

Discourse, Authority and Manipulation in Multimodal Perspective (DAMMP 2023)

Conference

16th-17th March 2023

University of Lorraine (Nancy, France)

www.idea.univ-lorraine.fr



Discourse emanates from various sources, some of which may be considered to be more authoritative than others. The knowledge available from these sources is “taught and learned”, “produced and used”, “sold and consumed” (Van Dijk 2011: 33). This raises the central epistemological question of the sources of knowledge, and for what purpose knowledge is disseminated. In other words, “who produces what knowledge for whom?” (*Ibid.*). Knowledge production is based on a “sociology of knowledge”, which means not only knowing what knowledge social groups already possess, but also what knowledge these groups may require in order to communicate in a satisfactory manner in society (*Ibid.*). Sources which command authority include ‘official’ genres (such as news reports, scientific publications and legal documents) are considered legitimate due to the social acceptability of certain ‘official’ sources which set “knowledge standards” (*Ibid.*). These standards give rise to the theory of “epistemic vigilance”, in which “interaction among epistemically vigilant agents is likely to generate not only psychological but also social vigilance mechanisms” (Sperber *et al.* 2010: 361). Crucially, a reliable informant “must possess genuine information” and must be willing to share it with their audience (*Ibid.*: 369). To what extent do the information sources which constitute a “sociology of knowledge” reveal a correlation between authority in discourse and access to knowledge? How should any discrepancy in the knowledge standards between source and content be interpreted?

The link between the concept of manipulation and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is well-established (Van Dijk 2006). Manipulation in discourse takes place primarily “by text and talk” and “is a form of talk-in-interaction” linked to power and abuses of power (*Ibid.*: 360). As manipulation occurs within the mind, the cognitive processes that govern it lend themselves to a cognitive approach (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, as certain discursive genres may produce different corresponding mental genres (Van Dijk 2014: 225), cognitive linguistics is particularly adapted to analysing different genres involving manipulation. However, certain genres pose increasing challenges for CDS. Firstly, in political discourse, the epistemic vigilance of an audience may lead politicians to “provide guarantees for the truths of their sayings” (Chilton 2004: 23). Growing political scepticism, coupled with the public’s need for “a simple and understandable world in times of uncertainty and insecurity”, has resulted in people looking to the fictionalisation of politics in the media (Wodak 2011: 206). This blurring of the division between fact and fiction is salient in ‘fake news’ stories, where “the facts are preceded by their denunciation” (Andrejevic 2020: 19). Secondly, technological advances in the twenty-first century have facilitated the development and proliferation of new forms of media, including the rise of social media platforms for news-sharing and forums for expressing opinions. These forms of “ephemeral media” (Grainge 2011) have changed the rapidity with which information can be transmitted, while video-sharing platforms can result in traditional segments of discourse becoming fragmented into smaller parts for easier digestion.

Consequently, there has been a recent turn towards multimodality in CDS, with increasing amounts of information processed through the “visual channel” in the news and other forms of communication (Hart 2016: 336). A major contribution to the multimodal approach is Systemic

Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) (O'Halloran and Lim 2014; O'Halloran *et al.* 2019). Inspired by Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014), SF-MDA uses multimodal analytic methods involving “mathematical techniques and scientific visualizations” (O'Halloran and Lim 2014: 148). Multimodal approaches have “a view of meaning as being greater than the sum of its parts”, in which “meaning in any communicative act is not just a product of the individual modes that contribute to it but of the interplay between them” (Hart and Marmol Queralto 2021: 530-531).

The discursive picture can be enhanced by gesture analysis, which provides for a coordinated message with speech (Kendon 2004; Streeck 2009). Specifically, the “impulse to gesture” occurs “at the interface between a cognitive-linguistic system and a face-to-face communication context, with the important qualifications that cognition is embodied and language is multimodal; face-to-face communication is interactive and situated” (Harrison 2018: 214). To this extent, gestures cannot be reduced to the mere externalisation of “pre-existing mental representations by means of body movements” (Kita and Alibali 2017: 262). Gesture, like multimodality in general, may demonstrate semiotic convergence with language, and may corroborate the reliability of informants, but does such convergence exist in manipulative contexts?

Although manipulation may involve an epistemic shift away from fact towards fiction or a different type of reality, how should manipulation be analysed in genres of fiction which contain elements of fact or reality? Do we observe the same linguistic and multimodal processes? The concept merits further exploration (Sorlin 2016, 2017), as fictional discourse “mirrors the ordinary functioning of language used to mediate social interactions in everyday life” (Sorlin 2017: 143). It may also expose the mechanisms of political and economic power in the modern media (Del Valle Rojas 2020), while genres like infotainment may blur the line between fact and fiction in audience reception (Ferré 2016).

The conference is open to papers which adopt a linguistic approach to manipulative discourse through multimodal analysis, focusing on English. Themes may include SF-MDA approaches, social semiotics or other multimodal approaches, focusing on official or unofficial sources, specialised areas of discourse (including, for example, political discourse, media discourse or scientific discourse), or the use of manipulation in genres of fiction. Other themes will be considered on merit.

