

Chapter 3. Strategies for Accessing and Articulating Voices through Digital Writing Research Projects

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Land Acknowledgment. This chapter was written in the Rochester, New York area, the traditional territory of the Onöndowa’ga:’ or “the people of the Great Hill.” In English, they are known as Seneca people, “the keeper of the western door.” They are one of the six nations that make up the sovereign Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Along with other members of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) community, I honor the land on which RIT was built and recognize the unique relationship that the Indigenous stewards have with this land. That relationship is the core of their traditions, cultures, and histories. We recognize the history of genocide, colonization, and assimilation of Indigenous people that took place on this land. Mindful of these histories, we work towards understanding, acknowledging, and ultimately reconciliation.¹

Interdependent Processes for Composing Audio and Video

The edited collection that houses this chapter is actively contributing to the knowledge of digital writing scholars who share innovative research to colleagues through *audio*, *video*, and other digital technologies. We digital writing researchers are experimenting with novel means of “speaking” to our audiences through sound, visuals, and other modes and media. While many of us are capitalizing on the affordances of digital modes and media, not every scholar might be familiar with the methodologies and methods that digital writing researchers can use to access sound and articulate our own and others’ *voices* through digital writing research projects. In this chapter, I reflect on my interdependent methodology and methods for accessing and articulating voices through audio and video technologies in my research projects. By sharing my experiences, I encourage scholars to sense how experimenting with different methods for designing access to sound and visuals in our research practices is a fruitful process that positively connects researchers and audiences.

1. Light modifications have been made here to Rochester Institute of Technology’s Native American Future Stewards Program’s Land Acknowledgment. See *Native American Future Stewards Program—Land Acknowledgment* at <https://www.rit.edu/diversity/futurestewards#land-acknowledgment>.

In my line of research as a Deaf rhetoric and composition scholar who works to make videos and audio accessible for audiences with different hearing levels, I engage with *sound* in *visible* ways and with *visuals* in *sonic* ways so that meaning becomes accessible across modes (including in “Integral Captions and Subtitles,” which was published in *Rhetoric Review*, and “Where Access Meets Multimodality,” which was published in *Kairos*). Later in this chapter, I discuss the challenges and benefits of composing videos in which I communicate through my primary language of American Sign Language (ASL) to predominantly hearing colleagues in the field. I also reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of different methods that I have used to record and capture the signed and spoken statements of D/deaf and hard-of-hearing research participants in focus groups and interviews. These four context-specific examples, which are tied to the communication practices that participants and I use, can inform researchers about the constructiveness of continually reassessing our research methods and methodologies so that we can better access and articulate a variety of voices in our digital writing projects.

Before I share my methods, I first share my interdependent methodology, a methodology that is shaped by my values: *sound* in digital writing studies, *access* in digital publishing, *interdependency* in research, and the concepts of *articulation* and *voice*. As I discuss in the next section, designing manifold means of access to our own and our participants’ spoken and signed meaning through visual, aural, and other modes diversifies and enhances the scholarly conversation that takes place in our field. If we have the goal of making our projects accessible to ourselves and others—and we should have that goal—then we should continually finetune strategies for merging sound and visuals in ways that capture the vision of our voices. With that in mind, I use the concept of “articulation” to represent how I work with technologies and other humans in an interrelated manner to give expression to my message—my voice—as a researcher and to the voices of the participants in my study. My interrelations with other tools and individuals—even in *independent* research projects in which I am the sole author and principal investigator—embodies the *interdependent* aspects of digital writing and digital research.

My use of interdependency in this chapter builds on my collaborative work with Laura Gonzales. In an article published in *Composition Forum*, we argued for and shared “intersectional, *interdependent* approaches to accessibility in writing classrooms” that work toward social justice (Gonzales and Butler; emphasis added). Building on Julie Jung’s exploration of interdependency in writing studies, we defined interdependency as the following: “In contrast to independence, interdependency is a product of the human condition in which we all rely on other human beings in various ways through different relationalities” (Gonzales and Butler). I extend our definition of interdependency in this chapter to reflect my interdependent methodology and the methods that I use in interaction with digital technologies and other human beings (including research participants and colleagues) to design and distribute digital writing projects that make voices, including my own, accessible.

