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VISUAL AND SPATIAL LANGUAGE: THE SILENT VOICE OF WOODSTOCK

BY: AARON HUMPHREY INKED BY: JOHN CARVAJAL

MULTIMODAL LITERACY  CHALLENGES US TO THINK ABOUT LITERACY AND THE BOUNDARIES OF TRADITIONAL "ALPHABETIC" TEXTS, AND TO CONSIDER HOW MEANING IS CONVEYED THROUGH THINGS LIKE T.V. SHOWS, VIDEO GAMES, WEBSITES AND COMIC BOOKS. 

BUT **ALL** TEXTS ARE MULTIMODAL—EVEN TRADITIONAL "ALPHABETIC" TEXTS CONVEY MEANING THROUGH A WHOLE RANGE OF MODALITIES...

WHEN WE OPEN UP LITERACY TO INCLUDE OTHER SETS OF SIGNS—

VERBAL



VISUAL



LINGUISTIC



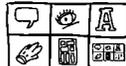
GESTURAL



SPATIAL



MULTIMODAL
COMBINATIONS



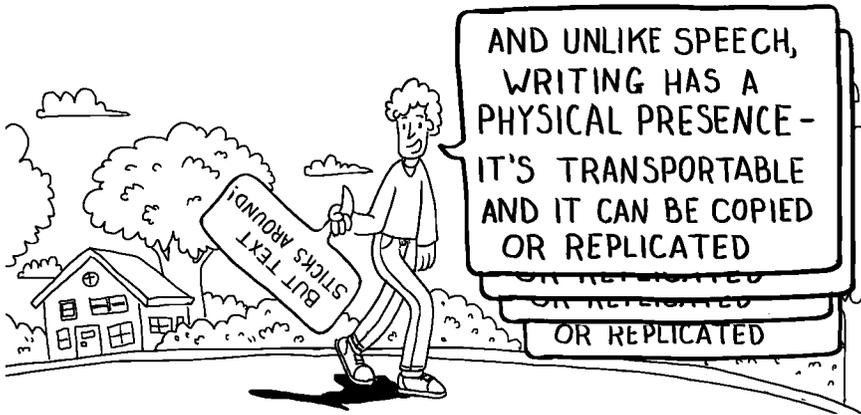
— WE CAN EXPOSE NEW MEANINGS IN ALPHABETIC TEXTS THAT WE MIGHT OTHERWISE TAKE FOR GRANTED.



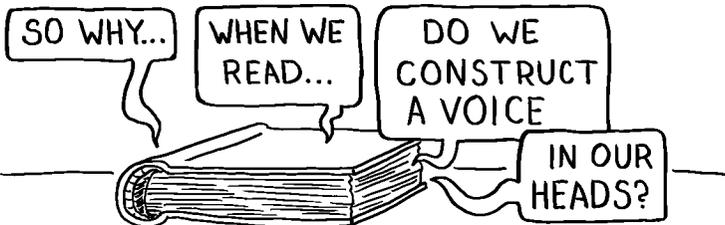
COMICS CAN ASSIST US IN THIS PROCESS BY DENATURALISING WRITING'S  AND  MODALITIES.

FOR EXAMPLE,

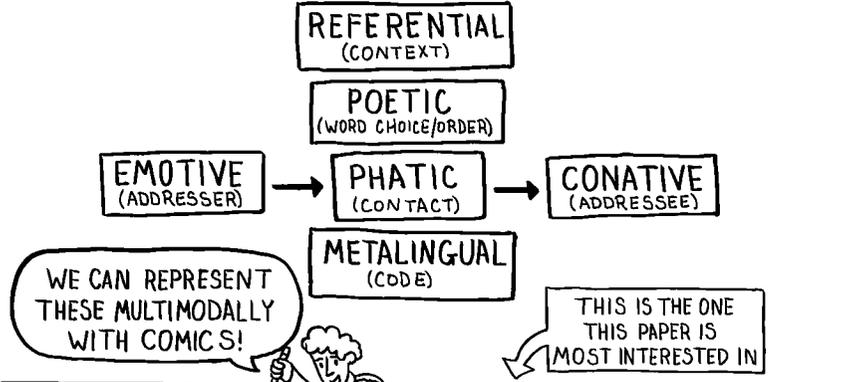
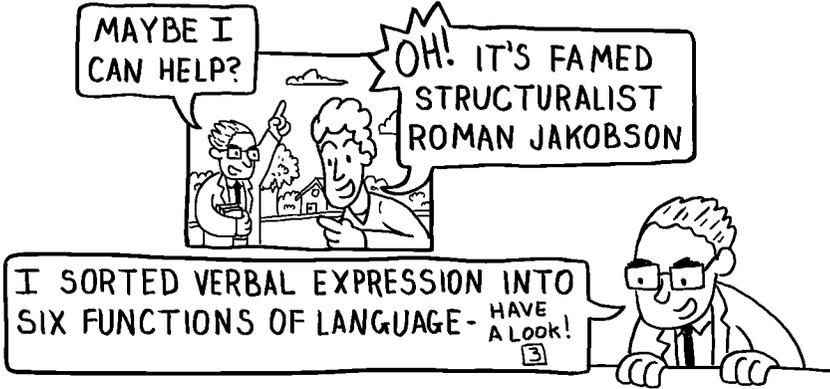
WRITTEN LANGUAGE IS OFTEN LINKED TO SPEECH—
(IN FRENCH, LANGUE MEANS BOTH “LANGUAGE” AND “TONGUE”)
—BUT COMICS CAN EMPHASISE THEIR DIFFERENCES.



