



Meaning construction in “Mark Haddon’s novel the curious incident of the dog in the night time”: A multimodal social semiotic approach

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2583-8261

Volume: 04

Issue: 01

January-February 2025

Received: 13-12-2024

Accepted: 15-01-2025

Page No: 126-131

Abstract

The output of multimodal texts has increased over the past 20 years due to advances in technology and culture, which has accelerated the demand for tackling multimodal additional semiotic modes for meaning making, such as typography, layout, visual images, colour, etc. The theory of multimodality, as supposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001–2006), Baldry and Thibaut (2006), is applied to a potential framework for the analysis of multimodal novels that use not only wording structure, but also many semiotic modes in the formation of meaning. The social approach to multimodality, in brief, is based on Halliday's linguistic description and adhered to the multimodal assumption that "mutual propositions are employed and worked together in various modes" (Kress and Leeuwen, 2002:3). Thus, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:39), in their book "Reading Images" investigate the level for which the underlying theories of Halliday's framework to language are feasible and applicative to visual communicative management, and they create a visual system that mostly makes use of Halliday's principles and concepts.

The study is concerned with the investigation of a multimodal analysis of the multiple elements of various modes of typographic devices, and layout design used in the selected novel. This selected text "The Curious Incident of the Dog in Night-Time" is a multimodal novel since the writer Haddon does not rely on linguistic verbal tools, he extends them to incorporate a variety of visual semiotic modes and graphic communicative elements that will intensify his understanding of storytelling and narrative development.

The study has shown that an extension to the mode of wording formation is performed in the multimodal analysis by incorporating more multimodal tackling features of typographic principles and layout framing devices in creating an appropriate comprehensive meaning construction in Haddon's selected narration.

Keywords: Multimodality, multimodal analysis, modes, meaning-making, linking

1. Introduction

A multimodal social semiotic access supposes that all modes are of equal importance in presentation and communication, all modes form an integrated resource, and each mode can be given with the specific and important features of its affordances. Also, they can potentially play an effective role in meaning making. These potentials of meaning turn out to be part of the cultural resources of any society. Therefore, modes express social and cultural shared meaning. The multifaceted perspective confirms that multimodal semiotics involves more than merely the accumulation of many different modes; instead, the mutual integration of them leads to distinct meanings that expand the total of their separate contributions (Norgaard, 2019:18).

In the present study multimodal inspection of social approach of modes of typography, and layout will be tackled and how they are interacted multimodally alongside with the wording structure in handling meaning formation. It is hypothesized that many distinctive features and semiotic principles (Index, icon, and discursive import) of typography are used impressively in this text. Furthermore, tools of composition meaning of layout in connection of "information value, salience and linking and framing" play an effective part in constructing meaning making in the novel. The procedures followed are explicating a multimodal analysis of representative examples from the novel showing the potential modes and their interactive communicative functions relying on a developed model of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), Van Leeuwen (2005, 2006) and Nogaard (2003, 2019) [7, 9].

2. A Social Semiotic Theory and Multimodality

The theory can characterize and analyze all signs in all modes besides their interconnection in a specific text. The categories of social semiotics accomplish the social interest, and the requirements of communities whose members shaped, designed, developed and firmly reshaped semiotic resources. They implicate together material resources, the modes, and the classes that shape the social and cultural world. These classes contribute to understanding actions, entities, and relations, frames, and classes for dealing with time, space, and so on. The whole modes in the social approach to multimodality, simultaneously, make up one integrated domain of cultural semiotic resources of the community (Kress,2010:132) [5].

In communication, many modes are always employed in ensembles of modes, where the affordances of each mode are utilized for the goals that, at the moment, seem to be most important to the mode's designer of signs. Combining modes provides a richer way to communicate meaning than the relatively limited capabilities of individual linguistic modes in speech and writing. A multimodal ensemble, which is a structured combination of many modalities, can be interpreted as either text or a sign. While the latter relates to the emphasis on the object's function, usually as a message in an interaction, the former refers to the emphasis on its modal composition. Considering that the overall meaning is dependent upon every component of the ensemble or text taken into consideration, it is clear that the separate contributions of each element only intensify the whole meaning (Kress,2010:61) [5].

