Collaborative Multimodal Pedagogy in the First-Year Stretch Composition Classroom

John A. Kubler[1]

California State University, Northridge, California, USA

Abstract

The new "Composition 2.0" collegiate first-year writing classroom now utilizes the increasingly diverse range of available digital writing formats and embraces the fundamental awareness that all writing processes are inherently multisensory and multimodal events. Yet, the corresponding awareness of the *collaborative* nature of all writing and its benefits is often overlooked in the rush to embrace new multimodal technologies. The emphasis on students' small-group collaborative multiliteracy processes is the focus of the present position paper that argues how carefully integrated and scaffolded multimodal exercises composing evidence-based arguments in a thematically unified semester-length FYC course will help to (1) broaden our conception of persuasive academic writing, (2) utilize underprepared students' multiple intelligences and collectivistic home cultural strengths, thereby establishing a more engaging writing classroom, and (3) help institutions build interdisciplinary collegiality among instructors working in various language arts departments. Using examples from successfully implemented collaborative exercises in a stretch composition course, the paper also describes how a culminating end-of-semester "Project Media" remixed music video assignment is an effective exercise for building students' multimodal persuasive writing skills.

Keywords

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[1] John A. Kubler is a Teaching Associate at California State University Northridge and has done graduate training in English, Speech Communication, Film Production, and Theatre Arts. Email: kubes2k@sbcglobal.net

Introduction

As the contributors to this special issue are undoubtedly aware, the recent attention to multimodal forms of writing in the early 21st century can trace its foundational beginnings to the meeting of what came to be known as the "New London Group" of educators hailing from Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Cazden, Cope, Cook, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress et al., 1996). Due to the rapid development of digital online technologies, these educators saw the need to broaden the definitional spectrum of literacy to include the ability to recognize and produce information in a variety of text forms beyond simply print-based, alpha-numeric writing. Most importantly, the group raised awareness of the exigent need to create multiliteracy compositional instruction that gives practice in using these multivariant textual forms and genres so that students might achieve success communicating in an increasingly diverse technological future.

Perhaps the group's most profound conceptual awareness was that all literacy processes (writing and reading/viewing) are inherently multisensory, multimodal, and collaborative (p. 81). During the composing process, for example, selected words/symbols trigger multisensory perceptions as writers recursively respond to both prior cultural texts and the new words emerging on the page before them. Likewise, during the reading/viewing process, the text itself acquires a multimodal, fluid, sensory identity as the reader/viewer collaboratively experiences the text in relation to his/her own prior textual encounters. Mary Hocks' influential essay on online digital writing (2003) reiterates this collaborative role of the reader by asserting most responses to writing are inherently interactive and participatory, resulting in a text that is experienced as a hybrid, multifaceted identity made up of a variable mixture of integrated verbal, spatial, and visual modalities where the reader/viewer takes pleasure in choosing when, where, and in what manner s/he will experience the online text.

Given the resulting resurgence of interest since 2003 in developing multiliteracy composition pedagogies, it is clear today that many educators have heeded the New London Group's mandate for instruction in multimodal forms of writing (Kress, 2003; Wisocki, 2004; Selfe, 2007; Lauer, 2009). What has now emerged since 2010, is a movement that can be called "Composition 2.0" (Day, McClure, & Palmquist, 2010), in which the exciting features of Web 2.0 digital technologies — such as wikis, blogs, social media and synchronic video communication channels — are utilized by first-year composition teachers in the development of classroom exercises for composing enriched-image texts.

Yet, although the New London Group's instructional mandate is increasingly accepted, its corresponding mandate for developing the *collaborative* nature of multimodal writing might be overlooked in this new rush to embrace enriched Composition 2.0 exercises. This emphasis on collaboration is the focus of the present position paper. However, building a sense of true collaboration in the FYC classroom as well as in the larger academic environment is sometimes difficult, as various educators and administrators have observed (Hall, 2002; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Mindich & Lieberman, 2012). For example, having been a colleague at several academic institutions, the well-respected educator Donald E. Hall argues that he has too often witnessed a tense atmosphere of competitive struggle for individualistic achievement, monographic publication, and the construction of a professorial identity based on principles of