The concepts of interdependency, access, voice, and articulation intertwine in my previous initiative with Joseph Cirio, Victor Del Hierro, Laura Gonzales, Joy Robinson, and Angela Haas. “With the goal of encouraging further representation and inclusion of minoritized scholars in computers and writing scholarship,” we presented at a Town Hall session at Computers and Writing in 2017 and published video recordings of our presentations in a webtext in the Disputatio section of *Kairos* (Butler et al.). When each one of us captioned the video of our own presentation, I experienced the challenge of determining how to caption the rhetorical situation of a live interpreted professional presentation in which signs and speech are not temporally aligned. During this interdependent presentation, I signed my message and two professional sign language interpreters worked with me to voice my signs in spoken English. In real-time situations such as these, the audible words are not spoken until after the sign has been produced and perceived by an interpreter. While this is a natural process in live presentations, this poses a challenge for synchronizing captions.

As I worked to caption my video, I wanted to provide our audience with direct access to what I was saying through my signs, and I had to decide *when* to place the captions. I recursively went through every temporal-spatial moment in my recorded presentation and made choices that intended to temporally bridge the space between the signs and speech through the captions. Through this consolidated design, I aimed for our audience to stay with my embodied message; in other words, I *articulated* my message—my *voice*—as a scholar through the interdependent process of making my *aural* and *visual* composition *accessible* (as depicted in Figure 3.1).

In this chapter, I now ask my readers to stay with my embodied message as I present my reflections on and argument for an interdependent methodology and methods that commit to access in digital writing research.

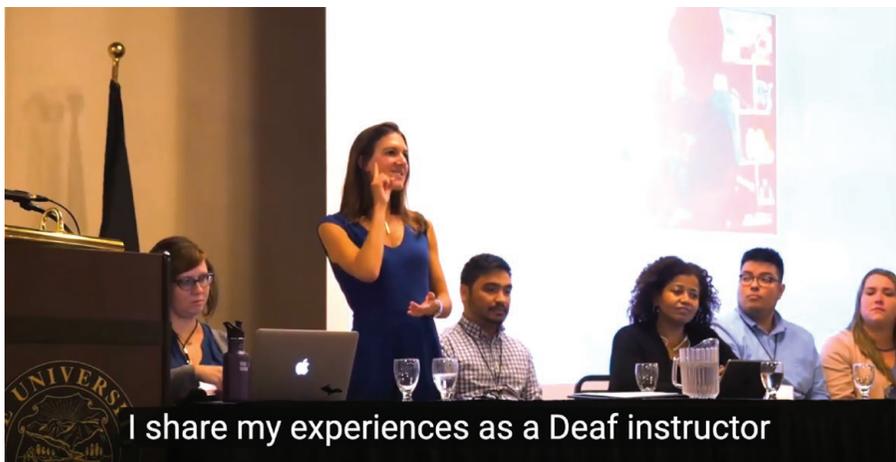


Figure 3.1. Screen capture from Butler et al., “Janine Butler” (3:22)

Methodology: Access + Interdependency, Voice + Articulation

Sound and Digital Writing

The increasing prevalence of video and audio technologies in digital writing research demands an equivalent increase in attending to the accessibility of these technologies. Each new technological release and update improves the quality of video and audio recording devices that we use to *capture* participants, ourselves, and other moments; the capabilities of software programs that we use to *edit and create* our digital compositions; and the platforms through which we *disseminate* our message to our audiences. We can correspondingly design access into each step of our research process and show that there is space for diverse communication practices and abilities. This methodology section of this chapter establishes the intertwining values of *sound* in digital writing studies, *access* in digital publishing, *access* and *interdependency* in research, and the concept of *voice* in composition and publication. These commingling values illuminate the research methods for *accessing and articulating voices* that are detailed in the upcoming section of this chapter.

