A visual communication approach to multimodal document analysis

Dr. Ognyan Seizov
Faculty 10: Linguistics and Literary Studies

*EXZELLENT.*
Outline

1. Key terms
2. Online communication’s specificities
3. Bridging the gap: guiding questions & study design
4. ICON: A multimodal annotation tool for online documents
5. Conclusions
Commercial segment

Key terms

- **Visuality:** the visual aspect(s) of communication artifacts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996)

- **Multimodality:** “a variety of visually-based modes are deployed simultaneously in order to fulfill an orchestrated collection of interwoven communicative goals” (Bateman, 2008, p. 1)

- **Political communication:** “All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives [;] communication addressed to these actors [; and] communication about these actors and their activities […].” (McNair, 2003, p. 4)

Online communication: Status quo

- Fast-paced innovation
- Production & consumption merging
Online communication: Status quo

- Fast-paced innovation
- Production & consumption merging
  - **Prosumer**: a media user who also generates, circulates, and re-circulates media content (cf. Bianco, 2009)
- Media convergence (cf. Appelgren, 2004)
  - Merging of media and media content
- Mono-modal research still dominates the field
- Theoretical and methodological gaps to be filled...
Bridging the gap: guiding questions

1. How do political websites (co-)organize their content visually and verbally?

2. How do the different communication modes relate to meaning-construction patterns of the content?

3. Are there clearly identifiable medium- and genre-specific patterns of multimodal interaction?
Bridging the gap: methodological synergy

Methods

- Political iconology (cf. Müller, 2009)
- Visual content analysis (cf. Bell, 2001; Rose, 2007)
- Multimodal document analysis (cf. Bateman, 2008)

- All of the above: ICON - “Imagery & Communication in Online Narratives” (Seizov, 2014)
Icon’s principle action

Visual analysis: what is being depicted and how?

Layout: what is the spatial relationship between images and text and what orientation guides are there?

Narratives: what is the semantic relationship between visuals and visuals & text?
Some previous multimodal annotation schemes

- Genre and Multimodality – GeM (Bateman, 2008)
- Djonov (2007, 2008)
The five layers of the ICON annotation scheme (Seizov, 2014)
ICON in action

Layer 1: Motif
111 – persons | 129 – n-a

Layer 2: Genre
211 – photograph
221 – news

Layer 3: Composition
311 – warm color
316 - grayscale
321 – close-up
332 – level
333 – low
342 – textual
ICON in action

Layer 4: Consociation
411 – nucleus-nucleus consociation
422 – nucleus-satellite dissociation
432 – satellite-satellite dissociation
4412 – textual signaling
452 – mostly external
ICON in action

Layer 5: Context
511 – consonant

521 – spatial contiguity

531 – dual scripting
Pilot: Data sample and coding (Seizov, 2014)

- One-shot sampling on June 21, 2012

- \( N_{total} = 52 \) webpages
  - \( N_{news} = 20 \)
  - \( N_{campaign} = 16 \)
  - \( N_{NGO} = 10 \)
  - \( N_{citizen} = 6 \)

- Intra-rater reliability: Krippendorff’s \( \alpha = .84 \)
Structures and functions in political communication online (Seizov, 2014)

- LeadVisual
- MultipleVisuals
- Text-flow

reasoning

23%

information

27%

persuasion

50%
Conclusions

1. How do political websites (co-)organize their content visually and verbally?
   Images are harmoniously embedded in the dominant text.

1. How do the different communication modes relate to meaning-construction patterns of the content?
   Multimodal contextualization is done through semantic and spatial proximity.

2. Are there clearly identifiable medium- and genre-specific patterns of multimodal interaction?
   Three structure-functional combinations emerged.
Limitations & outlook

- Sampling (size, period, unequal distribution)
- No moving image analysis (only first frame)
- One researcher
- Complicated and time-consuming coding procedure (software)

Outlook:
- Large-N follow-up
- Reception study and expert interviews
- Grasping prosumption and amateur multimodal production
Thank you for your attention!

Contact: seizov@uni-bremen.de