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Multimodal Corpus-Based Approaches to Website Analysis

This plenary paper describes research that will appear in a forthcoming book of the same name by Baldry and O'Halloran [7] and is based, in part, on a searchable corpus of university websites. Like the book, the paper starts from the premise that multimodal corpus linguistics [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] and its application to the analysis of websites is in its infancy [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11] but that, within a multimodal analysis framework, corpus-based comparison of websites can already provide insights into the evolution of corporate strategies (see below) with significant general consequences for multimodal studies and their further diffusion in teaching and research.

The paper uses corpus-based research into website analysis to investigate various issues such as the goals and image-promotion strategies of the world's leading universities from various semiotic, social and cultural standpoints. The main innovative feature of this corpus-based research is, however, its longitudinal approach. Its concern is with the development of instruments capable of extending the comparative approach implicit in all forms of corpus-based studies to the evolution of websites with reference *inter alia* to bias and diversity in specific societies and specific social groups.

Thus, although the research relates to a specific sector, namely the world's leading universities, the focus on how knowledge construction and communication evolves in websites in relation to different times, places and cultures reveals a concern with the development of a more general model of analysis of the changing functions of websites as expressions of corporate culture, whether they be universities, government institutions, multinational enterprises or international organisations.

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