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Images for Inventing and Images to Deliver:
Using Visual Rhetoric in Composing Practices

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Abstract

Images hold tremendous, yet underexplored potential for composition pedagogy as tools of invention and delivery. Analysis of post-assignment reflective essays of two assignments in two first-year composition classes reveals that using visual rhetorics as a pedagogic tool can be highly effective in helping students hone their critical composing skills. In one assignment, students formulated questions through images to explore a path of self-driven inquiry. In another assignment, students created visual content to illustrate their prior knowledge and expertise in a topic. In both cases, discussions of critical application of visual rhetoric are pivotal in strategizing research and delivery, and to locating gaps in pre-existing knowledges. Both assignments challenge students to explore and employ visual rhetorics which in turn help students discover, develop, and respond when meaningful curiosity arises (Peterson, 2001; Hocks, 2003). To understand how meanings are constructed, we examine how internalization and externalization, as theorized by Vygotsky, shapes authors' decisions in making meanings through visuals. We argue that alternating between internalization and externalization of meaningful visualization during the research process helps students learn and exercise control/mastery/agency and practice negotiation (Vygotsky, 1997; Bazerman, 2012).

Background of the Study

The persuasive meaning-making potential of text is significantly enhanced when images supplement textual content and when students are challenged to be critical interpreters and creators of visual content. Over the past decade, writing and composition studies have started creating space for students to explore the possibilities of images in the composition process. In a technology-infused writing environment, students can be both content creators and receptors of the textual and non-textual content. For instance, social media composing space gives opportunity for students to compose as well as form ideas/reactions/opinions about text-based and visual content. Available visual information can contribute richly to composition classes when students are challenged to uncover new information by critically analyzing these images. In this article, we use explore the application of visual literacy. We analyze the findings from two Freshman Composition class assignments to examine the affordances and limitations of using visual rhetorics. In the first example, students engage in critically exploring visual content, Images help students delve into questions that they do not know the answer to, leaving space

for self-driven inquiry. In the second, they create visual content to illustrate their prior knowledge and expertise in a topic. In both assignments, visual rhetoric is pivotal in helping them make decisions regarding the course of their research process. Students reflected upon their process in the portfolio assignment. Analysis of the portfolios reveals that visual rhetoric-infused pedagogy can be vital in critically engaging first year writing students.

Instructors can infuse visual rhetorics at various stages of the composition process. Images can trigger and mobilize inventive thinking; visuals can be used to demonstrate arrangement patterns (word clouds); visuals mnemonics can be used for memorization; and lastly, using images in presentations greatly enhances the impact of delivery. Instructors often include visual rhetorics in their pedagogy in ways listed above or in other ways. We think it is important to make the use of visual rhetorics in our pedagogy evident and visible to students. The composing and teaching practices that include visual rhetorics need infrastructures that sustain their creation (Ball, 2004). Ball and Eyman (2015) survey several web-based platforms that may provide some sample infrastructure for using visual rhetorics in composition. It is important to carry forward these conversations and find more ways of including images and visuals in composition.

In this article, we first posit visual rhetoric as central in helping students understand and explore the canons of invention and delivery in their composing process. We outline two assignments and explain the pedagogical approach and then provide the results garnered from our classroom research in which we explore these questions: What do student composers fairly new to a topic gain by interacting with images; How do student composers with fair amount of expertise in a topic gain by expressing with images; what are some limitations and challenges of using the visual rhetorics as a tool for invention and delivery; and what pedagogical modifications might be needed as a result? To investigate these questions, we conducted an IRB approved study in two first-year writing courses where we analyzed reflection essays of student portfolios written after submission of two specific assignments. We identified examples where students incorporated references of the images. These allusions indicated that students understood the effectiveness of using images in lieu of text-based methods of invention (in example one) and delivery (in example two). We looked for indicators of difficulties that students might have faced while using images in invention and delivery. Our findings from these essays helped us contextualize the scholarship in the field that focus on the theory as well as application of visual rhetorics, especially in first year composition.