autonomy and mastery, producing an isolated "atomized professional" type of self-identity (Hall, 2002, p. 69). What is needed, he asserts, is a "forthright admission of our own socially (or in this case, professionally) constructed selfhood" (p. 5). Hence, we can either embrace the ways we exist as interdisciplinary collaborators or we can "choose anxiety by thinking of ourselves as masterful scholars and isolated intellectual beings" (pp. 9-10). Likewise, in my own career working in both the academic and professional fields of English studies, Speech Communication, and the Cinematic and Theatrical Arts, I have also observed this overly-specialized, sedimentary thinking. And more importantly, limiting the practice of persuasive writing skills in the first-year composition classroom only to the genre of the academic print-based essay does not give those students who have yet to decide on a chosen major an opportunity to explore their talents in the broad spectrum of language arts modalities.

It is with such an awareness that I offer the following perspectives and suggestions for utilizing the oftentimes overlooked, inherently collaborative nature of multimodal writing to build an engaging Composition 2.0 approach to FYC classroom pedagogy. Here, at a large public university in the California State University system, I work with several colleagues who regularly use some type of multimodal writing exercises in their composition courses as a means to find an answer to the above isolated and overly-specialized mindset referred to by Hall. By providing examples of successful assignments I have used in my classes, I will argue that the positive effect of collaborative multimodal projects in a FYC classroom is immense and teaches a valuable appreciation for many of the language arts. Taking inspiration from Resta and LaFerriere's observations (2007) that teachers now use online digital networks to support collaboration, this paper shows how other forms of multimodal writing will encourage collaboration as well. Also, these varied multimodal assignments will, in turn, help composition teachers develop their own interdisciplinary collegial professional growth by providing opportunity to invite guest instructors to their classes from other language arts disciplines to collaborate and give advice on their students' works and textual productions. Hence, there is much to be gained through collaborative multimodal pedagogy in the first-year composition classroom.

Collaborative Multimodal Opportunities in Stretch Composition Programs

Stretch composition program initiatives for first-year collegiate writers who are assessed, upon entering the university, to need more interventional opportunities to develop basic academic writing skills have been successfully implemented by various American institutions now for nearly two decades. Arizona State University was one of the first to do so in the mid-1990s (Glau, 1996, p. 79) and my institution, along with at least a dozen other California State University campuses have followed this lead in the last decade (Stretch status roster, 2012). The bedrock exigence for such programs was the collection of findings that traditional, non-credit bearing basic writing courses — often labeled as "remedial" "transfer-level" or even "developmental" — resulted in high levels of diminished student self-esteem and low morale along with high rates of student attrition. Searching for a remedy to these problematic findings, stretch programs seek to raise student self-esteem by providing the crucial necessary factor of more time with which to develop skills by stretching FYC courses to extend over not just one but two credit-bearing semesters; this gives the students more opportunities to practice the important writing process skills of invention, drafting, and revising over a larger list of exercises and projects.

Regarding the connection between stretch programs and multimodality, my perspective here is that one of the key benefits of these programs is that they not only stretch the time duration of coursework but also help students stretch their conception of the evidence-based persuasive writing process itself. Indeed, as Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz assert (2013) "everything's an argument" and "arguments are all around us, in every medium, in every genre, in everything we do" (p.5). Certainly with this perspective, stretching the variety of FYC persuasive writing assignments gives students chances to compose evidence-based argumentative writing in a wider spectrum of multimodal forms beyond only a print-based essay text. In addition, this opportunity for multimodal writing fulfills one of the key goals of most FYC coursework, as Irene L. Clark discusses in her article "Print/New Media Transfer: Genre Issues" (2014), which is "to enable students to develop as writers so that they can complete writing tasks in multiple contexts," although concerns still exist over how best to achieve this goal (p. 26). I offer the following description of a thematically integrated semester length multimodal stretch composition course as one possible means to achieve this multiple-contexts goal.

