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INTERMODALITY IN TEACHING WRITING

by

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INTERMODALITY IN TEACHING WRITING

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University of Nebraska, 2012

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This dissertation articulates a writing pedagogy based on a theory of *intermodality* to help writing instructors navigate the affordances and challenges of multimodal composition. Drawing from recent discoveries in neuroscience about how the brain makes meaning, I situate this pedagogy of intermodality – literally, “between the modes” – within the Rhetoric and Composition traditions of embodied rhetoric and visual/multi-sensory rhetoric. A pedagogy attuned to intermodality capitalizes on how the senses (“modes”) work together to create meaning when composing with sound, image, movement, and text. In addition to the five senses, intermodality also incorporates the cultural, social, and material aspects of meaning-making.

This study focuses on my own writing classrooms as sites of inquiry for implementing intermodality at key points in the writing process – invention, revision, reflection, and moments of resistance – as students compose digital literacy narratives. The digital literacy narrative provides an ideal opportunity to study intermodality in the writing classroom because of its invitation for students to reflect critically on their perceptions of digital writing specifically and literacy more generally, and its ability to encourage students to (re)position themselves as agents in their own stories. The text describes the synergistic, imagistic, and embodied dimensions of a pedagogy of intermodality and suggests the increased avenues for student expression, analysis, and

persuasion when writing digitally. A pedagogy of intermodality reinforces the embodied, sensory aspects of writing by opening students to the affiliative elements of writing such as emotion, memory, and experience. The dissertation argues that, coupled with more traditional rhetorical instruction, a writing pedagogy attentive to intermodality helps students construct and implement effective rhetorical decision-making processes as they compose multimodally.

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Chapter 1: Writing Instruction in the Digital World

Do we think we know what writing is?
James E. Porter

About one-third of the way through the semester in my first-year writing courses, I ask my students to do something quite different from what they expect in a writing class: instead of writing a print-based text, I ask them to compose multimodally, using sound and image in addition to words. Most students respond to this assignment with concern, worry, or skepticism; even if they have experience creating an audio or video recording, few have done so to complete an assignment for a writing class. My assignment and their initial responses directly reflect the tension found in the current move from a print-based to a digital culture, which has already significantly impacted our work as composition specialists and instructors of writing. The increasingly widespread availability of digital technology during the past two decades has dramatically altered the “processes, products, and contexts for writing and the teaching of writing” (McKee and DeVoss 11), as well as the kinds of literacies students bring with them into the classroom.

The changing conception of “text” and “writing” in the 21st century has prompted serious (re)consideration in Rhetoric and Composition of the kinds of writing we assign as well as the ways we teach writing. Writing in the digital environment often means creating compositions that move beyond print-based words and incorporate sound, images, movement, and text, and they are often delivered only in electronic forms. As a college composition instructor with over 15 years experience in the classroom, I am confident that this kind of writing opens up new possibilities for expression and persuasion for students; I view my role as helping students tap into all the means

available to them. Therefore, I have made a commitment to having students in my first year writing courses produce at least one of their assignments using digital media.

With this commitment, however, comes the responsibility for developing effective pedagogies consistent with the kinds of writing we are asking students to undertake. Even though college students today are more digitally literate than students were, say, ten years ago, assigning multimodal writing projects still presents significant challenges. When I assign a traditional “paper,” I do not have to spend much time (if any) explaining how to save and print files, how to change fonts or spacing, and so on, because students are so familiar with word processing programs that the interface is practically transparent. However, asking students to compose multimodally often requires them to use programs with which they are less familiar, so the learning curve is steeper. More significant, students generally are unfamiliar with thinking about how to integrate so many different modal elements (voice, music, images, text, movement, color, and so on) into a project. Composing in the digital environment multiplies the complexity of the decisions a writer faces because of the additional media and mode choices available and also because of the rich layering and texturing of these elements. My goal in this project is to consider, develop, and evaluate a pedagogical approach that helps students pay attention to how their senses inform each other when writing digitally and make informed choices about how the elements of their digital writing work together effectively, expanding students’ avenues for expressing, analyzing, and persuading with writing.

Teaching Writing in the “Late Age of Print”

Digital technologies have complicated – but also enhanced – composition studies by providing more and different avenues for writing to take place. Indeed, new media has

affected the definition of “writing” itself, which is in flux and at times problematic. The field of Rhetoric and Composition has not reached consensus on precise terminology to describe this kind of new media writing; both *multimodal composing* and *new media writing* are frequently used. Sheridan, et. al. call it a “slippery” distinction: “We use ‘media’ to refer to mechanisms for delivering content to audiences. ‘Modes’ refer to categories of semiotic content (which are based, in some scholarship, on the five senses)” (834). DeVoss, Cushman and Grabill explain the terms this way:

[N]ew media aren’t necessarily new: images, motion, sound, video, and other media have existed for decades. What is new, however, are the spaces and interfaces in which and through which these media are woven. What is new is how writing is transformed into composing, requiring the ability to weave together what we might call “traditional” (certainly older) media (like text, graphics, and audio) with and for computer interfaces. What is also new is the access to these media and technologies in our writing classrooms. (37-8)

Claire Lauer’s definitive comparison of the terms “multimodal” and “multimedia” asserts the importance of context, noting “multimodal has become more commonly used in scholarly literature related to the new kinds of texts students are exploring in the composition classroom” but is “almost entirely absent . . . outside of the academy where the term multimedia takes prevalence” (226).

In this “late age of print,” as identified by Jay David Bolter, the definition of what we might consider “writing” in composition classes has certainly expanded beyond traditional papers, as we help students compose films, podcasts, visual arguments, digital portfolios, and so on. New media help to form a “convergence culture,” a term coined by

Henry Jenkins to refer to the current mixing of old and new media; more recently, theorists have been referring to our “small screen” culture, a nod to the computer screen or even smaller screens such as those on cellphones or iPods, the spaces where new media frequently “occur.” Because one of new media’s hallmarks is a move away from linearity and toward rich layering and simultaneity (for example, sound, movement, image and text occurring all at once), widespread digital technology in the convergence culture has engendered new kinds of literacies among students. These literacies are rapidly changing and complex, and they certainly inform the composition classroom. These literacies have ushered students from merely consuming new media elements to being able to produce new kinds of writing in this environment. In this digital world, our responsibilities and strengths as composition specialists reside with our foundation in rhetoric and our experience with the writing classroom. Our writing pedagogies must keep up as well.

To consider this reality of the digital world, the New London Group developed the term “multiliteracies” because it conveys the “multiplicity of communications channels and media” (Cope/Kalantzis 5) and also because it encompasses “the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity” (5); therefore, “multiliteracies” refers to different modes as well as different cultures. Furthermore, a pedagogy of “mere” literacy centers only on language, especially in a national form, assumes a stable system, and appears quite authoritarian, while a pedagogy of multiliteracies, in contrast, “focuses on modes of representation” beyond language and is culturally and contextually determined. It’s much more open-ended, flexible, and constantly changing and remade, which is consistent with the ideals of digital rhetoric. The “modes of representation” have

“specific cognitive, cultural, and social effects” (5). It is important to note that the elements of literacy acquisition and pedagogy in these descriptions, particularly those in digital environments, are rhetorical in nature, that is, contingent on context, audience, and purpose, and subject to change as the situation and needs change. Therefore, digital literacies introduced by new technologies can productively be viewed as rhetorical and under the purview of composition instructors.

One of the members of the New London Group, Gunther Kress, describes how dominant language and text-based practices are shifting toward what he terms multimodal communication, and he is particularly interested in how this shift dramatically changes conventional ideas of literacy. In his 2003 book *Literacy in the New Media Age*, Kress notes he must acknowledge the “social, technological and economic factors” (1) affecting literacy as he grapples with effects of both the image and the screen on his definition of literacy and moves away from a purely linguistic definition. As he develops his theoretical framework for literacy and multimodality (35), Kress states

The theoretical change is from linguistics to semiotics – from a theory that accounted for language alone to a theory that can account equally well for gesture, speech, image, writing, 3D objects, colour, music and no doubt others. Within that theory, the language-modes – speech and writing – will also have to be dealt with semiotically; they are now a part of the whole landscape of the many modes available for representation . . . (35-6)

Like so many other theorists, Kress relies on rhetoric to help theorize multimodal literacy, stating in a 2005 interview, “The twin notions of rhetoric and design, the rhetor as somebody who has a full understanding of the social situation in which she or he acts,

of the political situation in which he or she works, are key ideas. The social designer has a full understanding of the resources which are available and which are relevant and could be used in the situation in which the designing is being done” (Bearne 296). Kress’ influential marriage of rhetoric and design in describing multiliteracies informs the study of writing in the 21st century and opens the door for how we as composition instructors and scholars can (and must) expand our notions of writing.

The NCTE and CCCC are beginning to provide some general guidance for digital literacies and writing, at least in ideological terms. In 2008 the NCTE produced its “Policy Statement on Multimodal Literacies and Technology,” in which the first declaration is “[i]ntegration of multiple modes of communication and expression can enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration or decoration.” One of the implications for teaching is stated: “All modes of communication are codependent. Each affects the nature of the content of the other and the overall rhetorical impact of the communication event itself.” The CCCC’s “Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments” (February 2004) includes a statement acknowledging the changing nature of writing, but continues the split between print and screen: “The focus of writing instruction is expanding: the curriculum of composition is widening to include not one but two literacies: a literacy of print and a literacy of the screen. In addition, work in one medium is used to enhance learning in the other.” In spite of the dichotomy, the CCCC statement does acknowledge the mutual benefits of working in several modes, and it also includes calls for professional development for instructors, along with provision of adequate resources. At the K-12 level, organizations such as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) have developed

guidelines for students, teachers, administrators, and coaches (i.e. support for other colleagues becoming “digital educators”) and fulfill a strong advocacy role, especially for faculty development, student-centered learning, and administrative support. One of ISTE’s hallmarks is its NETS (National Educational Technology Standards) which “set a standard of excellence and best practices” for technology in education. For example, some of the standards for teachers include “Model Digital Age Work and Learning” and “Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility” (NETS - T).

As writing instructors, we have begun to embrace new opportunities for writing processes, participation, contexts, and products for our students, building on their multiliteracies both from within and outside of school settings. This digital rhetoric can be useful for the Rhetoric and Composition field as we consider how best to teach and incorporate digital media into our writing projects (see, for example, Wysocki/Johnson-Eilola/Selfe/Sirc, Selfe *Multimodal*, David/Richards, Hodgson, Joddy Murray, and Reid, each of whom provide excellent teaching examples and also devote significant space to the theoretical and rhetorical underpinnings of each assignment). Digital rhetoric involves the full consideration of audience, purpose, and message when composing in a variety of digital environments using a variety of media, and it recognizes and welcomes the complex relationship between image, text, sound, and movement. The turn to digital rhetoric also acknowledges the shift that privileges design and delivery as well as invention when composing, and it values the active participation of the viewer/reader in creating meaning. Echoing this idea of expanded opportunities, Justin Hodgson notes,

[W]hat is at stake here in ‘small screen’ culture is a matter of personal, civic, and cultural access to the gamut of new media practices, procedures, and possibilities.

. . . But more than just being a change in technology or medium focus (e.g., text to video), what we are dealing with is a transformation in what we privilege, in the processes we engage, in the methods we subscribe to, and in our very approaches to participating in the world. And all of this is asking us to reconsider varying pedagogical strategies, cultural conceptualities, and composing practices. (3)

Current theory and writing pedagogies that welcome and embrace this new kind of writing are prevalent at conferences and in composition journals, as well as in specific programs with a culture that supports writing in digital environments. Nonetheless, support for digital writing at the first-year level is uneven across institutions, and – depending on local context, culture, and history – not every program or institution may accept or support multimodal writing as a core value in its writing program. Therefore, those instructors committed to teaching multimodal writing must often negotiate their local and specific contexts alone or with minimal support.

Creating (and Studying) a Pedagogy of Intermodality

My purpose in this dissertation is to help other writing instructors navigate this seismic shift from traditional text-based pedagogies to an approach better-suited for the affordances and challenges when writing in digital environments, one that simultaneously pursues writing that is fully embodied. I particularly target those instructors who are similarly committed to the idea that meaning is made not only in words and who want to provide students opportunities to write digitally, but who may be working within local contexts where program or institutional support may be inconsistent for making this pedagogical shift. In this project I articulate a writing pedagogy based on a theory of *intermodality*. Intermodality (literally, “between the modes”) examines how the senses

work together and inform each other during the process of writing and describes relationships and conveyances between senses as they integrate information; our senses do not function discretely but work together, synergistically, to make meaning. A *multimodal* (or multimedia) project is one that employs several modes or media, such as sound, movement, images, text, and so on. Intermodality concerns the entire writing process for the multimodal projects, including the vast network of ways our senses interact with the world beyond the brain: how we perceive, how we respond, and how we learn, in a complex web that creates our embodied experience, including the cultural, social, and material aspects of that experience.

A writing pedagogy attentive to intermodality provides students opportunities to consider each mode as expressive and persuasive and to critically examine how these modes work together to make meaning as they compose. In a July 2011 keynote presentation to the Rhetoric Symposium in South Carolina, Anne Wysocki laments that in analysis of multimodal texts, we are hindered by our preconceptions – such as visual privilege – because we have been trained to examine each mode individually; instead, we need to think about how the modes work together rhetorically and ask ourselves, “What is this [new media] text trying to do?” Coupled with more traditional rhetorical instruction, intermodality helps students construct and exercise a decision-making process for solid rhetorical choices as they compose digitally, considering how their modes work together rhetorically and also how their choices affect/are affected by their purpose and audience. Ultimately, a pedagogy of intermodality reinforces the embodied, sensory aspects of writing by opening students to the affiliative elements of writing such as emotion, memory, and experience.

Therefore, the following questions have guided this inquiry:

- How does a pedagogy committed to intermodality serve as a productive alternative to one committed to textuality only or even to multimodality? What does a pedagogy of intermodality make possible for students that other approaches to writing/writing instruction cannot?
- How does a pedagogy of intermodality function in the writing classroom, in terms of invention, revision, and reflection practices?
- How does attentiveness to intermodality help address the material realities of the challenges when composing multimodally? Can this pedagogy overcome or diminish student frustration or discomfort (for example, with hearing their own voices or seeing themselves on-screen, with technology problems, with programmatic expectations, and so on)?
- How does a pedagogy of intermodality encourage more embodied writing practices, given the potential threats to embodiment from the digital environment?

In order to fully theorize and demonstrate a pedagogy of intermodality in the writing classroom, I must first define and describe my use of the term “intermodality” itself. To situate intermodality firmly in the context of Rhetoric and Composition, I trace its roots not only from neuroscience but also within the scholarship and research of our own field. Therefore, my methodology merges an analysis of scholarship in embodied rhetoric and visual (and other sensory) rhetoric with recent discoveries from neuroscience about the way the brain makes meaning. This synthesis informs my use of the term “intermodality” and lays the foundation for my work in the writing classroom.

Following the definition and framework of intermodality, I focus on my own writing classrooms as sites of inquiry for the implementation of intermodality. This practitioner inquiry methodology allows me to present, describe, and analyze specific, local teaching and learning situations, including class exercises and invention and revision strategies I employ, as well as student and instructor reflection. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) define practitioners as “deliberative intellectuals who constantly theorize practice as part of practice itself” (2), generating knowledge from an inside perspective, while also “investigating issues of equity, engagement, and agency” (12). This study positing a new theory for the writing classroom will benefit from this particular methodology, which intentionally introduces a productive dialectical tension between theory and practice. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle put it, “[t]he unique feature of the questions that prompt practitioners’ inquiry is that they emanate from neither theory nor practice alone but from critical reflection on the intersections of the two” (42). In addition, this localized, contextualized approach fits into the tradition of research in composition studies by giving voice to those most directly involved.

The practitioner inquiry approach is also well-suited to this project because of the additional layers of complexity raised by technology issues. Describing research approaches for the computers and writing community in 1997, Sullivan and Porter note, “we advocate a view of research as a set of critical and reflective practices (praxis) that are sensitive to the rhetorical situatedness of participants and technologies and that recognize themselves as a form of political and ethical action” (ix). And McKee and DeVoss’ collection updating digital writing research methods (2007) grapples with the “dilemma” of “how to adapt methodologies used in print-based writing research for

digital writing research” (13), concentrating especially on the ethical as well as technological aspects of this type of writing research. The practitioner inquiry methodology allows me to pursue the situatedness of my research question about a pedagogy of intermodality in my writing classroom (while simultaneously acknowledging my own theoretical biases) through work with students’ digital multimodal projects.

The Digital Literacy Narrative

To examine in detail how intermodality works in a composition classroom, and to consider ways I might incorporate a writing pedagogy attuned to intermodality, I focus this study on one particular assignment from my Comp I courses: the digital literacy narrative. Even though I believe intermodality permeates all aspects of writing – both digital and more traditional, print-based writing – focusing on one particular assignment allows me to isolate individual elements of my pedagogy for study as I lead students through a sequence of in-class and out-of-class exercises.

I chose to focus on the digital literacy narrative for a number of reasons. The literacy narrative (or literacy autobiography) is a common, well-known genre with a well-established history and scholarship in composition studies; therefore, its use in this study will help provide rich data for supporting student learning on a broad scale. The literacy narrative is one of the central components of my own school’s first-year writing program, and I have many years experience in teaching it, in a variety of ways, both in traditional print as well as multimodal forms. In addition, as many scholars have pointed out over the years, in different ways, the literacy narrative epitomizes composition studies’ values of giving students voice and authority as they think and write about their own experiences¹, and, as Mary Soliday suggested back in 1994, through the process of

“defamiliarizing” their language use and acquisition, literacy narratives “become sites of self-translation where writers can articulate the meanings and the consequences of their passages between language worlds” (511). This use of the literacy narrative as a vehicle for self-representation of “passages” invites Soliday [and all writing instructors] to consider her own writing pedagogy, particularly its implications for the larger conversations about “teachers’ understanding of difference” in the writing classroom (522). In their shift toward globalism in the writing classroom, Hawisher and Selfe continue this focus on individual narratives to describe emerging themes, where each of their participants also becomes a co-author in his/her chapter or section (see especially *Literate Lives* and “Globalism”). This approach, as Daniell puts it, “let[s] subjects be subjects and not turn them into objects” (407).

Beyond giving students a voice and authority through their own stories, literacy narratives enable students’ agency by helping them think about literacy in new, broader ways, often moving them from the idea of teacher-based transmission as the only kind of literacy. James Trier, for example, uses filmic literacy narratives and Shirley Brice Heath’s idea of “literacy events” to help pre-service teachers “reconceptualiz[e] [their] initial problematic views of literacy” into “a more complex understanding of literacy and literacy practices” (35) involving many different kinds of events and participants beyond teacher instruction. Writing a literacy narrative (and thinking about their literacy “passages”) helps students conceive of literacy in non-traditional spaces and also invites students to view literacy events with a more critical eye as they consider the socio-cultural influences on their own literacies. In addition, the literacy narrative simultaneously includes reflection as part of the literate experience, an essential

component when coming to these understandings about their literacies and literacy practices.

In the *digital* literacy narrative, students tell their stories using multimodal techniques such as podcast (sound recording) or film (sound and visual recording). These digital, multimodal literacy narratives have the potential to push and expand students' notions of what constitutes literacy even further, moving them beyond the idea of print-based words as the only way to define literacy. Multimodal composition opens up new ways for students to define and represent themselves. Students can access sound (and silence), film, color, image, and movement – in addition to text – to narrate their experiences with literacy, all of which enable “the increasingly rich representation of language and literacy practices in digital and nondigital environments” (Hawisher, Selfe, et. al. 56).

Furthermore, creating digital literacy narratives using film or podcast helps students make the pivotal move from being digital consumers to digital media producers. In his 2003 *Kairos* article, Daniel Anderson adapts the term “prosumer” [producer/professional + consumer] to composition studies as he details some of his “entry-level” digital production assignments, noting that “prosumer” refers to “the convergence of professional and consumer-level equipment and software,” such as the widespread availability of digital video cameras and movie-making software. But Anderson also underscores the connection of “prosumer” to literacy: as students move from consumers to producers, they become more critical consumers of media. Lovett and Squier note, “When students become producers and authors, rather than simply consumers of new media texts, they gain a fuller understanding of the ways in which new

media shape how information is structured, organized, understood, and evaluated. They learn to look at, rather than simply through, such texts” (249). The move to prosumer enriches the ways students perceive literacy events that make up their narratives.

More important, Anderson observes that – as producers – students gain additional agency and access for taking action, for having a voice and impact in the world beyond print, even in their own education. Similarly, in describing their Writing with Video course, Lovett and Squier note the increased agency of their students because of their technological literacies: “In a course like this . . . we have found that students and teachers can learn equally from one another. Too often learning environments are structured in the top-down, hierarchical model. By redefining and offering new theories and methods for communication, Writing with Video challenges this historical structure” (250). This increased agency obtained by creating digital literacy narratives, then, further broadens students’ notions of literacy.

Because of its invitation for students to reflect critically on their ideas about literacy and its ability to encourage students to re-position themselves as agents in their own stories, the digital literacy narrative provides an ideal opportunity to study intermodality in the writing classroom. The focus on the synergistic, imagistic, and embodied dimensions of intermodality when composing digital literacy narratives extends the ongoing conversations not only about literacy narratives but also digital writing in general.

This study concentrates on key points in the writing process for the digital literacy narrative, including invention, revision, and reflection; in addition, I consider ways a pedagogy of intermodality may help students address the obstacles they face and those I

face, too, not only technology-wise, but also in terms of resistance to the assignment and to engaging with writing in general. As with other practitioner inquiry, my research project is based on local and the specific circumstances and incorporates and values the dialectic between theory and practice (Cochran-Smith and Lytle). My goal for this project, then, is to describe and analyze a pedagogy developed in my local situation, based on a commitment to digital writing and drawn from my theory of intermodality, which ultimately expands students' avenues for expressing, analyzing, and persuading with writing.