Scholars over the last few decades have enriched our understanding of the value of sonic composition in equipping composers with tools for communicating through sound and multimodal composition (notably Heidi McKee, Cynthia Selfe, and Jody Shipka, among others). Joining these scholars in further expanding the definition of writing to encompass sonic compositions, Bump Halbritter detailed the process of composing layers of audio-visual texts, including the technological tools that we use to record audio and visuals. In the digital space of *Kairos*, Tanya K. Rodrigue and eight co-authors shared and reflected on nine sonic compositions created by “a community of writers” and students involved in Rodrigue’s digital writing graduate course; their webtext reveals various sonic composing processes that illuminate our understanding of sonic rhetoric. Even more recently, Courtney Danford, Kyle Stedman, and Michael Faris’ digital edited collection, *Soundwriting Pedagogies*, established a space for nine chapters with “theories, examples, and lots of audio to encourage the use and value of soundwriting in composition, writing, rhetoric, and communications classrooms.” The authors in this sonic-visual-textual collection share their messages through sound, with accompanying transcripts, to foreground the affordances of sonic composition. These scholars’ enthusiasm motivates my research on and with audio and video when enacting my methodology for making sound accessible.

Digital Writing and Access

While sonic creators—particularly in recent years in our field—often include transcripts and captions to make sonic compositions accessible, it is crucial to ensure that every single composition is designed to be accessible to audiences. To borrow

Elizabeth Brewer, Cynthia Selfe, and M. Remi Yergeau's argument for creating a culture of transformative access in composition studies, we should "broaden our own and the profession's understanding of accessibility practices in ways that extend beyond simple standards to embrace, instead, the spirit and practices of both universal and participatory design.... [T]he aim is to transform texts as much as it is to transform readers, audiences, expectations, and composing practices" (152). Brewer, Selfe, and Yergeau show the value of a culture of access in which we all actively participate in the design and redesign of our composition practices. Through engaging in participatory design—a value that has been stimulated by Jay Dolmage as well as Yergeau et al. in "Multimodality in Motion"—we can transform all our practices and convey meaning to audiences across multiple modes.

Accessing communication via multiple modes enhances a researcher's ability to connect with participants in a research study, to analyze findings, and to compose publications for audiences. My discussion of my methods for accessing aural and visual modes in the next section can contribute to a culture of transformative access in digital writing research by highlighting accessible research practices that make sound accessible in visual form. Such accessible processes intersect with current catalysts in the field, particularly Douglas Eyman et al.'s webtext—the product of a collaboration of 27 members of a summer seminar on accessibility in digital publishing—which "aims to address the full range of barriers to access and suggest best practices for working toward the goal of full access/ibility for digital publications." The digital writing scholars and colleagues emphasize the "the importance of access in terms of usability for a wide range of users with varying abilities and disabilities." I want to spotlight the phrase, "usability for ... varying abilities and disabilities," particularly as I proceed to discuss accessibility of research practices for researchers, participants, and audiences with varying hearing levels and communication preferences.

When I create videos in which I sign to hearing audiences, I create a rhetorical situation in which "standard" concepts of "accessibility" may be reversed. While sound scholars often add captions or transcripts to improve the accessibility of audio projects, I find myself including sound to make my spatial-visual message accessible to hearing audiences. Specifically, I enlist professional interpreters to record voice-overs for my videos. While I discuss this specific method later in this chapter, I first want to review the values that shape this method. The process of coordinating with interpreters to improve access and expand the reach of my digital compositions embodies the *interdependency* of research practices in disability studies (Price, "Disability Studies Methodology: Explaining"; Price, "Getting Specific"; Price and Kerschbaum) and in digital writing research (VanKooten).

Access and Interdependency

Margaret Price's commitment to disability studies methodological approaches can inform rhetoric and composition researchers who work to enact ethical and

accessible research practices. Building on her review of disability study methodological approaches (“Disability Studies Methodology: Explaining”), Price makes the following observation: “One interesting thing to note here is that DS [disability studies] researchers have been way out in front of most qualitative researchers when considering the promises and pitfalls of digital methods” (2). She also argues that, “DS methodology has much to teach other disciplinary approaches about what ‘access’ really means. ‘Accessible,’ in DS methodology, should mean something akin to our emergent notions of participatory design” (3). To borrow and extend Price’s argument, digital writing researchers can be informed by disability studies researchers who encounter the limitations of inaccessible digital methods and participate in the redesign of digital research methods to make them more accessible.

