

## *Museum communication: the current state of research and challenges for linguistics*

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*Museums are in fact perhaps as much concerned with words as they are with objects* (Hooper-Greenhill 1994: 115)

### 1. Background and purpose

Contemporary museums are institutions that co-create and shape the identity of individuals and communities at global, national, and local levels. One of the consequences of this fact is the extraordinary sensitivity of museums to social and civilisational transformations. This, in turn, results in a number

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of new challenges for museums. Museums do not abandon their traditional mission but seek new solutions to respond adequately to the changing world and evolving social expectations.

From the linguistic point of view, the museums' operations and any changes taking place within their activities are contingent on various aspects of communication processes. As a cultural institution, a museum fulfils its tasks by initiating the process of communication within the museum, with an exhibition and its accompanying texts directed outwards and inwards. These two areas of communication are interconnected and all communication processes within them are collectively called museum communication.

This paper explores museum communication from the linguistic point of view. It attempts to determine what makes museum communication specific and identify research opportunities offered by contemporary linguistics to investigate museum communication. Museum communication is defined as a kind of interplay of multiple communicative practices organised multimodally within a museum and activated in communication with the museum's external partners. Museum communication is primarily shaped by exhibition organisers as communicators (with all the relating social factors), the exhibition as a comprehensive multimodal message and artefact, and the broader public, including exhibition visitors.

This paper makes an attempt at answering the following questions:

- What is the role of communication in a museum and how does a museum become a communication space?
- What is the scope of previous linguistic research on museum communication and what aspects have been particularly addressed?
- What methodological tools does contemporary linguistics have to identify communicative processes in a museum?

The primary goal of this paper is to provide a review of previous works in German linguistics and introduce a new area of linguistic research.

## 2. Museum as a communication space and a multimodal text

For years, museums have been subject to substantial changes resulting from different concepts and innovative solutions. Furthermore, the museum community is currently involved in intense discussions on the (new) role and function of museums and their (new) image (cf., Pomian 2014; Folga-Januszewska 2020).

Most debates focus on different, often detailed, aspects of museums' activities; however, they all attempt to address the fundamental questions: What is a museum today? What should it become? What challenges is it facing? Are contemporary museums supposed to be only involved in traditional tasks, such as the protection of cultural heritage and education through collection and conservation of resources, research, artistic and cultural activities, or take up new tasks (cf., e.g., J. Kaczmarek 2018)?

This is accompanied by a reflection on how museums are adapting to dynamic demographic changes, changes in the consumption habits of visitors (e.g., ways of spending leisure time), and changes in people's modes of perception. In response to this, museum community tries to redefine the existing concept of the museum. In its study, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) indicates what, in its opinion, the attributes of contemporary museums are:

Museums are multi-voiced spaces of democratic inclusion for critical dialogue about the past and the future. By understanding and properly recognising conflicts and challenges of the present, and preserving artefacts, as institutions of public trust, they keep the memory alive for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all.

Museums do not operate for profit. They are participatory and transparent. They work in active partnership with diverse communities to collect, preserve, study, interpret, exhibit, and encourage understanding of the world, seeking to contribute to (building) human dignity and social justice, universal equality, and the well-being of the planet (as cited in Polish in Folga-Januszewska 2020: 31).

Although this description has not met with universal acceptance in the museum community and some have been sceptical about it (cf., Folga-Januszewska 2020), it reveals the important role of a museum in contemporary society, its scope of responsibility, and current social expectations. This concerns the educational and social function of a museum, in a broad sense, with reference to its integrating, memory-forming, developing, and inclusive role. The implementation of these goals, even in part, will result in further changes, not only broadening the museum's scope of activities but also reforming the existing areas it is involved in. We agree with the thesis that, "The move away from museum curators as moral guardians (Hooper-Greenhill 1995: 224), to a more visitor-orientated approach has influenced how museums communicate with their local communities and the general public" (Pillière 2018: X). The transformations will not be possible without an in-depth interdisciplinary

reflection that goes far beyond the current lines of research. In particular, the discussion can be enriched with linguistic research, especially linguistic sub-disciplines, such as text linguistics, media linguistics, discourse linguistics, cultural linguistics, and pragmalinguistics, that study the use of language and text (understood as a multimodal text) in public space and their immersion in culture.