Aspects of Multimodal Collaboration in a Semester-length Course

Collaboration in such a multimodal composition class occurs along four broad dimensions: (1) mixed semiotic forms, (2) course design and structure, (3) student group assignments, and (4) interdisciplinary collegiality. First, considering the issue of form, as suggested earlier, all writing can be considered to be inherently multimodal and communicates through a hybrid collaborative mixture of various linguistic, visual, aural, gestural/kinesthetic, and spatial semiotic image-domains that assist/collaborate with each other to convey a message. Even a print-based persuasive essay, on a fundamental level, is assisted by an aural dimension (as the reader hears the sonic sensation of the writer's voice speaking through the words) and also a kinesthetic dimension as the choice of sentence structure and length convey a rhythmic pulse to the reader. Usually, this collaborative nature of multimodal writing is thought of in terms of producing a single writing task artifact itself — such as in the composing of a webpage, a film, or a print-based essay. However, the scope of a multimodal writing task can be extended so its genre, if you will, consists of a larger collection of other sub-genre writing tasks or sub-modes within an overall umbrella project extending over multiple weeks.

Collaboration, in this respect, takes place on the second dimension — the structuring of the overall course design. Scaffolding assignments within an instructional unit is itself a form of basic pedagogical collaboration where various exercises progressively assist each other in building skills that contribute to a larger more complex assignment such as a print-based essay or capstone presentation project. But an entire semester can be scaffolded and integrated as well. My second semester stretch course, for example, is thematically unified on exploring how cultural images and values impact gender identity and gender relationships. The objective is for students to arrive at an awareness of and appreciation for the many gender-variant ways people choose to express themselves. Hence, form fits content in the overall design of my course; multimodal writing exercises help raise appreciation for multivariant identity choices regarding gender and sexual orientation. Students do practice writing skills using the traditional print-based essay format; however, they learn that essays are only one of several sub-modes of persuasive writing grouped within a larger multimodal project. Through integrated and scaffolded exercises leading to a culminating "Project Media" at the end of the semester, these assignments bring multimodal

literacy firmly into the composition process and give students practice in creating collaborative evidence-based arguments supporting identity choices.

Thirdly, collaboration in this stretch course takes place when students work on small group assignments. There is solid pedagogical support both in theory and documented best-practice evidence over the last forty years for the benefits of utilizing small-group collaborative exercises in higher education (Burke, 2011); research also links collaborative digital tasks to student engagement and knowledge building (Brett, 2004; Stahl, 2004). However, of special significance to the present focus on multimodal writing is the well-respected support for collaboration extrapolated from Howard Gardner's ideas on the "multiple intelligences" of students (Gardner, 1983, 2006). These varied multimodal intelligences include such categories as interpersonal, kinesthetic, musical, and visual-spatial skills, among others. Different students bring different learning styles and strengths to the composition classroom. As the educator Danny Ledonne puts it, "students who sometimes struggle to find the right word may well excel at assembling images to illustrate their points" (Ledonne, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, when a variety of students join together in small heterogeneous groups of four or five, bringing with them a varied mixture of unique learning strengths, the resulting collaborative multimodal project is often enhanced in quality compared to solo individual works.

In addition, as the educators Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull point out in their book, *Managing Diverse Classrooms: How to Build on Students' Cultural Strengths* (2008), many times these students hail from non-western home cultures (including immigrant Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander, African American, and Middle Eastern families) that favor a collectivistic value system where emphasis is placed on collaborating on tasks as a group to fulfill family needs and goals (p. 11). Since our university contains a large population of first-generation students drawn from these traditionally underrepresented minority groups, it behooves composition teachers to tap into these students' home-grown collectivistic cultural strength and interpersonal social intelligence in the design of collaborative multimodal projects.

Example Multimodal Assignments in the Course

While my first semester stretch course gives students practice exploring more individual writings, my second semester course has a greater emphasis on multimodal collaboration and the utilization of digital Web 2.0 technology — yet builds upon the reading, viewing, listening, critical thinking, and writing skills students acquired in the first semester class. As mentioned earlier, this second semester course is thematically unified on exploring social issues related to gender relationships and how individuals choose to define and express their self-identities. One of the underlying goals of the semester is for the students to develop a metacognitive awareness of the rhetorical and social purpose behind their multimodal compositions and the similarities and differences between the various modes or genres. I want them to discover that when they use these various modes to persuade and communicate an idea, all their modal endeavors share the same basic rhetorical principles such as being motivated by an exigence, having a purpose, being aware of audience and the specific rhetorical situation, and supporting a thesis claim with persuasive evidence (in the forms of either linguistic words or visual/aural images).

