Embodied Captions in Multimodal Pedagogies

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Abstract: Informed by my embodiment as a Deaf instructor asking hearing students to challenge captioning conventions, this article shows how hearing composers can reimagine the design of their captioned videos, and appreciate students' embodied responses to new rhetorical situations. The embodied methodology and methods in this article incorporate embodied differences and are directly influenced by the fields of disability studies, cultural rhetorics, and embodiment. This article foregrounds students' embodied responses—their individual reactions to the videos and activities—in the form of their reflective letters on the process of designing and analyzing videos with dynamic visual text, or captions that move around the screen in interaction with other modes of communication. In addition to discussing their written responses and the skills they developed, I assess their group videos to show how student composers interpret the process of infusing captions with meaning.

"I feel as if this class has made a difference in the way I view captions. Now when I am watching videos or even movies with the subtitles on, I think to myself, they could have made this more visually appealing and conveyed the message in a more visual way versus just putting the text on the screen."
- Marissa

Embodied Captions as Dynamic Visual Text

When I ask students in my composition courses to define the term "captions," they have often described captions as a tool for those who cannot hear or as two lines of text at the bottom of the screen that can be turned on and off. Their statements reflect the assumptions that we first create videos and then add captions after the fact to accommodate certain viewers. As a Deaf instructor of hearing students, I directly challenge such static and conventional assumptions by asking students to create captioned videos in various composition courses. Often, I give them the option to create conventional captions—two lines of text at the bottom of the screen that can be turned on and off on YouTube—or to *integrate* open captions that are burned into the screen of their videos. In a first-year composition course that is the focus of this article, however, I explicitly asked students to analyze and design videos that *integrate* what these students and I defined as "dynamic visual text," or embodied captions that are designed to move around the space of the screen in interaction with other modes of communication: bodies, faces, and sound.

With the rise of digital and online video media and programs, captions and subtitles are no longer technologically restricted to the bottom of the screen. New media technologies such as iMovie, Movie Maker, and other video editing software provide the tools for embedding dynamic visual text—including captions and subtitles—in different locations of our videos. We can manipulate this visual text to fade in and out, expand in size, and interact around the screen during the video design and editing process.

The technology exists for integrating captions in our videos—but the captioning conventions remain largely unchallenged, particularly in the composition classroom. Despite pedagogical arguments in multimodal scholarship for the importance of using multiple modes, the affordances of captions as a valuable mode in **embodying** multimodal communication have been largely unexplored. When publications and textbooks for students discuss captioning—if they do at all—they tend to focus on adding captions to completed videos (For instance, the first edition of *Writer/Designer* provides students with a sidebar on access that does not mention captions [Arola, Sheppard, and Ball 14]). Discussions of captioning too often have been restrained to adding captions to completed

videos.

I encourage composition instructors to move beyond accepting the conventions of captions as accommodations at the bottom of the screen and to **integrate** captions into our videos. I also encourage instructors to implement these practices in the classroom by asking students to design captions as meaningful elements of a video that interact with other modes of meaning. And when captions become part of the rhetorical message of a video, they are embodied because they **embody** the meaning of the video. If we can appreciate that embodied captions can benefit deaf *and* hearing viewers and if we can move beyond seeing captions as accommodations, then we will have overcome the boundaries between modes of communication.

Wysocki reminds us that new media composers need to think carefully about the effects of our decisions as we compose a new media text, such as the effect of design choices and the material or modes that we use to express ourselves. I argue that we should attend to the materiality of captions in digital videos and recognize that we *can* make choices in how to redesign these digital captions. Captions are material that can and should be manipulated and moved beyond the bottom of the screen in appropriate contexts. For instance, this screenshot from a video that I created for students shows me (a young woman with medium-length brown hair wearing a black shirt) rotating my right hand around visual text in the space to my right that reads, in black font, "I'm recording this with space for visual text."

Figure 1. Author's video (1:35).

In this article, my goal is to show how we can ask students in first-year composition courses—courses that may traditionally not dedicate or have as much time as other courses for teaching captioning—to design and analyze captions as integral components of videos. To explore the benefits and challenges of incorporating a space for captions in our pedagogies, this article foregrounds the responses of twenty-two first-year composition students in my course in the Fall 2015 semester. The Institutional Review Board at my university approved the study, students signed an informed consent form that allowed me use their work and our experiences together for my research, and all names were changed to pseudonyms.

This article shares my own and students' embodied responses to designing a space for captions in a composition pedagogy, and in doing so, I build on scholarship on accessibility, embodiment, and multimodality (notably Butler, Ceraso, Dolmage, Walters, Zdenek). As a contribution to the growing field of caption studies, I use this article to argue that we can create a space for communicating our different embodiments through multiple modes, such as captions, in the classroom. I present my methodology of storytelling through embodied differences and rhetorics, a methodology that is directly influenced by disability studies, cultural rhetorics, and embodiment. This methodology foregrounds students' stories as they explored how captions could embody meaning. Later in this article, I will discuss my theoretical framework and the methods I used to assess students' responses to reimagining captioning practices.

(Re)designing Captioning Practices

Before I discuss students' embodied responses to captions in my classroom, I first explore captioning and embodiment in composition pedagogies and consider my own embodiment as a Deaf instructor asking hearing students to challenge captioning conventions.

The act of captioning—including traditional captioning—is rhetorical and interpretative, as Zdenek's captioning scholarship has underscored. Zdenek's comprehensive rhetorical study of closed-captioned popular media accentuates how popular media captioners "construct meaning and negotiate the constraints of time and space" when choosing how to caption sounds in films and television shows (xiii). His rhetoric of captioning reminds us that "closed captioning is not unlike other rhetorical or compositional practices that demand sensitivity to audience, context, purpose, and genre" (106). However, while captioners for popular media are independent from the video production process, we composition instructors and students can be caption designers.