3. Analysis of the Mode of Typography

Nogaard (2019) confirms that typography is the visual component of wording mode within itself when analyzing text from a multimodal perspective. Typography is used here to refer to all visual appearances of writing words including handwriting and printed types. Thus far, this approach to typography is concentrated on two specific aspects, how various distinctive features related to various typefaces such as (Expansion, weight, slope, regularity, connectivity, size and color), and how several kinds of semiotic principles of (index, icon, and discursive import) are correlated in the interpretation of typographic meaning of the text (Van Leeuwen 2005; Nogaard, 2009) [31].

Haddon frequently uses bold type, a variety of fonts, and an unconventional utilization of the space on the page to transition between text and image and back again, reminding

readers of the visual nature of written words. He also uses an integration of verbal and nonverbal cues to effectively enhance his narrative. In *The Curious Incident*, semiotic devices such as chapter labeling, letter writing, the inclusion of pictorial tools, footnotes, and scientific and instructional discourses are employed visually to enhance the story and character development in distinct and significant ways. He intentionally deviates the typographic and visual conventions by utilizing a variety of semiotic devices that fall within the umbrella of verbal and as well nonverbal modes (Gibbons, 2012:419) [2].

The story is told from Christopher's viewpoint, a brilliant autistic fifteen years old boy who uses a range of imaginative visuals to help him demonstrate his narration. The author employs the first-person narrative 'Christopher' to assist readers analyze and consider his thoughts in a variety of materials. Several unconventional stylistic choices help to identify the meaning. The narrative starts one evening when Christopher learns that Wellington, the dog of his next-door neighbor, was killed with a garden fork. Christopher tries to figure out who murdered Wellington in spite of his father's advice to keep out of other people's business, and his teacher Siobhan suggests writing a book about it. By asking the neighbors, he learns more about the crime.

3.1 Indexical Meaning

Typographic signifiers that demonstrate signs of their own material creation are considered to be marker of the person, instrument, etc. that creates the text, and this is known as typographic indexical meaning. Haddon's book is a multimodal text that reconstructs and develops the narrative and characters using a variety of semiotic tools, including graphic elements like typography, layout, maps, footnotes drawings, diagrams, images and numerical calculations. The novel also includes a copy of the addressee's handwriting name, as seen in Figures (1, 2), along with a reproduction of the postmark, as part of its semiotics. The letters have a mimetic purpose since their visual elements—particularly the misspellings—construct the impression that they have been reproduced precisely from Christopher's mother's writing without any editing or proofreading. In this instance of indexical meaning, the visual appearance of the writing refers to the material source of its own creation (the handwriting on an envelope is fictitiously recreated, and the narrator interprets the circles, as opposed to the dots, over the letter "i" as a signifier of Christopher's mother). Mimesis, or high modality in the realization that "when we had been actually there, we might have viewed what we perceived", is evidently one of the main effects of the inclusion of these visual copies of Christopher's mother's handwriting (Van Leeuwen, 2005:161) [31]. Here, Christopher's mother handwriting of the fifth letters in the novel functions as a helpful tool in the development of both Christopher, the meticulous narrator who incorporates the letters into his book of writing, and his mother, who is uninformed and absentminded. Despite being informed at the start of the novel that his mother died two years prior, readers discover by the letters that his mother is still alive and staying with her loved. The way in which he uses letters as a visual method helps readers comprehend his obsession on honesty and his response to discovering that he has deceived and lied to (Mussetta,2014:103) [11].

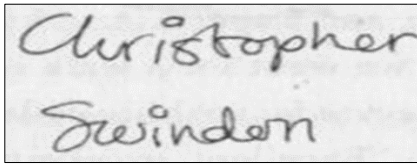


Fig 1: An Example of Indexical Meaning as a Connection to Christopher’s Mother Handwriting (Haddon,2003:52) ^[3]



Fig 2: An Indication of Indexical Meaning to the Real Postmark (Haddon,2002:55) ^[3].

3.2 Ironic Meaning

Typographic iconic meaning can be seen when letterforms resemble the signified or have conceptual characteristics in common with it. The study shows how italics typefaces exhibit iconic resemblance of handwritings, and how the handwriting and spelling mistakes of Christopher's mother could also be regarded as iconic typographic signifiers of her real character as uneducated, careless woman.