The key directions of the development of museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be described with three concepts, i.e., **communication**, **interaction**, and **participation** (e.g., Crooke 2008, Fiedler/Harrer 2017, Hooper-Greenhill 2007, Simon 2010). In addition to these terms, essential to understanding how contemporary museums work, the concept of **digitisation** of museums has to be clarified to understand how much museums changed in terms of the media used. Digital communication, interaction, and participation are closely interconnected and contingent on one another as a result of the increasingly strong audience orientation. According to the assumptions of contemporary museums, they are supposed to strive to increase audience participation and thus move away from the traditional role of the audience seen as a passive audience. **Participation**<sup>1</sup> presupposes the existence of **interaction** in a broad sense, which includes not only interaction within the exhibition space (e.g., interaction between individual elements of the exhibition, between the exhibition and the viewer, between the exhibition and the accompanying texts, etc.), but also a continuous exchange between a museum and the public and other actors beyond this space. **Communication** is the basis for the success of any effort to reach and attract audiences and make them involved by using various forms. Czajkowski claims that, “a museum is only as good as it is able to communicate. If it fails to do so, it is merely a static collection of exhibits rather than a dynamic element of social development” (Czarnowski 2013: 20–21).

With reference to the educational and social tasks of museums and communication as a prerequisite for the functioning of museums, the emphasis should be put here on the comprehensive process of producing and transmitting knowledge<sup>2</sup> in the best conditions possible while respecting the experience

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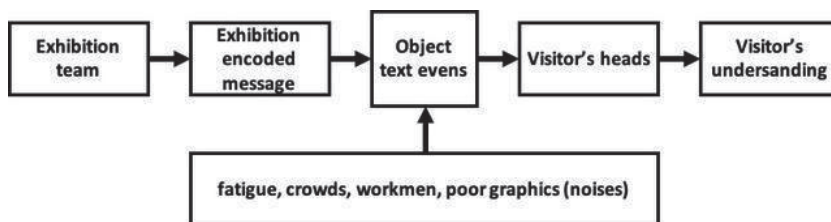
<sup>1</sup> For the ambiguity of this concept in relation to contemporary museum communication, cf., Jagodzińska 2021.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the concept of knowledge is defined as individual and collectively shared knowledge understood as a set of information based on linguistically organised texts.

and sensitivity of visitors. A museum is, therefore, not only a space for communication between experts (curators, educators, etc.) and non-experts (different audiences), but also a space for activities involving the public, enabling co-production, learning, and participation (cf., Nieroba 2019: 107–109).

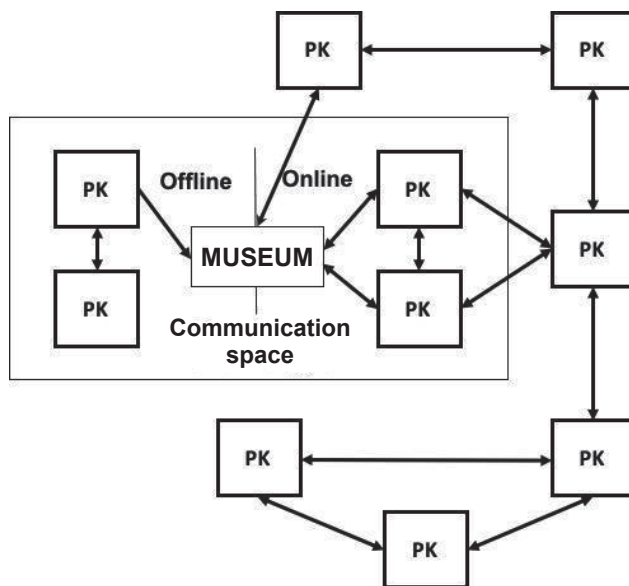
Research on museums as a communication space has been conducted since the 1960s, mainly in the field of communication sciences, education sciences, and sociology. The models of museum communication developed in these research fields have transformed from the linear models (Fig. 1), used at the beginning with a small group of actors communicating, “in the museum itself”, to participatory models (Fig. 2) – with a larger group of actors and the wider social contexts of communication.

