

VISUAL LITERACY AS A COGNITIVE SKILL

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**Summary:** Stylistic use in multimodal texts is more demanding in identification and interpretation. It is important to understand figurative language and see its connection with visual representation. Visual representation of PUs is a less examined mode of their stylistic use.

Exploration of phraseological metaphor in nonverbal expression opens up new pathways and makes a good case for including studies in this field in general research on phraseology.

**Key words:** to put all one's eggs in one basket, cognitive linguistics, cognitive psychologists, a new instantiation.

***To put all one's eggs in one basket:***

The allusion is to the base form of the PU to put all one's eggs in one basket. Importantly, with no textual presence of any of the base constituents the visual impact becomes the key to comprehension. Visual allusion is achieved as the PU is retrieved from long-term memory and we establish the base form. Eggs and basket are the implicit verbal elements of the PU, while at the same time they constitute the explicit visual presence of the phraseological image. Verbal absence turns into a presence due to visual representation. Emergence of the figurative meaning of the PU vis-à-vis visual representation of the literal meaning of eggs and basket results in a visual pun. The dual perception is enhanced as these constituents have been visually foregrounded in the article: You cannot miss the eggs and the basket when casting an eye on the page. The implicit presence of the invisible base form is indispensable to secure comprehension. Eggs and basket have also been psychologically foregrounded, turning into figurative constituents of the PU in our mind due to the natural perceptual link between sight and thought.

***Cognitive linguistics:***

Although cognitive linguistics has it that "figurative language does not require special cognitive processes to be produced and understood" (Gibbs [1994] 1999: 17), in visual representation the process of perception and comprehension may be a pursuit of hidden connections and cohesion of the textual and the visual, which is especially important in language teaching. Recognition and interpretation of a creative representation may be cognitively challenging for L2 learners. Experience has it that understanding cohesive ties is crucial for comprehension, while failure to recognise cohesion and insightful associative links leads to misinterpretation. The natural desire to understand leads to the link between the eggs and the basket, and breaking the sacrosanct rule of risk management. The link between the visible and the invisible is a dimension that allows us to gain an insight and draw inferences. The visible spurs our imagination and helps us to conceive the phraseological image, which is sustained throughout the text. It lingers at the back of our mind as the article explores the alternative of focused funds versus the Traditional piece of financial wisdom not to put all your eggs in one basket.

***Cognitive psychologists:***

Cognitive psychologists see visual perception as a cognitive activity. The human mind perceives and interprets the image with all its conscious and unconscious powers (Arnheim [1954] 1974: 461) to establish the message and resolve the subtle complexity of the situation, using available linguistic and background knowledge. A semantic and stylistic tie is established with the base metaphor of the PU, although it does not appear in the text. Visual discourse is an interesting “perceptual experience” (Gibbs [1994] 1999: 79) as we feel the invisible presence of the PU in the face of the visible absence of its base form.

To understand the following case of visual allusion (Figure 6.20), we need encyclopaedic knowledge of the political strife in the EU over the Lisbon Treaty. The second Irish Referendum (02.10.2009) reversed the decision of the first (12.06.2008), and the stray Irish sheep has returned to its flock. The available textual information is scanty: the name “Ireland” on the straying black sheep and “EU Treaty” on the pasture gate with twelve stars as a symbol of the EU.

***A new instantiation:***

A new instantiation is enabled due to use of the PU as a language unit and a pattern of instantial stylistic use, such as pun, extended metaphor, or allusion. To be creative implies going beyond standard form and meaning, and beyond conventional vision. When exploring creativity, Pope shows that creativity emerges every time some existing language material (words, images, sounds) is transformed into something judged to be fresh and valuable. Creativity does not come from nothing or from nowhere; it embraces “radical forms of recreation and includes actively engaged kinds of re-vision, re-memembering and refamiliarisation” (Pope 2005: xvii). Moreover, visual discourse calls for new ways of both creation and interpretation. “Multimodal texts demonstrate linguistic and artistic creativity, and creative multimodality reveals how language functions” (Goodman 2006: 244).

In conclusion, this chapter takes a closer look at the creative aspects of verbal and visual representation of phraseological image in multimodal discourse. The image-bearing constituents of phraseological units lend themselves very well to creative textual and visual representation, including abstract qualities and implicit messages. The phraseological image is sustained as thought develops, contributing to creation of a visual narrative. The visual reflects experience beyond the possibilities offered by a text. The cognitive approach promotes comprehension and interpretation of phraseological metaphor in verbal and visual discourse and brings out its role in the communication of figurative thought. Mental visualisation of instantial stylistic use forms part of cognitive performance, enhanced by visual representation of the extended image. Visualisation is a reflection of figurative thought. I would argue that phraseological metaphor occurs not only in thought, language, and visual representation; it also occurs in its perception. Visual representation of a phraseological image engages both the eye and the mind.

**THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:**

1. For a detailed analysis of the theory of foregrounding and its stylistic and psychological aspects, see van Peer (1986). For features of prominence that differentiate the figure from the ground, making it more salient, see Stockwell (2002: 14–15).

2. Innovative stylistic alterations are common in use of traditional proverbs, as is also seen from the rich collection of Wolfgang Mieder’s international archive of proverbs in Burlington,

Vermont (Mieder and Litovkina 1999: 3).

3. By visual literacy I understand the ability to perceive, comprehend, and interpret visual representation of language.