Scholarship in Infusing Visual Rhetorics in Composition Pedagogy

While discussing the conceptual fundamentals of the application of visual rhetorics, Welhausen (2018) claims that this area of study is undertheorized and subjective. He calls for teachers and students of technical communication to develop commonplace heuristics of visualization that departs from mere concepts of subjective aesthetics and resorts to deeper research-based findings to corroborate the "perceptual principles and rhetorical theory" (p. 133). To Lanham, the rise of the electronic text challenges conventional writing and therefore could be met with

institutional resistance (Lanham, 2010). The discipline of Rhetoric and Composition has begun to acknowledge that images function not only as enhancer of the alphabetic writing but can function as alternative to the written word as both the bearer of knowledge and the persuasive expression of knowledge. In classrooms, we can break down the visual nature of rhetorical acts by asking students to use images at various stages of the composition as the central mode (Hocks, 2003). In a discussion on the role of non-verbal aspects in memory, Reynolds (1989) argues that "(w)riters set up sequences defined not by sound but by space: beginnings, middles, and ends of words, lines, paragraphs, and texts; pages of lines moving top to bottom and left to right; headings, chapters, notes, references, aboves, belows…" (p. 247). This is depicted, for instance, using bullets in the invention process, mind maps in the arrangement process, multimedia in delivery, and so on. These practices are not pathbreaking or novel. Students generally use these tools in class already. These elements are not add-ons or extra in the writing process. Using visual rhetoric in the composition process is an extension of students how students already *envision* in the process of writing.

Beyond discussions related to composition, rhetoricians have theorized and explored how the rhetorical situation, understanding of audience, context, opportunity, and so on determine audience response in rhetorical situations. Bitzer argues that speech is a response to a rhetorical situation and to this, but in a more radical response, Vatz argues that the rhetorical situation itself is determined by the imagination and the art of the speaker (Bitzer, 1968; Vatz, 1973). Flower and Hayes use the concept of rhetorical situation from these two theorists to explore the cognitive process of a writer during the composition process, which, she argues, occurs as a linear series beginning with pre-writing (Flower and Hayes, 1981). Although they have been criticized to have over-simplified the writing process, Flower and Hayes give us a visualization of the composition process. Writing is in a constantly parallel to rhetorical situations. Booth and Davisson (2008), in their article on the visualization of the rhetorical situation of Hurricane Katrina, propose a tangent to the traditional definition and response to rhetorical situation that is applicable to a cultural ambiance that is steeped with multimediated visuals. Keeping pace with how students learn, think, and express in such an ambiance, understanding the impact of visuals and exploration and application of visual is critical to the composition. Consequently, instructors need to use visual rhetoric not simply as supportive teaching tool but as integral and central to the activities and projects. As digital presentation of texts facilitates an easier inclusion and manipulation of visual in the process of composing and interpreting (by the producer and the reader respectively), the difference between the text and the visual is blurring.

We will draw upon our two examples to expand the understandings of visual compositions as knowledge products where visuals can be centered at the beginning and the end. We then analyze how students see visual rhetorics as tools of invention and delivery in a composition class and develop a theoretical framework with further implications and applications in composition pedagogy.

Inventing with Images

In our first-year composition classes, students work on several writing genres: one of them is a letter to an editor and the other is an instructional manual. In the assignment where students write a letter to an editor of a major newspaper, students are asked to choose a current and contested topic or event of international significance. They begin by proposing a topic of interest about which they did not have much information. Students explore and analyze the political maps and images related to this topic or event in news and social media images surrounding that topic. For example, if the student chooses to write about the political or social situation of Iraq, the visual experience of interacting with a map is critical to their knowledge of the geographical situation of Iraq and the surrounding countries that influence the politics. Images also reveal human stories beyond what is covered in news. To get a deeper understanding of the situation, students are shown videos. Students are excited to find viewpoints that they did not know about when they began their research. The information that they procure from the visual content research is largely unknown to them until they have thoroughly researched the topic (Foss, 1994). The learning moment for students, then, is the critical analysis and application of this information: what will they do with the information and how will they talk about it.

In the discussion and the activities, students are encouraged to realize that writing, at any stage, does not need to be in the written words. The deepest impacts are caused by the images that they see and how these images broaden their knowledge and understanding. They cannot have an opinion about Iraq without knowing where Iraq is located geographically and how the geographical location influences what is happening there. Visuals that meaningfully depict multiple narratives of a world situation are accessible quite easily in most student projects. Students respond to their visuals in the form of freewriting without the requirement of sharing with instructor or the class. In these reflections, students document crucial detail that help them get diverse perspectives. Students include a compilation of these free-written journals in their portfolio reflection at the end of the semester. When we analyzed these portfolios, we found that images trigger thoughts, memories, and connections that help students form a deep idea of the issue that they would like to talk about in the letter to the editor. The empathy that visuals can create can sometimes be deeper than words.

