SOUNDS WRITE: EMBRACING MULTIMODAL TEXTS
AS LITERATE COMPOSITION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Dr. Donald T. Martin: English scholar, musician, and theologian. Thank you for showing the way.
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CHAPTER 1

Overview of a Study of Multimodal Teaching Practices

This chapter gives an overview of a dissertation project aimed at providing a systematic exploration into the increasing prevalence of audio compositions, and the use of sound in general, in the writing classroom (Selfe, 2004; McKe, 2006; Shankar, 2006; Shipka, 2006; Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007). Heretofore, there has been no such study describing the ways writing instructors are assigning and talking about sound with their students.

Some writing instructors are beginning to use the mode of sound in their writing classrooms through assigning audio essays. The audio essay, a spoken form of the traditional written essay, combines an author’s written and physical voice as well as other supplemental sounds, using digital recording technology, to create an alternative method of meaning-making for writing students. As there has been no systematic study of the ways this is taking place, the goal of this dissertation project is to describe four separate instances of classroom practice, each featuring a multimodal assignment foregrounding the mode of sound. The project provides a snapshot of instructor practices at a specific point in time, describing the way four instructors talk with undergraduate writing students about affordances of sound and related principles of composition. It describes writing instructors’ practices of assigning audio essays and ways they present, to their writing students, a rationale for acquiring multimodal literacy and producing multimodal texts.
Using grounded theory, it compares data from the four samples in an effort to map the range of understandings of the audio essay as reflected in the language used by these four practitioners. Ultimately, this dissertation seeks to answer the questions: “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? And what perceived affordances of audio technology are revealed through their classroom discourse?”

This chapter moves from a concise background of multimodal communication theory to a brief review of literature, then to an overview of theories of sound use, and finally to a summary of the way both areas are being treated by writing scholars in the field of written composition. It closes with a description of methodology and chapter synopses.

1.1 Multimodal Communication Theory

Multimodal communication theory weaves together the concepts of social construction, design, and sensory perception while foregrounding the “biological and physiological” aspects of “human semiosis” (Kress, 2000, p.184). Recent studies tend to view multimodal instructional practices through the lens of social semiotic theory and call for more research exploring those practices with the goal of contributing to existing theory or of developing new theory related to function, design, and production of multimodal compositions. Digital technologies have expanded the array of existing resources for meaning-making, allowing a combination of the video, audio, and tactile modes now to be common means of representation in distance communication. This,
according to Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, warrants a re-evaluation of semiotic theory as multimodal, in which “common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes” (p.2). Understanding that the individual modes work together rather than alone to produce meaning, Kress and Van Leeuwen have formed new theory surrounding these “common principles of multimodal communication” in which they map similarities across individual modes (2000, p.1). Using multimodal communication theory, Kress and van Leeuwen have examined semiotic properties of images, colors, sounds, tastes, space, and toys, but their emphasis tends to be on the visual mode. In focusing on audio essays, this dissertation project extends Kress and van Leeuwen’s work by exploring ways principles of sound are presented to students by their instructors.

1.2 Studies Using Multimodal Communication Theory

Among other works that explore multimodal communication principles is one study by Bezemer and Kress (2008), citing Kaplan (1995), which laments the lack of constructive attempts to “elucidate the effects of the distinctive affordances of different modes and media” as well as to explore the relationships between multimodal texts/representations and the social contexts in which they are assigned and produced. This study, along with those mentioned below, is discussed more fully in section 2.5.

Another study extending the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen by exploring alternative modes is that by Glynda Hull and Mark Nelson. In their 2005 article, “Locating the Semiotic Power of Multimodality,” they reference the tendency to favor
print over other modes, then also go on to invite further research into semiotic function of isolated, yet co-present modalities. Hull and Nelson’s research and analysis of data involving “multimedia digital storytelling” prompts them to call for a reconceptualization of writing—one that embraces multimodality in the composition of texts. Hull and Nelson admit that, “looking back at our analysis, we are still intrigued by what we did not capture, especially around sound and music and the intersection of these modalities with language and image” (p. 252).

In a third study, Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith (2008), as Bezemer and Kress suggest, write of the potentials and constraints of semiotic fullness relating to social context in a specific case study employing the modes of print, image, and sound in a digital video. *Semiotic fullness* they define as “multimodal completeness relative to the printed text” (p. 421) or as “the multiplicative interactions of meaning among co-presented modes” (p. 436). In other words, semiotic fullness is the balance between a variety of modes working together to convey the same message. Bezemer and Kress’s research analysis, dealing with one student’s multimodal composition and its effects on him socially, reveals affordances of video composition including the way such fullness enriches representation of self to others while at the same time constraining the author more securely in a single representation over time as in the case of a Youtube video posting. While Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith do move beyond the visual by examining a video production which includes sound, the analysis still centers primarily on
affordances of the visual mode. A gap, therefore, clearly exists in the study of multimodal compositions which foreground other modes besides the visual and their affordances. This dissertation responds to these issues as it features the assigning of the audio essay as one emerging type of multimodal text foregrounding the mode of sound. It describes the way instructors rhetorically frame their design and presentation of the audio essay assignment, their rationale for the affordances of multimodal texts and for the affordances of using the specific mode of sound. The studies mentioned here will be discussed more fully in chapter 2.

1.3 The Mode of Sound

Sound or audio theory, which will also be explored more fully in chapter 2, provides for my project two things: 1) a backdrop against which to place the data as I explore ways instructors present and talk about theories of sound use to their students, and 2) an understanding of how sound can be used rhetorically, which has implications for literacy pedagogy in teaching ways sound can be used intentionally as a sign. It has been established that changes in tools cause changes in approaches to literacy (Haas, 1996). In recent decades, sound engineering software has become available to the public through programs like Audacity and Garage Band, while ipods allow a single individual to access the equivalent of the holdings of a small radio station. This access alters people’s habits and the focus of their attention. Rudolf Arnheim, in Radio: an art of sound (1936) wrote about how sound always happens in time and noted a shift in
attention from days when families fully focused on an audio program sat together around the radio, the primary tool for communicating recorded sound, to the era when recorded sounds became a background to daily life as radios became smaller. Decades later, for Kress and van Leeuwen, it is precisely the notion of attention—the ability of the reader/listener to choose how to apply his or her attention to a given production—that problematizes the notion of multimodal literacies regardless of the foregrounded mode. New media mix modes in ways that allow one’s attention to follow subjective paths, some even simultaneously, which complicates the challenges of the literacy instructor. Kress and van Leeuwen, in their efforts to develop a multimodal theory of communication, therefore, call for studies which examine practices of communication—ways that people “make signs” using a variety of modes in various social settings (2001). My study looks at writing pedagogy that incorporates sound, which involves an alternative type of literacy from that considered to be associated with traditional writing classrooms partly because it requires different tools and also different perceptual skills.

1.4 Writing Studies and Sound

As tools for meaning-making change and communication theories subsequently alter to accommodate semiotic features of multimodality, some writing scholars are beginning to take up the issue of multimodal instruction in specific ways. Discussions of multimodality among instructors of written composition, (and for this project, discussions of sound in particular) tend to focus on three key concepts: relevance, the timeliness of
multimodal instruction; *design*, the recognition that the notion of design is driving multimodal instruction at all levels; and *change* as it relates to the rise of new literacies associated with multimodal instruction. The treatment each area has received in recent literature in the field and its relation to my project is the subject of this section. Each point is further developed in chapter 2 under section 2.1.3.

1.4.1 Relevance

Many writing professionals (Ball & Hawk, 2006; Selfe, 2004; Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007; Wysocki, 2004; Yancey, 2004) are challenging writing instructors to bring relevance to their teaching by keeping up with students’ abilities and expectations given the prevalence of digital technologies in the workforce. To keep their teaching relevant, educators are warned to “pay attention” to the close connection between technology and literacy, to be aware of what they are doing with technology and why, and to take stock of those in society they are benefitting and those they are leaving behind (Selfe, 1999, p. xxiii). A mounting need exists for written composition instructors to address the issue of relevance and to help their students develop multiple types of literacy (Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007, p.ix). The idea of relevance is further discussed in section 2.6.

1.4.2 Design

Design is at the center of an instructor’s decision to implement multimodal instruction into a classroom just as it is at the center of a student’s decision to construct a
multimodal composition in a certain way. Writing instructors should view the materiality of the texts they teach from as well as the materiality of the products they assign students to create and design, allowing students practice in forming re-articulations of the same message in different modes (Wysocki, p.18). Design is not simply about ratio of new technology to print in a composition but also about the rationale for why an author chooses which modes to combine and how she combines them. As many scholars are noting, constructing multimodal classrooms and multimodal compositions, therefore, is akin to constructing the self in a new way (Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, and Sirc, 2004, p. 20; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, Gee, Knobel, & Searle, 1997). Designing an audio assignment is a complex undertaking that involves understanding the technology required to create an audio essay, familiarity with rhetorical affordances of sound, and belief in the relevance of multimodal instruction and the many potential designs that can result.

1.4.3 Change

The visual mode has typically received more attention than the aural mode from semiotic and literacy theorists, and, in spite of increasing attention to multimodality by writing scholars, their focus too remains primarily on visual modes excepting the work of Selfe (2004) and Selfe and Takayoshi (2007). Only recently, with a 2006 issue of Computers and Composition entirely devoted to sound, has sound begun to gain attention in writing studies. Scholars such as Tara Shankar (2006), Heidi Mckee (2006), Thomas Rickert & Michael Salvo (2006), and Jodi Shipka (2006) have written about the uses and
affordances of sound in multimodal compositions as it relates to students’ ability to record and communicate ideas linguistically in a mode other than writing. Shankar (2006), focusing on affordances of speech in place of writing, has developed her own computer program called SpriterWriter and used it to teach adult learners and elementary students to compose what she calls spoken “talkuments.” Based on her analysis of outcomes after using the software in the classroom over two years, she argues that literacy values assigned to writing can be achieved in the domain of the oral and asserts that oral forms might fruitfully be revalued as literate composition. Her results show that literacy skills can be much higher when students are provided tools to compose new media texts as opposed to being confined to print-only compositions (p. 391). Shankar seeks for fuller integration of multimodal compositions in writing classrooms. What she does not do is offer a theory of how sounds other than speech work to convey meaning similarly or differently from print.

Also considering the affordances of sound, Heidi McKee (2006), draws on Kress and van Leeuwen and her previous experience assigning a multimodal composition. Referring to her experience, McKee writes that, although nearly all of the student subjects in her study of new media compositions used sound in their productions, she and her co-worker did not teach aspects of sound function such as initiation and duration nor rhetorical aspects of sound (2006, p.336).
Attempting to correct this, McKee presents a schema for using sound in new media compositions in the form of speech, music, sound effects or silence. Like Kress, and Hull and Nelson, McKee calls for viewing sound as co-relational with other modes rather than in isolation. Reviewing existing theories about sound, she offers ideas for how to draw on these theories when producing multimodal texts but does not provide information about what is actually happening in practice and how it is supported by these theories. McKee is questioning ways “composition instructors” should approach discussions of “sound design” in the classroom (McKee, 2006, p. 336). My study addresses this question as well, describing the way four instructors talk with their students about sound design and about the effective use of sound in composition.

The impetus for these novel approaches to teaching composition is partly a response to changing literacies, partly the knowledge that relevance in the classroom is attained when it matches real life, practical communication needs and tools, and partly the realization that designing assignments and pedagogies that reflect these notions is crucial in order for students to have a meaningful classroom experience.

1.5 The Importance of the Study

The research this dissertation undertakes is of significance because very little is known about assigning practices of instructors who are teaching multimodal compositions in the writing classroom, and few studies look specifically at this issue. New pedagogical practices relating to developing technologies and literacies need to be
observed, recorded, and described as part of the effort to understand how instructors are teaching previously untried assignments and why they are using the methods they have chosen. This understanding can lead to discovery and implementation of the most effective practices in the field. In addition to exploring how and why these practices occur, this project searches out instructors’ perceptions regarding the relevance of audio assignments in the writing classroom as well as their notions of potential advantages and limitations of producing an audio text.

With the intent to contribute to recent scholarly discourse on shifts in meaning-making strategies, as well as on multimodal literacy and multimodal assigning practices in writing classrooms, I explore, in this dissertation, the previously stated research questions: “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? And what perceived affordances of audio technology are revealed through their classroom discourse?” My attempts to answer these questions will hopefully contribute something to our understanding of multimodal composing practices, multimodal assignment instruction, and the place of the audio composition in writing studies. Regarding multimodal composing, the answers may help us understand how it is being shaped by instructors and whether or not their pedagogy is based on multimodal communication theory. This in turn can lead to better understanding of how multimodal assignment instruction features affordances of sound and relevance of multimodal assignments. Finally, anything we can learn about how instructors think that the audio composition fits
into writing studies can inform future practice in the writing field, as learning and communication styles continue to change based on increasing use of digital tools.

1.6 The Scope of this Study

I seek to understand ways that undergraduate writing instructors are presenting audio assignments. What language and what sort of rationale are they using with their students regarding the need for effective multimodal composing and, more specifically, the use of sound? One strength of this study, the qualitative method known as grounded theory, will enable me to examine and compare case studies comprised of video and written data from four writing instructors who assign multimodal essays in undergraduate classrooms.

1.6.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a methodology first developed in the late 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. This qualitative, comparative approach to data analysis is based on the creators’ desire to connect theory development more closely to supporting data than existing qualitative methods permitted and to eliminate or at least significantly reduce researcher bias. Grounded Theory, as outlined in Strauss (1987), features dense description, the concept indicator model, and the techniques of axial coding and dimensionalizing. The particulars of this theory will be outlined in detail in chapter 3.
1.6.2 Data

This project offers a detailed descriptive account of four composition instructors’ practices of assigning audio essays. Data were drawn from four case studies in an effort to reveal snapshots of new instructor practices related to the assigning of multimodal projects in undergraduate writing classrooms. My purpose is to describe and compare four case studies in an attempt to capture an understanding of the current “state of the art” (Fernandez, 2004, p. 3) of English multimodal composition instruction use the following data-gathering techniques:

*Video taping*

I transcribed video/audio tapes of four composition instructors presenting audio essay assignments to undergraduate writing classes. Each video was at least one hour in length—the length of a typical class session. Video/audio coverage focused on each instructor rather than on students. Instructors were chosen according to their plan to assign an audio essay to undergraduate writing students and their willingness to participate in the study, which in addition to allowing the video taping of one class, involved sharing written assignments and syllabi and answering retrospective interview questions via email.
Written interviews

Interviews of the four composition instructors who assigned the audio essays were conducted by email.

Written artifacts

These include assignments and syllabi of each of the four writing instructors. These will be described fully in chapter three.

1.6.3 Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1: “Overview of a Study of Multimodal Teaching Practices” moves through a concise introduction of the key issues and movements in the field of writing out of which my project grows. It sets the stage for fuller discussion of these areas in later chapters.

Chapter 2: “Assessing Changes in Pedagogical Discourse Surrounding the Teaching of the Audio Essay” offers an in-depth argument for the relevance of my study as it is situated in the discourse of the literature examining applications of multimodal communication theory in writing classrooms. This chapter defines significant terms and provides an overview of multimodal communication theory; pedagogical theory and new literacies; theories of sound; and the concept of multimodality as it is treated by writing studies professionals.
Chapter 3: “Methodology” provides a justification for the case study method, a thorough description of grounded theory, and detailed information about how the project was conducted – including case selection, data collection, coding, and analysis.

Chapter 4: “Comparative Analysis” presents my grounded theory codes and how they emerged. This chapter discusses results of the video discourse analysis. It gives examples of data collected from four undergraduate writing instructors and aligns them with theoretical discussions in chapter 2. The purpose is to reveal instructor intentions regarding the audio projects they were assigning and to compare ways their discourse showed their practices aligned with or shifted from the practices of the other three instructors as well as existing multimodal communication theory. A brief comparison between the discourse analysis results and existing pedagogies, particularly the New London Group’s pedagogy of multiliteracies, follows the grounded theory analysis. The purpose of this additional comparison is to explore ways instructor practices align, if at all, with those recommended in existing multimodal pedagogies.

Chapter 5: “Conclusions and implications of Multimodal Discourse Analysis” provides an overview of previous chapters. It then moves on to discuss a number of potential ways this dissertation may inform current practice and contribute to future research in writing. Those who wish to examine ways writing instructors have responded to growing cultural changes and to emergent consciousness of social context as it influences design in the
construction of audio and other multimodal assignments should find much to draw on in this project.

*What the Study Does Not Do*

Admittedly this dissertation has limitations. Some might wish I had looked at more than four classes. Most would want me to look at students’ composing processes and at their finished products—the essays themselves. Others have stated an interest in an analysis of assessment strategies used by instructors. While all of these areas would be extremely interesting and would yield rich information for writing studies, it was necessary to narrow the scope to one under-researched aspect of multimodal composing. The analysis of teacher practices and discourse is a good starting place for branching studies that will undertake the other areas mentioned above. Teacher talk and practice influences student behavior and leads to assessment strategies, making this a logical starting point for further research.

