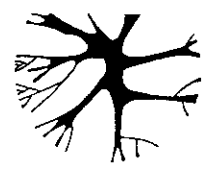


COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS



A Quarterly Information Service from the
Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture

Vol. 2 (1981), No. 4

The Language of Film and Television

An increasing number of people receive most of their news, entertainment and even religious inspiration through the visual media of film, television or illustrated magazines. We all “watch” television. James Monaco notes that some cats watch television attentively! But how well do we grasp the specific language of the visual media?

In countries such as the U.S., there is evidence that the post-1950 generation that has grown up with television has a pattern of thinking more attuned to the visual than to print media. Yet, some cross-cultural studies suggest that many American children, for all of the long hours of TV they watch, have a relatively shallow perception of visual expression.

Primary and secondary education generally focusses almost entirely on understanding print media. Some educators urge greater emphasis on visual literacy to build upon the latent “visual mentality” of young people today and to cultivate a deeper understanding of film and television expression. One presupposition of many “visual literacy” programmes now being introduced into schools is that film and television have specific languages and that we can teach students to understand this language.

This issue reviews some of the controversy among researchers regarding the notion of visual language and the debates on how to teach visual literacy.

Review Article

Is Film a Distinct “Language”?

The first filmmakers discovered very soon that different camera angles and movements or variations in lighting could convey different “meanings” similar to the way that different words have different meanings. D.W. Griffith, who pioneered new forms of cinema expression in films such as *Birth of A Nation*, liked to bathe his heroines in light with a technique he called “hazy photography” to bring out their translucent goodness and purity; the villains he left in dark and sinister shadows to symbolise their evil. Such simple techniques as low-angle shots could make small objects loom large and striking while a high-angle shot made the same object small and weak. Griffith was among the first to see film as a radically new medium, in his view, superior to books, paintings and the stage. He predated McLuhan in his belief that because film was a medium communicated through the eyes it was especially close to the soul and capable of lifting up society.

For the great Russian filmmaker, Eisenstein, the art of moving picture language was not in the meaning of the single shot but in the ingenious ordering of shots — the startling juxtaposition of wealthy nobles and oppressed peasantry — much as one would artfully order words in sentences and paragraphs. In *Potemkin* the sequence of three different lion statues, ordered to show the lion rising in fury, becomes a symbol of the revolt of the Russian workers.

As Hollywood moved into the mass production of film, there gradually grew up a set of codes and conventions for shooting scenes in a way that would connote a particular emotional tone and for editing film sequences to tell a gripping story. Early film texts rather mechanically compared film and written/spoken languages: the shot was the word of film, the scene its sentence and the sequence its paragraph. There were “dictionaries” of film language and “grammars” to guide the ordering of shots in editing — in part to emphasise the study of film as a serious and distinctive discipline.

Later film theorists have questioned this rather crude “erector set” approach to film language, but the comparison of filmic expression to language has continued to grow in importance in the study of film and television. James Monaco builds his introduction to the present state of the art in film research around the language metaphor of “reading a film”, and he argues that if we are to understand better what films and TV programmes are saying, we must learn the particular language of these media. Monaco’s approach to film and television language, like that of many who speak of the media in linguistic comparisons, takes as its reference point the theory of film semiotics of Christian Metz from France.

I: Semiotic Approaches to Media Language

How to Read A Film. James Monaco. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

In the history of film theory, many comparisons of film with written/spoken languages have simply emphasised that film has a distinctive code of artistic expression without contending that film follows similar "laws" of construction as one finds in language systems such as German, French or English. However, in the 1960s Christian Metz and others began to apply the systematic logic of linguistics and semiotics to film. Many of the major concepts and issues of current discussions of visual language can be traced back to Metz' or other semiotic positions.

Film Semiotics

Metz has been strongly influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure who was a pioneer in the science of linguistics and, in Metz' view, set down the foundations of semiotics. In its most general sense, semiotics is the study of how an intended meaning or message is conveyed through systems of signs which by social convention are understood to "stand for" or "mean" a particular object or experience. Semiotologists are interested in detecting the various classes of signs that form part of the pattern of human communication — musical notation, cartographic conventions, dance, painting, photography, gestures of politeness, poetry, folktales, myth, etc. In the case of film, as in other types of communicative expression, the goal of semiotics is to detect the specifically filmic type of signification and how these signs are interrelated to form a logical system or "language".