Access emerges as a central theme in a methodology that acknowledges the *interdependency* of researchers and research practices. Julie Jung draws from disability studies’ focus on the “fact of human *interdependency*” (104; emphasis in original) to call on teachers and scholars in writing studies to “*choose to recognize* the interdependencies that enable our intellectual work [teaching, research, and service], and though this act of recognition identify unmet needs, invent possibilities for meeting them, and honor and then join those who are already doing both” (112; emphasis in original). Presenting the example of how our scholarship would not exist without others’ scholarship, she espouses that our field’s intellectual work “emerges and survives *interdependently*” (107; emphasis in original). Later in this chapter, I detail how I conduct independent research as the principal investigator while working interdependently with other members of the research team, colleagues, and other stakeholders to access and make my work accessible. When I discuss the interdependent process of coordinating with professional interpreters later in this chapter, I recognize how these connections enable me to design accessible intellectual work and reach my audiences.

Through sharing my interdependent methodology and methods, I extend the collaborative work of Laura Gonzales and myself. In our previously mentioned article, the two of us built on Jung to argue for teaching social justice in “writing courses through intersectional, interdependent frameworks” that center on each individual’s “overlapping and interlocking experiences of privilege, oppression, and in/ability to access communication” (Gonzales and Butler). We cannot ignore our own intricate positionalities and our students’ positionalities, as well as our research participants’ and colleagues’ positionalities, when conducting digital research with other human beings. Just as Gonzales and I wrote in our article that “theories of interdependency can help students and teachers engage in productive discussions about who is being privileged in a design decision and why,” my chapter here shares my interdependent methodology and my methods for designing access in ways that do not privilege a single positionality, identity, or ability.

Interdependency and access dovetail in the work of writing scholars who conduct collaborative research. Stephanie Wheeler eloquently describes the relationship between interdependency and access when describing the innovative collaboration between faculty in her department and the university's access services program for students. She writes:

having these conversations [among faculty and students] about access within a writing program prompted an engagement with writing studies and access in a productive way, necessitating an understanding of access as something that is networked, and relies on interdependent and symbiotic relationships in the department and beyond. (Wheeler, n.p.)

Such initiatives foreground *access and writing itself* as an interdependent process, a process that I sense in my own digital research methodology and the methods that I discuss later in this chapter.

The duality of interdependency and access is even more evident in Price and Stephanie Kerschbaum's collaborative description of their "interdependent disability-studies (DS) methodology" (20). Price and Kerschbaum describe a qualitative research project in which they worked closely with each other and their interview participants to ensure that each individual could access their interviews, the data, and other aspects of the research process. They explain: "Neither of us could have done this study alone, and what has become possible in the course of doing it has become so because of our interdependent collaboration" (27). Specifically, they write about the importance of access in an interdependent project: "our commitment to collective access—i.e., access not just for our participants alone, or for us alone, but for all of us together" (28). Through their interdependency, they designed a research project that included access throughout every single step—and this participatory design can be adopted by digital writing researchers.

Interdependency and Digital Writing

In addition to scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition, interdependency in *digital* writing research has been meticulously detailed by Crystal VanKooten in her critical assessment of using video cameras in her research. In "A Research Methodology of Interdependence through Video as Method," VanKooten carefully details how she has now "reconceptualize[d] the research scene as *interdependent*: ... [a] situation where participants, researcher, scene, and tools constantly influence and rely on one another" (3). Crucially, her methodology "takes the research scene as interdependent and does not ignore the role of the researcher; aspects that demand alternate methods" (5). Of especially particular relevance for this chapter is VanKooten's approach to interviewing participants in her research and her detailing of how she records interactions between herself as

the researcher and her participants during the interviews (in addition to capturing participants from two angles).

The interdependent *digital* research scene described by VanKooten should remind qualitative researchers that we and our participants are actively responding to and informing each other. As such, recording all participants in a research scene—including ourselves in our role as interviewers and qualitative data collectors—foregrounds our connections and interactions. In VanKooten’s persuasive words, “each element of the research scene is linked to another and has an active part in meaning-making—including the technologies used” (2). When selecting types, numbers, and placements of video cameras and other digital research methods, each one of us certainly shapes the creation of a scene in which participants (and we) express and capture each other’s meaning. We furnish that scene with the technologies and tools that are available to us, that we choose to use, that are accessible or not accessible (to us, to participants, and/or to our audience). As I detail later in this chapter, we also shape the accessibility of our digital research scene and digital tools through our interdependent interactions with other individuals affiliated with our study.