This study also does not look at all parts of the original corpus. It provides a descriptive analysis of the audio transcripts of teacher discourse, while written data are referred to only minimally. Written data, however, are included in appendices at the end and so are available for perusal by others and may be used by this researcher for future projects.
1.6.4 Contributions to the Field

In conclusion, and in addition to those things already mentioned above in the section *The importance of the study*, this dissertation provides the following contributions to the field of writing. By examining the assigning of audio essays, the work here continues to answer the call by Hull and Nelson and Bezemer and Kress for examination of other modes besides the visual. It contributes to understandings, within the field of written composition studies, of how teachers talk about digital audio technology in undergraduate writing classrooms. By describing instructor discourse related to multimodal assignments in the classroom, this study can show, in answer to Heidi McKee’s questions, how writing instructors present, talk about, and reflect on such assignments. In the spirit of Tara Shankar’s valuing of orality as literate composition, this study may shed light on the way instructors think about the particular potential of all sounds, even those apart from speech, to convey meaning. It can also explore the rhetorical power at work within the complexities resulting from interaction between modes, authorial design and application, and audience perception and interpretation.
CHAPTER 2

Assessing Changes in Pedagogical Discourse Surrounding the Teaching of the Audio Essay

Changes in notions of meaning-making and what those changes mean for undergraduate writing instruction will be treated in depth in this chapter through an exploration of scholarship addressing multimodal communication theory; pedagogical theory and new literacies; theories of sound; and multimodality as it is treated by writing studies professionals. I begin in this chapter by arguing that multimodal communication is generating new literacies and emergent pedagogies about which little is known at this point. Multimodal Communication theory combined with social semiotics provides a useful lens through which to analyze data gathered in an effort to gain further understanding of these pedagogies. I also argue that sound has relevance in the writing classroom alongside text and image because of its many rich rhetorical aspects. The resources of sound in meaning-making are being tapped more and more by undergraduate writing instructors, who see a move to multimodal instruction as relevant and necessary. Finally, I argue that a need exists in the field of writing for research-based studies which explore and describe how people are practicing multimodal instruction. By reviewing these dominant claims, I demonstrate that the lack of understanding, by experts in the field, of how multimodal assignments are being presented is a problem. Later chapters provide a description of what in fact is taking place practically in four specific classrooms related to instruction of the audio essay.
2.1 MCT as a Means of Understanding Emergent Pedagogical Practice

Kress and van Leeuwen, in the 1990s formed a goal of constructing new theory, different from existing semiotic theory that would accommodate the many changes occurring in semiotics due to continual technological advances. The result of their efforts is multimodal communication theory (MCT), based on social semiotics and theories of multimodal discourse. *Multimodal communication theory* combines the concepts of social construction, design, and sensory perception (all of which are central to this project) with the idea “that human semiosis” above all else, arises out of a biological and physiological reality (Kress, 2000, p.184). Human communication occurs at many levels and always with the interplay of the five physical senses. The uniqueness of MCT lies in the fact that it foregrounds “communicative practices” involving the five senses at various levels of meaning-making (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, p.111). Such levels include the way a presenter frames or constructs an argument, for example as a plea or as a command; the way a message is produced or designed, as in the tools used to create it (such as cameras, computers, gestures, or audio devices); and the ways a message is interpreted by those receiving it—how it is perceived by the senses and cognitively processed. Communicative practices may also involve design (arrangement) techniques and methods of “distribution” (p.111). MCT therefore provides a useful lens through which to interpret the data for this project. Encompassing all levels of a message, MCT recognizes that each level “contributes to meaning” (p. 111) or that meaning resides in every level of every communicative practice.
As part of their theory, Kress and van Leeuwen make clear that the term *multimodal* refers to the understanding that any single mode can communicate a wide range of meanings—that if an author switches from foregrounding one mode to another, the same meanings conveyed in the first mode can usually be conveyed in the second—only with different affordances (2001, p. 2). At the same time, no message is ever monomodal, but rather, human senses, under normal circumstances, work together to interpret signs (2002, p.184; Arnheim, 1969, p. vi). The term *multimodal* then means “to be constituted by a number of modes of representation operating at once” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2002, p.184). Because the audio essay is a new media text involving an emergent communicative practice with layered levels of meaning, this project aligns particularly well with MCT. The project—an analysis of the discourse surrounding instruction of the audio essay—examines certain aspects of a shift in emphasis from alphabetic to other modes of expression in writing classrooms.

It is a shift that has been long in coming. According to Kress, any given culture, by choosing to privilege certain modes and communicative practices, causes members of that culture to rely disproportionately on certain senses while overlooking others. In the West, the emphasis has been on visual and aural senses in particular as they are used to decode alphabetic writing and speech (Kress, 2000, p. 184). Due to a narrow definition of writing that is fast becoming obsolete, writing classes have traditionally emphasized the alphabetic mode, focusing on the written essay or research paper. This project, however, looks at a developing communicative practice involving a fresh way of designing compositions in writing classrooms. The audio essay operates in the following three areas
of communicative practice, all of which are foregrounded in Kress and van Leeuwen’s multimodal communication theory: 1) social construction of a new media message within a classroom, 2) design of a composition radically different from the traditional written essay or research paper, and 3) use of perceptive senses by the audience which are different than those typically relied on in the classroom setting. This project therefore is clearly an analysis of a practice based on MCT as it involves students crafting messages in completely new ways using tools (Audacity recording software, the human voice, recorded sounds) far different from pencil and paper and even computer keyboard. Very little, however, is known about how instructors are helping students acquire skills for thinking about an audience’s processing of an audio message.

2.1.1 An Overview of Social Semiotics

Kress and van Leeuwen’s goal of developing MCT includes a secondary goal of exploring under-researched modes, a goal with which this dissertation is aligned in its exploration of the under-researched mode of sound and the way that instructors perceive and present its role and affordances during instruction. Kress and van Leeuwen’s intent is to promote studies which analyze “common principles of multimodal communication” by identifying affordances of separate but co-present modes and mapping similarities across those modes (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 1) Because they reinforce MCT with a social semiotic framework, it is worthwhile to explain social semiotics here and why Kress and van Leeuwen see it as being at the heart of their new theory.
2.1.2 The Role of Modality in Social Semiotics

Essential to an understanding of social semiotics is the concept of *modality* in the way that Hodge and Kress (1988, 1993) and later Theo van Leeuwen (1999; 2005, p. 160) define it. Modality is defined as one social groups’ expression of what is true for that group or as the “relationship between truth and norms, between the way we picture reality and the way we conduct social life” (van Leeuwen p.175). Social semiotics integrates two aspects of communication practice—design and interpretation—by taking into account and extending the range of modalities or levels of meaning present in any given act of communication. For example, a person designing a message, such as a teacher designing an assignment for an audio essay, is guided in that design by her interpretation of the context at hand, including the audience and any earlier messages that have a bearing, however indirect, on the message currently being constructed (Hodge and Kress, 1993, p. 175). The notion that *design* or crafting of the sign and *interpretation* of both context and sign work together as part of the sign is a central premise of social semiotics. Along these lines, social semiotics elevates the role of design in interpretation of meaning by expanding levels of meaning to include all locations in which meaning could be located within a sign and to what degree.

2.1.3 Definition of Terms Related to Social Semiotics

To ensure that all that has been discussed to this point and all that will follow is properly understood, some key terms need to be defined. *Semiotic theorists* (those who study the science of signs and symbols) and a growing number of literacy, communication, and writing scholars are giving more and more attention to the concept
of multimodality in relation to meaning-making. *Multimodality* has been defined as "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, p.20; 2002, p.184; also discussed in Arnheim, 1969, p. vi; Bezemer and Kress, 2008; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Looi et. al. 2005; Sorapure, 2006, p. 3). Multimodality then is concerned with production, design, and arrangement of a message.

*Meaning-making* is defined by the New London Group as, “the creative application of existing resources for meaning…in negotiating the constantly shifting occasions and needs of communication” (Fairclough, 2000, p.162). As this definition signifies that existing resources are changing, it can be assumed that practices of consuming and producing messages are naturally changing as well. It is logical then that students should be able to not only consume the new kinds of messages that are circulating but to produce them (Yancey, 2004; Selfe, 2007). The definition of meaning-making, based on the New London Group’s *theory of multiliteracies*, is aimed at helping educators craft effective pedagogy (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, p.7). Exactly what constitutes effective pedagogy is an idea which will be discussed in fuller detail later in this chapter.

Closely related to meaning-making is the term *design*. The notion of design and its many applications—from composition design to pedagogical design to design of personal identities and futures—is present in discussions by the New London Group and nearly every scholar discussing multimodality and literacy. The New London Group, in their theory of Multi-literacies, identifies “design” as “the key concept.” The way design
contributes to the theory of Multi-literacies will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. But here a brief explanation will suffice. According to the theory of Multiliteracies, anyone who initiates change in the present is a designer necessarily setting off a chain of events which will influence the future. The New London Group asserts therefore, that, “as designers of meaning, we are designers of social futures – workplace futures, public futures, and community futures” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, p. 7). As with any agents of change, writing instructors must operate within and from the history of understanding on which traditional methods and notions about meaning-making are based as they simultaneously introduce new ways of making meaning. The instructors observed for this project, in assigning audio essays, can be considered agents of change who are moving away from traditional pedagogical designs and introducing new designs for composing which could affect future pedagogy in writing composition classrooms. According to the theory of Multi-literacies, these instructors ideally could empower students to design their social and workplace lives differently than they might have done without this application of new knowledge. Through descriptive analysis of instructor practices and discourse related to the assigning of audio essays, this project reveals the extent to which the observed instructors articulate their awareness of and valuing of the basic principles of the theory of Multiliteracies.

Another word that requires further explanation is mode. Mode, as defined by Jeff Bezemer and Gunther Kress, is “a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning” (2008, p.171). Common consensus within a group enables a resource to carry meaning and to operate as a mode (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 346). Modes as
means of representation can draw on any aspect of the senses used to interpret and convey meaning: aspects of vision, including arrangement, perspective, motion, and color; of sound, including pitch, volume, sound effect and silence; of touch, including pressure and balance, as in instances of reading Braille, texting, and gaming; of smell; and even of taste, as in the ways certain foods are associated with certain cultures—any perception that signifies conventionally recognized meaning. Sub-categories like color and music can be treated as resources within the larger modes of vision and sound respectively or as modes in themselves. “What counts as mode depends on sign makers acting within the needs and understanding of a particular community and its more or less conventionalized practices” (Bezemer and Kress, 2008, p.172).

Some scholars use the word modality interchangeably with mode, but they are two different things. Modality was defined earlier in this chapter as showing the “relationship between truth and norms” (van Leeuwen p.175). Levels of truth or authenticity will potentially vary in any mode. As an example, one can consider birdsong in the aural mode. Real birdsong theoretically has more authenticity than recorded birdsong, if only for the reason that when it is generated and perceived, a real bird is part of the context. Recorded birdsong, because it is a captured preservation of a real bird’s song, in turn has more authenticity than birdsong mimicked by an instrument like a flute or recorder. So each form of an essentially identical message has a different degree of modality depending on the context and communication tools used to produce it. The same essential message can be conveyed using three different tools, all in the same mode (aural) but with a different modality (level of authenticity) each time.
The significance of this in light of this project lies in the fact that instructors are teaching students to combine semiosis of sound with traditional aspects of written composition. There is currently little understanding of the way writing instructors present affordances of the mode of sound to their students using the lens of multimodal communication theory, which relates affordances of any given mode to the level of modality/authenticity it achieves in a given context. No one knows how closely instructors’ pedagogy reflects this theory as they discuss the mode of sound with their students. Along these lines, social semiotics elevates the role of design in interpretation of meaning by expanding the levels of meaning to include all locations in which meaning could reside within a sign and to what degree. Instruction should ideally guide students to base their interpretation of meaning on awareness of authenticity of layered modes.

To even better understand the notion of modality, it is helpful to examine a few other definitions of mode. The original word “mode,” derived from the Latin “modus,” is similarly defined as, “method, manner, kind, tone” (mode, n.d.). A mode, therefore, is a method of communicating. In French, mode is translated as “Fashion” as in the phrase à la mode, “in this fashion” or “the way we do it here.” This French interpretation of mode seems best to capture the distinctiveness related to the notion of modality according to social semiotics, in which a certain group’s perception of any truth or reality conveyed through signs is relative to the fashion (the way we perceive things here) or the social norms of the group in which the sign message is created. An understanding of the way others will perceive a sign is crucial to the success of any communication regardless of the mode in which the sign is conveyed: through speech, sound, image, or gesture. The
chosen mode of communication along with level of modality will affect the success of the sign by increasing authenticity.

One final definition which deserves some clarification is that of new media texts. Outside of this project, new media texts have been defined differently by various writing scholars. One definition describes them as “texts created primarily in digital environments, composed in multiple media (e.g., film, video, audio, among others), and designed for presentation and exchange in digital venues… Although such texts often include some alphabetic features, they also typically resist containment by alphabetic systems, demanding the multiple literacies of seeing and listening and manipulating, as well as those of writing and reading” (Selfe, 2004, p.43). Another definition describes new media texts more broadly as any “text,” digital or not, in which “materiality is foregrounded” (Wysocki, 2004, p. 15; Shipka, 2006, p. 357). The compositions featured in this dissertation are aligned most closely with the first definition by Selfe. They are all digitally composed and do “include some alphabetic features” such as speech based on a script.

2.2 New Literacies

The rise of new literacies leading to new pedagogies that have yet to be described has been heralded and prepared for by the previously mentioned group of scholars known as the New London Group (NLG). The group is made up of 10 scholars from around the world, one of whom is Gunther Kress, who arranged to meet in 1994 to discuss “the future of literacy teaching” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, p.3). The NLG asserts that the word Multiliteracies (the title of the seminal book which they subsequently produced)
sums up the outcome of their discussions (p.5). Their theory of Multiliteracies is the foundation for a timely new pedagogy based on the ideas of economic globalization, increasing diversity, and the growing implementation of many new modes in communication and learning. Because the economy is changing and means of communicating within the economy are changing, the NLG argues that students must be taught literacies appropriate for the times, which will enable their success in the workplaces of their futures (p.12). Recent social changes related to literacy have been likened to those that occurred in Britain in the early 1900s when new technologies and increased access to print material gave rise to a new “reading public” that was pluralistic and read for new purposes and in new ways (Yancey, 2004, p. 299-300). Yancey uses the word “plural” to refer to the similar current variety of forms, uses, and locations of writing—most occurring outside of schools. Just as readers in the 1900s enjoyed an assortment of new reading materials and settings such as newspapers, magazines, novels, and public reading groups; so do writers today have new options for writing such as word processors, email, blogs, cell phone texts, and online chats in addition to traditional paper and pen. Like the NLG, Yancey suggests developing a new curriculum for the 21st century that “brings together the writing outside of school and that inside” (p. 308). Many now herald changes in literacy and pedagogy such as the ones this dissertation describes (Kress; the New London Group; Takayoshi and Selfe; Yancey). Most express concern over educators’ slow acceptance of changes in literacy related to multimodality. All recognize that changes in understandings of what constitutes meaning-making need to be reflected in educational settings.
2.3 The Need to Understand and Describe New Pedagogy

Multimodal communication is fostering new literacies and new pedagogies, that have yet to be observed and described. The current problem this dissertation begins to address is that no descriptive studies exist which look at new assigning practices related to multimodal instruction although these practices are receiving increased attention by writing instructors. As proof of this attention, many writing instructors are asking, along with Kress, what the subject of English as taught in schools should look like in light of emerging practices. Specifically they ask, “How might designing a curriculum that is relevant both inside and outside the classroom alter what we think and what we do?” (Yancey, 2004, p.306) Others asking and answering this kind of question are Cheryl Ball and Byron Hawk, in their introductory “Letter from the Guest Editors” which introduces a 2006 issue of Computers and Composition devoted to sound. They write “… we’ve moved—as a field—from linguistic to visual meaning-making, all in digital environments; so, a logical progression is to include other modes of meaning including audio” (p.263). The New London Group is among those weighing in on pedagogy design.

The NLG’s theory of Multiliteracies along with MCT is the impetus for a new pedagogy deemed necessary by prominent thinkers in the field as a “pluralistic educational response” to current social and economic “trends” (92). The new pedagogy of multiliteracies developed by the NLG identifies, “six design elements in the meaning-making process: Linguistic Meaning, Visual Meaning, Audio Meaning, Gestural Meaning, Spatial Meaning and the Multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first
five modes of meaning to each other” (p.7)\(^1\). The NLG proposes these design elements be taught using four new practices based on traditional practices of literacy education: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice (p. 239).

_Situated practice_, the first component of pedagogy identified by the New London Group, aims at helping students learn from “experience” ways of making meaning in various social settings or “lifeworlds” such as home, work, and “public” spaces (p. 7). Situated Practice is akin to “immersion” (32), a process in which students are able to practice making meaning in new ways side by side with those who are experts in the system being taught (p. 33). Students are able to work with experts to practice new literacies in new situations while at the same time they are encouraged to draw on their past experiences and their own literacy history. As the analysis in chapter four will show, this kind of practice took place in some of the observed classrooms observed. However, without the three additional components of pedagogy, Situated Practice will not provide the depth of understanding necessary for true mastery of design (p. 33).

_Overt instruction_, the second component of pedagogy identified by the New London Group, aims at guiding students in ways of talking about potential elements of design production. Overt instruction is more than “direct transmission, drills, and rote

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\(^1\) Note the recurrence of the word _meaning_ in this short quote from the introduction to the book, _Multiliteracies_, indicating the central relevance of the concept of meaning-making in the theory of multiliteracies. The final type of design is the combination of all types of design—multimodality.
memorization” (p. 33). Students’ acquisition of appropriate language with which to talk about the practice they are learning—what it is and how it is executed—is a significant aspect of overt instruction along with continued practice under the guidance of experts (p. 34).

_Critical framing_, a third component of pedagogy, is aimed at critiquing designs in order to “interpret…social context and purpose” (p. 7). Critical Framing allows students to recognize the way “historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered” factors have influenced their newly acquired practice of meaning-making (p. 34). This in turn allows students to understand and assess the way any given design functions under certain conditions as opposed to outside of those conditions. Along these lines, Pamela Takayoshi and Brian Huot believe that, as resistance to change is overcome, writing instructors will need to not only accept and integrate technology into their writing classrooms but to become evaluators of its effectiveness. Takayoshi and Huot assert that, as students’ and teachers’ use of technology grows, so also must their perceptive criticism of the quality and efficiency of that use. It is more important that technology is used well than that it is merely used (2003, p. 4). In communicative practice, this means understanding how technology will be interpreted in any given context.

_Transformed practice_, the final pedagogical component identified by the New London Group is that in which students as meaning-makers become designers of social futures” (p.7). Transformed practice involves students transferring what they have
learned to new situations. This transfer of knowledge to future social situations is the ultimate goal of the New London Group.

An attempt to gain some understanding of how these four pedagogical components are figuring into the discourse of instructors who are presenting multimodal assignments is one aspect of this project. After results of the GT discourse analysis are discussed, they are compared to the NLG’s pedagogical categories to see if there is any correlation. This is not part of the formal, methodological analysis, but does follow Yin’s logic model, which recommends comparing existing theory to observed results. Chapter four, therefore, will present an analysis of data which answers the question of how instructors are talking about audio essays and presenting affordances of sound when they teach. It will also contain a brief comparison between what these results reveal about instruction practices and what is recommended in existing multimodal, pedagogical theory.

2.4 Rhetorical Potentials of Sound

Some key ideas in sound theory have surfaced over the last century to support the rhetorical use of sound in the writing classroom, and these ideas need to be understood before an effective analysis of instructor discourse about sound can be presented. These rhetorical aspects, which enable the rich semiotic potential of sound, include the unique intimacy of sound; the notion of sound as action; the immediacy of sound in time, the logical order in which sounds are perceived; the effect of sound on perspective; and the notion of description versus prescription of semiotic affordances of sound. Because this project is a much-needed, descriptive study of the way instructors present sound and its
meaning-making potentials to their students, the following section will discuss each of these aspects of sound.

2.4.1 **Intimacy of Sound.**

One fascinating aspect of sound is its evocative ability, which can also be thought of as intimacy. A number of sound theorists write about this notion in terms of the intimacy of sound (Shafer, 1986; Ong, 1982; Altman, 1992; de Buffon, 1971; van Leeuwen 2007). According to Shafer, “Hearing is a way of touching at a distance” (1986, p.11) while De Buffon points out that “Sounds cannot be willfully physically shut out like images can be by closing the eyes. Whether we want it to or not, sound connects us with others” (1971, p.199). Van Leeuwen, in a 2007 multimodal essay, argues for the greater intimacy of sound over vision. He quotes Ong (1982, p. 138) saying, “There must be deeper meanings, invisible to the eye.”