Chapter Overviews

This chapter (**Chapter 1**) contextualizes writing instruction in terms of the changing processes and products of writing in the digital world and raises some of the challenges when teaching multimodal writing projects. This project will present and study a pedagogy of intermodality in my own writing classroom, one response to the new teaching challenges presented by multimodal projects in the writing classroom. My practitioner inquiry study focuses on the digital literacy narrative, including my assignments, exercises, and student projects, as well as my own and my students' reflections. My primary inquiry in examining my pedagogy vis-à-vis the digital literacy narrative is to consider how the senses work together to discover and create meaning during the digital writing process, and to determine the efficacy of several teaching moves at key points in the digital writing process, in terms of intermodality.

Chapter 2 defines and describes my theory of intermodality and suggests it is one way writing instructors can help students address the difficulties they encounter when writing multimodally. The term *intermodality* may be the most useful way to depict the

interaction between the senses when studying writing, indicating relationships and conveyances between senses and an integration of information from all the senses. Chapter 2 traces use of the term in neuroscience and situates intermodality within two well-established conversations in Rhetoric and Composition: embodied rhetoric and visual (multisensory) rhetoric. Intermodality acknowledges not only the importance of image in terms of how humans make meaning, but also the vital interaction between the senses.

Chapter 2 also introduces several of the students whose work illuminates my key pedagogical strategies and contextualizes the digital literacy narrative assignment in my writing classroom. A pedagogy attuned toward intermodality will help students write multimodally in more embodied ways, because they will have a more thorough understanding of their senses to be able to consider, articulate, and also critique the choices they make in the composing process as they work between the discursive and non-discursive realms. The chapter also articulates the embodied, imagistic, and synergistic dimensions of my pedagogy of intermodality. Chapter 2 argues that a pedagogy of intermodality honoring the notion of how meaning is made, and emphasizing the senses as they relate to emotion, situatedness, and experience, reinforces the embodiment of writers as they navigate the complexity of writing in digital environments.

After defining my pedagogy of intermodality, the final chapters weave theory and practice together as I examine intermodality during invention (Chapter 3), revision and reflection (Chapter 4), and resistance (Chapter 5). In **Chapter 3** I examine some of the in-class and out-of-class activities I assign to help students consider how they will

respond to the call for literacy narratives produced multimodally. I describe several invention assignments based on senses including “performing” definitions of literacy, consideration of the affordances of modalities, and drafting imagistically, using storyboarding or other visual techniques. These activities embrace the embodied, imagistic, and synergistic aspects of intermodality. Chapter 3 argues that intermodality in invention opens students to experience and utilize the interaction of their senses to help them compose multimodally and entertain broader views of what literacy means.

Chapter 4 continues the practitioner inquiry into my students’ work with their digital literacy narratives, this time focusing on how intermodality works in the processes of revision and reflection. I describe my classrooms’ group peer review process, and at the same time consider the elements of intermodality that occur while students view others’ projects. In addition, I examine my use of the reflective introduction as part of the digital literacy narrative project. Furthermore, I introduce an analytic tool students can use to distinguish between surface, functional, and deeper, more personal or experiential aspects of their narrative elements. This process of revision and reflection allows students to discover new and powerful ways for expression, but also to recognize and experience how their senses work synergistically in a multimodal project, even conveying messages that cannot be expressed only in words. The chapter examines, for example, students’ decision-making process for the incorporation of music into their projects, considering especially the audience’s emotional responses certain songs produce depending often on age or background. Chapter 4 argues that intermodality functions productively in revision and reflection to help students recognize how their senses work together when viewing

and responding to others' projects, helping them develop into more critical consumers, as well as producers, of multimodal projects.

Chapter 5 describes common types of resistance experienced among students, instructors, and institutions and begins to explore and suggest ways the idea of resistance can be reconfigured intermodally and perhaps redefined more productively in the writing classroom. Although not generally considered part of the writing "process," resistance to multimodal writing can in fact be integral to composing and can often drive the process forward. Instead of viewing resistance only as negative or counterproductive, a pedagogy of intermodality helps first of all acknowledge and then reposition resistance in the tradition of student or instructor agency. Intermodality is able to help students identify the material realities of their challenges when composing in the digital environment, including frustrations, discomfort, and anxiety. Intermodality can also encourage students and instructors to tap into all their senses, probing into and recognizing where the resistance comes from. By identifying these material realities, this pedagogy of intermodality incorporates resistance into the writing itself, enabling more embodied writing processes. Chapter 5 concludes by addressing the deeper questions of how a pedagogical commitment to senses, affect, multiple ways of knowing, and the materiality of composing disrupts notions of traditional academic writing. The conclusion suggests the implications of intermodality within and beyond the writing classroom.

Through the study of intermodality, this dissertation broadens writing instructors' conceptions of literacy in more embodied ways, to account for and accommodate composing beyond traditional text-based papers. This study articulates a pedagogy of intermodality in the composition classroom that will help students consider and utilize the

many modes available to them and offer students new opportunities to express themselves effectively within and outside the academy.

Endnote

1. See, for example, Eldred/Mortensen, Soliday, Haas/Tully/Blair, Bronwyn T. Williams, Hawisher/Selfe (*Literate Lives* and “Global”), Pandey, Hamilton, Daniell, and Lovett/Squier.

Chapter 2: A Pedagogy of Intermodality

Images tend to nest a range of senses, resulting in meanings that are collaborative products of sound, sight, and touch, providing full and resonant . . . significance to meaning.

Kristie S. Fleckenstein

Late one night I sit at my home computer, viewing initial drafts of students' digital literacy narratives. As a writing instructor, few moments are as exciting for me – or as nerve-wracking – as reviewing the first drafts of students' projects. I am filled with hopeful anticipation at discovering the way students' ideas have emerged and evolved as they work through their writing challenges. At the same time, experience has taught me not to be overwhelmed from the sometimes confusing rush of sensory elements as students experiment with the affordances of new media composing, or disappointed in a hastily assembled project that seems to lack planning or any technical execution. I relish the openness of my responses at this “drafting” phase when I do not have to worry about grading or assessing; I just absorb and welcome the project for what it has to offer, playing – at least initially – Elbow's “believing” game. I view the projects with an eye toward encouragement, noting what I find interesting or insightful, asking for clarification where needed, describing how I perceive the project's organization or potential direction.

On this evening I am particularly looking forward to viewing Sophia's film.¹ Sophia's second language is English, having arrived in the US from Mexico when she was 11 years old. For her digital literacy narrative, Sophia decides to recount the story of her first day of 7th grade, when she did not know any English, and three other girls in her ESL class were cruel to her because of the way she looked and talked. Sophia perceives this event as one that motivated her to quickly learn and master both spoken and written

English. I know all this from our pre-writing activities, and I am curious to see what she has come up with. I access her film and push “play.”

Her film opens with the non-descriptive but oft-used placeholder title “My Literacy Narrative,” and I note the sad music in the background. A photo of a school appears, along with text introducing her age. Suddenly I feel myself stiffen as I see three Barbie dolls sitting on screen and hear the voices of three young girls, speaking with Spanish accents. A fourth Barbie, representing Sophia, appears on screen, along with the human hand that’s guiding her. The teacher, a Cinderella princess figure, welcomes the fourth Barbie to the class and invites her to sit down; SpongeBob sits in the background. The hand has trouble getting fourth Barbie to bend and a second hand enters the screen, inelegantly assisting. I find myself chuckling at this technical glitch that interrupts my willing suspension of disbelief, but then I quickly recoil at my own thoughtlessness in laughing. I do not know exactly what I was expecting in this film, but I did not expect to see Barbie dolls and hands.

Upon reflection, I realize that for Sophia, using the Barbie dolls addressed several of her writing dilemmas: they helped her represent herself in 7th grade, provided visuals for her narrative, and gave her a vehicle to recreate the voices as she heard them that day. Furthermore, she used the one dark-haired and less well-dressed Barbie to represent herself, in stark contrast to the other three blonde dolls, reinforcing her perception of herself at the time as different and “inadequate.” And yet, the iconic Barbie doll carries so much more cultural baggage – the emphasis on a certain kind of beauty and materialism, the controversies she has caused over the years – that I realize Sophia’s film risks derailing and perhaps even inviting her viewers to laugh at her, essentially re-

creating the same wound she has been trying to heal for many years. She has already assumed great risk by sharing a painful experience. How do I respond to this draft of Sophia's film?

It is relatively simple to remind students that their images, sound, and text should "work together," that is, complement each other, or remind them to "consider your audience," but what does that mean in practice? Sophia's draft underscores the kinds of issues I encounter with increasing frequency: when students are faced with so many more decisions in multimodal composing, how do we help them make rhetorically effective choices? Sophia must juggle the tasks of connecting her story with audience expectations, navigating cultural differences, and working through technology challenges presented by composing with several modes, all at the same time. As writing instructors, we have dealt with many of these same questions for a long time; however, composing with sound, image, and movement, in addition to text, multiplies the complexity of the decisions a writer faces. What happens when an image or song does not carry the same connotation for the viewer as it does for the writer, due to culture, age, upbringing, and so on? When I ask students to create a film, and they create one that inadvertently introduces humor or even invites ridicule, what happens next? At times I wonder if I even fully understand the messy, emotional, agentic scope of this type of multi-sensory writing when I make the assignment. I do not necessarily feel well-equipped to articulate, for example, the historical and cultural baggage that Barbie dolls carry, even for myself: the combination of sensory modes, emotion, language, experience, and culture introduced and magnified through sound and image. I believe in the power and agency of multimodal writing, but my writing strategies are sometimes inadequate to address the complex new issues raised

by multimodal composing. I need a vocabulary, a set of tools, a pedagogy – based on rhetorically sound principles we already know and teach – to help students manage the rhetorical implications of their complex decision-making when composing multimodally.

This chapter defines and describes one approach to address these challenges for writing instructors. My theory of intermodality in multimodal composing emerges from recent work in neuroscience as well as the widespread availability of new technology, and draws from several important conversations in Rhetoric and Composition. To fully describe my work with intermodality in this study, I first contextualize the multimodal assignment (digital literacy narrative) in my writing classroom to show its relevance not only to my own program but also to first-year writing programs in general. I conclude this chapter by articulating the characteristic dimensions of a pedagogy of intermodality. A pedagogy of intermodality – one that honors the notion of how meaning is made and emphasizes the senses as they relate to emotion, situatedness, and experience – reinforces the embodiment of writers as they navigate the complexity of writing in digital environments. This chapter, then, lays the important theoretical foundation which I then examine in practice in succeeding chapters.

Assigning the literacy narrative as a multimodal project in my Comp I courses was not a random or impulsive decision; rather, our first-year writing program had been working up to these types of assignments for some time. I have been teaching first-year writing and helping to develop our curriculum for over 15 years at my institution, and I have personally worked with over 1,000 first-year writing students in dozens of sections. Since the mid 1990's, we have been integrating digital technology into our writing

classes, most notably converting classroom space into computer classrooms or creating “smart” classrooms. As with most institutions, initially we used the computers for asynchronous discussions or responses, posting assignments and handouts, online research, submission of drafts, and even – in some cases – peer review. These activities were handy short-cuts that also saved time and paper; nonetheless, our focus was still to use the computers to assist with composing traditional writing products (i.e. the “paper”). Along the way, our faculty participated in important conversations about how our pedagogies were shaping – and shaped by – the technologies we were using. As reflective practitioners, we came to understand that the technology in our classrooms was not merely a “tool,” and that, along with the new literacies our students were bringing into our classrooms, the very nature of writing was evolving as a result of digital technologies.

One important transitional moment for me came when our students – initially as a result of a top-down mandate for campus-wide assessment – began to create digital portfolios for what was perceived as a simpler, paper-less way for students to collect and display their work throughout a semester or their college years. We quickly began considering the significant rhetorical complexities of how students selected and presented their work, depending on the audience. For example, what were the implications to them if they were to show their writing and revision through various drafts, a practice valued by writing instructors but not necessarily valued by “assessors” on a more global level? And how much agency can students have over how they are presenting themselves when they merely drop documents into pre-fabricated templates provided by an outside source? These concerns and others prompted several writing instructors (including me) to reclaim the use of digital portfolios for sound pedagogical reasons, helping students learn to

understand their own rhetorical situation by considering their specific audience and purpose and then designing their portfolios accordingly. Furthermore, the capability to include sound and visual files on the digital portfolios allowed students to present other facets of their work (for example, recordings of their piano recitals, examples of their architectural drawings, or images of their artwork), in addition to “papers.” In order to create a design that fit each student’s individual purpose and need, we needed to help students essentially build a website; therefore we taught a simple webpage design program with no coding. For me, this was an important moment because it was the first time in a writing class – other than the various course management, file archiving, or email systems we use – that I actually had to teach software in order to meet writing course goals. Since then, the arrival of blogs, wikis, and other “web 2.0” (i.e. participatory) programs has made the task of creating these types of web pages infinitely easier for students to perform. However, these newer types of programs, along with the exploding use of social media, have reinforced for me, along with conscientious writing instructors everywhere, that the very nature of writing in the 21st century continues to change dramatically, and with it, our writing pedagogies.

My work with student digital portfolios opened my eyes to the imagistic possibilities of digital writing, that is, writing with sound, color, movement, and so on, and the widespread availability of web-editing and film-editing programs encouraged me to begin exploring the possibilities of digital, multimodal writing in our first-year writing program. One of our program’s common writing assignments, the literacy narrative, in which students explore and narrate their own experiences with literacy, seemed to be a good fit with multimodal writing, since students would now have additional means to

help them tell their stories, and my thinking here was reinforced by Cynthia Selfe's work with digital literacy narratives. About three years ago, I began assigning the digital literacy narrative as one of the three main projects in my Comp I courses.

Like so many other writing instructors helping students make that leap from the page to screen, my initial strategy with the digital literacy narrative was essentially to apply my traditional writing activities and assignments and go through the same steps with this "new" kind of writing. Of course, many of the principles underlying these two kinds of writing – writing for the page, and writing for film or web – are in fact similar: the idea of writing as a process, the importance of understanding the rhetorical situation, the idea of knowledge as socially and culturally constructed, careful consideration of style and tone, and so on. Very quickly, however, I realized that relying on writing pedagogies designed to culminate in a *paper* was not enough when the assigned product is multimodal. I began asking questions about my strategies for helping students compose multimodally. From my experience assigning the digital portfolios, I was already familiar with teaching basic visual design principles; I began to focus my questions on how sound, images, and words work together, particularly in the medium of film. I understand that multimodal composition – writing that moves beyond print-based words and incorporates sound, images, movement, as well as text – multiplies the decisions a writer faces, because of the rich layering and texturing of elements and also because of the additional complexity added from using different modes. Multimodal composing is not just a matter of combining as many "modes" as possible, but carefully considering how these modes interact and speak to and through each other, given the rhetorical task at hand. My inquiry became how to best teach the complex task of multimodal composing,

basing my strategies on sound, established rhetorical principles. As I developed my theory, I turned to work already being done with writing and the sensory modes.

A Theory of Intermodality

Many theorists have considered how the senses work together, not individually, to make meaning. When discussing the combination of senses, the term “synesthesia” (from the Greek words for “joined sensation”) is useful because it describes a cross-over between the senses and how the senses function together.² In arguing against the privileging of language over images and other modes of representation in education, Gunther Kress notes we must “acknowledge and account for the processes of synaesthesia,” which he defines as “the transduction of meaning from one semiotic mode to another semiotic mode, an activity constantly performed by the brain” (“Design” 159). His use of the term *synaesthesia*, however, is metaphorical and problematic, since synesthesia itself really only occurs in extreme and anomalous cases, and it is not something someone chooses (or something an instructor can teach). Kress calls for a new theory of representation and notes that “. . . a theory of semiosis which incorporates the facts of multimodality also needs to be a theory in which synaesthesia is seen as an entirely usual and productive process, essential equally for the understanding of semiosis in a multimodal semiotic landscape as for the possibilities of real innovation. . . .” (159). In terms of composition instruction, I would answer Kress’ call for a theory that “incorporates the facts of multimodality” by moving away from synesthesia and instead introducing a pedagogy of *intermodality*.

The term *intermodality* (literally, “between the modes”) may be the most useful way to depict this interaction between the senses when studying writing. Intermodality indicates relationships and conveyances between senses, an integration of information.

The idea is that our senses do not function discretely in the brain but work together, synergistically, to make meaning. The term *intermodal* is most commonly used in transportation to refer to freight that is moved using several modes or methods of transport, such as from ship to rail or between rail and truck. The term is also found in neuroscience, particularly in studies of brain activity, such as examining attention (see Karnes and Knight), or in infants, when examining, for example, the relationship between an infant's sight and tactile sense (see Meltzoff and Borton). Other fields also occasionally use the term, such as psychology/music technology (see Levitin, et. al.), and communication. Shaun Gallagher, a philosopher, also uses the term as he takes an interdisciplinary approach to what he calls embodied cognition. In his book *How the Body Shapes the Mind* Gallagher reviews the literature and research on the Molyneux problem.³ His summary of the findings from research with infants concludes, "Developmental studies demonstrate that perception is intermodal from the start. This is not an intellectual accomplishment that we acquire after much practice, but an innate feature of our embodied existence" (170). Gallagher's report of the findings that we perceive and process intermodally is significant for any writing pedagogy incorporating intermodality.

Using new brain imaging technology, such as PET (positron emission tomography) scans and fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging), scientists are now able to map the specific parts of the brain where different functions occur, down to an incredibly accurate level of specificity (such as movement, speech, memory, sensations, and so on). In fact, these neurological studies have important implications for composition, confirming many assertions gleaned over the years about the function of

emotion in reasoning and the importance of image to meaning-making; others also point to new possibilities for composition in terms of the ability of the brain to re-wire itself – or neuroplasticity – and the intermodality of the senses.⁴ Furthermore, biologist James E. Zull directly connects specific parts of the brain with particular aspects of learning. For these scientists, not only do we perceive and think in images, but these images are necessary even for our own consciousness, self-awareness, and learning.

Intermodality concerns the vast network of ways our senses interact and cross over: how we function, how we perceive, and how we learn, in a complex web that creates our “embodied” experience, including the cultural, social, and environmental aspects of that experience. Neuroscience defines intermodality strictly by the five senses, but Rhetoric and Composition scholars can usefully expand the definition to consider sensory interactions beyond the five senses, including emotion/affect, memory, and experience. For example, “The Blue Fly” (Figure 1.1) from Robert Hooke’s 17th Century *Micrographia* shows that the visual representation stimulates our tactile sense. When you touch or imagine touching this page or screen, the image is flat and smooth, but you have a sense of bumpiness, furriness and perhaps even sharpness; our sight is communicating with touch:

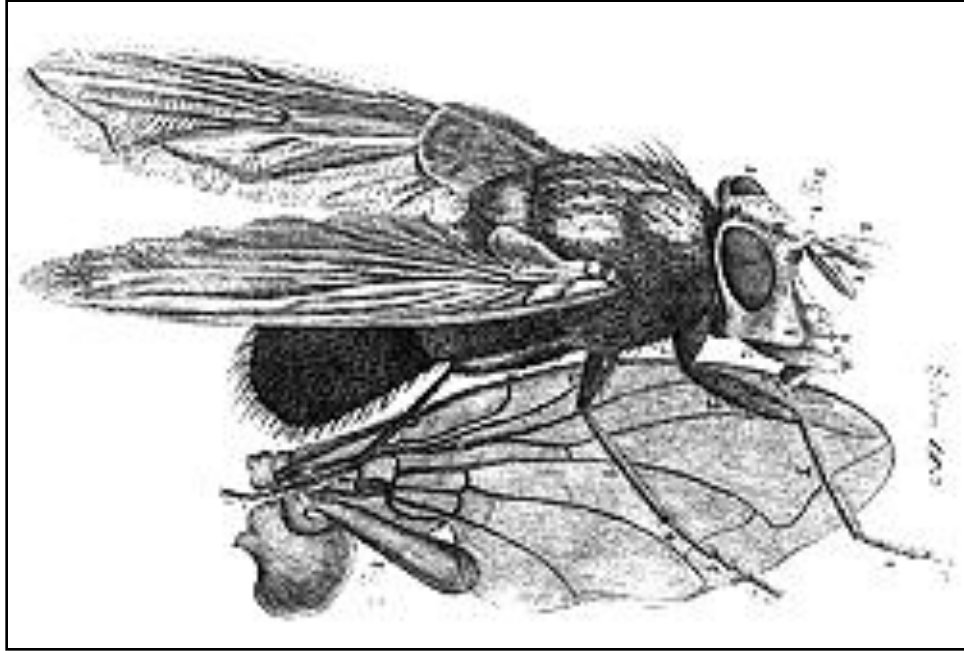


Figure 1.1: Robert Hooke's "The Blue Fly"

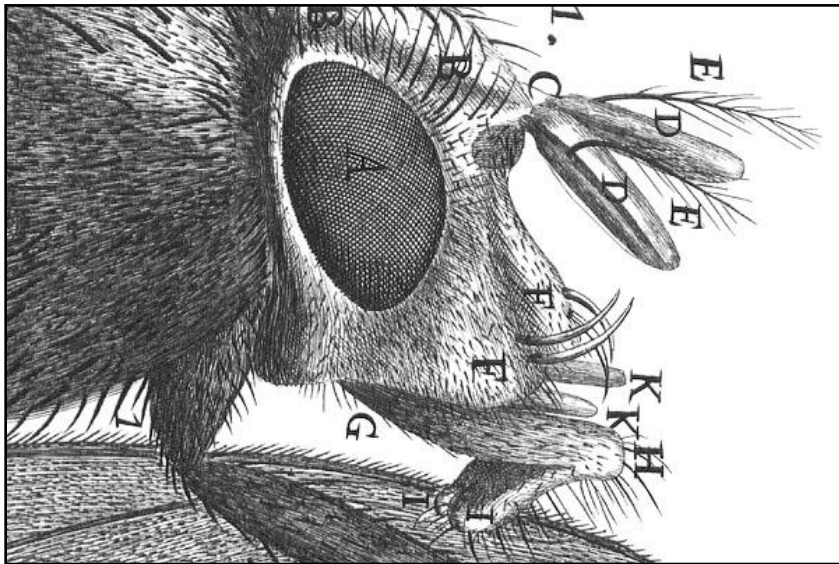


Figure 1.2: Robert Hooke's "The Blue Fly" (enlarged detail)

One might also suggest that the visual and tactile image here (Figure 1.2) may elicit an emotional response to this fly as well—maybe the “ewww” factor, or perhaps memories of our school days and the fascination and wonder the first time we observed some

common object with a microscope. Embedded in one sensory impression are numerous others, even those that move beyond the five senses. Furthermore, notice this particular example does not include color, movement, or sound, each of which would stimulate even more intermodal connections.