Digital Writing and Articulation

Interdependency—which exists between me and D/deaf and hard-of-hearing participants in my research studies as well as between me and professional interpreters when composing my videos—is an asset that strengthens my articulation of my voice as a digital writing researcher who is committed to access to audio and video. Articulation can refer to the physical articulation of clear sounds as well as the physical articulation, or jointing, of the limbs. For this chapter, I borrow Merriam-Webster’s definition of *articulation* as, among other points, “the act of giving utterance or expression” as well as “the state of being jointed or interrelated.” Articulation fills out our concept of interdependency to reflect how I work with interpreters to merge aural and visual modes in a “jointed or interrelated” state so that we give “utterance or expression” to my voice as a digital researcher.

The interrelations of modes certainly play a central role in digital writing research. The 2007 edited collection *Digital Writing Research: Technologies, Methodologies, and Ethical Issues* includes a chapter in which Susan Hilligoss and Sean Williams delve into questions for digital research while building on the “interplay and interrelationships” between visual communication with “verbal expression” in digital spaces (238). I hope that my own chapter here contributes to the further jointing of aural and visual modes to show scholars how we can all embed access into our research practices.

Articulation and Voice

The term *articulation* includes the connotation of clearly expressing oneself through one’s voice, a connotation that can be used to judge the quality of others’

voices. I intentionally use the term *articulation* to complicate and expand the definition of voice in digital composition. In a crucial chapter in *Soundwriting Pedagogies*, Jennifer Buckner and Kirsten Daley described how they negotiated sound when Daley was the only deaf undergraduate student in Buckner's multi-modal composition course. In their pedagogy-oriented chapter, they argue that our sound and composition theories cannot privilege speaking and hearing bodies and that we need to make sure that our theories are "informed by a multiplicity of voices, even those that do not audate."

To positively complicate our field's definition of voice, I begin with Michelle Comstock and Mary Hocks' 2006 description of voice: "In writing, voice acts as a metaphor for how a persona created in the text 'sounds,' with elements of diction, tone, and style informing this written voice. In multimedia, students use music, interviews, and voice-over narrations to create a tangible, not just metaphoric, voice." In their follow-up 2017 piece, Hocks and Comstock argued for embodied listening practices that move students "toward composing practices that integrate the human voice with other active sound producers and amplifiers in the environment, including rocks, water, air, bridges, buildings, mechanical engines, and non-human animals" (137). The digital writer's voice, then, is a metaphorical voice as well as a tangible voice that exists interdependently with the environment.

In addition to the metaphorical voice and tangible voice, the digital composer's own voice interacts with others' voices. This becomes especially evident in Erin Anderson's argument for teaching "voice-as-material" in sonic rhetoric; Anderson writes that composers "compose with the voices of others—and perhaps, in some sense, to speak through others' voices as if they were our own." Jean Bessette's own exploration of asking students to engage with gay liberation radio shows and compose digital projects argues that we can create "openness to difference" when we "speak with other voices" (74). By speaking with and through others' voices—including when speaking with and through interpreters—we foreground interdependency, interrelations, and the jointing of multiple modes of communication.

With a complicated definition of voice and articulation in mind, digital writing researchers access sound and articulate their own and others' voices through digital writing research projects. Bump Halbritter and Julie Lindquist's collaborative chapter in *Soundwriting Pedagogies* interrogates the nature of voice and how qualitative researchers disseminate recordings with participants' voices and their own voices. Halbritter and Lindquist open their chapter with a review of voice in writing studies that begins with Kathleen Blake Yancey's 1994 edited collection, *Voices on Voice: Perspectives, Definitions, Inquiry* and that suggests that interest in voice was "on the wane" since then (Halbritter and Lindquist n.p.). They argue that we can reconsider voice and its relationship with digital composition today and that, "when voices are made of other voices ... then it becomes necessary to understand and approach voice as a shared, mediated, and negotiated thing." Most forcefully, they ask the following questions:

What does it mean to have—that is, to be in possession of—an audible voice, one that is not your own but one with (and through which) you will speak? What does it mean to have a voice ... in the sense that the audible voice in question truly belongs to someone else? What does it mean to have a voice—in the sense that the first voice your readers hear is neither their own nor your own? (Halbritter and Lindquist, n.p.)

Halbritter and Lindquist explore the ramifications of these questions when presenting data collected from research participants.