2.4.2 **Importance of Order/Perspective.**

Some have organized sound by comparing it with a landscape (Schafer, 1986, p. 7; van Leeuwen, 1999, p. 22). Schafer explains the notion of a keynote, which is a sort of integral background that, though unnoticed, influences all other aspects of the context. He compares it to the visual notions of “figure” and “ground.” Figure is the object being looked at while the ground is the background that gives it outline. Without the ground, the figure is not distinguishable. Keynote sounds include sounds of the natural environment made by “water, wind, forests” and natural inhabitants of the land. “Many of these sounds may possess archetypal significance; that is, they may have imprinted
themselves so deeply on the people hearing them that life without them would be sensed as a distinct impoverishment. They may even affect the behavior of life style of a society…” (Schafer, 1986, p.10) Similar to Kress’s notion of a culture predisposing its citizens to favor certain modes, Schafer also mentions the move from a valuing of sound (particularly in the area of religion) to a valuing of visual and print media. Theo van Leeuwen, (1999) in *Speech, Music, Sound* has written a brief classroom text which introduces semiotic theory and links it with sound. In this book, he, like Schafer, classifies sounds according to perspective: “figure, ground, and field” (p. 22), placing sounds either centrally or in the foreground or background. VanLeeuwen sees perspective as being central to a semiotic theory of sound. He interprets qualities of sounds such as church bells or certain pieces played by an orchestra, as potentially affecting listeners in distinct ways. “Sound envelops us. It places us at the centre of the world, and at the heart of sensation and existence. Sound has no privileged points of view. All available perspectives are equally valid and rich in potential (Eco, quoted in Chanan, 1994, p.269)” (2007, p. 139). The notion of the potential of sound to bring the listener into the immediate experience would likely be a significant part of audio composition instruction. Van Leeuwen points out that more and more communicators/designers are crafting visual compositions according to auditory principles (2007, p. 140). His examples include cell phones used to send pictures, audio synchronization of light displays, and surround-screens or 3-D movies (p. 140).
2.4.3 Time and Action.

Another aspect of sound that would likely surface in a classroom where audio composition pedagogy was fostering new literacies involves sequential ordering and duration of soundwaves. For both the visual and the audio mode, Rudolf Arnheim considers order to be a necessary condition for anything the human mind is to understand. Conversely, order, by virtue of its involving sequence, depends on the dimensions of time (particularly but not exclusively in the case of sound) and space (particularly but not exclusively in the case of object and image). Arnheim’s discussion of arrangement is mostly centered on the visual mode but can be also applied to sound. He applies the logic of order to arrangement in the construction of anything from buildings to musical compositions to speech delivery. According to Arnheim, order, along with the absence of superfluous material allow a recipient of a message to determine which elements are foregrounded and which are supplemental (1977, p. 1). This ties in closely to Van Leeuwen’s concept of figure, ground, and field in which sounds are intentionally given prominence or subtlety, often through pitch, volume and timing choices. The placement of a sound in a composition: its duration, volume, and pitch, can have a powerful impact on the way a message is perceived and on the overall order of a piece (1986, p. 67).

2.4.4 Rules of Sound Usage.

According to van Leeuwen and significant to this project is the notion that, in the emerging “discipline” of “sound design,” no prescriptive rules yet exist. “A semiotics of sound” should be a descriptive record of sounds, the ways they have been used, and potential interpretations of sounds rather than a “code book” of how sounds should be
used to make meaning (p. 6). It remains to be seen, as projects such as this one unfold, how much, if at all, writing instructors prescribe the ways students can use sounds rhetorically beyond simply requiring that sounds be part of student compositions.

These rhetorical aspects of sound provide part of the backdrop for the chapter 4 analysis of a corpus of data containing transcribed discourse of four instructors presenting audio essay assignments to undergraduate freshman composition classes. It remains to be seen how these affordances of sound will feature, if at all, in the pedagogical discourse analysis.

2.5 Gaps in Existing Studies and the Need for Further Research

It has so far been established that, having expanded multimodal communication theory by incorporating social semiotics into it as a way to address new literacies arising from new media, Kress and van Leeuwen are calling for more research studies based on MCT. The NLG also implies a need for studies which describe emerging new pedagogies meant to facilitate these literacies. A few such studies do exist, and it is the purpose of this section to present them here in light of what they do and do not accomplish in exploring uses of this theory and describing pedagogy.

One study which draws on multimodal communication theory combined with social semiotics is that by Bezemer and Kress (2000) in which they examine affordances of different modes with the further complexity of noting additional influences of various settings on meaning. The relationship between “social production and representations,” they assert, can account for “principles of composition” employed in the rhetorical design of multimodal texts. Toward this end, Bezemer and Kress present a study in which they
analyze designs from a corpus of learning materials chosen from specific periods across the 20th and 21st centuries, examining changes in modal presentations (2008). They center their discussion on image design but make clear the need for similar research into other modes besides image, which is the intent of this project.

An article by Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith (2008), previously-mentioned in chapter 1, is further evidence of the usefulness of the multimodal communication theory for framing the results of this study. Drawing on the multimodal communication theory of Kress (2003) and other theories of multimodal literacy to examine affordances of separate modes in multi-modal presentations of the self; Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith assert that they have difficulty interpreting their findings according to a single theory, as multimodal literacy theories are in the midst of burgeoning development and change, and that not one, but a number of theories are partially applicable to their study. However, their goal matches that of Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2000) to continue research into affordances of multiple, co-present modes when they seek to understand the ways that presentations of the self vary when conveyed in a number of alternate modes. Relying most heavily on multimodal communication theory, they align themselves with Kress’s notion of varying “organizing logics” of different modes such as the linear, chronological movement of language contrasted with the multiple co-existing messages allowed by the “spatial” logic of images on a page (Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith, 2008, p. 419). In their analysis of a case study involving a digital video composed by a 12-year-old boy, Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith clearly apply social semiotic-based multimodal communication theory to explore ways that multimodal meaning-making is affected by
social influences (p. 421). Charting interactions between text, language, music, and image across time, these authors ultimately find that multimodal presentations increase the perceived factual value of a composition due, not only to their easy public accessibility, but also due to their “semiotic fullness” generated by the abundance of semiotic material operating synergistically through the various logics of multiple modes. (p. 437). Explorations such as this one by Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith and work by Bezemer and Kress reveal different perceptions surrounding multimodal instruction and the use of multimodal technology.

A third study which uses MCT by Hull and Nelson is framed as an effort to apprehend the intersections of meaning at work at various levels within an entire message (2005, p. 234). Drawing on the work of C. S. Pierce (1992, 1998), they demonstrate how messages can be duplicated in alternate modes and how one mode can affect the meaning of another co-present mode (p. 239). They note “patterns” in the ways the modes operated separately and together and find that the meaning-making potential of each mode is enhanced by its proximity to and interaction with other modes (p. 236). Likening the cooperation of the modes to “multimodal orchestration” they draw on Kress’s concept of “semiotic fullness” (2003) and the resulting “emergent meaning…” (Hull and Nelson, 2005, p. 244). In other words, meaning is not only conveyed through the words chosen, whether spoken or written, but also through the sounds or letters which convey the words. These involve volume, pitch and tone in the case of speech, and font and punctuation in the case of alphabetic writing. Meaning is also conveyed through grammatical choices such as word order, modification, and verb tense. As stated earlier, how recognition of
all these carriers of meaning plays out in the classroom has yet to be described. More studies are needed which describe instructor practices in response to new technologies and new literacies.

In a fourth, previously-mentioned study, one by Bezemer and Kress which also draws on MCT, a concept called recontextualization is applied (Bernstein, 1996) because of its value in analyzing texts “socially and semiotically” (Bezemer and Kress, 2008, p. 169). Bezemer and Kress explain how recontextualization works and ways that both a social and a semiotic perspective of representation can affect interpretation of meaning. Recontextualizing, or moving content from a practical originating social site to a secondary pedagogical site, both requires and enables semiotic remaking of the content to render it suitable for learning (p. 169). For example, an originating site for math knowledge might be the social context of a grocery store check-out lane. The mathematical processes and skills required practically by a clerk or savvy customer in that location are recontextualized for the mathematics classroom, the pedagogical site, in order to be taught. Those sites, therefore, where “sign makers” function as educators would be pedagogic sites in which the recontextualized meanings educators choose to convey to students through carefully-selected modes are generally designed to facilitate learning. Bezemer and Kress explain that their data allow them “to show how meaning material is moved from social site to social site, from medium to medium, from context to context, in each case requiring social, semiotic remaking…” (p. 169). In the case of this dissertation, the description of data should provide insight into ways writing
instructors are re-contextualizing relevant technologies into the classroom to teach and support new literacies rather than ignore them.

Also designing pedagogy that meets the challenges of new literacies in the writing classroom is Tara Rosenberger Shankar, who, in “Speaking on the Record: A Theory of Composition” explains how she created software called The SpriterWriter, which students used to transcribe their oral compositions into visual and linguistic documents. As mentioned in chapter one, Shankar “argues that literacy values assigned to writing can be achieved in the domain of the oral and how oral forms might be revalued as literate composition. She describes four kinds of learning that students (elementary-level and adult learners) were able to demonstrate when they composed talkuments (spoken documents) using the SpriterWriter software” (Ball and Hawk, 2006, p. 264). Shankar constructs a vocabulary including words such as “spriting,” “prosodacy,” and “letteracy” and “auding” to explain her new composing system (p. 375). “Spriting” is “speech” that “simultaneously” combines audio and visual representations (p.376).

As mentioned in chapter 1, writing professor Heidi Mckee (2006), draws on van Leeuwen’s and Rick Altman’s ideas, to speculate about how composing with sound might effectively be taught in a writing classroom. Mckee uses Altman’s notion of sound as an event situated in time as a guide for design and for providing language for her to teach how an audio text might be constructed. She notes that student writers of audio compositions will need to “consider the rhetorical effects of the before, during, and after of a sound event” cautioning that “sound is not something to be added as an afterthought (p.352).
Other instructors who have embraced and written about the move to multimodal composing include several of those featured in the aforementioned 2006 issue of *Computers and Composition* on sound. Thomas Rickert and Michael Salvo, for example, explore ways the “contemporary…music culture offers vocabularies, models, and practices for new media writing … beyond the tradition of text-based composition …” (2006, abstract). They discuss ways digital media is influencing classroom practice, but do not describe current practice as it is unfolding. Jodi Shipka, who undertakes “to better understand how, when, and why students might choose to explore the affordances of sound… in their work” (2006, abstract) argues for the increased use of multimodal compositions in the classroom. Shipka, discussing two examples from students in first-year composition classes who explored how using sound in their projects would help them achieve rhetorical soundness (p.370) notes that alternative semiotic resources and activities require different spaces than traditional ones (p. 366). Shipka describes the students’ perspectives of her own assigning of multimodal compositions using an activity-based theory of multimodal composing. She does not, however, describe new practices of other instructors in the way that this project does to provide an understanding of ways instructors are connecting with and applying new theory.

Anne Wysocki addresses changes in pedagogical design, referencing a book on design by Robin Williams called *The Non-Designer’s Design Book*, which outlines four principles of design: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. According to Wysocki, Williams’ design principles fail to address social implications of a design. She sees it as a problem when efficiency is the primary value in a society. Rather, she says
instructors of visual design [and presumably audio design] need to teach students to value the particular instead of the distantly abstract (the ideal). In the area of sound, the particular would have to do with authenticity of voice and sound as opposed to an idealized version of a sound. Valuing the ideal can be dangerous for those who are depicted as beautiful and then do not measure up in reality (women for instance). Regarding design of compositions, Wysocki encourages writing instructors to meet unconventional texts with “generosity” when they look and sound “different” from traditional texts and to view students’ rhetorical experiments with modes not as “mistakes” but as “choices” (Wysocki, 2004, p. 23 introduction).

Another writing instructor, Cynthia Selfe, has since the 1990s been promoting responsible change in classrooms relating to use of technology. Selfe challenges composition instructors to stretch beyond alphabetic boundaries in order to bring relevance to the writing classroom. Instructors, she notes, might be hesitant to move to multimodal instruction for a number of reasons such as the fact that their expertise is in alphabetic literacy rather than visual or that they question the lasting value of teaching and studying visual compositions (Selfe, 2004, p. 54). English Professor, Dennis Baron traces the development and reception of new technologies from the beginnings of writing to the pencil to the typewriter, the telegraph, telephone, and finally the computer. At every stage, he reminds, there is resistance and moralizing from educators about the dangers of the incoming technology. In the end, says Baron, people embrace and adapt (1999). It is not enough, however, to assign the role of incorporating new media into the curriculum to one or two courses taught by a single media expert. Rather, all types of
literacy, including alphabetic, need to be incorporated into the full range of composition courses in order to meet challenges tied to multimodal composing (Selfe, 2004, p.43).

Selfe argues that composition classes have to move beyond a focus on alphabetic literacy and start by teaching visual literacy as well. She warns that, because the visual image interests students more than the alphabetic, writing instructors need to move in that direction or risk going completely obsolete and losing their place or relevance in the university (2004, pp. 67-110).

Noting a divergence between the cultural aspirations of Americans to apply technology in the classroom and the reality of those efforts, Selfe began early to examine the complexities involved when combined forces of government, business, education, and families attempt to create a common agenda. Although the agenda aimed at increasing “technological literacy” in schools and marketplaces, in fact, among other obstacles, she reminded that staggering inequities pertaining to access persisted. Calling educators to a critical awareness, Selfe encouraged them to effectively link technology and literacy in schools and to remain aware of the purposes of the technology rather than to simply use it in the most basic and minimal of ways merely to meet administrative expectations (Selfe, 1999). Selfe focused on the visual early as the first step toward multi-modal composing but has since moved on to discuss compositions involving sound (Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007).

2.6 Closing

The arguments put forth in this chapter include the assertions that first, multimodal communication has generated new literacies and which demand new
pedagogies and that, second, multimodal communication theory provides a useful lens through which to interpret data for this project; third, that sound has relevance in the writing classroom alongside image because of its many rich rhetorical aspects; and fourth, that the move to multimodal instruction is relevant, necessary, and requires further research and analysis.

Writing instructors are indeed embracing the slow but certain move to multimodal instruction as relevant, necessary, and inescapable. Multimodal instruction in the writing classroom is a new phenomenon, and studies such as this one are needed to explore and describe changing practices in the field of composition studies because of this shift. It is, many would argue, a shift closely tied to cultural relevance. More and more writing instructors are claiming that to operate successfully at school, work, and elsewhere, students need to be able to both read and produce multimodal texts. Relevant “instruction” is that which mirrors the latest “literacy practices” involving digital technology in the culture (Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007, p. 3). But the relevance of multimodal communication skills also lies in their historical importance in light of the ancient oral skills taught by Aristotle. “New digital technologies” are re-establishing the age-old importance of acquiring rhetorical intelligence in multiple modes. Some also link digital technologies to a deeper understanding and appreciation of skills required to teach alphabetic texts (Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007, p. 3; Shankar, 2005, p. 375). Hence, this dissertation takes up the task of exploring current practice related to creating relevance in the undergraduate writing classroom. It provides a much-needed snapshot of instructors
participating in the move from graphocentrism to multimodal instruction by describing discourse related to the assigning of the audio essay.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

According to Peter Smagorinsky, the methods section of social science research reporting is often underplayed and incomplete when in fact it should be the “epicenter” of any research article (2008). For a number of reasons, what used to be acceptable in terms of information provided about research data, participants and the social contexts surrounding them is now simply not enough. Smagorinsky attributes this to factors such as the social sciences’ move away from a strict experimental research paradigm, greater scrutiny surrounding “researcher objectivity,” and the rise of “relational research” (p. 392). The purpose of this chapter is to give a general overview of the methods used for this project and my motivation for choosing them as well as to explain the case study approach and thoroughly describe the types of data collected for this dissertation. Also provided are details of the data collection and analysis process, followed by a rationale for using the grounded theory method of qualitative analysis in light of both its affordances and constraints. Finally, I explain my method of charting, in real time, sequential pedagogical moves for each instructor.

3.1 General Overview of Methods

The focus of this project has been to capture a snapshot in time of pedagogical practices surrounding the teaching of the audio essay in an effort to answer the research questions: “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? And
what perceived affordances of audio technology are revealed through their classroom discourse?” As I considered the best way to do this, it quickly became obvious that a case study approach involving multiple classrooms would be the most effective method. I was able to find four classrooms in which the audio essay was being taught, and I proceeded to collect video and written data directly related to the teaching of the audio essay. The case study approach, as outlined by R. K. Yin (2009) as well as A. Strauss (1987) allowed me to analyze each case on its own merit and then to compare similarities and differences across all four classrooms. This type of analysis provided the basis for certain conclusions to be drawn about multimodal teaching practices occurring at a particular point in time. A more detailed discussion of the merits and limitations of case studies appears later in this chapter.

Along with the case study approach, I applied a grounded theory method of qualitative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1987). My reason for choosing this method was my desire to combine both qualitative and quantitative analysis in my search for an understanding of what was happening in the classroom. Grounded theory gave me the chance to avoid imposing my own predetermined assumptions onto the data but rather allowed the data to speak for itself. As with the case study approach, a thorough discussion of grounded theory and its usefulness for this project will follow at the end of the chapter.

3.2 The Case Study Approach

I chose the case study approach for a number of reasons, not the least of which is its ability to align easily with grounded theory. Alignment of data collection methods
with analytical methods is essential for credibility (Smagorinsky, 2008, p. 392). According to Anselm Strauss (1987), when the case study method is combined with grounded theory it allows for a tight interweaving of descriptive data with major theoretical points. “Specific theoretical points” are combined with “illustrative data” to bolster the abstract nature of qualitative theory (p. 219). Strauss presents rules of thumb for case studies which include data collection and analysis around a core category; the construction of a working model of each case under analysis; and finally, the building in of illustrative data (p. 219).

The case study method is also valuable for this project because it is particularly suited to the exploration of my research questions. According to Yin (2009), the case study approach should be used when the form of the research question involves how or why; when there is little or no control over behavioral events required; and when the focus is on contemporary events (p. 8). All three criteria clearly fit my research questions: Both questions ask how or why, particularly the first: “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? But the second also— And what perceived affordances of audio technology are revealed through their classroom discourse?—as it could easily be changed to read, “How are affordances of audio technology revealed...” I also made no attempt to control the behavioral events in the classrooms under observation; and finally, my focus is on a contemporary event: the new practice of assigning audio essays.

Another reason the case study approach is applicable to my study is that case studies permit the researcher to conduct multiple levels of analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.
In my study of multimodal teaching practices, two levels of analysis occur: first, a grounded discourse analysis of the video transcript for each class (see chapter 4) and then a descriptive analysis of sequential pedagogical moves (see chapter 5).

The case study method is also appropriate for this project in that both Eisenhardt (1989, p. 535) and Yin (2009, p. 2) make the point that case studies allow for use of multiple methodologies such as interview, document collection, and observation. All three of the methodologies listed are used in this project, although, in the end, I center my analysis almost exclusively on the video observation data. Yin points out that in an effective case study design, triangulation of the data from different sources “converges” to bolster conclusions (p. 2, 116). This convergence does occur at various instances within my analysis—for example, when I look at a syllabus or written assignment to confirm or shed additional light on an idea that is implied or missing in the spoken discourse, such as a rationale for making multimodal assignments.