While the study of dynamic captions is nascent, researchers in human-computer interaction, user experience design, and related fields have developed software programs and technologies to create captioning software that allow them to change the size, shape, or typography of captions. Their research includes kinetic typography that embodies rising pitch or loudness, emotive captioning that use typography to visually represent emotional content, and user testing that tends to find a variety of different responses from viewers about the effect of the captions (Forlizzi, Lee, and Hudson; Lee, Fels, and Udo; Rashid, Vy, Hunt, and Fels; among others). Yet, the potential for animated captions exists, such as in Brown, Jones, and Crabb's assessment of non-deaf participants' reactions to dynamic subtitles indicates participants' positive feedback to how dynamic subtitles make it easier to follow the action when they are integrated into the frame rather than at the bottom of the screen. Thus, the development of animated and embodied captions is a work in progress that would benefit from the involvement of more scholars and designers who can critique and redesign captioning practices.

We can integrate captions to help students develop rhetorical skills for communicating across multiple modes, media, differences, and across cultural and linguistic diversity (New London Group; Cope and Kalantzis). Hocks emphasizes that visual/digital compositions, which blend words and visuals in dialogic relationships, "construct meaning as simultaneously verbal, visual, and interactive hybrids" (631). Selfe argues against composition's primacy of alphabetic text and emphasizes that we should "encourage students to deploy *multiple* modalities in skillful ways— written, aural, visual—[... and understand] the various roles each modality can play in human expression, the formation of individual and group identity, and meaning making" (626). To support the multiple and different ways that we and our students express ourselves, I insist on the need for integrating captions that interact with other modes of communication in accessible multimodal pedagogies.

When I use the term access, I echo the value of communicating meaning equally across multiple modes so that audiences can understand a message (Kerschbaum, in Yergeau et al.), a value that is fundamental in "Multimodality in Motion," Yergeau et al.'s collaborative webtext on making multimodal communication and spaces accessible for different bodies. I support Yergeau et al.'s argument that we need to "advocate for design that plans for users with disabilities, rather than creating add-ons or fixes that attempt to modify inaccessible spaces and texts after their creation." Through accessibility, we go beyond "allowing people to enter a space" (Brewer, Selfe, and Yergeau 154) and instead design spaces for all bodies. I argue that when we add captions to the bottom of our videos, we are treating captions as "retrofits" that are not organic elements of the composition (Dolmage, "Mapping Composition" 20). Instead of adding static captions to a finished video production in order to accommodate viewers, we should consider integrating captions into our video design and editing process.

Conventional, disembodied captioning practices that are automatically added to media lead me to Yergeau's statement that "when we exclude bodies from the design of social and virtual spaces—indeed, from the design of theory itself, from the design of genre and form and 'what mode for what purpose'—we reflect and enforce able-bodied privilege. Design is a relational infrastructure, an act of embodiment and reclamation" (Yergeau et al.) Designing integral captions reclaims and embodies multimodal communication, particularly the value placed on visual-based communication in Deaf culture, as discussed in the next section.

When we incorporate captions into our video editing process, we design pedagogical spaces in which we do not accommodate different ways of communicating; instead, we create spaces in which all individuals—deaf, hearing, and otherwise—have a role in the design of communication (Dolmage, "Disability" 170). At the same time, as a Deaf instructor of hearing students, it is important for me to recognize that not all bodies are the same and not all bodies experience captions in the same way. I use the term *visual* access—not full access—in the complete awareness that captions are not accessible to those who cannot see. I do not make the assumption about all bodies; instead, I use these terms to attend to how we can renegotiate the design of multimodal composition.

Embodied Differences

Instead of isolating deafness from other identities and markers of difference (Kerschbaum, *Toward*), I embrace the intersections that we all create through our differences. Thus, I include students' statements throughout this article. Since I am aware that our bodies and experiences will always influence our approach to meaning in the world, I build on cultural rhetorics and embodiment studies that emphasize how we relate with other bodies, texts, and cultures.

I recognize embodiment as the ways that each one of us experiences the world differently through our own bodies (Meloncon 75; Mitchell 16; Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson). Embodiment attends "to bodies and practices, not just artifacts and textual residue" and "incorporates the meaning-making *our bodies* carry with and through *our scholarship*" (Johnson, Levy, Manthey, and Novotony 40). This approach is reflected in cultural rhetorics methodologies that acknowledge and engage "with the material, embodied, and relational aspects of research and scholarly production" (Riley Mukavetz 109). My embodiment and my rhetorics include the knowledge drawn from my identity as a Deaf academic in my research and pedagogy.

Being Deaf—and experiencing the world predominantly through my eyes—has influenced my advocacy for embodied captions that move in sync with sounds and other modes on screen to convey meaning. As Deaf studies scholar Bahan has shown, Deaf people "inhabit a highly visual sensory world" (99) in which meanings are "channeled through and by vision" (84). As a Deaf woman who receives messages principally through vision, I certainly recognize my own embodied response to visual text that vibrates to recreate the rhythm of a speaker's voice or intensifies in size to draw my eye to a presenter's face—and I share that with students.

It is important that we share our embodiments as composition instructors. Leeann Hunter, a composition instructor and child of Deaf adults, demonstrates the benefits of applying embodied communication in multimodal composition classrooms. She describes how she asks her students to become active participants in the classroom when they explore nonverbal communication, "engage in visual-spatial metaphors," and discuss sensory experiences. She shows her pedagogy of "valuing sensory experiences of the world, while acknowledging the immeasurable variations in sensory experiences from person to person." Hunter draws from her personal experiences to show the pedagogical benefits of Deaf Gain.

The concept of Deaf Gain reframes deafness not as a hearing loss, but as a valuable cognitive and creative diversity that can contribute to mainstream society (Bauman and Murray, "Deaf Studies" 216). Bauman and Murray's edited collection, *Deaf Gain*, celebrates how deaf approaches and visual-spatial languages could benefit society and how individuals interact with each other in different spaces and contexts. For instance, Leigh, Morere, and Pezzarossi write that Deaf Gain provides a "way of relating to the world through the eyes in addition to the other sensory experiences the human body and culture make possible" (359). So, how does my embodiment and the value I place on multisensory communication inform my approach to incorporating embodied captions in the composition classroom? In terms of pedagogy, this value motivates me to ask students to analyze and design captioned videos and to reimagine how we can create a space for captions. In terms of methodology, my embodiment leads me to honor and coalesce students' own experiences and responses to the design of captions.

