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Student Perceptions and Use of Multimodal and Traditional Forms of Composition

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND USE OF MULTIMODAL AND TRADITIONAL
FORMS OF COMPOSITION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Professional Communication

by
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Accepted by:
Cythia Haynes, Committee Chair
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Scot Barnett

ABSTRACT

Given the dynamic nature of technology and writing, it is important to understand how students view traditional and multimodal methods of composition. Traditional composition (plain text) is frequently used to complete essays, and multimodal composition (often digital, but otherwise containing multiple media elements) is often used to construct blogs and webpages. As technologies advance, there is more and more opportunity for the overlapping of composition and technology in writing practices. The objective of this study was to examine how students perceive traditional and multimodal composition in terms of their use, perceptions, and preferences. This study used surveys (quantitative) and interviews as well as privileged observation (qualitative) methods to understand students feel about, and use different styles of writing in everyday life and how these perceptions change during the duration of one semester in a multimodal-centric writing curriculum. This study advances notions of composition beyond that of mere writing, to a composition “composed” of a rich array of media. The data that this study develops is particularly salient to understanding different ways that composition courses can be administered in order to best engage students.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents (all of them) and to my loving wife who has supported me every step of the way.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without many people who influenced me at key points along the way. Thanks to Cynthia Haynes and Scot Barnett for allowing me the opportunity to conduct a thesis that is unique to my interests. I owe Joe Mazer much gratitude for his patient tutelage and resources for conducting the statistical analysis in this thesis. My appreciation to Jan Holmevik for his gracious support and infectious optimism. To Mrs. Anna Inabinet and Cassie Premo Steele for fostering in me an appreciation for the humanities and literature. Thanks to George Williams and Ben Myers at the University of South Carolina Upstate for their support of my academic endeavors at key times. My appreciation to my father, Don Stowe, as well as Thomas Young for allowing me to constantly bounce ideas around with them. Finally, special thanks to my most ardent supporter and friend: my wife, Heather.

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CHAPTER ONE

CONSIDERING MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION

If the first rule of writing is to consider the audience, then perhaps it might follow that a first rule of teaching writing is for the teacher to know the audience. Who are the students we are charged with teaching? What do they know? What are their dispositions? While these students are surely multifaceted, if some sliver of understanding can be gleaned about how students perceive composition then educators will be better situated to teach the students. This study attempts to do just that.

The goal of this project is to gain insight into what students know and how they feel about different types of composition. Several layers of research and inquiry provide data that may inform this goal. For the purpose of this study, two main kinds of composition were considered: traditional composition and multimodal composition. Both of these types of composition are developed further in the study, but for now, I will provide a cursory definition of each. Traditional composition can generally be understood as being text-based writing, such as that which one might associate with writing an essay. Multimodal composition is a term that contains a variety of meanings in different contexts; when considering composition, multimodal most often refers to digital writings that blend several modes (textual, visual, audio, etc.) and media and these are most often housed in a digital format.

This study will examine an assessment of students' perceptions regarding composition, their preference among composition styles, and how their use of composition changes over the duration of the semester long course. Throughout this

study I was a teacher in the same composition program in which this study was conducted. Overall, the course emphasized the importance of multimodality in its composition curriculum.

It would be beneficial for teachers to understand how students think and feel about a multimodal curriculum. This understanding might allow the teacher to better understand how and why student perceptions of composition change throughout the semester. This study may also clarify some of the variables that affect student perceptions of different composition styles throughout the semester.

This study will focus on how students feel about writing and, in particular, how they respond to a decidedly multimodal curriculum. Most teachers have come across students who do not enjoy writing, regardless of how “good” a writer that student might be. It seems logical that if students prefer one kind of writing to the other, then individualizing instruction toward that particular composition method might make learning more enjoyable and more effective for students. While there is no magic wand to wave over a writing course, perhaps taking this extra step to understand some sliver of various student preferences in terms of composition seems worthwhile if it can help teachers deliver instruction more effectively.

The next section of this chapter will serve to create an exigency by discussing what it means to compose, by unpacking notions of traditional composition and multimodal composition. As such, the notion of meaning making and the notion of what it means to compose will be discussed; also, the relationship between multimodal composition and technology will be brought into question. Based on its prevalence in

multimodal composition, the notion of visual composition will be discussed in terms of how it might fit into a comprehensive understanding of composition. These discussions will then shift into a discussion of the research questions and justifications for the importance of those questions. Chapter one will conclude with a discussion of the methodologies pertaining to conducting the survey portion of the project including: how the surveys were coded and analyzed, the way the interviews were conducted, and a discussion of the impact of my personal experiences on this project and the way that sampling was conducted.

Chapter two will present all of the results of the survey, including highlights from some of the interviews and a discussion regarding how my own perceptions of teaching a multimodal curriculum may have affected my perceptions in conducting this study. This section will also include the statistically significant findings from the survey portion of the study and each research methodology, and in the case of the survey, different question types will be reported in its own section.

Chapter three further elaborates on the data presented in chapter two and discusses the possible implications of the study. Like chapter two, this section will discuss the findings of each research methodology and, in the case of the survey; it will also discuss the different results from the different question types. This section also discusses how future research can benefit from the experiences gained conducting this study. Limitations of this study and how future researchers might build upon this study will be discussed in this section.

This thesis concludes with the appendices, which include transcripts from the interview sections and figures and tables. The figures show the change in tasks that students used to complete traditional and multimodal composition. The tables are correlation tables, which demonstrate the correlations of student perceptions of the various descriptors of multimodal and traditional composition. These transcripts are divided into two groups: the transcripts of the interviews that were conducted at the beginning of the semester, and the transcripts of the interviews that were conducted at the end of the semester.

In summary, through the course of this project, the reader will be presented with information regarding the importance of composition, and in particular, a discussion of why understanding how students perceive different kinds of composition is important. In order to do this, several questions are posed (in chapter one) and methodologies are devised (also chapter one). Beyond this point the data is presented to the reader and further analyzed.

A. Meaning Making

Compositions are artifacts that are formed when ideas are inscribed. Because of the relatively short distance between thoughts being thought and the thoughts being inscribed, they are often thought of as the same. But ultimately, regardless of when the idea has its genesis, in writing or in thought, composition can be considered a way of creating meaning. In order to begin to understand composition, or the making of

meaning, it seems prudent to understand how some meaning is created. In his seminal work, Ferdinand Saussure introduces semiotics. Semiotics suggests that connection between a physical thing and the word that is given it is arbitrary (*General Course in Linguistics* 67), and that writing amounts to the use of symbols. Kenneth Burke famously describes man as a “symbol-using animal” (Burke 1340), which comes down to the idea that we are able to represent ideas with “symbols.” Katherine Hayles elucidates that Saussure “regards speech as the true locus of the language system” and that writing is but a “derivative of speech” (*My Mother was a Computer* 42).

The terms that Saussure applies to describe things within the framework of semiotics and writing are sign, signifier, and signified. Taking an example of a tree, the referent would be the tree itself, the signified would be the idea of “tree,” the signifier is the sound image or the sound “cat,” and the sign is the written word “cat.” Signification notes the arbitrary relationship between the signifier (in this case, the sound) and the signified (in this case, the idea).

In contrast to Saussure, Hayles explains that Derrida argues, “that writing exceeds speech and cannot simply be conceptualized as speech’s written form” (*My Mother was a Computer* 40). Derrida articulates that when we speak of “writing” we are speaking of “all that and more: to designate not only the physical gestures of literal or pictographic or ideological inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible and also beyond the signifying face, the signified itself (*Of Grammatology* 9). In saying this, Derrida, further allows that “writing” is also a descriptor “for all that gives rise to an inscription in

general” (*Of Grammatology* 9). He lists as examples of these ideas “cinematography, choreography” and also “pictorial, musical, sculptural ‘writing’” (*Of Grammatology* 9).

With this tension in mind regarding the sort of foundations of composition, it bears to reason that it is then possible for different people to have very different thoughts regarding composition. Perhaps it is important to understand where students stand in terms of their use of and thoughts regarding composition. Regardless of where meaning making begins, I argue that composition is all about making meaning in a way that another can experience it. But, let’s unpack what it means to “compose” a bit more.

B. Re/Considering Composition

The world is full of media waiting to be composed: pictures waiting to be compiled into photo essays or montages, sounds that await being captured to be mixed (and then, re-mixed!), video captures waiting to be captured and then have sounds applied, and any number of other media artifacts that are waiting to be manipulated. In this time of technology, an era where more tools are being made than those that are used, anyone can be a composer. If meaning is symbolic (Burke 1340) and man is capable of constructing meaning out of anything, then the modern composition classroom must be a frenetic, crazy place to work.

Coming into a first year writing program, I felt certain that I would be limited to teaching students how to “write” an essay on a standard white piece of paper—and there is nothing wrong with that kind of writing. Print literacy is a valid and important thing

that should be taught. In times when technology offers so many means, essays should not be limited to alphabetic print. However, understanding what composition is to any particular curriculum and, indeed, any particular teacher can be quite a challenge. Kathleen Yancey points out that writing and composition have never been defined in so many diverse ways as it is now (298). For the purposes of this study composition can be thought of as the inscription of ideas. This inscription is not limited to text, and can include images and any other semiotic code that one might devise.

Certainly I am not saying that basic writing skills are not important, nor am I saying that writing is easy. I argue that composition should be understood as more than the ability to string words together or as “mere writing.” Composition is about creating meaning, regardless of the media used to create that text. As such, the modern composition classroom should strive to be relevant and in so doing, perhaps appeal more to students. Given the importance of meaning creation in composition, it is imperative that students be taught to think critically. There is no doubt that teaching critical thinking is challenging. However, by teaching students to think critically, the teacher is, in a way, teaching the student to invent.

Composition encompasses more than merely inscribing ideas in some media or another, let alone the crafting of the written word. Composition spans a range of actions that are described nicely in the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery (*Silva Rhetoricae*). Inventing ideas (creating meaning) is just as important as the ability to inscribe those ideas using some media or another. If either of these steps fails, then the composition suffers. Victor Vitanza points out that few

teachers, however, feel comfortable teaching students how to do “invention”(270).

Gregory Ulmer argues that when it comes down to invention, “innovation almost always comes from outside a specialization”(3). The trans-disciplinary nature of multimodal composition, I argue, is uniquely situated to foster an abundance of innovation in a variety of compositional forms.

When given a single Crayon an artist can create a grand work of art. While it is not fruitful to argue that that same artist could make a “better” work of art with several Crayons, I feel that more “Crayons” allow the artists to be more creative, or to innovate. This is precisely why multimodal composition is such an important concept to teach students, and teachers, too. This is not to say that traditional composition and print media are not very accomplished, but to argue that multimodal composition is a very important trend in composition and should be treated as such.

Anne Berthoff, when discussing Paulo Freire’s “pedagogy of knowing,” argues that “unless and until the mind of the learner is engaged, no meaning will be made, no knowledge can be won” (744). I argue that the student who is innovating is an engaged student. Teachers often lament the apathy that some students display. Perhaps if we, as educators, give the students more Crayons, the students will be more engaged in what we are attempting to teach them.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire describes “the banking concept” wherein “education...becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (72). “Implicit in the banking concept [writes Freire] is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a

person is merely *in* the world...the individual is spectator, not re-creator” (75). Perhaps all of this is true, that people (particularly students) are spectators watching the world unfold. This kind of unquestioning voyeurism should be untaught in composition classrooms; students should be taught to create media and not merely allowed to consume. While both traditional and multimodal composition both require active engagement, I argue that multimodal composition is particularly demanding because of the multiple modes of meaning creation that are used in making a text multimodal.

Cynthia Haynes likes to think, “that thinking *is* doing” (“Writing Offshore” 668). This, I think, is a point often lost in students’ approaches to composition. It is important to understand that thinking about what one is going to write, and in so doing creating (inventing) interesting ideas, is the foundation of composition. Brent and Felder point out that critical thinking is teachable but, like other forms of learning, must be modeled successfully by the teacher if the students are to truly be able to learn the process (46). It is imperative that critical thinking be considered central to the composition classroom. Students should be taught to think critically about writing (or composing) and the media that they are engaging, in addition to the topic or material that they desire to cover in this composition.

When speaking with a friend outside of the academy, I used the word “ain’t.” Then, this gentleman looked at me in a puzzled manner and said, “Aren’t you an English teacher?” I explained to him, as I do to my students, that context is key, and that, as the rhetorical situation changes so should the writing change. Which is to say that as any given situation changes, so too should the argument and the way the argument is

presented. Without the ability to think critically, students are not likely to pick up on these situational differences.

C. Unpacking “Multimodal” composition

Any number of various media can be used to form a “multimodal composition,” while it is important to understand that multimodal does not necessarily denote writing involving computers, though it often does. At present, technology is converging in a number of interesting ways (Jenkins). Using digital technology, one can capture photographs, edit those photographs, turn the photographs into movies, upload those movies to the Internet, and then send a link of that video to a friend (who can further complicate things by remixing the original content, if he or she likes). While I acknowledge that technology is constantly changing (from rocks that people have used to carve into a wall, to the latest techno-wonder-widget), understanding the different capacities of various technologies is vitally important in the modern multimodal classroom.

Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that, “any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code is multimodal” (177). Pamela Takayoshi and Anne Wysocki argue that multimodal texts “exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound” (1). The combination of these two definitions, I think, is a very appropriate way for multimodal composition to be understood by composition instructors. Thus, I define my own notions of multimodal

composition, as that (taking note from Kress and van Leeuwen) which utilizes multiple modes of creating meaning (semiotics) in a way that “exceeds” (from Takayoshi and Selfe) any one form of composition. However, I resist agreeing with Takayoshi and Selfe’s notion of multimodal composition as merely “exceeding the alphabetic.” I, and other scholars (Haynes, Kress and Van Leeuwen), argue that multimodal composition need not necessarily contain alphabetic elements.

Outside of academia, one is hard pressed to find a practical use of an “essay.” While the traditional composition essay is a genre in decline, new forms of composition including blogging, tweeting, and web design are becoming more and more pervasive. While one does not need to look far to find examples of an “essay” that exceeds alphabetic text (photo essays, video essays and video blogs, to name a few), for the purposes of this paper when I speak of an “essay” I am referring generally to an alphabetic composition. Yet, in the composition classroom many of the assignments that students are turning in still strongly resemble the assignments their “parents and grandparents” completed while they were in school (Takayoshi and Selfe 2). Kathleen Yancey comments, “never before has the proliferation of writing outside of the academy so counterpointed the compositions inside” (298).

Even given these trends, the creation of basic sentences in traditional composition is critically important in multimodal composition. Font choice, colors, photographs, videos, sounds (and whether or not any, or all, of these variables are used) are key creative points. The multiplicity of different compositional artifacts that can be created using any of a plethora of digital tools allows the modern student a tremendous amount of

materials to compose with. I contend that multimodal composition engages students creatively, which encourages learning.

Multimodal composition is an inherently interdisciplinary notion that draws on as many media as one would care to gather to create unique artifacts. I acknowledge that pens and pencils are “technology,” but for the purposes of this work, when I speak generally of “technology,” I will generally be referring to digital technology such as computers, or more specifically, word processors. While one does not necessarily need to use digital means in the pursuit of multimodality, given the amazing capacity of digital technology, computers and digital technology should be embraced for their ability to provide students with many tools all packaged together.

D. Technology

Geoffrey Sirc articulates that his desire to use technology in writing courses is because technology provides “students an easy entrée into composition” which provides “a compelling medium and genre with which to re-arrange textual materials.” The goal of this is to help the student find his or her own voice (“Box Logic” 113). Diana George argues, “access to the Internet and desktop publishing has given teachers a way of incorporating visual thinking into the writing class” (32). With the “convergence” of technology, more and more writers are creating more and more multimodal compositions, even if they are not aware of doing such (Jenkins).