Case studies also allow for a variety of outcomes including theory testing, fresh theory generation, or description (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 535; Yin, 2009, p. 15). The outcome of this study, description, aims at discovering how instructor discourse and pedagogy mirrors or differs from recent theory generation by communication scholars. According to Yin, “in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories” rather than provide a sample that applies to all like occurrences in a “population or universe” (p. 15). This is particularly aligned with grounded theory’s stance that, “the grounded theory style of analysis is based on the premise that theory at various levels of generality is indispensable for deeper knowledge of social phenomena” (Strauss, 1987, p.
6). Strauss, however, is talking about creating new theory while Yin is talking about adding to existing theory. A “distinct advantage” of the multiple case design is that, in what Yin refers to as a “replication multiple case design,” “evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling and…robust” than evidence from a single-case design (2009, p. 53). “The ability to conduct 6 or 10 case studies, arranged effectively within a multiple-case design, is analogous to the ability to conduct 6 to 10 experiments on related topics” (p. 54). While some of the cases may corroborate one another, some may manifest differently. The findings will either “provide compelling support for an initial set of propositions” if all cases are similar; or impetus for further analysis if some are “contradictory” (p. 54). My project does not closely adhere to Yin’s replication model, in that I was not trying to replicate an expected finding in all four cases. In the replication model favored by Yin, “theory development is the first step in designing a study” (p. 56). However, my method follows more of a sampling model, in which each separate case is analogous to a separate respondent in a survey (p. 53). Because I combine the case study method with the grounded theory method, my study is not attempting to replicate any expected findings. It is not possible that, using grounded theory, I should develop or look to corroborate any theory at all in the initial stages of my analysis. Any theory development will derive from close observation and description of findings apart from a hypothesis. As will later be discussed in depth, it is a very important aspect of grounded theory to refrain from imposing upon the data any predetermined notion of what should occur. My study, therefore, is more a descriptive
snapshot of discourse and pedagogical moves that took place in four classrooms without any expectation that the findings will be replicated in any two of the four cases.

In their descriptions of the types of research skills required to conduct successful research, Yin’s case study method and Strauss’s grounded theory method are similar. Yin stresses the importance of the ability to “ask good questions—and interpret the answers”; to “be a good ‘listener’ …not…trapped by…ideologies or preconceptions”; to “be adaptive and flexible”; to “have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, even if in an exploratory mode”; and to “be unbiased by preconceived notions, including those derived from theory” (2009, p.69). Much like Strauss in his description of grounded theory coding (1987, p.57), Yin calls for reading between the lines, which he refers to as “listening” apart from the aural mode—a skill that involves rigorous thinking and constantly asking questions about the data—searching for hidden meanings that may not be initially apparent (p.70). The need to be flexible is also stressed, and was indeed necessary in my analysis as I at first intended to analyze all of the written artifacts from each instructor including syllabi, retrospective interview responses, and written assignments. However, when it became clear that the amount of data was too vast for the scope of this study, I narrowed my focus to the video transcripts, with the written artifacts available to triangulate findings when possible.

Protecting human subjects is another crucial aspect of case study research (Yin, 2009, p.73). I did this early on in my data collection process by presenting a description of my project and methods to an Internal Review Board. I received approval after committing to inform students in all four classes that they were not the focus of the
research, but rather the instructors were, and that student identities would not be revealed nor would their discourse be the subject of analysis. The construction of a *case study protocol*, which outlines which sites will be visited and how the data will be collected and recorded, is also highly recommended (pp.77&79). For my project, I created a prospectus outlining the problem and my strategies for exploring it as well as major themes in field literature related to my problem. I then conducted a pilot study of one classroom. The purpose of the pilot study is to “refine your data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed” (p.92).

Five techniques for analyzing case studies include pattern matching (Yin, 2009, p.136), explanation building (p. 141), time series analysis (p. 144), logic models (p. 149), and cross-case synthesis (p. 156). My study used a form of a logic model, which involves matching what is predicted by existing theory with what is observed in the cases under analysis. After I had finished the grounded theory analysis and logged the results, I went back and looked at the New London Group’s pedagogy of multiliteracies and compared it with my findings to see if what the NLG scholars were calling for was taking place in any form in any of my cases. During the GT analysis, I was not thinking about the NLG pedagogy and was in no way imposing their categories onto my data. The comparison I made between the two pedagogies, however, is not a pure form of Yin’s logic model. I followed much more closely the method for cross-case synthesis, which first “treats each individual case study as a separate study” (p. 156) and then reveals, through the use of word tables, similarities and differences across all cases (p. 160). For my purposes, the case study approach was highly applicable to collection of data related
to the assigning of audio essays and their subsequent analysis even though, at points, I made some diversions from the exact protocols suggested by Strauss and Yin. The next section outlines in detail my method of collecting the data.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

As explained above as well as in chapters 1 and 4, data sources for this project included four undergraduate writing instructors assigning multimodal compositions featuring sound as the primary mode of communication. In my search for cases, I sent emails to several universities within a 100-mile radius of my location that were near enough for me to travel to and conduct the taping. I was looking for undergraduate writing instructors who were assigning audio essays. Through email, I was eventually able to procure responses from four instructors from two Midwestern university campuses who were willing to participate. I asked if I could video tape the class session in which they intended to assign the audio essay. The video taping sessions were scheduled by email and carried out as planned after IRB approval had been obtained. All written artifacts were gathered either through email or on site. Participants agreed to have one class videotaped, share written assignments and syllabi, and answer retrospective interview questions via email. I captured the data on video, transcribed the videos, and also collected and studied the written class documents. General data collection procedures, followed by the specific details of each case, are presented below:
3.3.1 Video taping

I transcribed video/audio tapes of four composition instructors presenting audio essay assignments to undergraduate writing classes. My method of transcribing the videos involved exporting the digital footage to a computer at a university Mac lab. The data was then transferred to a DVD in real time. I watched the DVDs on my own computer, typing every line and noting the passage of time in minutes and seconds. For the Case 4, Eileen, I enlisted the help of a senior undergraduate student assistant, whom I taught to transcribe. I later reviewed and made minor corrections to her work. Video/audio coverage focused on each instructor rather than on the students.

The purpose of video taping was to capture instructional discourse and practice that took place during the actual assigning of each audio essay. Videos can provide real-time insight into what instructors are doing in the natural classroom setting with their own assignments as well as how instructors are talking to their students about the affordances of audio assignments. For this account, each instructor has been given a fictional name, a descriptive phrase, and a case number. The length of the video for each case study is shown in figure 3.1.
### Video Length for Cases 1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Video Length</th>
<th>Audio Assignment Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Nora</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>5-6 minute recording of a persuasive, audio research-presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Betty</td>
<td>34 minutes</td>
<td>ten minute audio essay on what it means to be a participant in a digital culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. James:</td>
<td>65 minutes</td>
<td>a 5-7 minute aural essay in which students presented data collected for a prior research project in the same course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing and Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Eileen:</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>a multimodal, audio walking tour (length unspecified) in conjunction with a digitally annotated map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Audio workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 3.1. Video Length Per Case**

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2 Visual data from the videos was not coded for this project. I chose video to capture the data instead of audio alone to allow for the possibility of continuing my analysis of the data at a later time.
Cases 2, Betty and 4, Eileen differ significantly in length from Cases 1 and 3. Case 2 is shorter for the reason that the camera was turned off during group work because the instructor was not talking. There was, therefore, an unrecorded break in the middle of the class of about 15-20 minutes. In Eileen’s class, Case 4, the session was 2 hours long. This was the length of her class each time it met that semester. On the day that I was recording, the first hour was instruction and discussion, while the second hour was a hands-on digital recording workshop.

3.3.2 Retrospective Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to assess various aspects of the instructors’ perceptions regarding their assigning experiences. They were not, however, in the end, systematically analyzed with any particular methodology. These interviews were conducted by email two to three weeks after the audio assignment, as they were designed to obtain retrospective accounts. Because I was not able to transcribe all of the video discourse in that brief amount of time, it ended up that the retrospective accounts were conducted before all of the videos were viewed. The interviews included questions about planning time, difficulties encountered, and resources used to develop the audio essay. (Questions are included in appendix A.) The interview responses were available to triangulate findings from the instructor discourse analyses. The interviews provided information about instructor familiarity with audio essay assignments and about the availability or lack of sufficient resources for teachers who are teaching multimodal assignments. Because the retrospective accounts were conducted before the videos were viewed, they were not as useful as they might have been although they did provide some
interesting information in some cases regarding such things as the amount of preparation the instructor put in and prior experience instructors had teaching audio assignments. I did not formally analyze the interviews, but my knowledge of their contents helped inform my analysis of the video transcripts. This triangulation is mentioned in chapter 4 when it informs the discourse analysis.

After viewing the videos, I felt that one area the interviews did not focus on enough was instructor concerns related to assessment. I had not asked questions regarding the instructors’ feelings about how, after assessing the assignments, they would change their instruction the next time around. This would be a rich area for future research on multimodal pedagogy.

3.3.3 Written artifacts (apart from retrospective interviews)

These included assignments and syllabi of each of the four writing instructors. The lengths and types of the written artifacts are provided below:

- Case 1, Nora, included a two-page syllabus; a 2-page typed audio assignment on paper; and half a page of step-by-step instructions on how to access two online audio examples. Featuring text, a picture, and 3 text boxes, the syllabus begins by describing changes in literacy and literacy practices and presenting several questions the class intends to explore:
The audio assignment also features a picture and text which describes, in several paragraphs, changing trends in culture that are affecting language use. It asks questions about what it means to be a member of a digital culture, describes the audio essay, then presents a table that breaks down the assignment into parts and due dates.

- Case 2, Betty, included a 7 1/2-page syllabus and a 4-page written audio assignment. These were available online and were also handed to students on paper. Betty’s syllabus moves through an introduction of course themes and objectives; a description of each type of assignment; brief sections on grading and attendance policies; and then a schedule. Her four-page audio assignment begins with assignment objectives followed by a detailed section on theoretical assumptions; then a description of the assignment and how to prepare for it; and finally, a reading and production chart breaking down the assignment into manageable steps and due dates.
• Case 3, James, included a six-page syllabus and a three-page written audio assignment. These were available online and also handed to students on paper. The syllabus moved through course expectations and policies followed by a schedule of readings and meeting times. The audio assignment titled “Argumentative Analysis” presented the audio essay in a way that mixed many traditional writing principles with multimodal and technological instruction. Students were given written instruction about the arrangement of the essay content as well as a graphic chart showing three stages of production. These stages were discussed in detailed text on the following page of the syllabus.

• Case 4, Eileen, consisted of six online pages of syllabus and audio assignment combined. Her syllabus/assignment pages included an assessment rubric for the multimodal annotated map assignment. This map assignment was combined with a 5-10 minute audio walking tour. So the syllabus moved through assessment to a description of the map and audio assignments and then to a section on policies related to the importance of active engagement by students in the class. Assignment goals are also outlined which have to do with mastery of argumentation—a traditional aspect of writing instruction.

I collected all of the available data: observation, syllabi, written assignments, and retrospective interviews, and codified them. In the end, the focus is on one section—the video transcripts, which were pulled from the larger data set to focus on classes as situated in and informed by the other data sources. Triangulation, though not explicit does occur in several ways. For example, I consulted the
syllabi to see which texts were used so I would know from what theory instructors were drawing. I also checked to see how much they integrated MMC theory into their syllabi. In the interviews, I was looking to see if they had done much audio assigning before and whether they had revised the assignment much before they gave it and even after they gave it and what they might do differently. I was looking to see if the less robust categories for the video discourse analysis were maybe filled in on the syllabus or if there was awareness on the part of any of the instructors that some discourse areas were thin. I did find some MMC theory reflected on the syllabi more than in the discourse, especially on Betty’s, and I allude to this and print the example in ch. 4. Most of the syllabi also included a rationale for teaching audio.

3.4 Data Analysis

As explained, my analysis for this project focused almost exclusively on the video transcripts. To supplement the instructor discourse analysis, I read the written assignments and syllabi to gain a clearer sense of what each assignment entailed than the classroom discourse alone could provide. I did not, however, apply any formal or systematic method of analysis to the written discourse.

With the video transcripts, I began by using open and axial coding to identify concepts and their dimensions according to Strauss’s concept-indicator model and then to organize the concepts into categories (Strauss, 1987, p.24). In my open coding, the initial codes included a much greater number of categories than the later codes. My very first attempt at creating codes resulted in this list of potential categories:
In-class technology use | Technological Advice  
Essay Content talk | Support  
Essay construction advice/talk | Instructional analogies/strategies  
Rhetorical format talk | Rhetorical strategies:  
Media Technology | Potential sounds  
Audacity Software | Planning  
Equipment Use | Assessment

**Figure 3.3. Potential Categories**

I arrived at the codes by reading over the transcripts and asking, clause by clause, what was taking place as indicated by the discourse. The above 14 categories reveal the specificity with which I approached the coding at first and why it was necessary to later condense these codes into fewer and broader categories, thereby making the coding process more manageable.

### 3.5 Rationale for Using Grounded Theory

Two types of grounded theory have sprung from ongoing disagreements between the two founders, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. This project draws from the theory presented by Strauss in 1987, which some would term the more descriptive of the two versions. Grounded theory is especially useful for this project, as theory surrounding digital production of audible text, a relatively new practice, is just developing. An explanation of the steps involved in grounded theory methodology is provided here:

A researcher using grounded theory (GT), rather than beginning data analysis with a theory or hypothesis in mind, begins the coding process by identifying, dimensionalizing, and connecting numerous concepts which emerge from the data. The GT researcher does not consciously lay subjective perceptions onto the data or analyze
data through pre-existing criteria. The inductive process can, therefore, lead to theory building in which the researcher should eventually see a theory emerge from the data themselves rather than from existing theory; hence the name “grounded” theory. The name implies that any resulting theory is entirely produced from and integrated with the data. However, in some instances, such as this one, in which the case study method is combined with grounded theory analysis, rather than yielding new theory, the process of conceptual coding can lead to a detailed descriptive account of current practice, particularly of value when new practices are the subject of inquiry (Fernandez, 2004, p. 3).

Strauss’s version of grounded theory relies on a concept-indicator model for the identification of concepts.

![Figure 3.4. Concept-indicator model (Fernandez, 2004)](image)

The concept-indicator model illustrates the way that during the first stage of coding, known as open coding, a number of indicators will point to a single concept. And this will happen over and over with different concepts arising from multiple indicators. Strauss writes that an indicator can be anything in the data “such as behavioral actions
and events observed or described in documents and in the words of interviewees and informants” (p.25). Repeated or similar behaviors, therefore, or phrases can point to a single concept. Strauss defines a concept as an idea or recurring theme that surfaces in the data and is identified by multiple indicators, which are recognizable to the researcher as a result of her experience in the field and her intuition.

In the next step of open coding, axial coding, concepts are then analyzed for distinctions known as dimensions. The process of determining distinctions is termed “dimensionalizing” (p. 21). For example, a distinction of the concept “composition” could be the distinction between an assignment composed by a teacher for a student, or an essay composed by a student for a teacher. One is crafting an instructional piece, and one is crafting a project for a grade. Such distinctions between different motivations behind the same concept (composition design as instructor intent vs. composition design as finished product for assessment) are dimensions, and any given concept may have several dimensions. Strauss’s concept-indicator model operates through constant comparison between concepts and their dimensions until accumulated linkages result in the emergence of a core category (Strauss, 1987, p.24). Ideally, each dimension and sub-dimension of every concept that emerges is compared and linked to others, which will eventually lead to saturation—the point at which no more new comparisons can be made. Part of this process involves identifying each concept or dimension by its properties. Strauss defines “property” as “the most concrete feature of something (idea, thing, person, event, activity, relation) that can be conceptualized…” (p. 21). My coding of the
video data did not lead to a single core category but instead led to four main categories, which were examined as they occurred outside of and then within assignment instruction.

Strauss’s coding paradigm calls for identifying and dimensionalizing concepts and categories to determine conditions, interactions, strategies, and consequences for each category and sub-category (p. 27). This is a very complex and time consuming practice. To manage the complexity, in my initial attempt to dimensionalize concepts within the written data, in order keep track of all the aspects listed at the beginning of this paragraph, I used the PowerPoint format. I was able to include all kinds of information about a single term on one slide. Two samples of a coding slide are included here:
Figure 3.5. Sample Coding Slide #1
These slides feature the concept being coded as the title. The properties or features of the concept are in the columns, which are color coded by case and in the second slide, also by number. Properties are simply words in the text associated with the concept. Conditions are identified at the bottom middle in the first slide and the bottom left in the second; and related concepts are in the upper left corner. For Strauss, the ideal coding process also includes written memos detailing the researcher’s thoughts, questions, and hypotheses pertaining to the data and the concepts. I was able to put memos in the notes area provided beneath each slide as shown in the second slide. PowerPoint, therefore, was an excellent medium for this complex type of coding in which all of the steps are recursive and overlapping rather than sequential. Keep in mind that
these slides show coding of the written data rather than the video data. I did not use PowerPoint with the video corpus because it was much, much more extensive than the written artifact corpus.

Strauss writes that when a stage of saturation is reached in the coding, when no more fruitful comparisons can be made, selective coding is used to condense concepts into one or a few core categories which integrate all of the data for each case study, and eventually across cases, to capture the main conceptual themes. By looking at the related concepts for the written data in the upper corner of each slide, I was beginning to see that design was repeated on almost every slide. Not surprisingly perhaps, design also surfaced significantly in the findings of my video analysis. Chapter four examines my video coding practices in much greater detail along with results of the grounded theory analysis.

After discovering the results of the discourse analysis, I looked at what the four instructors of my study were doing pedagogically, as indicated by their discourse. And I put those results up against the NLG’s pedagogy of multiliteracies to see how the approaches aligned, if at all, because the NLG has created the most specific pedagogical guidelines for addressing multiliteracies of any group to date. This comparison to NLG categories is therefore woven into the discussion of the GT results. I did not use the NLG categories (types or stages of instruction) as part of my GT methodology or coding. I merely laid the results of the GT analysis for each case against the NLG categories to see if there was much of a fit, intentional or not, on the part of the instructor. An explanation of what was or was not similar to NLG pedagogy could inform readers of the significance of my results in a new light. Filtering the results through the lens of one or
more existing multimodal pedagogies might reveal significant gaps in either the NLG pedagogy or the 4 Case pedagogies that could enlighten researchers and inform future instruction practices.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a general overview of my research methods. It began with an explanation and defense of the case study approach followed by a case by case description of my corpus and data collection methods. The chapter also provided an explanation of my methods of data analysis, especially the principals of grounded theory. These methods are especially appropriate for the type of research with which this dissertation is concerned because they allow for a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis and do not impose existing theory upon the data. The methodological discussion provided in this chapter lays the groundwork for the presentation of the analysis and results in chapter four.