Metz has seen in semiotics the basis for a true science of film, that is, a basis for a systematic understanding of how film conveys meaning and how film is a "language". He argues that semiotics has developed out of linguistics, the study of the prototype of human communication, spoken/written signs. The semiotic analysis of such diverse systems of signs such as chess and computers is modelled in some ways on the science of linguistics and the analysis of formal language systems (German, French, English, etc.). Today linguistics has become but one more branch of semiotics studying one type of sign system, but in applying semiotic analysis to films we are, in a sense, applying the logic of linguistics to films. Nevertheless, one of the major questions Metz and others face in applying the metaphoric comparison of language to film is to determine in what ways the system of meaning in moving pictures and television is like the system of signs in spoken language and in what ways it is different.

Is Film a Language System?

Metz uses the strict linguistic understanding of language — a *system of signs for intercommunication* — as a starting point, but then goes to great lengths to clarify how film is *not* a language system.

Firstly, film is not a linguistic system. Film does not have a defined number of minimum units such as sound or letters of an alphabet which can be grouped to form meanings like words apart from the context in which they are used. Nor does film have a preordained "grammar" which determines rather strictly how shots, scenes or sequences are to be put into larger units like sentences. The rich realism of each film shot has many signifiers and is virtually an assertion or sentence in itself. Camera angles, lighting and distance do have broad common meanings, but the creative filmmaker is constantly varying these so that he speaks in "neologisms". Moreover, whereas spoken language is based essentially on one class of sign — sounds — film incorporates different classes of signs which are systems in themselves: music, dance, photography, noise, etc. For Metz, the units of meaning

in film are at the large transverbal level as in myths and the "syntax" of film is an "open system" guided only by the rule of telling a good story.

Secondly, in spoken languages (as also in systems such as music) the arbitrary, conventional *sign* is distinct from the object referred to. We go through the sound or word, "man" or "homme" to get to the image of a man. But in the direct visual representation of film we have the immediate pseudo-presence of a tall, old, grey-haired man standing before a fireplace, etc. Metz argues that this "short-circuiting" between signifier and signified makes film language very different from spoken languages or music that have abstract notational systems.

Spoken/written languages lend themselves to literal, matter-of-fact communication because they start with pre-defined signs, abstracted from the rich imaginative, emotive context. Film starts with the literalness of reality so that the filmmaker must go almost immediately to the plane of connotative, affective expression if he or she wishes to "say something" beyond the literal image. Even a Navy instructional film on tying knots conveys, by means of choice of shots and editing, some of the internal reality of the filmmaker.

Finally, the specific genius of film is not in dialogical *intercommunication*, but in artistic expression. To speak a language is to use it, but to speak filmic language is to invent it.

Finding a Specific Film Language

Film semiotics seeks to codify as a system the more or less conventional, recurring modes of conveying meaning in film. Monaco suggests that the language codes of film have grown up in response to three basic questions: 1) What to shoot? 2) How to shoot it, that is, given accepted models of camera angles, focus, etc., how do I want to make this specific shot to bring out a particular meaning? and 3) How to order shots in sequences to tell a story "as I see it"? The meaning of a given shot or editing is in the mental comparison of this actual shot or sequence with other possibilities.

The question of "what to film" concerns largely the presentation of the film at a literal, objective, denotative level. The codes at the denotative level involve certain genres of film (westerns, comedies, etc.); certain classes of plots in, for example, westerns; classes of characters in westerns (cowboys, Indians, etc.) and classes of objects filmed.

The second and third questions (how to shoot and how to edit) usually move the filmmaker from the literal, denotative level to the connotative level of personal emotions, memories, symbolism and metaphors that are intended to be associated with a character, scene or plot. Film has a particular power of expression at the connotative level because it can draw on all of the connotative languages of poetic speech, music, photography and dance in addition to the specific connotative power of the moving picture such as camera movements and editing sequences.

Here again filmmakers have developed conventional models or paradigms of shots with accepted meanings. For example, the "zooming in" of the camera can create a feeling of intimacy and sensitivity to the inner feelings of actors. Monaco and others note that there is a general metaphoric quality in film realism — dark, closed hallways immediately connote danger and anxiety — but that film has a special connotative potential in its characteristic "figures of speech". Synecdoche (part for the whole) is found in the close shot of marching feet to represent an army; metonymy (associated detail) in the image of the schizophrenic showing in

the cracked mirror. Monaco cites British film theorist, Peter Wollen, as having brought out the "index" — portraying an aspect of a person or situation to convey an impression of the whole; for example, the rolling gait of a walking man to indicate a sailor or shimmering heat waves and hot colours to suggest heat.

However, Monaco, following Metz, stresses that the most characteristic device of film to convey meaning is not at the level of the shot or scene but in the ordering of sequence because film is essentially narrative. The whole gives meaning to each shot, metaphor or symbol. Also, we are more likely to find the specifically filmic codes in the "syntax" of film or, in the term Metz borrows from semiotics, "the syntagmatic dimension". While no image ever entirely repeats another image, certain narrative patterns such as parallel montage (alternating between the pursuers and the pursued to indicate simultaneity), acceleration, flashbacks, etc., have become stable through convention and repetition in narrative films. In the 1960s Metz developed a comprehensive schema of types of montage, indicating the signifier-signified relation of each type of montage and suggesting how each type contributes to the overall meaning of film narration.