Considering intermodality will help scholars and instructors examine how the senses work together and inform each other during the process of writing, which is especially crucial when composing multimodally, where several modes are employed such as sound, movement, and images, as well as text. When composing multimodally, writers' choices and opportunities increase exponentially and therefore, so does the potential for ineffectual, as well as powerful, choices. Viewing the senses as connected, as intermodal, will benefit writing pedagogies because instructors may be better able to help writers tap into senses that they may not be able to easily access or articulate; furthermore, composing strategies based on intermodality may enhance invention and revision processes and answer Yancey's call for a "textured" literacy, that is, "the ability to comfortably use and combine print, spoken, visual, and digital processes in composing a piece of writing" ("Using" 38). This textured literacy opens more opportunities for student expression, analysis, and persuasion.

My theory of intermodality for writing in digital environments is informed by and benefits from two important conversations already ongoing in composition studies: work with embodiment, and work with the visual and other sensory aspects of composition. In *Rhetoric and Composition*, the term "embodied rhetoric" has been conceptualized in a number of ways, all acknowledging the importance and materiality of the body when writing, and refuting the Cartesian notion of the mind-body split (see Mark Johnson,

Selzer/Crowley). Scholars in feminist studies (see especially Hobbs, Stenberg, Hindman, Banks) and disability studies (Wilson/Lewiecki-Wilson) both value embodiment, which makes visible the idea of difference and how personal identity affects power dynamics, politics, and writing against/with dominant power.

In addition, compositionists working with affect and other non-cognitive aspects of writing also yield some insight into the usefulness of the term “embodied rhetoric” for writing studies. A pedagogy of intermodality traces its roots back to the larger, ongoing conversation in composition scholarship on the importance of emotion, affect, and other non-cognitive aspects (such as intuition), which were traditionally marginalized as unimportant or too subjective in writing and the teaching of writing (Brand/Graves, McLeod). Often these approaches to teaching writing have been dismissed or minimized as remnants of expressivist pedagogy or else made part of that dichotomy pitting reason against emotion, rationality against irrationality, and so on. Current research in – as well as outside of – composition studies shows that these dichotomies not only are NOT useful, they are inaccurate, in terms of how our brains function.

Other composition scholars have contributed to this conversation on affect and non-cognitive aspects of writing, including Micciche’s reconsideration of the use of emotion in writing, the teaching of writing, and even writing program administration; Perl’s use of “felt sense” – tapping into the body’s wisdom or intuition – in the writing process; T.R. Johnson’s “rhetoric of pleasure,” in which his students insert stylistic devices (tropes from the ancients) to hear the sound, rhythm, and patterns in their writing; Edbauer’s call for textual-somatic pleasure, that is, a sensual relation to texts, in contrast to writing solely for ideological significance; and Albrecht-Crane’s articulation of a

pedagogy that pays attention to – rather than shies away from – the important affective dimensions of a classroom. In addition, Fleckenstein’s concepts of bodysigns and somatic literacy also consider the importance of affect and kinesthetic aspects of writing.⁵

So composition’s conversations about embodied rhetoric inform a pedagogy of intermodality as it acknowledges that we write with our whole bodies, not just with our minds. Embodied rhetoric works to undermine the mind-body split and its attendant dualisms which are often counter-productive, hegemonic, and perhaps even harmful; in addition, embodied rhetoric acknowledges the specific material conditions of our body and the contexts in which we function in all settings, including scholarly writing, and this materiality becomes even more important when working with writing in digital environments in which the body may seem to be even more removed from the medium. In this study I use embodiment to refer to the sensory, physical aspects of writing, including how socio-cultural influences impact students’ rhetorical choices when composing multimodally. Furthermore, in digital environments, this understanding of embodiment becomes even more important as the available modes for composing increase and so do the means for production and outlets for delivery.

If composition scholarship on embodied rhetoric informs a pedagogy of intermodality, then scholarship focused on the traditional physical senses is also crucial because it explains the necessity of an intermodal (as opposed to multimodal) approach. Sensory perception is the way living beings receive input from and interact with the world, through “modes,” literally, the five “traditional” physical senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Therefore, rhetoricians have always concerned themselves with the senses, including the vivid description of a scene, consideration of the tone or how

phrases sound to a listener/reader, and the use of words to conjure up specific images. Beyond the five physical senses, however, several other senses affect our writing and deeply influence our intermodality, such as *memory* or the sense of what happened (which can be evoked from an old song, a smell of perfume, or a taste of food, for example), the sense of *association* (in which a place or object triggers a particular feeling or emotion), and the *somatic* sense or motor memory, in which our bodies “remember” a movement, such as dance, riding a bike, or even the act of typing. Many other senses are tied to emotions, such as a sense of pride, a sense of fear, or a sense of loss. We may experience a sense of self or a sense of peace, which are tied to our sentience (awareness of self), or that special kind of intuition often referred to as the sixth sense. If something “makes sense” to us, it somehow fits in with or builds on what we already know.

What is important about the senses for my purposes here is to recognize that these senses do not function independently, that they work in combination with each other – intermodally – literally, between the modes. Although sometimes a sense is studied individually, as an optometrist examines only the eye and not the ear, the senses cannot be separated from the brain and therefore are always connected. One study of perception notes, “what our eyes register is not a picture of reality as it is. Rather our brains combine information from our eyes with data from our other senses, synthesize it, and draw on our past experience to give us a workable image of our world” (Barry 15). Even Aristotle in *DeAnima* describes the relations between the senses, defining the “common sense” as the quality that unifies all the sensory input into what we actually perceive (and which he locates in the heart). Neurology confirms that the senses function in relationship with each other, rather than through a direct connection between one sense and the brain,

recognizing “the importance of relationship in perceptual meaning” (Barry 43). In 1992 the neurological researcher Semir Zeki noted, “It is no longer possible to divide the process of seeing from that of understanding . . . nor is it possible to separate the acquisition of visual knowledge from consciousness” (qtd. in Barry 44). More recently, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio concurs with this connection between the senses and our understanding: “. . . consciousness begins as the feeling of what happens when we see or hear or touch. Phrased in slightly more precise words, it [consciousness] is a feeling that accompanies the making of any kind of image – visual, auditory, tactile, visceral – within our living organisms” (26). Damasio’s work emphasizes that the emotions and sensory images are integral even to the body’s consciousness.

Furthermore, the use of the term “image” refers to much more than the visual; image can be considered a unit of *any* sensory impression and all the objects and qualities within that sensory impression. Joddy Murray defines image as “what the mind forms and stores, not just what our eyes convey to the brain” (58). Murray notes, “. . . the term ‘visual’ in visual rhetoric *can* refer to images in the mind, and once that happens, then we are no longer discussing only the visual anymore – our sense data become synesthetic in the mind, not discrete, and as such we can no longer readily separate what is truly what the eye sees from any number of other sensual inputs” (58). The field of visual studies, for example, may focus on analysis and production of visual images, but the field also acknowledges that every image is connected to the other senses, as well as social, cultural, and linguistic attributes.⁶

In spite of the current movement toward multimodality, up until recently the majority of composition studies’ research about the senses has tended to focus on one

mode discretely, even if they acknowledge the need to study the senses together. Most of the research concerns the visual (see especially George, Hill, Hocks, Stroupe, Sean Williams, and Wysocki “Impossibly”), although there have been some recent forays into sound, most notably Selfe’s 2009 *CCC* article “The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing.” Also, in 2006 a special issue was devoted to sound in *Computers and Composition*, in which special editors Cheryl Ball and Byron Hawk’s introduction suggests the issue provides an “an overview of how a multiliteracies approach that incorporates attention to audio is possible within composition studies” (263). Important for my work here is that many of these authors note the need to study the senses together, rather than separately. For example, Jody Shipka proposes an approach “that resists attempts to bracket off the individual senses . . . for one that is both inclusive and robust enough to allow us to examine the complex interplay that exists between the various modes, materials, methods, and technologies students choose to take up” (“Sound” 371). Similarly, Heidi McKee (“Sound Matters”) notes that sound should not be considered in isolation from the other senses.⁷ In her 2006 *Kairos* article, Madeleine Sorapure suggests using the tropes of metaphor and metonymy to convey relationships set up by different modes and to “designate two primary ways in which meaning emerges from the bringing together of modes in a multimodal work.” So the work exploring the relationships between image and text as well as the visual and other sensory aspects of composition, combined with scholarship exploring all facets of embodiment in composition, informs my work with intermodality.

Dimensions of a Pedagogy of Intermodality

In addition to being informed by scholarship on embodied rhetoric as well as work with the visual and other sensory aspects of composition, the pedagogy of

intermodality I envision draws heavily from the work of two Rhetoric and Composition scholars, each for different reasons. Combining Joddy Murray's work with non-discursive rhetoric in multimodal composition with Kristie Fleckenstein's embodied literacies leads productively into describing the dimensions of a pedagogy of intermodality.

Murray argues for a model of composition that acknowledges meaning-making as *both* discursive and non-discursive, borrowing the terms from Susanne K. Langer. In her 1942 book *Philosophy in a New Key*, Langer uses the terms "discursive" and "non-discursive" symbolization to describe the different ways to articulate thought, in which the discursive is what we traditionally associate with writing: linear, logical, grammatical, following the "laws of reasoning" (82), while the non-discursive articulates what cannot be said or written with words. The non-discursive often is layered and simultaneous and frequently relies on visual forms. Langer calls the non-discursive symbolism "peculiarly well suited to the expression of ideas that defy linguistic 'projection.'" (93). As Murray puts it, "the value of non-discursive text . . . is that it thrives and derives its meaning-making from the complexity and ambiguity of its medium, whereas discursive language works best when it reifies and reduces complexity and ambiguity as it goes along" (5).

This distinction between the discursive and non-discursive may be more useful for composition studies than the visual-verbal distinction because it is possible to have images perform discursively (for example, in the linear, yet pictorial, instructions for building a bookshelf, or in the sequencing of film), while some written texts can be non-discursive (for example, stream-of-consciousness or associative, non-linear writing). A well-composed website, for example, like a beautiful painting or photograph, functions

both discursively and non-discursively as we experience it first as a whole and then work through the details one at a time. Although film is linear in nature, its elements also operate non-discursively. This use of discursive and non-discursive symbolization as descriptive terms helps when considering multimodal meaning-making, in which sounds, movement, images, and text may all work together, often simultaneously. Murray calls for a “non-discursive rhetoric” in multimodal composition, one that relies on image and affect’s role in symbolization, and one that does not depend solely on the “sequentiality of discursive texts” (137). Murray provides direction and new ways to think about the complex relationships between the senses for instructors assigning multimodal projects. Non-discursive rhetoric allows for and welcomes the complexity and layering of senses in composition.

Certainly Fleckenstein’s ideas about embodied literacies could be considered non-discursive, to use Murray’s term: for Fleckenstein, literacies are much more about the body than simply creating written text. For example, she employs “double mapping” for invention and body biographies to uncover significance of experiences or memories; she has students map the homes in which they grew up and identify the “virtues-characteristics” associated with the place to consider their effects on students’ reading and writing practices. Fleckenstein acknowledges that our literacies exist “as a hybrid of many literacies, a realization that allows us to extend the scope of literacy to embrace a multiplicity of media. . . and a multiplicity of contexts. . . . Embodied literacies focus attention on the specific organization and deployment of shared ways of knowing that organize our experiences across media and across life” (*Embodied* 78). Fleckenstein acknowledges the multiple kinds of literacy that each of us has, which – if we are aware

of them and build from them – will translate productively into a writing classroom and into the world beyond. She argues in “Inviting Imagery” that a pedagogy incorporating sensual imagery based on these various literacies will provide numerous benefits in the classroom, including “emotional engagement and response” in student participation and writing (17), “the power to structure our worlds and position ourselves in those worlds” (19), and, perhaps most important, transformation of students and the world (20). A pedagogy of intermodality, one that draws from these various literacies and incorporates sensory imaging, has the potential to lead to this engagement, empowerment, and transformation of students outlined by Fleckenstein.

In terms of intermodality, Fleckenstein describes the “nested” qualities of images: a sound or a smell embedded into a larger memory, provoking associations, immediate responses, memories, and so on. She writes, “Images tend to nest a range of senses, resulting in meanings that are collaborative products of sound, sight, and touch, providing full and resonant . . . significance to meaning” (*Embodied* 20). So Fleckenstein’s embodied literacies, especially as they influence and are influenced by writing, help describe intermodality as the senses working together to make meaning when composing.

Drawing from Murray and Fleckenstein, three dimensions of a pedagogy attuned to intermodality emerge: embodied, imagistic, and synergistic. Although suggestive rather than definitive, these dimensions help me describe my incorporation of intermodality in my writing classroom and will contribute to the pedagogical conversations in composition studies more generally.

First, a pedagogy of intermodality helps students work toward projects that are more fully embodied. This **embodied** dimension of an intermodal pedagogy

acknowledges the material aspects of writing; it encourages mindfulness about identity and experiences, relies on a writer's ways of knowing, and is unique and personal as it relies on all aspects of the body, not just the cognitive. A pedagogy of intermodality encourages engaged writing, whether print-based or multimodal. It does not privilege one specific genre or perspective of writing; rather, it encourages effective, involved writing, no matter what the purpose or writing situation. A pedagogy of intermodality teaches students how to listen to and draw from their own multisensory experiences, memories, and perceptions of the world (for example, the way a song can bring you to tears because of a memory, how you may drive or type without thinking about your movements, or when stuck writing, how you might switch to drawing or moving to pen/paper from a computer) to make important connections and express what needs to be said.

Second, a pedagogy of intermodality is multisensory and **imagistic**, as it pays attention to the significant units of meaning on which we focus our attention, as writers and as viewers/readers. A pedagogy of intermodality helps students explore these multimodal values in terms of their own complex sensory perceptions, and students learn to consider, articulate, and critique their choices. Projects' modal elements work together (or juxtapose, or fracture, depending on purpose), rather than, for example, having music simply "tacked on" to a project. Writing is textured, layered, simultaneous, complex, and it relies on recognition of the relationships between senses. A pedagogy of intermodality often employs several modes throughout the writing process to recreate or represent this simultaneity and connections between the senses, and they do not always have to be digital.

Prewriting, invention, and process assignments will engage intermodality, inviting students to modify their own perspectives based on sensory exercises and to become more engaged with their own ideas. For example, even for a traditional writing project, one might assign an exercise that asks, if your favorite technology were a dessert, what kind would it be, and why? (Peanut butter cookie? Double chocolate cheesecake? Fruit cup with light yogurt?) This type of exercise engages senses that a student might not normally consider (such as taste or smell) when writing a “paper,” yet the answers will speak volumes about their attitudes, memories, and experiences. This kind of writing defamiliarizes the students’ process and gets them thinking and working among all their senses. And the connections between taste, smell, and emotion or memory, of course, become prominent when examining food (think holiday meals, for example). Students could also be asked to pre-write in unconventional ways, with a storyboard or even PowerPoint, using image or sound in addition to words, tapping into non-discursive meaning in conscious, deliberate ways, which often frees them up to write without words. Students may begin a project by drawing about a song, describing its sounds, tone, and voices in colors, shapes, and lines, and then considering the song’s effects on them. A pedagogy emphasizing intermodality taps into all the senses in new and unfamiliar ways, perhaps uncovering connections and significance not previously recognized, and the sounds and other images broaden to encompass other “modes” such as memory, emotion, and experience.

Finally, a pedagogy of intermodality has a **synergistic** dimension, which acknowledges and welcomes the increased number of choices a writer faces and also its reliance on the multisensory aspects of digital writing. A *multimodal* (or multimedia)

project is one that employs several modes or media, such as sound, movement, images, text, and so on. Working *intermodally* includes all the *process* work surrounding the project, making sensory connections and asserting that the senses permeate all aspects of writing and do not function discretely. A pedagogy of intermodality is well-equipped to work with multimodal composition, drawing from well-established patterns of teaching writing (pre-writing, drafting, revision strategies, for example), but also focusing on the power and influence of images created and media used. Students conceive of their work as whole, vertically, with all its simultaneous layers, rather than just linearly, including all the layers of meaning embedded within each unit of meaning. Such a pedagogy can productively re-tool Berthoff's 1990 idea of "all-at-once-ness,"⁸ and the synergy of multimodal projects is achieved because the significant unit of meaning created is greater than its individual parts.

Using image, word, movement, and sound provides dynamism and innovation in the composing process; multimodal projects provide modal flexibility in terms of the senses. In an intermodal process, each of these elements speaks to each other and informs each other, synergistically. Fewer ideas get lost in the movement between the discursive and non-discursive elements, allowing richer/fuller representation of the embodied self. Murray's five "values of multimodality" (unity, juxtaposition, perspective, image, and layering), which are not formal principles or rules, but a place to start with multisensory textual production (173), also inform a pedagogy of intermodality. These design issues are fundamental to composition, or "the act of putting together with intent" (174), and they demonstrate the importance of design as an integral part of invention. Several of these values, of course, overlap with traditional, discursive writing practices. The

synergistic aspect of the layering of sound, image and text in a multimodal composition mirrors the nesting of our senses as we write; therefore, the synergistic dimension of a pedagogy attuned to intermodality may be able to help relieve the paralysis or fear associated with the increased number of rhetorical choices and account for the additional complexity and decision-making in the multimodal writing process.

Several students working on digital literacy narratives help illustrate each of these dimensions of intermodality and reflect the range of experiences I typically encounter. They serve as examples to demonstrate in context the challenges and opportunities a pedagogy attuned to intermodality may make possible at strategic moments in the composing process. Their experiences and responses to my interventions help me reflect on my pedagogy throughout this study. From the onset, each student faces slightly different but important challenges as they embark on their multimodal projects.

Among the students whose projects and experiences help to form my thinking is Sophia, who wrote about how her first day of school in America motivated her to quickly learn and master both spoken and written English. When presented with the idea of composing multimodally, Sophia is open to the possibilities but hesitant because of the unfamiliar turf; nonetheless, she is determined to succeed. She ultimately creates a film titled “Young Misery” using stark angles, somber music, voice-over narration, and words on screen, in addition to the Barbie dolls, that narrates the story of her first day of 7th grade, when she did not know any English, and three other girls in her ESL class were cruel to her because of the way she looked and talked. Sophia’s entire writing process is fully embodied as she tries to embrace the vivid memories, drawing out the scenes as she remembers them and re-creating the dialogue from all of her nested images; she focuses

first on sounds and smells from that time. She also works through several fears: first (like most of the other students), her initial concern about the technical aspects of writing in a new way, but soon that fear gives way to those arising from self-disclosure and the risk of putting herself “out there,” perhaps to be ridiculed once again.

Another student in a different class, slightly older than most first-year students, Jon is very shy and seldom speaks at all to anyone in class, even during small group work. He later tells me he had put off his writing requirement as long as possible because he does not like to write. Jon struggles to find a topic to complete the assignment, unable to connect what he perceives as “literacy” with anything in his world. Through in-depth conversation about literacy and exploration of his interests, he is able to land on the topic of the language of aviation and re-tell a significant experience in his life when he flew a small airplane through a thunderstorm and landed safely at an air show in Wisconsin. For Jon, the key moment connecting his love of flying with this digital literacy narrative assignment comes from sound: he remembered and described the radio communication between him and the flight towers; in fact, he was able to retrieve those recordings and listen to them, spurring his memories of that experience and tapping into his emotions. These vivid audio images anchor his revised film and lend credence to his point about literacy as he confidently demonstrates his talent with language when flying airplanes. Creating a film also allows Jon to include video images he saw (and filmed) from high above the ground, providing him means of expression he had never before tapped, demonstrating the imagistic potential of intermodality.

When faced with the idea of composing multimodally, Amanda is resistant and quite vocally protests how much she dislikes the assignment, how difficult and “unfair” it

is. Almost every class period her body language and demeanor indicates anger or resistance. Amanda seems closed to any new ideas or conceptions about literacy; she stubbornly procrastinates and delays her drafting; she does not want to conceive of writing as anything other than words on a page. Ironically, it is her artwork from her childhood, especially color, along with music from her childhood, that ultimately – synergistically – leads her out of her reluctance to write multimodally. She creates a film about the “alternative” literacy of visual art and shows how her artwork was her means of expression as a child. Her film wonders why that love faded as she went through school and suggests it might have something to do with schools’ rigid definitions of literacy. Interestingly, her film raises the visual and tactile aspects of her choice of career as an orthodontist, hinting that she just may have come around full circle in terms of her perceptions of literacy.

Each of these students ultimately produced a multimodal project that successfully addressed the digital literacy narrative assignment; none of their projects was without flaw, though, and some were less rhetorically effective than others. More important, however, each student began writing in new and unfamiliar ways, using sound, image, movement, and color, as well as text, and paid close attention to the interaction of their senses. Furthermore, each student discovered new and powerful means for expression and persuasion, expanded his/her ideas about literacy, and wrote in more embodied ways than they ever had before.