Project Space: Gender Relationships in Advertisement and Civil Law

In the first third of the semester, students explore how our contemporary cultural spaces impact gender relationships and a sense of self-identity in our society. Two spatial domain areas are examined: print advertisement and civil law pertaining to a controversial legal issue impacting gender rights. In order to discuss pop cultural advertising spaces, students are divided into groups of four and I provide them with a collection of various photo advertisements that depict ambiguous and provocative situations in gender relationships, such as those found in many Dolce and Gabana ads. As a group, students select the ad they will work with over the course of several multimodal exercises. These exercises include: (1) "Word-Picture" where students use the mode of the short story to describe their interpretation of the back-story, setting, and gender dynamics between the characters in the ad; (2) "Trans-Modal" similar to an *ekphrasis* type of exercise in the visual arts where students translate their interpretation of the ad's gender relationships into either a three-dimensional form (such as informal collage, sculpture, or kinesthetic experiential non-dialogue activities that could involve the entire class) or an aural form using sound without linguistic words; (3) "Dramatic Scene" where the student groups express their interpretation of the gender dynamics in the ad in a short five to seven minute scene with dialogue using the combined modes of the written play script and an in-class performance; and (4) "Ethno-Observation" where the students conduct informal primary research outside of class using a survey questionnaire to collect opinions from the public on the interpretation of the ad's messages about gender relationships.

The next two modal exercises, (5) "Classroom Debate" and (6) "Opinion-Editorial" examine how civil law impacts gender relationships within the public spatial domain of our communities. Every year, I choose one recent US Supreme Court decision covering a controversial hot-button topic related to gender rights and have the student groups read summary amici briefs that argue both sides of the case; student groups then discuss which position they would support using the modality of an informal four-corners classroom debate (agree, disagree, mostly agree, mostly disagree). This past year, the students argued about the controversial "Hobby Lobby" SCOTUS decision that attempted to balance anti-discrimination laws protecting reproductive freedom choices with the 1st amendment's right protecting religious freedom for corporations (*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*). After the debate, students were paired-up to write a collaborative op-ed response on how they would have decided the case and then posted it on their online blog websites utilizing the easily mastered template-based Weebly platform. Again, as with all good academic arguments, students practice rhetorical persuasion in these debate and op-ed modes using appeals to either *logos*, *ethos*, or *pathos*. Peer-reading and collaborative online commentary between students on these op-ed blog posts are also required.

Using evidence drawn from the above six, integrated multimodal exercises plus assigned weekly reading articles, students shift modes once again and this time individually write a print-based academic essay on the topic of how our contemporary advertising and civil justice spaces impact gender relationships. First drafts are assisted by collaborative in-class small group peer review and revision; second drafts are graded and receive instructor feedback; at the end of the semester, students revise their essays a third time for their online portfolios, based on the varied feedback.

Project Text: How Our Hyper-sexualized Culture Impacts Gender Relationships

Although our millennial students appear to have been born with digital devices in their hands and many have mastered using online social media platforms, researchers have observed

these students exhibit a disconnect between their valorization of using digital writing outside the classroom and the avoidance of utilizing it for academic purposes inside the classroom (Purdy, 2010; Turner & Hicks, 2011). That is, students have yet to discover ways to utilize the collaborative strengths of their social platforms for academic writing purposes. To remedy this disconnect, the second segment of my semester course gives students practice using the modality of online blog writing to assist in the invention and drafting stages of their writing assignments. I assign students to pair up and create an online research blog page on their collaborative Weebly site containing carefully structured postings. This blog is not simply an online repository of their reflective weekly writings; if such, there would be little difference from a traditional offline paper journal and little point in using the online modality just to appear trendy. Instead, and most importantly, the student pairs rely upon the inherent strengths of the blog modality during the invention phase of writing, utilizing key features that are designed to solicit *interactive collaboration* from their online readers/viewers to help brainstorm, narrow their topics, and collect organizational content for their upcoming second print-based essay.