The intricate questions about voice are just as pertinent in other contexts, including when I work with interpreters to articulate my message as a researcher and when I utilize different technologies and tools to capture the statements of D/deaf and hard-of-hearing participants. This process is informed by the interdependent nature of situations in which we design and redesign access and articulate our interrelated voices in digital writing research.

Methods: Audio + Video, Sound + Visuals

With access, interdependency, and the complicated nature of **voice** in mind, readers can join me in reflecting on how I work independently and interdependently with others to articulate my voice as a researcher and the voices of research participants in accessible ways. The methods that I use across different projects are categorized into two sections so that each section centers on a single theme with two examples for each theme. The first section centers on coordinating with others to articulate the sound/vision of the researcher's voice; the second section centers on experimenting with digital technologies and tools for accessing participants' voices.

The methods that I discuss in the following sections complement and expand the principles for working with participants that I detail in my 2019 article in *Present Tense*, titled “Principles for Cultivating Rhetorics and Research Studies within Communities.” In that article, I share the strategies that I used when conducting focus groups with D/deaf and hard-of-hearing participants to learn their perspectives on the current state of captions. I feature three research principles for research methodologies and methods in rhetoric and composition, including cultivating “the diversity that exists within groups, participants’ knowledge, and the multiple modes of communication through which meaning may be transmitted.” After reviewing the footage of each focus group, I independently transcribed the statements of all members of the signed group discussions into written English for my later analysis. With each participant signing in a different way—since not every individual signs in the same way—I had to determine how best to faithfully capture everyone’s embodied, temporal-spatial-visual signs into the linear, static form of English so that individuals’ per-

spectives would remain at the forefront of my research. However, attempting to capture every single linguistic marker and embodied message for every single project in the future would create an obstacle because the time-intensive process of transcribing three-dimensional and temporal signs into written words requires much energy and investment.

To explore more opportunities for articulating participants' messages, I use the following sections of this chapter to review several methods that I use to access and articulate voices throughout my research projects as well as the lessons that I have learned. While reviewing these experiences, I encourage readers to actively consider potential designs for different methods of accessing audio and video technologies in our field's research practices.

The Sound/Vision of the Researcher's Voice

In writing this chapter, I am making an assumption about my audience based on what I know about the makeup of the field of rhetoric and composition generally and digital writing more specifically: that the audience is largely composed of scholars who hear to some degree. I also make the assumption that a majority of these scholars are not fluent in American Sign Language (my primary language) and that they hear the audio in the podcasts, videos, and other sonic compositions that they create and listen to.

For some of these scholars, recording and disseminating their own speech as audio files might be an independent process that involves speaking directly into a microphone and hearing the resulting audio footage. My previous sentence intentionally compresses and oversimplifies the complex, rhetorical, creative, and inspiring processes that scholars in our field engage in to edit, amplify, and otherwise rework an astonishing wealth of insightful sonic compositions. My intention for sharing these assumptions is to underscore how the relatively straightforward practice of recording one's own voice can also be re-worked to amplify interdependent methods. I encourage digital writing researchers to join me in exploring the possibilities for articulating our own messages through the voices of others.

Accessing a "Professional Voice"

While working on different research projects over the past few years related to captions, sound, and access, I have created videos in which I disseminate my scholarship to colleagues in the field of rhetoric and composition. When recording these videos, I often face the camera and sign directly to the camera while reserving space around me for captions to be integrated into the screen during the editing process. I coordinate with a professional interpreter to incorporate voice-over in each video to articulate my multimodal message in accessible ways

to my target audience of predominantly—but not exclusively—scholars who hear and are not fluent in my primary language. In many cases, challenges emerge when attempting to synchronize the audio-visual-textual-temporal layers of the audible voice, the signs on screen, and the captions. These challenges are not easily resolved but the interdependent nature of coordinating with others is another lesson that we learn as we work towards access in each project.