In the context of the writing classroom, intermodality is, first of all, a theory of how we humans make meaning when composing. As will be shown in succeeding chapters, intermodality also can serve as a useful heuristic for writing and revising,

especially when composing multimodally; in addition, intermodality can be a productive way to read and analyze multimodal projects. As a composition scholar and practitioner interested in intermodality in the writing classroom, my main research questions are the following:

- How might a pedagogy of intermodality work in the writing classroom?
- How can we identify and teach intermodality from a rhetorical perspective?

A pedagogy of intermodality honors the notion of how meaning is made and emphasizes the senses as they relate to emotion, situatedness, and experience, reinforcing the embodiment of writers as they navigate the complexities of writing in digital environments. Furthermore, a pedagogy of intermodality informed by embodied rhetoric and principles of visual and other sensory rhetoric will serve students well since they will consider the rhetorical implications of all the senses combined when composing in digital environments. The next chapters describe, reflect on, and evaluate my discoveries while implementing a pedagogy of intermodality in my own writing classrooms.

Endnotes

1. Student names have been changed, although each student has given me written permission to describe their work in this study.
2. The term “synesthesia” is most well-known as a psychological phenomenon in which a person combines perception and senses in unusual ways. Neurologist Richard Cytowic defines synesthesia as “the rare capacity to hear colors, taste shapes, or experience other equally strange sensory fusions whose quality seems difficult for the rest of us to imagine” (*Synesthesia 2*). For example, letters or numbers (graphemes) are perceived by synesthetes as specific colors: the letter “A” tends to be red, “O” tends to be white or black, “S” tends to be yellow, and so on. Synesthesia, or “parallel sensation,” is not considered to be a serious condition but rather a difference in ways of perceiving, similar to having perfect pitch or color blindness.
3. Over 300 years ago, William Molyneux posed a question to John Locke as to whether a blind man who suddenly regains his sight would be able to distinguish between a cube and a globe placed on a table, without the aid of his hands. The famous question is fascinating, as it gets at the root of *how we come to know* and the relationship between touch and sight, learning and experience. The Molyneux Problem is still unresolved today, and neurologists continue to study many aspects of intermodality, especially in infants, considering especially whether it is learned, innate, or some combination. (Scientists have found that experience educates perception, but they have also found that perception is intermodal from the start. Shaun Gallagher, et. al. conclude Locke was correct in his answer “no” but for the wrong reasons.)
4. *Neuroplasticity* is the ability to change neural pathways or “the ability of neurons to forge new connections, to blaze new paths through the cortex, even to assume new roles. In shorthand, neuroplasticity means rewiring of the brain” (Schwartz and Begley 15). Discovering this neuroplasticity in *adult* brains was the real breakthrough for Schwartz (and his patients) because most scientists had thought that adult brains lose their plasticity: “It [the adult brain] can grow new cells. It can change the function of old ones. It can rezone an area that originally executed one function and assign it another. It can, in short, change the circuitry that weaves neurons into the networks that allow us to see and hear, into the networks that remember, feel, suffer, think, imagine, and dream” (130-31). If in fact adults can [deliberately, mindfully] change the paths of their brains, how might this information affect the way we teach students?
5. Fleckenstein explores various types of embodied literacies which we all possess and which are relevant within and outside the classroom. These embodied literacies can provide the foundation for new kinds of learning experiences, particularly within the writing classroom. Somatic literacy is when “students conceptualize meanings as multi-sensual and as sited, incorporating into writing-reading the sensuality and positionality necessary for our physical existence within the world” (*Embodied 80*). Somatic literacy includes kinesthetic learning and memory, including motor memory,

such as our ability to think a word and type it automatically. Somatic literacy participates and becomes immersed – it’s experiential, not a distant observer. Fleckenstein notes, “The sensuous intellect or allocentric attitude [deep involvement] is the aim and the essence of somatic literacy” (*Embodied* 82-3).

6. For studies of the visual in creation of meaning, see especially Arnheim, Barthes, Berger, Kress/VanLeeuen, Barry, Elkins, Mitchell, Stafford, Abram, and Vygotsky.
7. Beyond focus on the visual and aural, Carol Weist’s 2001 *Enculturation* article considers haptic rhetoric, “a rhetoric of tactile pictures,” by applying the visual framework from Kress and van Leeuwen to a tactile alphabet book for the blind.
8. Berthoff states, “When we write, we are simultaneously naming, inferring, referring, recognizing, remembering, marking time, wondering, wandering, envisaging, matching, discarding, checking, inventing” (86). Although at the time Berthoff was arguing against an overly rigid, “rule-governed” approach to teaching the writing process, what she said then takes on even more significance in terms of making meaning while writing digitally and employing a variety of modes: “To teach the composing process entails coming to terms with allatocness, learning to consider it not as a source of roadblocks but as a resource” (86).

Chapter 3: Intermodality in Invention

“In focusing upon those moments when the self is on the threshold of possible intellectual, social, and emotional development, literacy narratives become sites of self-translation where writers can articulate the meanings and the consequences of their passages between language worlds.”

Mary Soliday

I have not fully overcome this apprehension [about sharing such a deep and painful experience], but when I question this decision I remind myself of the positive impact that this narrative can have on society.

Sophia, first-year writer

The act of composing with writing cannot be severed from the act of composing with our senses.

Kristie S. Fleckenstein

These next chapters analyze my pedagogy in the writing classroom through the lens of intermodality, described in the previous chapter, as they address the following questions:

- How might a pedagogy of intermodality work in the writing classroom?
- How can we identify and teach intermodality from a rhetorical perspective?

The synergistic, imagistic, and embodied dimensions of intermodality can be interrogated and demonstrated through an examination of my pedagogy, particularly when helping students compose the digital literacy narrative. In this chapter I focus primarily on how intermodality influences invention activities, while the next chapter emphasizes intermodality in revision and reflection. Of course, due to the recursive nature of the writing process, the line between invention, revision, and reflection activities is rarely so neat or distinct in practice. In fact, a pedagogy attuned to intermodality in meaning-making welcomes the blurring of these tasks’ boundaries while composing, encouraging reflection at every stage of writers’ decision-making process.

During the second 5-week unit encompassing the digital literacy narrative in my Comp I courses, I need to accomplish two main tasks, which I view as intertwined, although they are not always perceived that way: first, we discuss, think, read, and write about **literacy**, particularly from a critical perspective, and second, I instruct, guide, and facilitate the **creation of a film or podcast**, including all the associated technical aspects. Both tasks have the potential to greatly unsettle or even undermine students' beliefs about what literacy is (and whom it serves) and what writing is (particularly "academic" writing). In addition, the assignment also asks students to write about something they are not used to considering in such a sustained way. Although the literacy narrative assignment has the flexibility to emphasize different learning objectives, for example, both Bronwyn Williams and Kara Poe Alexander ("Successes") focus their articles on the most common types of stories performed or on "the identities students construct for themselves and for their teachers" (Williams 343), I approach the literacy narrative as an opportunity to expand and complicate students' notions of literacy. I invite my students to read and think about "unlearning," psychologist Otto Rank's term that refers to "stepping out of the frame of the prevailing ideology" (70), or, as the editors of our Comp I textbook put it, "Unlearning is a kind of literacy that engages the politics, contradictions, and inequities that accompany education. . . . One of the goals of unlearning is to think critically about how we receive and make knowledge, as well as to remain open to new and different ways of knowing, reading, writing, speaking, and listening in various settings" (Bash, Kennedy, Christensen 397). Harvey Graff's "myth of literacy," for example, is defined by Selfe as "the widely held belief that literacy and literacy education lead autonomously, automatically, and directly to liberation, personal success, or

economic prosperity” (*Technology* 135). Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola explain the myth of literacy as “some basic, neutral, context-less set of skills whose acquisition will bring the bearer economic and social goods and privileges (352), when in fact “[t]he bundle of meanings and implications that comes with this word is . . . much denser and messier” (353). At the same time we are thinking about literacy, I believe that in this way asking students to create a multimodal project enacts the critical approach to literacy we have been discussing, because multimodal composing challenges students’ conceptions of academic writing. The delicate teaching challenge is to make these connections explicit for students, to close the gap between discussing literacy and writing multimodally, especially when they already may be struggling with the perceived assaults on their (heretofore) unexamined or under-examined beliefs.

The assignment itself employs a fairly traditional approach to the literacy narrative: my assignment reads in part, “Create a digital literacy narrative exploring how you understand the role of language, writing, or reading in your life. Pick an event from your past, either positive or negative, dramatize it in one or more scenes, and then reflect upon it to come to an insight about how writing, reading, or language works, or what it means in your life” (Appendix A). The idea is that our reading and discussions about literacy will inform the way students depict their own literacies; the significant part is not necessarily only telling a compelling story, but also reflecting deeply on how that story helps contribute to our concepts of literacy. The assignment indicates that students’ final literacy narrative projects should be presented in video (film) or audio (podcast) format, accompanied by a 1-2 page reflective introduction. The project topics range from the expected (influential books or teachers), to the unexpected (language of aviation, tattoos

as visual literacy), to the fascinating (literacy in a dual-language family, telemarketing as a despised form of reading, and code-switching throughout one day). Many projects do, in fact, engage the concept of literacy in more critical ways, demonstrating consideration of the complexity of the term. The range of projects reflects not only the variety of students in my first-year writing courses, but also the vast differences in the ways students think about and consider literacy.

No matter how well one plans for the challenges, the dual, intertwined tasks of thinking critically about literacy while creating a multimodal project are difficult to achieve, both for students and for me as I guide them. The breadth of invention challenges when composing the digital literacy narrative can be seen in the initial positions of the students we met earlier, along with two others. Because of the nature of literacy narratives (that is, telling a story from one's past), many students must work through how to depict themselves at younger ages and in different contexts. For example, Sophia wants to re-count the painful memories that motivated her to quickly master spoken and written English at age 11. Not only does she wrestle with how to depict herself in 7th grade, she must also figure out how to bridge the gap between Spanish, the language in which most of her story events actually occurred, and English, the language of her primary audience.

Many students also have difficulty landing on a topic for their literacy narratives, and once they do, they may worry about whether or not the topic is "good enough." Jon, the quiet junior who does not like to read, write, or even speak much, struggles to find a topic for the assignment. His preconception of literacy as dealing only with books initially puts him at a loss to connect with any of his own experiences. After much

procrastination, Amanda begins to think about how important her drawing and painting were to her as she grew up, and she wonders if that might have anything to do with literacy. She isn't sure it would be an "acceptable" topic on which to write. Even students who have a great idea for their digital literacy narrative often do not know where to begin or how to give life to their ideas in film or audio. For example, Melanie, a bright, energetic freshman, would like to contrast her two vastly different experiences of reading: her love of reading as a child with reading now in her job as a telemarketer, which she dislikes. She recognizes a certain bitter irony in her use of reading to "annoy" others solely for the purpose of making money for a large company, but she is uncertain how to articulate that irony. Similarly, Dustin, taking seriously the assignment's call to engage critically with the concept of literacy, wants to push back against a recent ABC television news story which he felt was an inaccurate critique of literacy in the US, injecting his own experiences against those presented of students in other countries, but he does not know how or where to begin.

The digital literacy narrative offers students flexibility and versatility in their writing and invites student creativity, but working multimodally also complicates the decision-making process for students. These examples demonstrate students wrestling with several invention challenges common to this assignment: idea generation, issues of self-representation and re-presentation, and use of new media for composition. Students realize they have practically unlimited choices in terms of film, sound, images, color, font, text, animation, and much more for their project. Although these limitless choices offer great creative possibilities, the decision-making process can be overwhelming, if not paralyzing, even for those students who have some solid ideas about their projects'

purposes. Nevertheless, working through this complex decision-making process invites opportunities for deep reflection. I want my pedagogy, specifically my invention strategies, to call attention to the complex web of meaning students are invoking and creating. Given adequate guidance, incorporating intermodality during invention activities can help students prepare for the tasks of writing multimodally and also critically considering their ideas about literacy. An examination of rhetorical invention provides the foundation for my own invention activities for multimodal projects.

Rhetorical Invention

Scholarly conversations surrounding rhetorical invention have traditionally been lively and varied. In the Introduction to their 1994 compilation of “Landmark Essays,” Richard Young and Yameng Liu discuss both the “discovery” and “creativity” aspects of invention and note that the term *invention* “signif[ies] a uniquely rhetorical perspective on composing that subsumes both objectivistic and subjectivistic conceptions” (xiii). Ten years later, Janice Lauer’s reference guide *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition* introduces, defines, and surveys historical and contemporary issues in rhetorical invention, including invention pedagogies. She reminds us of the age-old question of “whether rhetorical invention is an art that can be taught or a natural ability that can only be nurtured” (4), leading to questions of the “relative importance of natural talent, practice, imitation, or art in educating a writer or speaker,” influencing one’s pedagogical approach (4). Through the decades of scholarship on invention these conversations have been important, but, as Collin Brooke points out, almost all of it has been based on a “print-based model of authorship; each ends up focusing on the generation of textual

objects” (63); now scholarship on rhetorical invention must account for new ways of composing in the digital environment.

Several Rhetoric and Composition scholars focus on invention when composing digital projects, which helps me theorize invention activities in my own classrooms. For example, in thinking about the influence of computers on our writing classrooms, Scott DeWitt (2001) argues that “new technologies can help teachers to *imagine* new pedagogies, that teachers’ actual hands-on experience with particular computer applications can lead them toward the development of teaching practice. Such reciprocity allows us to remain true to sound pedagogical practice in its many forms but, at the same time, opens up possibilities for the creation of new practices” (14). More recently, Justin Hodgson (2010) acknowledges composition’s use of digital mash-up and remix as completely new ways of viewing invention. In his influential work *Lingua Fracta: Toward a Rhetoric of New Media*, Collin Brooke argues for what he calls an “ecology of practice” within new media composing, based on a “move from a text-based rhetoric, exemplified by our attachment to the printed page, to a rhetoric that can account for the dynamics of the interface” (26). Brooke advocates a move toward what he calls “proairetic” invention, which resists closure and moves instead toward “the generation of possibilities,” toward openness and expansiveness (86). Each of these scholars challenges the field’s (and my own) ideas about the purposes and strategies for rhetorical invention, along with questions of originality, authorship, and idea generation, and ask me to critically reflect on how my invention activities, often based on more traditional writing assignments, may actually undermine students’ progress in composing with new media. Although my own students do, in fact, produce artifacts for their literacy narratives,

rather than the completely open-ended systems that Brooke considers such as listservs or social bookmarking, Brooke's injunction toward openness and expansion in invention is useful to my own pedagogy, particularly in thinking about intermodality. Rather than shutting down or finalizing thinking about sensory relationships, particularly toward experience or memories, invention that values intermodality keeps raising more questions, asking students to think even more deeply and make more connections, both with their audience and within themselves.

As I have shifted some of my writing assignments toward new media, I have tried to value invention processes that work not toward closure or finality but openness (more "proairetic"), and DeWitt's approach toward invention as "a rich collection of processes, both systematic and chaotic, that leads to discoveries of what is not yet known: topics for papers; new pedagogies; personal and professional identities" (4) has guided my bundling of invention strategies. Also instrumental has been Lauer's definition of heuristics as "series of questions, operations, and perspectives used to guide inquiry. . . . [t]hey prompt investigators to take multiple perspectives on the questions they are pursuing, to break out of conceptual ruts, and to forge new associations in order to trigger possible new understanding. Heuristic procedures are thought to engage memory and imagination and are able to be taught and transferred from one situation to another" (8-9). Sometimes these values of multiplicity, newness, and deep engagement are difficult to maintain when students press only for what it will take to complete the task with the least amount of resistance to get their grade and move on. Acknowledging this pre-disposition of students' desire (and need) to finish, my invention strategies for the digital literacy narrative do not necessarily value efficiency but rather breadth and depth, encouraging

exploration and reflection; strategies valuing intermodality during invention slow students down, directing them to discover new insights not only about multimodal composing, but also about their own literacy.

Invention Strategies

Like most reflective practitioners, my specific invention activities in the classroom continuously change and evolve. As my work with and thinking about the digital literacy narrative has progressed, I have found myself deliberately incorporating invention strategies that exhibit the synergistic, imagistic, embodied dimensions of intermodality. A pedagogy attuned to intermodality helps students embrace the choices – and the open-endedness – of the writing process, particularly when composing multimodally.¹ In addition to reading literacy narratives (such as those from Jimmy Baca, Malcolm X, or Amy Tan, for example), discussing the elements of a literacy narrative, and also viewing several student digital literacy narratives, I work with my students through a variety of invention activities, three of which are described here.

Early in the 5-week unit, I ask students to think more deeply about the many definitions of literacy that we have been studying since I am, after all, asking them to write a *literacy* narrative. In this in-class activity, students work in a small group for the entire class period doing the following: first, read various definitions of literacy and discuss a series of questions such as, “What are some common literacy acts?”, “How is literacy connected to social and cultural practices?”, “How has literacy changed over time?”, and “How do technological advancements change our notions of literacy?”. Next, students organize a brief (3-4 minutes) presentation to the class based on their discussion, considering engaging ways to present beyond simply reciting answers. I ask them to draw from all the means available to them in our classroom: all the group members (enacting a

short play or “talk” show), whiteboard (drawing, diagrams, key words), computer/laptops (images, PowerPoint/Prezi, film clips), and so on. Then, during the last 20-25 minutes of class, the groups make their presentations, and usually there is time for some de-briefing or conversation, which carries into the next class period. I try to set a lighter tone for this low-stakes activity, reminding groups that we do not expect perfection; rather, we are looking for interesting ideas and insight.

The embodied dimension of intermodality, particularly through this type of active-learning, is evident here as students interact, move, and literally enact (in most cases) literacy; they begin to show, not tell. Though the questions are difficult and time is rather short, I am always struck by how engaged students become with this type of invention activity, as I see movement, talking (and listening), laughing, and the last-minute rush of ideas and nerves prior to presentation. Many of the presentations are quite clever, insightful, or engaging, but I am less concerned at this point with their revelations about literacy than I am with the activities – their process – they go through in preparing for the presentation. This activity strives to get students into their bodies, paying attention to voice, sound, movement, positioning, timing, space in the room, and their audience. Fleckenstein often refers to developing or paying attention to these “embodied literacies,” and Nick Monk works closely with the idea of embodied learning in his book *Open-Space Learning*. Although this activity is not necessarily digital (though many groups employ some digital technology), it is most certainly intermodal, inviting students to actively, physically engage with literacy by speaking, listening, moving. My plan is to help them begin their journey for the film or podcast, narrowing the often jolting gap

between writing a paper and creating a multimodal project in which they must consider movement, sound, and images, as well as words.

Another in-class invention activity is to invite students to compare three modalities (audio, video, and alphabetic text) in terms of when and how they are most effective, and what each modality can do that the others cannot. During this class-wide exercise, loosely based on Selfe's table "Affordances of Modalities" (*Multimodal*, Appendix 31), students use the whiteboard or GoogleDoc to come up with lists of "affordances" for each modality; for example, what sound can do that no other mode can, such as represent tone, inflection, pitch, volume, accent, perhaps gender or age, silence (lack of sound), ambient sound or sound effects, vibration, and so on. Sound, of course, can also "represent" the emotional gamut that music can convey in mere seconds, as well as the intertextuality of familiar riffs (the *Jaws* music, for example). Often it takes students a while to get going ("What do you mean by 'affordances' again?"), but once rolling, the listing comes quickly. Furthermore, productive comparisons inevitably are made between the modes; for example, can video represent silence? And if so, how (with black/blank screen; any other ways)? Can words represent, say, body language or color (through description)? If so, how does that compare to actually showing the body language or color? What are the effects of both? And so on. This activity does not appear to focus directly on literacy as much as the previous group exercise; however, the discussions that arise here often help students with their own multimodal literacies, including (for most students) thinking about modalities rhetorically, in new and productive ways. Writing about their full-semester course called "Writing with Video," Lovett and Squier assert that the class

yields specific attention to the process of communicating with video as a rhetorical device. The pedagogical process seeks to have students recognize the multiple modes available to them in making meaning. The emphasis on process is fundamental to the pedagogy supporting the course because it makes the cognitive process of translating experiences, perspectives, and ideas into a product utterly explicit and conscious for students. (249)

Students begin to understand the vastness of the choices ahead for them as they consider the modes they will use to create their films or podcasts, given the rhetorical situation at hand. This exercise is one of the most direct considerations of the synergistic dimensions of intermodality, as students begin to see how the modes can layer and work with each other, simultaneously, to produce certain effects or to juxtapose, intentionally or not.

Once students have begun to focus on their own literacy story through a series of writing prompts taking them back into their own experiences, and after we have considered the affordances of various modalities and how they might work together in their projects, we begin drafting using methods outside of traditional word-based drafting. I suggest drawing out the project's structure and design, using storyboard, PowerPoint, idea mapping, or some other method for visually demonstrating the layers involved on the timeline. I provide students with a very simple 8 ½" X 11" sheet with six boxes on it, and – depending on which way you orient the paper – additional, smaller boxes below or above each one. The idea is to block out various “scenes” or sections of the film, specifying what elements will be on-screen (visual), what will be heard (aural), and whether/not text appears at that time, in a linear sequence. The structure of the boxes also helps students visualize their composition in terms of “scenes,” once they are

reassured that the drawing is only for project conceptualization. Creating storyboards using slides (i.e. PowerPoint) allows the student writer to manipulate order a bit more easily, but the principle is the same. Rather than mandate any one particular approach, I try to let students guide themselves as much as possible. Here is an excerpt from my instructions for this exercise:

Writing a traditional word-based essay can be somewhat different from writing digitally, for a film or podcast, yet there are many similarities as well. One of our biggest goals with this project is to consider in what ways your writing process differs when composing with, within, and for new media. This project provides a good opportunity for you to experiment with and try out new ways of drafting/creating/writing. Therefore, you may create an initial draft using whatever means you feel is most helpful to your composing process, including Word, drawing or comics tools, PowerPoint (for sequencing, images, or video clips), or even freehand drawing/drafting.