At this point it seems important to re-emphasize that not all multimodal compositions are necessarily created using digital technologies or computers. “The

documents we now see in digital environments that use multiple modalities to convey meaning” are distributed primarily, but not exclusively, by digital media like “computers, computer networks, CDs and DVDs” (Takayoshi and Selfe 1). Taking composition to an interesting extreme, Cynthia Haynes argues that trees are in fact multimodal compositions, from the carvings in the bark to the creatures that have bored into its trunk (“Caretakers of Multimodality” 65). Included in Haynes’ example is the notion that in the composition of the tree, there could be, but does not need to be any form of alphabetic writing. “In other words, multimodal composition can be understood as being organic as well as composite, thus broadening our understanding of how meanings can be created in multiple modes using multiple platforms (e.g. soil, software, sound)” (Haynes Personal Interview).

Technology changes the way humans communicate, and this has been the case since the invention of writing tools. It is too simplistic to say that the Internet is “changing the world” and think that this is the first time this has happened. Composition has changed with each “great” technological innovation. From ancient times when monk’s copied Bibles to today when the masses have word processing tools, the impact of technology can be felt. While traditional alphabetic composition has long been the benchmark in the composition classroom, multimodal composition is a departure from strictly text-based compositions. The “five-paragraph essay” may be the bread and butter of traditional composition, but multimodal composition’s stock seems to be on the rise.

Writing is a dynamic process and technology is constantly in flux. Wysocki offers that “Writing, like all literate practices, only exists because it functions, circulates,

shifts and has varying value and weight within complexly articulated social, cultural, political, educational, religious, economic, familial, ecological, political, artistic, affective, and technological webs” (*Writing New Media 2*). Given the inherently changing nature of writing (Wysocki 2), it is important to understand how writers understand and perceive new forms of composition particularly in terms of technology, which has a very immediate effect in impacting various composition styles.

While traditional composition is concerned with the construction of words and sentences, multimodal composition takes advantage of varying technologies and relies on the readers’ developed visual literacies to create a (potentially lively) conglomerate of pictures, text, color, video, and sound. A key difference between traditional texts and digital multi-modal texts is that while traditional composition can live in a hard format or on a computer, digital multimodal texts are almost entirely limited to their use in a digital format due to the multiple media that can be contained in the text.

In *Sensorium*, Caroline Jones presents a number of novel compositions, which engage technology and the senses, to express different ways that users can experience things (which we can understand as being compositions). Jones reminds us that “seeing is believing”(32) and several times throughout the text she explicitly or tacitly makes the claim that our society is “ocularcentric” (20), which is to say, that in terms of our senses, society is most concerned with sight. She also explores a number of interesting artistic compositions to demonstrate other senses that can be stimulated with various technologies. Despite this interesting work, the visual is an uncommonly pervasive

means of transmitting information, and as such should be considered thoroughly in the multimodal classroom.

E. Visual Communication

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen nicely articulate “the dominance of the verbal, written medium over other visual media...[as being] firmly coded...in conventional histories of writing (“Reading Images” 21). It is interesting to point out that alphabetic writing is often noted as being an intersection of image and language (Kress and van Leeuwen, “Reading Images” 21; Ong 87). However, what Kress and van Leeuwen write about in this text is beyond cuneiform or alphabetic writing that is visible, and instead they speak of non-alphabetic images, like photographs and even films. Anders Fagerjord takes this idea a step farther, arguing that in a flash documentary the way the camera moves is also an expressive media (98).

The inclusion of images into papers has tremendous capacity to communicate information. Ron Fortune describes a student who wrote a paper describing a derailleur he had created for his bicycle. Fortune points out that the student’s paper would have immensely benefited from visuals that could have worked with the verbal text to both demonstrate the existing design’s shortcomings and to show how the new design would improve on the old. When Fortune asked the student “why he did not use visuals the student responded by saying that he did not think ‘using pictures’ was acceptable in a writing course and that he did not know how to [include pictures] anyway” (49). This

example highlights the need not only to educate students about appropriate use of technology but also the importance of teaching students *how* to use technology.

Other scholars would likely agree with Fortune's thoughts on the student's paper. Kress argues that images should be used and taught as part of composing arguments ("English at the Crossroads"). Diana George argues that, "current discussions [published in 2002] of visual communication and writing instruction have only tapped the surface of possibilities for the role of visual communication in the composition classroom"(12). She pushes farther still, suggesting, "students have a much richer imagination" regarding the possibilities of visual communication than scholarship has covered (12). If one can make the jump, then I would argue that permitting students to use visuals (and as a practical matter, multimodal communication in general) is an excellent way to encourage student creativity.

Kress and van Leeuwen speak of an image wherein a young woman looks off screen in the foreground and a young man in the mid-ground looks at the young woman and discuss how this image functions to attract and direct the viewer's eye in terms of gaze and figure ground relationship. The authors then stress that these few patterns do not exhaust their ability to analyze the image. They note that "there is a third element: the composition of the whole" which stresses the ways "in which the representational and interactive elements are made to relate to each other" and in this way "are integrated into a meaningful whole" (176).

Kress and van Leeuwen argue that within the confines of understanding images there are multiple ways that images can be understood. Composition

Relates the representational and interactive meanings of the image to each other through three interrelated systems:

1. *Information Value*. The placement of elements (participants syntagms that related them to each other and to the viewer) endows them with the specific informational values attached to the various 'zones' of the image: left and right, top and bottom center and margin.

2. *Saliency*. The elements (participants as well as representational and interactive syntagms) are made to attract the viewers attention to different degrees, as realized by such factors as placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrasts in tonal value (or colour), differences in sharpness etc.

3. *Framing*. The presence or absence of framing devices (realized by elements which create dividing lines, or by actual frame lines) disconnects or connects elements of the image, signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense. (The Meaning of Composition 177)

The authors stress that these principles of understanding composition need not simply apply to pictures, but that "they apply also to composite visuals, visuals which combine text and image and, perhaps, other graphic elements" regardless of whether these elements are represented on a page or a digital screen of some sort (177). They argue that these composite texts are in fact multimodal (177).

F. Electracy

Gregory Ulmer coined the term electracy to refer to a kind of digital literacy. To bring the idea of electracy Ulmer refers us to the grammatological ideas of orality and literacy. Ulmer reminds the user that orality and literacy are socially invented technologies (xxiii). Ulmer argues that religion is the institution most closely associated with orality and that the academy is the institution associated with literacy, but the institution allied with electracy is that of the Internet (xxiv). Ulmer invites all who wish to join (without requirement) the EmerAgency, which allows students to take on a sort of

digital agency and become what Ulmer calls an eagent. Ulmer says that one of the goals of electracry is “to do for the community as a whole what literacy did for the individuals within the community”(xvi).

In my opinion, Ulmer understands the utility of allowing students to create. In his book, *Electronic Monuments*, Ulmer spends much of the book describing and giving different examples of a project that he had his students complete called a MEMorial. Ulmer says that the purpose of this project was for his students “to develop a familiarity with the Web site and the Internet as media of an emergent language apparatus” (xxxiii). In outlining this project Ulmer informs the reader that this project is “an invitation for invention...that draws on all the resources of disciplinary knowledge”(xiv). Ulmer explains that the overarching goal of this project is to change the world for the better (xxxiii), and while he is speaking specifically of his notion of MEMorial, perhaps then the overarching goal of education should be in engaging students in meaningful ways that have the dual purpose of helping them to learn and help them to change the world.

G. Research Questions

All of the ideas relating to the relationship between teachers and students, prior to this point of this study, are based on the assumption that teachers know something about students. The next section will step back from this assumption and seek to examine some basic questions regarding how students use and perceive different compositional styles and their various preferences and perhaps the reasons for these preferences. In particular,

this study seeks to understand the way that these perceptions change throughout the course of a semester long multimodal-oriented composition course.

When considering how a teacher can effectively begin teaching any given group of students, perhaps it would be useful for the teacher to know what the students preferences are regarding composition styles at the beginning, and then again at the end of the semester. These questions will also allow consideration of how and why preferences might change over the course of the semester. With this in mind, it seems prudent to start by understanding whether students prefer multimodal or traditional composition at the beginning of a first year writing course. This question can be further understood when asked at the beginning of the semester and then again at the end of the semester in an effort to see if student preference of composition styles had changed.

While student's preferences certainly have the potential to change the way they view composition, perhaps the kinds of composition they use most often will also be telling. In particular, does the amount of different kinds of compositions that students compose change over the course of the semester. With this in mind this study seeks to ascertain which type of composition students report using more at the beginning of the semester and then again at the end of the semester. This will be particularly useful in examining the way that the first year composition course impacts the students perceived use of writing. One might be tempted to believe that this question would tell us which type of composition students use more at the beginning and the end of the semester, but really it only tells us how the students perceive their use of composition types because most people do not keep an accurate log of everything they compose.

Overall, one of the major goals of this study is to assess how and perhaps why students feel the way they feel about various forms of composition. To this end, the survey asked students questions gauging how students perceive composition clarity, richness, and ease of use. These types of questions are asked because understanding the different traits students associate with different forms of composition will perhaps shed some light on why the student prefers one mode or another, or perhaps it will illuminate some of the students thoughts regarding multimodal and traditional composition styles. From this we will be able to draw correlations between various qualities of composition (ease of use, richness, etc.).

H. Methods

This study used qualitative and quantitative methods to examine student perceptions of multimodal and traditional forms of composition. Institutional review board approval was granted for this study. As such, I will report each section of the study independently.

I. Survey Methodology

Student's perceptions of traditional and multimodal composition were measured using a survey designed specifically for this study. The survey used included Likert scales, multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions. The survey focused on

ascertaining how students tend to use multimodal and traditional composition, the frequency of use of these media, and how strongly they prefer a traditional or multimodal composition. Some questions sought the students' perceptions in regards to multimodal and traditional composition in terms of pleasure, ease of use, excitement, and richness. Additionally, open-ended questions inquired about multimodal or traditional composition preference and reasons for these preferences, and the kind of tasks that students tend to complete using traditional and multimodal texts.

The survey portion of this study provides the empirical arm for the results section. The same survey was administered to the same student sample twice, once at the beginning of the semester and once toward the end of the semester. The population studied was entry-level accelerated composition students at a southeastern research university. Sampling was conducted by selecting (by convenience) two composition instructors, and surveying each of the instructors' two classes (four classes total). The first survey yielded a sample size of 69 ($n=69$) and the second survey yielded 67 surveys ($n=67$). To achieve balance in the study, the calculated sample for the study was 67 students ($n=67$). In order to limit attrition, I aimed to pick a large enough sample size that students withdrawing from the course between surveys, and routine absences, would not cause the sample size to drop below an acceptable number.

In order to calculate statistics, the numeric data from the surveys was entered into SPSS and then calculated. The tests conducted on the data included reliability testing, a t-test (conducted on the data compiled in the first set of surveys compared to second set

of surveys), simple frequency data, correlations between perception categories, and a measure of magnitude of change in student perceptions (affect).

The t-test measured the differences between the mean responses for two different instances of the same survey. In this case, the survey was administered at the beginning (M_1) of the semester and at the end (M_2). Where data from the t-test is reported statistics from the first round of survey results will be noted as (M_1) and results of the t-test from the second round of survey results, conducted at the end of the semester will be noted as (M_2). Regarding the t-test, only data that is statistically significant is reported, to verify this p value is reported. P values are reported when values are measured from two different samples and have different means (M). “The p value is a probability, with a value ranging from zero to one. It is the answer to this question: If the population really has the same mean overall, what is the probability that random sampling would lead to a difference between sample means as large (or larger) than you observed” (“GraphPad”).

The data for the t-test will be presented as a narrative, but statistics will be included throughout to denote statistical significance and strength of trends. The survey conducted at the beginning of the semester will be referred to as such and denoted as being (M_1) and the survey at the end of the semester will be referred to as such and denoted as (M_2). For each of these, “ M ” represents the mean, and the number indicates which round of surveys is being denoted. Following this, the mean will be reported. So, if the mean of the student responses at the beginning of the semester is 2.20 it will be noted as ($M_1= 2.20$).

For this study first reliability of the data was tested; cronbach's alpha is a measurement of the internal reliability of statistics (Cronbach 297-334). Cronbach's alpha measuring the reliability of the statistics for multimodal clarity for the first survey was .709 and for the second time was .703. For the measurements of traditional clarity on the first survey, Cronbach's alpha was .677 and for the second round of surveys it was .679. Regarding multimodal ease of use the Cronbach's alpha score for the first survey was .836 and for the second round of surveys was .855. The score for traditional ease of use in the first survey was .735 and for the second round of surveys it was .738. The Cronbach's alpha for multimodal was .737 on the first survey and .818 on the second survey. The statistics for traditional richness indicated Cronbach's alpha for the first round of surveys at .710 and for the second round of surveys it was .790.

J. Interview Methodology

At the time that the first round of surveys was conducted, volunteers for interviews were solicited. Subjects of the first round of surveys were invited to volunteer to be interviewed by filling out a short contact sheet (Appendix C). All of the participants who agreed to be interviewed were contacted by email and the first four to respond were selected to be interviewed. One additional interviewee, who was also a first year composition student and a passing acquaintance of the researcher, was selected by convenience. In this manner, five subjects were selected and then interviewed. At this point the students and the researcher worked out times that were mutually agreeable to

conduct the interviews. Study participants were contacted primarily through e-mail, but student cell phone numbers were collected in the contact sheet and used in the instance of one interviewee running late.

Each of the two rounds of interviews followed the surveys. The first round of interviews was completed within two weeks of the survey. Following the second round of surveys the second round of interviews were conducted within two weeks. Throughout this project I strived to complete interviews as quickly after the surveys as I could.

At the time of the initial interviews, interviewees read and signed informed consent forms and agreed that the interview could be tape-recorded per review board requirements (Appendix C). The interviews sought to understand how the interviewees use the writing process, how they perceive writing and how they perceive traditional and multimodal composition as well as how students use various compositional methods in the course of their work. Follow up questions sought to understand why students preferred traditional and multimodal composition.

When contacting the potential interviewees, the researcher sought to create a peer-to-peer relationship for the interviews in large part by signing emails using a first name, in an informal (but professional) manner. Many of the respondents responded referring to the researcher as “professor,” which might influence the relationship between the researcher and the students interviewed.

Every effort was taken to keep the interviews informal with the idea in mind that the students would feel more comfortable discussing their writing practices if they were

relaxed. The interviews lasted from approximately five to fifteen minutes. Questions varied based on responses given to previous questions. Many of the interviews centered on the idea of finding out how the various students went about the writing process to understand how they view and practice the writing process.

Susan Katz recommends that researchers let participant interviews speak for themselves (39). As such I have included the transcripts of the interviews in the appendices and quoted from them throughout the body of the results section. These quotes are drawn from transcriptions made from each interview. The researcher transcribed each interview without aid so that the interviews would be more fresh in his memory as recommended by Katz (31).

Observer effect is a phenomenon often noted for causing participants to say what they feel the researcher wants to hear (Katz 33). I do not feel that observer effect had too large an impact on the interview sessions because the interviewees typically were comfortable disagreeing with me, and for the most part they seemed at ease with the interview process. Throughout the interviews the researcher attempted not to ask leading questions and not to phrase questions in such a way that the student felt compelled to answer in one way or another. Given these precautions, it is impossible to prevent all observer effect, as humans are adept at picking up on subtle cues that the sender of those cues might not have intended. Because of this, it is impossible to say that observer effect was not present in the study, but I feel comfortable saying that I tried to minimize it wherever I could.

K. Privileged Observation Methodology

During the period of research, I taught the same course from which students were sampled to participate in interviews and surveys (the students that were interviewed and surveyed were from sections of the course and were not my students). During this period of time, my understanding of how students reacted to various writing tasks certainly evolved. This understanding will help to triangulate findings of the interviews and surveys. This understanding will help to add richness to the findings.