WRITING AND SPEAKING ARE CLEARLY VERY DIFFERENT...



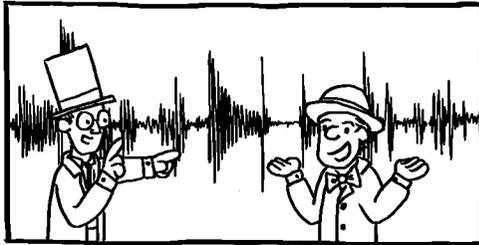
CAN WE SEPARATE OUT THIS IMPLIED VERBAL MODALITY OF WRITING FROM ITS VISUAL AND SPATIAL MODALITIES?



<p>EMOTIVE RELATES TO THE SOURCE OF THE MESSAGE</p> <p>WOW! I'M GLAD! I'M THRILLED I KNEW THAT!</p>	<p>PHATIC RELATES TO THE CONTACT BETWEEN AND</p>	<p>CONATIVE IS ABOUT WHO IS BEING ADDRESSED</p> <p>AM I TALKING TO YOU? OR AM I TALKING TO YOU?</p>
<p>REFERENTIAL IS ABOUT THE MESSAGE'S <u>CONTEXT</u></p> <p>SO: </p> <p>BUT ALSO: </p>	<p>POETIC IS ABOUT WORD CHOICE</p> <p>IT'S WHY WE SAY</p> <p>I LIKE IKE</p> <p>NOT "I PREFER DWIGHT E."</p>	<p>METALINGUAL IS ABOUT THE CODE OF A MESSAGE</p> <p>SO, ENGLISH IS A CODE</p> <p>abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz BUT COMICS HAVE THEIR OWN CODE SYSTEMS AS WELL</p> <p>* # ! % @</p>

PHATIC COMMUNICATION HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE "SOCIAL GLUE" THAT CHARACTERISES "SMALL TALK" AND "TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER"

HOWEVER, THE PHYSICAL PROPERTIES OF SPEECH ALSO WORK TO BIND BOTH PARTIES TOGETHER IN ^{TIME} _{SPACE}



SOUND WAVES LITERALLY SURROUND US AND PASS THROUGH US ALL IN AN INSTANT - (EVEN VOCALISATIONS WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND PERFORM THE PHATIC FUNCTION!)

THE WORLD OF SOUND IS ESSENTIALLY A UNIFIED FIELD OF INSTANT RELATIONSHIPS

McLUHAN

4

ALTHOUGH JAKOBSON'S OTHER LINGUISTIC FUNCTIONS SURVIVE THE TRANSLATION FROM  TO  MORE OR LESS INTACT, THE PHATIC MODE OF CONTACT IS ENTIRELY TRANSFORMED