Notice I keep “Word” (word processing) as an option; students in general are familiar with this program (no learning curve here), and its features actually allow significant visual creativity, at least in the drafting stage, including a large variety of fonts, shapes, colors, inserting images, shapes, text boxes, columns, and so on. In addition, some students are uncomfortable with freehand drawing; sometimes just getting them to use a strange font in a different size and color can open up some ideas for them or help them express a difficult concept. Sometimes students absolutely insist on typing out their narrative using only words, but I try to steer them away from this method, since it becomes difficult to remediate that paper into a film or podcast. If a student knows that

he/she wants to make a podcast, often they do type out a script using words, which they will read, but even then I suggest a more visual approach, such as a double-entry notebook, in which they show what other sounds/music/effects will be going on alongside their reading as well as points for strategic pauses.

The storyboarding exercise taps directly into the imagistic dimension of intermodality, inviting students to layer senses simultaneously as they begin to envision their story. Along with Joddy Murray, I use the term “image” here to refer to any unit of sensory impression and all the objects and qualities within that sensory impression, including sound, vision, smell, and so on, which link up with memory and emotion. Murray defines image as “what the mind forms and stores, not just what our eyes convey to the brain” (58). If composing multimodally opens up additional possibilities for expressive capability, it also multiplies and complicates the modal choices available to students. The storyboarding exercise expands possibilities for students’ expression as they consider all available senses to include in their narrative; it also helps students remember the linearity of both film and podcast as they outline and design their projects. At the same time, when students compose multimodally, they must conceive of their work as whole, vertically, with all its simultaneous layers, rather than just linearly. Drafting with a storyboard asks students to compose with images, sound, and words together from inception. Storyboarding also raises (and helps them address) the difficult questions they need to face such as how to depict an event from their childhood, including its accompanying emotions, or how to represent a more abstract concept. Using image, word, movement, and sound during invention mirrors the layering or nesting of our senses and provides dynamism and innovation in the composing process.

Student Invention

Each of these invention strategies incorporates one or more dimensions of intermodality to assist students as they compose their digital literacy narratives. My goal is to offer students as many opportunities as possible to reflect on their options as they create their projects, and to discover connections between their own literacy experiences and composing multimodally. As DeWitt notes, “Moments of invention require that writers are aware of the connections that they see while constructing knowledge. Therefore, the more numerous and diverse the connections they make, the richer these moments of invention and our students’ learning experiences will be” (24). Nonetheless, not every student benefits from every activity, of course, nor necessarily makes (or even cares about) these connections; Chapter 5 explores in more depth the types and sites of student resistance and reluctance I frequently encounter. What I hope to do here is show the possibilities of the open and expansive nature of the invention strategies detailed above; naturally, each student’s story and experience is unique, and so are their invention processes.

Sophia worried about how to depict herself as a 7th grader and also how/whether to include Spanish in her film. She knew she wanted to tell the story of what motivated her to master English, but for her the process of retelling the story was also deeply emotional, as she dredged up painful memories and felt vulnerable once again. Using storyboard helped her focus on specific events from her first day of school in Omaha, where several girls in her ESL class began bullying her because she did not speak or understand any English. The layering mechanism of the storyboard allowed her to determine which sounds the viewer would hear, with which camera shots and how she would integrate her narration between “today” and “back then.” She was also able to

figure out a way to layer the voice-tracks (using her sisters' voices) to include a teacher whose words (literally, a repetitive, rhythmic "blah blah blah") faded into the background while the other girls' voices were fore-grounded. She decided to use Barbie dolls on camera to represent her and the others in 7th grade. As described in her Reflective Introduction, Sophia viewed her film as more abstract, symbolic even, depicting "discrimination against the illiterate," and she targeted two main audiences: first, younger people who may have similar experiences, to "show[. . .] those with similar experiences that they are not alone, and it might raise awareness, so that they might take action to keep this from occurring." Her second targeted audience was professionals in education, to give them a first-hand account of this experience, which "might allow professionals to develop plans of action to target the issue." Sophia notes, "If these people remain open-minded, they will likely appreciate my honesty, my dedication to my film, and openness to share this painful memory." I believe that for Sophia, the process of creating this film became a kind of cathartic experience, as she was able to view her own experience in the larger context of literacy; furthermore, she believes her film can make a difference: "The only problem I had. . . was overcoming the fear and anxiety of sharing such a deep and painful experience. I have not fully overcome this apprehension, but when I question this decision I remind myself of the positive impact that this narrative can have on society."

Jon, the junior who struggled to identify his own literacy story, realized he could conceive of literacy more broadly than he had originally thought, as a result of his group exploration of the definitions of literacy. Jon has a love of flying – he's a pilot – and his group members were able to help him identify the many literacies he employs before and during a flight: Jon "reads" all of his plane's gauges, weather reports, and manuals, he

“writes” his flight plans, and he communicates almost constantly with ground control. His initial idea was a rather dull, uninspired slide show of photos, him and his planes, without a clear focus. Our work with the affordances of the various modes got him to thinking about what he hears up in the air. It turns out that oral language – the specific language of flight – is vitally important to him as he is flying, and he connects the sounds almost automatically with his somatic memory of controlling the aircraft and the “feel” of the plane. When we moved to thinking about sound intermodally, that is, how specific sounds connected with other senses for him, Jon said the whole project seemed to come together for him, almost instantly, as he remembered the time he flew through a storm and landed safely at an airshow in Oshkosh. He was able to retrieve the recordings from that flight for his film, including the Oshkosh air traffic controller, which helped Jon demonstrate how quickly and precisely instructions and information come at him as a pilot, as he made his point about the language of aviation. He notes, “the audio of the air traffic controller at the Oshkosh airport was added to show how fast things move and how important it is to know what they are saying.” For Jon, sound was the way in to his other senses when composing multimodally, leading to a stronger main point and a new attitude toward literacy.

Amanda’s spark finally lights up when the class begins drafting with storyboards, literally drawing their stories. In that class her body finally loosens and even a smile escapes. She digs in her backpack and pulls out a pack of colored felt-tip markers. Amanda still isn’t sure what any of this has to do with literacy, but suddenly she seems to have a lot of ground to cover; she is busy right up until the end of class. She smiles at me, and I offer a tentative suggestion: “Maybe for your project you could do something with

drawing.” “Really?!” she asks, excited for the first time since the assignment began. “Maybe this won’t be so bad.” In her Reflective Introduction, Amanda writes, “Most everyone in the class is doing something on reading or writing, but I couldn’t remember anything in my past about literacy, whether it be good or bad. In the process of thinking, I remembered I never read books because I was always drawing. That love for drawing carried over into school projects and homemade gifts.” For Amanda, the invention exercises allowed her to access and employ the embodied and imagistic dimensions of her intermodality, tying the activity of drawing to her memories and opening up her attitude toward the assignment and also broadening her ideas about literacy more generally.

For Melanie, our classroom exercise examining the affordances of each mode allowed her to discover an effective design strategy, in which she contrasts her warm, comfortable attitude of reading from her childhood with her current use of reading to make money in her job as a telemarketer. Her use of sharply contrasting music clearly delineates her two opposing views of reading: a subdued, jewelry-box version of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” in the first part of the film, and the driving, dramatic “Intense Music” to build to a climax about reading to earn the “almighty dollar” in the second part of the film. Of course she uses images to enhance this contrast and tell her story (old-fashioned typewriter font, children’s books, slow pace, and sepia tones in the first part, compared to flashing images, modern fonts, colorful charts, fast pace, and lots of images of money in the second part), but the music drives her film. As Melanie notes, “I wanted the music to have a big influence on the viewer’s perception of the film. . . . The tone of the video is sarcastic and overdramatic, which will hopefully be a more

effective way to grab the viewer's attention and draw them into the main idea of the video, but also to keep it from being too serious.”

Each of these students wrestled with the dual tasks of thinking critically about literacy while also planning and creating a multimodal project. An invention strategy attuned to intermodality can help students tap into memory and emotion through sound, smell, taste, touch, or vision, and invite students to slow down and carefully consider how the mode intersects with and informs other modes, generating additional images and memories, often even the visceral feelings embedded in these memories and experiences. At the same time, these invention strategies also help students assess the social, historical, and cultural implications of their images, beyond their personal experiences, which defamiliarizes not only the images, but also the significance of the memories for the students as they situate their experiences in a broader context for a wider audience.

In her call for more writing instructors to theorize their work with new media, Anne Wysocki notes two “broad categories” of writing about new media from outside of Rhetoric and Composition: writing about specific individual texts, and broader theorizing about media in general (“Opening” 5-6). Wysocki notes, “There is little or nothing that bridges those two categories to help composers of texts think usefully about effects of their particular decisions as they compose a new media text, *to help composers see how agency and materiality are entwined as they compose*” (“Opening” 6, emphasis mine). In this chapter on invention, I attempt to answer Wysocki's call and bridge this gap between the specific and general, by defining and analyzing my own invention strategies through the lens of intermodality, at the places where multimodal writing occurs. Intermodality moves invention beyond traditional activities as it opens students to consider and rely on

the interaction of their senses to identify a significant unit of meaning emerging from all the layers, and also to begin to critique their choices as they design their projects rhetorically. Furthermore, intermodality helps students see the relationship between their own agency – the authority of their own “re-presentation” – and their embodiment within these multimodal projects. The next chapter picks up this relationship enhanced by intermodality as it explores my pedagogy in terms of reflection and revision.

Endnote

1. Even though I have developed activities that exhibit these qualities, I do not necessarily “teach” intermodality itself, or even use that term with my students. I do advocate making my pedagogy visible to students; as these ideas surrounding intermodality continue to gel, I may begin to talk directly about intermodality, only insofar as it is productive for students and their writing. So far I have not seen the benefit in taking class-time to work directly with the concept of intermodality in any great depth.

Chapter 4: Intermodality in Revision and Reflection

“Revision is the reordering of experience so that it reveals meaning. It is the great adventure of the mind.”

Donald Murray

“As I added pictures, pieces of the [oral] story began to get taken out as the pictures could tell some of the story for me.”

Jon, Aviation major

The due date for the first drafts of students’ digital literacy narratives has arrived. Together we have defined and considered issues of literacy and unlearning, read and discussed essays, worked through several invention exercises, viewed other students’ projects as models, learned some new programs for working with sound and image (and most likely fought some battles with technology), posted drafts to YouTube or Vimeo, and made the link available on our class GoogleDoc. Fatigue is palpable, and not all are unscathed as old procrastination habits catch up to them with the additional steps of these multimodal projects. At this point in the process, it is my task first of all to congratulate them and remind them how far they have come during the past few weeks. We take a moment to reflect on all these activities. Now I must prepare them to go right back into these projects with a renewed interest and an eye toward revision, especially rhetorical revision.

This class period is, by far, the most difficult moment all semester.

The digital literacy narrative asks students to wrestle with modes and senses in ways they may not be used to, drawing their attention to complex decisions they must make, as well as to the consideration of how to (re)present themselves and their stories in new media and perhaps even to question traditional ideas about literacy. Each semester

produces a variety of projects demonstrating differing levels of effectiveness and covering a wide range of topics. Most of these drafts are nowhere near “complete,” but many have a good start. Nonetheless, students face especially sticky challenges at this point. For example, to address her question of how to represent herself in 7th grade, Sophia decides to use dolls, specifically Barbie dolls (hers has long, black hair, and the mean girls are blonde). On viewing her draft, Sophia’s peer group is not sure about this choice; they want to be supportive and open-minded, but some are confused and some find this use of the dolls funny, the opposite of her intention and potentially undermining her project’s purpose. Another difficult project is Jon’s: on his first draft, we hear Jon read his narrative of the entire day of his flight. His monotone voice is not confident, and the script from which he reads has stripped away all of his enthusiasm as a pilot. At this point his project is difficult – if not impossible – to follow.

Wrestling with a different issue, Amanda was still trying to figure out her main point about literacy by the time drafts were due. She knew she wanted to talk about her drawing and painting as she was growing up, but she didn’t exactly have a story. She had collected many photos of her artwork from home, as well as gift cards she had made, and she even had video of her father reminiscing about her love of art. Meanwhile, Amanda had discovered the transition and other visual features on her movie-maker program, and this draft bombarded viewers with images, text, and color, with no discernable organization or direction. Another student, Morgan, told a powerful story of a Thanksgiving prayer she and her cousin wrote as 5 year-olds right after 9/11, intending to highlight the first time she felt her writing and speaking were taken seriously by adults.

Her film relied heavily on borrowed images from the World Trade Center attacks, however, and distracted viewers from her point about her literacy experience.

Each of these examples represent several (but by no means all) of the challenges for revision presented by initial drafts of multimodal compositions: attempts to convert traditional writing directly onto film, projects which uncritically layer elements or combine modes, or – conversely – do not take full advantage of the visual and aural affordances of film, and preoccupation with the technology used for the composition while overlooking the basic rhetorical situation. Madeleine Sorapure identifies the two most common problems she sees in multimodal projects as “matching modes,” which “diminishes the potential of multimedia by, in essence, leveling the modes so that they each express something more or less equivalent” and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, including too many elements only for their “cool effect,” which leads to distraction: “Here the potential of multimedia composing is diminished because the different modes are brought together more or less arbitrarily.” These examples do not include projects with sound quality issues, inelegant film edits, or other concerns that I would classify as “technical” issues. At this point in the process I am interested in having students reflect on and revise the global elements of their projects, and I know I need to provide them with strategies and means for these kinds of substantive, rhetorical revisions. I wonder how a pedagogy attuned to intermodality might play a part in my revision strategies for students.

This chapter continues the inquiry into my writing pedagogy by focusing the lens of intermodality on the processes of revision and reflection, specifically during students’ digital literacy narratives. I examine several of the strategies I employ for students to

revise and reflect on their multimodal compositions from a perspective of intermodality, keeping in mind the recursive aspects of the writing process. I argue that intermodality functions productively in revision and reflection to help students recognize how their senses work together when viewing and responding to their own and to others' projects, helping them develop into more critical viewers, consumers, and respondents, which in turn develops them into more nuanced and effective producers of multimodal projects. In this way, in addition to a useful way to approach invention, intermodality becomes a powerful reading and analytical tool, both of self and of others.

It is important to situate my work helping students revise multimodal projects within the larger context of Rhetoric and Composition scholarship on revision, which during the past forty years has consistently pushed back against the historical tendency to reduce the idea of revision to merely correcting surface errors; Bamberg (2012) and Horning (2002) both extensively trace revision's historical roots as well as Rhetoric and Composition's more rhetorical approaches to revision emerging from the process pedagogy in the 1960s. As Bamberg describes it, "During this ongoing process, writers could revise at any point during composing and at any level – from the major units of discourse such as the thesis or the main arguments to individual words and sentences. However, their primary concern was always developing meaning in terms of purpose and audience" (81). In his book *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts* (2006), directed toward writers as well as teachers of writing, Joseph Harris defines revising as "the work of returning to a draft of a text you've written in order to make your thinking in it more nuanced, precise, suggestive, and interesting" (98), and his book prompts writers to

consider the larger writing issues such as their purpose and the social implications of what they write (99).

Furthermore, writing scholars generally agree that the complex tasks of revision and reflection are highly intertwined, and the emphasis on choice is prominent. Using the metaphor of weaving to represent revision, Horning describes seven “strands” in her framework for revision; she defines revision as “the interaction of conscious *and unconscious* choices writers make in a draft as they weave readable writing for readers, drawing on a balance of several kinds of self-awareness and on specific skills to produce the finished fabric of a readable text” (5, emphasis mine). Conversely, in her book *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, Yancey calls reflection a “dialectical process” and notes, “reflection includes the three processes of projection, retrospection (or review), and revision” (6). My own classroom experiences have shown that revision and reflection work hand-in-hand, and the distinction is often unclear, since they are so closely related. Students generally are not able to revise substantively or productively until they have spent time and space reflecting on their drafts. Even in the final Reflective Introduction or cover letter that students write to me upon submission of their project, they often consider what they would do differently or how they would revise the project they just “completed;” this recursive process is something we try to teach students about writing in general. In this way it becomes productive to view reflection as a lens rather than a mirror through which to view one’s work for revision [in Lanham’s distinction of looking *at* versus looking *through*], particularly with a fresh perspective or a renewed concentration on audience and purpose.

Almost all of the Rhetoric and Composition scholarship on revision involves a written *text*, the “paper.” The move toward multimodal composing, however, reinforces the importance of focusing revision on the rhetorical aspects of the project, as well as the complex, material, and even collaborative aspects of revision. In Selfe’s *Multimodal Composition*, Kara Poe Alexander’s chapter “More about Reading, Responding, and Revising: The Three R’s of Peer Review and Revision” notes,

Although both of these processes – peer review and revision – figure into the composing of conventional alphabetic texts, they may look and feel very different for multimodal essays. . . . [S]tudents may find that revising such texts . . . may not be as quick or, in some ways, as simple as making changes to an alphabetic essay that requires only the use of a word-processing package. (113)

Similarly, in advocating a “multimodal task-based framework” for her students’ projects, Jody Shipka observes, “For students who have grown accustomed to instructors telling them exactly what they need to do, this way of working can be time-consuming and frustrating. . . . [R]evision has become *re-vision*: A demanding process that involves both the potential and the willingness to reimagine the goals, contexts, and consequences associated with their work” (“Multimodal” 291). Both Shipka and Alexander understand the additional time, effort, and energy needed to revise multimodal projects, which has certainly played out in my classrooms as well.

In terms of intermodality, the most useful conversations about revision and reflection are those that concern the embodied, imagistic aspects of revision. Stacey Pigg notes, “[S]tudents’ knowledge-making and understanding is newly and constantly mediated by the new (and old) technologies attached to their bodies” (250). Similarly, in

his 2010 article “A Fractal Thinker Designs Deep Learning Exercises,” Ed Nuhfer reinforces the link between revision and reflection as it relates to deep learning: “Revision recycles past thinking into established neural conduits and employs that thinking to grow larger, more complex networks needed to produce new thinking” (10). He asserts that “Deepest learning only begins after one grasps that revision is the real learning product, not the paper” (11). And considering the non-discursive, embodied aspects of revision, Peter Kratzke attempts to identify and articulate that “gap” in whether and how revision can be “taught,” and that inarticulatable moment when a writer becomes aware of his or her own self-presentation and embodiment in the process of writing and revising.

While composing multimodally herself about revision, Susan Delagrange reminds us of the concept of *techné* as a productive art; in her 2010 *Kairos* article in which she reflects on revising her own article, she notes, “Techné is a making, and involves knowledge in the hand and knowledge in the head. Knowledge in the hand comes from practice and experience, knowledge in the head from reflection on causes and effects; shaping this webtext helps me become a better, more aware practitioner of my visual/verbal/interactive art.” My approaches to guide students’ revision and reflection of their multimodal projects are informed by this “knowledge in the hand and knowledge in the head”; furthermore, a pedagogy attuned to intermodality seeks to dismantle this bifurcation, this mind-body split, so that doing and knowing become one.

Revision and Reflection Strategies

The idea of “revision” in the writing process implies that something has already been produced, that we will *go back* and re-examine our writing. In practice, this is true:

we often address revision in the writing classroom just after a first draft has been submitted; however, as emphasized throughout this chapter, revision – just like invention – permeates all aspects of the writing process. As we write, we continuously reflect on our task. Most of these revision activities themselves are well-known and commonly used among writing instructors; I am, however, viewing them here (and modifying them in the classroom) as they are attuned to the synergistic, imagistic, and embodied dimensions of intermodality. Key at every point in revision is the idea of reflection; every activity invites students – formally or informally – to reflect on where they are in their process, and how they are combining their modes to best reach their rhetorical goals, even if they are writing and thinking about others’ work. Almost every class period (and often outside of class) students do some sort of reflective writing: checking in, asking questions, considering what they think about various modes, experiencing frustrations or successes. Students are often overwhelmed by the number of choices they face in any multimodal composing project. Therefore, the role of reflection becomes even more important as students make and revise their choices.

One of the most powerful ways to help students think about – and engage in – revision of their own work is, perhaps ironically, to have them respond to their peers’ projects. Critically viewing and articulating their responses to other students’ projects addressing the same assignment helps students consider their own projects with fresh perspective. I employ a small-group (4-5 students) peer review process, in which students view and respond in writing to three or four of their classmates’ projects, using a series of questions I provide, prior to coming together for our small group workshop (Appendix B). I characterize the purpose of our peer review sessions as “motivating the authors to

revise.” Each group member also provides an Author’s Note to the group, including me. I ask each student to write a fairly informal note that includes how far along they see themselves in their process, an articulation of their main point or what they hope to accomplish in this project, a consideration of the modes they have selected, a statement of what they like best so far in their project, and any specific questions or concerns they would like their readers to address.¹ The Author’s Note is a valuable opportunity for students to step back from their project for a moment, reflect on their process, and reconsider the goal for their project. Horning suggests that these notes carry several benefits for revision: “they help students become aware of their preferred approaches to writing, and also enable them to take risks to try new and more productive strategies on a particular task. In these ways, the process statements [Author’s Notes] help build students’ metarhetorical and metastrategic awareness” (145). During a multimodal project, which some students have never before attempted, this moment of reflection becomes crucial for future writing projects as they consider how the various modes they have selected work together to create meaning. Furthermore, the Author’s Note assists and directs reviewers by allowing them to see how the author perceives she is crafting the project.

Since my students’ peer reviews are written, the reviewer must take the time to articulate what exactly is happening in the video or podcast – and where the project succeeds or falls short – based on specific sensory elements, along with the images, memories, and experiences they evoke. Viewing their peers’ projects becomes a synergistic and imagistic process of analysis. Furthermore, an effective peer review can be one of the most embodied writing experiences a student has. Because a student must

experience the project, admittedly in draft form, with all of his/her senses – hearing, seeing, reading, thinking, remembering, engaging emotionally and intellectually, and so on – and at the same time offer substantive feedback, the student is, in fact, participating intermodally, and more important, paying attention to that intermodality. For example, a student reviewer pays attention to the rhetorical choices made and considers the efficacy of those choices: why does the voice on the film seem to be reading a paper without expression? What message is conveyed by the images shown, and is that message consistent with the author’s intent? How do the voice, music, text and image work together, synergistically? Where are they juxtaposed, and to what effect? And naturally, during and after the group session, the author must process her feedback (often itself a deeply embodied experience) and face even more difficult decisions for revision.

