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Integrating Multimodality and Reception Studies for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Multimodal research has traditionally focussed on the analysis of texts and their production, resulting in a wealth of theoretical and analytical constructs as well as approaches. On the one hand, multimodal research on texts and their production has pushed the field forward; on the other hand, however, it has resulted in different, and at times contradictory, accounts of how different modes work individually and together in making meaning. One of the reasons for the divergent accounts is a relative lack of empirical evidence coming from the other end of the multimodal communication process, i.e. the reception of multimodal texts. It is crucial to note that 'reception' here is not intended as passive uptake of an encoded message in a unidirectional process, but as the purposeful, active interaction and engagement of participants with a text in what Barker calls a "*two-sided* affair" (2021: 194, *emphasis in original*). Over the last two decades, scholars from a variety of fields, including linguistics, communication science, media studies and critical discourse studies, have started to take on the challenge of investigating text reception. Reception studies come in different forms, with different focuses and methodological approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. However, the common denominator between them is the interest, as the name suggests, to explore how people interact and engage with multimodal texts. This keynote will provide a summary of key issues in the integration of multimodal research and reception studies as well as a summary of previous research and how this can be applied to research projects withing the humanities and social sciences.

Keywords: Multimodality; Reception studies; Empirical research; Humanities; Social sciences