Umberto Eco sees four general stages of development of the semiotic approach to film which correspond to stages of development in the field of semiotics: 1) the close association of film semiotics with the analytic framework of linguistics; 2) an attempt to define the specific sign system of film as distinct from language systems; 3) from about 1967, an increasing focus on the socio-political factors influencing film language; and 4) dating from about 1975, a move (including Metz) toward analysis of the psychological perception of film with heavy use of the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan.

Worth: Subjective Feeling in Film Language

Sol Worth: Studying Visual Communication. Edited with an Introduction by Larry Gross. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

Like Metz, Worth was interested in developing a scientific, semiotic codification of film expression, but he departed from the more formal linguistic emphasis of Metz and French structuralism.

Worth's approach to film language began with student filmmaking at the Annenberg School of Communication as he encouraged students to use film as the expression of their own subjective feelings and perceptions. Next he experimented with ethnographic documentaries among Navajo Indians made by Navajos themselves. These amateur filmmakers not only described their culture, but in so doing they revealed that filmmaking is a very subjective, culturally influenced perception of the world. Worth challenged accepted ideas of anthropologists that ethnographic documentary is an objective, "photographic" picture of a culture. At the same time the films were never completely idiosyncratic, but tended to employ similar grammars at least in editing devices.

Worth thought that a semiotic of film should be approached within a general sender-receiver model of communication and should analyse the success or failure of the image-event to communicate the feelings of the filmmaker. The filmmaker begins with the desire to communicate his or her feelings, seeks a story as carrier of feelings and, finally, expresses the feelings-in-story in terms of film images. The viewer starts with the image event, perceives the story and finally interprets the encoded feelings in terms of a personal framework. The image-event — its properties, units, and system of organisation that enable us to infer meaning from a film — should be the subject of research because here lies the success or failure of sharing meaning in films. For Worth the most characteristic aspect of film language was the visual metaphor, such as Eisenstein's sequence of a factory foreman

informing to the Cossacks followed by a shot of a hideous jackal. In metaphor the filmmaker expresses the interpretive meaning of the story.

Later, with Larry Gross, Worth explored the various ways visual signs can be interpreted by viewers and especially how viewers grasp the intended meaning of a filmmaker. The research of Worth and Gross on the application of interpretative strategies in teaching visual literacy to children has been especially valuable.

Film Meanings in the Relation of Camera and Object

Pictorial Signs and the Language of Film. Jan M. Peters. (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi N. V., 1981).

Peters, professor of film and audiovisual communication theory at the Universities of Leuven (Belgium) and Amsterdam, published one of the first studies of film semiotics in 1950, based largely on the semiotic approach of Charles Morris. The present work, acknowledging an indebtedness to Metz, provides one of the most elaborate recent codification of semiotic meaning systems in film. However, unlike Metz, who located the specificity of film meanings in the narrative ordering of shots and scenes, Peters would base the codes of film language in the *pictorial* and specifically in the relation of the camera eye and the object.

For Peters, film creates a new level of meaning, over and above objective reality, by varying three aspects of filmmaking: 1) the selection and high-lighting of objects, for example, by brightly contrasting an object before a vague background; 2) the way the object of film is presented (the staging, the pattern of acting, the representation of characters, costuming, etc); and 3) the way the eye of the camera frames the object (camera angles, distance, and movement).

Peters' classification of film meaning codes builds upon his distinction of *mimetic codes* — the simple representation of what is depicted — and *expressive codes* — what the movement of the camera eye can say about the object (revealing the intentions of the filmmaker). The mimetic and expressive codes are distinct at the level of what is depicted, the depiction and the extra-pictorial text and music. While Metz builds his classification around the ordering of shots and scenes — the syntagmatic structure, Peters considers the shot as the smallest unit of filmic expression and builds his classification around the dichotomy of camera eye and object in the shot.

Questioning Metz and French Structuralism

"The Functions of a Semiotic of Film," Günter Bentele, *Codicas/Code* Vol. 1 (1979), pp. 78-93.