Sometimes hearing and reading the unanimity of group advice that was written separately helps motivate the writer to revise. For example, in her author’s note, Amanda wrote, “What I like best about my video is all the abstract colors and pictures that I have put in to it to add some life to the video.” Her reviewers agreed to a point (for example, one reviewer said, “The different ways the words fly onto the screen keeps it interesting as well as the colors”), but overall they encouraged Amanda to tie her images more closely together around a main point; unanimously they encouraged her to minimize the distracting transitions. After peer review, Amanda began to focus on the rhetorical task at hand and narrowed her visuals, sound, and text only to those that helped make her point.

During peer review, Sophia had to open herself up to her group and risk resurrecting all those old fears she had put away. Her group members viewed the project in the spirit in which it was offered, assisted greatly by Sophia’s author’s note, but did not

shy away from asking her difficult questions, especially about the use of the Barbie dolls. The consensus was that the use of the dolls to represent the girls had the potential to be powerful (and two students raised an interesting issue about the deeper, cultural significance of using “perfect” Barbies), but technically the delivery was not there yet. Sophia’s peer group provided specific suggestions on camera angles, edits, and use of words on screen in strategic places – as well as silence – to enhance the film’s power in telling her painful story. Directly after peer review, Sophia was relieved and almost euphoric that these people would spend time and effort on *her* work.

Morgan’s peer group nudged her to find visuals other than 9/11 images to help tell her story of the Thanksgiving prayer. She called home to get some family photos and discovered her mother had saved the actual paper on which she and her cousin had written the prayer! Her film then shifted dramatically toward a focus on delivering the prayer itself before dinner, culminating in an image of these words – uneven, simple, and misspelled, in children’s bulky print – juxtaposed with the meaning behind the words and her realization of their immense power. Morgan says, “By adding pictures of the original prayer, I hoped to show how such a painful, powerful tragedy could be put into such simple words with a deep meaning. I read along with the prayer as the picture is on screen to ensure that my audience can understand each word that we wrote.”

Most students in my writing classes identify the group peer review as the most difficult – and the most beneficial – part of their writing process (and many are surprised by their realization). In part this finding may be due to students never before having really engaged in a useful peer review process, in which they are asked to view projects beforehand, write their responses independently, and come to the group meeting ready to

go; nevertheless, I argue that students find the group peer reviews beneficial because of the embodied, imagistic, and synergistic nature of this process. It is at this point of viewing their peers' projects where students are most aware of the intermodality of composing, when they can observe in others' projects how their senses are working together to tell (and receive) the story, and where the narrative may fall short because the elements are not working together efficaciously. Students may not be completely successful at their peer reviews because of the difficulty of the task I am asking them to perform; nonetheless, as Kara Poe Alexander asserts, "Many students will lack experience composing in modalities other than words and will need to know what to look for and how to respond to their peer's work in constructive ways. This preliminary review of projects will also help alleviate some of students' apprehensions about multimodal assignments" ("More" 117).

The next important revision exercise provides students with a useful strategy to critically examine their specific choices when creating their multimodal projects. Two key choices almost all students face, for example, are incorporation of music into their projects and deciding if, when, and how they are to appear (voice or face or both) in the telling of their own stories. For each of these decisions, among dozens of others, students can benefit from guidance to make rhetorically sound choices. For multimodal projects to be effective, students need to pay attention to how their choices of sensory elements (such as sound, image, movement, and even text, color or emotion) work with (or against) the others to support the project's purpose, and also how their elements might be perceived differently from what they intend. There is often a disconnect – a gap – between what a student intends and how that project is received. Therefore, as students

create their projects, they benefit from productive ways to examine the relationships they've created between all the sensory elements in their multimodal projects.

This heuristic exercise introduces a simple but powerful analytic tool which helps students examine any element on three levels: surface, deeper, and personal (see Figure 4.1 below). Once students have begun drafting, I provide them this diagram, along with some instructions, including this statement:

Any sensory element (unit of meaning) you choose for your film or podcast – a song, a narrative voice, a photo, a film clip, words on screen – carries certain socio-cultural and personal baggage. So, for example, a certain photo in your purse or wallet might give you a visual image, but it also conjures specific memories, even smells or sounds, and perhaps brings a smile to your face (perhaps a blush?) and a certain feeling in your gut, all happening simultaneously. Sometimes students unintentionally create projects with conflicting messages or values. A useful way to analyze and evaluate your composing choices is to examine each element, breaking it down in layers:

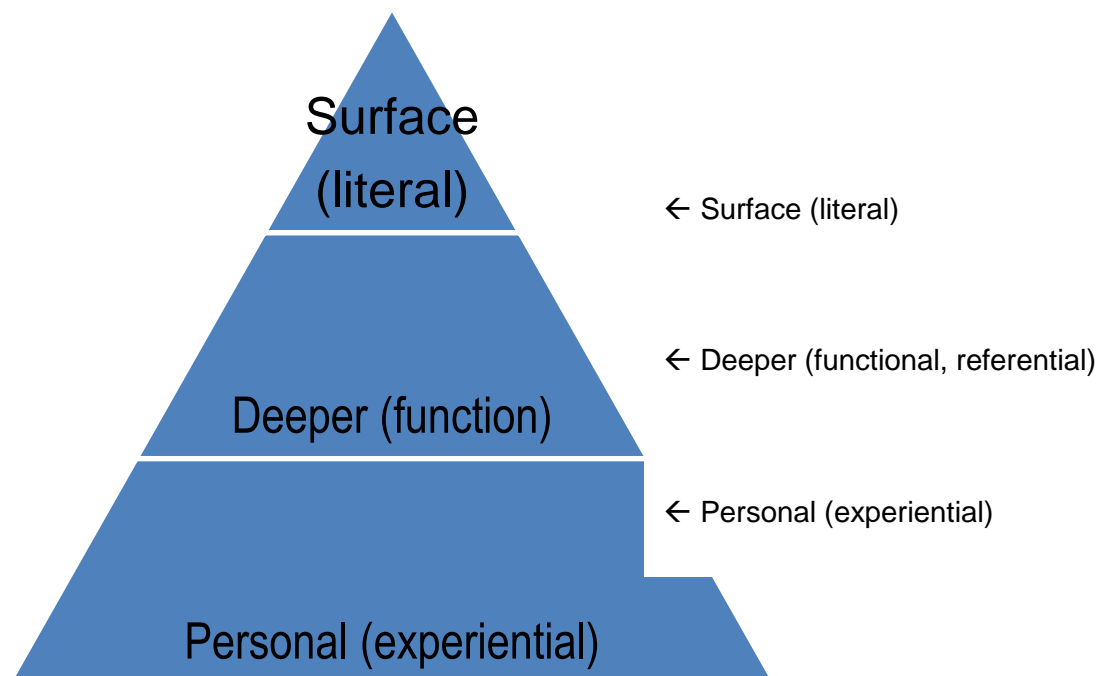


Figure 4.1: Analyzing Each Sensory Element: A Heuristic

I walk students as a class through the diagram, indicating that the tip of the pyramid, the “Surface,” is what the element literally is or says, while the “Deeper” level describes how students intend the element to function, perhaps symbolically, referentially, or intertextually. The “Personal/Experiential” level asks students to consider what the element means to them personally, including memories, experiences, feelings, and emotions.

At this point it is essential to work through several examples together. I begin with a “stock” sound effect such as the ocean. On the surface we hear waves crashing, seagulls, the wind. These are the literal sounds that are heard. This ocean sound often refers to relaxation or serenity, the idea of “getting away” (for people in Nebraska), or a student may intend for it to symbolize our awe of nature or the recognition of eternity beyond our own individual lives. However, experientially and personally, the sound of

the ocean may conjure different impressions that a student may not intend (such as fear, perhaps from a bad experience at the beach). Once students recognize this potential for misunderstanding or a different interpretation, they consider ways to mitigate or remedy this potential (perhaps by voice-over or another image) to help convey their intention. In the ocean example above, a voiceover might say, “For me, the ocean has always been a place to relax and let go . . .”, or the student could show a visual image of people relaxing on the beach. For a completely different effect, a voiceover might say, “Unlike most people, for me the ocean is not relaxing; it reminds me of a frightening experience . . .” and might be accompanied by a different kind of music. So this exercise demonstrates the melding, or complementarity, of the sensory elements as they draw in the audience to understand the student’s point at the deepest possible level and make projects more rhetorically effective. The tool reinforces the socio-cultural, as well as personal, constructed nature and impact of all sensory images, as well as how memories, experiences, and emotions of writers attach to these sensory images as they compose their projects. Fleckenstein describes the “nested” qualities of these images: a sound or a smell embedded into a larger memory, provoking associations, immediate responses, memories, and so on. She writes, “Images tend to nest a range of senses, resulting in meanings that are collaborative products of sound, sight, and touch, providing full and resonant . . . significance to meaning” (*Embodied* 20).

We work together as a class to “fill in” the diagram using several examples, and students begin to catch on to the process of separating these layers for analysis as they consider their own elements. I always try to offer a song as an example, since music is

readily accessible to most students and they are generally able to grasp the different levels of analysis. My favorite example goes something like this:

So, I want to use Prince's 1982 pop hit "1999" (surface) for a fun, upbeat song in my film with its great beat and party anthem (deeper function), because it reminds me of some great parties I attended and always makes me feel good (personal). At the same time, I need to also realize that many people today think Prince might be a bit odd – and old – and the song is quite dated and, to many in my audience, almost cliché, not to mention those troubling lyrics about nuclear annihilation. If I am writing about "the good old days" in the 80's, trying to recreate my experience, I may choose to keep it. But I may decide to use other elements to clarify my choice. Otherwise, I may want to re-evaluate my use of this song in terms of how it interacts with other elements of my film and ask myself, "What is this song's rhetorical function?"

This example works well because my students (who are mostly in their late-teens/early 20's) can quickly recognize the culturally-specific aspects of the Prince song and its effects on audience, and in turn, they become more likely to apply the heuristic to their own favorite songs. This heuristic works with visual images (moving and still, original or borrowed), voice (dialect, gender, age, ethnicity), music (year, lyrics, genre), ambient sound, and even text (color, font, size, arrangement), creating opportunities for detailed analysis of elements that may go unexamined. This particular invention exercise incorporates the embodied, synergistic, and imagistic dimensions of intermodality.

At this level of analysis, students will become more proficient in recognizing that not everyone shares the same deeper, more experiential reactions to a sensory element,

thus creating potential for misunderstanding or disconnect between intended meaning and outcome in a multimodal project. The point seems obvious when speaking in the abstract, but when students begin to select which elements to include in their projects, often this point is overlooked. In this revision exercise, intermodality becomes a tool for analysis, a way for students to read and critique their choices and better understand how their elements work together in their multimodal projects. This heuristic offers a way to help students attain a critical distance (a different, more productive kind of “gap”) during creation of multimodal projects.

Returning to Sophia’s project allows insight into how this heuristic can function. Although it was a risky choice, Sophia decided to use Barbie dolls to “act out” key parts of her story; after peer review, this analytic tool helped her understand and work through the socio-historical baggage attached to Barbie dolls, and she was able to mitigate any unintended humor or scorn by use of effective camera angles and sad, melancholic music. In an in-class exercise in which students selected one specific point in their project to apply this analysis, Sophia wrote, “The best part in my Literacy Narrative is where I finally become aware of what the three girls had done to me and how it hurt me emotionally. . . . In this part, I present a small scenario with the doll that represents me and my voice talking. Even though it was painful to realize how I had been humiliated . . . , if I removed my voice, this part would collapse and make no sense.” Sophia understood that at this point in the narrative, her voice – not the visual – was the crucial element to tap into her deeper emotions.

Similarly, using this analytic tool solidified the main idea for Melanie in her literacy narrative comparing her love of reading as a child with her despised job as a

telemarketer. When she came across the catchy theme song from the popular PBS show *Reading Rainbow*, she was immediately transported back to a specific time in the 90's as a child, which dusted up all these “nested” images, as Fleckenstein refers to them, in her memories beyond the song itself, generating images of specific teachers and their names, the smells of her school as well as her living room where she watched the show, and countless other specific childhood memories. She was struck by the irony of a TV show as the catalyst for so many children's love of reading, and she studied the cultural and historical resonance of this song – for any of us older than a certain age, this song may not conjure up much (unless, perhaps, we watched the show with our children), yet for Melanie (and for most of her classmates, which got her thinking about her audience), this song opened many other senses and memories. She actually included part of this clip in her final project, repurposing the original to help make her ironic point about reading.

Another valuable strategy for reflection and revision, and one that draws on both simultaneously, is the Reflective Introduction I ask students to submit on the day their final, revised digital literacy narratives are due (Appendix C). In this 1-2 page typed document, which students compose in essay or letter format, students introduce their projects to me and reflect on their process to get the project to submission. I ask them to thoughtfully address questions about audience and purpose, describe and defend their choices in selecting specific audio and visual elements, and explain decisions about organization and content. In addition, I ask students to reflect on ways their writing process for this project differs from when they write a more traditional paper, focusing especially on their writing process. Furthermore, I encourage students to use this opportunity to explain any gaps between what they envisioned for the project (if, for

example, they had unlimited time, money, or expertise), and what they actually produced. This exercise works well when students (at my urging) work on it *well before* its due date; my intent is for students to make revisions to their digital literacy narratives *while* they write their reflective introductions. I remind them to consider what seems obvious (but may not be): “If your choices don’t make sense, consider changing your project so they do.” The idea is that in the reflection students may recognize specific choices they made which were not rhetorically sound, and still have time to change them. The Reflective Introduction thus serves as a working document, to guide the author to productive changes. Simultaneously, the Reflective Introduction invites students into metacognition, to consider *how* they composed this project and *why* they selected certain sensory elements and not others to represent themselves and their literacies, and not just *what* they did (DeWitt 256).

Two concerns arise from the use of these reflective introductions. First, many new media scholars have critiqued the idea that even though we say we “buy into” the idea of assigning multimodal projects, we as writing instructors still feel the need to accompany the project with a text-based paper, to somehow justify the multimodal project. For me, the Reflective Introduction is not designed to “justify” the multimodal part, to become the “real” writing; like Sorapure and many others, I believe the multimodal project must be able to stand on its own, and I assess it as such, in which the reflective introduction merely factors in along with all of the other process work. Instead, the Reflective Introduction serves as the crucial moment of learning for the students, where they make connections to and within their projects that they may have never before made. This “bringing together” of all the elements in their process is synergistic, helping students see

how the sum of their project is indeed greater than its constitutive parts. I remind students that the learning we care most about is not in fact the delivery of their 3-5 minute film, but in the production of that work, of their entire process. Students often feel relief when they discover I do not expect technically perfect multimodal projects. Along these lines, Jason Palmeri states, “When I’m asking students to compose in new ways, I don’t necessarily expect polished final projects. I’d rather see that students really learned a lot from the process than just see that they made a slickly presented piece” (DeWitt, *et. al.* 354). We are surrounded every day by well-produced sophisticated video products, including, for example, TV commercials, and when their work does not stack up to what they are used to experiencing, or does not look “professional,” they begin to realize how difficult this multimodal work really is. Interestingly, from here they often draw parallels with traditional writing, too: just because you can type well doesn’t make it easier for you to write well.

The second concern about the reflective introduction that arises is more “rhetorically tricky” (DeWitt 257), for my students and for me: students understand this paper “introduces” project and will be part of the grade, and yet at the same time we ask them to be honest and “write critically” (257). Students will want to present their “best side,” and yet we say we value their honest self-assessment, warts and all. Yancey (*Reflection*) reminds us of the dual nature of this type of reflective narrative; she calls it “Reflection-in-Presentation,” that is, there is a personal, embodied component, represented through a public, social text. Yancey believes this tension can be productive and perhaps even desirable. She notes, “The *tension*, then, occurs between the *actual* self and the *represented* self, a tension that is *rightful*, that is productive” (72). In fact, for this

particular assignment, in which students are asked to re-present themselves in a narrative about their literacy, this tension has been present from the beginning as they wrangle modes and senses to make the most effective impact and convey a meaningful message. Sometimes the Reflective Introductions are perfunctory, and students clearly have just whipped them off at the last minute. Yancey also worries about those exchanges which she feels are not, in fact, exchanges at all but “*maintaining a form without substance*” (*Reflection 137*), when the students are just going through the motions, writing in disembodied ways. For a variety of reasons, some students simply are not (yet) able to deeply engage in this kind of reflective exercise. I wonder if my assignment here at least helps them get started on their way to a more reflective life. More common, however, are students who attempt deep reflection. This process of revision and reflection allows these students to discover new and powerful ways for expression, and also recognize and experience how their senses work synergistically in a multimodal project, even conveying messages that cannot be expressed only in words.

For example, as he reflects on the peer review in his reflective introduction, Jon acknowledges the valuable feedback his group gave him: “My first draft included less pictures and a lot more of me telling the story. After my group meeting and revisions, I added more pictures and took out some of my talking. . . . In the case of this project, my pictures, videos, and audio clips can be used to show the audience what I’m talking about. They can be used to tell some of the story so that I don’t have to.” In addition, in his reflective introduction Jon considers his various audiences and suggests that, “for my friends and family it shows a side of me that they may not have ever seen before. I think the [viewer] would value my pictures, the story, and the fact that it does take some actual

learning to know how to read and understand the things that I, as a pilot, have to know.” In his understated way, Jon demonstrates pride in his ability to fly planes and his connection with this language of aviation as an important type of literacy. Meanwhile, Amanda, who had such a difficult time getting started, was able to access her ideas for her film through openness to drafting by alternative means, such as drawing. In her reflective introduction, she writes, “Art was how I expressed myself and it made me feel accepted,” which seemed remarkable to her that she was “allowed” to admit this in a writing class. She demonstrates growth in her attitudes toward literacy, stating, “I’m really proud of this video and how hard I worked on it. I hope it shows people that there are other ways you can express yourself besides words.”

Sophia considers multimodal writing more directly in her reflective introduction: “This type of writing is quite different from traditional alphabetic writing in such a way that one has a wide variety of modes available to portray a message, as opposed to [using] just words. As a result of this difference, I had to be careful in choosing and applying the types and amounts of modes I used.” She describes the elements she included in her film and notes they “help set the scenes and through their unique tones, give the viewer a sense of the emotional aspects of my experience.” In thinking about her audience of those interested in issues of social discrimination as well as educators in general, she notes, “If these people remain open-minded, they will likely appreciate my honesty, my dedication to my film, and my openness to share this painful memory.”

In one of the more rhetorically powerful projects I have viewed, Jake’s film demonstrated how he used writing to get over the death of his older brother, writing him letters each day about his daily routine. As with most of the students, Jake faced his share

of technical issues, noting in his reflective introduction, “It took me awhile to get used to everything [on Windows MovieMaker] so for the first draft I recorded my audio and just threw some pictures on there and it really didn’t go together well. But once I got my peer revisions I was then able to put my pictures and my song so that it all flowed well together.” Jake writes, “People that have to deal with the death of people close to them sometimes shut down or don’t want to talk about it, but I was able to make a video about it, so I think that is something that could be valued.” He continues, “This project was definitely a lot more thought provoking than just writing things down on a piece of paper.” He concludes, “I am glad I was able to do this though, it really opened me up, especially to a new style of literacy.”

From my experiences with students, I know that working on the digital literacy narrative will be the most embodied part of the semester for most of them. When compared to traditional writing assignments, students are more fully engaged with their emotions, their physical surroundings, considerations of purpose and audience, even to their own looks and the sound of their voices. They *experience* writing. They watch as their ideas literally take on a voice or draw a picture for their viewers. They deeply consider and witness how combining sensory modes enhances their writing, bringing it to life, many for the first time. Many students even feel exuberance after overcoming rhetorical and technical hurdles to make their ideas come alive, and many show their work to family and friends and even express pride in their projects, which is not so common with traditional writing at the first year level. At its best, the embodied, synergistic, and imagistic dimensions of revision and reflection in multimodal writing helps the “doing” and “knowing” for students merge into one.

Endnotes

1. My use of this type of author's note draws heavily from the practices of Robert Brooke and the Nebraska Writing Project.
2. I would eventually like students to make the choice of what media to use for their literacy narratives, rather than imposing the film/podcast specifically. Having students work through the rhetorical decision-making process, including what they want to accomplish and what is the best way to get there, given the available resources, is key to digital writing. Obviously, creating a film is not always better than other types of multimodal projects or even a traditional print essay. That's the ideal situation for me: students choosing from *all* available means. However, right now, many of my students are unfamiliar with creating audio or video projects, and, due to concerns with technology or worries about grades, I believe they would often simply choose a traditional print essay as the path of least resistance, as the easiest choice for them. At this point, I feel responsible for introducing this new type of writing to them; to mandate is to open doors of expression and persuasion for them that they may not otherwise choose. More on resistance and agency (and my sometimes uneasy role in students' resistance) is explored in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: The Limits and Possibilities of Intermodality

This is supposed to be a writing class, not a computer class.
Student comment, course evaluation (2011)

Digital composing opens new channels for sharing stories. These channels bring new voices into scholarly conversations.
Dan Anderson et. al.

The rhetoric of resistance is the rhetoric of possibility – that which is not, but may which someday come to be.
Andrea Greenbaum

It happens every semester, even after so many years: that crucial moment of self-doubt. As the time approaches to introduce and assign a multimodal writing project, I feel dread. I anticipate the puzzled looks on students' faces and hear their inevitable comments and objections: "Why are we doing this?" "I don't know how to do this." "Is this writing?" The list is endless. I know the rhetorical and technological challenges that loom ahead for them, even for those who feel comfortable with writing or technology. Writing something meaningful is difficult enough; telling a compelling story or making a persuasive argument is even more difficult. Doing it using a computer program with which they may not be familiar and employing modes they don't often associate with "writing" seems next to impossible. Even with all the detailed instruction I try to give them ahead of time, they forget, ignore, or don't understand until the inevitable problems – rhetorical and technological – arise. For all that I see ahead of us, I feel dread.