Students choose a topic area to focus on relating to how the hyper-sexualized aspects of our American culture impact attitudes toward gender relationships; possible areas explore the impact of dress and fashion, pop cultural entertainments (music video performances), dating and the hook-up culture, images of men and women in video games, or the "empowerment vs. objectification" debate concerning expressions of sexuality. On their weekly blogs, students post their responses to assigned films and reading articles, plus their summaries of one credible article that they have discovered through their own research each week that will help support their opinions on the issues. Students need to harness the participatory nature of online blogging with digital features such as (1) hyperlinks to articles or video clips that support their argument claims, (2) interactive offsite surveys and informal quizzes on the topic that seek viewer input, and (3) open-ended discussion questions that seek their classmates' comments which will help the students during this invention stage of their writing process. As with all good online blogging, students need to compose visually interesting posts that have good spatial designs, clear and concise writing, and a rich mixture of captioned photos, varied font sizes/colors, and links to media clips.

Using collected evidence drawn from their interactive online research blogs, students shift back to individual writing once again, and write a print-based academic persuasive essay responding to this prompt: "to what extent is our hyper-sexualized society and pop cultural images impacting gender relationships and self-awareness in either a positive or negative direction?" As before, first drafts undergo collaborative peer review and revisions.

Project Media: Multivariant Gender Identity Choices

The third and final section of my thematically unified semester's exploration of gender and identity allows students the opportunity to re-examine their previous notions about what gender refers to and discover the many variant ways in which people express their gendered selves, including the potential transformative possibilities open to individuals today (which itself extends multimodality onto the human level). Again, form fits content here, with Project Media's emphasis on an appreciation for transgendered and hybrid intersexed subjectivities. At the same time, students will build upon what they learned in the earlier sections of the course regarding how our advertising, civic, and hyper-sexualized cultural spaces impact the text of self-identity and the gender relationships within those spaces.

This project takes inspiration from Bump Halbritter's interesting work using multimodal audio-visual writing exercises in his composition classes at Michigan State University (2006; 2012). Taking inspiration, in turn, from Lawrence Lessig's arguments (2004; 2008) that a free culture ought to allow the creative "remixing" of projects — where artists quote, sample, and build upon the creative works of others, without copyright infringement — Halbritter has students harness the power of juxtaposing ready-made recordings of pop songs with scenes from films in order to make a compositional mash-up of aural-visual arguments (Halbritter, 2006, p. 329). I use this type of integrated-media music video project but apply a small-group collaborative approach to it.

The students reunite into their four-person groups; specifically, their goal is to assume the group identity of a collaborative creative production team who pitch a music video project to a contemporary singer/songwriter. The exigence for the team's integrated forms of multimodal writing is to use evidence and appeals to win the contract and convince the songwriter that their production design is the best visual/aural interpretation of the lyrics. Student teams select an artist and song whose lyrics convey some important social message regarding our semester-long topics relating to gender relationships and self-identity, such as Macklemore and Ryan Lewis' song "Same Love." As such, the students will assume an activist stance — with a rhetorical purpose — and create a multimodal argument that "represents new knowledge for a real audience" as Mary Hocks urges composition classes to achieve with their multimodal exercises (Hocks, 2003, p. 650). Hence, the students are encouraged to think of themselves as creating collaborative multimodal evidence-based arguments supporting appreciation for varied identity choices.

The four members of each group have integrated task roles to play in the project: the positions include *Director*, *Video Editor*, *Webmaster*, and *Graphic Illustrator/Publicist*. With input ideas from all members, the director-editor pair downloads an mp3 recording of their selected artist's song and then uses available editing software programs such as iMovie (available on most Apple laptops) to remediate the soundtrack with visual/aural images drawn from varied evidence sources to support the group's interpretive claims regarding the song's gender-related messages. The pair also writes a print-based document containing a sequence shot list of what audio/visual elements they will incorporate into the sections of their planned video with a brief explanation of why they are using these pieces of evidence (similar in purpose to the useful organizational tool of a traditional annotated bibliography). The group's finished music video is eventually uploaded to YouTube for peer viewing and commentary utilizing this popular collaborative online communication channel.

