


BOOK REVIEW

Maria-Ionela Neagu and Diana Costea (Eds.), *Multimodal communication and soft skills development*, Peter Lang, 2022, 324 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-87524-7 (Print), E-ISBN 978-3-631-87885-9 (E-PDF), E-ISBN 978-3-631-87886-6 (EPUB), <https://doi.org/10.3726/b19917>.

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The book titled *Multimodal Communication and Soft Skills Development* draws on multimodality as a means of communication. It also highlights the idea that the development of soft skills is in line with the development of the society and of the individual. The book is divided into two parts: Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Soft Skills Development. The multiple elements which converge to the creation of multimodality are captured in the book. In the Introduction the editors familiarise the readers with the topics tackled throughout the volume, they also draw on the theoretical underpinnings the book adopts. The editors also underline the importance of multimodality and of soft skills in today's world.

Part I *Multimodal Discourse Analysis* comprises 11 contributions. The first contribution authored by Gabriela Duda is titled *La modification de la valeur d'usage des termes géographiques*. It deals with the use of geographical terms in Romanian public discourse. The chapter analyses a series of geographical adjectives in context as well as the positive, negative, derogatory connotations they can acquire and convey. It is argued that traditions and stereotypes have a contextual influence and determine the axiological changes for these terms, which thus acquire symbolic connotations in advertising, politics and the media. The examples analysed by Gabriela Duda are retrieved from advertisements and commercials published in the Romanian media.

The second contribution is authored by Carmen Sancho Guinda who analyses the means through which political discourse and academic dissemination of science benefit from multimodality.

Arleen Ionescu and Zengjing Li analyse the effects of racial humour on Asian and Chinese citizens after the outbreak of COVID 19. The examples are selected from the media and illustrated with pictures which heighten the impact of the jokes and reveal cultural tenets.

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Ling Chen affiliated with Shanghai Jiao Tong University writes the chapter *Remembering Trauma in Multimodal Ways: The Rape of Nanking*. The chapter deals with trauma and the ways in which traumatic events enter public memory. It makes reference to an episode in the history of China: the rape of Nanking and the way in which the event was reflected in the following media: non-fiction documents, literature, films, testimonies. The author analyses Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking* and Geling's Yan's *Flowers of War*.

Rongrong Qian's contribution telescopes the multimodality of memory manipulation by making reference to John Banville's *Shroud*. The study accounts for the way in which memory strategies of distortion, forgetting, and imagination can have a negative impact upon one's identity.

In the chapter entitled *Multimodal Stylistics of Nicholas Royle's Quilt*, Zengjing Li places the novel in the age of multimodality. Throughout her study, she argues that wording, typography, layout, and even the book covers represent pivotal semiotic elements that prompt the readers to engage in meaning making and decoding.

Diana Rînciog's study aims to investigate the sales and advertising strategies adopted by marketers to sell perfumes, as luxury products, to an audience eager to offer themselves a ritual privilege. More specifically, sifting evidence from advertisements the author explores the multimodal communication techniques adopted in the product launch and promotion processes. The container, the fragrance, the slogan, and even the price have become factors of paramount importance in defining the personality, the uniqueness of the perfume, allowing the consumer to indulge in a multisensory experience.

Adina Oana Nicolae authored the chapter *Verbal Meets Pictorial: Patterns of Metaphorical Multimodal Interaction in Business Magazine Covers*. The author conducts a fine-grained analysis and captures the multimodal interaction between text and image.

Diana Paraschiv and Cătălin Stănescu from Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești analyse multimodality as a means of exploring meaning identity in the context of the first edition of UNTOLD festival.

Sara Marinescu's research tries to capture multimodality as conveyed by war photography. The harsh truths of the Vietnam War were captured with unmatched authenticity through the lens of the camera. Thus, photography serves as a medium that not only documents reality with a sense of objectivity but also evokes strong emotional responses in its audience. This paper explores how images of war, particularly from the Vietnam era, were instrumental in stirring emotions such as empathy, sorrow, frustration, and powerlessness. These photographs challenged prevailing narratives by revealing the brutal realities on the ground, calling into question the justification that the war was fought for humanitarian purposes. The article also focuses on how photography influences public perception and attitudes toward conflict. Visual media, like other forms of discourse, can reflect underlying conceptual metaphors. By analysing these war images, we can uncover embedded meanings and better understand the symbolic and emotional weight they carry.

Ultimately, the camera offers a glimpse into the suffering endured by others, allowing viewers to connect, however briefly, with their pain.

In her chapter *Hiding or Revealing the Human Nature Behind the Mask: The Joker Effect*, Mihaela Duma analyses a large array of implications of the mask as fostered by anthropology. The different types of masks and implications are further analysed by the author.

Part II is entitled *Soft Skills Development* and it comprises five contributions. Anca Dobrinescu authored the research *Multimodal Communication in the English Literature Class* in which she tackles literature as a form of multimodal communication and pays heed to the novel and its role in the individual's comprehension of the society. The author acknowledges the challenges that literature has to face as part of the academic curriculum. Anca Dobrinescu shares the strategies and techniques she applies as a professor of literature, the selection of topics and authors.

Ana Maria Tolomei's chapter tackles the use of multimodal communication patterns in cultural studies and literature classes. Both teachers and learners are "invited" to gradually move from the interpretation and analysis stages of a literary or non-literary text to the investigation and production stages. Individual or collective Mind Maps as motivating and engaging mind tools can go beyond the written, visual or aural "texts" into cultural contexts from a New Historicist perspective.

Teodora Raducanu investigates emotional and social intelligence competencies in private schools abroad. She analyses a series of private schools based in Europe and in Canada and the climate they provide to students so that they should be stimulated and self-confident, not only to achieve higher academically, but also to be prepared for adult life.

Doina Grigore affiliated with George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași studies the role of the performer in musical communication. It is argued that the authentic interpretation stems from the performer's and/or conductor's ability to (re)create, not only to express and reproduce, but to innovate and enrich the original composition.

Maria-Ionela Neagu and Roxana-Iuliana Stan authored the research *Developing Soft Skills during EFL Classes*. Drawing on the main approaches to motivational psychology and sociology, the authors provide theoretical insight on the concept of soft skills, as well as on social and emotional intelligence, and critical thinking skills. The theoretical part is complemented with an empirical one carried out with the students enrolled at "Elie Radu" Technological Highschool in Ploiești, Romania. The control group students were empowered with soft skills by getting involved into carefully tailored activities which explore media diversity, persuasion techniques, letters of application, getting a job or setting up a business, thus encompassing teamwork, decision making, problem solving, goal setting, self evaluation.

Considering the eclectic nature of all these empirical studies, the volume is a springboard for discussion, displaying a balanced structure and casting new light on the concepts of multimodality and soft skills.

References

Neagu, M.-I., & Costea, D. (Eds.) (2022). *Multimodal communication and soft skills development*. Peter Lang.