This research method is similar to that of a participant-observer in an ethnographic study. However, there are some key differences in that the researcher was also the instructor of record for his courses. With this in mind, the researchers perceptions are that of a privileged observer.

CHAPTER TWO

RESULTS

As surveys were administered first toward the beginning of the semester and then for the last time toward the end of the semester, much of the data is held in the differences between these two surveys. The student responses (which could be coded numerically) were entered into statistical software program SPSS. As mentioned more thoroughly in the methods section a t-test was the primary statistical analysis conducted on the data, but tests for reliability were also conducted.

A. Survey Results

One of the questions in the survey asked students to indicate how they perceived their level of competence to be with regard to multimodal and traditional composition. The data collected about students perceived competence with regard to traditional composition was not statistically significant because $p > .05$ (as discussed in the methods), so it is not reported. But, there was statistically significant data regarding how students perceived competence in regard to using multimodal composition changed. Toward the end of the semester ($M_2 = 2.24$) multimodal composition caused students to feel less competent than they had reported feeling at the beginning of the semester ($M_1 = 2.57$) $t = 2.61$, $df = 134$, $p < .05$.

Asking students to report how often they perceived that they used different forms of composition was important for ascertaining the different tasks that students complete

using one form of composition or another. Toward the end of the semester ($M_2 = 3.16$) students reported using multimodal composition more often for school or work related assignments than earlier in the semester ($M_1 = 2.71$), $t = -2.81$, $df = 132.72$, $p < .05$. Similar to the finding regarding student use of multimodal composition for school or work related assignments was the finding that toward the end of the semester ($M_2 = 2.82$) students reported using multimodal composition less often for composition not related to school or work assignments than they did at the beginning of the semester ($M_1 = 3.48$) $t = 3.37$, $df = 134$, $p < .05$.

Similar to the finding that students used multimodal composition for non-school assignments at the end of the semester was the finding that, toward the end of the semester ($M_2 = 3.76$) students reported using traditional composition methods for school or work assignments less often than they had reported at the beginning of the semester ($M_1 = 4.07$) $t = 2.43$, $df = 134$, $p < .05$.

While the previous section dealt with what kind of composition method students used for school and work related projects and non-school or work related work, this section attempts to shed light on the numeric frequency of use of the two composition styles. At the beginning of the semester 34.7% ($N=24$) students reported using traditional composition three to five or more times on an average day. By the end of the semester, that percentage had increased to 50.8% ($N=34$) of students reporting using traditional composition three to five times a day on an average day. At the end of the semester the reported use of traditional text increased by 16.1% ($N=$ increase of 10) than the students had reported at the beginning of the semester.

Along with asking students about how often students use traditional composition methods, they were also asked about their use of multimodal composition. The results suggest that toward the beginning of the semester 46.4% students reported using multimodal composition from three to five or more times a day. This number decreased by the end of the course. Toward the end of the course 43.2% students reported using multimodal composition three to five or more times a day. From the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester the number of students reporting using multimodal composition three to five or more times a day decreased by 3.2%.

B. Student Perception Correlations

Several measurements of student perceptions, which focused on multimodal and traditional forms of composition, showed positive correlations. The data collected for this study in survey round two suggests that ease of multimodal composition use and traditional ease of use are inversely correlated, Time 1: $r = .38, p < .05, R^2 = .14$ and Time 2: $r = -.32, p < .05, R^2 = .10$. This comes down to the idea that students who feel that multimodal composition has a high level of ease of use tend to feel that traditional composition has a lower level of ease of use. Ultimately, this finding supports the notion that students typically find either traditional composition or multimodal composition to be easier to use.

The findings of this study suggest that multimodal composition's ease of use is positively correlated with clarity of multimodal composition Time 1: $r = .48, p < .05, R^2 =$

23 and Time 2: $r = .58, p < .05, R^2 = .30$. This indicates the probability that as students perceive multimodal composition to be easy to use, they also perceive multimodal composition to be clear. This suggests that students find things that are easy to use to also be clear.

Like the findings above, which refer to multimodal composition, the results suggest that traditional composition's ease of use is positively correlated with traditional composition's clarity. Time 1: $r = .65, p < .05, R^2 = .42$ and Time 2: $r = .62, p < .05, R^2 = .38$. This data suggests that students who perceive traditional composition to be easy to use find these same compositions to be clear.

Results suggest that traditional composition's richness is positively correlated with traditional composition's ease of use. Time 1: $r = .54, p < .05, R^2 = .31$ and Time 2: $r = .62, p < .05, R^2 = .38$. This suggests that students who feel that traditional composition is easy to use also find it to be a rich media. This finding suggests that students equate ease of use with communication richness.

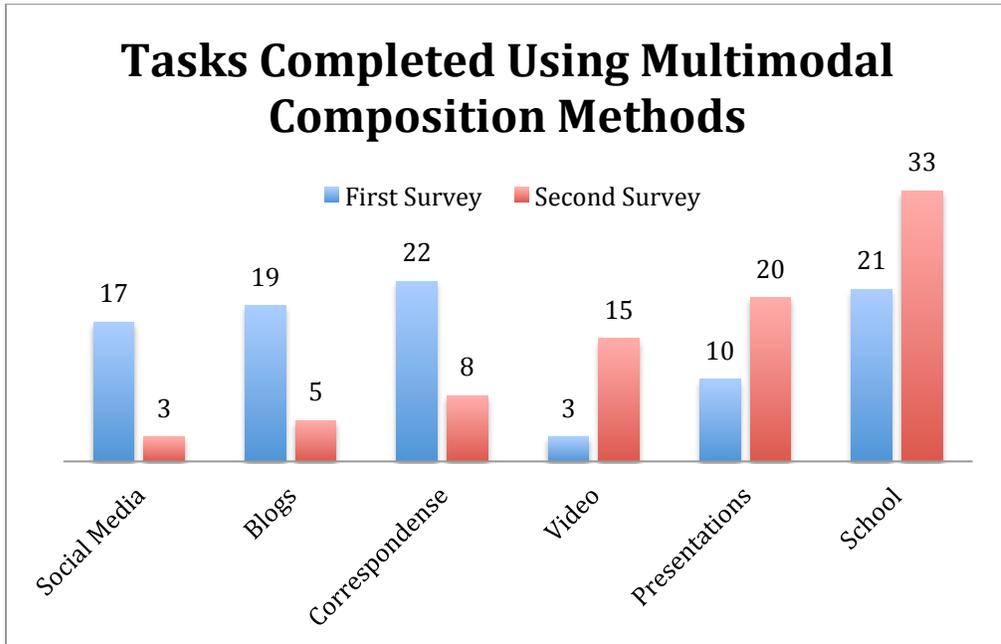
The findings of this study suggest that traditional composition's richness is positively correlated with traditional composition's clarity. Time 1: $r = .62, p < .05, R^2 = .38$ and Time 2: $r = .79, p < .05, R^2 = .63$. From this it can be understood that students who equate composition with being a rich media also feel that traditional composition has a high level of clarity. The inverse can also be true, if a student feels that the compositions lacks richness, the correlation suggests that the student will also feel that the composition lacks clarity.

The results for this study suggest that multimodal composition's richness is positively correlated with multimodal composition's clarity. Time 1: $r = .51$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .26$ and Time 2: $r = .61$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .37$. The results also suggest that multimodal composition's richness is positively correlated with multimodal composition's ease of use. Time 1: $r = .50$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .25$ and Time 2: $r = .48$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .23$. Results suggest that ease of use of traditional composition and ease of use of multimodal composition are inversely correlated. Time 1: $r = -.38$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .14$. and Time 2: $r = -.32$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .10$.

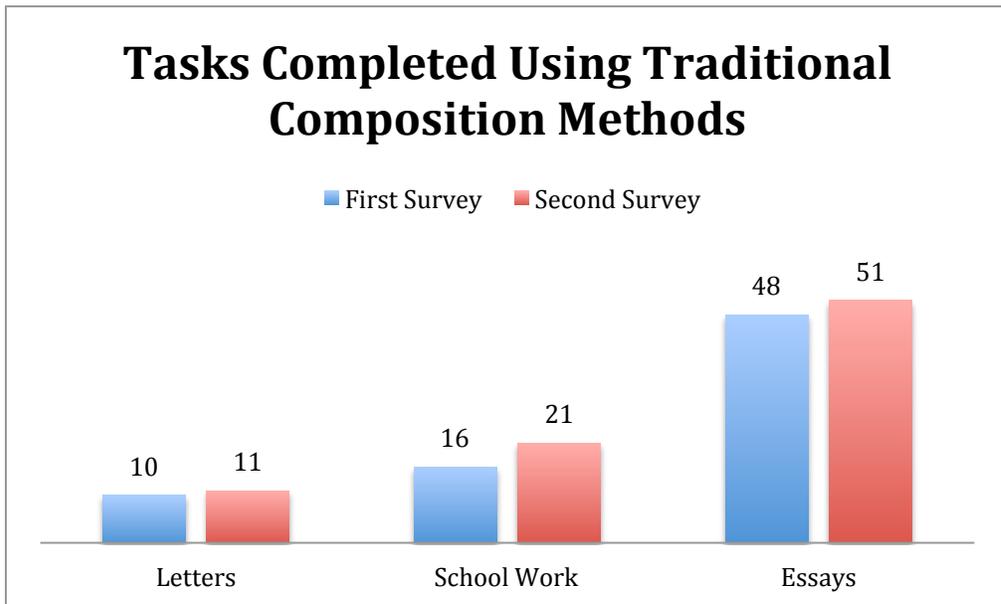
C. Open Ended Responses

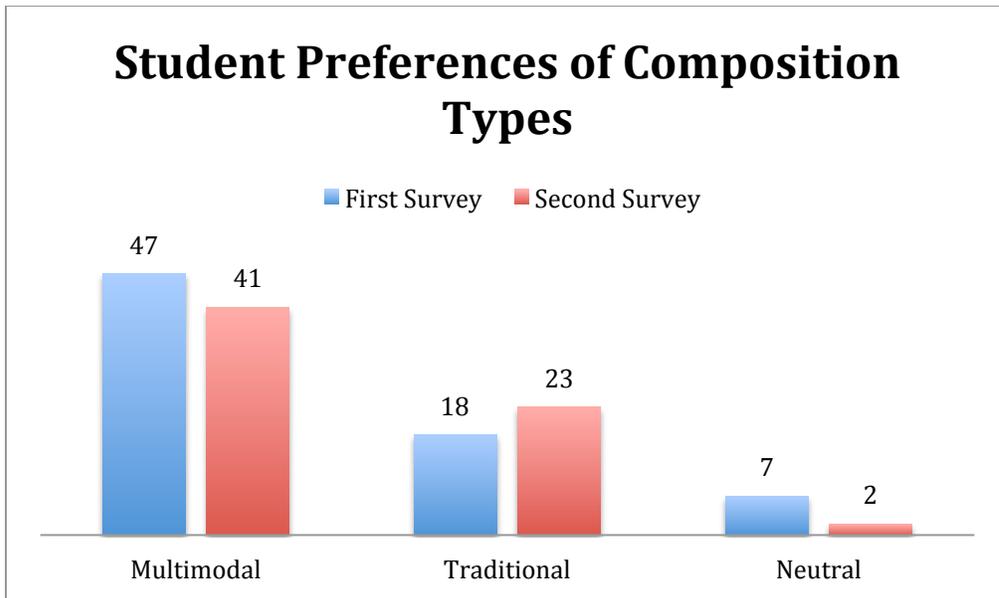
In order to better understand the survey questions inquiring about students preferences of multimodal or traditional composition and what kind of tasks students use to complete various tasks, an open ended questions section was included in the survey. This data allows us to examine what kind of tasks students prefer to complete in a multimodal way and also in a traditional way as well as their reasons for preferring one mode of composition to another.

Tasks Completed Using Multimodal Composition Methods



Tasks Completed Using Traditional Composition Methods





D. Interview Results:

The interviews suggest that most of the students did not change the process that they use in order to compose texts. To my perceptions most of the students suggested that they started out writing out ideas very often using pen and paper but others just worked on the computer.

During the first round of interviews all of the students who were interviewed reported that they were using blogs for the English course they were enrolled in (note that students interviewed were drawn from the same population as those students who were interviewed). When asked about blog use, one student claimed not to keep a blog. When asked further about this, the student indicated that they were required to keep a blog for school.

Most of the students in the interviews suggested that most of their work with composition during high school was limited to essays that were from two pages to ten page research papers and “thesis type paper stuff” (R1 I4 Appendix E).

When asked about which medium (books or blogs) the student felt educate him or her more effectively, a student responded, “It’s a lot easier for me to be motivated to read something that is on a computer” (R1 I4 Appendix E). This student clarified that anything with “images, charts or...pictures” which incorporated visuals provided him with more motivation to read than plain text.

One student explained that he does not write anything by hand, and that his writing process begins with a Word document. He explained that he does this because he felt like it was faster, particularly because most of the sources he uses are online. This student explained that this was a fast way for him to compose because he typically writes papers in one sitting (R1 I4 Appendix E). However most of the students suggested that they typically begin by working out their ideas using pen and paper, and then later in the writing process move towards putting their words onto the computer. One interviewee said, “I usually write down on paper my basic idea and what I need to do to make or support my thesis...then I just start writing or typing... on the computer” (R1 I3 Appendix E). This student claimed to prefer writing on a computer because it is faster.

Another student claimed to prefer writing using technology, but noted a dependence on writing things out with pen and paper before typing onto the computer (R1 I1 Appendix E). The student explained that this was because the student felt that this method best suited him or her because it helped to the students to get “thoughts out

better” (R1 I1 Appendix E). Interestingly, this student preferred multimodal composition because “when you are still writing with...pencil and pen...it gets kind of tiring” (R1 I1 Appendix E). It seems that this student prefers both to write essays out first, but tires of this and then prefers to type the information.

Throughout the interview phase, particularly the second round of interviews, students reported that multimodal composition allowed for more creativity than traditional composition. One student suggested that when writing, particularly in a poetic style, he enjoyed being able to see how his written words looked on the page (R1 I2 Appendix E). When I interviewed this student again at the end of the semester he indicated that he still preferred composing using pencil and paper. He elaborated that this was largely because he did not see the words he typed on the computer as “his own” (R2 I2 Appendix E). This raises a number of issues regarding authenticity of writing, which might provide fruitful discussion for future research topics. When asked about multimodal composition, this same student responded that multimodal composition allows for a tremendous range of creativity and allows the writer to put a lot of “expression” into a paper (R2 I2 Appendix E).

In one instance a student indicated that throughout the course he felt that he had become more comfortable with different types of technology. This same student mentioned that he had used his cell phone in the English course by using the video camera to make a video proposal for his group’s multimodal project (R2 I2 Appendix E). This student seemed pleased to have been able to use a cell phone in an official capacity during class.

When asked about what kind of writing assignments the student would have throughout the rest of his or her career at the university, the student expressed doubt that writing would be required and indicated that he or she was an engineering major (R1 I4 Appendix E).

One student explained that “it’s a lot easier to remember something if there...is more than one sense involved” (R1 I4 Appendix E) and because of this, the student stated that texts that incorporate multiple modes of communication help him or her to remember the idea in the long term. This same student felt that having the ability to put images or videos into a text makes it easier to write because then “you don’t always have to find the words, you can find a picture” (R1 I4 Appendix E). Another student articulated that learning comes more easily when the ability to “watch” or see an example is present (R1 I3 Appendix E).

Another student explained that he feels that using an image to create meaning is “equally effective or greater” than simply using words (R1 I4 Appendix E). This student concluded by expressing how important he felt it is for academia to stay up to date in terms of different forms of communication that are currently being used. As an anecdote, this student suggested that “nobody is just walking down the street and just reading an essay on the side of the wall,” but if there is an image that catches their attention “then the words that follow are going to be important” (R1 I4 Appendix E).