Meanwhile, the Webmaster creates a separate online Weebly website that builds an interactive digital argument supporting the director-editor's claims made in the remixed music video; this website builds upon the good graphic skills the students learned earlier in the semester while working on their collaborative research blog in Project Text. The same focus is maintained for creating an interactive experience for the reader/viewer. However, this time, the website has multiple pages, loosely following the general structure of an evidence-based argument essay— only now using the modality of a digital website. These include: (1) a landing introductory page that introduces the viewer to the overall topic and thesis claim of the group's argument, (2) a second page that uses text, images, and multimedia to establish the social context and exigence behind the issue; (3) a third page that brings in facts and statistics through various infographic tools such as illustrative charts, graphs, or Wordle clouds; (4) a fourth page with concise body paragraphs explaining the group's claims with hyperlinks to supporting articles; and (5) a final

thoughts page that contains the lyrics of the song, a link to the group's music video on YouTube, and a concluding "so what" summation of the group's overall claims. These interactive Weebly sites are inspired by Madeleine Sorapure's use of "infovis" writing exercises at UC Santa Barbara in which her "assignments that ask students to visualize information offer fresh and highly relevant approaches to the writing and critical thinking involved in exposition, analysis, and argumentation" (Sorapure, 2010, p. 60).

The Graphic Illustrator/Publicist's mode of writing consists of using desktop publishing software to create a persuasive brochure for easy projection during the group's in-class pitch presentation of their project to the mock singer/songwriter audience. This brochure will create a visually interesting digital presentation of the group's interpretation of the song, by referring to the individual argument claims behind the various lyrics and showing selected still photos from the remixed music video. During the group's in-class presentation, the Graphic Illustrator/Publicist introduces the project and team members and facilitates the class discussion.

The last modal task of Project Media that the students engage in to support their interpretation of the messages of the artist's song is the completion of a collaborative print-based persuasive essay that contains a summary of each member's individual contributions to their group's overall multimodal pitch argument, explaining such things as basic claims, evidence, and specific design choices used in their individual writing modalities. This is the third graded essay the students write over the semester but this time the essay is written collectively.

Opportunity for Multimodal Pedagogy to Build Interdisciplinary Collegiality

Over the course of a stretch semester, the above integrated assignments not only build students' collaborative multimodal writing skills but can in turn help composition teachers develop their own interdisciplinary collegiality — the fourth dimension of collaboration mentioned earlier. Once again, form fits purpose. Some colleges have built hybrid interdisciplinary composition programs such as the "Multimedia Authoring minor" developed as a collaborative venture between the English, Art, and Computing Sciences departments at Elon University, NC (Rosinski & Squire, 2009). There, classes are co-taught by instructors from the three departments who help students see the numerous parallels between the rhetorical strategies of both webpage writing design and traditional print-based writing modalities.

Furthermore, one can readily see how the above mixture of diverse, multimodal assignments could provide excellent opportunities to invite guest instructors to class from other language arts disciplines to collaborate and give advice on students' works. For example, the Word-Picture exercise benefits from a creative writing teacher's input; the Webmaster's and Graphic Illustrator's assignments benefit from instructional perspectives shared by teachers from the graphic arts and digital media departments; the Trans-Modal exercise benefits from a fine arts/sculptor's perspective; the Ethno-Observation exercise benefits from a sociologist's perspective regarding field ethnographic research; the Scene exercise benefits from the advice on playwriting and acting from a drama teacher's perspective; and the Project Media's remixed music video can gain valuable instruction from a cinema arts teacher's perspective. Moreover, the sharing of creative projects on online websites and YouTube provides the opportunity for students and faculty from many interdisciplinary departments to view and leave collaborative commentary (Clark, 2010; Ledonne, 2014). If time permits, online sharing can even provide the opportunity for a transglobal collaborative experience between teams of students living in various countries,

such as the multimedia public health presentations developed jointly between students from San Diego's Kearny High School's Digital Media and Design program and those attending Daraja Academy in Nanyuki, Kenya (Collier, 2013 p. 6).