An early example of my methods for addressing my audience through a signed, captioned, and voiced-over video is a conference presentation in which I presented some of my findings from my dissertation research via prerecorded video at the Council of Writing Program Administration in July 2016. In this professional video, I addressed colleagues in the field and started with the following line: “In this presentation I integrated captions into the space around me so that you can follow my body language, my facial expressions, my meaning.” At the time, I was a doctoral student at East Carolina University in North Carolina and this video presentation was part of my dissertation research on intentionally and thoughtfully designing a space for integral captions within our videos as opposed to treating captions as an afterthought to be automatically placed at the bottom of the screen (an argument that I have disseminated elsewhere, including in “Integral Captions and Subtitles,” which was published in *Rhetoric Review*).

I intentionally planned for and integrated the captions into this video so that the captions would embody my multimodal message—and my professional voice as a signer (as depicted in Figure 3.2). When filming myself, I positioned myself so that the camera framed me from the waist up (a medium shot) and with space to my sides. Determining that black font would be the most readable color for my captions in this professional presentation, I stood in front of a light-colored wall and wore a black shirt that contrasted with my light-skinned hands and arms.



Figure 3.2. Screen capture from the author's dissertation video.

During the filming process, I had the eventual design of the captions in mind. As a right-handed person, I positioned myself mainly on the right side of the camera; that allowed me to use my dominant hand to interact with the captions that would appear in the space next to me. When I felt that it would be rhetorically effective to move myself and the captions, I moved to the center of the screen or the left side. For instance, several times in the video, I discussed conventional captions that appear at the bottom of the screen; in these instances, I moved myself to the center of the frame and placed the captions at the bottom of the screen. When editing those moments, I changed the color of the captions to white to embody the traditional color for captions *and* to make them readable when they appeared in front of my black shirt.

During the editing process, I used Windows Movie Maker to integrate captions into different places around the screen, depending on my meaning at any given moment. Nonetheless, the design of my captions was directly influenced by the affordances of the free version of Windows Movie Maker that I had as a doctoral student. For instance, while I could design the timing and pacing of my captions, I could not embolden, color, or italicize a single word or letter in a segment without also affecting the other words or letters in the same segment. In such ways, the potentials and limitations of my version of Windows Movie Maker influenced the final design of my video.

Knowing that it was important to articulate my voice as an emergent researcher, I enlisted one of my regular interpreters at the time who I trusted and who was comfortable voicing for me to provide the voice-over for this video. Although she normally spoke with a Southern accent, she informed me that she wanted to suppress her natural accent so that my identity as a non-Southerner would come through in the video. I told her that she did not have to make that change, but we then decided together that she would do so, and this decision has remained with me over the years as I recognize that we worked together to maintain our metaphorical *vision* of what my *audible* “professional voice” should sound like to colleagues in the field.

In digital writing, the concept of “professional voice” can be problematic if we hold on to a limited vision of what our own and others’ voices should “sound” like and whether these sounds should be audible. Yet, just as cooperating with an interpreter enabled me to improve access to my professional voice, the professional relationships and digital tools that all digital researchers draw upon, including tools for transforming captions, can help us concretize our messages in living color—rhetorically and literally.

Accessing Sonic Conversations

With the ongoing creation of additional programs and platforms, professional opportunities to converse with colleagues in digital spaces frequently materialize and it is crucial that all members of our online communities can access these con-

versations. As an example, after the 2018 publication of *Soundwriting Pedagogies*, I was asked to contribute to a podcast series that extended the work of the edited collection. For this podcast series, scholars in our field submitted questions for the authors of each chapter to respond to, and the resulting episodes were circulated on the Computers and Composition Digital Press platforms (Hope). I developed a few questions about the theories and practices for Jennifer Buckner and Kirsten Daley about their chapter in the edited collection, “Do You Hear What I Hear? A Hearing Teacher and a Deaf Student Negotiate Sound.” My video-recorded questions and Jennifer Buckner’s audio responses to my questions were merged into a visual podcast episode for the series.

When I was first asked to contribute to the series, I was eager to engage in a conversation about negotiating and accessing sound in visual *and* aural form. I reflected on and created a list of the most compelling questions about the chapter that I wanted to ask Buckner. As I drafted my plan for my component of the episode, I anticipated that my video would be merged with Buckner’s audio responses. By this point in my career as an assistant professor with additional resources, I had been using Adobe Premiere Pro to create and edit videos with sound and captions. With Adobe Premiere Pro, I could now finetune the design of my captions to embody my message even more emphatically. This program gave me greater control over the size, typography, placement, and other nuances that I wanted to design in my captions. Most relevantly for this podcast series, I could amplify the size of specific words in the way that one would raise their pitch in speech for emphasis.

