

MULTIMODAL SYNTACTIC CONSTRUCTIONS: A NEW PATTERN OF COMMUNICATION IN MODERN ENGLISH

Syntactic structures of a kind which was virtually unknown a few decades ago, incorporating multimodal elements, are now appearing with increasing frequency in English-language mass media discourse, and it can be argued that this evolution points to the need for a whole new approach on the part of modern linguistic schools. These structures clearly cannot be described in terms of the traditional definition of syntax as a separate area of linguistics—one that focuses on the grammatical structure of phrases and sentences consisting of at least two words, and which are in conformity with the rules that govern the criteria of semantics, orthography, style and punctuation.

The research that we have carried out indicates that up to now, these structures have not been subjected to the rigorous linguistic investigation that is essential for the formulation of appropriate descriptions and internal categorizations. Drawn from specifically chosen source material, research results have been assembled which indicate the need for a detailed examination of the concept of multimodal syntax beyond any that has been conducted either in Ukraine or in other countries up to this point. This being the case, we consider it appropriate and potentially very valuable to offer a newly-formulated definition of this field, along with a description of its specific features, focusing on the differentiating characteristics of multimodal syntax, and the range of resources available which enable it to possess these distinctive traits and functions.

In the creation of the mass media enclaves which were analysed, many verbal elements were included, but in many cases they do not possess as great a manipulative potential as non-verbal and paraverbal components. The most conspicuous of these include the insertion of images, and the manipulation of text (involving colour, and special effects such as variations in font size and weight, and text position) which are essential components of advertisements in both paper and digital periodicals. We referred above to the issue of devising a system of syntactic principles that reflect the realities of multimodal sentences. In order to achieve this, we have undertaken empirical research that makes use of the ever-increasing body of source material that is becoming available.

In dealing with that, we will employ terms such as non-verbal, paraverbal, and multimodal lexeme. We differentiate between paraverbal and non-verbal means as the first function based on verbal means, such as to accompany items such as special font or colour effects; the non-verbal are purely of a graphic nature but do not have anything in common with font. This may include any picture that is of a non-lexemic nature. We will be dealing with multimodal syntax [1], the base of which is made of up lexemes (words) which are different in character, form, structure and meaning from those of the higher (syntactic) level to which this article is devoted.

The source material that has been assembled (one thousand examples taken from mass-media texts) provides evidence indicating the need for in-depth study of multimodal syntax. Unlike monomodal syntax, which is based on verbal means and punctuation marks, multimodal syntax is formed using a combination of verbal

resources along with a major infusion of nonverbal components having varying structures or forms, quantitative composition, appearance, and communicative and pragmatic orientation. Multimodal syntactic constructions absolutely do not fit into the traditional interpretation of syntax.

The research that has been carried out suggests that multimodal syntactic constructions can be divided into two types, multimodal homogeneous (27%) and multimodal heterogeneous (73%). Multimodal homogeneous constructions consist either of verbal means plus punctuation marks, or solely of non-verbal means which belong to a single system. Heterogeneous syntactic constructions are based on various sign systems. They can be composed of both verbal and non-verbal means at the same time, or solely of non-verbal means which belong to at least two or more sign systems [2].

After observing and analysing so many multimodal structures, it is hardly necessary to restate how important a function they perform in contemporary media texts. Furthermore, our research has underlined the important place which multimodal syntax has as an essential and integral part of multimodal linguistics, and we are pleased to see how the investigation of practical examples has enabled us to begin constructing a more comprehensive theoretical framework in relation to this area of syntax. Some of the examples lead us to the conclusion that some multimodal syntactic constructions can be difficult to interpret, or can be interpreted in multiple ways; the background knowledge of the reader has a large bearing on this process.

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