Story as Embodied Methodology

Throughout the remainder of this article, I incorporate students' embodied responses to reflect the value that cultural rhetorics places on "story as a methodology" (Riley Mukavetz 110). The cultural rhetorics perspective engages with texts and bodies in the process of "constellating stories in order to visibilize a web of relations" (Powell et al.). Texts are not objects in isolation but embodied stories that show the relations between different bodies and experiences. I weave students' analyses, designs, and reflections into a story here to reinforce that their processes and projects are embodied experiences of redesigning how we communicate through captions in visual-spatial form.

When I use the term **embodied responses**, I refer to students' individual reactions to and interpretations of our experiences. As mentioned earlier, embodiment is defined as the ways that we experience the world through our bodies; each one of us has our own unique experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives that are constructed through the interactions of our bodies within the world around us. In analyzing students' embodied responses, I attended to specific statements that showed individuals' direct or personal reactions to a video, project, or situation. As I will discuss later, one student who struggled with technology wrote negatively about her video editing experience, and this was her individual emotional reaction to the process of working in a situation that was new for her. Another embodied response is found in Mara's reflective letter when she writes, "I had never really thought about captioning and the way it can affect the audience. It became fun to watch the video and interact with this particular video.... [I]t involved something I love, music and learning more about how different styles of videos relate

to the audience." Mara describes her experiences, background, and perspectives (how she had not thought about captions before, how the interacting with this particular video became fun, and how it involved her love for music) and her reactions are unique to her identity (as a music lover who had not thought about captions before). The embodied responses of Mara and her classmates are discussed in more depth later in this article.

By sharing students' responses, this article embraces the cultural rhetorics orientation in which we work towards "understanding—and feeling—what it means to interact in a space where every person is coming from multiple, overlapping communities and identities..." (Del Hierro, Levy, and Price). In addition, this article does not define culture "by any combination of race, ethnicity, gender, or class, but by the spaces/places people share, *how* people organize themselves, and *how* they practice shared beliefs" (Riley Mukavetz 109–110). I focus on shared space: classroom space and video space. The students in my classroom space contributed a variety of genders, races, classes, sexual orientations, and other identity markers—but I have not identified these markers because my approach in this particular semester was on embodied differences in the form of hearing and seeing (captions and sound).

I centered my methodological focus on my classroom experiences in the full awareness that it would be *limited* to my own and my students' embodiments. Doing so is not a limitation, but an opportunity for exploring the redesign of embodied hearing and seeing in composition—through the lens of a Deaf woman teaching hearing students about captioning. I believe this is a unique opportunity that can reveal much about disabling misperceptions, including the perception that captions are a static form.

I am inspired by the critical race methodology of counter-storytelling in which scholars of color oppose the traditional narratives imposed on them and instead incorporate a methodology that "foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process" and views their own "experiences as sources of strength" (Solórzano and Yosso, "Critical Race Methodology" 24). In the context of literacy educational research, Allen and Collins are among those who study the power of counter-storytelling in validating the experiences and perspectives of those of color. Similarly, my storytelling intertwines with my qualitative research method to show the "centrality of experiential knowledge" (Solórzano and Yosso, "Critical Race and LatCrit" 473). While I do not highlight other markers, the intersectionality between Deaf studies and disability studies and other cultures is evident in how we endorse the significance of the individual self's identity and differences.

Through interactions, we can reject what cultural rhetorics scholars describe as rhetoric and composition's "temptation to try to demarcate the cultural, social, and physical away from one another into camps—feminist rhetorics, African American rhetorics, disability rhetorics, etc." (Powell et al.). For instance, Walters draws from her experiences with her students to argue against focusing on one single disability or impairment and instead calls for considering designing access widely for a variety of audiences.

This intersectionality between disability studies and other cultures builds on Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson's argument that in order to transform how disability is perceived, we need to transform social and education practices, reimagine social spaces, and rethink ordinary habits (18). Their discussion of "an embodied rhetoric of difference" asserts that "difference teaches us to... become other than ourselves, to push beyond old identities and ways of thinking" (18). While my methodological focus centers on embodied hearing and seeing in order to better understand these differences through storytelling, I encourage other instructors to address other differences—including their own and their students' differences—when developing a pedagogical approach.

Embodied Methods

Influenced by my theoretical framework and the power of storytelling as validation of individuals' experiences, I aimed to collect student's written words so that I could see, through their eyes, the benefits and challenges of designing a space for captions in composition pedagogies. In addition to discussing their responses and the skills they developed throughout the activities, I assess their captioned video productions to show how student composers can infuse captions with meaning and movement—or embodiment.

This particular first-year writing course at a state university was unique because it was a mixed section comprised of some general enrollment students and some students who were identified as at risk for struggling in college; these latter students were members of an immersive university program designed to support their transition to college. Students here have shown relatively less confidence in themselves as writers based on their past educational experiences. In addition, a significant number of students at this particular university come from rural backgrounds and are first-generation college students. This institutional and classroom context accentuated the importance of teaching about and across differences.

When preparing to teach this particular section of first-year composition, I foregrounded my own embodiment as a Deaf instructor and developed an assignment sequence that asked students to work with dynamic visual text. During the assignment sequence, students engaged in three major rhetorical activities: design, reflection, and analysis. They created their own group videos in a group video captioning activity, rhetorically analyzed lyric videos for a six-page paper, and wrote separate reflective letters on both their designs and on their analytical papers.

I considered the following questions when developing the activities and assignments:

Design/Analysis: How does designing videos with dynamic visual text help students with analyzing videos with visual text, or vice versa?

Access through Embodied Captions: How can we use embodied captions to help students understand that we can make meaning accessible to audiences in deeper ways?

Rhetorical Skills: How can we use these captioned videos to help students develop skills for rhetorical analysis?

Embodied Reflections: How do students respond to these experiences? In other words, what are the different embodied reactions that students have to captioned/captioning videos?