Another example is used In the coming lines when uppercase letters and particularly tall capitals are employed iconically to communicate a distinct text and a particular form of salience—that is, emphasis on word meaning. Here, Christopher demonstrates his true interpersonal interactions and the intricate nature of everyday life at the train station. More stimulus, including people, are around him than he has ever experienced. The semiotic typographic meaning of boldness and capitals letters is used to emphasize the point and demonstrate how Christopher's actions are becoming more independent and grown up with all his interaction with other people, as well as how he is starting to take more charge of his own life. He chooses to sit down at a table outside of a café and retreat into his world after being overstimulated by everything, and plays the mental game called Conway's soldiers which is based on mathematic processes.

“ And there were signs saying Great Western and cold beers and larges and caution wet floor and Your 50p will keep a premature baby alive For 1.8 seconds and transformation travel and Refreshingly Different and IT’S delicious it’s creamy and it’s only £1.30 hot choc deluxe and 0870777676 and The Lemon Tree and NO Smoking and FINE TEAS and there were some little tables with chairs next to them and no one was sitting at one of the tables and it was in a corner and I sat down on one of the chairs next to it and I closed my eyes” (Haddon, 2002:83) ^[3].

In many instances in the novel, the italics seems to convey several various iconic meanings in Haddon’s novel. The meaning of observing or separating are created in italics. The iconic meaning of italicized words demonstrates Christopher’s capacity for adopting to new circumstances and dealing with challenges. The iconic typographic meaning of the previous example depends more on the mode of wording

than on the actual interpretation of the individual’s handwritten performance of index meaning which is not expressed via wording features.

3.3 Discursive Import Meaning

It is the third tool of the typographic semiotic principles when typographic connections are brought and inserted to situation to which they didn’t be there. Thus, the meaning that is produced results from the import of correlations from the field that a particular typeface originally is counted with the field of that it transferred and inserted into (Van Leeuwen,2005b:138) ^[32]. Various scientific and academic discourses are imported into the multimodal narrative composition. Not just verbally, but also through other methods, such as diagrammatic, special, mathematical and other visual resources. Christopher choses to develop an idea in several modes sequentially due to the intricacy of some explanations. This allowed readers to select their an appropriate semiotic resource and comprehend his explication. Alternative approaches to creating and working on a certain idea’s communication are provided in various modes. Therefore, go to figure (20) for Christopher’s explication of how to solve the “Monty Hall Problem”. He begins by outlining a process of constructing an equation of eventuality before stating that creating "a picture...like that" is another way of solving the problem. This is followed by a conceptual map that integrates verbal and diagrammatic resources (Mussetta,2014:113) ^[11].

Thus, you win a car if you switch two out of three times. You only get a car one out of every three times if you continue with it. And this demonstrates how intuition is not occasionally accurate. And people make decisions in life depending on their intuition (Hadon,2013:36). However, using reasoning, you can determine the correct response. Even though Christopher shifts to a verbal mode to solve the riddle, the solution is never fully given in linguistic terms; rather, it is given in diagrammatic and mathematical discourses that are specifically taken from academic and scientific disciplines. This allows the novel to develop and expand multimodally and makes meaning possible in ways that are not traditional. This example illustrates the discursive import of various typographies, such as diagrams, maps and mathematical formulas to the narrative situation in which they formerly seemed out of place. In addition to these examples, the insertion and inclusion of the letters of Christopher’s mother in the narrative could be regarded as discursive import when signifiers are brought and imported into a context to which they previously didn’t belong to.

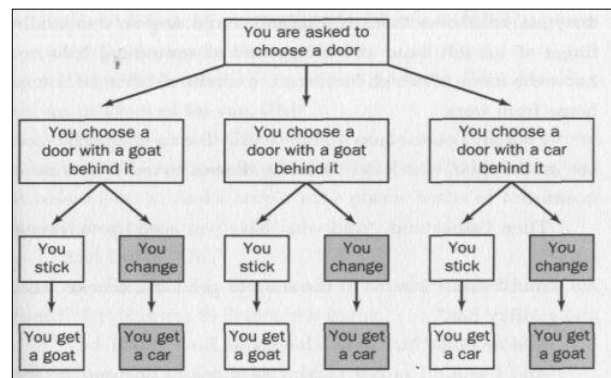


Fig 3: The Monty Hall Problem as a Discursive Import Example (Haddon.2003:36) ^[3].

