main functions of still visuals: attack and acclaim [Benoit, 2019]. The content examination shows that American campaign poster, button, stickers and billboards focus on politicians' personal qualities, their background and political stance, while British still visuals tend to either promote or criticize party ideology. It is quite understandable since during US elections they chose the president, whereas Parliamentary elections in the UK can be viewed as contests between parties rather than individual leaders. The critical content analysis of still visuals reveals that modes employed in meaning making include verbal and non-verbal. The layout and font belong to the graphical mode, pictorial components and photographs make the iconic mode and one more non-verbal mode is colour. All the modes are interdependent, linguistic and pictorial elements are always arranged graphically and chromatically. Each of the modes can assume a dominant position in the text.

Apart from traditional still visuals some emerging forms of political communication deserve consideration. Political advertising has gone digital and in the 2016 presidential campaign its ability to reach individual voters was used extensively. Digital political advertising targeted at individuals changes the basic characteristics of political communication, to be more specific the usage of a collective addressee of politically relevant messages. Since targeted political advertising is not transparent, it opens the floodgates for manipulation, which meets some opposition in society.

Moving visuals employ two media to transmit information: the visual channel and the audio one. TV interviews and televised debates rely on the verbal content of communication. However, the public opinion is also shaped by non-verbal elements, such as posture, gestures, facial expressions that are perceived visually. Moreover, some acoustic properties of speech can have a bearing on the ultimate impression politicians produce on the viewers. Intonation, volume, voice timbre – things that are paraverbal by nature – can be as potent as the speech content.

The most complex structure of all multimodal texts functioning in visual political communication is found with TV political advertising. The first political TV ad was used in the 1952 presidential campaign in support of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Walt Disney's brother Roy produced a commercial in a cartoon style, turning the existing slogan "I like Ike" into a catchy song. This type of moving visuals, incorporating verbal, colour, graphical, iconic and musical modes, is rich in symbols. The usage of music alongside moving images enhances the effect of the ad calling to bring the candidate to the White House.

Conclusion

The tendency to visualization of political communication is on the rise, which can be explained by a great persuasive power of visual images used along with linguistic elements. The texts combining verbal and non-verbal components express the intended message in a laconic way. To shape and transmit politically relevant information an ensemble of modes is employed, apart from the verbal mode it includes graphical, colour, iconic and musical ones. In political communication they use two groups of visuals: still and moving ones. The former type includes campaign posters, pins and stickers. The emerging form of visual communication is digital political ads. Moving visuals have a more complex structure than still ones, as they are perceived through visual and audio channels. The persuasive power of such moving visuals as televised debates and TV political ads is amplified due to the interaction of modes, which are carefully orchestrated to reach the voters.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Список литературы / References

1. Adami, E. Multimodality / Adami, E. In O. Garcia, N. Flores & M. Spotti (eds.)//Oxford Handbook of Language and Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press. – 2016. P. 451-473
2. Benoit, K. A. Functional analysis of visual and verbal symbols in presidential campaign posters, 1828-2012 / Benoit, K. A. // Presidential Studies Quarterly. – 2019. - Vol. 49, No.1. P. 4-22.
3. Bezemer, J. Using a Social Semiotic Approach to Multimodality: Researching Learning in Schools, Museums and Hospitals / Bezemer, J., Jewitt, C., Diamantopoulou, S. et al. NCRM. 2012.
4. Jewitt, C. The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis / Jewitt, C. – London: Routledge. 2009.
5. Kress, G. Multimodality. A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication / Kress, G. – London: Routledge. 2010.
6. Muller M. What is Visual Communication? Past and Future of an Emerging Field of Communication Research / Muller M. // Studies in Communication Sciences. – 2017. 7/2. P. 7 -34
7. O'Halloran, K. Multimodal Discourse Analysis. In K. Hyland and B. Paltridge (eds). Companion to Discourse / O'Halloran, K. – London: Bloomsbery. - 2011. P. 120-137.