So, our syllabus says that we will produce "multimodal texts" this semester. What the heck is a multimodal text?
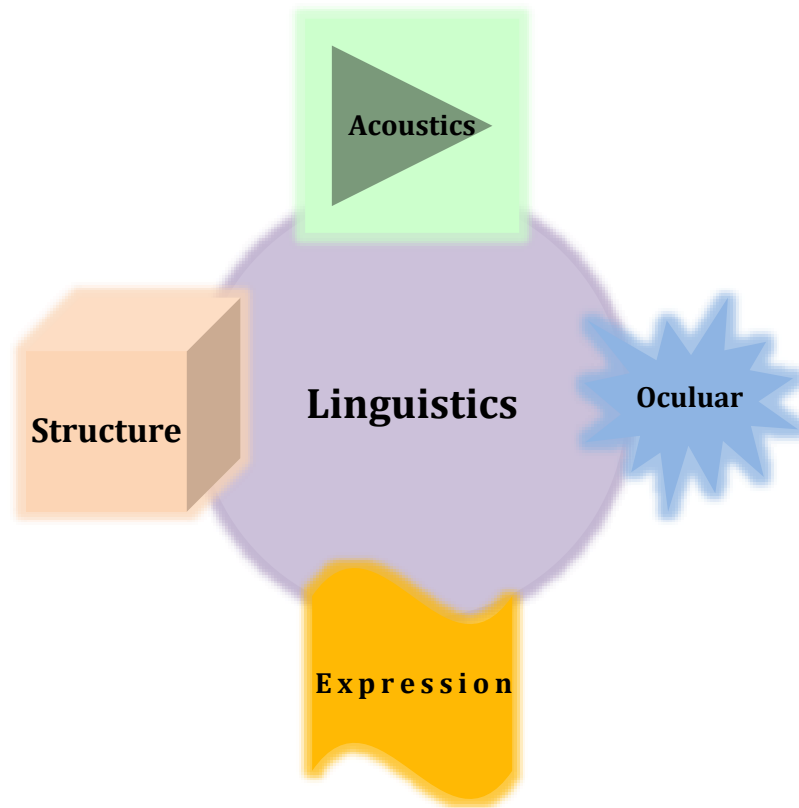
Here's the answer. Let's define what we mean by multimodal. Look at the visual:

Acoustics

Structure

Linguistics

Ocular

Expression

Multimodal communication is a rhetorical (effective) combination of the mutually-informing elements in this chart. I like to use the word text in place of communication, and when I do, you should know that I really mean any kind of text- visual, aural, non-verbal, written, and spoken. I have depicted my vision of multimodal textual communication in the visual above. You can see that linguistics is in the middle of this visual. Why? Well,

– **<u>linguistics</u>** is an overarching term that describes both an individual's intrinsic process when creating language, as well as the extrinsic considerations like context and culture. Think of linguistics as the center of communication. It is the anchor for written words. When I say linguistics, I include ideas of style, grammar, usage, word choice, etc. I also include ideas of context (when/where/why) in which the communication is taking place and the cultural complexities (race, gender, class) contained in the communication itself. So, you see, for our purposes here, we would say that linguistics is what holds communication together. What about structure?

- The **structure** of a piece of communication is how you, the author, put it together for a specific audience. Structure includes spatial and arrangement components. You could also say it is how you, the author, design the communication. For engineers and architects , you might also see it as the framework you build to make your text clear for your audience.

- The **expression** you put into a text is what you might think of as non-verbal cues or physical gestures, basically your bodily movements. When performing a text for an audience, you must give consideration to your body movements. For instance, if you are recording a vlog, you should make appropriate choices in how you, the performer AND author, physically move as part of the video presentation. You will study this mode much more in your speech courses, but it's important that you have a working knowledge of how expression informs the rhetorical choices you make in all of your textual communication. In many forms of electronic texts, you also must be aware of sound. That brings us to the aural mode.

- **Acoustics** considerations in creating any form of text must be rhetorical (effective). How effective is a podcast, if your audience does not get it, because you, the author, have not considered volume, the rhetorical amount of sound effects, music, or other aural elements? You know the answer – not very effective (rhetorical) at all. We have all watched videos and listened to podcasts that have errors in aural elements. Ranging from distracting to completely destroying the author's purpose, these sounds become vital to getting your message to your audience. Let's move now form our ears to our eyes., or the visual element.

- Let's replace the word visual with **ocular**. When I make this switch, many of you will immediately think of *Ocular Rift,* a virtual reality helmet/gaming experience. So, ocular considerations, then, are those parts of a rhetorical (effective) text in which you, the author, must choose the most rhetorical appeal to the eye. So, this element has much to do with first impressions, what the text looks like. In a standard "dear teacher" essay, you consider this element when you use font, charts, photographs, diagrams, etc. When you design a digital text, the visual element is just as important, but you have to consider further issues such color, lighting, text-objects, and more.

So, you see now how all five modes of communication, or texts for us, inform the rhetorical choices you make as an author. And yes, if you have produced any kind of text, you are already an author. Think about that – ANY kind of text. This semester we will build on the skills and talents you already have as an author and rhetor to facilitate your growth as a scholar both here at the University and in your home communities of discourse.