Bentele is typical of a trend which suggests that film semiotics abandon the structuralist method of seeking an analogy between linguistics (and the outdated linguistics of de Saussure at that!) and film. He suggests that film semiotics be based on a theory of communicative action and use a more empirical methodology of observing systematically the complete process of film communication. The linguistic analysis approach is inadequate because it focusses on the static meaning content of a film (the message in itself) and does not consider the *production* of film signs, the *processing* and *storing* and the interpretation of the *viewers*. The rules and conventions embodied in the meaning pattern of films are not just the abstract expression of the producer's ideas but grow out of all of the practical problems of filmmaking and an understanding of viewers' interests, marketing, etc. The semiotics of film must attempt to establish a catalogue of filmic rules and conventions, but based on a much broader analysis of film communication.

II: Psychological Factors in Visual Literacy

The Psychology of the TV Image. Jon Baggaley, Margaret Ferguson and Philip Brooks. (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants., England: Gower, 1980).

The authors recognise that semiotics provides a logical map of the meaning content of television programmes, but argue that the rather rigid, abstract taxonomic description of codes should be related to the empirical analysis of the psychological factors influencing viewers' interpretations of meaning.

The present research focussed primarily on the factors of credibility of television news presenters. The authors performed thirty experiments on the discrepancy between the visual effect television news producers intended and the actual interpretation of viewers. Various aspects of programme production were studied — camera angle, dubbed music, the detail of the visual background, etc. — and these were tested against audience psychological and social characteristics.

They discovered that the visual techniques used to support the main message may in fact contradict and defeat that message and take on a life of their own. For example, producers may have the camera show the notes of a lecturer to suggest that he is fair and straightforward. But in fact, viewers tested by the authors

got an opposite impression: prejudiced and devious.

This research provides a step toward understanding the various factors that influence the passage of meaning from dispatch to reception.

Fragments of Reality: An Experiment With News and TV-Visuals. Olle Findahl and Birgitta Höijer. Trans. by C. Hulten. (Stockholm: Swedish Broadcasting Corp., 1976).

This experiment with 617 persons seeing one of 27 versions of a fictitious news bulletin shows that for TV viewers to recall a news item they must clearly know its background, causes and consequences. Consequently, TV-visuals should clearly indicate these. Otherwise viewers get only unrelated bits of reality which they soon forget, because they have never really understood the situation in which the news items first appeared and they have not grasped the relevance of the news to their lives.

However, once the context of the news is clearly established, the producer can then choose between visuals — drawings, photos or captions — and audience recall will still remain high.

III: Rhetorical Interpretation in Visual Literacy Training

The Rhetoric of Television. Ronald Primeau (New York: Longman, Inc., 1979).

Primeau feels that in the expanding leisure time of post-industrial societies, television has become for many an addiction rather than a resource to be used intelligently even for entertainment. Part of the problem is the exclusive emphasis of our educational systems on the print media with the neglect of visual literacy and skills of more discriminating television viewing.

In Primeau's view the plethora of "effects research" studying the psychological and sociological influence of television is of limited use for designing a method of visual literacy because most of it is done for the media industry or other special interests. After all this research, "the untrained and isolated media consumer remains alone".

He considers the schema of classical rhetoric to be one of the best bases for a text on television critical viewing skills because American television, like the Graeco-Roman rhetorical tradition, is essentially persuasion, the selling of ideas, attitudes and consumer goods. Also, the classical rhetorical devices developed in an essentially oral society as a model for oral communication, and television is an oral medium. If viewers are acquainted with the rhetorical methods of television persuasion, they will be better

able to control their use of television. For the simple layman, rhetoric is preferable to semiotic and psychological approaches to media literacy because it is based on a straightforward model of communication that all can understand.

Primeau builds his method of teaching media literacy around the classical five steps of preparation of an oration: 1) selecting a topic (invention); 2) arranging the material in a suitable order (disposition); 3) adding style to the bare statement (elocution); 4) delivering the message to an audience through an appropriate use of the medium; and 5) helping the audience remember what was said (memory). In the first section, he asks the reader to view favourite programmes in the light of rhetorical conventions. Then he analyses the institution of television — the media industry, processes of production, advertising, etc. — and specific genres of television in terms of the five steps.

Some might question the exclusive application of oral communication to a visual medium, but rhetoric is perhaps a way to link television to curricula that have traditionally conceived of communication education in terms of courses of speech and literature.

IV: Media Language Approaches in Education

Interaction of Media. Cognition, and Learning. Gavriel Salomon. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979).

Salomon proposes that different "media language" dimensions such as camera distance or angle can contribute to the development of different patterns of cognition and learning skills in education. For example, in one experiment with eighth grade students in Israel, he compared the effect of a film with camera zooming in to highlight details of a Breughel painting with a series of slides of the same painting alternating between one photo of the entire painting and the next with a detail. He found that the "zooming effect" improved children's capacity to relate parts to the whole.