Overall based on the interviews I gather that many of the students did not change their writing style based on the class. However, by the time the second round of

interviews came around each student felt that multimodal composition has the capacity to be more persuasive to an audience.

Throughout the course of initial interviews at least one student who did not feel particularly confident using computers noted the utility of multimodal composition for learning purposes, indicated that composing using blogs and Microsoft Word was easy (R1 I3 Appendix E). Another student indicated that he or she had not used a blog prior to their English course, but that they felt that it was pretty easy even though he or she messed up once in first attempting to set up a blog (R1 I1 Appendix E). One student mentioned that some of the blog topics were pretty interesting but that he did not keep a personal blog by choice (R1 I2 Appendix E).

At the end of the semester the students seem to have an increased appreciation for multimodal composition. Several students claimed that they prefer to learn from multimodal composition. Other students, who perhaps identified more with their role as students than as writers indicated that they prefer to learn from multimodal composition methods.

E. Privileged Observation

Throughout the semester, particularly in viewing my own classes I learned that different students respond to technology in a variety of ways. Some students are terrified of technology and do not want to be in the same room with a computer, while others are

afraid of the technology, but willing to experiment with it in order to perhaps gain some proficiency.

This is also true of students' understandings of rhetoric and their ability to compose well. Generally I have found that my students who show the highest level of acumen in understanding rhetoric also compose quality work. I would stop short of drawing a direct cause and effect relationship between the two of these ideas, but it seems reasonable that those students who are successful in developing their ideas of rhetoric would also be successful in employing those ideas in their composition assignments throughout the course of the class, regardless of the technological medium required for the assignment.

I have noticed that my students are constantly querying me regarding my expectations of what a successful project will look like. While one would be tempted to conjecture that this was because they are looking for ideas to build on, I feel that it is more likely that they are trying to figure out the lowest level of effort they can put in and still gain the grade they wish to receive. Several of my students confound this expectation by continually turning in work that is vastly superior to the classes standard of work.

The way that my classes responded to the multimodal final project also informed my understanding of how students respond to and use multimodal processes. For the multimodal project in my course the students were required to make a video and house it in some fashion, whether on a blog or a website. I demonstrated constructing websites using Wix (www.wix.com). Unsurprisingly, each group used a Wix to house their

website. Given the wide-open nature of the assignment, I had expected that at least one group might do something different for the housing. The fact that they did not suggests to me that students are constantly seeking to understand the instructor's expectations and biases and to perform in exactly that way.

In an effort to avoid this, from time to time I would give them an assignment with very few guidelines in terms of what was expected and in terms of how the assignment should be completed. These assignments were met with resistance and uncertainty. I can understand how that would be, and perhaps in the future I will continue to experiment with this type of experiment in similar low stakes situations; but ultimately, I try to limit student dissonance.

Most of the groups of students that completed the multimodal assignment in my class did not do an excellent job. This is not too surprising given that most of the students were relatively unfamiliar with video editing. I made an effort to assure that there was someone in each group that had video editing experience. The groups ran into a lot of issues in editing the videos and by deadline, several of the projects had deteriorated from earlier versions. This speaks I think to the fact that multimodal assignments almost always take much longer to work with than one might expect. This is particularly true with video editing, which often takes much longer than one would expect to complete the assignment.

Overall, most of the teachers I spoke with used the multimodal project as an opportunity for group work, which seems to have been the program norm. I, too, allowed the students to complete the multimodal project in groups. Based on my observation I

noticed that there was a wide variety of group dynamics at present in my classes. Some of the groups did an excellent job distributing the work through the various group members, while other groups seemed to struggle to gain any kind of momentum. I'm not sure how students would respond to this assignment if they were required to tackle it on their own and not with the benefit of the group. If the main emphasis of the project was on creating a video, I do not think that students working independently would create high quality works. Of course some of the students that had more experience with video editing would likely be very successful, but then the students who had little in the way of video editing would perhaps do poorly. The group work potentially allowed students to do tasks that complemented their strengths.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this study allow composition instructors everywhere to have insight into what students' perceptions are with regards to multimodal and traditional composition. In addition, this study provides researchers information regarding how students' perceptions of traditional composition and multimodal composition change throughout the course of a multimodal oriented composition course. This information can be useful in the development and modification of current composition curriculums as well as modification of teaching practices and requirements.

In addition to the potential benefit this study would offer to educators everywhere, the practical implications are also apparent. This study will directly benefit composition classes at Clemson University by allowing some insight into how students perceive multimodal and traditional forms of composition. The research conducted in this study is unusually rich, engages several layers of triangulation and will provide qualitative discussion as well as quantitative data that could be very useful for pursuing grants and for understanding how Clemson's English 103 class impacts students perceptions about multimodal and traditional forms of composition.

Beyond the implications relevant to Clemson University, this study also provides useful insight for other programs. The fact that students felt less competent using multimodal composition at the end of the semester suggests that students feel less competent when faced with assessment. Future studies might question students about

their perceptions when they are not being assessed. Additionally, the fact that students preferred traditional composition at the end of the semester and tended to prefer one form or the other because of ease of use or previous training is also quite relevant to other institutions.

Future research might do well to examine the way students' preferences for technology change throughout the semester. At least one student interviewed stated that throughout the course of the class he felt that he had become more comfortable using different forms of technology. This is particularly important in an age where new technologies pop up seemingly every few days. For this reason, students should be taught how to adapt to new forms of technology and not simply how to use any one form of technology.

Future studies should test students' impressions of students before the course ever begins and after the course is completed, but quickly enough at the end that they are inquiring of the students while the experience is still fresh in their minds. This study was conducted approximately two weeks into the semester because of waiting for IRB approval. Had the study been conducted on the first day of class, students would likely have had slightly different answers because the first two weeks of this course do a lot for setting the groundwork that the course builds off throughout the rest of the semester.

A. Survey findings

I was surprised to find that students felt less competent with regard to using multimodal composition at the end of the semester. It seems reasonable that some of this can be explained by virtue of the fact that the students had not yet been graded on the multimodal projects and that this led to uncertainty on the part of the students. Lester Faigley notes that grades can very much represent a sense of self worth to students, and this could very well explain their perceived lack of competence (“Judging Writing, Judging Selves”).

B. Specific Use Tasks

More students reported using multimodal composition for school or work related assignments at the end of the semester than at the beginning of the semester. I expect this can largely be accounted for in noting that students became more familiar with what multimodal composition was toward the end of the semester.

At the end of the semester students reported using multimodal composition less often for compositions not related to school or work assignments than they had at the beginning of the semester. Interestingly, in the section of the survey wherein students reported what kind of tasks they used each type of composition for, at the end of the semester many fewer students reported using social media than had indicated the same at

the beginning of the semester. Perhaps, at the time of the second round of surveys students were so busy completing their multimodal project that they had been ignoring social media, or perhaps the course had suggested to them that social media was not a multimodal form of composition.

Throughout the course of the semester I maintained a class Facebook page. On this page I posted blog assignments and on one or two occasions I answered a student question. I started this Facebook page after asking if students would like me to in order to avoid what Jason Jones calls “The creepy treehouse effect” (Jones). Except for one or two instances the students did not post on this page (which was not overly surprising to me, as it was related to class). Students reported that the Facebook page was where they preferred to get their blog assignments as compared to the class blog. I would be interested in seeing further work conducted regarding how student use and perceptions of social media changes throughout a composition course or even a course on social media.

At the end of the semester less students reported using traditional composition for school or work assignments than they had toward the beginning of the course. This seems to be an important data point due to the multimodal nature of the course. If students are using multimodal composition more, then they might also report using traditional composition less often than they had at the beginning of the semester. This could be explained by the fact that perhaps students are using multimodal composition more often than traditional composition.

C. Traditional Composition Frequency of Use

Student frequency of use is addressed in the finding that toward the end of the semester more students reported using traditional composition methods than multimodal composition methods. This is interesting when considered with the fact that toward the end of the semester fewer students reported using social media as a multimodal form of composition. I am inclined to wonder why students reported such a rapid decrease in social media consumption, but this will be discussed elsewhere. Based on the survey questions, students were asked to report how many times a day they used different kinds of composition.

In the first round of surveys 34.7% of students reported using traditional composition three to five times a day. Later in the semester, 50.8% of students reported using traditional composition three to five times a day. Ultimately, 16.1% more students reported using traditional composition three to five times a day during the latter part of the semester.

D. Multimodal Composition Frequency of Use

Another research question can be answered by the fact that the results of this study suggest that toward the beginning of the semester 46.4% percent of students reported using multimodal composition three to five times a day whereas 34.7% of students reported using traditional composition three to five times a day. In the open-

ended survey section (Figure: 2.1 Tasks completed with multimodal composition), students reported using social media much less toward the end of the semester. This suggests that students were less inclined to associate multimodal composition with social media at the end of the semester, but also likely accounts for part of the reason why traditional composition is used more at the end of the semester.

From the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester the number of students reporting using multimodal composition three to five or more times a day decreased by 3.2%. Given the multimodal nature of the course, I would expect for student use of multimodal composition to go up. It is possible that students gained an understanding of multimodal composition and realized (at the end of the semester) that they used it less often than they had thought at the beginning of the semester.

The idea that students felt less competent using multimodal composition at the end of the semester also comes to bear on this discussion. Students who feel less competent using a media are likely to revert to a more familiar style of composition, which could also explain some of the increase in student use of traditional composition. In asking students why they preferred multimodal composition, many of the answers dealt with speed and efficiency; but also, many students reported that traditional composition was preferred because of its ease of use. This leads me to suggest that students, perhaps, equate multimodal composition with efficiency, but not with ease of use.

While some students reported that multimodal composition was easy to use, many others reported (in asking why they prefer one style of composition or the other) that it

was hard to use. At least one of the students I interviewed struck me as being rather fearful of technology.

Overall, one could be tempted to explain which form of composition students prefer at the beginning and end of the semester using the above data to suggest that students prefer multimodal or traditional forms of composition, but at the end of the semester 41 students reported preferring multimodal composition over 23 students who preferred traditional. This suggests that students' use and their preferences are not the same thing. It is very likely that homework assignments, and such things, explain students' increase in use of multimodal composition, which would have little to do with the students' preferences.

E. Open Ended Questions

Toward the end of the semester fewer students preferred multimodal composition and more students preferred traditional composition. This supports the idea that students felt less competent at the end of the semester regarding multimodal composition than they did at the beginning of the semester. Also, fewer students reported being neutral, which suggests that fewer students had unbiased preferences of the two composition styles examined in this study.

Given that many of the students felt that multimodal composition allowed greater creativity, it was surprising that they did not prefer multimodal composition. If the notion that creativity requires the student to invest more into the project, then perhaps

Friere’s banking model could explain some of this. I argue that multimodal composition requires students (particularly those who are unfamiliar with technology) to push themselves into learning how to compose using a new technology, which, understandably can be frightening. When asked why, of the students who preferred traditional composition, the vast majority suggested that they preferred traditional composition because it is what they were “taught” how to do, and it (traditional composition) is what they have always “done.” A plausible explanation for some of this could be in understanding that perhaps students prefer traditional composition because they perceive it to be “safe” and that it does not require them to push themselves.

In examining students’ reasons for preferring multimodal or traditional composition, it is interesting to note that students tended to either be in the mindset of a learner who has been exposed to multimodal education or to that of a composer of multimodal compositions. As a composition instructor I would hope that students would act as composers and creators of meaning, but I can also appreciate that students are often just that—students.

Over the course of the semester students’ reasons for why they preferred multimodal or traditional composition did not change drastically. Students who identified with being a composer preferred multimodal composition because they can compose using this method quickly (survey 59), because it allows them to be more visually creative (survey 135), because the student self identifies as being creative (survey 104), or because it is more fun to make (survey 89). These responses were fewer in number than those who identified with being learners. Students who preferred multimodal

composition and identified themselves as being composers felt that multimodal composition was super because it is more interesting to the viewer, and it is fun to create multimodal content.

Those students who seemed to identify with being a student preferred multimodal because it is an easier and faster way to get assignments done (survey 79), because they feel that they learn better through multimodal compositions (survey 103), while others mention that they feel that multimodal composition is less boring (survey 3). Ultimately those students who identified their use of multimodal compositions as that of a student preferred those methods that seemed the easiest, the most fun, and ultimately, the most efficient.

Other students reported preferring multimodal composition on the basis that it often heavily engages in using visual tools. A number of students I interviewed self-reported as being “visual” people. When identifying as “visual” they were referring to drawings or images and not text which is also visual. This suggests that the students enjoyed composing using visual means, which are taught extensively in the course. Overall, more people reported being fans of “visual” methods toward the beginning of the semester than at the end of the semester.

Students who preferred traditional composition methods suggested that their reasons for preferring traditional composition are primarily based on the fact that they have “always learned using traditional composition,” because they feel that traditional composition is easier to use. Others suggested that they preferred traditional composition because it appears to be more formal and that it appears to be professional.

Among students who indicated preference for multimodal composition and traditional composition, many of the responses had to do with perceived formality of the composition. Most of the students felt that traditional composition is more appropriate for formal compositions. Ultimately, this suggests that the students have begun to learn about considering the appropriate means of persuasion (as Aristotle would prefer) with regards to making a composition in a more formal way.

One of the dominant factors in students' preferences of multimodal or traditional composition styles seems to come down to ease of use. Those people who preferred traditional composition often did so because of perceived ease of use. Those same students were, at the time of the second administration of the survey, just completing their multimodal project and tended to prefer traditional composition because it was "easier" and took less time to compose. The students who preferred traditional composition at the beginning of the semester tended to prefer it because they perceived traditional composition to be more formal, more clear to the audience, and because they had been trained in how to do traditional composition.

Ease of use along with richness and clarity were the major key ideas that were used to measure student perceptions. These were used to try to see what kind of associations students identified for each type of composition. At the beginning of the semester (Table 1.1) and at the end of the semester (Table 2.1) students identified the same patterns of perceptions; but at the end of the semester students felt more strongly about the correlations. These findings go a long way toward validating the construct of the perception scales used to measure these perceptions. It also suggests that students'

perceptions of these various qualities were strengthened over the course of the semester. This supports the ideas that students' overall perceptions of the traits that they associate with each type of composition did not change, but rather intensified toward the end of the semester.

Interestingly, those people who preferred multimodal composition tended to prefer it because it allows for creativity on the part of the composer. These students made few claims that multimodal composition is easier to use, but they were very appreciative with regards to how exciting multimodal composition can be to the audience. Students also seemed to feel that multimodal composition is very relevant to writing because of the climate of technology.

F. Traditional and Multimodal Composition Use

Between the first and second survey sessions, more students reported using traditional composition methods for writing letters, completing school work and composing essays, amidst other reasons. Though schoolwork and essays are displayed differently in Figure 1, in a way they are the same thing. They are categorized separately because students delineated between the two. It seems likely that throughout the course of the semester students either became more aware of how often they were using traditional methods for composition or, throughout the semester they began to compose more.

The way that students reported using multimodal composition for various tasks proved very interesting. Findings indicate severe drops in reported use of multimodal composition for social media, blogs, and communication (including email).

The drop in social media is particularly fascinating. In an age that is so taken with Facebook and Twitter, it is worth noting that students stopped identifying social media as multimodal composition. I say this because it is very unlikely that this many students completely stopped using social media over the course of the semester. It seems more likely that they came to understand multimodality in terms of the final project they were tasked with, which, at this university, in this course, is referred to as “The Multimodal Project.” For the multimodal project, most instructors require students to compose a video argument. If students began to associate multimodality in general with making a video, some of the drop off in social media might be explained.

Along with social media, toward the end of the semester many students did not report using multimodal composition for blogs. In the course that these students were enrolled in, instructors typically require students to keep blogs that are used for task related “blog assignments.” In speaking to one of the instructors whose class I surveyed, the instructor informed me that it is likely that student blogging dropped off as this instructor had let off assigning blog work while the students were working on their multimodal assignments.