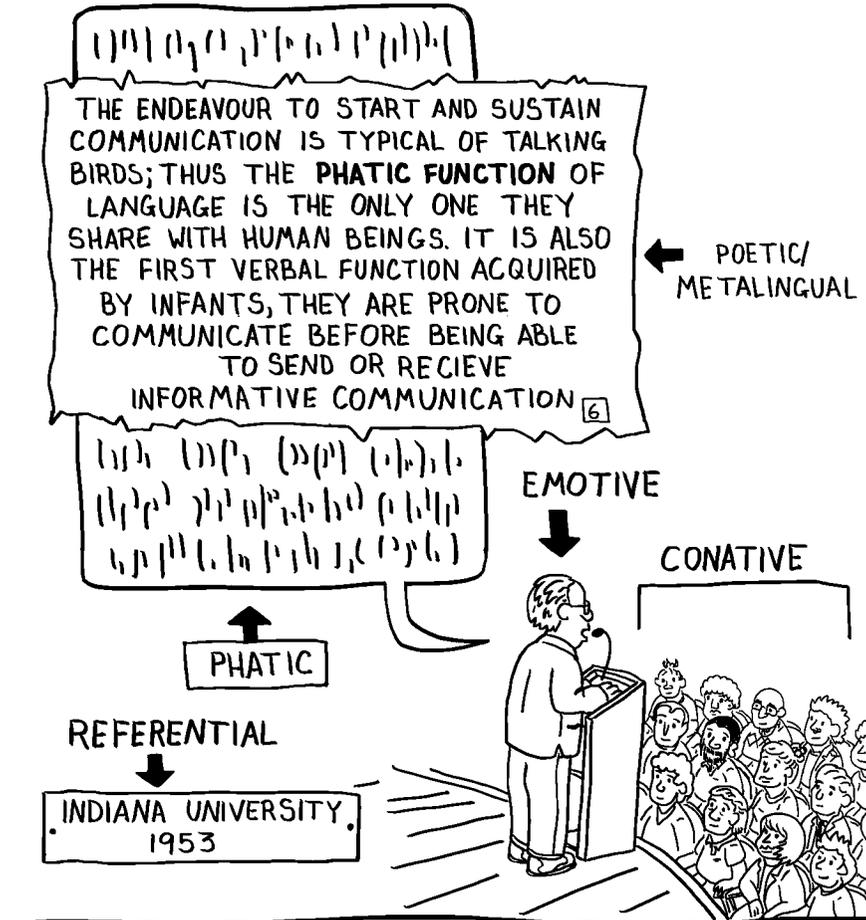
SHULTZ'S REPRESENTATION OF BIRD SPEAK IN PEANUTS COMES CLOSE TO VISUALLY DEPICTING THE PHATIC FUNCTION IN ISOLATION

5

EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WOODSTOCK IS SAYING, WE STILL "HEAR" HIM

I THINK THIS IS A GOOD WAY TO REPRESENT THROUGH A VISUAL MODALITY THE QUALITIES OF VERBAL MODALITIES THAT ARE LOST IN TRANSLATION TO WRITING.

JAKOBSON FIRST PRESENTED HIS WORK ON THE SIX FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE AS AN ORAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATION...

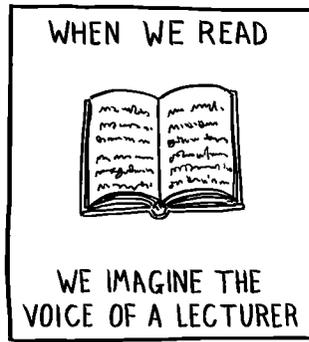
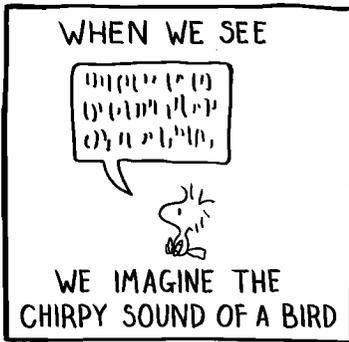


THIS FOLLOWS THE LONGSTANDING TRADITION OF PHILOSOPHICAL, ACADEMIC AND RELIGIOUS TEXTS BASED IN AND COPIED FROM SPOKEN LANGUAGE -

WE HAVE COME TO LINK SPEECH & TEXT

THIS IS WHY WOODSTOCK'S CHICKEN SCRATCH WORKS -





AND SO, WE ARE SURROUNDED BY "VOICES"
EVEN WHEN WE ONLY SEE WRITING AND DO
NOT READ IT-BECAUSE THE VISUAL FORM
OF WRITING HAS COME TO BE SYMBOLIC OF
THE VERBAL MODALITY.

THE BOUNDARIES OF THIS THEORY ARE EXPLORED IN THE FIELD OF ASEMIC WRITING WHERE WRITERS & ARTISTS CREATE TEXTS THAT MIMIC SOME OF THE QUALITIES OF PRINTED WRITING, BUT WHICH HAVE NO PRESCRIBED LINGUISTIC MEANINGS.