Chapter four contains a complete discussion of the video discourse analysis for each case including a full explanation of the emergence of codes. The chapter begins with a complete description of each instructor’s goals for the class session under analysis. My development and coding of the categories of instructional discourse is then explained in detail using a table outlining the features of each category. The frequency of each type of discourse category is presented using graphs and a word table, after which each specific case is analyzed for the unique insights it yields in light of my research questions. Examples of instructor discourse taken from the video transcripts are included
in this section. Chapter 4 closes with a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the findings across all four cases.

Chapter five begins with a concise review of the dissertation project and its goals then examines connections between my analysis results and existing scholarship. It goes on to discuss implications of my findings for future pedagogical theory related to the teaching of the audio essay followed by an overview of ways this project responds to appeals from other writing instructors for more research on alternative modes. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of the manner in which existing pedagogical theories are mirrored in my findings. These topics, along with speculation on how my analysis results could lead to future research projects as well as a few concluding ideas for new research projects that could be derived from unused data from this corpus, are all covered in this final chapter.
CHAPTER 4

Comparative Analysis

Having just described in chapter three the grounded theory based methodology used to code and analyze a corpus of data containing discourse from four instructors teaching audio essays, it is the purpose of this chapter to present the results of the data analysis. These results are closely tied to the content in chapter two, which discusses theories of communication and multiliteracies that anticipate projects such as this one. Chapter two explains that Multimodal communication theory (MCT), based on social semiotics and developed by Kress and van Leeuwen, emphasizes the layering of meaning in every level of a message. Chapter two also details the way the New London Group’s theory of multiliteracies establishes the need for redesigning pedagogy to address emerging literacies required to successfully use radically changing tools of communication. The way instructor discourse reflects instructor awareness of these theories is part of this analysis. Also presented in chapter 2 are rhetorical features of sound as they have been written about by major scholars, and another purpose of this analysis is to examine ways these rhetorical features figure into instructor discourse. Finally, chapter two provides descriptions of studies that examine research tied to MCT and pedagogy to illustrate the need for more research based studies about how instructors are talking about multimodal assignments. In an effort to provide such a study, I collected and analyzed data for this project which came from recordings of undergraduate English composition classes, gathered as part of an attempt to answer the following research
question: “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? And what perceived affordances of audio technology or sound are revealed through their classroom discourse?”

4.1 Description of the Four Instructors and their Goals

I video taped four freshman English classes at two different state universities on days when the instructors were presenting audio essay assignments. Each class has both a name and a case number, and each transcript is coded according to the grounded theory method of Glaser and Strauss (1987): Case I, Nora: Audacity Workshop; Case II, Betty: Interpreting the Audio Assignment; and Case III, James: Sharing and Listening, were one hour in length; while Case IV, Eileen: Writing instruction and Audio workshop, was two hours. Because of the varying length of the classes and number of clauses, discourse frequency analysis is based on percentages rather than raw numbers. It is also important to note that the focus of the video transcription is not on students but on the words of the instructors. Although students’ words are occasionally included in the data, it is only for the purpose of clarifying an instructor’s response to a student’s question or comment. A general overview of the structure of each class session follows here, with a more in-depth discourse analysis of each case later in the chapter.

Overview of Case I, Nora: Audacity Workshop. The goal of Nora’s class session was to teach students how to use Audacity to create the audio essay. Many of Nora’s comments therefore pertained to general aspects of the assignment such as planning content and becoming comfortable with the notion of digital production. Nora’s assignment instruction included attempts to listen to samples of audio essays. The
technology failed, however, and the instructor, unable to play the NPR (National Public Radio) audio files, went on in spite of this to give a brief overview of how Audacity can be used to create an audio essay. Nora followed this with a lab in which students worked individually with Audacity to learn to record and edit sound files.

*Overview of Case II, Betty: Interpreting the Audio Assignment.* Betty’s goal was to lead students through a group activity that served as a supplement to the audio essay assignment. The group activity was designed to help students work together to interpret the audio essay assignment. Each group worked from the same list of questions designed to help them explain different aspects of the audio assignment and interpret what they were being asked to do. For example, students were told to open a link on the course management software, which would have six steps for them to follow. First they were to read the audio essay assignment together. Then they were to circle or underline parts which they thought were important or about which they had questions. Then they were to answer four questions together as a group about understanding the purpose of the assignment, recognizing the audience, accessing the required resources, and getting help.

In summary, this class, the shortest of the four cases in terms of coded lines, focused mainly on Betty’s describing to students how the hour would progress and briefly explaining what the audio assignment would look like. She then provided and explained the supplemental group activity to help students familiarize themselves with the purposes and evaluation methods relating to the audio essay. The supplemental assignment required breaking students into groups and giving them time to work to answer the questions about the different aspects of the written audio assignment. After
the groups finished, students reconvened to share and discuss their answers. Finally, before dismissing the class, the instructor looked ahead at the syllabus to call attention to due dates for the rest of the semester.

*Overview of Case III, James: Sharing and Listening.* The goal of James’ instruction was to have students share progress on an ongoing research assignment and then to introduce the audio essay assignment and the Audacity software required to produce it. The transcript for this class had nearly twice the number of clauses as the first two cases likely because James participated more in leading discussions and in demonstrating Audacity as opposed to incorporating group work or hands-on practice. James began by reviewing students’ progress on a recent writing project that involved research surrounding a community debate. This earlier writing assignment was intended to provide the content for the audio essay. Each student shared with the class the various viewpoints of the players involved in the community discourse he or she was studying. After students shared, the instructor explained the audio essay format, introduced Audacity, and discussed technical support. He then brought up some NPR and Storyboard audio files for students to listen to as models, after which the class discussed affordances of sound compared to those of writing. The instructor then went on to fully explain the audio assignment and to model the use of Audacity for students.

*Overview of Case IV, Eileen: Writing Instruction and Audio Workshop.* The goals of Eileen’s class, Case IV, were more varied because the class was an hour longer than the other three sessions. Her goals included assigning a multimodal project; giving traditional writing instruction, such as reading and analyzing author purpose and design
of a few short written and audio narratives; introducing the audio essay; and providing lab time. Eileen began by reviewing instructions for a multimodal assignment different from the audio essay—an annotated map. She referred to the annotated map as a “new genre” that she and the students were creating. It was to be a digital map of a place—any place a student chose to describe—such as a book bag, a dorm room, a hallway, or a courtyard. The map had to have dialog boxes or annotations that one would click on and open to read short descriptions of different areas in the place. A considerable amount of time was given to this instruction during which Eileen explained how to access the necessary tools on the computer, how to choose a place, and how to communicate emotion and significance in this new mode. She then moved to a discussion of a sample piece of writing which was a narrative about a group of firefighters that were almost killed by a hidden smoldering remnant of a fire they thought they had successfully put out. The discussion of the story centered on finding and communicating the broader significance of an event to an audience. While students were handed and then read the piece, Eileen took attendance and had some talk of grading procedures. They then discussed the narrative and applied writing concepts from it, especially the idea of communicating to an audience the broader significance of a topic—what Eileen referred to as the dragon’s breath—to the multimodal annotated map assignment. The class then listened to NPR’s All Things Considered followed by further discussion of writing concepts and techniques such as dragon’s breath, the role and affordances of certain sounds, and why some stories are better told in audio and others in writing; which the class then applied to the notion of the multimodal creation of their own audio essays.
From there the class moved to a brief discussion of the syllabus, assignment due dates and formats, and the issue of peer review. Finally, Eileen used lab time to focus solely on production of the audio essay by allowing students to practice using Audacity along with digital audio recorders.

4.2 Categories of Instructional Discourse

Using grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1987), which is based on continual comparison of data, I coded the four video transcripts, a corpus totaling 2,498 clauses, by assigning categories to emerging concepts. I separated textual lines of each video transcript according to the clausal boundary and analyzed each clause according to its theme based on context and key words. Any individual clause, whether dependent or independent, became a separate unit of measurement which was eventually assigned to one of eight categories of discourse. According to Foster (2000) referencing Crookes’ (1990) seminal article, “The Utterance, and Other Basic Units for Second Language Discourse Analysis”

In deciding upon the most appropriate unit for segmenting oral speech samples, we must be governed by the well-established methodological criteria of reliability and validity. If the unit cannot be reliably identified, the measurements will be misleading. Crookes (1990), in the first paper to address this issue in detail, noted that if the unit has little or no relationship to the psycholinguistic planning process, the measurements made will have little or no value. They will have no advantage over merely, say, chopping up the transcript into groups of ten words or twenty morphemes, or whatever. To put it simply, what we need to
know is what the performer can achieve in a single chunk of micro-planning activity, and how particular types of plan may affect the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of the language that is produced (2000, p.356).

Therefore, because the clause boundary can be reliably identified, and because it is related to psycholinguist planning, it is the most logical unit of measurement for this analysis.

As stated earlier, my goal in defining these categories was to code the transcripts in a way that would allow me to answer the questions, “How do writing instructors talk about audio assignments? And what perceived affordances of audio technology or sound are revealed through their classroom discourse?” The eight final categories that emerged came from just four general areas: Logistics, Technology, Writing Concepts, and Multimodal Creation. Each of the four was examined as it occurred in discourse that was outside of audio assignment instruction and then as it occurred inside the context of audio assignment instruction. Therefore, the four original categories became eight when looked at in the two different contexts of general instruction and audio assignment instruction:

1. **L** = Classroom Logistics
2. **A/L** = Logistics of and within Assignment Instruction
3. **T** = Technology
4. **A/T** = Assignment/Technology
5. **W** = Writing Instruction
6. **A/W** = Writing Instruction as part of the Audio Assignment
7. **M** = Multimodal Creation
8. **A/M** = Multimodal Creation within Assignment Instruction

### 4.2.1 How the Codes Emerged

I identified the codes by reading each video transcript multiple times and noting repeated ideas and words which indicated recurring aspects of instruction. At first I used
very specific labels like Audacity and NPR, but they were too numerous. I decided to simplify and condense. While still in the early stages, I formed six codes: *technology* (use or teaching of); *assignment instruction; teaching writing; listening to audio; hands-on technology practice; sound;* and *group work*. However, I determined these were still not concise enough in describing what was occurring, and there tended to be a great deal of overlap, for instance, between *technology, hands-on technology practice, sound,* and *assignment instruction*. So it became necessary to combine *technology* and *hands-on technology* under the one code: *technology*. Discussion of *sound* proved to occur in various categories such as during *assignment instruction, listening to audio,* and *teaching writing*; so I eliminated sound as an isolated category. At one point, I added the categories *rhetoric, assessment,* and *rationale* followed by resources and learning. This coding continued to be problematic. I found that I needed to simplify and focus my attention on words used rather than on possible implied motives and derive categories from evident clausal themes. I was, therefore, finally able to combine the existing codes into just five categories and to form the *multimodal creation* category. I changed the category *learning* to *guidance in multimodal creation* because that more accurately described what was going on each time I designated something as *learning*. It is usually under the categories of *multimodal creation* or *assignment/multimodal creation* that discourse about affordances of sound falls. My revised categories became

- Technical process
- General writing instruction
- Specific assignment instruction
• Guidance in mm creation process

Eventually, the coding ended up being four categories slightly modified. I eliminated the isolated assignment instruction category and replaced it with classroom logistics. I changed technical process to technology. I changed general writing instruction to simply writing instruction. And I took away the word “guidance” in front of multimodal creation. I then added assignment instruction to each of the four main categories to make a mirror image of each category as it occurred during assignment instruction, resulting in the final eight categories listed, listed previously and again here:

1. L = Classroom Logistics
2. A/L = Logistics of and within Assignment Instruction
3. T = Technology
4. A/T = Assignment/Technology
5. W = Writing Instruction
6. A/W = Writing Instruction as part of the Audio Assignment
7. M = Multimodal Creation
8. A/M = Multimodal Creation within Assignment Instruction.

All but an insignificant, uncodable percentage of the discourse that occurred in the four classes on the day the instructors were presenting an audio essay assignment fell into one of these eight categories. No other area emerged from the data that could not be included under the four main categories. These categories, therefore, give an accurate description of the ways that instructors are talking about audio essays and the affordances of sound.

4.2.2 Coding scheme

In order to define each instructional discourse category in a way that another coder would be able to duplicate, I crafted the following coding scheme table. As
explained earlier, the clausal boundary, whether dependent or independent, was the unit of analysis. Any unit that did not fit into one of these categories was coded with a question mark and left out of the final analysis. The sum of these uncodable clauses, as already stated, was insignificant. An explanation of each category is provided in the table on the next two pages. The table gives the code name, describes features of statements that received that code, and provides a list of words and phrases coded under that category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Statement Features</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Logistics</td>
<td>Statements deal with managing the logistics of class (such as taking attendance or reviewing the calendar); assessing student understanding; speaking about how the class will be or has been conducted; setting the direction of the class; explaining directions for anything other than the audio assignment; meta-comments about how class is proceeding or how students are behaving.</td>
<td>Attendance; Does that make sense to you?; Follow these six steps; Get together with your favorite group of people; how we did it...; I am going to ask you to...; I see a lot of...; I would like; Next...; Now I want you to; Thanksgiving; What do you think?; We are going to...; whether it is for this class; You are very...; ...What you say is not going to become part of the transcript.; I don’t think you were here; You guys are very silent; You look...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment Logistics</td>
<td>Statements deal with logistical aspects of the audio essay assignment only and not any other multimodal assignment such as an annotated map. These aspects include assessment criteria; student progress; written directions; deadlines; and how, when, and where to get access to equipment or computer support.</td>
<td>asked to do; assignment; description; audio essay; follow the directions; get help; hard to go back; I want; If you know; I’m asking you to do three things for this assignment; It is a good idea; project is started; sign up; task; thinking ahead; think of this task; this means; times available; work alone; work in pairs; you decide; 5-7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Statements deal with manipulating technology by either the instructor or the students during class—any activity done on the computer or with the computer, from opening up sample NPR audio files to putting away computer or sound equipment.</td>
<td>Audacity [when its capabilities are discussed apart from the assignment]; bring up; burn; computer; cut and paste; Do you know how to make this work?; download; head phones; how it works; I don’t want to complicate this with so much technology; logon; Maps.org; machine; microphone; program; pull up Vista; technology; uses of Audacity: record, create MP3, wave files, or oggvorbis; volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment/Technology</td>
<td>Statements deal with technological aspects specifically in relation to the audio essay assignment; teaching how to find and use technology necessary for the creation of the audio essay; teaching students how to read Audacity files.</td>
<td>Amplify; available online; Audacity; bar flattens; burn all this to a CD; button; Cd; cord; delete; digital; drop a file onto the computer; effects; erase; file; folder; free; generate; headphones; interface; levels; phrases; power; press; record; space; tempo; volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Instruction</td>
<td>Statements deal with traditional writing concepts such as revising; editing; composing; argument; audience; purpose; story analysis; or rhetorical concepts such as logos, pathos, and ethos; and decisions about placement of content.</td>
<td>Argument; audience; debate; citations; composition; creative anxiety; decide; what is most important; dragon’s breath; edit; emotion; essay; planning; purpose; read (when mentioned in relation to reading traditional written compositions or stories); research; sources/resources; word count; writing; works cited page; you choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment/ Writing</td>
<td>Statements deal with traditional writing concepts in relation to the audio essay assignment such as sources; the writing process: planning, revising, editing; publishing; or audience. This is language that is typically used in the teaching of writing:</td>
<td>Analysis; argument; audience; bibliography; claims; data; drafting; edit; format; interview; print; publishing; read; research; revise; sources; warrant; works cited; write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimodal Creation</td>
<td>Statements deal with representation in other modes besides writing or with actually assigning another multimodal assignment apart from the audio essay; with content of a design rather than technological process of creating the design. (Content can include text, image, sound, or other graphic features such as font color or size.)</td>
<td>acquire sounds; allow time; annotated ; map; “any kind” of editing; any other kind of projects; be able to create with Audacity; call-outs; create; deliver; different versions; each one of these; pieces...; graphic; image; instead of writing; learn; meaning-making; podcast; PowerPoint; print; read (when related to consumption of a textual part of a multimodal composition such as an annotation); representation ; sense; sound; talk radio as opposed to music; that's what you might do; understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment/ Multimodal Creation</td>
<td>Statements deal with inserting or arranging modal layers to enhance the central message. They are the same as those related to Multimodal Creation above except that in this case they are in direct relation to the assignment. These can be statements asking for a reaction to a MM sample recording; statements making comparisons between multimodal and written compositions.</td>
<td>Add sound as a layer of detail in your audios”; audio essays; arrangement; audio project; auditory; CD; Clips; Communication; Composition; creating; ducks quacking; form; frame; hard to go; back; hear; images; listen; modes; movie; multi-media; music; non-destructive; editing; NPR; oral/orally; pause; PowerPoint; project; radio; represent; semiotic; songs; sounds; sound track; speaking; speech; stories; voice; where your sounds are; whether that means burning a piece of music from a CD, getting or downloading an audio file, or a piece of audio file from online, or recording your own voice; you can use music.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.3 Frequency of Instructional Discourse Comments

The table and charts used above and in this section correspond to methods for examining variations within multiple-case studies described and recommended by Robert K. Yin in his book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2009). Yin identifies a number of approaches to the case study method, among which is direct observation, the method of choice for this project. As this study bears out, the benefits of direct observation include the fact that events are covered in real time and that the context in which the event occurs is captured (p.102). One form of case study methodology is the “comparative case method” also known as cross-case analysis (p. 15). Yin recommends using cross-case analysis when two or more cases are involved in order to yield more robust findings. In a cross-case analysis, each case is treated individually, and then results are compared. In instances where a “moderate” number of cases are involved, such as this project, Yin recommends using:

…word tables that display the data from the individual cases according to some uniform framework” (p.156).…Complementary word tables can go beyond the single features of a case and array a whole set of features on a case-by-case basis. Now, the analysis can start to probe whether different groups of cases appear to share some similarity and deserve to be considered instances of the same “type” of general case. (p.160)

My approach here involves using word tables to describe category features and most frequent discourse occurrences. I also use bar charts for both individual cases and cross-case comparisons. After coding each clause according to the guidelines above and
testing the codes against an inter-rater coder, with an agreement of 91-92% in all four cases, I charted the percentage of frequency of occurrences for each category. The results per case are shown in figures 1-4 below.

Figure 4.1 Frequency of Instructional Discourse Comments
Next, a word table shows a cross-case comparison of the most frequent discourse categories.

**Table 4.2. Top Three Most Frequent Instructional Discourse Comments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Most Frequent Category</th>
<th>Second Most Frequent Category</th>
<th>Third Most Frequent Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case I : Nora Audacity Workshop</td>
<td>Assignment/Technology 45%</td>
<td>Assignment Logistics 22%</td>
<td>Classroom Logistics 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case II : Betty Interpreting the Audio Assignment</td>
<td>Classroom Logistics 36%</td>
<td>Assignment Logistics 25%</td>
<td>Assignment/Writing 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case III : James Sharing and Listening</td>
<td>Assignment/Multimodal Creation 27%</td>
<td>Assignment/Technology 24%</td>
<td>Assignment Logistics 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case IV : Eileen Writing Instruction/Audio Workshop</td>
<td>Assignment/Technology 33%</td>
<td>Classroom Logistics 21%</td>
<td>Writing Instruction 17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From looking at the data and charting it, I discovered no immediately-discernible pattern or predictable set of practices that can be traced from one instructor to another. The word table reveals that the instructor talk fails to address anything about the nature of the multi-modal assignment. Rather, top discourse categories describe how classroom management varies across instructors, where individual emphases are, and so on. The charts also reveal a lack of pattern. All four instructors differ significantly in one or more areas. However, as Yin would suggest, some important conclusions can still be drawn from a close examination and comparison of the four cases.