Empathy can be a powerful tool in triggering strong responses in students who are encouraged to go deeper into their research. The place of empathy in rhetoric and composition has been explored (Leake, 2011, 2016; Blankenship, 2013, 2019; Lindquist, 2004; Lucas, 2011; Lynch, 1998; Zhao, 2012; Prebel, 2016) and their pedagogical value has also been discussed. We studied the application of these important analyses in a composition classroom to examine how reason, emotions, and judgments shaped students' interest in delving further into images to conduct deep research in their topic of choice. Leake (2016) writes, "Empathy can be a means of invention, a heuristic, a way of considering audience and situation, an instrument of revision, and a tool for critical analysis. Teaching empathy as rhetoric attunes us to its all of its possible uses and liabilities as a means of persuasion" (p. 3). He goes on to argue that images are important in the inventive process because images function as strong tools of rhetorical empathy that push writers to raise questions triggered by their emotion and reason.

The deliverable for this assignment is compact but rich. Based on research made through the exploration of visual content, students write a 250-word letter to the editor of a real newspaper (paper or web-based, national or local). These letters by young writers of an impressionable age are socially conscious and extremely powerful. Students began the project from a state of not knowing anything about the topic to a state of being advocates and passionate responders of a global issue. Topics of letter included the push to strike Iran and the military situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The variety of visuals to which they are exposed are responsible for their interest in exploring deeper. Several students belong to a visual-content-driven generation of Instagram natives. For them, learning is enhanced by the use of visuals. The quality of projects demonstrates that images function effectively as core in the invention process.

In the portfolio reflections, students wrote that images intrigued them and lead them to further critical explorations in order to get the bigger picture. Images can lead to a social response deeper than text. This quote from a portfolio from one student summarizes the general pattern of responses from students: "If children from a young age see pictures and read about other parts of the world it would not only give children the knowledge of knowing where countries and where different kinds of people live, but also give a different view. This extra knowledge would also subliminally (sic) end the ignorance of not knowing." Student responses showed that visuals draw out empathy. The reflections reveal that images related to the history, geography, and current situation lead to students questioning their pre-existing knowledge and impression of the topic and lead them to exploring deeper to revise those knowledges and understandings.

Post-assignment reflections reveal that images triggered empathy as a motivator for going deeper in research. Images can have multiple interpretations; peaked curiosities can be quenched with more image or texts-based research. Words provide ready-made perspective on a topic whereas images provide potential for a multitude of perspectives. Although text-based sources ultimately were major sources of information in almost all projects, images as a starting point of invention lead to the urge to explore further. In the next section, we will describe how another assignment used visual rhetorics for delivery.

Delivering with Images

Scholars found it hard to dissociate delivery, one of the more neglected canons of rhetoric, from its original functions in physical performance in Grecian tradition (Lanham, 1991; Nadeau, 1964; Connors, 1983; Reynolds, 1996). The definition of the canon of delivery was revised later to make it more applicable to digitally mediated composition practices and pedagogies. Several scholars in the field have applied the revised rhetorical concepts in pedagogy, thereby paving the way for future scholars and instructors (Porter, 2009; Ridolfo, DeVoss, 2009; DeVoss & Porter, 2006; Banks, 2005; Rhodes, 2004; Yancey, 2004). In this article, we would like to broaden the definition of delivery to include visual rhetoric. In this example, visuals do not function as aides of delivery in a multimodal presentation. Images are the tools of delivery. Adsanatham (2013) re-defines digital delivery keeping in mind that student projects are multiliteracies that are digitally produced (Kress, 2009; Takayoshi, Selfe, 2007; Selber, 2004). In

his research, he argues that multimodal video-making is layered in its form, content, and process because of the considerations of both format and distribution (p. 318). In our example, we further extend this definition to include the expository nature of delivery where images are designed and presented as the final product. These images can be digitally mediated or tangible. While stalwarts like Hocks, Porter, Devoss, and others have succeeded in convincing practitioner and instructors of composition that visual rhetorics is important and needs to be explored in writing pedagogy more aggressively, we argue that an excellent way of helping students benefit from the pedagogic value of visual rhetorics is by letting them explore the pedagogical functions of visual rhetoric.