In many ways, my students' puzzlement and frustration are justified: this class is often the first time they have ever been required to create a multimodal composition, other than perhaps a stock PowerPoint presentation. I tell myself their puzzlement is a sign of their unique time and place; in five years or so, my first year writing students will be more familiar with (and presumably less resistant to) this type of writing in an

academic setting, as the causes for their anxiety, doubt and frustration will most likely be mitigated. Some students embrace the challenge, others aren't sure; still others resist with every last bone in their bodies. Some students even cleverly point out the irony of being asked to use multimodal means to comment on their experiences with language, reading and writing for a literacy narrative.

And then my own doubts creep in: Why *am* I doing this? To myself and to my students? Why don't I feel this way when I assign another type of difficult writing assignment, say an annotated bibliography or in-depth research paper, anticipating all the problems students will encounter with these projects? Why *this* one? Why isn't the instructor down the hall worrying one iota about digital writing? I find myself wanting to resist assigning the project, rather than moving forward. An entry from my teaching journal (2/10/11) expands on my doubts:

This morning I'm thinking a lot about whether or not to mandate films/podcasts for my comp classes, or whether to offer options. It seems that we need extra days for support for instruction – it's really difficult to say, "OK, go make a film!" especially when the students are not experienced with it or don't have much initiative. Am I doing students a disservice here? I don't know. If I really believe that students need to become ready/prepared/good(?) at writing digitally, then am I doing them a disservice NOT to assign this work? If I offer an option, I think (not sure) that most would stick with traditional writing. Why is that? Comfort zone, learning curve. So, what do I do? Am I a hypocrite if I write/research about this type of writing, but then don't have the guts (or the fortitude) to actually assign it to my own students? Why do I want students to compose multimodally?

These feelings I get are visceral and embodied. As an experienced composition instructor, it is unusual for me to feel panicky or nauseated before a class, but when I initially assign the multimodal project, I typically do experience some anxiety or anxious symptoms or else, conversely, I feel *weary*, uncertain I am "up" for the difficult task. Teaching multimodal writing actively engages the body, perhaps more so than teaching traditional

writing, and involves deep commitment on my part. Perhaps it is the new-ness of teaching this type of writing; I have not comfortably settled into a teaching routine, at least one that is consistently effective. Am I just lazy when anticipating the additional work for me and for my students that will be required? I think my resistance stems from more than that.

I use the term “resistance” fully aware of its long association in composition studies with the ideas of critical theory and critical pedagogy. In this tradition, “resistance” is generally viewed as a positive attribute to be nurtured in writing; that is, resistance to oppressive hegemonic systems, leading to increased critical consciousness, emancipation or transgression, and social action (see especially Hurlbert/Blitz, and Greenbaum). In the Introduction to her 2001 collection *Insurrections: Approaches to Resistance in Composition Studies*, Andrea Greenbaum acknowledges Paulo Freire’s influence on “composition evolving into a field dedicated to teaching students how to create critical texts and to engage in self-conscious writing practices that always consider context – history, locale, politics, culture, gender, race, and class” (xiii). And even if I myself do not expressly practice a “critical pedagogy” as a writing instructor, I can never teach writing as a values-neutral, universal “skill,” because of the work of scholars such as James Berlin, Ira Shor, or Linda Brodkey.

The term “resistance” has also frequently been used in conjunction with the introduction of computer technology in the writing classroom, but spread over a far more complicated range of meanings, from Cynthia Selfe’s consistent and decades-long concerns about paying attention to the effects of technology in the classroom, to students’ and faculty’s technophobic resistance toward any digital technology in the writing

classroom. In her 1998 4C's presentation, Dona Hickey sheds some light on the complexity of student resistance to technology in writing classrooms by exploring the link between pedagogy and technology. She notes, "Students subvert the pedagogy by complaining not about it, which they cannot see or define, but about the technology, which they **can** see, and about which there is no stigma in disliking and no shame in failing. The discomfort they feel, therefore, must be with the machine. It's getting in the way of learning from the teacher." Hickey's reminder to examine our writing pedagogies as we use digital technology resonates with me as I explore resistance toward my multimodal writing assignments.

In trying to locate both the nature of and various sites of resistance related to my multimodal assignments, several main threads commonly emerge. Although closely intertwined, resistance by students, instructors, and the institution may be usefully examined individually. Furthermore, in spite of countless differences between these groups, I have found the main reasons for resistance to multimodal writing essentially boil down to two key factors: technical and rhetorical difficulty with new technology, and – more significant – varying impressions of what writing itself is and does. This chapter describes the common types of resistance and discomfort I have seen and experienced among each group and begins to explore and suggest ways the idea of resistance can be reconfigured intermodally and perhaps redefined more productively in the writing classroom. No easy strategies are offered, but my inquiry here pushes beyond invention, revision and reflection to examine how a pedagogy committed to the synergistic, imagistic and embodied dimensions of intermodality can help turn resistance into a potentially productive feature of the writing process when composing multimodally.

Although not generally considered part of the writing “process” the way invention, revision, and reflection are, resistance to multimodal writing can in fact be integral to the composing process and can often drive the process forward in embodied ways. Instead of viewing resistance as negative or counterproductive, because of its close relationship with emotional (frustration, fear, doubt) and even physical (anxiety, stomach ache, neck pain) reactions, a pedagogy of intermodality helps first of all acknowledge and then reposition resistance while writing. Rather than something to be “overcome” or “ignored,” in a pedagogy of intermodality resistance is acknowledged, expected, and perhaps even welcomed, especially when composing multimodally. Intermodality is able to help students identify the material realities of their challenges when composing in the digital environment, including frustrations, discomfort, and anxiety. Intermodality can also encourage students and instructors to tap into all their senses, probing into and recognizing where the resistance comes from. By identifying these material realities, a pedagogy of intermodality incorporates resistance into the writing itself, enabling more embodied writing processes.

Student Resistance

Students often greet my introduction to the digital literacy narrative assignment with great resistance, more so even than their general annoyance at other writing assignments or work in general. Their resistance takes many forms (backchannel grumbling, frantic questions, angry body language, outright objections in class) and stems from many places: fear, doubt, frustration, concerns about whether or not this is “writing,” and so on. When we ask students to work on a multimodal project such as a digital literacy narrative, we are asking them to complete a number of unfamiliar,

difficult tasks simultaneously – writing about a topic that may be new and difficult for them (such as the literacy narrative invites), using a technology with which they may not be familiar. Students’ reasons for resistance are for the most part embodied and material. For example, students’ fear of the unknown and doubts about the unfamiliar are mostly visceral, non-rational, and even imagistic: students “imagine” all the problems they will encounter, for example. In addition, students’ frustration – often from technology and also from an overload of choices and the affordances of the various modes – is experiential and embodied.

Amanda, the student who became excited about the digital literacy narrative once she began to make some connections between literacy and her childhood love of art, soon felt her enthusiasm stale as she moved to actually create her film. Technology, particularly Windows Movie Maker, was not her friend. She had loaded dozens of scanned photos of her artwork – big, space-eating files – and her version of WMM kept freezing up while editing, a common problem Microsoft is working to correct. Once she got going, Amanda took her film-making task seriously, but she felt that the programs she was using, along with her inexperience, held her back from attaining her vision. As she edited, she lost data, and twice she started over completely. By her third attempt just to get the draft out, she was understandably demoralized, angry with me, and ready to give up. She managed the best she could, eventually creating a project that came close to her expectations. In her Reflective Introduction, Amanda writes,

I love the point of my video and I’m so glad I got my music to work. . . . Next time I do an assignment like this I’m going to remember not to use Windows Movie Maker. However, I do have to remember that there’s nothing I can do

about technical difficulties. I'm really proud of this video and how hard I worked on it. I hope it shows people that there are other ways you can express yourself besides words.

Although I think Amanda *did* in fact learn she can do something about “technical difficulties” (she sought advice frequently from me, from the campus information services, and from online help), through several class exercises and conversations in which we directly addressed her frustrations and fears, I saw her initial resistance and later frustrations turn into resolve as she determined to finish the project.

Amanda's technology problems are not atypical for my first-year writing students. Some of Amanda's issues were exacerbated by her procrastination in getting started, but many students do encounter technology bumps along the way that they would not face in working only with word processing and printing a paper. In response to some of the most common technology problems, I have written a series of Guidelines for multimodal composing that seems to help (Appendix D). In my interactions with students about technology, I try to remain calm and positive, acknowledging and even naming their frustrations or concerns if possible, and trying to model for them a pro-active approach toward technology. However, Amanda's struggles in working with a new program nevertheless underscore the steep learning curve, limiting our classroom's ability to maintain focus on the rhetorical situation and choices. When I would have preferred our class be able to consider and discuss the larger issues of re-mix and attribution, for example, our class time instead was often used up on the more mundane aspects of the project, such as practical questions about how to save and publish their movie files.

Another common source of student resistance to the project also stems from the difficulty in working with new technology, but concerns the rhetorical choices made around that technology. For example, Carrie's project exploring reading and imagination is weighted down with too many "bells and whistles;" she utilizes her program's broad array of backgrounds, slide transitions, fonts, colors, and sound effects with little relation to each other, distracting the viewer. In spite of peers' comments as well as suggestions from me, and all of our class work with examining how the senses work together in multimodal compositions, Carrie does not seem to see anything wrong with her sensory overload (or chooses not to acknowledge her rhetorical choices), and she does not go back into the program to revise her project. She feels as if she has completed the difficult assignment and wants to be done; unfortunately, her film suffers rhetorically as a result of her technology choices. About Carrie, I wonder: did she really *not* see the confusing effects of her choices, even after her peers pointed them out? Was she overwhelmed and stifled by the thought of having to go back into the program and revise? Was her refusal to revise actually an act of resistance, perhaps to my assignment? Carrie's reflective introduction indicates no concerns about her project or recognition of its rhetorical problems; she resists the complications by simply ignoring them.

In contrast, Rachel creates an engaging literacy narrative called "What's Wrong with Being Smart?" but cannot find enough images to sustain her 4-minute oral story from her youth, so she resorts to loading words on screen and even inserts clip art images. After her first draft and conferences, Rachel rethinks her choices and turns her "video" into an engaging audio podcast without all the problematic images detracting from her narrative. Initially she resists moving her project into a different mode (audio only), one

that fewer of her peers employed, believing that the more features and modes she could add, the “better” her project would be. Eventually, though, Rachel acknowledges and embraces the complications her film elicited (from her peers and herself) and, thinking carefully about the implications of her rhetorical decisions, she harnesses that resistance into a more productive direction for her project, resulting in a rhetorically effective audio.

As the experiences of both Carrie and Rachel point out, one thread in the writing process that drives writers into reflection and revision is when we must face our own resistance, either from the technology, the rhetorical choices, or our ideas about writing. Yancey suggests that “[r]esistance and reflection are symbiotic” (*Reflection* 204); even though it might appear that resistance can thwart writing efforts (and sometimes does), a pedagogy attuned to intermodality may help channel resistance in productive directions, particularly in multimodal writing. In addition, once a first draft has been completed, students are often reluctant to revise because of the difficulty of the task, which for multimodal projects involves more than simply opening up the word-processing program. Jody Shipka reminds us that

A multimodal task-based orientation requires a great deal from students, to be sure. Making the shift from highly prescriptive assignments to multimodal tasks is challenging for students unaccustomed to thinking about and accounting for the work they are trying to achieve in academic spaces. Even those eager to assume more responsibility for their work and/or to explore various materials, methodologies, and technologies often find the tasks more challenging than they had first anticipated. (“Multimodal” 292)

Granted not all traditional writing assignments are “highly prescriptive,” as Shipka seems to imply here, but her work acknowledges the challenges students face when contending with the expanded choices presented by multimodal composing.

The resistance stemming from concerns about whether or not multimodal projects are, in fact, writing leads to productive reconsiderations of how we define *writing* and helps us revise our ways of experiencing writing. This kind of multimodal writing is relatively new, and many students (and teachers) have not been exposed to this way of expression, persuasion, or analysis, at least not in the writing classroom. These examples of resistance are themselves moments when the embodied, synergistic, and imagistic dimensions of intermodality can be acknowledged and considered directly, through class activities and individual conversations. Exploring these moments helps students recognize the influence of all their senses on the activity of writing, and the embodied nature of writing in general. Intermodality helps students expand their rigid notions of writing as words only, as they create projects using a variety of imagistic modes and senses for pre-writing, composing, and reflection. Furthermore, students who may not find fluency with words have more avenues through which they can approach writing, perhaps through drawing or sound, expanding on the synergistic dimensions of multimodal writing. Students cannot separate their bodies from their heads as they try to produce a multimodal project, and the ways they handle the embodied challenges teach them much about writing specifically and life more generally, particularly in paying attention to the interaction of their senses and the value of reflecting deeply. A pedagogy of intermodality can help students recognize, acknowledge, and embrace the

technological and emotional challenges of writing multimodally and re-direct these challenges into productive writing moves.

Instructor Resistance

My own resistance to the multimodal assignment is multifaceted and manifests itself in many ways. At times, it is closely intertwined with my students' resistance to the difficulty with technology and rhetorical choices, as well as to ideas about writing in general. In addition, like so many other writing instructors, my resistance bleeds into institutional concerns. Even though I support the idea of having students produce (and not just consume) new media, I know the difficulties I will encounter when teaching. For example, on the due date for the multimodal projects, I collect students' Reflective Introductions and begin viewing the final versions of their projects, dutifully composed and submitted. I am dismayed to view/hear many projects that are shallow, uncritical, under-developed, or simply preoccupied with the media. I feel like a failure and decide that I should not be assigning multimodal projects: I am not equipped for this work. I simply cannot find the right strategies or exercises to help students get through their resistance and learning curve effectively. It's just too difficult.

Then, after a day or two of self-defeating talk, I remind myself that all instructors experience these difficulties, regardless of the subject. I think about the progress my students have made, the small victories. I remind myself of Wysocki's call to teach generosity toward others' productions, "no matter how awkward-looking or -sounding" if we want "to see and hear voices that we traditionally haven't, and to open composition even more to those whose ways with words and pictures don't look like what we know and expect" ("Opening" 23). Reflecting intermodally reminds me that I do not have to be

able to master every writing technology immediately, that I only need to remain open to the possibilities for writing, and that I can learn alongside and with my students. My intermodal reflections help me understand how my doubts or fears, for example, affect the way I view and hear student projects. I understand that if I remain entrenched in teaching writing only as we have done it for the past 40 years, I am not providing my students what they need. I must continue to teach the well-established rhetorical principles as they play out in new digital environments, and those environments will continue to change. And change is often painful and emotional, embodied. Intermodality helps me articulate what exactly hurts and identify my specific emotions or images, either informally (thinking on my way to work) or formally (through specific writing or exercises); These deep, intermodal reflections provide a powerful bridge between the body and mind, in which I experience the merging of non-discursive, visceral and imagistic elements with rational and discursive aspects of my teaching.

Sometimes my own blind spots (my resistance to “see” my own pedagogy) may also interfere with teaching multimodal composing. For example, when conferencing with Jamie about her film on her bilingual heritage, I ask her, “Why did you include that particular music [classical violin] on your video?” “Oh, I don’t know,” Jamie replies. “I just really like that song.” While Jamie’s answer seemed to indicate an uncritical choice of music, it wasn’t necessarily the wrong choice. I needed to probe a bit more closely at the time, encouraging Jamie to examine her rhetorical choices. And I look back now with a certain kind of horror at my own comments and insensitivity toward Jamie’s project, since in my zeal for intermodality, to have all the senses “inform” each other, I was blind to my own cultural norms about which music “should” layer with her message of

bilingualism. My assumption was that a film on her bilingual heritage ought to replace her classical violin with the snappy salsa sounds of Latin America, when in fact perhaps Jamie might have been attempting to push beyond those stereotypes by juxtaposing images of her native Guatemala with Mozart violin. Her music choice may very well have been an act of resistance; it is possible that I was working against what *her* senses told her.

Another form of resistance with which I wrestle concerns a sometimes-implied assumption that because of its ability to incorporate so many different kinds of media, multimodal composition will *automatically* be better able than traditional print-based writing to depict or represent students' ideas or experiences. Stated another way, even when we do value and incorporate imagistic composition, these projects cannot always capture the full experience or idea of a writer. We may be able to create work that resembles our experience or perceptions, but even non-discursive representations cannot fully capture our non-discursive experience and ideas. A 3 to 5 minute film, no matter how masterfully created, can never completely depict the scope of Jake's grief over the loss of his brother, or even adequately describe his use of journaling to work through that grief. I worry sometimes that those instructors who incorporate multimodal composing into their first-year writing curriculum may oversell this type of writing, to their students and to their programs. Reflecting on these teaching moments causes me to worry and to resist multimodal composing. In these moments, a consideration of intermodality helps me work through these experiences, remaining open to possibilities engendered when meaning is created using all senses and continuing to learn as an instructor.

From this concern about over-selling multimodal writing emerges a more complex problem of resistance for me. When we as writing instructors “impose” new, unfamiliar assignments on students, we do it because we believe it is beneficial for students, and our program’s and discipline’s guidelines support those assignments, even if students grumble. However, when an assignment is not yet fully accepted or widely practiced by a program, at what point am I giving students what is “beneficial” for them, or “what they need,” and when am I simply oppressing them by “making” them do something other writing instructors do not? At what point do I become the oppressor, forcing students to follow my own interests? Of course, I understand that students do have agency in this process, too. Derek Mueller asks writing instructors to consider ways to reframe students’ “digital underlife” (based on Robert Brooke’s articulation of writing as a disruptive form of student underlife) as productive and generative, so those “distracting” backchannel Twitter or Facebook conversations actually become helpful to students outside of class, as they engage in their own inquiries, solve their problems, and take responsibility for their learning and writing. I believe in offering students more ways to compose using modes now widely available, which taps into their alternative literacies and provides them more voice and agency; I want to make more writing options available to my students since they will be writing in digital environments for the rest of their lives. Like so many other instructors working with digital writing, I believe I have an ethical responsibility to do so. Yet, I still worry whether I am, in the words of Selfe and Cooper in a 1991 *College English* response on resistance in which they critique the “universality” of certain ideals in writing, too “close to [my] discourse,” that is, “[I] identify with it, and its particularities become invisible to [me]” (955). If I am in fact engaging in my own

resistance (against the ideas of “traditional” writing), am I doing it with my eyes open, or am I merely dragging students along with me for my own self-aggrandizement? How can a pedagogy attuned to intermodality help me work through issues that only time can resolve? I realize that these questions leading to my own resistance as a writing instructor are deeply embedded in larger, institutional issues.

Institutional Resistance

Assigning multimodal projects in first year writing is still *not* the norm, except for those pockets of universities that have been embracing computers and writing for many years. At my own institution I would characterize my forays into multimodal composition with first year students as “tolerated,” rather than “supported”; although several faculty members in my department strongly encourage this type of work for our students, far more view it with skepticism or even concern, mostly because of the perceived additional missions/tasks for writing instructors, the technology learning curves, and concerns about what other kinds of writing instruction might be sacrificed. I frequently remember the words of my WPA as we considered chapters for our program’s textbook and essentially the direction for our writing program:

When so many of our students struggle to write essays, and when we as a program have committed ourselves to helping them improve in that essential skill, I have questions about the value of turning several weeks of the semester over to a different kind of “composition.” I’m not absolutely opposed to it . . . but let’s have more program-wide discussion about this . . .

My WPA’s concern is justified, and she is not alone. Legitimate concerns about “mission creep” mount for first-year writing programs. Beyond concerns over ever-expanding missions, though, are many other forms of institutional resistance. Instructors everywhere who are committed to digital writing face specific, local challenges presented by their

own teaching/learning environments. The WIDE (Writing in Digital Environments) Research Center Collective at Michigan State University, in their 2005 *Kairos* article “Why Teach Digital Writing?”, categorizes claims of resistance in terms of Scope, Identity, and Mission Resistance (“We shouldn’t be teaching technology in a writing class.” And “Students won’t learn how to write for academic or disciplinary contexts if we teach them writing online.”), Humanistic Resistance (“We should be teaching writing as a humanistic enterprise, not as a technical skill. . . . Liberal education should not succumb to vocational training.” And “Teaching computer-based writing contributes to the takeover of the university by corporate interests whose aim is to produce uncritical workers rather than critically and creatively minded citizens.”), Cost Resistance, and Passive Resistance (silence). Each of these institutional concerns is in turn addressed by the Collective, including their answer to passive resistance, which is to keep speaking out about the importance of digital writing. Related to these concerns is the objection that writing instructors must master the specific technological skill before assigning, which is nearly impossible given the current generational technology gap, that is, instructors who are not digital natives. Selfe and Hawisher suggest that some instructors “remain unsure of how to value the new-media literacies or even how to practice these new literacies themselves” (*Literate Lives* 217).

We do not need to look far to find resistance to technology, especially within English studies. In a 2011 *College English* article, Gregory Palmerino describes an incident with a passive resistant student (whom he equates to Melville’s *Bartleby*) who refused to turn in any work for a composition class, which caused Palmerino to rethink his own teaching and re-double efforts to focus on human interaction and “human

relevance” (296). He rightly worries that we are not truly free – as students or as teachers – when we submit to technology’s use as a tool for hegemonic systems. Yet in a stunning indictment that is as troublingly unsupported as it is over-generalized, Palmerino blames “technology” as the cause for students’ lack of engagement with the classroom, noting in fairly apocalyptic language that “technology has hijacked the composition classroom – hijacked it so completely that it may be too late to combat the effects” (287). And “the lifeline that is required to pull students up into the conscious world of meaning has been yanked away by the ease and comfort of technology, which is not only the opposite of the learning process, but opposed to it” (289). Rather than taking the time here to critique his argument in-depth (starting with his lack of a definition of what he means by “technology”), it is enough to point out that Palmerino’s concerns are indicative of a widespread kind of vague, over-simplified resistance to “technology in the classroom” and lack of familiarity with the kinds of research (and critique) of technology in the writing classroom that have been going on for years. Institutions, by definition, change slowly and tend to embrace the narrowest views of writing, particularly academic writing. So even while individual scholars and some programs around the country argue for writing in digital environments, the journals, the conventions, the organizations, the campus IT departments, the vast majority of writing instructors, the secondary education teachers whose hands are tied by testing – an entire system – is beset by inertia against multimodal composing. It is this context in which my inquiry is situated.