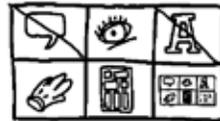


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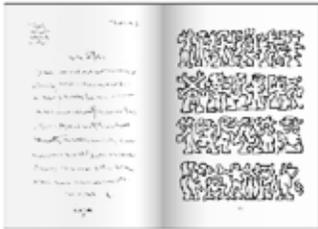


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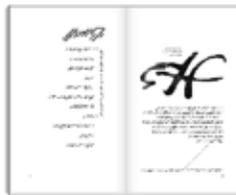
THESE TEXTS ARE READ USING MULTIPLE LITERACIES



AND SOME IMPLY LINGUISTIC AND VERBAL MODALITIES MORE THAN OTHERS



9



10

11

IT'S NOT JUST LINGUISTIC MEANING WHICH IS CONSTRUCTED MULTIMODALLY, BUT ALL THE FUNCTIONS OF ADDRESS –

EMOTIVE/SOURCE	PHATIC/CONTACT	CONATIVE/ADDRESSEE
<p>WHAT KIND OF PERSON WOULD MAKE SOMETHING LIKE THIS?</p>	<p>NEW BOOK, SMELL!</p>	<p>DOES READING THIS MEAN I'M AN INTERESTING PERSON? OR JUST A TOLERANT ONE?</p>
REFERENTIAL/CONTEXT	POETIC/"WORD" ORDER	METALINGUAL/CODE
<p>I'LL FILE IT WITH MY OTHER ART BOOKS</p>	<p>THESE CRAZY INK BLOTS! THEY JUST LOOK SO COOL! FOR SOME REASON...</p>	<p>YEH, BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WE JUST TALKED ABOUT THAT!</p>

JUST AS WRITTEN TEXTS STILL COMMUNICATE MANY MESSAGES WHEN THEY HAVE NO CLEAR LINGUISTIC MEANINGS, MUCH OF THE INFORMATION CONVEYED IN SPOKEN COMMUNICATION RELATES TO JAKOBSON'S FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE, EVEN IN CASES LIKE THE ANIMATED PEANUTS CARTOONS, WHERE ADULTS ARE ONLY HEARD MAKING SOUNDS OF A MUTED TRUMPET, RATHER THAN WORDS. →



VERBAL



GESTURAL



SPATIAL



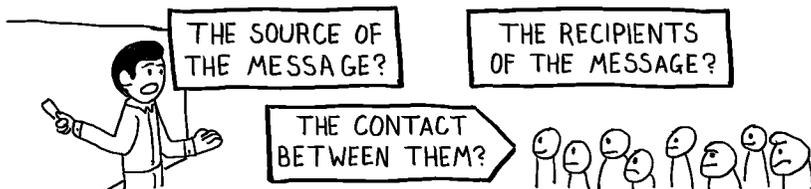
VISUAL



THE PHATIC CONTACT THAT THESE MODALITIES CONSTRUCT CONVEYS PARTICULAR MESSAGES ABOUT THE **POWER** RELATIONSHIPS IN A LECTURE, EVEN IF WE DON'T KNOW WHAT ITS LINGUISTIC MESSAGES ARE



WHAT DO THESE MODALITIES SAY ABOUT THE FUNCTIONS OF ADDRESS?





HIS LECTURE-STYLE OF TEACHING HAS BEEN CRITIQUED BY NEARLY ALL MODERN THEORIES OF EDUCATION

PAULO FREIRE CALLED IT THE **BANKING MODEL** OF EDUCATION, WHERE KNOWLEDGE IS TREATED AS

"A GIFT BESTOWED BY THOSE WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES KNOWLEDGEABLE UPON THOSE WHO THEY CONSIDER TO KNOW NOTHING" 12

IT'S ALSO BEEN CALLED THE **TRANSMISSION MODEL** -

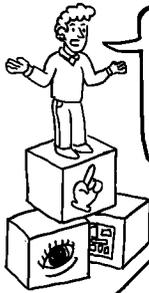
-THE LECTURER BECOMES THE AUTHOR OF HIS STUDENTS, REMAKING THEM WITH THE POWER OF HIS OWN VOICE.

