Basic Multimodal Terms Categorized by Discipline and Mode

Each discipline often has specific ways of describing elements of multimodal texts based on what is most relevant to its field. This table includes some of the basic language of multimodality used in a few different disciplines divided up by the categories of modes used in the discipline of composition. This expanded list of terms can provide more thorough ways of discussing and describing multimodal texts across disciplines.

	Linguistic	Visual	Gestural	Spatial	Audio
composition terms	word choice	color	facial expressions	arrangement	music
	delivery of written text (tone)	style	hand gestures	organization of objects	sound effects & ambient noise/sounds
	sentence and paragraph organization	size	body language	proximity between people and objects	silence
	coherence of ideas	perspective	interactions between people		emphasis or accent in spoken voice
basic design terms	headline or header versus body text	color (primary, secondary or tertiary)		emphasis or hierarchy of objects or people	
	legibility	saturation		layout	
		contrast		alignment	
		repetition or rhythm		proximity	
		line (in terms of line quality)		negative/white space	
basic visual art terms		color (harmonious, monochromatic, warm, cool)	line (in terms of compositional direction)	composition (balanced, symmetrical, asymmetrical)	
		shape	repetition or rhythm	perspective	
		texture		size or scale	
		contrast			
		contour versus flat			
basic video/film terms	dialogue	camera angle	movement/editing (continuous or discontinuous)		music
	narration	lighting			sound effects
		setting			dialogue
		focus			harmonious
		props			discordant