In the second assignment, students create instructional manuals or brochures. Students are invited to explore their past experiences and interests to reveal an area where they have expert knowledge. As an initial response, students respond with panic and dread claiming no expertise in anything. In some of the earlier assignments which include autobiographical or self-reflective elements, students see that there are areas where they may have unique know-hows that are interesting and shareable. Some of the areas are maneuvering John Deere tractors remotely to making stuffed cupcakes, washing hands the proper way, de-mystifying the art of writing complicated coding, tying shoe-laces in several ways, and so on. Students are encouraged to choose topics that they are genuinely interested in. In most cases, the students are excited to talk about them. They are challenged to transform ideas into pedagogic information. The process of creating an instructional manual puts the students in a pedagogic position where they can demonstrate expertise. Students create original visual instructional content depicting a step-by-step instructional. Although images are the main deliverable, some texts may be included to support the visuals. The project steers them towards the often-uncharted territory of visually representing the knowledge for instructional purposes for a target audience. Although visual rhetoric might seem intimidating to some students who do not see themselves as having good design skills or artistic acumen, the expertise of the topic gives them confidence. They are assured that they will not be assessed on the artwork but on their ability to use visual medium to communicate effectively to a target audience. In this assignment, students use their knowledge of the subject steer the project and provide ample assistance and resources for the composition and design of the product. Once students see the project taking shape, the fear of applying visual rhetoric is lost and students focus on the strategies that will enhance and optimize the delivery of the message through visuals.

Students create images, photographs, infographics, and flowcharts that are included in the instructional brochure. The brochures provide how-to instructions to a specific target audience to help them perform activities or develop understanding on the topics chosen by the student author. In a classroom, students are usually the ones receiving instructions. The reversal of roles in their new position as instructors and creators of the instructional content creates space for conversations on rhetorical nuancing for a range of audiences. It also makes them aware of the rhetorical commonplaces that need to be located before they begin delivering their instructions on the new knowledge that they have identified and have discerned important enough to be shared in the documentation project. They are asked to identify their audience and decide what the audiences *need* to know in addition to what they *want* to know in the

instructional brochure (Talarico, 2021; Cattrysse, 2010). Students develop original visuals to illustrate the brochure in the form of photographs, graphs, maps, sketches, and so on. Usually, as a method of illustration, images are used to fill in information gaps within the written text. In this project, the written words are used to complement the visuals.

Visual media scholar Mitchell (1995) recommends a "close reading" of images as a way to unlock the potential of images as makers of a multitude of meanings. In a more recent book, Mitchell (2005) theorizes the potential of images, both static and moving, to exert power over the onlooker and forcing them to be fixated as Medusa would (p. 36). The meaningful-ness and power of images, to Mitchell, are not dependent on the maker of the image but the image themselves. Observing the presence and power of visual content in a generation that in general use frequently uses social media platforms and tools, Mitchell presents a "pictorial turn" that will supplant the linguistic turn of the twentieth century (p. 15). While the power of visuals is undeniable, we would like to shift the power back to the creator and manipulator of the images as having substantial power of inventing, arranging, and stylizing images in a way that triggers responses in the on-looker. Visual rhetorics are constructed and that makes the creator, in this occasion, the students who created the image-rich documents, in control of the image until it finds its way into the line of vision of the on-looker/interpreter. Context, *kairos*, and political climate instills meanings in the images, as well, but that argument has potential for further exploration in a separate work. In the next few pages, we explore the rhetorical situation of visuals in the two assignments under discussion.

Learning through Images

In this section, we will analyze the function of visual rhetorics in both assignments. The analysis will be comparative so as to tease out patterns that reveal critical engagement of students in visual rhetoric-infused pedagogy. In the first example of the letter to editor assignment, images help students realize the gaps in their understanding and information about a topic. These lead to a commonplace or *topos* on which the main argument of the letter is based. In the second example of the brochure assignment, a *topos* shapes the content of the brochure, which in this case is visual. The central *topos* is that topic brochure is important. Rhetoric and Composition scholars drew from the ancient understanding of *topoi* to define it variously (Welhausen, 2018). Crowley (1998) explains *topoi* as being an "(a)ncient invention (drawn from) communal epistemologies that privilege the commonplace; that is, they began with tradition, precept, generally accepted wisdom, what everybody knew" (p. 209). *Topoi* is the author's way of connecting with the audience on a commonplace. In our examples, the student projects used visuals to connect with the research topic (first assignment) and audience (second assignment).