Toward the end of the semester many more students reported using video. This is likely to be explained by the fact that comparatively few of the students in this course are familiar with video editing and that at the end of the semester the final major assignment

("The Multimodal Project") typically asks students to make a video. Even if the instructors do not require the students to make a video for the final project, many students choose this as an effective multimodal method of making an argument.

Toward the end of the semester more students reported using multimodal composition for schoolwork and presentations in general. For the purpose of this analysis, I feel that it is safe to say that most of the presentations were conducted in the pursuit of completing a school assignment. Given that both grew, this supposition would be consistent with the idea that students reported using multimodal methods more toward the end of the semester. This could be explained in part by "The Multimodal Project." While all of the projects (generally) in the curriculum used at this institution are multimodal, this distinction is not often made until the end of the semester when the final multimodal project is announced.

Throughout the course of the interviews, when asked about why they preferred multimodal composition or traditional composition, the students seemed to differentiate between the role of being a student or being a composer. One student who was interviewed claimed that she preferred multimodal composition because it helped her to learn. Sometimes during the interviews I would ask students which form of composition was more persuasive to see if they would answer the question from a different perspective, this did not seem to be particularly effective.

G. Preferences

At the beginning of the semester 47 students' preferred multimodal composition and 18 students preferred traditional composition. At the end of the semester the students who preferred multimodal composition dropped to 41, whereas the number of students who preferred traditional composition had increased to 23. So, over the course of the semester some students either came to like multimodal composition less than traditional composition or else they came to appreciate traditional composition more than multimodal. While it seems likely that the students were feeling less confident regarding multimodal composition because of the uncertainty regarding their grade, it also seems likely that some of the students might have been burned out. In asking students why they preferred multimodal composition or traditional composition, regardless of which choice the student made, ease of use was very often the reason why. Other reasons were based more on training. Students who reported preferring traditional composition often reported that their preference was based on the fact that they had been taught to compose this way for a long time. Some of the students who reported preferring multimodal composition reported that they felt it was very easy to use. At the time of the second survey the students had just completed working on the multimodal project, which has the potential to be a very demanding project. This last minute exertion very likely influenced students to prefer traditional composition because of the recent strain in composing using multimodal methods.

H. Synthesis

At the end of the semester students preferred to use traditional composition methods, but they had a significant appreciation for multimodal composition. The survey portion of this study suggests that students felt less competent using multimodal composition toward the end of the semester. At the time that the second survey was administered, students had just completed their final multimodal project and were awaiting their grades. This anticipation and uncertainty with regard to their grades could very likely have caused the students to be very concerned about their grades. As an instructor myself, I noticed that my students were very concerned with how the multimodal project would impact their overall grade (particularly because several groups had last minute glitches in their videos). This uncertainty likely describes much of why students felt less confident in regard to multimodal composition.

Following the completion of the multimodal project, which was likely an intense last minute scramble for many of the students (as it was for mine), the students were likely stressed about how much work had gone into creating a video. Based on previous experience, I have always been surprised by how much longer it takes to edit video than I expect it to. It seems reasonable that such may also have surprised the students in the face of completing their multimodal project.

By the conclusion of the project I was rather surprised that students were not more appreciative of multimodal composition. Because of its use of technology I assumed that students would prefer using multimodal techniques. Instead of that, it seems that students

are more interested in getting the work done as simply and as easily as possible. It seems likely that instructors could harness this bit of information and pitch different writing styles and techniques as easier and time saving. Though oftentimes multimodal composition can take an extremely long amount of time to complete, other times the process can be so absorbing that the user doesn't notice the amount of time spent on the project.

Over the course of creating a video I had my students complete a number of different steps including revision. Overall, I noticed that students tended to put more work into finishing the video portion of their multimodal project because it is so visual. An essay in MLA format, once it is formatted, looks like an essay in MLA format regardless of how polished it might or might not be. However, the visuals in video are immediately apparent, as are other production related elements (such as sound) all the way throughout the length of the composition. It is perhaps because of this that my students seemed to focus on completing their multimodal projects much more intently than they focused on finishing a research paper.

One student I interviewed claimed to have never kept a blog, but when further asked about this response, stated that he kept a blog for his English class (R1 I3 Pg 2). This led me to question whether or not the students were taking ownership for the work they were required to do in class, or if they looked over it as just "school work." On the open response portion of the survey, students were asked about why they preferred multimodal or traditional composition. Several students indicated that they preferred multimodal composition because multimodal composition is more similar to the ways

that they compose information when they are not compelled to do so for class reasons. This suggests that students enjoy composition that is incongruous with what they might perceive as “typical school work.” This leads me to believe that novel composition processes like those of Geoffrey Sirc (“Box Logic”) might prove particularly valuable.

From the student who did not keep a blog by choice, but who enjoyed some of the topics he was blogging about for the English course, I gather that blogging is something that students might enjoy. In informally asking my students anonymously about their thoughts about what was working in the course I taught, many of the students suggested that the blog assignments were a good way to do homework. The main reason that students cited for preferring blogs to other homework assignments was that they felt it was a fast way to complete homework and that it was “easy.”

I feel that teachers, particularly those who use a multimodal teaching style, should consciously educate their students about composition. I have always felt that students should be able to talk about the subject and major topics of the course at the end of the semester. With that in mind, if the teacher teaches the students how to compose in a multimodal style, the teacher should explain that to the students. Further, the students should be educated about what constitutes a multimodal text.

Overall, all of these discussions should reach towards providing the students with knowledge of how to fit into any given type of discourse. In my teaching of writing, I often explain to my students that this one thing might not fit in one rhetorical situation, but might be very appropriate for another. As I said when I discussed the time that I was

speaking to the gentleman and used the word “ain’t,” the context is always critical to consider.

Although the statistics support the notion that more students preferred traditional composition at the end of the semester, I feel that this must also be tempered by the notion that during the final round of the interviews the vastly majority of those interviewed suggested that they felt multimodal composition could be more persuasive than traditional composition in the right context. This is significant for two reasons, first it shows that the students who came through this program gained an appreciation of considering the rhetorical situation and it also suggests that the students had an appreciation for the potential of multimodal composition.

Overall the results for this project suggest to me that even the students who do not prefer multimodal composition appreciate its strengths. More than any other factor, it seems that students’ preference of one type of composition method tends to stem from their prior training and their familiarity with various technologies that they are asked to use in the course of instruction. While the purpose of this study is not, nor has it ever been to evaluate the curriculum, I feel comfortable arguing that the curriculum (based on this study, and my observations as an instructor) does a good job in familiarizing students with notions of multimodal composition and in a large sense, technology. I also get the sense that many of the students who prefer using traditional composition appreciate it for the ease of use and the aesthetic that writing provides.

Returning to the idea of multimodal composition providing a composer with more “Crayons,” this study does not examine whether or not traditional composition is “better”

than multimodal composition, or visa versa, and as such I make no claims regarding the overall worth of traditional composition or multimodal composition aside from arguing that multimodal composition seems to be a growing trend and that one of the most prevalent form of traditional composition, the essay, is experiencing a rapid decline at present. If this is true, why not encourage students to work with a wide array of technologies and immaterialities? Multimodal composition is often realized through digital means. These technologies have developed tremendously in the last 20 years, and will almost certainly continue developing. Because of this, students should be taught about technology and its potential to alter the face of composition.

Teaching students to compose will allow them to affect change, but it does not guarantee that they will do this ethically or for purposes of doing “good.” Overall, I hope to advance the idea that teaching students to use the tools of multimodality and to allow others to, in turn, experience their compositions is critically important. While it would be fantastic if teaching students to compose would somehow make the world a better place, ultimately we have no such guarantee. As I see it, our job as educators is to equip students with the tools (which are increasingly multimodal and electrated) necessary to compose in the 21st century and to help them to affect change through their compositions.

Through students’ use of multimodal composition, I argue that students have the ability to affect the creation of electracy. Jan Holmevik explains that electracy, or our ideas of digital literacy, are still being created because our society is currently in the midst of a paradigm shift from the apparatus of literacy to that of electracy. Many students spoke of enjoying writing; but let’s face it, oftentimes writing is tedious.

However, if we are able to better understand students' perceptions of writing, perhaps we will be better able to serve them as students and make them better students who can go forth and use composition.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Tables

Pearson Product-moment Correlations for all Affect Variables Survey Time 1

Table 1	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Multimodal Clarity	--			-		
2. Multimodal Richness	.51*	--				
3. Multimodal Ease of Use	.48*	.50*	--			
4. Traditional Clarity	-.10	-.13	-.16	--		
5. Traditional Richness	-.17	.04	-.14	.79*	--	
6. Traditional Ease of Use	-.11	.07	-.36*	.62*	.62*	--

Note: *Correlations are significant at $p < .05$.

Figure 1.1 Pearson Correlations for All Perception Variables: Survey Time One

Pearson Product Correlations for all Affect Variables for Survey Time 2

Table 2	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Multimodal Clarity	--					
2. Multimodal Richness	.61*	--				
3. Multimodal Ease of Use	.58*	.48*	--			
4. Traditional Clarity	-.23	.03	-.07	--		
5. Traditional Richness	-.17	.04	-.04	.80*	--	
6. Traditional Ease of Use	-.11	.07	-.32*	.62*	.62*	--

* Correlations are significant at $p < .05$

Figure 2.1 Pearson Correlations for All Perception Variables: Survey Time Two

Appendix B

Figures

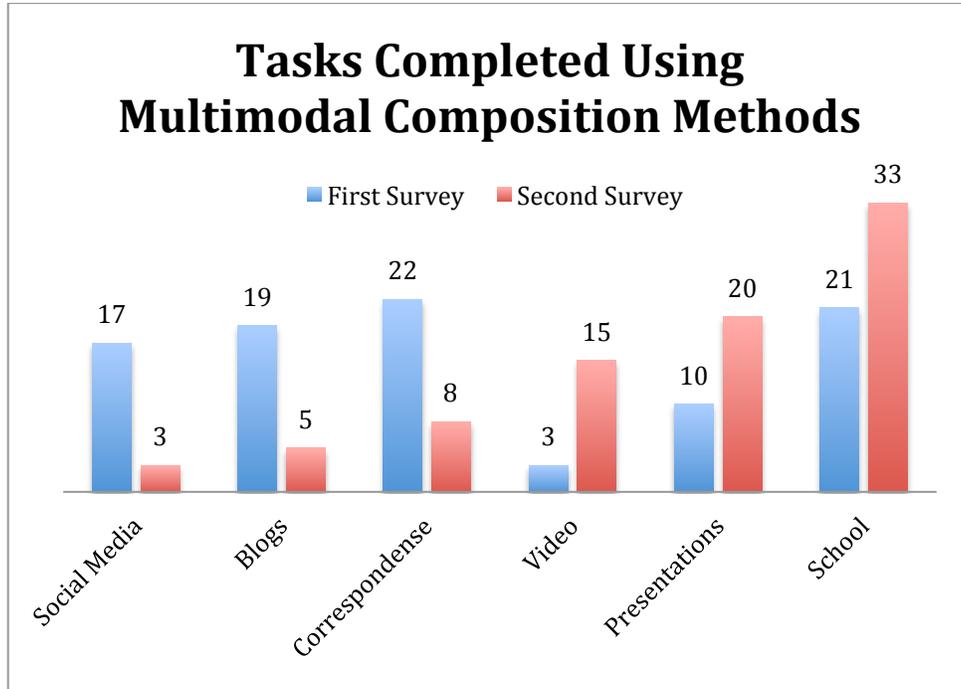


Figure 1.1: Comparison Over Time of Tasks Completed Using Multimodal Composition.

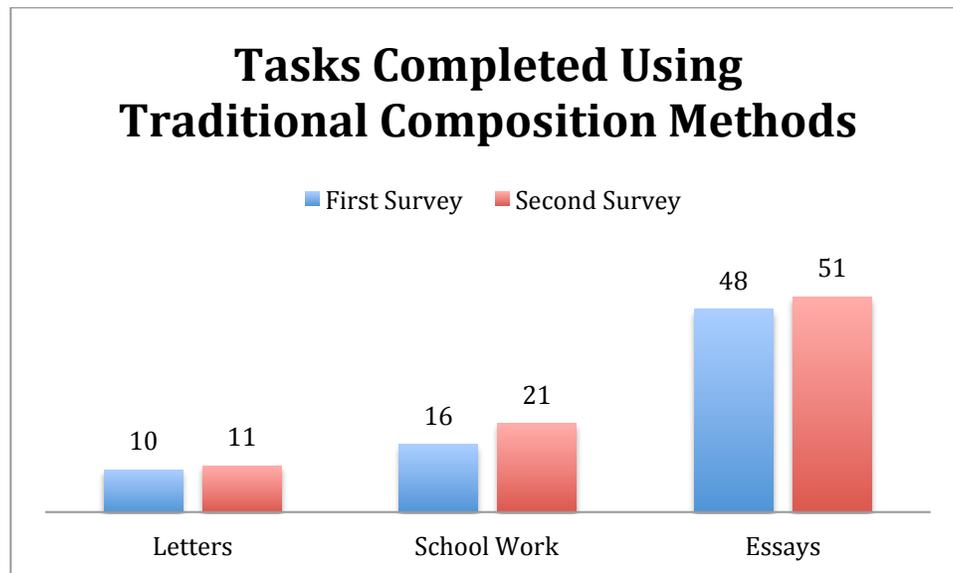


Figure 2.1: Tasks Completed Using Traditional Composition Methods.

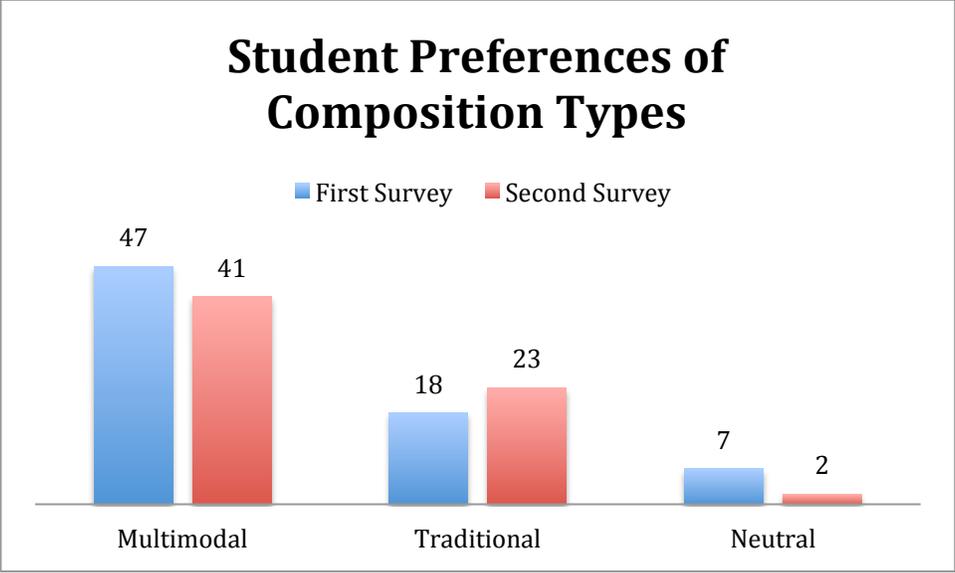


Figure 3.1: Student Preferences of Composition Types.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Forms

Information Concerning Participation in a Research Study Clemson University

Student Perceptions, Use of and Affect towards Multimodal Forms of Composition

Description of the Research and Your Participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Cynthia Haynes. The purpose of this research is to examine your use perceptions and affect towards multimodal and traditional forms of pedagogy.

Your participation will involve completing a survey

The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 15 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

Potential Benefits

You will receive no direct benefit from this study. The results of this research will help researchers to better understand how students feel about traditional and multimodal forms of composition. Consequently, future students will benefit from this study.

