

[7.5] Task 7: Mode-bending (Mandatory task)

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Mode-Changing Reflection: “What’s in Your Bag/Phone”

Redesign and Educational Significance

For this redesign, I transformed the visual semiotic formation of the task "What's in Your Bag/Phone" to an auditory formation to discover new ways to make meaning through transmediation (Peña & James, 2024). Instead of displaying the image of personal belongings, I developed an auditory soundscape to represent identity through sound. This soundscape, comprising the rustle of a bag, the tone of notifications, and the murmur of background spaces, punctuated by brief reflective narrative, is designed to elicit a strong emotional response. Each sound serves as a multimodal signifier of everyday experience, inviting the listener to make personal meaning. The aim of this redesign is to empower learners, aligning with the New London Group's (1996) invitation to construct a pedagogy of multiliteracies. This approach recasts learners as active meaning designers within various cultural and semiotic terrains. By transforming from visual to auditory representational form, I sought to enlist other sensory modes and question the centrality of text-based literacy. The focus shifts to designing meaning through sound as an embodied practice that insists upon interpretation and uptake over consumption.

Theoretical and Scholarly Connections

Peña and James's (2024) Model of Transmediation, a transformative tool, elucidates how meaning is reshaped, not merely translated, across semiotic modes. Their model underscores that transitioning between modes fosters a deeper engagement with form and content. This concept resonates with Bolter's (2001) discourse on remediation, where the digital and the sensorium continually redefine our ways of understanding.

From an educational perspective, this redesign advocates on behalf of Dobson and Willinsky's (2009) definition of digital literacy as the ability to move through and make sense of and produce meaning within and between many representational systems. My soundtrack redesign instantiates this ability by framing literacy as multimodal and sensual and not constricted within alphabetic or visual parameters.

Furthermore, the sound format echoes Prensky's (2001) argument that digital natives process information uniquely, favoring multimodal, sensorially rich interactions. In line with the observations of Tapscott (1998) and Weinberger (2007), this shift also calls for educators to redesign the distribution and structure of information along decentralized and collaborative lines. The soundscape format embodies this decentralization: it defies linearity. It invites us to interpret it freely and conforms to an information architecture more vividly described by Wurman (1996) as an imaginative organization within accessible and emotionally compelling forms, fostering a sense of inclusivity and community.

Critical and Professional Reflection

The transition to an aural semiotic mode has been a revelation in my exploration of multimodal learning. It has allowed me to explore the realms of inclusion, sensory accessibility, and diversity among learners. For those with visual processing difficulties or auditory learning dependency, sound serves as a gateway to creativity and comprehension. This aligns with the principles of multiliteracies teaching, which celebrates diverse modes of expression and cultural affiliations (New London Group, 1996).

However, this transition is not without its challenges. The absence of overt visual cues in the acoustic text demands a high level of precision in pacing, sound clarity, and inflectional variation to maintain coherence. It requires conscious decisions about rhythm and emphasis skills that are akin to writing but call for a different set of cognitive and affective awareness. This shift between experiences enhances metatextual consideration and encourages educators and learners to not only understand how meaning is constructed through organization but also how it is perceived.

Community and Collaborative Relevance

Using this redesign in the classroom would encourage students to listen, interpret, and talk about things together in class. Peers could respond to each other's soundscapes by asking important questions that keep the conversation going and build community through multimodal engagement. These tasks not only support the course's goals of critical literacy, but they also reflect how knowledge is shared on digital platforms that combine sound, text, and interaction.

Conclusion and Personal Insight

This redesign demonstrated that transmediation encompasses more than mere translation; it involves transformation. It puts learners in the role of meaning-makers who work across modes, cultures, and technologies. The process helped me better understand multiliteracies by prompting me to reflect on how I usually rely on pictures and to make room for sound as an essential form of literacy.

Now, I understand the crucial role of educators in promoting educational equity by offering students the freedom to choose how they represent their understanding, aligning with their sensory and cognitive strengths. This flexibility supports transformative pedagogy, challenging the traditional, vision-centric approach to reading and writing. Importantly, this experience reaffirms that mode-changing is a practice of educational equity, fostering diverse communicative competencies and empowering learners to develop their own epistemological approaches.

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