Salomon questions the widely accepted assumption that the impact of the specific technology of a medium on learning is negligible and that the only meaningful difference between media is their content. Too often research on media and learning takes a medium as a global unit and compares it with another medium on such a global effect as grades. He argues that a medium must be differentiated into four variables: 1) technology, that is, the particular method of gathering, storing, transferring and displaying information; 2) content; 3) the social settings and

situations typically associated with a medium (for example, TV is usually viewed in the home); and, most important, 4) the coding of the symbol systems (media "language").

The technology, for example, the mechanics of cameras, acetate film, etc, sets up the possibility of a different class of symbol system, but it is the symbol system with its particular mapping of the world that constitutes the communicative, learning factor. Social settings such as the encouraging presence of mothers with preschool children viewing Sesame Street can be significant, but are only associated factors.

Salomon stresses that some classes of symbol system such as film, television, print, and gesture map certain aspects of the world better than others. By introducing students to the new coding elements of a particular symbol system in a particular medium, it is possible either to activate existing capacities or develop entirely new capacities. In the testing of Israeli children who saw Sesame Street for the first time, six months viewing improved the analytic abilities of lower-class children (whose life context develops less of this) while middle-class children, who begin with strong analytic abilities, developed more synthetic capacities. The particular symbol system of a medium can affect acquisition of knowledge by highlighting different aspects of content, provide easier paths to internal "recording" of information and can, in some contexts, determine what kind of personality will acquire certain kinds of knowledge from a medium.

Salomon recognises that his approach follows the general gist of McLuhan's idea that the message is in the medium, but emphasises the difference in conceptualising and methods and testing. The relatively sophisticated theory of Salomon, distinguishing different interacting components of media, could prove to be a very significant advance over present attempts to measure the gross effects of a medium taken as an undifferentiated entity.

Film Production as a Teaching Method

Communication and Social Skills: Towards a Theory and Practice of Audio-visual Language and Learning. Carol Lorac and Michael Weiss (London: Wheaton, 1981).

In a four-year project sponsored by the English Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations, Lorac and Weiss examined how group production of film, television and tape-slide programmes would contribute to students' social/communicational skill acquisition. They found that such production experiences enhanced the students' ability to relate to one another. It also assisted those students whose primary mode of learning and expression is visual to have enough self-confidence after successfully expressing themselves visually (often for the first time in their lives) to develop similar proficiency in verbal skills. And for the students in the experiment as a whole, there was a general stimulation of genuine and growing interest in and grasp of the subject matter itself.

The project cultivated many different types of skills: communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening and mastery of the new visual language); social skills such as ability to cooperate in an assignment; and the ability to employ audio-visual materials suitably. The method also overcomes typical problems of literacy, the lack of continual and understandable visual feedback about what one has thought and a poor self image. A major factor in this was the pupils' motivation and learning from each other. The authors discovered that the formation of insights and concepts can occur more readily from imaginative contact with visual forms than with formal reasoning.

Lorac and Weiss conclude that this experience in group production is in general superior to the isolated mode of learning which, though it fosters certain individually-oriented learning skills, does not contribute to social interrelationships which make for a more cohesive society.

Current Research on the Language of Film and Television

AUSTRALIA

Deane W. Hutton, Head, Dept. of Educational Technology, (Salisbury College of Advanced Education, Smith Rd., Salisbury East, S. Australia 5109) is directing the Visual Education Curriculum Project which develops teachers' books stressing the visual in learning throughout the curriculum.

Gunther Kress, Dean, School of Communication and Cultural Studies (Hartley College of Advanced Education, Lorne Ave., Magill, S. Australia 5072) is working in Discourse Study and analyzing TV news stories for *The Critical Reading and Listening* with **N King** and **S.Muecke**, about different modes of reading a variety of 'texts', e.g., TV news.

BELGIUM

J.M. Peters (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Centrum voor Communicatiewetenschappen, E. Van Evenstraat 2A, 3000 Leuven) is studying the pragmatic and semantic dimensions of the translation of novels into film.

CANADA

M.F. Malik (Concordia University, 7141 Sherbrooke St., W., Montreal, Que, H4B 1R6) is researching symbolic information complexes, which are compressed information quanta and catalyze the thinking process.

FRANCE

Michel Colin (Department d'Etudes et de Recherches Cinematographiques, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III) is studying the role of linguistic structures in the interpretation of filmic structures.

Frank Curot (Section de Cinema, Université Paul Valéry, Route de Mende, Boite Postale 5043, 34032 Montpellier CEDEX) is researching the filmic space in Renoir's films, from an aesthetic, technical and semantic approach.

Pierre Guiraud (Faculté Des Lettres et Sciences Humaine, Université de Nice, 98, Blvd Carlone, 06-Nice, B.P. 257) is studying lexicology and etymology and has published *Le Langage du corps* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1980).