Protection of Confidentiality

Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Cynthia Haynes at Clemson University at (864)656-3040. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

Information Concerning Participation in a Research Study Clemson University

Student Perceptions, Use of and Affect towards Multimodal Forms of Composition

Description of the Research and Your Participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Cynthia Haynes. The purpose of this research is to examine your use perceptions and affect towards multimodal and traditional forms of pedagogy.

Your participation will involve an interview, which will be recorded.

The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 15 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

Potential Benefits

You will receive no direct benefit from this study. The results of this research will help researchers to better understand how students feel about traditional and multimodal forms of composition. Consequently, future students will benefit from this study.

Protection of Confidentiality

Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

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I have read this form and have been allowed to ask any questions I might have. I agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date:

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Appendix D

Survey and Volunteer Forms

Read the following description of composition styles. Then, based on what you read complete the survey below. Thank you for neatly answering all of the questions or circling your response to each item.

Multimodal Composition: Composing texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound.

Traditional Composition: Composition like one might perform for an essay in MLA or APA style. This style of composition is just as functional when printed out as when it is on the computer screen. For example, traditional compositions cannot contain hyperlinks.

1. How often do you use multimodal composition? (Circle One)

For school assignments or work?

Never Occasionally Sometimes Often Always

For non-school or work related composition?

Never Occasionally Sometimes Often Always

2. How often do you use traditional forms of composition? (Circle One)

For school assignments or work?

Never Occasionally Sometimes Often Always

For non-school or work related composition?

Never Occasionally Sometimes Often Always

3. Which form of composition do you prefer? (Circle One)

Multimodal Composition

Traditional Composition

4. How do you feel about each form of communication?

Multimodal Composition

Strongly Not Prefer _____ Strongly Prefer

Traditional Composition

Strongly Not Prefer _____ Prefer

5. On an average day how many times do you compose using: (Circle One)

Traditional Text

5 or more times 3 or more times 1 or more times 0 times

Multimodal text

5 or more times 3 or more times 1 or more times 0 times

6. Answer the following questions regarding the clarity in multimodal and traditional forms of composition.

Multimodal composition's clarity is pleasing to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Multimodal compositions clarity is exciting to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Multimodal compositions clarity helps me learn. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional compositions clarity is pleasing to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional compositions clarity is exciting to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional compositions clarity helps me learn. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. Answer the following questions regarding the ease of use in multimodal and traditional forms of composition.

Multimodal composition's ease of use is pleasing to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Multimodal compositions ease of use is exciting to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Multimodal compositions ease of use helps me learn. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional compositions ease of use is pleasing to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional composition ease of use is exciting to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional composition ease of use helps me learn. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Answer the following questions regarding the richness of multimodal and traditional forms of composition.

Richness: the ability of a medium to carry information

The richness of multimodal composition is pleasing to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Multimodal compositions richness is exciting to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Multimodal compositions richness helps me learn. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional compositions richness is pleasing to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional compositions richness is exciting to me. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Traditional compositions richness helps me learn. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. Answer the following questions about multimodal and traditional forms of composition.

Composing Multimodal texts makes me feel competent. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Composing Traditional texts makes me feel competent. (Circle One)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. Which form of composition do you prefer, and why?

11. What kind of tasks do you use multimodal composition to complete?

12. What kind of tasks do you use traditional composition to complete?

Appendix E

Interview Transcripts

Round 1 Interview 1

Q: So, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today, can I ask you a little bit about your general thoughts on writing?

A: Uh, I like the new style of writing, with the technology because, when you are still writing with like pencil and pen and it gets kind of tiring.

Q: Yeah.

A: I like the new style.

Q: Yeah, When you were learning to write what kind of writing did you do most.

A: I know we did a lot of stuff where I started with like cursive and stuff and we started writing like long papers and as you go through the various grades they get longer and longer and longer.

Q: Yeah.

A: I like it better with technology.

Q: How often do you hand write papers?

A: Well, before... I don't hand write them often but before I would turn it in, I would write it out on paper and then I would type it up, that's better for me.

Q: So, your composition process relies on writing it on paper before you type it up?

A: Yes.

Q: So, you mention that you like to write things on paper before you write them on the computer. Why do you think that is?

A: Because I can better get my thoughts out better.

Q: Yeah.

A: If I type it up while I'm thinking it, its not 'gonna go together, so I have to think about It on paper where I can like change it before I put on the computer so, hopefully I have it right.

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: I don't know. I just, it's just a habit.

Q: Okay, so you think that's how you do it because that's how you were trained to do it?

A: Yeah.

Q: How do you proofread a paper?

A: After I write it on paper, I just go back through and check everything and correct everything, then I put it on a computer.

Q: So once it's on the computer, you don't proofread it?

A: Well, I do. I get other people to read it. When I write it out I read it, then once its typed up, I get other people to proofread it.

Q: Do you write a blog or anything like that?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of blogging do you do?

A: In my English class we have to. Whatever topic she puts up we have to respond to it. So, its just the stuff that she puts up.

Q: Have you blogged before?

A: Not before that.

Q: Okay, how do you feel about that? What do you think about it?

A: I like it. I like it.

Q: When you're composing your blog do you start with pencil and paper, or do you just type straight into the computer?

A: I just type straight into the computer.

Q: Is that because of the formality of the exercise that you don't go through the extra step?

A: Yes, I think so.

Q: Okay, when you are doing blogs, what kind of elements do you include?

A: Um, like she is specific about what she wants in them so I try to include everything that she wants so that I don't get penalized.

Q: What kinds of things does she ask you to put into them?

A: Like, depending on what we are learning, she may say add imagery or she may, whatever, whatever the topic is, whatever the main point, you have to always hit the main points.

Q: So is that like pictures, or links to other things or anything like that?

A: Yeah, we've had that like, but that probably won't be in the blog but if we feel the need to put it up there she said we can.

Q: Do you do that?

A: I did.

Q: You did? Did you know how to do that sort of stuff before you started using the blog for this class?

A: Kind of Sort of.

Q: So, when you were getting ready to include an image into your blog for this class, was that difficult for you?

A: Not really.

Q: Did you mess up or anything before you got it right the first time?

A: Yes, Once.

Q: But it was pretty simple to you?

A: Yes.

Q: So do you think that composing a blog is easier or harder than sitting and writing the first draft of your paper, on your paper?

A: I think they are kind of the same. Yeah, they are kind of the same.

Q: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

A: No.

Q: Are you expecting, what kind of assignments are you expecting to have throughout the rest of your career at Clemson?

A: Like what are my assignments?

Q: Yeah, like do you think you are going to be writing a lot of things on paper

A: I don't think so.

Q: Do you think more and more stuff will be like blogs and things?

A: I don't think so.

Q: So what kind of things do you expect will be happening in the future?

A: I expect to know a lot more math and science.

Q: What is your major, by the way?

A: Chemical Engineering.

Q: Oh wow, So I want to make sure that when you are talking about "the older style of writing" I don't necessarily just mean writing, I mean like something like this too (holds up MLA hard copy of paper) because there are no links. Do you often have to write just standard documents on a computer?

A: Not really.

Q: Okay, did you in high school?

A: Yes, depending on what the assignment was.

Q: So, were most of the assignments you did in high school require that it be turned in in a printed format or a hand written format?

A: Hand written format.

Q: Interesting, Okay, thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it.

A: You're welcome.

Round 1 Interview 2

Q: So, can you tell me a little bit about your experiences with writing?

A: Um, as far as writing experience goes, in the history in my personal history, I have found that just doing high school papers seems to be doing where it stands. I do do a little bit of creative writing, mainly poetic nothing along the lines of stories but knowing how to utilize different words and to broaden my vocabulary that I have learned through my high school writings has helped me to develop my creative writing

Q: Okay, when you typically write for a class project, for school, can you tell me about the process that you take to start writing that, specifically, do you use a pen or a computer or different kinds throughout the process?

A: Initially, when I am given a topic I try to generalize the topic, I try to find ends and outs of where I can find loop holes that fit my interests, something that I can break out of the box with and by this I mean that take the topic at hand and I generalize it, find an interesting perspective to look at it with and dive into the research on that topic rather than the initial "dull" topic.

As far as organizing that, the thought process is usually mental to begin with and as I come up with key topics that can help me break out of that norm, I'll jot them down on pen and paper and when I have a full list of different perspectives that I can take, I typically type them out and then I'll combine them into a productive and organized sentence of some sort. Just to generalize what I want to do as a whole.

Q: So, how do you proofread a paper, when it is finished?

A: In my own, or a peer, or anything in general?

Q: For your own.

A: For my own, um, when I go through to read my own I

Q: Do you print it out first?

A: I do not. I do not proofread it off printed paper, first. I do print it out later. But, initially, I take a break- anywhere between an hour to a day and it depends on how long I've been sitting on that particular paper. And I'll go back with a fresh pair of eyes so to speak and the first thing I do is to check over the generics. Did I use as pronounced a vocabulary as I could possibly use without making it sound overdeveloped. Um did I use of course, correct grammar, punctuations, such as commas? A lot of people have difficulty with comma rules. I know, I myself, looking back at my own writing, I do as well. And I also look at point of view. If I change point of view I tend to think of it as a bad thing because it can cause a lot of confusion very quickly and I try to keep that in mind, the initial point of view set even if we are aloud to use a broad point of view.

Q: So, do you prefer writing with a pen and paper or do you prefer writing on a computer?

A: I prefer writing on a computer, and after the initial look I'll print it out and I will do my constructive editing on print. So, I can see where my thoughts were exactly on the page, because it's hard to type in the margins of a double spaced paper. I mean almost impossible to get the exact editing that you want.

Q: uh huh.

A: So to go back on printed paper and know that the exact spot, finding the exact letter and the exact sentence that you wanted to insert that you wanted to take out, or edit, whatever. Um, you know exactly where it is, you know exactly how you wanted it and then, later you can look at it again if you've come up with a better idea of how tot formulate that sentence. Or whatever you are doing?

Q: Do you keep a blog? Or anything like that?

A: Out of personal choice? No. We are keeping one for our English 103, and I am actually enjoying some of the topics. However, I see it, somewhat redundant that it would be a personal blog with no audience. I know you can build an audience on sites like online sites and out of personal opinion my creative writing that I do is on personal topics, personal opinions, how I, Its almost perspective based. So, in essence, that can be my quote, unquote blog. But, its not blog blog up to writing standards.

Q: So when you keep your personal writings, do you compose those on a computer, or pencil and paper?

A: Um, it depends on where I am at. I I am having just one of those days, so to speak, and I'm in the middle of class and I know that the topics going to be dreary and dry and I really want to pay attention but I don't know how, I'll occupy my time by writing in pen and paper and then later I may go back and put it on the computer. But, as far as being creative it is better on pencil and paper ...

Q: (trying to insert a question)

...A: but it's easier to store on a computer.

Q: Why do you think its more creative with pen and paper?

A: You're able to, well the main thing for me, doing poetry, we'll start with this, is if you want to add an in-depth, if you don't just want, the verbal, or the audial um play on words that you may be trying, the audial creativity, you could also use a visual creativity easier with pen and paper. You can see how your own writing stretches into different shapes, different mindsets almost.

Q: You said visual creativity, what do you mean by that?

A: Um, prime example. If I were to be doing a poetic piece on life. And, let's say my opinion was based on how short we put life and how as we look into the future it may become shorter. My stanzas or even the lines themselves may become shorter but just as powerful and that may just be because of how I am writing them or it could be because of the sentence style I am using and how easy it is to show that after my own handwriting.

Q: So, you are looking at the aesthetic of how it looks on the page?

A: Exactly.

Q: Okay. So, when you are writing these things on the computer, your poetics or your class assignments, do you often insert images or hyperlinks, or different fonts or things like that?

A: Um, out of my experiences with essays, no. Primarily, because I see it not, it's more of an informal addition. We're kind of breaking out of that traditional informal thought, going to today's college papers, because we are able to use these figures, as long as we annotate them and show how and where we got them. But in high school it's not something we really use. But, now that I am becoming more familiar with college writings I have inserted more visual, almost visual figures to kind of use as a reference to kind of build my writing out of.

Q: Do you think that helps your writing?

A: Um me being a very visual and kinesthetic person, yes, it helps tremendously with the through process. And even the execution process.

Q: Do you think it helps the person who reads your papers?

A: Considering everyone has a different standpoint on how they learn or how they view things and how perspectives are always changing I feel that the images I use or even produce can help them see insight into my perspective. SO, in essence, yes, I think it helps them see where I am going and see where I am coming from.

Q: Interesting, so, talk to me about, just writing plain stuff, without images or links or anything. Or writing things with links and things. Which do you prefer more?

A: Which do I prefer more, pen and paper? Is that what you're asking?

Q: No, I'm asking between computer writing, just a plain paper, or computer writing that is using videos or images or sound or different fonts.

A: I prefer the video sounds and fonts due mainly because you can show what you are trying to express without using a paragraph and losing your viewer. If you are trying to explain something, and there is this one aspect that you cannot put into words. Just for whatever reason, you are having a writers block it's very difficult to describe, there are so many concepts involved, it can become really long and drawn out. You can easily lose your viewer, or your reader with just a plain text. So, If you have an example you can do a shortened version of the text that can emphasize what you have already shown visually.

Q: Cool, so do you have anything else that you would like to add to this?

A: As far as general paper writing, organization um probably helps me the most. Because I am able to....

Q: Organizing, on a computer, or organizing on pen and paper?

A: I prefer to organize on pen and paper, because I am able to look at a rough sketch of my organization and know how to change through the process. So I can view the change almost real time and that just allows me to keep the change and keep the flow of everything going because if I modify the organization on a computer or if I try to view multiple things on that one screen it becomes just far fetched.

Q: So are you saying that you like to do it on pen and paper because when you do it on the computer there is no record of what came before?

A: When I do it on the computer, right, it just changes, there isn't really a record, unless I save it piece by piece, which could get really time consuming.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, when I am writing on a paper, I have that record of where I came from and now I can see where I am going.

Q: So, what kind of assignments do you expect that you will be doing at Clemson? Do you think that you will be doing more things that call for just plain writing or more things that call for like blogging or writing using hyperlinks or creation of websites?

A: With Clemson being the atmosphere that I've dove into so far, I believe it will be more creative oriented which allows preference. So, you can use either, as far as requirements, I think the text will be there, but we have the ability to use any visual references, hyperlinks, any sort of font changes that can emphasize our point as long as it is justified.

Q: So, you know that writing with fonts and images and videos is usually only published online.

Q: So, do you think you will be turning in things like that?

A: Some of my professors have actually encouraged trying to email a not necessarily a changed copy, but a more creative copy.

Q: Oh? Really?

A: This isn't my English professors, but there is still text based papers.

Q: Tell me about that, if you don't mind?

A: I've had some of my professors say you need a very streamlined format in person, but if it helps you think otherwise, to use the visual creativity to use any sort of thing that helps you think and research and really dive into the topic, to do it and if we want to share it, and if we want to be able to produce those thoughts to email them to the teacher so they can consider it and my prime example of is engineering. We have note sheets that we have to use on exams as far as unit conversions or something of that sort. Me being the visually creative person, I was drawing more of the actual scenario and then would put the sort of footnotes or side notes or whatever explaining how each piece was done. My, we just had an exam last night actually and on the exam my note sheet which I had for personal use was, there was a hot air balloon and we were talking about pressure and conversions and temperatures, and I saw that being able to recognize how the formula fit with the visual interpretation of the formula helped me to be able to understand it better. But when we have to go back into formal class mode I had to use just the formula. But, I still felt that using the visual reference helped me to dive into the topic.

Q: Great, thank you so much for your time.

A: You are welcome.

Round 1 Interview 3

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences with writing?

A: Um, writing's never been my favorite because I don't think I'm very good at it. But, in high school I took AP literature and AP language and I found language was really interesting because it talked about how to be an effective writer. So, I kind of liked English more.