These questions informed how I constructed assignments and collected students' work for the purposes of assessment for my research. I intended to see how students reimagined captioning practices through these activities, so I saved their course projects for later research. When assessing their projects for my research, I focused on the major points of interest: **how are students responding to the process of viewing, analyzing, and designing embodied captions—and what are they learning through this process about making meaning in ways that are new to them?**

These points informed my embodied method in which I evaluated students' reactions and responses to their activities. When reviewing students' reflective letters on the group video captioning activity, I pulled out the statements that explicitly showed their understanding of the rhetorical strategies that they used to convey meaning through the captions. For instance, as I will explain later, one student wrote, "We also used the visual text to help mimic what Marissa was saying." This is a clear instance of a student explaining her group's rhetorical strategy in designing the captions to embody spoken meaning in their video.

I also pulled out the statements that showed their embodied, visceral, or emotional responses to these videos or activities. For instance, I will later mention how one student found the process "frustrating." Being frustrated by a new rhetorical situation, or designing videos to become more comfortable with the analytical process—these are examples of how students respond emotionally or viscerally to the activities. I find these examples to be important because they remind us that students are individuals experiencing these projects in different ways.

To supplement these written statements in this article, I assess three of their group videos in three different genres to determine how effectively they integrate visual text to embody rhetorical meaning. That assessment is driven by the foundational questions of how students engage with **design/analysis**, **access through embodied captions**, and **rhetorical skills** for composition; this complements their **embodied responses** as evident in their reflective letters. To demonstrate their skills and stories more directly, I focus on three groups' videos and the students in these three groups who reflected on their videos. I then supplement this with other students' responses, including the challenges they faced.

The group video activity was part of a scaffolding process that prepared students for analyzing lyric videos for a major project. For the purposes of this research, I will not discuss their analysis papers in depth; rather, I inspect their embodied responses in their reflective letters on the process of analyzing lyric videos. As with the reflective letters on the group captioning activity, I pulled out the statements that showed their visceral or emotional responses to viewing the videos and completing the assignment. For instance, and as I share later in this article, students wrote statements that included phrases such as, "I felt like...," "break out of my comfort zone," or "[this process] was hard!" These are emotional responses to the videos and the process of analyzing these videos. In addition to these responses, I include explicit statements about what they learned from this process, such as: "Visual text opens your eyes to *see* the meaning."

Thus, my method is comprised of collecting embodied responses and discoveries (or the development of new skills) in order to share these stories and understand how students react to integrating captions in the composition classroom. An embodied methodology and methods are centered on embodied responses, particularly students' emotional and visceral responses in the form of how they feel frustrated with a new writing situation, how they become (or don't become) comfortable with the process, how they feel when they discover new meaning for the first

time, and other instances of *reacting* to a project. These become clear through language choices, such as explicit use of "frustrated," in their reflective letters. In addition to exploring these individual reactions, an embodied methodology and methods foreground the rhetorical skills or discoveries that students make about composing and communicating in new contexts or modes. These discoveries become salient when students write directly about how they feel, hear, or see meaning in a new way.

Introducing Embodied Rhetorics and Captions in the Classroom

In support of story as methodology, I will now interweave my descriptive assessment of the assignments and activities—and challenges that arose—with students' own analysis, designs, and reflections. Throughout the assignment sequence and the semester, I consciously shared my embodied experiences communicating across multiple modes, my responses to uncaptioned videos and to videos with integral captions, and the importance I placed on accessibility. On the first day, I shared these values through my accessibility statement on the first page of the syllabus to position myself "rhetorically as an instructor interested in creating an inclusive atmosphere" (Wood and Madden). I see the theme of accessing differences as supporting Fleckenstein's suggestion to "encourage our students to attend to the sensuous connections" between image, word, life, and meaning within our place in the world as bodies (151). Asking hearing students to reimagine sound also asks them to think about how we can sense and access meaning in ways that may be new to them.

When introducing the assignment sequence to students, I shared two versions of the same video of myself: one with conventional captions at the bottom of the screen and another with integral captions. These images show the two versions of "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" that I showed them. The first screenshot shows traditional captions at the bottom of the screen that draw viewers' eyes *away* from my eye gaze and signs, which are both directed towards the upper right corner of the frame. In contrast, the second screenshot integrates red captions that embody the meaning of the holiday poem and that are placed in the direction of my eye gaze.

Figures 2 & 3. Author's videos (0:27).

By articulating my embodiment through my signs and showing the rhetorical differences between the two caption styles, I intended to show students a different way of experiencing words on screen and to encourage them to be thoughtful about the captions that they designed.

While they watched the two videos play side-by-side, I asked them to consider how the design of the captions enhanced the second video's message for viewers. Showing the difference was important; Alisha would later suggest in her reflective letter that the analysis assignment asks students to compare a video with dynamic text and one without to appreciate the differences.

At this point into the semester—in the fifth week of the semester—we had already been discussing rhetorical situations and concepts for several weeks. I built on previous discussions by explaining rhetorical analysis in depth

and conducting several activities in which we practiced analyzing videos and the effects of captions together. This scaffolding was meant to prepare students for reimagining captions.

At this point, I need to clarify the limitations of asking hearing first-year college students, who are not regular consumers of captions and who are not experienced caption designers, to create embodied captions. One such limitation is that—aside from me—there was no user testing with deaf viewers. Their designs do not adhere to captioning style guidelines—such as setting the caption timing for reading speed and creating color contrast so that the words are readable against the background—and so they are not meant to be taken as the best practice. Rather, I mean to show how students can renegotiate accessibility by embodying sound and meaning in captions.

Group Video Captioning Activity

After discussions and activities, we transitioned to a group captioning activity in which students used a week and half of class time to design videos with integral captions using video editing software. I worked with students to develop plans for videos that would benefit from captions that move across the screen, change in size or color, or otherwise visually convey meaning. My main request was that they design a space for captions during the entire process rather than treating the captions as an add-on or afterthought. I found that captions are not accommodations or retrofits in these students' videos, but essential components of the rhetorical message. The design quality of the videos themselves may not be professional (one group was tight on time and filmed theirs in the hallway outside the classroom), but they show that students can integrate captions to enhance a video's message.