4. Analysis of the Mode of Layout

Layout is the third tool of the developed model to be tackled in analyzing the multimodal aspects of this novel. According to (McIntyre and Busse, 2010), layout refers to "the inclusive spacial page form which includes features of constancy, space of line, margins, position of visual and verbal parts and also the visual meaning established by their relatedness". Following the previous principles of the social semiotic multimodal system (Information value, salience and framing) to compositional meaning, the researcher will apply and investigate them to Haddon's selected data.

4.1 Framing and Salience in Chapter, Page and Paragraph Distinction

Chapters are frequently framed with greater clarity than paragraphs. In term of visual, chapters are formed by completely separating white space frames that separate text blocks; in the case of chapters, these breaks occur on separate pages. Furthermore, paragraphs are usually only demarcated by a line break; this may be done in combination with paragraph indentation to create frame blank-space districts of different lengths. Haddon deviates traditional forms of salience by substituting position and numbering of chapters and their titles. By changing between text and images and making unusual use of the available space on the page, Haddon uses both verbal and visual modes to develop his story. The usage of letters of Christopher's mother changes the page's layout and affects reading process. The Curious Incident utilizes graphical devices like chapter numbers and footnotes in methods that go beyond simple structuring to fulfill a narrative purpose.

In Haddon's novel, the number of chapters are put to the left side area of the page instead of the center (the next chapter starts immediately when the preceding chapter ends), without chapter headings and only bold number and are not separated by white space frames without salient titles as the conventional use, and even the content of the first ten chapters is very short of one page at least. The numbering of chapters is an absorbing method as a significant device contributes to characterization, and also represents a kind of puzzlement to the reader because first chapter is marked number 2 and followed by chapter 3,5,11,13,17, etc. This way of numbering effects readers' process of reading and leads their awareness to the material object of the narrative itself, and in chapter eight (number19) readers discover that Christopher selects prime numbers for numbering chapters of the novel (Mussetta,2014:104)^[11].

Framing of the novel seems to be further significant semiotic resource of creating various kinds of meaning than information value. The margins of the page reinforce the framing to three or more separated chunks in multiple connection of each page in relation to word structure. Paragraphs are separated from each other by a framed spaces of different range. Frames of white space around pages, paragraphs in their organization are semiotic of different range of chunks.

Furthermore, many phrases and expressions stand out and in different special composition because of their repetition grammatically with interaction with typographic features (big size and boldness) such as, Good Day, Black Day, Super Good Day, etc. (P.14,16,29,121). Pictures, diagrams and maps are framed in the central position or on the top side of the pages (P.8,30,20,36, etc.). They are salient with equal importance to the written text and attract the readers'

awareness view because of their visual effect and appearance in the special representation of the layout mode. In addition to pictures, many of Christopher's scientific and mathematical speeches and discourses are inserted to the narrative and seems to be salient and occupy specific white space frames with different lengths.

4.2 Framing in Another Kinds of Text block

In this section, another detached layout block unities in the spacial arrangement will be explicated. In Haddon's novel, it is seen a wide frames of spaces concerning chunks of the letters' text send by Christopher's mother which show that they are in some way different by nature from the principal narrative to which they are incorporated. The layout of the letters consists of three to five paragraphs with name of addressee on the left as given information and the address location with mobile number on the right as new details. The expanded margins that compose the inclusive layout are as well enhanced via the distinctive features of font weight, size, sloping and line spacing of the rest of the text. These selections are correlated with the wording construction creating a visual salience that facilitates the thematic meaning of the inserted text (the letters).

Another example is when Christopher presents equation math as one semiotic resource to solve to the Monty Hall Problem likes the following, and then presents a second way of solving the problem by introducing a diagrammatic map image in combination with mathematical discourses (See Figure3). Framing of the below equation shows broader margins, larger and bold typeface with some variation in line spacing (double line) with equation symbols and numbers. The visual layout and spatial organization disrupt the conventional narrative design. The mode of wording interact with layout and typography in meaning construction, mostly the lexicogrammatical choices. The speech function is realized by the use of imperative constructions (Let the door..., Let Hx..., Let Cx, etc.). In this example the wording structure conducts a significant amount of semiotic function in interaction with other modes.

"Let the doors be called X, Y and Z.