Q: Yeah, So, when you are sitting down to write something, like a school project, what is typically your writing process, in terms of, what do you write on, how do you outline and things like that?

A: I usually write down on paper my basic idea and what I need to do to make or support my thesis or whatever, and then I just start writing or typing I guess, on the computer.

Q: Which kind do you prefer, hand writing or using the computer?

A: For writing a long essay, definitely a computer.

Q: Why is that?

A: It's quicke.

Q: Okay.

A: And you can delete things and add things and ...very easily.

Q: What kind of things do you include when you write things on the computer?

A: For an essay?

Q: or for anything, what kind of things do you like to use?

A: For essays I just type. But, if I am making like an advertisement, or something like that, or playing around with different forms and images and different types of texts, the fonts and all that.

Q: Yeah, so when I'm talking about traditional writing, I'm talking about writing on the computer or hand writing, and then when I'm talking about multimodal, I'm talking

about like hyperlinks and things with images or sounds. Do you prefer one of those over the other?

A: I think for learning purposes, multimodal is more effective for learning.

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: Well, I feel like I am a visual person and so its easier for me to comprehend it if I can see it or I can watch an example or something like that.

Q: Do you keep a blog or anything?

A: No.

Q: Have you ever?

A: I had to make a blog for a class.

Q: What kind of things did you put on that?

A: Um, it was for like a Spanish class, so like we to include things like animations and but the rest of them were like main components were like paragraphs and stuff.

Q: How hard did you find it to interact with the blog? To put that stuff in there?

A: It was pretty easy.

Q: Was it easier than Microsoft Word or something like that?

A: I think writing in Microsoft Word is really easy

Q: So, the blogging was slightly higher?

A: Only just slightly, you have to know your tools and where to find everything.

Q: Cool, so in terms of learning you think multimodal is better than traditional composition?

A: Yeah, I think it stimulates more parts of the brain, which, I don't know, like makes more connections or something.

Q: Interesting, do you care to elaborate on that?

A: Well, like, for me, taking notes that, you have to write it out and then I can like remember it better so and then I like see something I can remember it better because that just uses more parts of your brain.

Q: Yeah, interesting, do you have anything else you'd like to add?

A: Um...I don't think so.

Q: Do you often like write with, do you send text messages a lot?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you use Facebook or anything like that?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you post videos or anything like that?

A: Not really, I'm not really good with computers.

Q: Okay, thank you for your time.

Round 1 Interview 4

Q: Alright, so could you go ahead and tell me a little bit about your experiences with writing?

A: With writing, okay, most of the writing I've done is um been mostly in English class. So, and largely a lot of like research projects and like um analyzing readings or just pretty much analyzing modes of English.

Q: Cool.

A: And so, um but, outside of that, not a whole lot of creative stuff there has been some, a little bit of creative stuff, writing but not very long or anything, mostly, the longest would be maybe two pages. But, some of the longer stuff I've done is like a ten page research paper and um a couple page, like a thesis type paper stuff like that.

Q: How do you typically turn those in?

A: Just on paper. I've had to do like turn it in dot com before but that was for like only one or two papers.

Q: Do you keep a blog or anything like that?

A: No, I don't, I don't do anything like that

Q: have you ever kept a blog?

A: I am for the English class that I am taking right now.

Q: yeah.

A: So.

Q: So, what kind of things do you put on your blog that you are keeping for your English class?

A: Pretty much just like the progress of my paper that I am writing or ideas that I have for things like that. I feel like it is better, not so much for other people to read, but more for my organization. It's almost like, a thing I did for one paper, I just wrote note cards and that's like an easier form of note cards.

Q: Cool, so, in the blog have you put any pictures, or links or anything like that in it?

A: Links to other sources that I have found for my paper, but um I guess I have posted pictures of sources that I am going to use or images that I am going to use.

Q: Do you find that it is simple to figure out, or more complicated?

A: I think it's easier than say like if you wrote it down on a note card or something then you'd have to go and go to the computer and do all the find the link and go to the right source and finding an image would be more difficult, whereas if it's on a blog you can go just straight to the image.

Q: So, think about when you are having to read a book or a text, or when you are having to read a blog, which do you feel helps educate you more?

A: It kind of depends, I'm more of a scientific thinker, so um any kind of text is pretty easy for me to internalize, so um but I have found that it's a lot easier for me to be motivated to read something that is on a computer, or something with like images, or charts or even like pictures....something else to look at whereas I have a really hard time like picking up a book and reading it and that's just something where looking up information or like an encyclopedia or um a reference.

Q: Why do you think that difference is?

A: Um, I don't know I guess I mean I don't use computers all that often except for research and things like that, I don't do Facebook or anything like that, um so, I have one, but I don't really, I think one of my friends who sent me a friend request the other day, he was like "your last status update was over a year ago" and it's not that I'm never on Facebook, it just seems easier because it is more readily accessible, whereas there is like the tangible aspect of something on a paper or in a book, but um it's also there's just like if you find a thing and you are reading something in a like in an online article, and um there might be a link in something that would help you to understand it better, or um a link to something that'll help you think about it more, or something like that whereas if you are in a book and they start to go off on something that isn't um as relevant or something you don't understand and then you can't find the correlation with when you get you get its almost like you get feedback on a computer.

Q: So, you think its fair to say that you feel that multimodal communication which includes pictures and sounds is more expressive to an audience than traditional text?

A: Um yeah, I think so and like what I've learned in psychology is that like it's a lot easier to remember things if there are more than one sense involved in it, so like if you hear something or if you see something and it links to another image in your mind that'll help you remember it better like I find that I learn things a lot better if there's some other mode than just text, um especially for remembering it long term or internalizing it.

Q: If you are sitting down to write a paper or something, what does your writing process look like, where would you start at? What mediums would you use?

A: I don't usually write, anything anymore, its more just on the computer, I just open up a word document and just start going, um, most of my, whenever I've referenced anything it was from a book I would um go to the book but um a lot of times I will try to see if a book or if portions of a book are online, so that it's just faster to just, you can just tab over to the source, a lot of sources are online now so but most of my writing is done in one sitting, so and um like I told (instructor name) most of my papers are done in like forty five minutes, like in a flurry of writing.

Q: Wow, tell me about your experience with the visual rhetoric paper, what did you think about that? I know you probably included an image in that, so do you think that was helpful or interesting.

A: I thought it was interesting because it ... and like the deeper meaning purpose of the article ...er... the not the article, the project to realize how everything that we are seeing or doing is persuading um, so I think that was like really effective, and it liked help analyze things more and I'm kind of an analytical person, to really think about it and formulate a better argument is something that I thought was interesting to do, um, because I like to argue it was kind of catered to both of my, but two of my interests.

Q: Cool, how do you think how including different things in a text might influence the way that you think about writing as a writer?

A: I think having the ability to um put a like images or videos or sounds or something into a text would make it easier to write um because you can use an image or a video or a sound or something to um help you make your point or so you don't always have to find the words, you can find the picture for it. And it, I don't know if it, I don't really think that it takes away from your writing per se I just think it kind of adds because I think writing is more just, its not about writing um, its about language and like what you are using, so, I think if you can use an image to create words or create a language then I think that's as equally effective or greater

Q: so do you think that one of those ways or another is more effective for you? Or rather, easier for you to use as a writer?

A: you mean like using images to say other things or not, I think definitely using images is definitely easier to do, just like, for that reason um you can reference an image and it would help you bring your thoughts forward and into the reader or even like when I write something's I will have an image in mind and I don't necessarily recognize it as something that helps me think and if you can use it and if it helps you think I think it would help the reader think about it as well especially for like if you wrote the visual rhetoric assignment, it would be pretty unclear, so, um and I think if you can put a picture into a readers mind and then back it up with another picture, that makes it even more effective.

Q: So, do you have anything else that you'd like to add?

A: Um, I don't know, I think it's important for all forms of academia to cater to what is relevant and if, since language does influence all learning, it is important for language and therefore English which is the study of the language um to be relevant and um to be up to date with what modes of like language and like like how verbalization and like communication should stay up to date with what's being used because nobody is just walking down the street and just reading an essay on the side of the wall, if there is an image that catches their mind or an image that brings them to think about something and then the words that follow are going to be important and I feel like that's important for academia to be relevant

Q: Excellent, thank you so much for your time.

Round1 Interview 5

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your general thoughts and experiences on writing?

A: Um, I've only written one paper this year, um, so I haven't had much experience with college writing...

Q: yeah

A: But I wrote a ton in high school so...

Q: What kind of things did you write in high school?

A: Um we wrote a bunch of essays, I didn't have many, I guess like, I guess I did have like some multimodal projects. Like I had PowerPoints to do or something like that I don't know,

Q: How many of those did you do in high-school about? The Power Points or multimodals?

A: Oh, Jeez, like ten, I don't know, not that many

Q: Okay. Were those easy for you? Did they introduce you on how to do them? Was it difficult?

A: Yeah, we went over, kind of like the presentation, like what you needed to have for each slide, you know, or break it up, like I did a presentation today on like Spanish. I'm still like practicing that one. But I did a power point like that one and just breaking it up into different groups or sections, I don't know. Stuff like that.

Q: Okay, So when you prefer to write, do you prefer to write with a pen and paper or do you prefer to type?

A: Um, I prefer writing, I guess, well I like writing like a rough draft, and then typing it, like refining it, and all that

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: Probably when I'm writing stuff down I can process it better, I can like cross it out and see it. I don't like reading something from the Internet; I like printing it out and then reading it. So I like writing things down so I can see them in my hands.

Q: What did you say about reading stuff off the Internet?

A: Um, I don't, I mean like, I can read stuff off the internet, like articles and stuff but if its anything longer than like 2 pages I don't like reading it just because ...

Q: So what do you do about that?

A: So, um, usually, if I really want to read it I will print it off. But if not, then I'll like skip around, I'll read the first sentence of every paragraph unless I see something interesting. So, that's usually what I do.

Q: So have you ever kept a blog before or anything like that?

A: Yeah I have a blog for English and then I post on her blog for like response questions and stuff like that. And now keeping a blog right now just for my research paper. But, like I don't know, like I have a Tumblr but its more for like following people, I don't um really use it for like personal use I guess. Like personally actually writing stuff down.

Q: So, for your blog in your English class, what kind of things do you put in there?

A: Um we posted, um, about like our research like our research progression like the progress we made and then we posted stuff about our sources and then quotations about like our annotated bibliography and then like where we are going with our direction. Like which direction we are going with, I mean, which direction we are going in, with our paper.

Q: Have you included any images or links or anything like that in your blog?

A: I included a link for like the citation, that's about it though. I don't have any images yet, but we have to have images for our paper, at some point.

Q: So, with regard to just writing a paper that one would turn in like a standard essay you might have done in high school versus keeping a blog where you can use textual sounds and multiple colors, which do you think is more effective?

A: I think it kind of depends on what you're writing about. Like, if I'm, in my research paper I have to do a rhetorical analysis. So, it's going to help to have like a chart and a graph and then like some data in the paper but if I was like writing a paper on analysis, not on analysis, but on supporting my paper, I don't know. If I was just writing about something I think its better to just write it typing. But, if its about rhetorical analysis, I'd like having images there because it helps like back it up.

Q: What do you mean when you say "It's about rhetorical analysis?"

A: Well, we wrote a paper this year about a picture, um, like an ad and then we wrote like how's it appealing rhetorically to its audience and then we wrote about that. And then, those kind of things I think you need images to back it up sometimes, because it just helps.

Q: Do you think that that's appropriate for all kinds of papers?

A: No, because sometimes if they are more formal then I wouldn't want to have an image in there I guess?

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: Um, it could take away from the paper just by um the image is kind of distracting, wanna keep like flipping back to the image, like "what's this for"? So, besides I just like focusing on the writing. So, because I like reading better, so that's probably why.

Q: Which do you enjoy composing more texts that involve images and videos and things or just...

A: What do you mean?

Q: Like writing your blogs or what not, or your paper for 103 that you did with the image do you like writing like that?

A: I do like blog posts just because like they are shorter and to the point, but I mean like sometimes I like writing papers too so...

Q: Okay

A: I'm not really biased with any of them

Q: Do you view the composition process there differently? Between the two?

A: Yes, because I thought that with the multimodal composition its not as put together maybe, I mean, it still flows, but it's not as put together as a paper would be. And you can like skip around. On my blog posts I skip around all the time. So, I guess it doesn't really ...

Q: So, you view multimodal texts as being less formal?

A: Right. That's how I see it.

Q: So, what kind of assignments do you expect that you will be seeing for the rest of your time here at Clemson?

A: Well, In English, I'm expecting...we're doing like a multimodal project and then, our research paper is multimodal, I guess, and then for math, I don't really have those kind of things and then Spanish, I don't know what other kind of projects we have left, but I mean I like a presentation today

Q: I mean like through the rest of your college career.

A: Oh, through college, I don't know what I'm thinking, mm yeah. I expect like a ton of different types of projects. Like a presentation and a tri-fold or something and then like huge essays and then powerpoints. I think there's going to be all different kinds of it. I don't really see myself writing just one type of composition.

Q: So, you think it is important to do many kinds?

A: Yeah, I like to spice it up a little bit.

Q: Okay, Excellent, thank you so much for your time.

Round 2 Interview 1

Q: So, what other media have you encountered that you are more comfortable using now, since you have been in English 103?

A: Um well definitely like making videos that id never really done before, so that was something that definitely helped, um, it opened me to that, it also like I never really like use the blogs or anything, so I think that was another thing that definitely opened me up to a whole lot more, you could just, when we had to use them seeing all the other students blogs it was a good way to see how effective it was to communicate ideas that link people together, so I think those were the two that I think were really effective and then I think another thing that was important was um like just the visuals themselves like using a picture and and then picking the proper picture to like help it be a text or something like that, even just the picture itself, using the right one can be important as opposed to any, so

Q: have you done anything with podcasting or PowerPoint or Prezi or website design?

A: not a whole lot um I mean not necessarily for this class or anything for other classes I've used some of the ideas that like I was sharing before, some of the ideas that I learned in this class when I'm making PowerPoints and stuff

Q: Cool, yeah, so at this point in the semester which do you prefer traditional composition or multimodal composition?

A: I think, definitely multimodal composition, because it definitely is more up to date than just the traditional and there is always a use for the traditional composition but um, I think there is more capabilities that can be used on the multimodal, and it is much more flexible.

Q: What kind of things might best be best used for multimodal?

A: Um, I think anytime you are trying to get an idea out or argument especially um especially if it was like to a larger audience or something like that, it doesn't have to be a specific audience, I think that is definitely the most effective way to do that, is with multimodal. Whereas if it was just traditional it's a lot more harder to get someone to sit down and read a paper, than it is to say "watch a video" or something like that.

Q: That's a good point, fantastic, would you care to elaborate on that further?

A: I think like when I have to like write an essay it's a lot harder to come up with something that's going to get somebody to stick to reading ten pages of paper as opposed to watching a minute of video or even ten minutes of video, it's a lot easier to do, and not necessarily, it's not necessarily better that it's easier to do, but, it's better that it's more effective if you can captivate somebody for ten minutes in video or ten minutes reading a paper, it's a lot easier to do on a video. You can fit a lot more in, so.

Q: Yeah, well thank you for your time and coming.

Round 2 Interview 2

Q: So, just to have this clear, do I have your permission to record this conversation?

A: Yes, you do.

Q: Thank you very much, so how is this semester wrapping up for you.

A: Um, the semester is going well, I am realizing that I am having to change a few of my study habits, my high school personal study habits don't necessarily fit the college regime, but um I'm adapting well, a lot of support behind me, and that kind of helps out.

Q: So particularly this session, I am particularly interested in looking at where you are in your writing: right now. So, if you would go ahead and take me through how you would write a paper.