My pedagogical struggles and resistance, along with those of my students, directly reflect the current move from a print-based to a digital culture, an upheaval which has already significantly impacted our work as composition specialists and

instructors of writing. In spite of institutional and student resistance, the moment of assigning the digital multimodal project in the first-year writing class presents the ideal occasion for students to explore, and pay attention to, the traditional elements of writing that we as writing instructors sometimes are unable to bring to the forefront, such as audience, purpose, thesis, tone, transitions, organization, style, and so on. Asking students to work with and in new media de-familiarizes these elements for student writers and helps them to deliberately and carefully consider these elements as they create and revise their projects. As an instructor helping students compose multimodally, I understand that writing with new media can also help students analyze and create more traditional kinds of writing as well. In their introduction to *Multimodal Composition* (2007), Takayoshi and Selfe assert

Further, the authors of this book agree with many contemporary scholars and teachers . . . that the study of literacy and composing using a full range of visual and aural modalities can teach students new strategies and approaches which can be productively applied to their efforts at composing more traditional written compositions. Thus, the time spent on multimodal composition, far from being a distraction, will enrich the teaching of composition in general. (“Thinking” 5)

A pedagogical commitment to senses, affect, multiple ways of knowing, and the materiality of composing – to intermodality – disrupts notions of traditional academic writing in the institutions. Unlearning the five-paragraph essay or dull, jargon-filled writing as the *only* kind of academic writing, and expanding notions of what writing is and what writing can do is a goal for the assignment, even as it also undermines institutional resistance. In asking students to write and think about literacy, I encourage

them to broaden their understandings of what we conceive of as “literacy,” inviting students to consider writing tasks they will be doing in 20 years or the kinds of writing and reading they will be teaching their children. I value the additional potential voice and agency we give to those who compose multimodally; multimodal composing provides the opportunity for counter-hegemonic thinking and writing and expands ideas about academic writing and literacy in general.

Implications of this Study

My discussion of institutional resistance leads directly into the broader implications of this study. I began my inquiry with only my own classroom pedagogy in mind, but I have discovered that the institutional contexts in which students study and in which I work necessarily impact my examination of intermodality and student digital writing. With this realization, Cy Knoblauch’s 1991 chapter “Critical Teaching and Dominant Culture” lends a comforting reminder not to over-react nor to over-dramatize the institutional situation we find ourselves in, as he asserts, “Change, not stasis, is the condition of life: the instructional challenge, accordingly, is not to force open obstinately closed minds, but to intervene creatively in processes of change that are already underway, making use of the intellectual disequilibrium that the university can foster in the interest of learning” (20). My work is most effectively viewed, then, in the context of new discoveries about how we as humans make meaning and the changing nature of writing itself.

In 1999, Dennis Baron prophetically asserted that “in the future the computer will be put to communications uses we cannot now even begin to imagine, something quite beyond the word-processing I’m now using . . .” (15). Of course he was right, and in the

short 13 years since he wrote, the way we write, and what and how and where we write, have all changed dramatically, along with the ways we teach writing. In the next generation, many of today's concerns about unequal access to technology will have dissipated, along with many of the student fears, as their teachers become more familiar with (and better at) using technology for writing. What will be important then is to establish that our writing pedagogies, and the theories underlying those pedagogies, continue to emphasize age-old rhetorical principles informed by new discoveries about how our senses work together as well as continued critical use of technology, all to ensure that writing remains a local and embodied endeavor.

Regardless of our individual preferences for writing instruction, it is our professional obligation to help prepare our students for the kinds of digital writing they will need in the future. J. Elizabeth Clark makes such a case in her 2010 *Computers and Composition* article "The Digital Imperative," in which she suggests writing instructors need "to help the profession embrace digital rhetoric not as a fad, but as a profound shift in what we mean by writing, by literacy, and by cultural communication" (35). This profound shift is not simple, even for those practitioners currently working with digital writing. Collin Brooke notes that even though we as composition instructors are "uniquely positioned" to positively impact conversations about digital writing, he reminds us "Such contributions . . . depend on our ability to rethink some of our own cherished and unexamined assumptions about writing; new media will transform our understandings of rhetoric as thoroughly as our training and expertise in rhetoric can affect a similar impact in discussions of new media" (5). As our writing pedagogies resist institutional pressures (against digital writing, for example, or acknowledgement of the

body), so too must we carefully examine our own pedagogies and training. A pedagogy of intermodality, then, serves as a productive alternative to those committed only to textuality by opening up new avenues for expression and persuasion, by allowing new voices and perspectives to enter and even change the conversations, and by giving agency to those who are willing to expand our notions of writing.

A pedagogy attuned to the dimensions of intermodality will also help composition scholars develop, as Yancey notes, “new vocabulary, a new set of practices, and a new set of outcomes” for our writing curriculum (“Made” 308). Because of its embodied aspects, pedagogies that emphasize intermodality will remind composition instructors of the importance of all the work with embodiment that has already been done, but also focus on more recent research on attention and consciousness; additional findings from the neurosciences about how humans make meaning will also inform composition studies. Furthermore, continued work on the complex relationships between word and image – not just visual images – will flourish alongside (and as part of) research in digital rhetoric. Each of these strands will continue to inform what we know about the intermodality of the senses, especially as it pertains to writing. And although we may not necessarily have our students produce films or podcasts, in ten years scholars in composition studies will still be examining the complex relationships between word, image and sound, along with the use of the latest media to produce – as well as to critically consume – new ways to express, persuade, analyze, and critique. And intermodality, because of its basis not only in the human body but on the socio-cultural environment (both physical and online) will help instructors craft pedagogies best attuned to students’ writing needs, whatever they will be.

At its core, this study demonstrates that additional understanding of the ways we make meaning when we write, and the subsequent pedagogies informed by that understanding, will continue to prompt composition scholars to investigate and privilege what Cochran-Smith and Lytle call “issues of equity, engagement and agency” (12) for students. A pedagogy of intermodality encourages more embodied writing practices within digital environments by helping students become more aware of how their senses – and, when writing, how the sensory modes – work together to create meaning. Embodied writing practices foreground issues of power and agency: intermodality can help students broaden the way they imagine their range of rhetorical choices and even the way they view their access to these choices. In addition, the move from consumer to producer of new media enables additional student agency for taking action, for having a voice and impact in the world beyond print, even in their own education.

A pedagogy attuned to the embodied, synergistic, and imagistic dimensions of intermodality, one that acknowledges how the senses make meaning while writing, like the one outlined in these chapters, will continue to be refined. Additional studies will examine the productive dialectic tension between theory and practice, as new classroom approaches, exercises, and assignments are generated based on this theory of intermodality. Through its inquiry into intermodality in the writing classroom, this dissertation broadens writing instructors’ conceptions of literacy in more embodied ways, to account for and accommodate composing beyond traditional text-based papers. This pedagogy of intermodality in the composition classroom will help students consider and utilize the many modes available to them and offer students new opportunities to express themselves effectively within and outside the academy.

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APPENDIX A

M. Christensen
Digital Literacy Narrative Assignment

Unlearning in College and the “Myth” of Literacy: A Digital Literacy Narrative

Introduction

While most people think about attending college to learn, higher education also requires “unlearning.” In fact, while you’re at UNO you might spend as much time unlearning as learning. We often need to acknowledge and unlearn misinformation and harmful or counter-productive attitudes we have picked up along the way: for example, destructive habits, unquestioned assumptions and stereotypes, and stale ways of problem solving. Unlearning is a kind of literacy that engages the politics, contradictions, and inequities that accompany education. It reminds us that literacy is much more complex than knowing how to read and write. One of the goals of unlearning is to think critically about how we receive and make knowledge, as well as to remain open to new and different ways of knowing, reading, writing, speaking, and listening in various settings.

The term “literacy” itself carries a lot of baggage and needs to be examined carefully. We assume that literacy is *good*, right? As an English instructor, I’ve been in the literacy “business” for a long time now, as I work with students on their writing (and reading). That’s good, as long as I am giving them other information as well, especially the ability to think critically and recognize the inherent inequities that exist within the system, the recognition that literacy alone will not solve all our social problems, that literacy is *not* neutral. I’m reminded to approach any use of “literacy” with caution, particularly in terms of the potential to overlook the inherent social, cultural, political, and educational structures set up to preserve the status quo. Harvey Graff’s term “myth of literacy” is defined by Cynthia Selfe as the “widely held belief that literacy and literacy education lead autonomously, automatically, and directly to liberation, personal success, or economic prosperity.” Or, as Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola put it, “some basic, neutral, context-less set of skills whose acquisition will bring the bearer economic and social goods and privileges (*Passions and Pedagogies* 352), when in fact “[t]he bundle of meanings and implications that comes with this word is . . . much denser and messier” (353).

This unit asks you to read, write, and think critically about representations of literacy and learning and to examine your own attitudes toward literacy. You will be encouraged to probe beneath the surface and speculate on not only what images of literacy say but also how they are put together; to locate assumptions, beliefs, and values at work in these images; and to explore how the images reflect your own experiences with writing and reading. Through informal and formal writing assignments, you will analyze your own literacy experiences and those of others.

Assignment

A literacy narrative tells a story. In “Coming into Language,” Jimmy Baca relates how language in general, and writing in particular, “free” him from old patterns of thinking, helping him discover a new sense of self and connection with the world. A narrative like this relies heavily on vivid scenes and descriptive detail to convey some controlling idea or statement about literacy. A digital literacy narrative in this case refers to one created for digital or web presentation, generally a film or podcast (audio).

Create a digital literacy narrative exploring how you understand the role of language, writing, or reading in your life. Pick an event from your past, either positive or negative, dramatize it in one or more scenes, and then reflect upon it to come to some kind of insight about how writing, reading, or language works, or what it means, in your life. You want to tell a good story, with plenty of vivid, specific, concrete detail. But you also want to hang the details on some **larger idea or point that emerges** as you brainstorm and draft the narrative (consider our readings and discussions about literacy). This is your story, so it should convey some of your truth about writing, reading, or language, not some Hallmark card cliché about the joys of literacy. It should honestly depict some of *your* experience, in *your* voice, with *your* critical reflections on it.

To make this assignment your own, you might consider one of several directions:

- Look at an influential person or persons who helped or hurt your progress toward becoming a writer or reader.
- Examine some significant event or series of events in your reading or writing life.
- Look at cultural attitudes toward literacy and explore how you have navigated some of those for better or worse.
- Explore judgments you or other people make about literacy. What makes someone too literate or not literate enough? A story might be lurking beneath those judgments.
- Talk about becoming literate in some subculture or group, learning the lingo, gaining acceptance because you could read, write, or speak the code of the group.
- Recall a specific movie or key scene that shaped the way you thought about language, writing, or reading.

Remember: *Less is more*. Don’t try to cover too much. Observe your subject through a 1 x 1 inch frame, as Anne Lamott suggests.

(with special thanks to Dr. Tammie Kennedy for much of this material)

Criteria

- The initial audience for this project will be your classmates, and perhaps a wider blog (online) viewership. However, you should consider identifying a more specific audience who would be interested in, or could benefit from, what you have to say about literacy – perhaps a professional organization, a group of educators, a foundation, and so on; consider your purpose closely.
- Your project should contain a clear controlling idea, point, or dominant impression (i.e., thesis)
- Your project should support that thesis by “showing” or “representing” your experience with one or more scenes and specific detail.
- Your project should include a “so what” component that analyzes the significance of the experience in terms of who you are now and connects with broader discussions about literacy.
- Your final literacy narrative project should be presented in film or audio (podcast) format with a specific purpose and audience in mind, accompanied by a 1-2 page reflective introduction.

Steps toward Successful Completion

Writing a traditional word-based essay can be somewhat different from writing digitally, for a film or podcast, yet there are many similarities as well. One of our biggest goals with this project is to consider in what ways the writing process differs when composing with, within, and for new media. This project provides a good opportunity for you to experiment with and try out new ways of drafting/creating/writing. Therefore, you may create an initial draft using whatever means you feel is most helpful to your composing process, including Word, drawing or comics tools, powerpoint (for sequencing or images), or even freehand drawing/drafting. Whatever drafting process you use, you must make your **draft** visible to your reader/viewer by **March 3** on our wiki and include a brief author’s note.

Schedule

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A Note about Grading

As you will recall from our syllabus, this project – including your first draft -- is worth 25% of your grade. I realize I am asking you to take risks and work with types of writing and technology that may be unfamiliar to you; therefore, I do not require nor expect perfection. At the same time, remember that working with/in new media often requires more time than you might expect; plan accordingly. Creative thinking, good effort, and strong consideration of audience and purpose will be rewarded. In your accompanying Reflective Introduction, describe some of the challenges this project posed for you.

APPENDIX B

M. Christensen

Group Peer Assessment: Digital Literacy Narrative

INSTRUCTIONS: View **each group member's** project and respond to the following questions. PLEASE TYPE!

- Provide substantial answers. DO NOT merely write “yes” or “no”—give the writer plenty of specific feedback. Your responses will be evaluated by group members later.
- Complete a separate TYPED response for **all** the projects in your group and bring them to your group conference. Make sure your name is on your response, as well as the author's name.
- Bring two (2) printed copies of each response; one for the author and one for me.

*Address the following issues regarding the project. Keep in mind you should bring up **strengths** as well as **weaknesses**. BE SPECIFIC! Use page numbers or paragraph numbers to refer to specific points or questions you bring up.*

1. What is the author's **main point**? Is it clear what the author is trying to accomplish in this project? Suggestions? Write for a bit on the author's contribution to the larger conversation about literacy (this question is a bit difficult, but *try*).
2. Address the author's main **question(s) or concern(s)**.
3. In what ways does the author **support** his/her particular point about their literacy? (list the ways) How would you describe the variety and quality of the stories, examples, descriptions, and other techniques used? Was there too much detail, just enough, or could the project use more?
4. In thinking about the project's **organization**, how easy was it for you the reader/viewer to follow the discussion? Where is the project repetitive, confusing, or contradictory? How might you move sections around for clarity or effectiveness?
5. How would you describe the overall **tone** of this project? Is it appropriate for the topic? Does the project seem thought-provoking, or a bit shallow (stating the obvious)? What suggestions do you have to complicate the assertions in this essay, or to make the narrative more engaging?
6. Describe the author's use of various modes (sound, images, movement, words, and so on). Do they seem balanced, or, conversely, do they seem effective for the author's purpose?
7. What did the author do **best** in this project? Be specific. What is working well? Where does the project need work? If this were your own project, where would you focus your revision?

APPENDIX C

M. Christensen

Reflective Introduction: Digital Literacy Narrative

“We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on that experience.”
John Dewey

The purpose of this Reflective Introduction is to introduce your digital literacy narrative, and to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses as well as your process of composing this project. Your audience for the reflective introduction is me and your classmates; make sure your tone and the information you include are appropriate for your audience (i.e. many of us have already seen an initial draft). You may write this reflective introduction in letter or essay format. The paper will be a 1-2 page argument introducing your literacy narrative and explaining/justifying the choices you made within the project to create and support your point about literacy. Use MLA format (12-point TNR font, heading, double-spaced, 1” margins, etc.), **print** and bring one copy to class on the day the project is due.

Your reflective introduction should cover the following areas:

- Audience and Purpose. Spend time demonstrating that you have thought carefully about **the point you are trying to convey about literacy**. Who will be interested in viewing/hearing your project? Why would they be interested? What qualities of the composing will your reader value?
- Describe and justify your choices in selecting the specific audio and visual aspects of your project, along with your decisions on content. How did you determine the project’s organization? How did you determine what to leave in/out? Don’t forget the “big” components, such as explaining your choices for music, images, and so on. (If your choices don’t make sense, consider changing your project so that they do.)
- Reflect on the ways your writing process for this project has differed from “traditional,” alphabetic writing when composing with and for new media. Be sure to describe your composing process, including your drafting methods.

There is no magic formula or model text to write this reflective introduction effectively – but you need to demonstrate “self-assessment;” in other words, show that you can evaluate the strengths of your work, that you understand what you do well and what you still need to work on.

Remember, a solid conclusion – about your project, and about your writing in general – is not always available, nor is it necessarily appropriate. Uncertainty or fluidity about your work – the tension between where you are and where you wish you could be (or think you are) is an important aspect of your reflection.

APPENDIX D

M. Christensen

General Guidelines for your Multimodal Composing Process

1. Plan, Plan, Plan

Before you get too involved with the software, the editing, the mash-ups, and so on, make sure you understand the assignment, and think about your PURPOSE and AUDIENCE. Begin **DRAFTING** your ideas on a storyboard/timeline (electronic OR simply a piece of paper). Think in terms of “events” or blocks of time, and consider how your audio and video (if applicable) will work together, simultaneously. Somewhere in this process you need to decide how you will appear in your work, through your voice and/or image, or in some other way.

TIP: Try to avoid writing a traditional “essay” first; generally you don’t have enough time to read whole paragraphs at a time, and you’re not making full use of all the sensory elements you have available.

2. Collect

Once you have a preliminary plan, begin collecting all your components: sound and video clips (both original and borrowed), images, music, sound effects, quotations, captions, and so on. I recommend saving all these files in ONE folder so they are readily available and also more portable in case you are working on a different computer. Labeling your files using distinct names will save you time when you begin moving everything around.

3. Build-Edit

Build your project using one of the programs listed below, or another of your choosing. Make sure you are somewhat familiar with the program; use their tutorials or look online for help. SAVE your work FREQUENTLY!

4. Revise

Once you’ve posted a draft, it’s sometimes difficult to get yourself to go back in and revise it, but it’s SO worth it! Get feedback from others; get away from the project for a few days. I recommend you save in a NEW version and don’t overwrite the old version, which frees you to consider some new possibilities with lower risk of “losing everything.” Dare to cut out the fat and the redundancy (for example, when you voice the words AND have them appear on-screen at the same time). Above all, make sure each of your modes supports the others, given the deeper meanings nested within every element.

As you revise, consider your project's overall impact, organization, coherence, and salience (prominence of important elements).

TIP: Remember to consider the power of silence once in awhile, perhaps while zooming in on a powerful image, or letting a significant statement just hang in the air for a bit.

5. **Save and Publish**

Most programs offer a way to save your “project” temporarily as you are editing, but this file is NOT transportable (in Windows (Live) Movie Maker, for example, it will save as .MSWMM or .WLMP). If you post these types of files, no one will be able to see them. (Notice when you “open” these files, they open in the film-editing program, NOT on a player.) Instead, when you have finalized a draft, look for the **SAVE MOVIE** or SAVE choices, in which you will be prompted on where you want to save it, and in what size, etc. At this point all your associated files will burn onto the film, and then you will have a portable file that will open in a movie- or audio -player. For example, Windows Movie Maker will save files with the extension .WMV.

When you are ready to make your film available, several options are open to you, including uploading it on YouTube or Vimeo. These options also allow storage, which is important with these big files, and you can control the privacy/access levels.

Some Useful Tools for Multimodal Composing

Considering your story

Ira Glass on Storytelling <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loxJ3FtCJJA>

This American Life (example audio podcasts) – archives:

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/listen#web>

Student Examples: The JUMP: *Journal for Undergraduate Multimedia Projects*:

<http://jump.cwrl.utexas.edu/>

Pre-production free software (storyboard, screenwriting, layout): <http://celtx.com/>

Audio editing programs

AUDACITY: Download: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Tutorials: <http://www.how-to-podcast-tutorial.com/17-audacity-tutorial.htm>

For Mac, use GARAGE BAND

Video/Film making/editing programs

Windows Movie Maker (or Live Movie Maker)-all computers at the library have

Windows Movie Maker

Mac iMovie

Numerous other software (some free, some premium): Final Cut, Sony Vegas, open-source (Avid), etc.

- **Windows Live MovieMaker tutorial:** <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/explore/produce-your-own-movie>
 - **Windows Movie Maker on the web (older version):**
<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/default.msp>
 - **using MovieMaker:** short, video-based [tutorials](#) that walk you through how to do pretty much everything in MovieMaker v.2. Look up other tutorials, too.
 - **using iMovie:** Apple's tutorials for using the newest version(s) of [iMovie](#).
-

Other useful information

- Making responsible MUSIC choices: Jamendo: free music used under Creative Common license <http://www.jamendo.com/en/>
- **rip YouTube videos:** zamzar.com – a free file conversion website: will help you rip YouTube videos for editing yourself.

- Instructions for [ripping videos from YouTube](#) using Zamzar (above). Follow the filetype choices in Step 2 for either Mac or PC.
- **Squared 5 MPEG Streamclip**: Another free Video Converter for Mac and Windows. Powerful. <http://www.squared5.com/>
- **taking screenshots**: [PC](#) or [Mac](#) instructions for taking screenshots and making them into images that you can upload to your blog.
- **CamStudio**: record all screen and audio activity on your computer and create AVI video files <http://camstudio.org/>
- Basic podcasting information:
<http://newmediaocw.wordpress.com/syllabus/week-7-podcasting/>
- Online photo editing: <http://www.picnik.com/>
- [xtranormal](#): type in a script and use their pre-made 3D environs to create a movie.
- Other animation programs

Storage and Distribution

- **Vimeo**: a great way to store your videos (you can set the settings to private or to allow only certain people access): <http://vimeo.com/>
- And, of course, there's [Youtube.com](#)

If you have other suggestions for this list, please let me know at mchristensen@unomaha.edu