Kenneth Burke (1969) emphasizes the importance of rhetoric in situating commongrounds helping the speaker (author, in our example) and audience to connect. To strengthen persuasiveness, the author and audience need to be able to "acting together" after been connected through shared experiences or identifiable topics. Bazerman (2012) writes, "externalized words of the writer and the reader's meanings evoked by those words depend on each participant's history of engagement with those words within each person's communicative

interactions" (p. 260). In both examples, the reaction to the visuals depends on a commonplace established by previous engagement or by preconceived impressions. Visuals form an interest and curiosity that have an impact that might often be stronger than words such as in the examples provided above. The rhetorical impact of images (both viewed and produced) is enhanced by the fact that images can manipulate the viewer into forming a certain rhetoric by highlighting or focusing on specific moments during an event. A photograph can cut up the whole reality and present only a part of the reality that it wants to highlight (Booth & Davisson, 2008). Students make meaning from this cropped image-segment. Students may also be in the role of those who are cropping part of a whole image to highlight certain meaning. In both cases, students use visual content to bring the audience "into" the commonplace.

Although the same prompts were provided for their reflection essays for the two assignments, students' responses about the use of visual rhetorics were very different for each. Amidst the differences, we located interesting patterns. In the first assignment where students explored images as an inventive strategy for writing letters to the editor, students commented wordily about gaps in their understanding of intercultural affairs before having explored the images. Most of them were able to see a growth in themselves as critical thinkers. In the second assignment where images were used as a delivery method in an instructional brochure, we found that a large number of students commented on how the assignment helped them develop as writers. While working with images in the second assignment, students were building their compositional skillsets. They were making rhetorical choices and design decisions at every step while replacing alphabetic texts with images, thereby applying those composing skills. Their reflections highlighted how and what they "wrote."

Locating patterns in reflective statements by students helped us theorize how students apply visual rhetorics in their process of invention and delivery to hone their strength in academic and professional writing. The post-assignment reflections revealed that images helped students see gaps in their knowledge and understanding of issues. There gaps were locations of meaningful curiosity and critical exploration (Peterson, 2001; Hocks 2003). In the first example, the curiosities are triggered by visual information. In the second example, visual information enacts the role of responding to curiosity about original questions or problems located at the beginning of the project. They also externalize their expertise during the acts of producing and communicating pedagogical information in the form of a brochure.

Understanding Internalization and Externalization of Visuals

The externalization and internalization of critical understanding involving visual rhetorics is presented below in an illustration that depicts the establishment of *topoi* and the role of visual rhetorics at various stages of the project. While Vygotsky's theory of internalization and externalization is rich and applicable widely, we are using Bazerman's explanation since Bazerman contextualizes this theory specifically to writing. Bazerman (2012) writes, "the processes of internalization may be, these words and the concepts they signify populate our minds as we make sense of the world to address action challenges" (p. 260). In the process of invention (in the letter to the editor assignment), students explore visual content to internalize

the information. They make sense of the world by letting the visuals seep through the crevices between their pre-existing concepts leading to the re-shaping of ideas they previously had. Bazerman further writes, "internalization processes … change readers' cognitive and affective landscapes (i.e., the symbols, gists, and emotions …). Changes in mental landscape make new thoughts possible" (p. 260). In turn, this leads to rhetorical invention. In the letter to the editor assignment, visuals are internalized in the invention process.