Francois Jost (202 rue du Chateau des Rentiers, 75013 Paris) is researching the degree to which the perception of the codes of the statement depends on the spectator and his socio-cultural situation and is trying to integrate the experiences of narratology with semiology.

Brigitte Sicard (Institut des Sciences d'Information et Communication, Université de Bordeaux III, Domaine Universitaire, 3405 Talence) is studying the images of the mass media as a means of education, the semiology of the fixed image, and the rapport between TV and film.

GERMANY

Günter Bentele (FB 11 Philosophie u. Sozialwissenschaften, Freie Universität Berlin, Potsdamer Str. 58, 1000 Berlin 30) with **R. Ruoff** has edited, *Wie objektiv sind unsere Medien?* (How objective are our media) (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1982).

Münsteraner Arbeitskreis für Semiotik (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Institut für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, 44 Münster, Bispinghof 17) is a group of semioticians at the University of Münster, including **Elmar Elling**, **Karl-D. Möller**, **Hasko Schneider**, **Hans Jürgen Wulff** with two studies forthcoming: a sequence analysis study of Truffaut's *Jules and Jim*, and a study of the evolution of parallel editing. Current research includes study of film and narrative structures, a bibliography of film theory, and audio-visual records of human interaction.

Joachim Paech (Universität Osnabrück, FB 7 Sprache, Literatur, Medien, 4500 Osnabrück, Postfach 4469) is researching the theory and analysis of textual transformation in literature, film and television plays; and the history of film theory since 1945.

Erich Strassner (Deutsches Seminar der Universität Tübingen, 74 Tübingen, Wilhelmstr. 50) has published "Sprache in Massenmedien — ein Forschungsüberblick" (Language in the Mass Media — a Review of the Research) in G. Bentele, *Semiotik und Massenmedien* (Munich: Ötschlager, 1981). Others in the Deutsches Seminar include **St.-P. Ballstaedt**, **V. Eberspächer**, **A. Esche**, **M. Muckenaupt**.

GREAT BRITAIN

John Hartley (The Polytechnic of Wales, Pontypridd Mid Glamorgan CF37 1DL) continues research on the production of meaning in television and related media by analysis of particular forms of cultural production, particularly news discourse, to be published as a teaching text by Methuen in 1982.

Stephen Heath (Jesus College, Cambridge) is currently working on cultural and ideological aspects of television and recently published with **T. de Lauretis** *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

Stephen Neale (88 Spalding Rd, Sneinton, Nottingham) is currently completing *Cinema and Technology* (Macmillan and British Film Institute) which will locate the technology cinema uses in its economic, aesthetic and ideological context.

Don Ranvaud, Film Studies, School of English and American Studies (University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ) edits *Framework*, a film journal, is working with Peter Wollen on *Territorial Rites* developing the notion of film production as a form of cannibalism, and is the general editor for a series of *Framework Readers*.

Jane Scannell (102 Princes Ave., Watford WD1 7RS) is researching television techniques and those of the spoken word, specifically how television discourse is constituted by the way eye-witnesses are videotaped.

Michael Weiss, Schools Council, Communication and Social Skills Project (Brighton Polytechnic, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex BN1 9PH) is investigating the effects upon learning of learners producing television, etc., as a means of responding to subject study, and making an audio-visual analysis of audio-visual language. **Carol Lorac** is writing *The Audio-visual Composing Process*.

Paul Willemen (Education Dept., British Film Institute, 127 Charing Cross Rd., London WC2H 0EA) is researching the possibilities for TV or cinema to present/develop an essayistic discourse.

HUNGARY

Szilagyi Gabor (III. Vorosvari ut 1, Budapest, H 1035) is studying the semiotics of film and photography, with a forthcoming book, *Discourse and Statement in the Cinema*.

INDIA

R. Narasimhan, Director, National Centre for Software Development and Computing Techniques, Tata Inst. of Fundamental Research (Horn Bhabha Rd., Bombay-400 005) has written "Visual Pattern Analysis in Machines and Animals" with **H.B. Barlow** (Physiology, U. of California, Berkeley) and **A. Rosenfeld** (Computer Science, University of Maryland).

ITALY

Gianfranco Bettetini, Dept. of Theory and Technique of Social Communication, (Catholic University, Via S. Martina 11/A, 20122 Milan) is studying the problems of audiovisual semiotics and realism in the media.

Francesco Casetti, Dept. of History and Criticism of Cinema (University of Milan, via Pietro Calvi 15, 20129 Milan) with **L. Lumbelli** and **M. Wolf** is writing "Indagine su alcune regole di genere televisivo" (Study of some rules of the kind used on TV) in *Ricerche Sulla Comunicazione*, Vol.2 (1981) and Vol. 3 (1982).

