

# A Day in the Digital Lives of 0-3 year olds (WG1 project)

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# Study aims and design

- ▶ digital technologies in the everyday lives of children aged 0-3 years, across Europe
- ▶ 'Day in the life' methodology
  - 1 familiarisation visit + 1 all-day filming + 1 consultation visit
- ▶ 2 children: 1 x 14 month old girl; 1 x 32 month old boy
- ▶ Researchers: Rosie Flewitt and Alison Clark

**Focus today: Young children communicating online**

# Text Design + Principles of Composition

What happens when text is designed for digital media/ when young children are composing on-screen?

Text **design** and **principles of composition** bring diverse aspects in coherence with each other:

**(Designer's interests + Rhetorical purposes + Imagined Audience) + (Modes + Media + Social site)**

Key question for the meaning-maker = 'In what modes should my meaning be fixed?' (Kress, 1997)

The writer/speaker makes choices about how to realize their intention, interest and purpose, in relation to the semiotic resources available to realize these purposes as material signs/texts intended for a specific audience.



**Interest:** I miss my friend

**Purpose:** Send a message to let her know I'm thinking about her



Who is my audience?

How can I materialise my purpose?

What are my options? What is available? What is apt?

**Modes:** writing (text message); image (photo); sound (talk to her? voice recording? music? etc); **moving image (video)**;

**Medium:** **mum's mobile phone**

**Social site:** Sign-maker's decisions shaped by social and technological environment for making and distributing signs

*NB Publicly available stock images are used on this slide.*

**Selection of modes:** video message is available and apt for the medium (social conventions for the site) & the sign maker's (Jack's) interest and intention (bringing form and meaning together)

**Semiotic arrangement:**

- temporal (speech and moving image operate sequentially, in constraints of time) so decisions are needed in relation to *pace* (9 seconds in length; *pace in action with constant movement*)
- spatial (*layout= fill screen with self, from near, to distant, to very near; screen framed top left by pirate hat – a given from their previous play; new = 'I'm Jackbeard'*)

**Principles of foregrounding:** decisions about salience = rhetorical and representational devices: achieved through speech (*intonation, pauses and emphasis*); through body movement, (*from standing back to almost touching screen*)

**Social relations:** between sign maker and sign interpreter and decisions about social positioning (smiles; cheeky eyes; 'up close and personal'; kiss)

**Text from Jack's video message:**

**Hello Lucypirate**  
**I'm **Jack**beard**  
(blows kiss)



# New media, new possibilities

Digital media have made available new kinds of modal ensembles to users of all ages, offering possibilities for representation that have not existed before.

Social semiotic approach to multimodality offers robust and theorised insights into how young children's meaning making with digital technologies is designed, and design is dependent on:

- material aspects of a medium that afford and constrain possible semiotic action
- availability of semiotic resources in a given site/medium
- 'aptness' of semiotic resources, depending on sign-maker's interest, intention and sense of audience
- established social conventions of modal use and media use

Can inform debates about children's uses of diverse communication technologies, potentially raising the debate that is all too often mired by cultural ideologies of simplicity, ability, and panics about the 'dumbing down' of literacy and culture generally.