Making the group project an in-class workshop activity was more successful than asking them to work outside of class because we could work through the new experience of using video captioning technologies together. Selber reminds us that we should provide students with training and support to prevent student frustration and stress in lieu of assuming that they come to class with technological skills (30). In her reflective letter, Marissa writes, "At first I was in somewhat of a panic, worrying that I wouldn't know how to do everything to our video to make it the visually appealing video that it needed to be." But then once she started using Movie Maker in class, she found it to be "an alright user-friendly application" that was easy to navigate but that provided very limited options. Other students helped each other out with iMovie.

After completing their videos, students wrote a reflective letter on their experience with the composing process and the rhetorical strategies they used in creating their visual text. The letter asked them to consider what they learned from the process, whether they felt designing helped them prepare for analyzing videos, and their comfort level with using the software. I framed the reflective letters in agreement with Halbritter that "it is *the process of reflection* that is really at the heart" of a pedagogy that values the process, not the product (33). Students in my course did not have the technological expertise in video editing software, and for many this was the first time they developed a multimodal project for an English course; it was important for me, then, to focus assessment on the process of developing rhetorical skills for communication and to not grade their videos. However, a few of the students commented that the videos should have been graded so that they would have put more effort into the projects. Tricia wrote that it was "frustrating" to not get a grade for her effort and suggested replacing the analysis paper with a larger individual video design project. We should consider their embodied responses when deciding how to assess student work in genres that are new to them.

To demonstrate how designing videos allowed students to embody meaning through captions, the next subsection assesses three of their videos and their reflections on the process. I have developed a set of criteria for assessing videos that integrate captions in meaningful ways to embody multimodal communication; although these criteria are not the focus of this particular publication, I will assess how these three student videos embody meaning through captions in order to provide context for their reflections. I selected these three videos because they most efficiently represent different—and equally thoughtful—approaches to designing captions that embody these students' intentions in communicating a message; this allows for a deeper understanding of how designers work to convey meaning through captions.

Nine groups of two to three people per group designed videos in different genres; one group made an instructional video, two recorded themselves performing children's stories, and six groups created music videos. The genre of music videos probably seemed more appealing to students because of the presence of prerecorded sound and preexisting meaning. Instead of creating a new composition within the limited timeframe that we had, they could visually interpret these music videos. Their choice was probably also influenced by the recurrent use of music videos in our class and the fact that the analysis paper centered on lyric videos.

I will now assess one of the examples of each genre with their group members' responses; then I will constellate students' reflective responses.

Instructional Video: How NOT to Drive

Erica, Marissa, and Serena were creative in creating an instructional video on how to drive that shows major things that should *not* be done while driving. Marissa and a friend get in the front seats of a car and the camera frames them from the backseat as her friend starts making mistakes when driving, such as turning the radio up.

Figure 4. Student production (0:38).

Their reflective letters discussed the design choices they made with the visual text to reflect the meaning of the video as Marissa and a friend talk to each other in the car. Serena wrote that they used the visual text to help emphasize "how important the rules Marissa were saying were. We also used the visual text to help mimic what Marissa was saying. Moments such as when Marissa said turn it down we made the word 'down' actually flow down on the screen." The word "mimic" encapsulates what I had emphasized to the students that they should do throughout our discussions (although without any formal training): create captions that convey sound and meaning. To help them see the movement of sound, I would move my hands in rhythm with the vibration of the music to recreate sound in my body. Similarly, this video experiments with the conveyance of sound in captions.

At the same time, their captions indicate the limitations of asking novice composers to create embedded captions that cannot be adjusted by the viewers. As shown in this screen capture, the word DOWN is vertical and the letter N is in white font against a white background, rendering it hard to read and inaccessible. Also, the captions for "Turn it DOWN" actually flies up, rather than down (as shown in the following image), when Marissa tells her friend to turn the radio down. These technical limitations remind us that embodying caption is a work in progress, but the rhetorical consideration is clear in how they design the captions in this video. The captions, "You do NOT have your seatbelt

on!!!!" is red to reflect Marissa's warning to her friend. The use of dynamic visual text is especially necessary in a video that does not show the speakers' faces or body language, although the color and design choices do not quite capture the meaningful content of the conversation.

While the color and design choices do not always fully embody the meaning of the video, Erica, Marissa, and Serena clearly considered how they could incorporate the captions into their video. They prepared for captions to be included in their videos in the pre-production and shooting process, and they added captions in the space of the video during the video editing process. The captions provide visual access to the dialogue by moving along the screen, and this is especially important when we cannot see their faces. The captions complement the embodied rhetorics and multimodal communication of these women by visually moving with their voices and becoming capitalized ("Turn it DOWN") to emulate the rise in vocal tone. The captions enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of the video by visually showing what is happening with the bodies that are faced away from viewers.

I would suggest that these women showed development of rhetorical skills in working to communicate a message in a different video genre beyond a music video or a story. They created their own story for audiences that was enhanced by visual text on screen, and that may have prepared them to analyze how videos use rhetorical strategies in visual text to appeal to audiences. Marissa wrote, "This project made me feel a little more comfortable and better prepared to do my analytical paper of rhetorical strategies used in music videos. I learned the importance of visually appealing text through the hands-on project. By actually doing it and making it myself, I have a better understanding." Her response—that design helped her feel more comfortable approaching the analysis project—was repeated by members of other groups, including the next group.

Figure 5. Student production (0:01).

Children's Story: One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish

Adrien, Carson, and Brian's reading of *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*—whether intentionally or unintentionally—is an example of how captions can enhance the meaning of a composition that may lack meaning without the captions. The camera alternates between the three young men standing in front of a blank wall reading one stanza of Dr. Seuss's book. None of them change the intonation of their voice or show any facial expression— except smiling faces as they attempt to not laugh at themselves (Carson especially smiles as he starts to laugh when saying each line). Watching this in class was a friendly experience for the classmates as they remarked on the difference between the visual text and the monotonous voices.