MODERN THEORIES OF EDUCATION, SUCH AS CONSTRUCTIVISM, EMPHASISE THAT STUDENTS

A BRING THEIR OWN, EXISTING KNOWLEDGE TO THE CLASSROOM

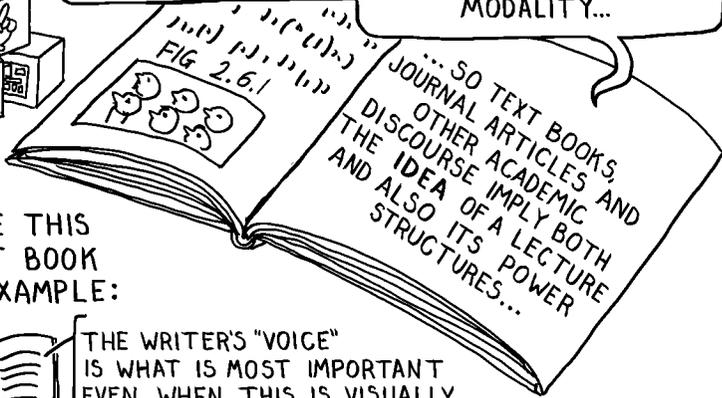
B AND CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN LEARNING THROUGH ACTIONS & EXPERIENCES

Despite this, lectures remain central to academic discourse, as exemplified by how closely lectures and conference papers are linked with published journal articles, book chapters and textbooks. For example, Jakobson's 1953 lecture was transcribed into text and turned into a frequently cited piece of writing. This is underscored by the fact that academic conference presentations, which are essentially lectures, are called 'papers' even if they are never published in print.



AS THE MULTIMODAL FORMS OF LECTURES ELEVATE THE SPEAKER'S VOICE

AND AS THE VISUAL AND SPATIAL MODALITIES OF WRITING IMPLY A VERBAL MODALITY...



TAKE THIS TEXT BOOK FOR EXAMPLE:

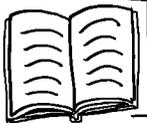


THE WRITER'S "VOICE" IS WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT EVEN WHEN THIS IS VISUALLY OR SPATIALLY INCONVENIENT

As seen in Figure 7.3.1, this phenomenon is



IMAGES ARE NUMBERED AND QUARANTINED, SEPARATE FROM THE WRITER'S "VOICE"



[NO SIGN OF FIGURE 7.3.1, TWO PAGES LATER... AND STILL NO SIGN OF IT...]



FIGURE 7.3.1! THERE IT IS!

... ALONG WITH FIG. 7.3.2, WHICH WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED IN THE TEXT FOR SIX PAGES.



MEANWHILE, THE WRITER'S "VOICE" CONTINUES AS IF IT WAS NEVER INTERRUPTED



YES, FIGURE 7.3.1 IS STILL BEING DISCUSSED DOWN HERE, IN INTRICATE DETAIL THAT NECESSITATES FIGURE 7.3.3



FIG. 7.3.3: READER DESPERATELY FLIPPING BETWEEN PAGES



SO COMICS CAN BRING THE VISUAL AND SPATIAL MODALITIES TO THE FOREFRONT OF WRITING?

I WOULD ARGUE THAT THEY ARE ALREADY AT THE FOREFRONT OF WRITING, BUT COMICS CAN MAKE THAT MORE APPARENT...



AND WRITING WITH COMICS ALLOWS US TO MANIPULATE THOSE MODALITIES IN INTERESTING WAYS!

THEY GIVE US A WAY OF SHOWING WHAT WE MEAN

RATHER THAN JUST TELLING IT!

IN WRITING THIS PAPER, I'VE TRIED TO LAY OUT SOME TOOLS FOR ANALYSING THE MULTIMODAL QUALITIES OF COMICS & OTHER TEXTS



I'VE ALSO TRIED TO USE DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES AND MULTIMODAL COMBINATIONS ON EACH PAGE



SO IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN GO BACK AND TRY TO FIGURE OUT HOW DIFFERENT MODALITIES & FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE WORK ON EACH PAGE!



OR EVEN BETTER- YOU COULD TRY WRITING THIS WAY YOURSELF!



AND GIVE US TOOLS TO DO DIFFERENT THINGS IN REGARDS TO THE FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

- EMOTIVE
- REFERENTIAL
- POETIC
- PHATIC
- MET

WHICH CAN IN TURN CHALLENGE THE POWER STRUCTURES COMMONLY EVOKED IN ACADEMIC WRITING & PUBLISHING.



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