

Jenna Brown

Dr. Arreguin

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The Impact Visual Aids and Podcasts have in the Classroom

Introduction

English classrooms have greatly changed throughout the years. They have adapted to new technologies and the changes society brings. Additionally, students have also adapted the way they learn materials. Students have moved away from the idea that they can only learn materials through standardized texts. With the increase popularity of social media sites (Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, etc.) and the rise in Podcasts, students are finding new ways to learn, create, and challenge themselves. In order to enhance students' learning, classrooms need to find a way to efficiently incorporate visual aids and podcasts (sound). Sound (Podcasts) and visual aids are efficient tools to help students learn and connect with the materials.

Multimodality

Multimodality is an important concept to consider when focusing on classroom environments. Students are learning and expressing themselves in different formats – journals, messaging, stories, etc. Alexander and Rhodes write “More than occasionally, writers and communicators today anticipate reader control with modular hypertexts that can support multiple interpretive pathways and that can invite textual transformations and revisions” (Alexander and Rhodes, 30). Technology plays an important role in society, especially to students now a days.

By focusing on writing in terms of multimodality, it allows students a chance to explore literacy through what they are already familiar with:

Increasingly, the literacies practiced by individuals who communicate primarily in online environments exists within a dynamic cultural ecology influenced by expanding global markets and computer networks that stretch across language barriers, cultural groupings, and geopolitical borders. (Alexander and Rhodes, 35).

Incorporating Visual Aids

With the increase in technology in the classroom, visual aids have been more frequently used. Visuals are an important way to influence readers and create an emotional response. Visual aids are just as effective as sounds for specific settings: “The more vivid the information, the more likely it is that the information will prompt an emotional response from the receiver” (Hill, 30). The function of writing changes when it is created alongside visual media and graphics as the writer must find the best way to incorporate the words and visuals in a way that makes sense and entices the intended audience(s). Writers have to focus on making sure that (1) the visuals/images and words connect with readers, (2) the visuals/images and words adhere to each other, and (3) help showcase what the writer is attempting to present. There are certain elements that use both words and images to entice readers; examples of this are presentations, graphic novels, illustrated books, messaging, etc.

Incorporating Sounds and Podcasts

Similarly, sounds play just as an important role as visual aids: “Music and sound are powerful emotional tools. They put you inside the point of view of a character as strongly as any narrative one could write” (Abel, 155). There are many differences between writing for a sound-

based medium, like a podcast, and other forms of digital writing. One difference is that the stories do not have to begin at the beginning when creating a sound-based medium (Rosenthal). Also, writers for a sound-based medium are able to use sound as a way of engaging listeners and developing the story: “Sounds can create an emotional tone. It can also simply create room for emotions to hit you” (Abel, 152). Music allows listeners to connect to the story being told and helps set a tone, mood, or setting. Writing for other digital forms (articles, blogs, social media posts) do not have this gratuity; these writers must use words to help readers visualize the setting, tone, and characters. One example of this is crime podcasts. The podcasters are able to use music to put the audience into suspense and let them know when something is happening.

Incorporating Visual Aids/Podcasts into a Classroom – Project Example

*Course Description: Undergraduate Shakespeare course

*Readings: *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Othello*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*

*Project: The goal of this project is to help students connect with the material and use visual aids/podcasts to view the text in a different light. Students will have four options to choose from.

- Option 1:
 - Students will choose three characters to create Instagram’s for.
 - Each character’s Instagram must contain a profile and 3 posts with captions. Students should focus on how characters should react to certain situations, what pictures would they use, who would comment on their post, etc.

- Students will write a one-page reflective paper about their experience creating this project and how visuals play a role in helping audiences connect with the characters and/or story.
- Canva is a free source to help create Instagram posts.
- Option 2:
 - Create a Podcast.
 - Students will review a Shakespeare play or plays. In this review, students will express their feelings about the play and, using what they have learned about sounds/podcasts, will focus on tone, sounds, and words.
 - Podcasts will be 8-10 minutes.
 - Students will write a one-page reflective paper about their experiences creating this project and how sounds/listening play a role in helping audiences connect with the characters and/or story.
 - Riverside, Reverb.chat, Freesound are site options to record audio.
- Option 3:
 - Create part of an audiobook.
 - Students be the narrator for the story. They will record themselves reading two-three acts from the play of their choice. During this reading, students will focus on using sounds, voices, and tone to help express the characters and the stories.
 - Students will write a one-page paper about their experiences creating this project and how sounds, tones, and a narrator's performance play a role in helping audiences connect with the characters and/or story.

- Riverside, Reverb.chat, Freesound are site options to record audio.

Please note:

If students believe a YouTube video would better fit their project concept, please reach out to me about altering the project details.

Analysis of Project Example

I focused on an English undergraduate Shakespeare course. In this course, students will read different plays by Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Othello*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*). In addition, students will read different articles, connecting to Shakespeare and visual aids/podcasts. Students will be shown different clips of Shakespeare's plays, visual aids, and podcasts. This will help them understand how visual aids/podcasts help play a role in connecting audiences connect to materials.

The main outcome of this project idea is that students are able to connect to the story using visual aids or podcasts. I added an audiobook option as it has similar characteristics of a podcast: sound, tone, words, and a chance for audiences to connect with the characters and the story. Additionally, it allows students a chance to take control of their own project; they are allowed to choose what project suits them best or interests them. They are also able to analyze what they think of the characters and story and use what they have learned about visual aids and podcasts. They are able to put what they have learned into action.

This project can be modified to fit different classes or grade levels. This project is an independent project that allows the student to express themselves and have an active role in

connecting with the material they have learned. Additionally, teachers can modify this project to focus on one book, add sources needed, change the reflection paper. The project is a foundation to help students understand what is expected of them, but does not tell them what to do. It allows them to work independently and find the best path for them.

Works Cited

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- Hill, Charles and Marguerite Helmers, editors. "The Psychology of Rhetorical Images," *Defining Visual Rhetorics*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2014, pp. 24-40.