In the first model (Fig. 1), museum communication is defined in a very simple manner as a one-way process of knowledge transfer from the curatorial team through the exhibition and its texts to visitors. A model developed by Fiedler/Harrer (2017: 228) shows the multiplicity of communicative actors relevant to museum communication but does not clearly organise the relationships between these actors and the exhibition as the focal point of museum communication.



**Fig. 1.** Museum communication model according to Hooper-Greenhill (1994: 42)

As stated before, meaning in museum communication is carried by the exhibition itself (exhibits, exhibit labels, layout, arrangement of the exhibition space, display strategies, and technologies used) and the forms of communication and accompanying genres of texts (e.g., Ravelli 2005, Lazzarotti 2016, Fiedler and Harrer 2017). Museums use museum communication to bring visitors closer to specific objects and knowledge of the subject concerned. This is how museums fulfil their educational and social mission. Even after a cursory glance at the communication processes taking place within a museum and between a museum and the external environment (see Fig. 2),



**Fig. 2.** Museum communication model according to Fiedler/Harrer (2017: 228); PK = communication partners (visitors, stakeholders, etc.)

museum communication can be divided into two categories, internal and external communication.

- Internal communication (i.e., communication within a museum) involves participation and interaction between the sender (curatorial team) and the audience (visitors) through and within the exhibition. The elements that make up the exhibition include texts representing different genres and attracting media interest to various extents (written and spoken texts, printed and digital texts, static and moving texts, etc.). These include catalogues, exhibition guides, exhibit descriptions, introductory texts on the exhibition, etc. These texts are physically accessible in the museum space in a “traditional” form and/or made available through special applications in a digital form (audio guide, texts accessible by QR code, etc.). Texts making up the exhibition also include spoken texts, such as the narrative of the guide and audio guide texts. Special thematic exhibitions have comprehensive multimodal arrangements enhancing the expressive function in the process of communicating a message, e.g., about the artist and their works, through spoken word, projected graphics,

motion-animated paintings, or their combination, to improve the educational function of museums.

- External communication encompasses the museum's interactions with various partners, including those that serve its marketing purposes. It involves texts that carry out, *inter alia*, phatic and persuasive functions, i.e. blogs, social media posts, images and graphic posts, virtual walks, brochures, flyers, announcements, and advertisements.

The important role of texts in museum communication has been most frequently highlighted by representatives of other scientific disciplines so far. They asked about the linguistic complexity of exhibit labels in the museum, and the ways in which they build relationships with visitors, and thus strategies for producing specific meanings (e.g., Hooper-Greenhill 1994, Meier/Reust 2000, Graf 2003, Ravelli 2005, Serrell 2015, Nieroba 2018, Pillière 2018). It is linguists, however, who have focused their attention on the functioning and structure of texts, their impact on audiences, and their relations with other objects. Linguistic research and the application of linguistic instrumentation and research methodology can significantly deepen the existing knowledge of museum communication and inspire further practical applications.

The following section provides a review of linguistic research on museum communication in general and its selected aspects and determines linguistic and multimodal analytical categories that seem to be suitable for application in future studies on the subject. These categories are closely related to the contemporary attributes of museums discussed earlier, i.e., communication, interaction, participation, and digitality.

### 3. Museum communication from the linguistic point of view

This section presents the scope of previous linguistic research on museum communication and aspects that have been particularly addressed. Linguistics has so far focused on museum communication mainly in terms of language use, including other semiotic systems. This primarily includes comprehensive semiotic processes with particular attention to the related communicative strategies and practices, genres of texts, and their functions, both in internal and external communication.

The museum's exhibition is the focal point of museum communication and the subject to which linguists have paid the most attention so far. How-

ever, there are few works on it in the Polish and German linguistics. The exhibition, whether permanent or temporary, constitutes the essence of the museum and is the pillar of museum communication. There is no consensus among semioticians and scholars of museum communication as to whether an exhibition is a medium (Scholze 2004: 12, Traba 2015), a code/channel (Locher 2004), a text/statement (Niklewicz 2015), or a narrative (Flacke 2016), but the linguistic perspective is clear in this respect. The exhibition is a sign and a text at the same time; it is a multi-coded/multimodal, comprehensive, and multifaceted text that has to be analysed using multifaceted models of description and different methods (cf., section 6).

