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Editorial: Transduction in evolving contexts of intermodal meaning making: Moving meaning across media, modes and multiple realities

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Transduction in evolving contexts of intermodal meaning making: Moving meaning across media, modes and multiple realities

Gunther Kress in his seminal book, *Multimodality: Exploring Contemporary Methods of Communication*, argued for the importance of naming the “processes of ‘moving meaning’... across modes” (Kress, 2010, p. 124). He introduced the term “transduction” (Kress, 1997) to describe the movement of meanings across modes, which we have extended in this present Research Topic to include media and multiple realities. Scholars have also used the term “intersemiosis” (O’Halloran, 2005; Baldry and Thibault, 2006; Unsworth, 2006; Bateman, 2008; Lim, 2021) “intermodal relations” (Cape, 2008; Martin, 2008; Norris and Maier, 2014; Siefkes, 2015) and “transposition” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2020; Kalantzis and Cope, 2020; Lim et al.) to account for the shifting of meanings from one mode to another. The concept of transduction has been used productively by many researchers seeking to understand the nature of multimodal meaning-making, particularly the interactions and interplay of meanings across semiotic systems (Bezemer and Kress, 2008; Hellwig et al.; Newfield, 2014; Rivers; Tytler and Prain; Sindoni, 2016).

In the contemporary digital and multimodal world presenting evolving and new contexts for intermodal meaning making, it is of value for scholars not only to theorize but also apply our understandings of transduction to inform transdisciplinary research, develop better educational approaches, and bring about positive social change. This Research Topic presents four articles which contribute toward the set of goals.

Tytler and Prain report on a successful study from their research project which involves the design and development of a pedagogy to guide students in understanding the transduction process involved in the multimodal meaning-making of primary school science. The authors show how students in a primary school science classroom can be guided by their teachers to explore similar and different meanings across modes. In this, they demonstrate the value of explicating the transduction process in the students’ learning of concepts and processes in science.

Lim et al. introduce a pedagogic metalanguage of transpositional grammar to support primary and secondary school students’ learning of multimodal literacy in the language classroom. The authors argue that providing the resources to support teachers and students’ thinking and talking about multimodal meaning as well as rebalancing the cognitive bias in education with attention to the affective and embodied dimensions of learning can contribute to educational justice in the digital age.

Hellwig et al. present a compelling case for the learning of multimodal literacy, particularly the understanding of transduction, in the training of architecture and civil engineering students in universities. The authors report on a study where students in two courses of English for Architecture and Civil Engineering created digital multimodal artifacts to explain disciplinary concepts. The analysis of these artifacts reveals the range of semiotic resources used to communicate complex ideas and offers both theoretical contributions on developing a model for transduction as well as practical implications on a multimodal literacy curriculum for tertiary students.

Rivers takes us beyond the context of formal education to explore the transduction in the “multimodal gestalts” of the YouTube videos recording a bike initiative of British DH Dom Whiting. The author presents the analysis of the soundtrack of the drum and bass music in the videos from a social semiotic approach to multimodality and reflects on how the music communicates a post-pandemic utopianism in the United Kingdom. Through the discussion, Rivers argues for the importance of moving beyond the superficial differences which prior to the pandemic had divided and structured society, toward greater diversity and inclusiveness.

Through the notable contributions made by the 10 authors in this Research Topic, we hope to initiate a conversation and provoke a discussion on how our current understandings of multimodal meaning-making can bring about better learning for students, contribute to educational justice in the digital age, and advance positive social transformation in the post pandemic world.

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Author contributions

FL prepared the text of the editorial.

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