

Does non-linear arrangement of written units hinder the writing/reading interface? Some counterexamples providing a negative answer, from Aztec script conventions to specific visual patterns in European texts

Antonio Perri¹; Luciano Perondi²; Leonardo Romei³

¹University “Suor Orsola Benincasa”, Italy; ²Università IUAV di Venezia, Italy;

³Independent researcher

Linearity of speech is a structural constraint according to which the interface between oral discourse, or reading practice, and written text presupposes a one-dimensional order of signs. However, in some ancient script conventions (mainly pictorial, such as Nahuatl writing) but also in particular written or printed texts from Western tradition we see emblematic or non-linear compositions as alternative strategies for encoding of information and linguistic content.

In this paper we assume that non-linear, or emblematic representation in written language is, indeed, a main feature of textualization practices occurring in any scriptorial tradition. While it does not hinder or seriously damage the interface between writing and reading with a cumbersome lack of mapping, on the contrary what we have called *synsemic layouts* – as the emergence of Western multi-linear textual structures testifies, first, during Medieval times, then in scientific writing of European Renaissance and the hermetic tradition of the sixteenth century, but also in contemporary “infographic” or in what is called multimodal writing – do play a major role in the very process of linguistic understanding, at the crossroads between universal visual strategies and language-specific devices.

Fernández-Fontecha, A., O'Halloran, K. L., Tan, S., & Wignell, P. (2019). “A multimodal approach to visual thinking: the scientific sketchnote”. *Visual Communication*, 18(1), pp. 5-29.

Bonora G., Dalai G., De Rosa D., et al. (2020) “Sinsemia as a tool for designing interactive artifacts for teaching. The case study of The topography of Dante’s *Inferno* and the detailed definition of reference frame”. In: Università degli Studi di Sassari, UNISS (Italy), Ceccarelli N., Jiménez-Martínez C., et al. (eds.) *2CO Communicating Complexity. Contributions from the 2017 Tenerife Conference*. Vicerrectorado de Docencia. Universidad de La Laguna. Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de La Laguna, pp. 94-104. DOI: 10.25145/b.2COcommunicating.2020.

Lussu, G. (2020). “Writing Is Image”. In: Cicalò, E. (ed.) *Proceedings of the 2nd International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Image and Imagination. IMG 2019*. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, vol 1140. Springer, Cham, pp. 15-20. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41018-6_3