According to semioticians and linguists, the exhibition is an intentionally created semiotic system (Kováč 1979, Borusiewicz 2020); it is a place of visualisation and a fictional world in a specified museum space and at the same time a process of communication producing a system of collectively shared meanings in a specific (non-linear) way (Cameron 1968, Schärer 1991, Lazzeretti 2016, Ziębińska-Witek 2018). According to Niklewicz, the task of the exhibition:

is primarily to shape the self-awareness of the viewer as someone who becomes the creator of the museum narrative. This has made it possible to put a number of discourses in an intertextual space and, as such, can represent an extension to linguistic theory (Niklewicz 2015: 171).

The linguistic reflection on the exhibition in museum communication has been undertaken by Wolfgang Kesselheim in his monograph, *Ausstellungskommunikation. Eine linguistische Untersuchung multimodaler Wissenskommunikation im Raum* [Exhibition communication. A linguistic investigation of multimodal knowledge communication in space] (2021). Kesselheim (2021: 28) assumes that exhibition communication has the following features:

- It is based on temporally permanent signs/texts that are independent of the presence of their makers and conditioned by time and space. The process of receiving these signs is significantly affected by the visitor, with their experience and knowledge in the three-dimensional exhibition space.
- It is multimodally organised which means that the meanings produced in space result from the overlapping of signs coming from many different semiotic systems and interacting differently with different senses.



- It is a communication of knowledge, which means that the acquisition of information (the facts presented in the space) is a focal point for the participants in the communication.

Kesselheim defines two types of exhibition communication, i.e.:

- “communication through the exhibition”, whereby studies focus on the process of producing meanings in the exhibition space by means of a multimodally organised exhibition; and

- “communication at the exhibition”, whereby studies focus on the interactions of visitors to the exhibition.

He relies on the achievements of semiotics and text linguistics to analyse communication through the exhibition and the methods of conversation analysis to investigate communication at the exhibition.

From the point of view of semiotics and text linguistics, the study of communication through the exhibition is based on the assumption that the linguistic analysis of museum communication also has to focus on the elements that shape the space (the architectural layout of the space, the arrangement of the space, the objects in it, writing, etc.), which have not been investigated actively enough so far. This is because meanings are not “inscribed” in the exhibition; they are actively constructed by visitors although some routines to read the meanings have been designed by the exhibition maker. Due to the multimodally organised process of integrating dispersed elements (non-linearity), two issues become relevant for linguistic research, i.e., the analysis of the combinations of the object and the accompanying description, typical to museums (the structure of the text and the descriptive, narrative, value-laden way of implementing the subject), and the study of the hybridity of communication, arising from the overlapping of different semiotic proposals and their arrangements conditioned by the specified exhibition space.

From the point of view of conversation analysis, the effectiveness of communication at the exhibition is determined by the visitor, with their experience, knowledge, and expectations. In this case, studies focus on the group of visitors and the way they perceive the exhibition, move around it, and act together through interaction (not always verbal), and not on the exhibition space itself and the interaction of various semiotic elements. Kesselheim assumes that visiting the exhibition is largely about taming the space so that visitors limit their perception of the exhibition space to what is within their range of sight, touch, hearing, and even smell. Hence, he believes that the

analysis should focus on such activities as the way visitors move around, stop at exhibits, encourage others to approach exhibits as well as view and describe exhibits, and the way the viewer's knowledge is activated and acquired. He claims that participants in the interaction perceive particular features of exhibits and infer, based on their perceptions, the general features of the classes represented by exhibits. However, the process of producing the interaction space is affected not only by the movement and gaze of visitors, but above all by the language which, as such, also determines the way visitors move and perceive the exhibition. Finally, multimodal resources contingent on the body, such as gestures that museum visitors use during the interaction, are coupled to the environment which, as such, is full of multimodal signs (cf., Borusiewicz 2020: 57–109).

