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BA English Honours | Semester II | ENG2VN101

English Language Skills for Visual Media

Module 1: Visual Storytelling and the Grammar of the Visual • Comprehensive Notes

Chapter 1: The Semiotics and Architecture of Visual Storytelling

Visual media—encompassing cinema, television, digital streaming, and web video—operates via a specialized semiotic grammar. Just as written language relies on phonemes, syntax, and rhetoric, visual storytelling constructs narrative meaning through camera angles, shot composition, lighting design (mise-en-scène), and temporal montage.

1.1 Camera Syntax: Shots, Angles, and Movements

Camera placement directs the viewer's psychological identification and emotional empathy:

- **Extreme Long Shots (ELS) & Wide Shots (WS):** Establish geographic context, environmental scale, and character isolation.
- **Medium Shots (MS):** Emphasize interpersonal interactions, dialogue, and body language.
- **Close-Ups (CU) & Extreme Close-Ups (ECU):** Magnify subtle facial micro-expressions, generating intense intimacy or psychological dread.
- **Camera Angles:** Low angles project power and dominance; high angles induce vulnerability; dutch/canted angles evoke psychological disorientation.

1.2 Mise-en-Scène and Montage Theory

Mise-en-scène encompasses everything situated before the camera: set architecture, color palettes, costume, props, and lighting chiaroscuro. When combined with Soviet montage principles (Lev Kuleshov's juxtaposition of unrelated shots to create new conceptual meaning, Sergei Eisenstein's montage of attractions), visual grammar generates layered symbolic discourse.

Advanced Critical Theory, Hermeneutics & Literary Praxis

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1. Hermeneutic Paradigms and Textual Mechanics

Critical inquiry into Module 1: Visual Storytelling and the Grammar of the Visual reveals how textual forms construct meaning through complex aesthetic strategies and structural choices:

- **Structuralism and Semiotic Deconstruction:** The organization of signs, tropes, and syntactical structures establishes narrative authority while simultaneously revealing internal fissures. Binary oppositions embedded within the discourse—such as center versus margin, tradition versus modernity, and subjective interiority versus objective reality—are systematically problematized through textual slippages and ambiguous signifiers.

- **Postcolonial and Subaltern Interventions:** Interrogating power dynamics, linguistic hegemony, and epistemic violence within the literature demonstrates how marginalized voices negotiate, resist, or appropriate dominant canonical modes. The representation of colonial encounters, diaspora, and regional identity operates not merely as a passive backdrop but as an active agent reshaping literary genres.
- **Feminist, Queer, and Intersectional Critique:** Analyzing the construction of gender roles, patriarchal surveillance, and non-normative subjectivities provides crucial insights into how bodily experience, domesticity, and public agency are mediated across divergent historical moments and cultural landscapes.
- **Ecocritical and Spatial Dynamics:** Physical topographies, built environments, and non-human ecologies function as active participants in the narrative economy. Space is never neutral; rather, it reflects socio-economic stratification, environmental exploitation, and geopolitical borders that delineate belonging and exile.

2. Historiographical Context and Reception Theory

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3. Comparative Aesthetic and Thematic Matrix

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