The nearest thing to a pattern was that all four cases had between 14% and 25% of their statements coded for Assignment Logistics, and all four stayed between 0% and 5% for Technology when it was apart from the audio assignment. This suggests that instructors are perhaps more concerned with managing and communicating the assignment clearly than with teaching rhetorical principles related to multimodal compositions. This could be because the audio essay assignment is new and unfamiliar, and the instructor is adjusting to and developing the parameters of the assignment. Just as Eileen explained to her class that, in the case of the annotated maps, they were inventing a new genre, so, with some instructors, it may be with the audio essay. Each instructor is, in effect, working out the details of a new assigning practice which requires a totally new set of skills from students. Inside assignment instruction, three out of the four instructors spoke about technology at least 25% of the time, which reflects the fact that these new skills have to do with mastery of digital audio recording software. Overall, the results seem to suggest that the assignment is driving multimodal instruction
practices and that these goals are still evolving, perhaps indicating a need for stronger assignment guidelines for teachers.

In light of the lack of a strong pattern in the cross-case analysis, it is necessary to take a closer look at the individual cases and try to understand what the data for each case says about discourse regarding audio essays and affordances of audio technology in relation to the theories presented in chapter 2. The next section will provide a chart and discussions for each individual case.

**Case I, Nora, Audio workshop**

![Figure 4.2. Case I Frequency Chart](image)

**Case 1 Frequency Analysis**
- Total number of clauses = 319

- **Assignment/Technology**: 44% (142 clauses out of 319 or 44% of all clauses)
  - Nora’s explanations of where technology required for the assignment such as Audacity software, microphones, and recorders can be located and obtained and how it can be properly used. The Assignment/Technology discourse occurs around and within an Audacity tutorial, which allows students hands-on experience with the digital recording software they need to
create their assignment. Nora was clearly most concerned, on the first day of introducing the audio assignment, with making sure students knew how to find and use the program they would need to create it. The second most frequent code, *Assignment Logistics*, which includes instructional transitions and directions about the assignment in general, occurs at about half the frequency of the first. These logistical moves are still within assignment instruction, and the third most frequent code is similar, *Classroom Logistics*, at 17%. This last contains Nora’s logistical statements surrounding the explanation of the presence of the Videographer; the length of the class and the lab; and management of work spaces. Like technological guidance; the first, second, and third categories are all about practical matters rather than theory. The fourth most frequent code for Nora, *Technology* discourse apart from the assignment, involves statements introducing Audacity as software and its various capabilities as well as statements about the difficulty of opening the NPR files. No theoretical discourse occurs within these first four categories. Even in the fifth most frequent code, *Assignment/Multimodality (A/M)* discourse, which occurs 8% of the time, less than half the rate of *Technology* discourse, there is no mention of theory, although this is one of the categories where theory is most likely to be mentioned. Most of Nora’s A/M statements, while they deal with sounds—choosing them, finding them, and capturing them, do not go into depth about rhetorical effects of sounds. Her comments focus more on the logistical difficulties of capturing the sounds one has in mind. Neither a rationale for choosing types of sounds (such as real background noises versus music) nor any theory about the affordances of sound is presented as part of Nora’s discourse. The remaining two categories, *Writing Instruction*
and *Multimodal Creation*, both have a very limited frequency of occurrence. The *Writing Instruction* code occurs at a frequency of less than 1%. Nora’s statements coded *W* or *A/W* are always about planning ahead, while statements coded *Multimodal Creation* have to do with the notion of creating a composition; with names of sample audio essays from NPR that students had listened to in previous class sessions; with the instructor telling the students which types of multimodal works can be created using Audacity, such as podcasts; and with different types of files Audacity can produce: OggVorbis, Wave, or MP3.

At the beginning of this chapter, I wrote that part of this analysis would involve examining the way the discourse reflects instructor awareness of the NLG’s theory of multiliteracies and resulting pedagogy. Taking the results of Nora’s discourse analysis and holding them against the NLG’s pedagogy can reveal whether or not there is any match, intentional or not, or only discrepancies between the two pedagogies. This does not affect the nature of grounded theory, as the GT analysis has already been completed. The findings are now being examined in light of MMC theory and the theory of multiliteracies. Viewed in this way, Nora’s discourse most closely matches overt instruction and situated practice. Nora’s session barely touches on theory surrounding the locating and layering of sounds in the audio composition. An example of her discourse which features her focus on the merely practical aspects of acquiring sounds follows here:

*So for instance, if you know that you need to have ducks quacking and leaves rustling...you should figure out where your sounds are, maybe acquire those sounds and decide at what point you want to hear things because if you know you need to hear something*
somewhere else, it’s hard to go back after you’ve got…This isn’t quite as easy as using word processing where you can just cut and paste really easily. It’s a good idea to know exactly what you’re doing ahead of time. There’s just really—there’s nothing that will substitute for really good planning.

The discourse that might have lingered on and explored multimodal communication theory as well the affordances of audio did not happen. This is possibly because the NPR files would not play. If the NPR files had played, students would have likely been asked to analyze the clips and discuss reasons behind the successful use of audio in these files. So the failure of technological equipment likely influenced the Multimodal Creation discourse on this particular day.

Nora’s transcript, the Case I class session, is therefore comprised of the following: logistical references to the assignment, which account for a significant part of the video transcript; teaching of technology pertaining to the audio essay, specifically of Audacity through an online Audacity tutorial; and then a great deal of logistical and technological maneuvering, also in relation to the workshop and assignment. Nora’s Case aligns most closely with the NLG category situated practice (immersion combined with expert guidance), which is where the tutorial would fall. Her Case can also be somewhat aligned with the NLG’s category overt instruction in relation to technology instruction and her use of any of technical language appropriate to the field. The correlation, however, is minimal. Most of the class is a lab, and therefore mirrors the NLG’s notion of situated practice.
Case II: Betty, Interpreting the Audio assignment

Betty’s transcript, Case II, was only 9 lines shorter than Nora’s, but it differed significantly in that, unlike Nora’s technology-heavy session, Betty’s most robust category was *Classroom Logistics* with 112 clauses out of 310 or 36% of all clauses falling into that category. However, Betty’s also differed from Nora’s in that Betty’s instruction used different NLG pedagogical areas of instruction. Behind *Classroom Logistics*, *Assignment Logistics* was the next most robust category, accounting for 25% of clauses. With the two categories combined, sixty-one percent of Betty’s instructional discourse ends up being mostly logistical, the highest of all four cases by at least 23%.

Betty’s statements coded as *Classroom Logistics* have to do with introducing and explaining the supplemental assignment, forming groups, and discussing the class
calendar, while those coded Assignment Logistics deal with students’ answers to the supplemental assignment that asked them to read and analyze written instructions for the audio assignment. They are also about managing prior research and writing carried out by students, which are to be translated from a purely written form into the audio project. A great deal of time is spent explaining how things will play out—in meta-discourse about the class schedule and the assignment. There is clearly concern on Betty’s part over whether students will correctly perceive the assignment instructions and the due date and what it will take to complete the work in time. Interestingly, Writing Instruction and Multimodal Creation receive no time at all apart from the assignment. However, as sub-categories of the assignment they have significant values: 15% and 9% respectively. Betty’s Assignment/Writing (A/W) statements have to do with choosing sources—which to keep and which to cut—from the written assignment; and with research; audience; and the concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos as they manifest in audio. Some examples of this discourse include:

What is the purpose of this [the audio] assignment?

. . . give us just a little background on information that you found in your sources,

how are you gonna fit all that together?

. . . what sorts of resources do you need to get started on this

. . . but what did you come up with for the audience?

. . . you’re gonna write up, you know, 1-2 page explanation of what you did, and we’re gonna read an article that’s really gonna help

. . . you understand how ethos, pathos, and logos come across in oral compositions,
You’re gonna turn in the explanation and the works cited page to me

The assignment/writing discourse would be most closely aligned with the NLG pedagogical area overt instruction as it does involve use of terms specific to the field of writing.

Assignment/Multimodality (A/M) statements have to do with explaining the audio format as opposed to writing, choosing which sounds to include, explaining which kinds of formats audio files can be saved in, and detailing how to access Student Media Services. These also fall under some form of overt instruction.

The category Technology is slightly greater outside (4%) than inside (5%) the assignment, but overall accounts for less than 10% of the classroom discourse. Betty’s statements coded Technology apart from the assignment are comments about students logging into Vista at the beginning of class or finding a link to the supplemental assignment, general comments about computer hardware and software, and comments about student levels of competence with video/audio technology. Within the assignment, Assignment/Technology (A/T) statements have to do with Audacity. There is not any hands-on lab time with Audacity in this class and most of the discussion is about making sure students understand the written audio assignment. Betty steers away from technology and focuses more on interpretation of text—specifically of the audio assignment instructions. The audio assignment is included in appendix B. It touches on theory and writing concepts applied to audio that do not come across in the spoken discourse. It is interesting to note that all the theory and rationale for using audio was presented in print rather than orally.
In summary, Betty’s class (Case II) aims well over half of its discourse at *Classroom* and *Assignment Logistics*, followed distantly by *Writing Instruction* and *Multimodal Creation* within assignment instruction. This would place Betty’s instruction solidly in the *overt instruction* and *critical framing* components of the NLG’s new pedagogy. Logistical and writing discourse would be using language appropriate to the task and field, while *assignment/logistics* in this case involves a form of *critical framing* in which the students are critiquing their own assignment. Betty’s supplemental assignment offered an opportunity for her to examine rhetorical affordances of sound and multimodal communication theory, and she did begin to touch on those areas but did not go into any significant depth with that sort of instruction. An example of this occurs in the following lines:

You were…struggling with what the purpose is of the assignment. You see in point one there, under “What are we doing?” I’m asking you to do three things for this assignment, and the first is to go back to project two look at all the information [that] we gathered from the library, from your interviews, and then from your own thoughts about all that stuff and to present that data to us orally.

In the next few lines, she has the opportunity to discuss the rationale for doing an oral/audio assignment. She begins to explain the implications of this”:

Instead of writing out a paper, this time you’re gonna actually be speaking the information, and this means that you’re gonna have to decide what’s most important…

but she then gets sidetracked and goes back into the logistical focus on length:

if you sit there and try to read your 8-10 page paper, that’s gonna take way longer than 5-7 minutes, Um, so 5-7 minutes is how long I’m asking you to make this thing to be, and this is gonna mean you’re gonna have to choose what’s important. Like I said, are you gonna cut some sources out?
No theoretical principles are discussed here as part of the spoken discourse. However, it is significant that Betty’s written version of the audio assignment contains the following section:

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In his chapter titled “Authoring in Sound,” Charles Hardy III hypothesizes that “Perhaps multi-channel aural histories represent an important tool for the authoring of ‘post-modern’ histories by providing a means of sharing authority, privileging multiple rather than univocal perspectives, and opening space – using simultaneity and dimension in the presentation of history that is not possible in the printed word, bound as it is to a linear unfolding” (393). In project 2, you attempted to integrate your perspective, your informant’s perspective, and the perspectives you found in your secondary research in an 8-10 page paper. Still, you were constrained by the print mode and made to represent all of these perspectives using mainly your own voice. You were also forced to represent those perspectives in a linear fashion. For project 3, you’ll have the opportunity to experiment with “simultaneity and dimension” as you present the perspectives from projects 1 & 2 in the aural mode. You’ll be able to include multiple voices and to make clearer the distinctions between (and overlap of) your own ideas, your informant’s ideas, and the thoughts of the researchers you encountered. And, unlike a print essay, the oral essay is not bound to a linear structure which means you’ll have more freedom with organization.”
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Figure 4.4. Audio Assignment Excerpt from Case 2

The written version of the audio essay assignment for case 2 can be found in its entirety in appendix B. From this written excerpt it can be seen that Betty does have an awareness of the importance of providing a theoretical rationale, and perhaps this is why she is so concerned with the students’ critical analysis of the written version of her assignment, so much so that she devotes most of the class session to having them complete the supplemental assignment or meta-assignment aimed at analyzing the real assignment. But there is admittedly a disconnect between the spoken discourse and the written, and the theoretical rationale is never fully articulated verbally in the classroom even in the discussion that follows the group analysis of the assignment. This suggests
the possible need for the use of textbooks containing logistical instruction as well as in-depth theoretical instruction of the audio and other multimodal compositions.

Betty’s class is an anomaly because of its heavy focus on logistics and low Technology percentages, and also because of its unique critical pedagogical approach. One reason for this appears to be Betty’s decision to delay the introduction to the Audacity recording software until the students were completely familiar with what they were being asked to do. So in Betty’s case, overt instruction and critical framing are entirely separate from situated practice, while in the other three cases, it is the opposite, which illustrates the different instructional views and priorities of the four instructors. I asked to observe the class on the day the audio assignment was to be introduced. For three instructors, this meant that Audacity or NPR or both were part of the instruction, but for one instructor, this meant that the written instructions alone were presented and thoroughly interpreted and the technological aspects of the assignment deferred to a later date. At this point, it seems to be a matter of instructional style. Whether one practice is to be preferred above the other would be a fitting topic of future research.
Case III: James, Sharing and Listening

![Case 3 Frequency Analysis](image)

James’ entire class session centers on the audio essay assignment, and the four Assignment categories are all close in value. The Assignment/Multimodal Creation category, at 27%, is highest but only by 3% more than Technology and 7% more than Assignment Logistics and Assignment/Writing, which tie at 20%. All categories outside of the assignment categories are under 10%, with Classroom Logistics being highest at 7%.

James’ statements coded Assignment/Multimodal Creation are about explaining what an audio essay is and what form it takes; why one might choose that mode; differences between the audio and print formats; comparison to radio; affordances of sound and oral communication; and analysis of NPR sound clips. Here are some examples of this discourse:

so far we’ve ex--, mainly examined this phenomenon happening in print text; however, this assignment will move beyond the print text to look at the ways auditory technologies function as a semiotic representation, right? And again, what we’re talking about with semiotics is different ways to create or represent meaning,
can you pay attention to the issue of voice

and how do the voices sound.

did you notice the shift in her tone of voice? I mean, she’s still sort of narrating

Is this a scripted or unscripted discussion? Did it sound like it was being read or did it sound like was being spoken free-form? Did you notice the shift in her tone of voice?

she’s still sort of narrating . . .

It’s basically taking all of the ideas that you have already, the ideas you’ve been working with, and putting them into a different form of communication—a written paper.

You are going to speak it.

I want to listen to some examples of audio essays from NPR, right? And NPR actually has a ton of examples of this because it’s mostly talk radio as opposed to, you know, music. So, um, maybe we should listen to them and then talk about what these certain particular responsibilities would be.

radio is a media that is one of the only forms of purely oral communication, right? Everything that happens, happens through speech, you know, or sound. Uh, We can only hear radio. We can’t really see it [radio]; we can’t, you know, watch it and hear it at the same time like we do with the TV.

This would be closest to an example of overt instruction. James is explaining some unique aspects of radio, but, like the other instructors, he does not discuss affordances of radio as compared to written communication.

Statements coded Assignment/Technology have to do with whether students have previously worked with Audacity and with teaching them how to locate it on their computers and then how to use it. This discourse also has to do with locating and opening NPR and Storyboard files.
Okay, the sound is on. I can hear it.

... you can see a lot of the conversation has been edited out, just from like the way the clips are put together and [snaps] the [snaps] length of time between responses.

... It is very reliable, but at the same time, different systems, different configurations in, in the hardware itself can sometimes cause problems.

... this is an audio file; this is an audio file; this is an audio file. I’m going to put them all together in the same folder, right? All the time. Everything gets saved to the same folder.

... What you don’t know is that at the bottom, it’s the sort of orangish icon with headphones, right? And that should open up a new document.

... If you pause something, you need to Stop before you can cut or paste

James is teaching technology as part of the assignment, but it does not get an inordinate amount of time. Instead he balances the four categories within assignment instruction. Judging by the breakdown of his discourse, it appears that James sees rhetorical principles as being just as important as technological expertise.

James’ Assignment Logistic discourse is about the fact that the audio assignment is already underway because of an earlier research assignment that will provide the content; about finding and signing in at the media resource lab; about lab hours; about what students should be doing or thinking about next. This discourse includes mostly transitional statements that move the class along, and almost all of the discourse falls within assignment instruction.

Assignment/Writing discourse, which ties with that of Assignment Logistics at 20%, has to do with the discussion of the written essays that are already in progress.
Students are asked to share their research and arguments with the class. This discourse is about shaping the argument, creating the persona of the writer, and organizing ideas. It includes analysis of sound clips when that analysis pertains to traditional writing concepts, advice on creating the introduction and resolution, and instruction about moving through the stages of the composing process and citing sources.

Okay. Um, So, this, in this essay I’m asking you to deconstruct the issue of debate for people, like myself, who are not as familiar with the topics

. . . use the argument structure that we’ve been talking about, the sort of claims, how do you know what you’re claiming? Go back to your data. And then how do you get from data to claim, the warrant. Okay?

. . . I’d like you to do a bibliography, right, a Works cited page, a reference page.

James’ assignment/writing discourse would again be most closely aligned with overt instruction.

In summary, James’s class is neatly balanced with all four areas within the assignment being almost equally addressed. James uses overt instruction instead of situated practice in teaching students how to use technology. He offers to let them open Audacity and work along with him, but it turns out to be just him modeling while the students watch and question. They watch him model Audacity, but in this session, they are not given a lab in which they can acquire hands-on experience using the software. A form of critical framing is used when the students listen to and discuss the NPR files. Even transformed practice can be seen at work in this class because the research topic that the audio assignment is based on is an argumentative analysis of a public debate.
The underlying tenor of James’ discourse implies that for students, the value in participating in the kind of community research they are doing has the potential to make them more socially aware of public rhetoric and debate and to affect their future roles discourse. Finally, the 7% of discourse dealing with classroom logistics outside of the assignment occurs at the very beginning and end of the class to open and wrap up the session.

Affordances of sound, almost always coded M or A/M, are discussed after listening to NPR, but not with a particular focus on any of the rhetorical affordances mentioned in chapter 2. The idea of intimacy of sound is very much a part of the critical framing discourse, but the concept is not tied to any particular researcher, theory, or word choice. For example, James plays an audio selection about a man who researches aspects of soap, including the way certain soaps sound when rubbed on skin. Here is a sample of the discourse from that section of the transcript. Statements in bold are those of the instructor. Statements in italics are by students.

But what did you think of that?
S3: Interesting.
S2: It was unique.

What was interesting about it, hmm?
Student 3: The, like the, I don’t know, the fact that he uses examples. You know, like, here, listen to this. And now listen to this. I thought that was kind of interesting.