Other works on museum communication in a broad sense study communication activities and practices. Heiko Hausendorf, in his work, *Soziale Positionierungen im Kunstbetrieb. Linguistische Aspekte einer Soziologie der Kunstkommunikation* [Social positioning in art. Linguistic aspects of the sociology of art communication] (2012), analyses museum communication using the example of art communication. He pays particular attention to two aspects, i.e., communicative practices relevant to museum communication and the social positioning of those who are in contact with art. He posits that art communication is always about occupying a certain social position and that this positioning usually takes place within the process of evaluating and valuing art. In this paper, the former aspect is much more important. Hausendorf defines five key tasks of museum communication leading to five key communicative practices, i.e., referencing, describing, interpreting, explaining, and evaluating. For the analysis of the painting by Georges Seurat, *Une baignade à Asnières*, he developed a model shown below to study the tasks, means, and forms of art communication.

Another inspiring study in the field of museum communication is the analysis of audio guides by Constanze Spiess (2017) investigating linguistic strategies to link different speech genres that are responsible for meaning-making in educational messages. Spiess defines the following three linking strategies: integration, syntagmatic linking, and superimposition. The first strategy takes place when statements of experts, laypeople, and artists themselves are integrated into a text in an audio guide describing a work of art or an artefact. In the second strategy, the statements of those commenting on

**Table 1.** Tasks, means, and forms of art communication. Adapted from Hausendorf (2012: 101)

Communication tasks				
Reference (What is it all about?)	Describe (What can we see?)	Interpret (What lies behind the work?)	Explain (What do we know about the work?)	Evaluate (What do we think of the work? How do we evaluate it?)
Pragmatic and semantic measures				
Identify the work	Specify the material and format	Specify the artist	Specify the style/era	Specify the value
Forms: grammar and lexis				
Une baignade à Asnières	Oil on canvas, 201 × 300 cm	Free space that Georges-Pierre Seurat consciously used	Moving away from conventional impressionism	The highest quality pearl of the modern era

a museum object, functionally and semantically separated from one another, are placed one after the other to explain and describe the object and then interpret it. The last strategy involves the periodic overlapping of a narrative text about a museum object and other semiotic codes, such as sounds, essential to explaining the essence of the object. For example, in the descriptions of a war-related artefact, sounds of falling bombs, screaming people, etc. may appear. Spiess attempts to capture, with the help of pragmalinguistic tools, the function of audio guides and the ways in which they construct communicative practices that make up the process of referencing, describing, interpreting, explaining, and evaluating museum objects.

Cecilia Lazeretti in her work, *The Language of Museum Communication. A Diachronic Perspective* (2016), analyses the press releases of various British and American museums and their websites, blogs, e-news, and social media. She is interested in how the language of museum communication has changed in order to face the challenge posed by new technologies. In her research, she applies the methods of corpus linguistics and genre analysis. The work is diachronic in nature and shows the dynamic changes in the use and role of language in museum communication.

Recent works in the field of museum communication reveal an even stronger need for the analysis of the semiosis process using multimodality

research. In this respect, the following section outlines the types of modalities in communication and a model of analysis that is effective in view of contemporary communication trends.

#### 4. Multimodality in communication: challenges in the analysis of museum communication

All communication, including museum communication, is multimodal, but the share of individual linguistic, pictorial, and acoustic signs in different areas of communication can vary. In the case of museum communication, the perceptual demands of exhibition visitors are increasing; they expect to see a museum world that is similar to the world of their everyday media communication. Progressive digitisation, also understood as a dynamic sign-making technology, provides effective tools for the creation and reception of different kinds of texts. To break away from the stereotype of “unattractive” forms of presenting content and knowledge, also in the spirit of the museum’s participatory approach, digitally produced multimodal texts are used more intensively in museum communication (cf., Kress/van Leeuwen <sup>2</sup>2010; Bonacchi/Karpiński 2014, Opiłowski 2015, Klug 2022). A multimodal text, derived from multimodal discourse theory<sup>3</sup>, is a coherent and dynamic whole in which the verbal code interacts with other codes (visual, auditory, and gestural). Multimodal texts take the form of viewing surface (Schmitz 2011) as well as verbal and pictorial spaces (Poprawa 2020). Its structure is assumed to produce a greater density of the meaning, clear intentions of the sender, and more effectiveness when conveyed to the recipient<sup>4</sup>. There are several factors in multimodal communication that are crucial for a multimodal text to acquire a certain meaning, communicative effectiveness, and social utility. The key elements include mode, medium, production, distribution, and design (cf., Kress/van Leeuwen <sup>2</sup>2010: 20–21). The written or spoken word combined with a static or moving image and enriched with auditory elements is an essential part of contemporary text genres. Different **types of sign modes** with different perceptual, cognitive, semantic, and functional

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<sup>3</sup> The original term (multimodal discourse) is derived from Kress/van Leeuwen (<sup>2</sup>2010: 24–44).