In his explanation of externalization, Bazerman says, "any form of writing responsive to its situation involves some externalization of previous linguistic tools in ways prompted by the situation, even if it is only to repeat prior formulations of authoritative others, apropos to the moment" (p. 268). In the brochure assignment, students organized and presented the information in a way that is familiar to the audience. Their "publicly shareable thoughts" are produced in the form of a brochure by their act of "reformulating the linguistic repertoire," which in this case is specific to the brochure genre (p. 268). Students make decisions regarding the level of difficulty or ease in the presentation of the information and the use of visual content through their prior social transactions. In the brochure assignment, visuals are the externalization of ideas used as a mode of delivery. Fig. 1 illustrates how students begin their
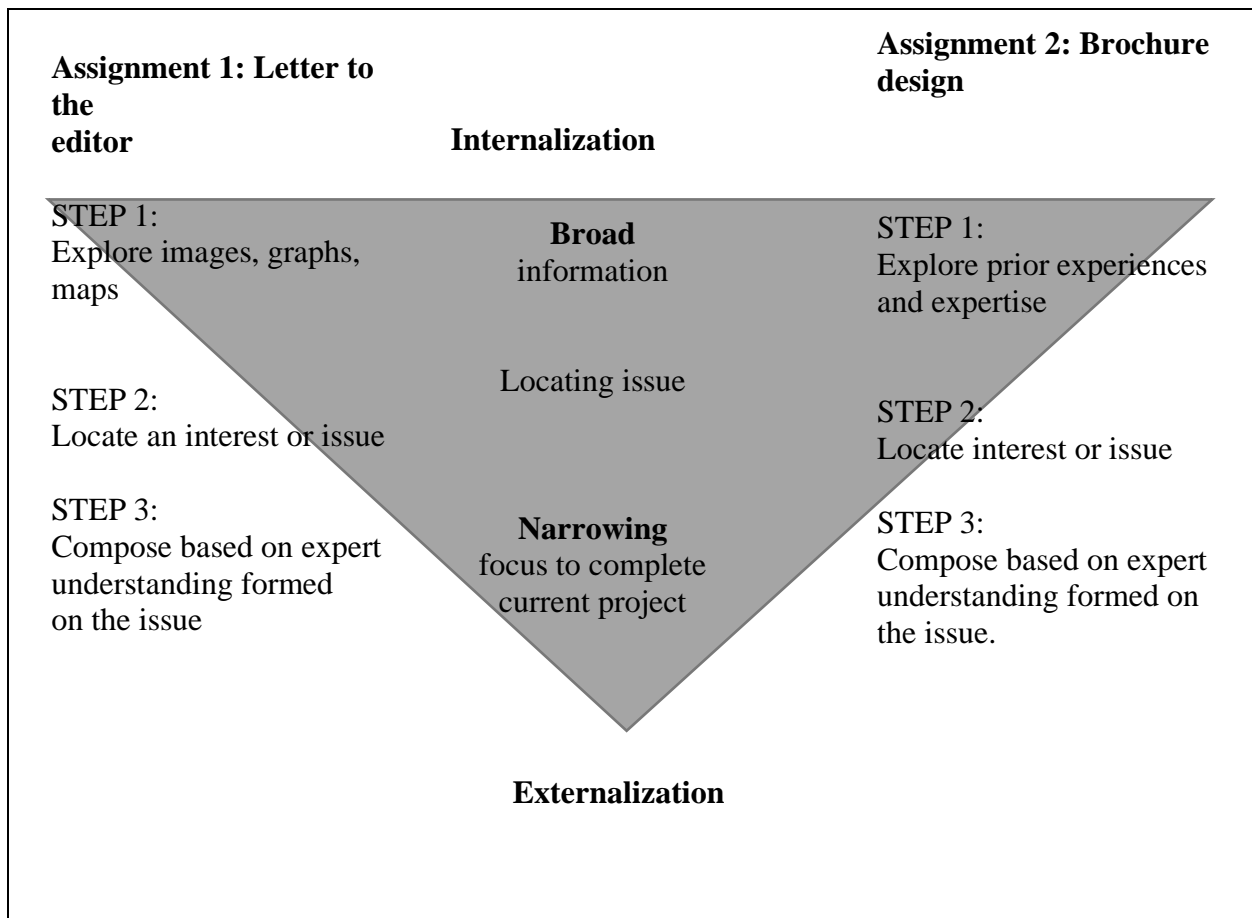

Assignment 1: Letter to the editor

Assignment 2: Brochure design

Internalization

STEP 1:
Explore images, graphs, maps

Broad information

STEP 1:
Explore prior experiences and expertise

Locating issue

STEP 2:
Locate an interest or issue

STEP 2:
Locate interest or issue

STEP 3:
Compose based on expert understanding formed on the issue

Narrowing focus to complete current project

STEP 3:
Compose based on expert understanding formed on the issue.

