

**Tamás EITLER**

*Nonlinearity and Decontextualisation in Visual Communication*

The paper discusses how nonlinear visual communication serves to decontextualise actors and processes represented in multimodal genres including advertisements, course materials, web pages and television documentaries. Nonlinearity as a structural principle will be defined against and compared to other organising principles including left-right, top-bottom and centre-margin (Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 1996), with a focus on how it furthers decontextualisation in an unexpected and even manipulative way. For this reason, the other key notion of the paper, decontextualisation, will also be scrutinised through a great number of examples drawn from the genres mentioned above. It is going to be shown how not providing either the immediate discourse context or the wider social context in a given multimodal document composed of images and other semiotic resources in a nonlinear fashion may contribute to the construction of interpretative spaces where the objective responsibility for the consequences (= the explanation) of actions can be easily left evaded or backgrounded, whereas the affective meanings (associated with emotions) can be foregrounded. This can serve broader aims the common characteristics of which include maintaining naturalised, commonsensical and automated interpretations, which all perpetuate inequalities.

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