In their reflective letters, Adrien, Carson, and Brian wrote that they were originally planning to find a green screen on campus in order to project the book and words on screen behind them [For the purposes of this ungraded video project, we had not discussed copyright issues]. They couldn't find a green screen, but they used iMovie to create colorful words on screen in front of them in order to appeal to children. Carson wrote that "Without the text all the video would be is three guys reading a book in front of a white wall. That's boring." He explained with reason that his video makes it "very evident" that visual text can completely change the effect a video has on viewers.

The three of them used iMovie to change the color of the font and animate it to reflect Dr. Seuss's meaning—so, the color-coded visual text is effective for the target audience of children. Each stanza or phrase is animated and color-

coded so that single phrases or stanzas emerge on screen in eye-captivating ways but also logical manners that embody Dr. Seuss's rhythm. The basic color for the lines is white, with select words appearing in different colors. For instance, the stanza, "here are some who like to run; they run for fun in the hot, hot sun" appears on screen with the four rhyming words appearing in three different colors to visually show that they rhyme. Another line, "Where do they come from? I can't say, but I bet they have come a long, long way" also appears with the two sets of rhyming words matching in color (from and come in blue and say and way in orange) while the other words are in white.

These young men's design choices for the color codes show that they considered how to visually embody meaning. This becomes particularly interesting in the captioning design for the line, "We don't see them come, we see them go; some are fast, and some are slow." While some might color code "go" and "slow" to show the visual rhythm, they chose to match "come" and "go" in red and "fast" and "slow" in green. Instead of embodying the vocal rhythm, this design strategy embodies the linguistic *meaning* of the complementary words.

Assessing their video provides some insight on how captions can not only be integral to a composition, but *improve* it for viewers. Adrien, Carson, and Brian clearly looked for a space for captions, as evident in their search for a green screen to embed the visuals. Their captions provide visual access to the meaningful content of the video: certain words are colored to visually show their vocal or linguistic meaning and how they might complement certain other words in the same stanza.

While the visual text may embody Dr. Seuss's meaning, it certainly doesn't match up with the young men's monotonous voices. The ironic juxtaposition leads to an intriguing experience that allows viewers to sense Dr. Seuss's embodied rhetorics and the speakers do not support that experience. In a way, the captions *become* or replace the embodied rhetorics and multimodal communication that is not sensed in the speakers' voices. We could say that the captions are the only way through which multimodal communication is reached in this video. Finally, we could agree that the captions enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of the video by *becoming* the embodiment of Dr. Seuss's words.

This video, and the next one that I discuss, certainly shows how integral captions enhance how viewers respond to the layers of an audio-visual composition.

Music Video: Turn My Swag On

Nathan, Alisha, and Inga designed their highly entertaining music video version of Soulja Boy Tell'em's "Turn My Swag On," with Nathan serving as the cameraman and Alisha and Inga going all out with their performances of women who do not want to go to class in the video. The camera frames two screens to juxtapose Alisha in one frame and Inga in the other in slow motion. With "Hop up out the bed" as the first lyrics that expand across the middle of the screen, the two women rise from their respective beds and dawdle as they reluctantly get ready for the day. "Turn My Swag On" oscillates on screen and seems to raise towards the viewer. As the rap lyrics play, the visual text glides and flips around the screen and interplays with the young women's performances. "Take a look in the mirror say wassup" stretches horizontally from one side of the screen to the other, drawing the viewer's eyes through the contrast between the two women and bringing them together at the same time.

Image 6. Student production (1:41).

As Alisha explains in their reflective letter, their goal was "to take a humorous yet insightful twist" on the song to "broadcast how we wake up and basically get dressed as if we could care less." One minute and thirty seconds into the video, the two frames come together into one frame to show the two women together and the lyrics continually moving around the screen—as shown in the image above. This video succeeds in using visual text that interplays with the song and physical action on screen to enhance the composition. Although the design choices for each particular line are not fully authentic to the meaning—some phrases are bigger than others but not louder in the song, for instance—they show clever design that appeals to audiences. Watching this visually enhanced video in class was a great experience for students, who wanted to watch it again and again.

Assessing this video reveals the multisensory experience of accessing music. Although Alisha and Inga do not interact with space during the filming process (they and Nathan designed the captions in post-production based on what iMovie allowed them to do with captions), the three of them integrated the captions into the space of the screen to a large degree. The captions move through and around the screen in extremely large font to draw viewers' eyes around the screen; instead of being a small component of the screen, they seem to occupy the screen itself, and this is visually effective in enhancing the sense of music. The salient nature of the captions provides visual access to the meaningful action on screen and the embodied rhetorics of the two women *and* the music. The interconnection of musical and physical modes is enhanced through the captions. Finally, the captions certainly enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of the music video. However, since they designed the captions through iMovie, they are limited in that the captions do not appear on screen in exact synchronicity with the music.

Nathan, Alisha, and Inga showed a direct awareness of accessibility and the benefits of captions in their reflective letters. For considerations of space in this article, I will focus on Alisha's extensive response on what she learned about access and seeing meaning in different ways. She wrote about how this project changed her previous view of captions as "a special communication tool used for the hearing impaired audience or audiences who may speak a different language." The entire process, she wrote, made her understand captions more:

> Captions were more than a tool for a certain group of people. Captions are art in a unique way. It shows emotion and meaning with words. Pushing the audience to actually see, read, comprehend, even feel the words instead of just looking at the video.... Captions also helped me understand the world in the eyes of others. Having motion or color of visual text adds another sense of understanding.

She described the learning process of engaging with visual text to express meaning:

> Bringing the lyrics to life was the hardest yet informative part. We first believed this part would be easier than the video, seeing we were just adding cool font or color. We were quickly awoken to the fact that it was more than that.... We really wanted our captions to be more than plain text, speaking to the

viewers.

Alisha's reflections on seeing captions in a new way were repeated throughout the reflective letters that students wrote. One of the most common themes in students' reflective letters was how this project made them change how they experience visual text on screen.