Challenges and Future Considerations: The Multimodal Boot Camp

In the preface to *Everything's an Argument*, Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz admit to have chosen a "purposefully controversial title" for their book (vii) which behooves readers to pause and consider the following question: is everything *really* an argument? In similar fashion, the above description of a stretch composition class made up of thematically integrated multimodal exercises continues this scholarly conversation and might invoke controversy itself, undoubtedly raising questions and concerns, some of which are not easily answered. How does one define an "academic evidence-based argument" or even "evidence" itself? Can the modes of a picture, a non-verbal gesture, an interactive online blog, or the aural/visual elements of a music video contain the same depth of effective evidence to support a well-reasoned persuasive argument as a print-based scholarly paper? Is a well-reasoned, deeply investigated, coherently logical argument the only kind of argument we should be teaching in a collegiate FYC class?

These are complex questions to address for Composition 2.0 multiliteracy teachers for much depends upon how we define the debatable attributes of "depth," "effectiveness," "well-reasoned," and "coherently logical." The naysayers might argue that a music video's cutaway shot to footage from another closely related news broadcast is not as deeply reasoned and persuasive as a print-based research essay's well-integrated and discussed quotation from an expert's source article. However, I offer this rebuttal: both attempts at persuasion are referencing and incorporating some degree of supporting evidence into their arguments. They are both following the same rhetorical strategy, but in different ways using different modalities. One mode might rely more upon *pathos* and *ethos* than *logos* in a specific section of its argument, but it is still using evidence to persuade. This reminds me of trying to compare a realistic landscape photograph to an abstract painting of the same scene in the debate in the art world at the turn of the twentieth century over which one is more coherent, referentially clear, and therefore more communicative. Should the effectiveness of every style/genre of persuasion be judged on the standard of representational (logical) clarity? And in regard to the question of depth and nuance, is it ever possible to agree on which of the following genre modes of presentation of the same written text (Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* for example) explores and expresses the passions of the human heart with the most insight and nuance: a live stage production, a ballet or film of the play, a written literary analysis of it, or a painting of the climactic death scene? Some readers and viewers will see depth and nuance in a modality; some will not.

Another question arises: is it the duty of composition teachers to give students the chance to become multimodal explorers in the composition classroom? There are indeed other classes in other departments that students can take for these various modalities. However, I argue that it is important for students to gain experience working with as many of the variant modes and genres of persuasion as time allows so that they understand they have options — so they can choose the most effective combination of modes to fit the specific rhetorical situation. Hence, based on the fundamental awareness that all writing processes are inherently multisensory and collaborative events, the above FYC course demonstrates how collaborative multimodal writing exercises (1) broaden our conception of persuasive writing, (2) utilize underprepared students' multiple

intelligences and collectivistic home cultural strengths, and (3) can build interdisciplinary collegiality in a thematically unified stretch composition classroom. Think of this as a sort of adaptation training in a multimodal boot camp that teaches versatility and options. Through working with the above varied modalities of persuasion, students will gain confidence to succeed when they encounter other unfamiliar technological writing genres in their future.

Furthermore, most of the students in my class are not just playing around with surface details and presenting a mish-mash of disconnected aural-visual images that lead nowhere. On the contrary, the students are expected to have the same metacognitive awareness of the basic rhetorical strategies found in traditional print-based essays — the need to discover an exigence and a clear thesis, maintain awareness of audience expectations, develop competence using the tools of the genre, and use multimodal evidence to support their claims. They must reflect upon and articulate their choices in what Jody Shipka calls "purposeful choosing" where they think "carefully about what they hoped to achieve and how they might achieve those goals given the resources [modalities] they happened to have on hand" (Shipka, 2006, p. 369).

In the end, the above description of how multimodal exercises can be successfully implemented in a thematically unified second-semester stretch course suggests that the profound linkage between multimodality and collaboration is enhanced, perhaps even to its highest level, when composition instructors design carefully scaffolded exercises that progressively build skills culminating in end-of-semester collaborative small group multimodal projects. Is this design suitable for every stretch composition course? Of course not. However, such an integrated and interdisciplinary collaborative multimodal course might be the best way to teach an appreciation for many of the language arts, and help develop our students' ability to communicate in an increasingly technologically diverse and multiliterate society. Taking inspiration from David Bartholomae's well-respected mandate (1986), what better way is there to "invent" — or in this case, re-invent — the new 21st century multiliterate university and help our students navigate through the innovative future of constantly evolving multimodal discourse?

Acknowledgment

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