Let Cx be the event that the car is behind door X and so on.
Let Hx be the event that the host opens door X and so on
Supposing that you choose door X, the possibility that you win a car

If you then switch your choice is given by the following formula

$$\begin{aligned} & P(Hz Cy) + P(Hy Cz) \\ & = P(Cy).P(Hz Cy) + P(Cz).P(Hy Cz) \\ & = (1/3.1) + (1/3.1) = 2/3 \end{aligned} \text{'' (Haddon,2003:35)}^{[3]}$$

4.3 Linking

Linking is the last device of layout to be tackled in this section. visual and verbal linking as a semiotic resource will be explained in addition to the condition of the meaning performed by the linking of various modes. The image's visual depiction is either elaborates and reaffirms the verbal narrative by saying the same information or extends and attaches new knowledge linked to the existent one. In Haddon's novel, many semiotic resources are used and unconventional use of the page's accessible space as shifting between verbal and visual modes employing the combination

of them to grasp the narrative progress.

Many examples of this linking are employed in ‘‘The Curious Incident’’. Christopher in his illustration for solving the Monty Hall Problem, presents the verbal mode of equation then introduces the visual mode of the picture for more illustration with a diagrammatic map ‘...like this’. The visual verbal linking is realized by the symbols and instructions of the equation with the relation of choices of the visual diagrammatic picture of visual mode (See Figure 3). This type of linking according to Van Leeuwen’s grouping (2005:231)^[31] is extension as the verbal representation of the mathematical symbols adds more information to the existing narrative process of the visual picture. Most pictures and drawing maps in the novel are separated by specific empty spaces between each of the frames and there is no boundary of segregated line between them and the verbal narrative. Therefore, the decoding and grasping of the meaning of image is easy and clear because of the closeness and relatedness of the image and verbal wording.

Another example of linking when the visual handwriting on the envelop is reproduced with the words Christopher and Swindon with circle instead of dote at the letter ‘‘T’’ to be a reference to his mother who writes it. The same link of relatedness of elaboration of the same information between the typographic visual description of the image’s post mark of the letter and the date of posting it (see Figure 1, 2). It is linked and elaborated to the coming verbal mode of wording that emphasizes and reaffirms this closeness. The linking of these two examples strengthens and emphasizes the reader’s implication of the high visual modality of his mother name and her real existence.

The visual design of the letters of Christopher’s mother are considered as a visual extension of adding new information to the verbal mode concerning his discovery of his mother being alive with her beloved, her unwilling to live with her sick child and after that his finding of his father’s lies to him and his admission of killing the neighbor’s dog. The letters create a connection and linking between the visual exposition, and the verbal narrative and contribute to add more details and understanding to the events and characters development.

4. Conclusions

- visual tools of typography are very important and are always combined with mode of wording in handling multimodal features of the novel. Haddon uses many choices of the detailed system of distinctive features of typefaces such as boldness, capitalization, sloppiness, regularity and connectivity to identify different meanings in many examples, and employ unconventional utilization of spacial design on the page to make transition between text and image making integration between verbal and visual modes. Multimodal elements of a particular typeface (e.g. handwriting and postmark of Christopher’s mother,) are inserted and used iconically as a distinct text in this novel in order to create a communicative functions of meaning and participate in the explication of narrative perspective. Furthermore, typographic semiotic principles of indexical, iconic, and discursive import meanings are tackled and explicated in many examples such as (map of England, letters of Christopher’s mother) in connection with the mode of wording in order to get a comprehensive and significant understanding of their typographic meaning.
- The composition meaning of layout’s tools show that in

contrast to the limited application of information value in the context, they demonstrate that framing, salience, and linking can be utilized effectively and be more productive in the study and analysis of layout choices of meaning in this selected novel. In addition, linking also proved to be a beneficial tool for layout analysis, leading researcher to consider which parts in the novel’s layout are linked and how, as well as to decide whether a particular element in the layout is elaborating on or including and adding new information to the element with which it is linked and related. It is important to consider the salience of the elements under study into account when examining the novel’s layout. The researcher illustrates how framing of particular parts such as blocks of letters, diagrams and scientific paragraphs be salient and attract the reader’s attention.

Finally, it is significant to say that in addition to wording structure, all other modes of typography, layout design, photographs, etc. are necessary in integration with each other for the ultimate comprehensive meaning construction of the text exposition.

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