THE NETHERLANDS

Leonard Henny (Sociologisch Instituut, Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, Heidelberglaan 2, Utrecht 2506) is collaborating with an international team under **Jose Vidal Beneyto** assessing the relations between ideology and the production of reality by studying the role of TV news in the formation of collective images, for presentation at the August 1982 World Congress of Sociology in Mexico City. Henny's own research, called "The Visual Dialogue", defines the sociology of audio-visual communication as the study of an interactive process of reality production in and between various cultures.

Peter Hofstede, Dept. of Study of Religion and Mass Media, (University of Groningen, Nieuwe Kijk in 't Jatstraat 104, 9712 SL Groningen) has published on cultural impact of television and is currently researching Family Photography as Iconography to develop a basic method for understanding visual culture.

William Langeveld (Dept. of Political Education, University of Amsterdam, Keizersgracht 73) has recently completed a comparative study on the reactions to the TV series *Holocaust* in various countries.

Ed Tan (Faculty of Medicine, University of Amsterdam, Vondelstraat 35, Amsterdam 1013) is researching reception of theatre and film using a cognitive/psychological approach and is publishing "Cognitive Processes in Reception" in E.W.B. Hess-Luttich, ed., *Multimedial Communication, Vol. II: Theatre Semiotics* (Tubingen, Gunter Narr, pp. 157-203).

NORWAY

Frode J. Stromnes (Institutt for Samfunnsvitenskap, Universitet i Tromsø, Boks 1040, 9001 Tromsø) is studying how the language of film and TV may have a structural similarity with that of language, from the psychological viewpoint. So study of these media offers a unique chance to disclose the psychological structure of communication and cognition. Forthcoming: *The Externalized Image*, a study of how pictorial structure in Ural-Altai and Indo-European TV films correlates with the psychological structure of language.

POLAND

Andrzej Gwozdz (ul. Proletariatzkykow 4c/29, 41-103 Siemianowice) is researching the theory of film text, problems of text-processing (coherence, text-analysis), and television semiotics. He is writing an anthology of the history of German film studies and is co-author of a work on kinesics of film and television. (He would welcome copies of works in this general field.)

SPAIN

Juan Jose Garcia-Noblejas (Universidad de Navarra, Facultad de Ciencias de la Informacion, Centro de Proyectos Audiovisuales, Pamplona) is researching the possibility of an audiovisual lexicon and the conditions for the epic film.

UNITED STATES

Association for Educational Communications and Technology (1126 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036) produces books and audio-visual resources for teaching visual communications skills through filmmaking, photography and other elements of visual language. One is *Research, Principles and Practices in Visual Communication*, which presents fundamental concepts of communication, visual perception and design based on research and theory.

Robert C. Allen (University of North Carolina, Swain Hall Annex 044A, Chapel Hill, NC 27514) is studying the "language" of soap operas from a semiological approach and with **Douglas Gomery** is writing *Film History: Theory and Practice* (Addison-Wesley, 1982), the first historiographic book on film.

David Bordwell (Communication Arts, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison WI 53706) has completed a book on the history of the Hollywood cinema, which traces the aesthetic, technological and economic constraints on the formation of "classical" narrative structure and cinematic language.

Charles H. Harpole (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901) is completing a book on film theory which centers on the areas of cinema and language, and cinema language.

Brian Henderson (State University of New York, Center for Media Study, Wende Hall, Buffalo, NY 14214) has recently published *A Critique of Film Theory* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1980) which offers a new theory of film.

International Visual Literacy Association (**Dennis Pett**, AV Ctr., Indiana University, Bloomington IN 47405) seeks to "promote, apply, develop, evaluate, and disseminate information and relevant practice and theories regarding visual literacy, including learning theory, visual linguistics/semantics. Publishes *IVLA Newsletter* and *Journal of Visual/Verbal Linguaging*. Pett with **L. Burbank** recently presented "Designing Visual Presentations" at the 1981 IVLA Conference.

Institute for the Semiotics of the Visual at Rhode Island School of Design, (2 College St., Providence, RI 02903), with **Mihai Nadin**, **Thomas Ockerse**, **Nikhil Bhattacharya** and **Hans Van Dijk**, investigates visual communication and signification from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Phyllis Reynolds Myers (Trident Technical College, PO Box 10367, Charleston SC 29411) is writing an article on the relationship between visual languaging skills and technical education as a synthesis some of Piaget's and Gagne's work.

Leland Poague (Iowa State University, Dept. of English, 203 Ross Hall, Ames, IA 50011) with **William Cadbury** (University of Oregon, Speech Dept., Eugene, OR 97403) has recast the theory of the relationship between film and language according to Chomsky's picture of language, which authorizes a return to the philosophical aesthetics of Monroe Beardsley.