A: I guess I will go ahead and use my 25 hundred word 103 paper as a prime example. For the rough draft I mainly focused on the content um how I could force my argument, how I could push out there what exactly are the key points knowing that I have the effect of having a rough and then a final really helped me out. I know what the teacher's

looking for, I know what the professor is wanting out of my paper. Um, so I try to get the content base and strong points, see what I can elaborate on that way I can then add the filler so to speak. But, first I like to get the content, and then after I have gotten the review I fix the grammar and the point of view if needed, I fix the minute errors and the comma issues that are incorrect throughout the paper. The main idea is to get that full argument, just thrown out at the rough draft.

Q: How do you do that? With pencil and paper or on the computer?

A: I like to see it in pencil and paper more so because I can see my own writing, I can see how I put emphasis on different sections for my own personal file putting it in on the computer doesn't really help add my own personal I feel as if its computerized I feel like it is very generic. I don't see it as my own. So I like to get the tone that I like on the paper, and then the grammatical emphasis when I put it on the computer, typing it up final structure making sure its presentable in a grammatic sense.

Q: So, do you prefer traditional composition or multimodal composition?

A: Growing up with a lesser amount of computer technology, you know in my school all the way through grade school. It was not until high school that I really began to get to technology based text and um and formatting papers through there but I realize that I think I am more of a (AUDIO INTELLIGBLE) because I am used to it because it is a comfort zone, because it makes me feel more relaxed when I am writing, I don't feel stressed, I don't feel pressure, I feel as though I can sit down and write a paper in pencil and do what I need on the computer I feel that as if it is just the same old same old, there is nothing good um it's the text its just there. There is no drive to actually type that paper its just from now on its words its just making sure things are punctuated correct there is no tone there is no attitude there is no sincere argument there at all.

Q: So what kind of assignments do you think that you might use multimodal for? What kind of writings do you think that lends itself towards?

A: On a writing things, I believe that um a thousand word essay in English 103 was on an image based advertisement, um, keeping the more image based on the computer and formulating my ideas on a sort of a textual notepad. That actually helped out but when we are given a mental topic, something where we have to draw from ourselves I believe that pencil and paper is the way to go.

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: I just I feel like, if you are drawing it from the computer, you are not pulling your own writing, you are not pulling your own opinions, you have the open ended source of information but then again you don't have your open ended source of opinion because it is coming from technology, I mean a lot of people have adapted to be able to pull from

both but from personal preference I just I know ive got the information I might as well look it up, um there, and that's I said there's no tone there is no argument there is no sincerity behind the argument.

Q: But, for multimodal I mean more using digital tools to create arguments not arguments that are already made. Like for making a video that would be a multimodal composition or making a website.

A: As far as a multimodal media project, I believe that the computer it helps out with the process the going back towards the going back towards the script for that project I would be more so have it done in paper. I can see where to add a different situations different, and again just with the tone, I know where to emphasize that that part of the script if we are doing a video, that we have created um but as far as pulling it together, the computer definitely helps the technology it really streamlines the process of course. Um, and not even in the editing but just in pulling everything together as a whole. It really ties up and organizes well with technology. As far as the raw process goes putting it out on pencil and paper something that you can touch just begin able to realize the tone the tangible product.

Q: Do you enjoy it?

A: I do. I am a very kinesthetic learner.

Q: Do you enjoy multimodal composition?

A: Oh I do, I love it we um, it allows for a lot of creativity, there is a lot more expression you can have a lot of tone put into a paper but you can never get the action, you can never see what s going on unless you have that advanced experience with um just being able to create images a lot of people aren't able to express that in words and they need the ability to act it out and to show it.

Q: DO you feel that you are more likely to use multimodal in the future, now or ...

A: Um, as I've grown closer to technology and being able to manipulate things, more so, my writing the efficiency of multimodal projects are just through the roof when it comes to technology. Um being able to just spruce it up to that level to where it's yours. Its not something that someone could ever recreate off of their... just off the fly. It's nothing that would be unoriginal. It is original. It is unique and I believe that technology helps create that um so in the future I believe that yeah I will be able to definitely look at technology as an open source whereas pen and paper is always a necessity.

Q: Cool, do you feel comfortable with any other, what kind of technological media do you use?

A: In English 103 I have used my phone, I have used the camera on my phone to help do a process, um, a video stating our proposals on what we are going to be doing for our multimedia project. Um I have also used the recording mic on my computer to help um I know one of our voice-overs, I had to voice over a whole different section, of the process of the proposal. But, just having that extra microphone with a little more clarity with the extra sound was...it was very useful. Um you know, keeping in touch with everyone, everyone knows email is vital, for college. And then being able to shoot it to someone, and know that 80% chance they will get it in a short amount of time is very helpful. Um it is better than searching for someone on foot and calling, okay where are you now? Okay, you have moved, do this, it is very less stressful; you know it is there you know its there. If they didn't see it. It's not on you and hopefully that'll reflect with our grades and everything. And how the whole things pull together.

Q: Cool, that's interesting. So do you feel like you have become more comfortable with some of those throughout the semester?

A: Oh, definitely, I feel like um, its not forced, but we've been um we've been suggested to use those and to become comfortable with them because they are helpful and being able to go out and say okay I need to use this I want to use this, but I don't know how. I need to explore it. It builds the sincere curiosity instead of "oh, I guess I can figure out how to do this for this project" It's it it because it has that sincere curiosity the reason that you want to go forward with everything and it is all personal it is not an outside source makes it a lot more viable of a reason to learn the technology and get used to it.

Q: So in terms of persuasion do you feel that traditional compositions or multimodal compositions are more persuasive?

A: I feel that the, in todays time, and that's a key factor. Today's time, multimodal is very, very persuasive because of the fact that you can customize it you can build it to fit any audience that you need. You can build any person that you need any and all things you can fit any scenario. Um, with pen and paper it is very hard to do that and even if you are excellent at doing so it is very hard to edit it for a different crowd without going through and analyzing it without going through and analyzing your entire document that you have created. Um, to ease access to manipulate is very useful and leads to a very long streamline source of persuasion.

Q: Interesting, well (name) thank you so much for your time....

Round 2 Interview 3

Q: Thank you for volunteering to come help me out again.

A: MMhmm.

Q: Do I have your permission to record this?

A: Mhmmm.

Q: So, you are at the end of the first semester at the university how do you feel about writing now, how do you go through the writing process, what are your perceptions of it?

A: I actually feel my writing has improved and um I take more time thinking about how I am going to write before I start than I used to.

Q: So, could you walk me through the writing process that you go through now?

A: Um, I look closely at what exactly the prompt entails and then I figure out the best way to organize it and for most of or for all of the essays in English this year we had to have a visual component so I figured out what visual aspect would help my essay the most how to incorporate it.

Q: As you were going through getting ready to write a paper did you do most of your rough work with like pen and paper or on the computer?

A: Um, I wrote, I did like an outline handwritten and then a rough draft on the computer

Q: Interesting, why did you choose to hand write your outline?

A: Um, I don't know I think it's easier to actually write it out and see how – move things around. And mark it out on paper.

Q: yeah, so do you have an easier time composing things with images now than you did at the beginning of the semester?

A: Yeah, I think um I'm better at incorporating them. Before, I probably didn't, I would just stick it anywhere, and write about it. And I think I did better at actually having it be a part of the paper

Q: uh, huh- cool, that's interesting. So now that you have been doing these do you feel more comfortable with multimodal technologies at the end of the semester than you did at the beginning of the semester?

A: Um, what do you mean by that?

Q: Like, do you find it easier to compose websites or make movies now than you did at the beginning?

A: yeah, for some of my classes I have had to make a website for my architecture portfolio so, I'm getting a little bit better at that I'm not really that great at computers. We're doing the movie project now, so I am learning a little bit about that too.

Q: How are you feeling about that (the movie project) are you comfortable or is it scary to you?

A: It's a little bit scary because a lot of things are going on that you have to think about, but hopefully it will turn out well.

Q: So, given the choice of these two options do you prefer traditional composition or multimodal composition?

A: Umm, I think I would definitely prefer to learn from multimodal compositions.

Q: Why is that?

A: Because um I think they have like. I don't know, they get information across in a different way. That will help me remember it better.

Q: Which do you think is more persuasive? Traditional composition, or multimodal composition?

A: Um, I think multimodal composition is probably more persuasive just because, the more ways that you look at something and show your view point and multiple ways, they, the stronger the argument is.

Q: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

A: No

Round 2 Interview 4

Q: So, first of all do I have your permission to record this?

A: Yeah.

Q: Great, so how is the semester gone for you? Has it been good?

A: It's really awesome; I think next semester will be better, just because I've like already gotten one like underneath my belt.

Q: Sure.

A: The first one was kind of rough just, like getting the hang of things. It's a little different from high school (laughs) So, I'm just getting used to it. But, I am, I enjoyed most of my classes and it gave me a good idea of what I should or should not study (laughs) so, I'm excited.

Q: So can you tell me a little bit about how you would approach the writing process at this point in your career?

A: I don't know if its changed any since the beginning of the school year but I do am definitely like, I definitely understand um, different types of writing more than I did before. Like instead of just writing a paper, I understand how to do projects and how to include pictures in your papers and to do like analysis of it and I guess I, I think I have a more argumentative side now to my writing. I know how to make an argument and support it and all that. I know how to do that now.

Q: Cool, so do you think that makes you a stronger writer?

A: I think it is making me a stronger writer; definitely, I enjoy writing a lot more too. We had to write a lot of papers this year but um there was I felt really good about it, it came together a lot better than I thought it would. So.

Q: So when you start writing do you tend to use pencil and paper or do you tend to write on the computer?

A: Um, I brainstorm on a piece of paper, it is easier to see ideas like that and then um and then later when I am like writing the actual paper I do like to go in there with Word and write it all out and then go back and edit it like that. I like to have something physical to look at, Like reading on the computer, is so I don't know hard for me to do that. So.

Q: Interesting, so as far as uh different multimodal mediums like blogs and podcasts

A: I'm a lot more accepting of those

Q: Are you?

A: Unintelligible (positive sounding?) They would make a stronger argument than like regular writing would but we did um we just started our multimodal project in English and it was so much fun to do that and form an argument and support it and like make the video and all that and we didn't do any PowerPoint's but um we made a PowerPoint for like the storyboard and that was a lot of fun just looking at it and doing something other than writing about a paper because that's boring and now I realize that (laughs) so.

Q: So why do you think you are more accepting of them now?

A: Um, it could be my teacher but um the way we did the multimodal project um it gave me a new perspective on it it wasn't like easy like to do the project but it made it a lot more fun to like go back and edit a video and cut scenes and like add music and all of that and so its just I like it a lot more

Q: So, the multimodal project was more fun than the other assignments?

A: Yeah, I mean I did enjoy the research paper like surprisingly like a ten page research paper and I ended up enjoying it and Um and the other rhetorical analysis of that picture we had to do a rhetorical analysis of an ...I mean an ad analysis and it could be just that I realize that I really love English. Like I'm changing my major to English so.

Q: Cool, cool

A: So, I'm excited. I definitely I guess I like both modes, I kind of like all modes I don't know

Q: So do you have one that prefer, do you prefer traditional or multimodal?

A: UM I still like traditional composition, you see I really do love writing, like I'm better of writing out how like what I'm trying to say instead of actually saying it it doesn't come out the way I want it to a lot of times and then um but I definitely love multimodal projects too. Just because it is fun to see the pictures. I am also a visual, I am more visual than I thought I was. So I can like, I am like a visual learner so its like easier to see an argument like on a PowerPoint than it is to try to find it in a (something)

Q: So between those two forms, which do you think allows for more creativity on the composers part?

A: Definitely multimodal, just because you can include so many different like, you can appeal to all of the senses of the people in the audience. Because in multimodal you can do like in hearing and listening and speaking and music and all of that it just like appeals to all of the senses. Like reading a paper is like seeing something I don't know. I think both appeal to peoples senses. Just in a different way. Multimodal allows for more creativity.

Q: Which do you think is ultimately more persuasive to the viewer?

A: I honestly think it depends on the context of the of the subject or whatever it is, but um I think the context plays a big part just because multimodal project like we did that on zombies so it was like a more fun way of persuading your audience but my research paper was on like reading and how that effects like how kids learn so I feel like that when

you want to write more than visual, because you can't really have a visual with that. SO unless it's like a graph or something like that. I think it all depends on the context.

Q: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

A: I definitely like multimodal a lot better, I mean I like a lot this semester. I thought I wasn't going to like it, but I do.

Q: Why did you think you wouldn't...like it.

A: I don't really know why, so I didn't think it would make like that strong of an argument or it wouldn't be as

Q: Was it just a reluctance to learn?

A: probably, but I did enjoy it a lot, but I guess I had a good group too but there is some (Unintelligible) (Unintelligible) But I mean I hope we do more in the future in our other English classes. So it's all good.

Q: Thank you for your time.

Round 2 Interview 5

Q: I just want to verify that I have your permission to record this.

A: Yes, sir you do.

Q: Thank you. So, how is this semester going for you?

A: It's good. It's really good.

Q: Almost done with it now?

A: Yes.

Q: Cool, so if you could tell me in a few words how do you approach the writing process at this point in the semester?

A: I still approach it the same, I try not to procrastinate much but I still approach it the same pretty much?

Q: So, do you feel that you have learned anything that has helped to make you a better writer?

A: Yes, like to take my time to do it and not try to rush it. Like get your thoughts together and start writing.

Q: Okay, so in terms of multimodal or traditional composition which do you prefer at this point?

A: Traditional.

Q: Why is that?

A: Well traditional, that's how I learned it, that's how I'm just stuck on it I guess. I still do it.

Q: Have you done any more work with multimodal composition throughout the course of the semester?

A: Um, yes.

Q: Like what?

A: Um, I know we did like the multimedia project, and it was actually fun. It was fun but I prefer traditional.

Q: So do you have a good time writing traditional papers?

A: mmmhmmm (answer in the affirmative).

Q: Did you have a good time working on the multimodal papers?

A: I did.

Q: Which did you prefer more?

A: Traditional.

Q: Okay, so between those two. Which allows the composer to be most creative?

A: I think multimodal, but I prefer traditional

Q: Why do you think that that allows the user to be more creative?

A: Because you have a like there are a lot more stuff that you can do with multimodal paper than traditional paper (unintelligible faded out).

Q: Between those two, which do you think is the most persuasive?

A: I think traditional is more persuasive.

Q: How so?

A: Because, you can like put more thought into like, if you do a multimodal then its more stuff to add but I always liked traditional. I think traditional is better. That's just my opinion.

Q: Okay, and have you used anything like blogs or podcasts or anything as the semester has gone on?

A: We use blogs.

Q: How do you feel about that?

A: They are okay. I like them, but. They are okay.

Q: Do you feel like you know how to use them better as the semester has gone on.

A: I do.

Q: Do you feel like those are effective or persuasive or anything like that?

A: Um yeah because you can like compare your thoughts to other people and you can like see what they think you can like make comments to like, you can do different things with blogs.

Q: So how would a blog differ in your perception from a traditional composition?

A: I think a blog is like, I believe that a blog is like multimodal but being traditional, I don't know. I would use a blog, but I would still stick to traditional.

Q: Why is that, I'm just curious?

A: I mean I like messing with technology, but I like to write like.

Q: Do you like to do that with pen and paper or like on the computer?

A: Pen and paper.

Q: Really? Cool. Fascinating. Why do you think that is?

A: I think you can get more out with pen and paper than typing.

Q: So you are faster at hand writing than you are typing?

A: I can get like all of my thoughts out by writing it first. Then once I finish writing it, I type it. But I prefer writing first. And then, typing. Because I can't get my thoughts out if I just sit there and type. It's kind of hard.

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: I just, a habit, I guess that's just how I was taught. So, I guess I can get all of my thoughts out by writing it down and then once I write it down and correct any mistakes then I can type it.

Q: Okay, well thank you so much for your time and coming to see me.

A: You're welcome.