Okay. So what does that do for him?
S3: Grabs people’s attention, I guess. Or it helps him explain what actually it is that he does, by giving examples I guess.
S3: Okay, what if he says, “I just test out different soaps to see how each one sounds on the skin. What if he just told us that?
S2: I think I probably wouldn’t have quite understood what he meant by that. I probably would have questioned.

There is a very particular kind of sound that, that scrubbing against the skin has.
Um, How is that different from the way that makes, um, the way his job might be described on paper?
S2: You wouldn’t actually hear the noise.
S3: Yeah.
You wouldn’t actually hear the noise. Right? That noise was pretty essential for understanding what exactly he does.

This sample shows that both the instructor and the students seem to be having difficulty finding the right language to precisely describe the affordances of sound which they are perceiving. This may indicate a need for better resources for instructors guiding them in ways to effectively discuss affordances of sound in light of existing theories and scholarship on the subject.

Case IV, Eileen, Writing Instruction and Audio Workshop:

Figure 4.6 Case 4 Frequency Chart

The densest category in Case IV, Eileen’s class is related to instructing students on the use of headphones, digital recorders, and Audacity software for the audio essay assignment. Assignment/Technology accounts for 408 clauses or 33% of the discourse. Statements coded in this way occur mostly in the second half of the session during lab time. Examples of Eileen’s Assignment/Technology discourse include
... grab a recorder

... You’ve gotta plug in, so go ahead and take the recorder out, plug them in,

... you have to open the little plastic flap on the side...the little plastic flap, and plug in your power, and now you got power to the machine. [silence]

... Do you see the levels on the screen? See the levels going across? Yes? Talk into your machine. Yawn into your machine...

... there are a lot of files, you’ll never find the file that you want. So you always wanna clean em off before you use them.

“Check 4, check 4.”

You gotta have it on record/standby before you’re gonna hear something, right? This is why you always have to wear headphones when you record.

... Go, okay, open Audacity, open the headphones. Okay. Go to Project [long pause] Pull it down and say “import audio.” And then navigate and find the audio thing you just put on your desktop, and import it.

... And then what you should see in your screen is the wave form. Right? Now go ahead and plug your headphones in and listen to that wave form.

Eileen’s Assignment/Technology discourse provides an excellent example of situated practice in which students are immersed in technology with close guidance of an expert.

Eileen’s next richest category has to do with assessing student knowledge or explaining what has happened or what is happening next in the instructional approach: Classroom/Logistics, accounts for 21% of the discourse. Her discourse coded for this category includes statements such as

Now that’s just a little bit of Audacity. You’re going to have a whole session on Audacity so . . . ,
which indicates that, like Betty, Eileen is going to devote much more time to Audacity in another class session, but unlike Betty, she incorporates a great deal of technology instruction into the introductory class session as well although it is instruction more related more to use of hand-held digital recorders that will input files into Audacity at a later date. Eileen’s Classroom/Logistics discourse involves meta-comments about what is going on with the students in class:

**Are you with me?**

and commenting on attendance, grading procedures, and the class calendar.

The third richest category, Writing Instruction (17% of the discourse), involves class discussion of writing samples and model audio clips. These discussions reinforce concepts regarding what makes a good story and ways to weave significance into a story. Eileen’s aim is helping students use traditional writing concepts to enrich multimodal projects. Some of her writing discourse also has to do with annotations for the map assignment:

**Unless we...unless we um, invest those stories with some larger significance, the story remains just a story. It doesn’t have the dragon’s breath. What’s the larger significance with which she invests this story? It has to do with the human condition**

**... So, if you have to take these from your own experience, how do you find them? How do you select the story that has larger significance? What do you look for?** [silence]

Multimodal Creation is less dense than Writing Instruction but still accounts for just over 10% of all discourse. Many of these statements have to do with the annotated map and later on, affordances of sound in audio clips.
Now we’re talking about the annotated map. So there has to be some background image that you are mapping. Right? And in the background, you’re gonna have one big image. Say this is the old [unintelligible], that’s the big map, and then you’re gonna have little annotations coming off of that oval. Now one of these might be a story, or a little micro-essay. One of these might be another image. One of these might be a reflection. One of these might be another image, but they’re all sitting on the background of the map.

... now you could think of this as an annotation either for...in print form...for your annotated map, or an audio form for your walking tour.

... Let me play you a story. This is gonna be a...an audio story, okay?

... audio is very good at capturing sound, not...writing not so good.

Now, this piece, did it work better as an audio essay or as a piece of writing? Hmm?

Statements coded Technology also often have to do with the annotated map—how to locate websites and how to perform functions on the computer. The number of general Technology statements (25 or 2%) is miniscule compared to the 408 Assignment/Technology related statements. Assignment/MMC, the weakest category with only 15 occurrences or 1% of the discourse, includes statements about capturing sounds for the audio essay and deciding where to locate them.

In summary, Eileen spends just slightly more time on Classroom and Assignment Logistics combined than she does on teaching Assignment/Technology. More than 10% of her discourse deals with Writing Instruction and Multimodal Creation. It is interesting to note that her writing instruction occurs outside of the assignment and is completely overshadowed by Technology instruction within the context of audio assignment instruction.
In comparison with the NLG categories, her *Technology* and *Multimodal Creation* discourse is closest to *overt instruction* although it does not reach the ideal level of the NLG’s pedagogy which would involve higher interaction from and modeling of language by the students. Eileen’s writing instruction is similar to *critical framing* because it closely analyzes pieces of writing in print and audio, while the digital recorder/Audacity workshop is a good example of *situated practice*. And a hint of *transformed practice* occurs in Eileen’s statement, “we are creating a new genre here,” which suggests the type of student empowerment the NLG is aiming for as the culmination of their new pedagogy.

4.2.4 Final Discussion

The chart below tracks discourse frequencies in all eight categories across all four cases.
Figure 4.7. Cross-Case Frequency Analysis Chart

An examination of the chart can help explain what these findings mean in light of the research questions for this project: “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? And what perceived affordances of audio technology are revealed through their classroom discourse?”

Instructor discourse about the audio essay, on days when it was understood that presentation of the audio essay was the focus of instruction, can be understood in this way: Explaining and teaching technology (Assignment/Technology)—how to find, access, and use it to understand and produce the audio essay—accounts for an average of 26% of the discourse across all four cases. This category falls under the New London Group’s notion of situated practice, as it involves having students listen to models of experts (NPR) and learn to use digital recording software alongside the teacher in a lab situation. This is the predominant focus of two teachers (Nora and Eileen) and the second dominant focus of one (James) although it plummets in Betty’s class, Case II. As already mentioned, Betty decided to introduce her audio essay assignment through a written, supplemental assignment, closer to critical framing than situated practice, that was a group discussion activity aimed at interpreting the written audio assignment instructions. Hers was a very different approach from that of the others who opted to present the assignment and the related technology in the same session. Betty’s class is highest by far in logistics. Transitioning from one phase of instruction to another and commenting on and assessing student behavior outside of audio assignment instruction (Classroom Logistics) accounts for an average of 20% of the discourse across all four cases, followed
closely by logistical discussion within the assignment. Likewise, transitioning through the specific audio assignment instructions (Assignment Logistics) accounts for an average of 20% of all discourse. In other words, transitional types of statements, both in and out of the audio assignment, account for 40% of all discourse. They are concerned with the most fundamental type of meaning-making—ensuring that students correctly perceive and follow what the instructor is saying or planning to do next. How this compares to other disciplines and types of assignments is a topic for further research. It is possible that these instructors were taking more care to provide clear transitions and directions than they might have taken when and if assigning a genre that was more familiar to them.

Logistical statements are not about theory. Rather, it is within Multimodal Creation, Assignment/Multimodal Creation and Assignment/Writing that theories and affordances of sound would normally most likely be discussed. However, explaining rhetorical aspects of the audio essay project (Assignment/Multimodal Creation) accounts for an average of only 11% of all discourse, just 1/4 of the sum of logistical discourse. Two of the four instructors—James and Eileen—do give time to the role of sound in meaning-making, but Eileen mentions it in passing when discussing writing apart from the audio assignment. This seems to happen because her teaching spans several different areas in her two-hour class session, and the audio clips lend themselves to that type of critical instruction even though Eileen is not using the sound files as part of audio assignment instruction. Eileen has instead been talking about the annotated map, a separate multimodal assignment, and then leading a discussion on principles of good writing. And almost as an offshoot of this writing instruction that occurs outside of and
prior to the audio essay instruction, she plays these audio clips and analyzes their rhetorical aspects with the students. The conclusions she and the students reach about sound are likely intended to be applied to the audio assignment when that instruction takes place. But that close instruction about affordances of sound directly in relation to the audio essay assignment does not happen in this class session. This reinforces the finding that there seems to be a gap in theory-focused discourse in the assigning of multimodal assignments.

Applying traditional writing concepts to the audio assignment (Assignment/Writing Instruction) accounts for an average of 10% of all discourse and occurs in the first three classes but not in Eileen’s, while teaching traditional writing concepts apart from the audio assignment (Writing Instruction) accounts for an average of 5% of all discourse, and nearly all of it occurs in Eileen’s class. Eileen is applying her intensive writing analysis instruction to another multimodal assignment (the annotated map), and it can be assumed that in future class sessions, as the audio assignment instruction continues, the writing instruction will be applied more directly to that as well. The fact that writing instruction, both inside and outside of the assignment, comprises half as much discourse overall as Assignment/Technology should be addressed in research concerning the generation of materials aimed at assisting instructors who are assigning multimodal projects. Use of rhetorical techniques should receive as prominent a focus during instruction of multimodal compositions as during instruction of written compositions.
Similarly, explaining aspects of arrangement and rhetoric different from general writing principles that are unique to multimodal projects (such as affordances of sound) and which are taught apart from the audio essay (Multimodal Creation) accounts for an average of only 3% of all discourse. As already mentioned with Writing Instruction, this is an area that should receive much more coverage.

Manipulating or explaining technology apart from audio essay instruction (Technology) accounts for an average of only 1% of all discourse. It is clear, therefore, that instructors are not getting bogged down by malfunctioning technology as has been feared. They are talking about technology related to the assignment (Assignment/Technology) most, but that category is actually outpaced by logistics inside and outside of the assignment. When combined, the two logistical areas get almost double the time that Assignment/Technology receives. And as mentioned before, it remains to be seen whether this is unique to classes in which new genres are being taught.

Because Multimodal Creation and Writing Instruction are almost even, with Writing Instruction as part of the audio assignment getting a very small percentage (5%) of the discourse, Assignment/Technology discourse, can therefore be seen as trumping Writing Instruction discourse in the undergraduate writing classroom during the assigning of audio essays. This may mean that, within assignment instruction, traditional writing concepts are not perceived as requiring the same amount of attention as technology.

Regarding pedagogical techniques across all four cases, recontextualization of technology (Bezemer and Kress, 2008, p. 169) in the form of incorporating NPR sound files as examples or as situated practice in downloading and experimenting with free
Audacity software in the classroom setting seems to account for most of the classroom time. *Overt instruction* is the next most evident pedagogical strategy, followed by *critical framing*, with only a couple of hints at the notion of *transformed practice*. *Critical framing* involving some discussion of the theory behind the creation of the audio essay as well as the rhetorical value of using sound is not as prominent as one might expect or wish. According to the New London Group, *overt instruction* must occur along with both *situated practice* and *critical framing* to ensure that learning or *transformed practice* occurs. In none of the four cases was a balance between or linear progression through all four types of pedagogy achieved. Especially of note is the fact that in none were goals for any type of *transformed practice* regarding the transfer of new knowledge to future social situations made clear to students as part of the spoken discourse.

The next chapter will discuss ways new theory might inform current pedagogical practices. It will also look ahead at ways future research scholarship might extend from the findings in this project.
CHAPTER 5
Conclusions and Implications of Multimodal Instructional Discourse Analysis

Having reviewed the literature on multimodality (in particular, audio composing) and presented findings from my own research of teachers’ actual practices with audio composing, in this chapter, I discuss the intersections between my findings and existing scholarship. Particularly, I examine how my research contributes to existing scholarship, the pedagogical implications of those contributions, and future directions for research in audio composing. After beginning with a brief review of the chapters that have led to this point in order to give the reader an overall sense of how the project has developed and moved, the chapter will outline potential contributions to the field of writing studies made by this project. The scope of these contributions covers ways this project answers the call to research by other writing instructors; implications of the discourse analysis results and their potential effects on future writing pedagogy; ways existing pedagogical theories are mirrored in the Cross-Case Analysis; implications of the discourse analysis results for future research projects; and the potential for future research based on unused data from this corpus.

5.1 Overview of Previous Chapters

At the outset, this project undertook to answer the questions, “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? And what perceived affordances of audio technology are revealed through their classroom discourse?” Answering these
questions requires attaining an understanding of multimodal communication theory and ways it is being written about by writing and communication experts. Chapters one and two explain how multimodal communication theory, created in response to ever-changing developments in communication technologies, uses social semiotic theory in an effort to account for ways modes work together to produce meaning. Social semiotics, a study of signs that gives particular attention to their dependence on social convention, recognizes that meaning of the same sign can subtly or even radically change from one social group to another. Chapter two explains that, in their theory, Kress and van Leeuwen foreground certain areas involving new modes of composition requiring any fundamentally different use of students’ senses than has been traditionally relied upon within classrooms. These areas are foregrounded in my study as well, in its attempt to extend Kress and van Leeuwen’s research into multimodal classroom compositions—how they are being produced and taught.

My early chapters also explain that new literacies and subsequent new pedagogies have arisen out of the development of new technologies, which multimodal communication theory has sought to explore. The rise of new literacies has been recognized by many communication and writing scholars such as Gee, Kress, Cope and Kalantzis and other members of the New London Group; Yancey; Selfe; and Takayoshi. While some experts like Ball and Hawk are calling for new pedagogies in response to new literacies, the NLG in particular, has developed a full-blown pedagogical theory to address continued, rapid changes in meaning-making. The NLG’s pedagogy of new literacies is made up of four levels: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing,
and transformed practice. *Situated practice* invites students to try new forms of communication, often involving new technologies, under the direct supervision of an expert teacher. *Overt instruction* involves teaching students the appropriate language with which to talk about new communicative approaches and new types of compositions. *Critical framing* is the acquisition of critiquing skills that allow students to assess their own and others’ creations. *Transformed practice*, the final pedagogical stage, is that phase in which the student internalizes what has been learned and intentionally uses or plans to use the new communication skills he has attained in a thoughtful way that can enhance his social future. The NLG is not the only group talking about adjusting pedagogy to meet new literacies, however. Others involved in developing new pedagogical methods include Tara Shankar, Anne Wysocki, Heidi McKee, and Cynthia Selfe whose ideas and contributions are also discussed in detail in chapter 2.

For this project, the rhetorical affordances of sound in meaning-making are especially relevant. Two writing experts who have explored the semiotic value of sound include Jody Shipka and Heidi McKee, both of whom specifically question how the mode of sound can be taught effectively. Theories of sound and its rhetorical potentials including *intimacy, action, immediacy, order, and perspective*, which should be central to a pedagogy that foregrounds sound are discussed in chapter two. How these aspects of sound actually do come into play in the instructional discourse observed for this study, however, is problematic and will be addressed later in this chapter.

Chapter two also highlights another important aspect of the goals of this study, which is the call for research into matters concerning multimodal assignments and the
actual carrying out of such research by a number of writing and communication scholars. Ways this study provides a partial answer to this call will be fully explained in this chapter in section 5.2.1.

The first three chapters of this dissertation clearly establish, therefore, that multimodal communication has generated new literacies and hence a need for new pedagogies; that multimodal communication theory provides the appropriate lens through which to interpret data for this project; that sound has relevance in the writing classroom alongside image because of its many rich rhetorical aspects; and that the move to multimodal instruction is relevant and necessary and warrants further research and analysis.

Chapter three explains why grounded theory combined with the case study approach afforded the best means for capturing this current snapshot of multimodal instructional practices as revealed through instructor discourse. It also explains how my cross-case analysis of four instructors assigning audio essays includes a line-by-line discourse analysis of four audio-visual transcripts in an effort to reveal the answers to the research questions. The analysis results and their implications for pedagogy and research in the field of writing are summarized in the next section.

5.2 Contributions to the Field

This dissertation contributes to the field of writing in a number of ways. First of all, it answers the call by Kress and van Leeuwen and other writing and communication scholars for examination of other modes besides the visual. Furthermore, it adds to understandings about ways undergraduate writing instructors are incorporating digital
audio technology into their classrooms. It provides a snapshot of one type of multimodal instruction which reveals some of the ways instructors present, talk about, and reflect on audio assignments.

5.2.1 Answering the Call by Other Writing Scholars

In addition to Kress and van Leeuwen’s initial call for research studies exploring practices implementing their newly developed multimodal communication theory, the three aforementioned articles by Bezemer and Kress (2000), Hull and Nelson (2005), and Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith (2008) call for more research into multimodal practices in classrooms. A number of other studies presented in chapter 2 do attempt to answer the call, but almost always in the context of the visual mode. My study aligns with the goals expressed in these scholars’ invitations to further research in that, first, the audio essay assignment fits the description of a practice based on multimodal communication theory. The audio essay operates in three areas of communicative practice foregrounded in Kress and van Leeuwen’s multimodal communication theory: 1) social construction of a new media message within a classroom, 2) design of a composition radically different from the traditional written essay or research paper, and 3) use of perceptive senses by the audience which are different than those typically relied on in the classroom setting. This project therefore is clearly an analysis of a practice based on MCT as it results in products that require tools different from those traditionally used in the writing classroom. My study explores how instructors are helping students acquire skills for producing a new media message and for thinking about how an audience might process an audio as opposed to a written message.
Another call is for researchers to, “elucidate the effects of the distinctive affordances of different modes and media” as well as to explore the relationships between multimodal texts/representations and the social contexts in which they are assigned and produced (Bezemer and Kress, 2008). My study answers this call through its focus on the particular social setting of the undergraduate classroom. In doing so, my study also aligns with the NLG’s call for explorations of their pedagogy of multiliteracies as well as the call put forth by a number of writing instructors for their colleagues to consider new pedagogies appropriate for changing times.

5.2.2 Implications of Discourse Analysis Results for Writing Pedagogy

This study suggests six implications for a writing pedagogy which includes attention to audio composing. They are summarized in this paragraph and then discussed in more depth below:

1. Results suggest that assignment/logistical comments outpace rhetorical instruction, implying a need for better instructional guidance for teachers.

2. Results suggest a high occurrence of transitional or logistical statements. The implication is a need for more instructor attention to how time and words might be better spent.

3. Results suggest a near absence of discourse providing a rationale for multi-modal theory instruction. Although each syllabus presents a brief written form of a theoretical rationale for multimodal instruction, there is a failure on the part of the teachers to articulate these theoretical bases verbally, implying a need for classroom texts which clearly provide such a rationale.
4. Results suggest a lack of substantial rhetorical instruction on affordances of new modes, again implying the need for in-depth texts on the subject. While this is similar to finding number 1, providing a rationale, it differs. A rationale for teaching multi-modal texts would have to do with Gee’s notion of changing literacies and construction of social futures—enabling students to function in ways determined by new technologies. Instruction about affordances of new modes would concern what one mode can accomplish that another cannot and what the mixing of modes can yield.