<sup>4</sup> The very concept of discourse is defined by Kress/van Leeuwen (<sup>2</sup>2010: 20) as “a socially constructed knowledge of (some aspect of) reality.”

potentials, are inherent in multimodal texts. In the course of multimodal practices, they combine into higher-order structures, i.e., texts, and develop their sense-making potential. This means that multimodality reveals a highly comprehensive level of communication. Types of sign modes need a **medium** as a carrier of the text as a whole. In such a case, the articulation of texts in public space becomes a prerequisite for the **production** of texts. When reproduced through the media, it reaches **distribution**. Repeated and distributed texts perpetuate form, internal structure, and external visibility jointly referred to as **design**. Design is essential to the effective creation and reception of text genres in social communication. Multimodal texts also combine the meanings, functions, and arguments of other multimodal texts, and conceptualise social images of reality.

Therefore, the essence of multimodal texts, including those used in museum communication, lies in the coherent and intentional use of several semiotic systems to activate different senses using diverse forms of communication and text genres. The image is complemented by the **dynamism** in the forms and content of communication. The formal features are reflected by the semiotic complexity of a multimodal text or, more precisely, in one of the macro-modalities called **text design** (cf., Bucher 2007: 59 et seq., Kress/van Leeuwen 2010: 5 et seq., 21). Another macro-modality (**language-image-sound relations**) involves the process of meaning and sense-making. The dynamism and comprehensiveness of all levels of content (subject, meaning, sense) are embedded more strongly in language-image-sound relations than in text design. This is because they draw on more meanings, invoke a deeper quality of meaning, and strongly depend on the participant in communication (their creative powers and receptive skills). Text design is primarily visual (or possibly aural) and its semantics is connotative rather than denotative. Further, **hybridity** as a coherent combination of different forms of communication can become an element of persuasion towards the viewer. An intriguing performance at the intersection of written and spoken language, moving image, light, colour, and even smell or touch (which also function as semiotic systems) will produce a semiotic performance with a narrative arranged by the viewer for themselves and not just a simple “semiotic proposal.”

Therefore, the study of museum communication should incorporate the tools of media linguistics as it primarily focuses on the interplay between different semiotic codes and their influence on the (re)construction of meanings.

## 5. Multimodal text: categories and models of analysis

The study of multimodal communication to date and, in particular, the analysis of multimodal texts use several characteristic methodological approaches. The first stage involves establishing an overarching perspective in relation to the text and situational conditions. The examples include cross-cultural, comparative, intermedial, interdisciplinary, cross-genre, diachronic, and other general methods. The choice of the method depends on the aim of the study and the available corpus. An overview of different methods and text analyses based on them can be found in Schneider/Stöckl (2011). Museum communication can utilise all these methods. Due to its comprehensiveness in linguistic, media, and situational construction, as is commonly the case, it requires a wide range of methods.

The next (lower) methodological level includes specific analytical models, involving categories (i.e., ordering parameters) and criteria (i.e., category-clarifying parameters). There are a large number of models of analysis in use, serving as comprehensive sets of analytical instruments. The foundations of contemporary multimodal models can be found in a model of analysis called DIMEAN (German: *Diskurslinguistische Mehr-Ebenen-Analyse*, Multi-Level Linguistic Discourse Analysis), discursive in the strict sense and open to multimodal texts, developed by Warnke and Spitzmüller (2009, 2011). The levels introduced by the authors (trans-textual, actor-related, and intertextual), their openness to the purpose of the study, and the specific character of the corpus make it possible to apply it to the study of museum communication. Furthermore, exhibitions become the subject of public discourses which, depending on the research objective (research on how the topic is discussed, the way of argumentation, comparative research, etc.), can be analysed using the DIMEAN model. The model inspired other discourse scholars and media linguists to develop further research procedures. For example, Peździsz (2017: 232 et seq.) developed the BIAN model (German: *Blog-Interaktion-Analyse*, Interaction Analysis in a Weblog). The model contains several facets of analysis, i.e., profiles, analytical processes, and underlying theories. It has a high degree of comprehensiveness and, most importantly, mainly refers to a weblog as a specific text genre with specific user interaction. Since museum communication also takes place virtually on the Internet and there are a number of blogs about exhibitions, the BIAN model can be applied to the study of both internal and external virtual communication.