References

- Andrejevic, M. (2020) ‘The Political Function of Fake News: Disorganized Propaganda in the Era of Automated Media.’ In Zimdars, M. and McLeod, K. (eds.) *Fake news: understanding media and misinformation in the digital age*. Cambridge (MA): MIT, pp. 19-28.
- Chilton, P. (2004) *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. London, Routledge.
- Del Valle Rojas, J. A. (2020). ‘Hybridising the Media’s Corporate-Political Discourse through Rhetorical Strategies: An Analysis of *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* (Morales, 1971).’ *Communication & Society*, Vol. 33, N° 4, pp. 107-121.
- Ferré, G. (2016) ‘Between Fact and Fiction: Semantic fields and Image Content in Crime Infotainment programs.’ *Multimodal Communication*, Vol. 5, N° 2, pp.127-141.
- Grainge, P. (2011) ‘Introduction.’ In Grainge, P. (ed.) *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-22.

- Halliday, M.A.K. et Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2014) *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Routledge.
- Harrison, S. (2018) *The Impulse to Gesture: Where Language, Minds and Bodies Intersect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hart, C. (2016) 'The visual basis of linguistic meaning and its implications for critical discourse studies: Integrating cognitive linguistic and multimodal methods.' *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 27, N°. 3, pp. 335-350. DOI: 10.1177/0957926516630896
- Hart, C. and Marmol Queralto, J. (2021) 'What can cognitive linguistics tell us about language-image relations? A multidimensional approach to intersemiotic convergence in multimodal texts.' *Cognitive Linguistics*, Vol. 32, N°. 4, pp. 529-562.
- Kendon, A. (2004) *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kita, S. and Alibali, M.W. (2017) 'How Do Gestures Influence Thinking and Speaking? The Gesture-for-Conceptualization Hypothesis.' *Psychological Review*, Vol. 124, N°. 3, pp. 245-266.
- O'Halloran, K.L., and Lim, F.V. (2014) 'Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis.' In Norris, S. and Maier, C. *Texts, Images and Interactions: A Reader in Multimodality*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 137-153.
- O'Halloran, K., Wignell, P. and Tan, S. (2019) 'Doing critical discourse studies with multimodality: from metafunctions to materiality by Per Ledin and David Machin', *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol. 16, N°. 5, pp. 514-521. DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2018.1556173
- Sorlin, S. (2016) *Language and Manipulation in House of Cards: A Pragma-stylistic Perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . (2017) 'The pragmatics of manipulation: Exploiting im/politeness theories.' *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 121, pp. 132-146.
- Sperber, D., Clement, F., Heintz, C., Mascaro, O., Mercier, H., Origg, G. and Wilson, D. (2010) 'Epistemic vigilance.' *Mind & Language*, Vol. 25, N°. 4, pp. 359-393.
- Streeck, J. (2009) *Gesturecraft: The Manu-facture of Meaning*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (2006) 'Discourse and manipulation.' *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 17, N°. 3, pp. 359-383.
- . (2011) 'Discourse, knowledge, power and politics: Towards critical epistemic discourse analysis.' In Hart, C. (ed.) *Critical Discourse Studies in Context and Cognition*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 27-63.
- . (2014) *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wodak, R. (2011) *The Discourse of Politics in Action: Politics as Usual*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keynote speakers

Gaëlle Ferré, Professor of Linguistics, University of Poitiers

Simon Harrison, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, City University of Hong Kong

Christopher Hart, Professor of Linguistics, Lancaster University

Call for papers

We invite participants to submit an abstract (in English or French) not exceeding 500 words, plus 5 or 6 keywords. Papers may be given in English or French and will be allocated 20 minutes, with follow-up questions during the session. Abstract submissions must include two separate Word formats: one anonymised, the other containing the name(s), affiliation(s) and email address(es) of the author(s) in addition to the title of the paper. All abstracts will be sent for anonymous peer review by the Scientific Committee. The Organiser and Scientific Committee reserve the right to request modifications to the abstract as a condition of acceptance. Parallel sessions may be used where appropriate. Some papers will be published.

The deadline for submissions is **Monday 19th September 2022**. Decisions will be communicated by e-mail by Monday 31st October 2022. Please send all submissions with the subject “DAMMP 2023” to Robert Butler: robert.butler@univ-lorraine.fr

Scientific Committee

Robert Butler, Senior Lecturer, University of Lorraine (Nancy)
Alan Cienki, Professor of English Linguistics, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Gilles Col, Professor of Linguistics, University of Poitiers
Belinda Crawford, Associate Professor, University of Pisa
Nuria Edo-Marzá, Associate Professor, Universitat Jaume I
Denis Jamet, Professor of English Linguistics, Jean Moulin University – Lyon 3
Juan Carlos Palmer-Silveira, Associate Professor, Universitat Jaume I
Linda Pillière, Professor of Linguistics, Aix-Marseille University
Miguel Ruiz-Garrido, Associate Professor, Universitat Jaume I
Sandrine Sorlin, Professor of English Language and Linguistics, University of Montpellier
Sabine Tan, Senior Research Fellow, Curtin University
Ronghua Wang, Associate Professor, Hunan University
Janina Wildfeuer, Assistant Professor, University of Groningen
Suwei Wu, Assistant Professor, China University of Petroleum (Beijing)

Registration

While it is anticipated that participants will be able to attend the conference in person, a hybrid format will also enable to participants to follow the conference online. The University of Lorraine asks for a registration fee of not less than 50 euros, whatever the format of the conference. A website specifically for the conference will be available shortly.

www.idea.univ-lorraine.fr