Reflective Letters: Limitations and Potentials of Designing Captioned Videos

Naturally, many wrote about wishing they had more time to work through the video editing software that they used or that they could do *more* with the visual text in the software. Kristina wrote that "I would like to be able to make the transitions of the captions flow smoother, make the words look more unique and make certain words stand out when emphasized more in the song." Dana likewise wanted to explore the software more to see what she could do with it. Brian and Adrien wrote about not being able to put the visual text exactly where they wanted in iMovie and by the limited number of fonts available to allow them to express emotion through the text.

Analysis and design came together in this project when they explicitly referred to the choices they made in expressing meaning, such as describing why they made certain words a certain color or font. I'll use Damani's phrase to describe this: they were analyzing their own designs. Brian refers to his design choices when he provides an example of how he used a specific font to represent the story and concludes the paragraph with, "As you can see, we intended for certain words to portray their meaning with the use of dynamic text." Brian also mirrors many of the students' comments that the design process helped them approach their analysis papers: "By completing this project we started from the inside out on discovering how to analyze dynamic text in music videos."

Only one of the twenty-two letters was explicitly negative in its response to the project. Molly told me in class that she did not enjoy the project because she was not a creative person and she was not comfortable using technology, and she described the difficulties she had in learning new software in "such a short amount of time," although her reflective letter misnames the software that her group members used to design their captioned videos. In class, Molly showed clear physical distance from the activity, sitting apart from the other two who were working together on a laptop. Her lack of involvement in the group project is something that I should have addressed to support her learning and that I have kept in mind in future courses. It is equally important that instructors adapt our pedagogical tools *and* software tools for students who have different levels of comfort and expertise with technology.

In her reflective letter, Molly recommends dedicating more time in the course schedule to this activity so that their video could be more creative—and I agree that more time should be provided to students to work on designing projects. For teachers planning to incorporate this into their course calendar, I would suggest dedicating four weeks to video design projects so that students can engage fully in the process of drafting, composing, and learning from their work projects. These four weeks could be a mix of workshop days, peer review days, and group conferences with the instructor so that students actively receive and provide feedback throughout the composing process. Building time within the course calendar for both analysis and design would create a space for students to develop rhetorical skills for communicating across modes.

Writing a Rhetorical Analysis: "It helped me look directly at the lyrics"

When students were designing their videos, they had already received the prompt for their analytical paper and were drafting their projects. The assignment asked students to rhetorically analyze how a music video integrates text, visuals, and sound to capture the mood of the song and make the lyrical meaning accessible to audiences. I provided students with a list of possible ASL music videos and captioned music videos, but the options for music videos with dynamic visual text are limited, so most of the students chose to analyze lyric videos. I will let Dana explain what a lyric video is:

> In contrast to traditional captions, lyric music videos provide visual text and imagery that enhances the composure of the song as a whole. The movement of words on the screen provides a lyrical visual to follow along with as you watch the video.... Visual captioning allows one to stay engaged while watching a lyric video as well as allowing them to understand the meaning of the lyrics in a deeper way.... These compositions add energy variations that the audience can connect with and find easy to follow along as the movement penetrates throughout the entire lyric video.

As students searched for lyric videos, I steered them away from lyric videos that only showed words on screen and towards lyric videos with text that interacted with other elements of the screen: in other words, towards videos with

layers of sound and text that coordinated to convey meaning (Halbritter). To help some students re-view lyric videos through a different perspective, I asked them to play their lyric videos silently and to stop at highly interactive moments in which a substantial amount of action occurs on screen. When I worked with Kelly one day, she came up to me at the end of class and thanked me for helping her feel better about approaching her paper. In her reflective letter, she explains that writing down what she saw and felt made the process of finding meaning in the visual text comfortable and easy: "I actually enjoyed analyzing a video like this because it helped me look directly at the lyrics and feel more in depth with the words."

6.1 Reflecting on the Analytical Paper: A Criticism of Lyric Videos

While reading their analytical papers, I found that, while some wrote stronger analyses of specific moments than others, they overall were able to analyze the significance of the visual text in the video in conveying lyrical and aural meaning to the target audience. Some of the strongest analyses were—perhaps not coincidentally—analyses of the videos that showed the most rhetorically effective design of visual text on screen.

Since this article focuses on students' embodied responses, I will dedicate this subsection to the letters that students wrote to me reflecting on how they approached their particular music video and their overall experience writing a rhetorical analysis of the video. I asked them to consider points such as their comfort level with writing the analysis, their recommendations for how they would write the paper differently, and parts of the video that appealed to them. I took in particular consideration students' reactions, particularly when they describe their feelings, beliefs, or changes in these perspectives.

Reading through students' reflective letters leads me to criticize the genre of lyric videos since lyric videos too often do not use visual text rhetorically to embody the message of the song. This prevented students from being able to rhetorically analyze the videos. After all, how can someone analyze rhetorical strategies when the designers seemed to not have used any? If the visual text embodied the meaning of the video, then students could better analyze the strategies.

Thus, I use this moment to critique lyric videos and call for more careful consideration of how captions can embody lyrical meaning. As Nathan wrote about his lyric video, **"**there's so much meaning in the video without the text." Noelle described the visual text in her video as just there for looks and not used as emphasis: "I believe the text does add meaning in some videos but with my particular video the words were just there and it felt more like a sing-a-long than it did a music video." In her analysis of her lyric video, Noelle states:

> ...[T]he words in the video don't really show which words hold more meaning than the others. The lyrics in the song have more emphasis behind them than what the words on screen show. For example, one of the lines in the song is "Pedal to the floorboard, eight up in a four door" and all the words are sung with the same tone but the words on the screen show it as "PEDAL to the floorboard, EIGHT UP in a four door..." I watched the video without the sound and felt like the words were being screamed at the audience as opposed to just sung to...

The lyric video that Noelle analyzed shows little consideration for rhetorical strategies to embody meaning in visual form. The words do not synchronize with the musical tone and do not express meaning clearly or even accurately. Yet, there are a limited number of music videos that incorporate visual text, so I cannot completely disregard lyric videos for analysis purposes, and I hope that the genre of lyric videos expands. As Alisha wrote, "This process [of finding a music video] was hard! All my favorite songs or artist lacked dynamic text in their videos."