Another model of multimodal analysis is the AMEG model (German: *das diskurslinguistische Analysemodell des medialen Gegendiskurses*, Model of Linguistic Analysis of Competitive Media Discourse) developed by D. Kaczmarek (2018: 187 et seq.). It also integrates the selected facets, criteria, and patterns of analysis drawn from text, discourse, and media linguistics. This comprehensiveness stems from the object of study – there are more than one discourse (primordial and competitive discourses) applied to an intercultural (e.g., Polish-German) communicative setting. The model can be used in the intercultural analysis of museum texts and discourses. Special temporary exhibitions, shown in many countries and provoking numerous discussions, comments, and opinions, are also gaining in popularity. The discourse about such exhibitions can be analysed using the AMEG model.

The last of the comprehensive multimodal models is the MUKAM model (German: *das multimodal-kontrastive Analysemodell*, Multimodal-Contrastive Analysis Model) developed by Opiłowski (2015: 124 et seq.). Originally, it referred to press texts. It contains three main facets of analysis, i.e., the text genre, macro-modalities (with two main macro-modalities, that is text design and combinations of language and image), and macro-modalities in comparative terms. The model takes into account the visual design of source (artistic) texts and accompanying texts and the relations between language and image, also in the context of museum internal communication and museum multimodal practices. In view of the multiplicity of museum forms of representation, this model could also, in whole or in part (e.g., in terms of macro-modality only) provide an analytical tool for museum communication.

The advantage of these models is that they provide a multi-faceted approach, being based on numerous research categories and criteria as well as the detailed analytical parameters towards the analysed scopes of communication (multimodal texts, discourses) and forms of communication (printed texts, weblogs). However, as analytical matrices, they are somewhat cumbersome to use during the analysis and when identifying the results. They uncover the depth of semiosis in the texts but are difficult to implement during compact scientific analyses and reviews due to their comprehensiveness. The authors emphasise that their models can be reduced or modified to adapt them to the research purpose. On the other hand, forms of multimodal communication together with contemporary (digital) text production techniques continue to intensify the presence of central and peripheral signs.



They also make changes in semiotic hierarchies, e.g., by shifting originally peripheral signs to the centre of semiosis of the text, thus intensifying the interaction of signs and resulting in a hybridity of forms, a multiplicity of meanings, and an almost uninterrupted intermediality. This also applies to museum communication, which, similarly, makes strong use of different means of multimodal expression of form and content to be communicative and convincing to its audience.

Thus, the tendency to increase analytical transparency, without loss to the interpretation of the texts and with an open field for creative clarifications and emphases on the analysis, is becoming evident. A model of multimodal text analysis developed by Stöckl (2020: 58) and tested by Czachur, Opiłowski, and Smykała (2022) is an example. The model is based on a combination of functional stages in the text and types of semiotic sign modes as proposed by van Leeuwen (2005: 80). Based on these assumptions, Stöckl defined the following criteria for describing a multimodal text:

- **Composition** involves the analysis of the components of the text's structure. This includes a macro-level analysis taking into account all the visual and verbal elements that make up the whole and a micro-level analysis concentrating on such elements as lines, frames, font size and colour, breaks, and other distinctive features. Such multimodal elements are present in the texts accompanying the museum exhibition and have an influence on its communicativeness.

- **Communicative action** refers to various actions (carried out with the verbal and visual code) that make up the functions of the text. According to the research by Hausendorf (2021) to date, this includes mainly referencing, describing, interpreting, explaining, and evaluating (cf., section 4).