5. Results suggest a very low occurrence of discourse related to technological difficulties, with the implication being that technology is not an obstacle to instruction as some have feared.

6. Results suggest a low level of writing discourse implying again that instructors may need to attend to ways they are using time and words and work to achieve more balance between related areas of instruction.

What follows here is a fuller explanation of each of the six results listed above. The first suggestion of the data analysis, a density of assignment/logistical discourse, is that instructors appear to be more concerned with managing and communicating the practical steps of creating the audio assignment than with teaching rhetorical principles related to multimodal compositions. Communicating the logistical details of the assignment seems to be the central focus of the multimodal instruction practice that I observed. In answer to this, more explicit assignment guidelines for teachers might enable them to better explain alternate forms of meaning-making and concepts like social
semiotics, multimodal communication theory, and affordances of sound and other modes to their students.

The second finding revealed by the discourse analysis, closely tied to the first, suggests that classroom logistical comments, or transitioning from one phase of instruction to another, accounts for a full 40% of all discourse—20% outside of the assignment, and 20% within the assignment. The implication is that teacher talk is primarily made up of instructional transitions or logistical moves from one topic of instruction to another. This indicates that teachers may view these transitions—ensuring that students correctly perceive and follow what the instructor is saying or planning to do next—as the most fundamental type of meaning-making. The 40% rate for logistical statements is higher than any other category and warrants attention by teachers who may perceive a need to look for ways to reduce these transitional comments in favor of more in-depth instruction on meaning-making.

The third suggestion of the results of my study, absence of a rationale for teaching multimodal assignments, is that a gap exists between spoken and written instructional discourse in more than one classroom, with the theoretical rationale only being partially articulated in one classroom (that of James). The implication is a possible need for classroom texts containing logistical instruction as well as in-depth theoretical instruction of the audio essay and other multimodal compositions. A lack of rhetorical instruction on affordances of new modes implies the need for in-depth texts on the subject, perhaps both written and non-traditional, such as videos, podcasts, or websites.
The fourth suggestion of the discourse analysis is that there is a relative lack of rhetorical instruction on the use of new modes. The implication is that some instructors are either not very concerned or are not comfortable with teaching aspects of multimodal rhetoric but are sticking instead with teaching the practical steps of producing an audio essay. For example, my results show that instruction on how to find, access, and use technology to understand and produce the audio essay represents 26% (just over ¼) of all discourse, while explaining rhetorical affordances of the mode of sound accounts for 11% (slightly less than 1/8) of all discourse. Technology instruction accounting for one fourth of the discourse seems high, though somewhat understandable considering that new technology is being applied, but the near silence on rhetorical matters is at best of interest and at worst, troubling. It is possible that multimodal rhetoric and affordances of sound were discussed in depth in another class session. This information is not available from the existing data. It would seem, however, that on the day the audio assignment is introduced, rhetorical affordances of sound should receive as much if not more attention and discourse as the practical technological aspects of production. A balance between the two or shift in favor of multimodal instruction would signify a greater valuing of communication design and arrangement skills which are at the heart of writing instruction.

A fifth suggestion of the results is a very limited amount of discourse related to technological difficulties. Manipulation of technology not directly related to the assignment, as in cases where the computer is malfunctioning or working slowly, accounts for an average of only 1% of all discourse. The implication, therefore, at least
for these four instructors, is that technological factors are not inhibiting instruction as has been feared. Instructors are talking most about technology when it is related to the production aspect of assignment. Even that category is doubly outpaced by logistical statements as explained in the next paragraph.

A sixth finding revealed by the analysis suggests that total discourse related to traditional writing instruction, both in and out of the assignment, accounts for 15% of all discourse across the four cases. The implication is that this is an area which should possibly receive more attention from instructors. It may be a valid cause for concern among writing scholars that, at least in these four cases, technology instruction discourse as part of the audio assignment soundly trumps writing instruction. One might expect both writing instruction and multimodal creation (which would cover affordances of sound as compared to affordances of the alphabetic mode) to receive equal if not more time than technological instruction if the composition aspect of the undergraduate writing classroom is to remain foregrounded.

5.2.3 Existing Pedagogical Theories Mirrored in the Cross-Case Analysis

Another way of viewing the results of the analysis is to relate the discourse to existing pedagogical theories. Pedagogical techniques across all four cases do in fact mirror the NLG’s pedagogy of new literacies in the following ways: Some form of situated practice accounts for most of the classroom time in three of the four cases. This involves students practicing some aspect of multimodal production under the supervision of an expert. The Audacity workshops are examples of these. Second in frequency to situated practice is that which could qualify as overt instruction, involving an instructor
explaining concepts and using language appropriate to the field. Third in frequency is some form of critical framing, the assessment of multimodal productions made by either students or experts, for example, listening to and analyzing NPR clips. Least frequent is any resulting hint of Transformed practice, or the communication of a sense that the knowledge being taught will be transformative for the student in some way. This can partly be explained by the fact that my data provides a snapshot of one day. It is possible that later, instructors brought out the notion of some type of social or cognitive transformation. However, my data did not reveal any stating of goals for applying new knowledge gained by doing the audio assignment to any social future.

In looking at ways the classes in this study mirror Jody Shipka’s and Heidi McKee’s pedagogical concerns related to the teaching of rhetorical affordances of sound, it has already been established that, in most cases, there is a shortfall. While Case Three did address rhetorical aspects of sound, the others did not, and Case Three could have gone into more detail about how to transfer the conclusions drawn from the NPR file critiques to student productions.

Finally, pedagogical techniques across the four cases did somewhat mirror Tara Shankar’s pedagogy. Shankar’s method, involving the use of her newly developed sound-writing software, would view the audio essay as equal in literary value to a written, alphabetic essay. The pedagogy under analysis here, with its featuring of the audio essay, appears to make a move in that direction. However, Shankar has students composing purely in sound, whereas each class observed for this study relies on a written composition that has already been constructed in traditional, alphabetic text. Therefore,
the audio composition under study here appears to be more of a technological experiment than a full-blown audio research project. The gathering and sifting of content has already been done in traditional ways. Granted, the content has to be rethought and reconfigured to fit the audio mode, but in none of the four cases is the audio assignment a fresh assignment that stands alone. The question should be addressed as to whether a stand-alone audio essay is something that instructors should move toward in order to value (or “embrace”) multimodal creations equally with traditional alphabetic written assignments. Some implications of this finding include the possibility that a reliance on existing written assignments may signify that multimodal instruction is more of an aside to regular writing instruction—somewhat of an experiment at this stage that may or may not continue to be implemented. It could also mean that instructors are not comfortable enough with the audio essay genre to teach it apart from a written assignment. Another possible meaning is that instructors do not value audio communication as fully as they do written communication. All of these possible conclusions open up questions for future research to answer. One question raised here is, “What would it take for instructors to, as Shankar suggests, truly embrace audio as written composition?” Writing instructors need to ask themselves if that is truly a desirable goal and why. Embracing audio as written composition would mean giving equal value to language-based messages whether they occurred in print or in audio. The audio essay, with its potential for layering sounds and incorporating volume, rhythm, tone, and inflection, is at least as complex as the written essay. Both require knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, audience and tone. Beyond those, each mode has its own affordances which require skill to maximize.
In that light, both modes seem to legitimately belong in the freshman composition classroom. In light of competing disciplines, however, such as communication studies or studio recording, the answer is not so clear.

As the previous paragraphs show, relating existing pedagogy to the findings of my analysis can inform future pedagogy in a number of ways. First, it can cause instructors to re-examine and adjust their classroom discourse and practices in light of multimodal communication theory and the NLG’s pedagogy of new literacies. Instructors can work to incorporate the techniques of critical framing and transformed practice more fully into their instruction.

These results, in light of existing pedagogy, might also inform future pedagogy by promoting exploration by instructors of ways they might reduce their transitional/logistical comments, perhaps replacing them with instruction more focused on multimodal creation and rhetoric merged with traditional writing concepts. One way this could be done is by using non-traditional texts such as videos, podcasts, or instructional websites in and outside of class time to convey key rhetorical concepts related to the production of multimodal compositions. It could be that, in light of new literacies, the traditional textbook is no longer the most effective mode by which to communicate these ideas. Reaching students through the use of other modes might free up time for teachers to present more models and discuss rhetorical affordances during class time.

Another way comparing existing pedagogy with my results might inform future pedagogy could be by causing instructors to take a hard look at how and why they are
embracing or not embracing instructional modes that foreground other modes besides alphabetic writing and to align their practices accordingly. The availability and effectiveness of multimodal instructional materials and instructors’ willingness to use them when assigning multimodal compositions are other areas for future research to explore.

Perhaps most important to keep in mind when designing multimodal pedagogy is the idea that MCT recognizes that each level of a message, “contributes to meaning” (p. 111) or that meaning resides in every level of every communicative practice. If multimodal communication theory is to guide instruction, then this recognition of the sprawl of meaning across various modes needs to be more evident in instruction practices.

5.2.4 Implications of Discourse Analysis Results for Future Research in Writing Studies

As has already been shown throughout this chapter, this dissertation can be used as a springboard for a number of future research projects. For example, all of the findings presented here could be compared with findings from future, similar studies and thereby disputed or verified. The fact that writing instruction, both inside and outside of the assignment, comprises half as much discourse overall as technological instruction and what this means is just one specific example of a finding that could be explored and verified through additional research studies. Also, the way instructors alter their instructional methods over multiple occurrences of the same assignment—how their discourse changes as they gain experience or become more aware of pedagogical theories
related to multimodal assignments—would be interesting to explore. Other future studies could measure the sophistication of students’ composing processes and their finished products—the essays themselves—in correlation to instructor discourse categories and their percentages. Assessment of multimodal assignments is another area that should be explored. How are instructors approaching the task of evaluating complex multimodal assignments? And how much of their discourse focuses on assessment?

5.2.5 Potential for Future Research based on Unused Data from this Corpus

Early on in my inspection of the data for this project, I recorded in four separate charts, each instructor’s pedagogical moves as they mapped chronologically in real time. Below is one of the charts I created, in which I describe major segments of instruction as concisely and appropriately as possible and log the minutes spent before a transition until a new move occurs.

![Nora, Case I: Instructional Moves Chart](image)

Figure 5.1. Case I Instructional Moves Chart
Completing this analysis would be a meaningful future research project as it would reveal instructor behavior separate from discourse. The way behavior matches discourse would also make an interesting comparative study.

My study here is based on video transcripts of spoken discourse. But a fairly extensive corpus of written data including retrospective interview results, syllabi, and written assignments exists that could yield a rich analysis. One analysis could be conducted tracing key ideas from the classroom texts and syllabi as well as excerpts of the written assignments and linking them to patterns of instructional discourse. Similarly, the retrospective accounts could compare how instructors prepared and how often they had taught multimodal assignments before.

Comparing texts, other preparation tools, and strategies used by the four instructors and linking them with the discourse analysis and charts of pedagogical moves might be useful. This could explain how aligning or not aligning instructional tools with principals of multimodal communication theory affects teacher behavior. These are just some potential ways this data might be used in future research projects.

5.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest a need for instructors to engage in a lively, discursive examination of the possibilities of further incorporating multimodal communication theory into writing pedagogy. Having explained multimodal communication theory and its relationship to social semiotics in chapter two, this dissertation establishes that knowledge of MCT is foundational to the scholarly study and practice of multimodal instruction. This project, therefore, encourages fruitful attempts
by instructors to thoughtfully create sound, multimodal pedagogy based on the NLG’s theory of multiliteracies. By capturing a snapshot of what is happening during multimodal instruction through a case study analysis (Yin, 2009) using grounded theory (Strauss, 1987), this project answers the call by communication scholars to provide more descriptive studies about the use of individual modes and current understandings of their affordances (Bezemer and Kress, 2008; Hull and Nelson, 2005; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001) as well as the call by a number of writing instructors challenging their colleagues to increase their multimodal teaching practices (Ball & Hawk, 2006; McKee, 2006; Selfe, 2004; Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007; Wysocki, 2004; Yancey, 2004). This study then provides its own call to writing studies scholars to acquire more information about how instructors are designing and presenting multimodal assignments so that pedagogical guidance in various modes, for teachers and students, might be forthcoming. Finally, this study presents the key following conclusions, which remain to be refuted or verified by other scholars:

• that technology does not necessarily impede classroom instruction;
   The fact that the discourse category charts in chapter four show only a small amount of time being spent on troubleshooting technological mishaps provides further support for the conclusions reached by other scholars who have researched effects of computers on writing instruction (Greenleaf, 1994; Bernstein, 1996));
• that writing principles of design, arrangement, and rhetoric could be more intentionally applied to audio compositions;
• that a much richer discussion of affordances of sound based on existing theories of sound (Shafer, 1986; Ong, 1982; Altman, 1992; de Bufon, 1971; Hardy, 1999; van Leeuwen, 2007) may need to be happening during audio essay instruction;

• that, at the time of this study, instructors consider NPR and Audacity to be the resources of choice for providing models of and recording software for audio compositions;

• that instructors may need more guidance about how to present the audio essay in a way that will involve providing a rationale for the practice, giving an overview of multimodal communication theory, and incorporating the four pedagogical elements outlined by the NLG’s theory of multiliteracies: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice.

• that instructors could benefit from thoughtfully assessing their own valuing of multimodal assignments and from discovering ways to embrace multimodal texts as literate composition.

These conclusions are the beginning of what will hopefully be an extended effort by other researchers to answer the questions, “How do writing instructors present and talk about audio assignments? And what perceived affordances of audio technology are revealed through their classroom discourse?” and questions similar to them regarding new literacies and new pedagogies as they unfold through the embracing of the practice of multimodal instruction in the writing classroom.
APPENDIX A

Retrospective Interview Questions

This appendix includes the interview questions for the retrospective accounts, conducted by email, which asked about planning time, difficulties encountered, and resources used to develop the audio essay.

Interview Questions

1. How far in advance did you prepare the audio assignment before presenting it to your class?
2. What sources did you rely on as you developed the audio assignment?
3. When and in what situation had you ever developed or assigned an audio essay before this?
4. Approximately how much time did you spend creating this audio assignment?
5. How many times do you recall coming back and changing or tweaking the assignment and over what span of time?
APPENDIX B

Case Two Audio Assignment

This appendix contains screen shots of the written Audio Assignment from Case II.

For our third project you will revisit all of the data that you've collected so far and produce a 5-7 minute audio essay which you will present to the entire class. Your essay should integrate your informant's perspective, your own perspective, and the perspectives you found in your secondary research in project 2. You'll choose the format that seems most rhetorically appropriate, given your purpose as a composer. You'll also compose a 1-2 page explanation of the rhetorical choices you made as you composed this project and a works cited page.

Learning goals for this project (what you should get out of this):
- Assessing a rhetorical situation and then making informed decisions about your composition that take into account the expectations of your audience (public, written, oral);
- Using written, oral, and other texts as a way to develop ideas;
- Employing research strategies for developing ideas, exploring them, and adding them;
- Writing collaboratively with other students in composing and discussion;
- Reflecting on your composing processes and decisions;
- Learning web and digital environments necessary for conducting and writing research;
- Using appropriate academic citation systems for documenting work;
- Composing documents using information in order to influence readers;
- Integrating a variety of sources into documents.

Theoretical assumptions (why are we doing this?):
- In the chapter titled "Authoring in Sound," Charles Handy hypothesizes that "Perhaps multi-channelaural histories represent an important tool for the authoring of postmodern histories by providing a means of sharing authority, privileging multiple rather than universal perspectives, and opening space -- using creativity and dimension in the presentation of history that is not possible in the printed word, bound as it is to a linear unfolding" (199). In project 3, you attempted to integrate your perspective, your informant's perspective, and the perspectives you found in your secondary research in an 8-10 page essay. Still, you were constrained by the print mode and unable to represent all of these perspectives using unity or your own voice. You were also forced to represent those perspectives in a linear fashion. For project 3, you'll have the opportunity to experiment with "multi-source and dimension" as you present the perspectives from projects 1 & 2 in the audio mode. You'll be able to include multiple voices and to make clear the distinctions between (and overlap of) your own ideas, your informant's ideas, and the thoughts of the researchers you encountered. And, unlike a print essay, the oral essay is not bound to a linear structure which means you'll have more freedom with organization.
composition goals (what are we doing?)
For our third project, then, you'll do three things.

- First, you'll revisit all of the data you've collected so far (interviews and secondary sources) and present that data to us in the oral mode. You'll have to decide what seems most important to the story that has emerged, since you won't be able to fit all of your data into a 5-7 minute long aural essay. This will require you to decide what sounds you want to use and how you want to use them as well as what the structure of your oral essay will be. You'll record and mix your essay in Audacity, burn it to a CD as an .mp3 file, and present the CD to the entire class for feedback.

- Second, you'll write up and submit to your instructor on your presentation day a 1-2 page explanation of the rhetorical choices you made as you put your essay together. In the explanation, consider:
  - What kind of ethos did you hope to convey? How did you convey it? (Refer to Wysocki & Lynch for help.) What relationship did you try to set up with your listener(s)? Why is this relationship fitting, given the topic and message of your essay?
  - Did you evoke pathos in your listener(s)? If so, how did you do this? Why is the pathos you evoked important to the story you are telling? (Refer to Wysocki & Lynch for help.)
  - Finally, comment on your project's logos. How did you set up your essay and why is that set-up the best for your story? What information did you emphasize? How and why did you emphasize it? (Refer to Wysocki & Lynch for help.)

- Third, along the way you'll cite down the sources of the sounds you use as well as note the secondary sources you are drawing from; all of these sources should appear in the accompanying works cited page. You'll submit this page with your 1-2 page explanation on the day of your presentation.
Finally, a few technical considerations (what you need to think about before you do it):
To create your essay, you'd need:
- Pick up a cheap pair of headphones if you don't have any.
- Find some speakers you'd like to use.
- Acquire a CD-R or DVD drive to save your work.
- Spend time working with the Audacity tutorials.
- Record yourself or a friend speaking (practice, practice, practice). You can also edit if you mispeak.
To record yourself, you can use either:
- A digital recorder (if you own one or know someone who owns one).
- A tape recorder (take a trip to the student Multimedia Studio in the library to digitize it).
- A microphone and computer (there's a record function in Audacity).

**Project 3 presentation (what you’ll turn in):**
Instead of submitting a portfolio for project 3, you will present your oral essay to the class by playing the CD. You should burn your project to a CD as an MP3 file. After your presentation, you will submit that CD along with your 1-page explanation and a works cited page to your instructor. You will receive extensive feedback on your project from your classmates and your instructor after your presentation is complete (in lieu of a peer review day).

**Schedule of events (subject to change with notice):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>What will be done</th>
</tr>
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REFERENCES


Yancey, Kathleen Blake. (2004). “Made not only in words: Composition in a new key.”

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