Others had the opposite reaction and found a lot to work with in their lyric videos. Dana found substantial meaning in the visual text in her video and wrote that "I have now learned how a lyric video can entail so much more than just added words on the screen. Visual text truly does change the basis of a video and allows you to understand and recognize the lyrics in a deeper way. This paper has allowed me to break out of my comfort zone and understand the importance of a rhetorical analysis as a whole."

The most positive reactions came from the students who chose videos that meant something to them and that used visual text in aesthetic and rhetorically effective ways; this allowed viewers to relate or interact in meaningful ways with the message. In her reflection of a video that she analyzed that incorporated Snapchat, Serena wrote, "the video relates to my generation with the use of dynamic text... [and] tools that I use on a daily basis to communicate to my peers." The use of daily communication tools appealed to her, as it did to Mara.

When reflecting on the video she analyzed that incorporated emojis, Mara wrote: "I had never really thought about captioning and the way it can affect the audience. It became fun to watch the video and interact with this particular

video.... [I]t involved something I love, music and learning more about how different styles of videos relate to the audience. I would recommend doing this project again for next semester; it was a lot of fun."

Erica wrote about how this project transformed the way she experienced music videos:

> I can honestly say I never acknowledged the purpose of dynamic visual text in music videos until I started working on this project. I used to just watch people in the videos, or just listen to the music. Now, I purposely look for music videos with lyrics on the screen so that I can see every exact word being sang. Nothing is more powerful to me than when a song reaches its climax, or the most cultivating part, and the lyrics on screen go perfectly along with what's being shown in the video.

Being engaged in the experience of watching the videos was what allowed them to "look deeper" (in Evan's words) and sense meaning in a new way. Carson wrote that the analysis assignment taught him that "that you don't have to hear a song in order to understand its meaning." Erica wrote, "Visual text opens your eyes to *see* the meaning. While the song is being sung to give you sound, the text conveys the meaning in such a way that it allows a connection and binds the two together; text and sound." Molly wrote that the experience "made me look at a music video in a totally different perspective, which was interesting.... Thank you for allowing me to see a different view on music and music videos as a whole."

Overall, their designs, analyses, and reflections are (to varying degrees) thoughtful and analytical. Their stories show that we worked together through the challenges of experiencing meaning in different ways and through technological difficulties. Most of all, their embodied responses show that they experienced and constructed meaning in a new way.

Sensing an Embodied Accessible Multimodal Pedagogy

These twenty-two students' embodied responses show that we can design a space for integral captions in the classroom to make students conscious of the experience of multimodal and multisensory communication. Emphasizing how we make meaning through the body—embodied rhetorics—could encourage students to apply their analytical and design skills from the creative arts—music, painting, dance—to composition. Alisha wrote in her reflective letter of her passion for art: "I am an art lover. I love analyzing paintings, poetry, dance, music even lyrics. I myself was thrilled about the idea. Dissecting the video went perfectly, but actually writing it was difficult.... I was never good at writing, that being said I wish I could just analyze the video and explain verbally how the usage of dynamic text made me feel." A media design major, Alisha expressed her appreciation for dynamic visual text, color, and font—which are embodied modes. At the same time, she revealed the challenges that she found in expressing herself through alphabetic text. In her analysis paper, she incorporated an effective mix of alphabetic text and screenshots in interaction to analyze the visual design and color choices for the visual text in her lyric video.

The pedagogical value of bringing together creative composition and multimodal composition is clear. Dunn and Palmeri are prominent in supporting composition's relationship to the visual and performing arts and in teaching writing as a creative, multimodal process of composing. Halbritter emphasizes that composing music mirrors the process of composing writing as songwriters have been "merging text with music, the verbal with the non-verbal, and the visual with the aural, all along" (17). This interaction is fundamental in what Halbritter defines as *multidimensional rhetoric*: "rhetoric that integrates a variety of modes, media, and genres—sound, images, language, music, etc." (26). Videos with integral captions embody the merging of modes and bodies.

These twenty-two first-year composition students' embodied reactions to seeing sound reflect Ceraso's multimodal listening pedagogy that imagines sound as vibration and that calls on instructors and students to unlearn ear-centric practices in which we interpret sound through the ear alone (105). While Ceraso might challenge my own emphasis on *seeing* here, I believe that the experience of sound as vibration and as movement is an embodied experience that we should emphasize. Experiencing meaning through different senses and modes becomes an embodied act of recognizing different ways of communicating meaning. And when we realize that there are many different ways to express meaning, we could consider a transformation in how we could design captions beyond the bottom of the screen.

As we move forward, I encourage scholars and instructors to reframe their pedagogical focus so that captions become *integral* modes of meaning in our compositions. Through an embodied methodology and its methods, we can continue to assess students' responses in the form of reflective letters and the explicit statements that reveal the strategies that composers use to communicate to audiences. The methodology of embracing differences can strengthen how we integrate new design strategies into the composition classroom. Yet, all the students in this class

were hearing and I was the only one who was Deaf: thus, I now turn the tables and call on others to engage in their own counter-storytelling and explore the intersectionality of markers of race, gender, and other aspects of identity.

I encourage instructors to adapt this assignment sequence for their needs and apply it to other teaching contexts, including upper-level composition courses, professional writing courses, public writing courses, and other communication courses in which students design compositions and multimodal projects. Design a space in your schedule for video captioning activities or projects in which students create their own videos and develop a plan for captions during the editing process. Ask them to consider how captions are a necessary mode of meaning in their videos and how they could redesign access through various means: visual, verbal, and otherwise.

Hopefully, students who integrate captions in the college classroom could enter their future positions in the workplace and community engagement with an appreciation for composing through various means and reaching different audiences. They could be equipped to explore strategies for capturing and conveying their message in meaningful ways. And that is a goal of embodied methodologies: to continually learn from different cultures, identities, and means of communication that can renovate the study and practice of communication.

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