- **Thematic structure** primarily comprises the main theme and side themes. In this respect, the thematic coherence of the texts is co-determined by thematic co-reference and the positioning of the topic in the specific knowledge frame of the text users. In terms of museum communication, the thematic arrangement and the development of the exhibition theme through exhibits and accompanying texts constitute an important research field.

- **Multimodal integration** shows the essence of the interaction of the visual and verbal layers at the level of formal and pragmatic connections, i.e., compositional and communicative-functional connections between different semiotic codes.



• **Intertextuality and interpicturality** refer to the relationship that occurs between the whole or part of a secondary text referring to a primary text by means of intertextual forms, such as quotation, paraphrase, parody, allusion, and even plagiarism. Sometimes, such forms can be seen in textual elements, e.g., the title of an image or its verbal inner element. This analytical criterion can be extended to include inter-iconicity (inter-pictoriality), which, just as often as linguistic intertextuality, occurs, for example, in visual (pictorial), graphic, and formal references to painting and sculpture. While the multimodal integration concerns intra-textual relations, intertextual and inter-iconic relations refer to external texts, images, and graphics. The aim is to capture the intentional and strategic connections between the analysed text and other, external texts and images.

Compact and eclectic models of analysis, such as the one above, would not be possible without previous elaborate models, such as DIMEAN, BIAN, AMEG, and MUKAM. Only detailed analytical insights into multimodal text structures of different typological provenance encourage the development of pragmatic models, tailored to the specific research goal and targeted at the most important communicative elements and activities in the analysed multimodal text. Museum communication research, including both internal and external communication research, can make successful use of compact models. If the purpose of the study and the specific character of the analysed texts so require, the model of analysis can be extended. The dynamic analytical approach seems to be most appropriate in this case.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper contemplates the role and features of museum communication from the linguistic point of view. Particular attention was paid to the factors that co-shape museum communication, methodological instrumentation necessary to describe museum communication, and tools available to contemporary linguistics.

In terms of linguistics, museum communication is a comprehensive set of multimodally organised communicative practices oriented mainly towards the achievement of social and educational goals (culture- and identity-forming functions). These goals are achieved through the collection, storage, preservation, and conservation of resources, their display on the exhibition, research

as well as educational and publishing activities. If the exhibition and the process of comprehensive communication it initiates, directed inwards and outwards, is placed at the centre of the museum's activities, the conclusion important for contemporary linguistics is that exhibition design mainly involves the creation of various forms of communication and space planning, and thus the construction of relationships between the viewer and the multimodally organised exhibition space and between the visitors themselves (cf., Mordyński 2015).

Modern linguistics, which has placed the human speaker and the subjective process of meaning production at the centre of its interest, has developed cognitively attractive tools for a comprehensive yet detailed analysis of museum communication. As evidenced in this paper, the factors that have to be taken into account in linguistic analyses of museum communication include the dynamic and multimodally organised exhibition space, with the visitor moving around it, and the whole process of commercial and educational communication directed outwards. The design of the research procedure requires flexibility. The multilevel model of analysis chosen based on the research objective should look into the visitor, with their expectations and knowledge/experiences, and at the same time the multimodally managed process of sense- and meaning-making. Research of this type is useful from both the theoretical and practical point of view and can enrich the work of museologists and theorists.

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*Museum communication: the current state of research  
and challenges for linguistics*

This paper deals with communication processes taking place in the museum, collectively referred to as museum communication, from the point of view of contemporary linguistics. Based on previous research, museum communication is defined as a kind of interplay of multiple communicative practices multimodally organised within a museum and activated in communication with the museum's external partners. Linguistics has so far looked at museum communication mainly in terms of language use, including other semiotic systems, with particular attention to the related communicative strategies and practices, genres of texts, and their functions, both in internal and external communication. However, the paper argues that the scope of tools used to study museum communication should be broadened. The key determinants of museum communication include multimodality, multisensoriality, hybridity, and digitality. The paper provides a review of linguistic models of analysis with a variety of tools and solutions that have been developed for the study of multimodal texts with similar attributes in different communicative fields. The review is then used to develop a catalogue of linguistic analytical categories that can be applied to detailed analyses of particular aspects of museum communication.

*Key words: museum communication, multimodality, linguistic models of analysis, communicative practices, hybridity, semiosis*