Externalization

Figure 1: Using Visuals in Composition

project by exploring a plethora of information. In the letter to the editor assignment, this refers to the massive number of images, videos, and infographic maps that they view. In the brochure assignment, they explore their experiences and interests before narrowing down to one in which they have a strong interest or expertise.

In the next stage, the assignments call for locating an issue by narrowing down the options. The next stage is to compose deliverables in response to the requirements of the paper. Use of images can come at the initial stage or latter stage but it is important to keep in mind that visual rhetoric is central to learning and producing at these stages and should not merely appear as an illustration of the written word. Visuals function as an instrument of internalization in the meaning-making process in the letter to the editor and of externalization in the meaning-making process in the brochure assignment.

In a study of Vygotsky's theory of internalization and externalization in the matter of construction of mathematical models and scientific diagrams, Maschietto and Bussi (2009) explores how we understand visual cues and how does the mind interpret them. Vygotsky locates meanings in the signs to which the human brain is exposed. The meanings mediated by the signs are internalized (Van der Veer, 1997). According to Maschietto and Bussi, in the Vygotskian way of thinking about the interaction of students with the images in letter assignment, images are icons that help students internalize the global issue that they selected to write about. Here, "signs are the products of the internalization processes and are called psychological tools" (Maschietto & Bussi, 2009). The range of graphic information that the students interact with are part of the semiotic system. The formation of the common *topoi* and internalization of the visual icons lead to the formation of a good idea for their project. For example, images of refugee camps would be a starting point for students, leading to further exploration of images and texts that signify both the news coverage and human side of these stories. Next comes the written word in the formal letter format. The externalization of the response to the images is alphabetic. In the brochure assignment, externalization of images happens at the stage of development of the product. While working with visual rhetorics as central in the freshman composition course, students internalize and externalize images as part of the cognitive process. On one hand, in the letter to the editor project, students begin by exposing themselves to information that they do not know; students internalize the new knowledge. On the other hand (and project), they externalize knowledge for their audience in the form of visuals. For example, if the audience is not aware of seven different ways of tying shoelaces, this new knowledge is revealed by students with information on the ways of tying shoelaces. Students externalized this information in the brochure with the help of visuals.

Internalizing and externalizing visual cues contributes to negotiation of control/mastery/agency over the project. Reflections show that students appreciate the potential of visual rhetorics in raising social consciousness and intercultural understanding (assignment 1) and understanding the pedagogical function of visual rhetoric (assignment 2). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) write about the function of internalization of semiotics as essential to the learning of language. They explain that symbol systems are complex, intertwined, and messy but vital. The human brain is constantly negotiating its relationships with symbol systems, other humans, and semiotic cues

in the "external world of nature" (p. 197) in order to develop a distinct perspective. In the composing process, an author alternatively internalizes and externalizes inquiry during the activities of invention, arrangement, delivery, and so on. The author is in a constant state of oscillation of control/mastery/agency with the content. This happens when learning, interpretation, and application take place at various stages of composition. Both as producers and interpreters of content, the author is open and adaptable to this state of oscillation. While these stages are normal in the composing process, students might need help realizing that they are internalizing and externalizing. In addition to the content they are producing, they learn to compose and communicate meaningfully.

Limitations and Roadblocks

The authors of the current article are not scholars in visual rhetoric or visual literacy. However, we intended to incorporate visual rhetoric in our pedagogy with the conviction that with adequate resources and guidance, visual rhetoric can be universally implemented by instructors in spite of not being specialists. However, in doing so, our first major roadblock was finding instructional assistance for such projects in composition textbooks. Textbooks advertised as "readers" tend to feature alphabetic texts only and textbooks that base their writing pedagogy on rhetorics are, in general, handbooks containing text-heavy activities and readings. We did not intend to base our first-year composition course entirely on visual rhetorics. Although the Rhetoric and Composition discipline has a significant body of scholarship on visual literacy, English departments have a long way to go before they can envision a course in composition primary based on visual literacy (Selfe, 2004; Hobbs, 2002; Hill, 2004). Nevertheless, did not we want the visual rhetoric element to be an extra add-on element. We found a robust body of scholarship on how to incorporate visual rhetorics in first year composition classes (Little, 2015; Lundy & Stephens, 2015; Veach, 2019) that primary focused on the need rather than the process. We appreciated the tools we had but struggled to find a textbook that had elements of visual rhetoric assignments and instructional content. There are textbooks that are applicable to courses that entirely based on visual rhetoric. A seamless symbiosis of text-heavy composition pedagogy and visual rhetorics still needs more work. Instructors of composition with limited expertise but ample interest in using visual rhetorics need to be able to use textbooks that have both elements and choices of assignments to choose from within the lessons.