Ronald Primeau (PO Box 122, Anspach Hall, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858) is researching how 30 years of television has helped shape the evolution of a uniquely midwestern culture, and whether the models from speech act theory provide insights into the language of TV.

Robert P. Snow (Dept. of Sociology, (Arizona State University, Tempe AZ 85281) is writing a theoretical text on the special language features of mass communication, *Media Consciousness*, whose aim is to determine how media-developed languages affect the interactions between media and audience.

Promising Research Areas

As one considers the possibilities for future development of research on the language of film and television, two areas deserve mention. First, there is a need to move from analysis to practical application of the findings; and second, film and television themselves have developed so much that they can be a major contributing factor in their own study.

From Analysis to Application

It has taken researchers several decades to be satisfied that the evolution of film and television has reached a sufficiently stable state to study their language. For, until film and television had evolved by being used to make various kinds of statements — dramatic, documentary, scientific — it was difficult to study the language in itself. To most users of film and television this language is transparent; the general inclination continues to be to overlook ways in which the conventions of the language shape and interpret programme content. A future issue on Education for the Critical Use of the Mass Media will discuss research on making viewers more aware of how this language influences what they see by how it necessarily impinges on the most natural-seeming subject matter.

To cope with such an elusive area as film and television language, it has been expedient initially to draw on linguistic models which are used to explicate the workings of the perhaps more elusive verbal language. Semiological insights as well as study of the wider political, social and cultural contexts within which film and television operate have broadened the analysis of visual language. But now it would be well to apply these more speculative insights to the practical order.

For example, researchers who are aware of how culturally rooted are particular uses of this language — Western conventions of dissolves to mean the passage of time — may wish to study the effects of imported television programmes on indigenous cultural autonomy and integrity. To see *Dallas* in Kenya or *The Flintstones* in a Brazilian slum involves a considerable clash of cultures. The fast cuts, the use of sound and pacing are as much a contributing factor to the loss of taste for one's own indigenous culture as are the alien stories and values. How something is said is as influential on cultural tastes as what is said.

Researchers may wish to explore the ethical dimensions involved here. This would be a contribution that they are equipped to make, given their scholarly insight into the deeper nature of film and television as vehicles of expression. They could point

out the cultural implications of the present situation where a few countries are producing the television programming for many of the others. A closely connected task would be to research pre-television perceptual differences. They might record and perhaps thus preserve a unique and irretrievable human resource. In the fully developed state of cross-cultural television exchange it will be desirable to be able to draw upon local variations of the currently dominant Western television styles. Researchers could contribute to this more general human development by finding similar ways to apply their research to specific current issues.

Media-Assisted Research on the Media

The challenge to researchers has been to develop interpretative structures which suit the expressive power of film and television. Until now, such study has of necessity relied heavily on the printed word. It would, however, be possible for researchers to start to use the techniques of slow-motion replay, zooming in or out, and freeze-frame on a computer-assisted video recorder to make a kind of video article analyzing those aspects of film television language best studied visually. Such a blend of the printed word and the visual could greatly assist in clarifying, studying in detail, and bringing out the unique character of film and television.

Furthermore, with the advent of two-way cable and the low cost portable video equipment researchers would be less dependent on institutional users of television such as networks for samples of how television could be used expressively. Two-way interactive cable would allow the users to transmit to one another original programmes. The freedom for individual expression auteur filmmakers once enjoyed could become common. Such a development would present researchers with a splendid opportunity to study the formation of idiosyncratic uses of television's expressive power, much as the hearing impaired have a sophisticated sign language capable of unsuspected eloquence and beauty.

Researchers of visual language have an important role to play in encouraging the growth of inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural research on the human and social impact of film and television. Their insights can help enrich and liberate the lives and culture of those whose culture at present dominates television styles and those whose cultural resources have been eclipsed by imported television styles. Thus applying research to practical issues can be a way to contribute to human development within one's own and other cultures.

PAUL KENNEY
Issue Editor

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COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS — Published four times a year by the Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture ISSN 0144-4646

Editor: Robert A. White

Asst. Editors: James McDonnell, Paul C. Kenney

Subscription:

Individual: 1 year, US\$6.00 (UK£3.00) 3 years, US\$15.00 (UK£7.50)
Institutional: 1 year, US\$10.00 (UK£5.00) 3 years, US\$25.00 (UK£12.50)
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Address all correspondence to:

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS

221 Goldhurst Terrace
London NW6 3EP England

Tel: (01) 328-2868

Typesetting and origination by

Type Out, London SW16; (01) 677 1788

Printing by

Roebuck Press, Lavender Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey; (01) 640-9211

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