Multimodal legitimation

Rowan Mackay
R.R.Mackay@sms.ed.ac.uk
Linguistics, The University of Edinburgh

To legitimate one's position and to de-legitimate that of your political opposition is referred to in Aristotle's Rhetoric (Aristotle, 2007). Within recent years critical discourse analysts have re-engaged with the subject of legitimation (Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 2000; van Dijk, 1998) which is central to the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Simultaneously, there have been forays from textual based political analysis to the analysis of multimodal texts. This move to the emerging discipline of what van Leeuwen (2005, 2007) terms 'social semiotics' is long overdue. Persuasion, legitimation, and manipulation are not limited to written texts alone. This is not a new realisation but the consequences of it have been somewhat ignored. The internet continues to shape our communicative world – and our political one as a result. I am studying multimodal legitimation through looking at the spot ads of the 2008 presidential campaign in the U.S. I am trying to see whether the legitimation tactics identified in much CDA work can be transposed onto the multimodal material we see in today's political campaigns. Furthermore, I explore where this is not possible, or where the multimodal material affords new legitimating possibilities.

References

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