The student reflections we analyzed revealed insightful comments on the images that they were using at the stages of their composition process. This in turn helped us understand their cognitive process. However, many of the students focused more on tracing their growth as a writer based on the products at various stages of the composition rather than the process. In our analysis of reflection and assignment assessments, we were able to see the impact of using images. We strongly felt that visual rhetorics were effective in honing the skills of critical understanding and of successful delivery in the two example we are presenting in this paper. However, we cannot conclude that all students understood the role of visual rhetoric in helping them develop these skills. Nevertheless, once honed, these skillsets are transferable in their future professions both in academia and industry.

Conclusion

Peterson (2019) attempts to reassert the position of visual as the most important human sense, a position that was once held by the grand rhetoricians of ancient Europe where rhetoric included non-verbal communicative practices. However, in classrooms, the visual is often not used according to its potential as a means of persuasion or pedagogy. There is a need for more research on "visuals apprehended by the body's eye … and how these visuals might influence audience who perceive them" (p. 19). In this paper, we show how students perceive visual cues and form knowledge. In the second assignment, one can see how knowledge is presented by students through visual cues. We call for further exploration of the pedagogical application of visual rhetorics in strategizing all rhetorical processes.

When applied to other assignments, we find that the use of visual rhetorics as a pedagogical approach in composition should go beyond the application of images at the fringes of "real" writing. Visuals can etch non-written meanings on the mind of the readers like every other mode of meaning-making can. Visuals can be used frequently given that many students are constantly creating and interacting with images on social media platforms. Visual rhetorical approaches can be used as a way of remixing longer assignments in contexts that students have developed. They can be encouraged to re-envision a text-heavy project for an audience who can best be reached through the use of visuals. Again, in these projects, multimodality should ideally be central and not seen as an add-on component.

In general, students are often users and producers of visual content in social media with more than basic skills in recording, applying, and editing of visual content. Cyphert (2007) argues for the electronic eloquence of both students and instructors leading to a potentially seamless exchange of application and interpretation. Although Cyphert's article pertains mainly to speech, the foundational theory is applicable to both the verbal and non-verbal. Keeping that in mind, Tracy Bowen advances a schema that suggests evaluating critical choices and awareness (2017). This is a new medium of meaning-making and students may be still developing critical skills as composers and interpreters of visual rhetoric. Instructors, too, need training and instructional materials to help them help students learn with more depth instead of depending on students to know how to manipulate or interpret images. Training in the field of composition and rhetoric has given us robust tools for assessing student writing. We use rubrics to assess the strength of persuasiveness of language, style, and argument. However, in projects that employ visual rhetorics, evaluation of the success of the project might sometimes pose a challenge. The artistic excellence of our students' projects was not assessed. That said, we need more research about the construction of assessment rubrics for visual rhetorics in freshman composition. In an attempt to develop a rubric appropriate for assignments containing visual rhetorics, Sonja Foss came up with a schema that included criteria such as functionality, identifiability, and legitimacy (1994). This schema almost seems a defense of the use of visual rhetoric.

It is easy to marginalize the visual in the discipline of rhetoric and composition where text is considered central in the understanding the composition process. It is also easy to neglect the so-called fifth (or last) canon of rhetoric by bestowing on it a sense of finality and thereby

curbing its potential of growth and further interpretation. Our examples show the pedagogic value of visual rhetoric as a tool of invention and delivery. Visual rhetorical studies have a tremendous, yet less explored scope in meeting some of the most important learning outcomes in composition pedagogy. As composers and critical interpreters of meaning-making visuals, students can successfully apply visuals in almost all stages in the composing process. Visuals do not necessarily need to be in the fringes but can replace parts of the written word as a robust and rich alternative of a persuasive tool. Once we recognize the potential of visual rhetoric as a mainstream tool for knowledge dissemination in a freshman composition class, a vast scope for research will open up in the matter of assessment and developing study materials that are specifically targeted towards visual rhetorics in freshman composition.

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