With my final composition *and* the eventual podcast in mind, I recorded myself signing with space for traditional lines of captions below me and I integrated amplified captions for key terms in the space next to me. Through this preparation, the captions appear at the same time as my signs (as depicted in Figure 3.3). For instance, I explained that Buckner and Daly’s use of “‘audate’ jumped out at me as a term that could help scholars formulate our understanding of how each body experiences sounds.” To embody the impact of that term on me, I used Adobe Premiere Pro to place that term in my line of sight next to my eyes and signs.

I enlisted a professional interpreter to read the captions in the video so that the voice-over would align with the signs and the captions. I then included the audio file in my video project in Adobe Premiere Pro, synchronized the modes, and finalized the video. This interdependent process with an interpreter and Adobe Premiere Pro led to a final composition in which signs, captions, and speech simultaneously present shared meaning. Based on my unique and interdependent sonic experiences, I strongly encourage digital writing scholars who engage in professional conversations and other shared sonic events online, including podcasts, to experiment with innovative methods for making such dialogue multimodal and accessible through collaborating with and learning from other voices.



Figure 3.3. Screen capture of the author from Lacy Hope (1:10).

The Sound/Vision of the Researcher's Voice: Conclusion

These two examples may serve as a reminder that the methods that can be used in each research situation are not identical and that there is no single template to follow when working independently and interdependently to access and articulate voices. Rather, each new research project presents a distinct opportunity—with its corresponding affordances—for actively considering different methods of capturing the sound/vision of our professional voice through the interrelations of speech, captions, and other modes.

Recording, Transcribing, and Accessing Participants' Voices

In addition to dialoguing with colleagues, I use my research projects to improve access to sonic and multimodal compositions and I strongly value involving the perspectives of users of these compositions. As a result, a major component of my qualitative research processes entails collecting information from D/deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals about their experiences with and preferences for accessible technologies. Over the past few years, I have used and revised several methods for recording and transcribing the statements of research participants in different focus groups and interviews. Each recording and transcribing method creates benefits and limitations when working with participants with different communication practices, including participants with different preferences for

signing and speaking. Evaluating the best technology to use and procedure to follow for recording and transcribing participants' statements begins anew with the start of each new research project (and with the release of each new technology). This self-evaluation is necessary because we are essentially asking ourselves to complete an important mission: to always improve access to and articulation of our participants' voices.

Transcribing Sound and Visuals: A Relatively Low-Tech Method

While I have often worked independently as the principal investigator with an interdependent methodology, one collaborative project was an especially interdependent process in which I worked closely with a colleague and other individuals to access and articulate participants' voices. In this project, Stacy Bick, a visual communications senior lecturer who teaches filmmaking and related courses, and I interviewed D/deaf and hard-of-hearing students who had taken at least one filmmaking course at our institution about their experiences creating films with sound and captions; some of these participants spoke in their interviews, some signed, and some spoke *and* signed. Stacy Bick and I hired a deaf graduate student assistant who was comfortable communicating in spoken English and sign language to review our video recordings and transcribe the entirety of these interviews.

I share this example here to acknowledge that an interdependent methodology and methods are context-specific while ever-evolving with technology—yet always drawing on traditional methods, tools, and technologies. The graduate student assistant had to take the time to recursively review each video recording to capture each participant's spoken and/or signed message and place all the aural and visual voices in written English in the transcripts. This relatively low-tech method relied on digital tools and affordances—including the ability to slow down video recordings and replay the same moments over and over to capture all signs—and provided us with what we needed to accomplish our research goals: versions in written English of each participant's statements.

After the graduate student assistant completed each transcript, I reviewed the videos and transcripts. I likewise had to slowly view and read the two texts—the written and the multimodal—side-by-side to ensure that I did not miss a moment in either version. Reading the choices that the graduate student assistant made in transcribing particular signs or sentences was an edifying experience for me as a rhetorical scholar because I experienced firsthand the slightly different ways in which she and I might have transcribed a signed statement into written English. Notably, the choices she made in determining where a participant's signed sentences began and where they ended were at times different than my choices would have been. While reminding the editor side of me to resist the desire to move punctuation marks in the transcripts that did not need to be moved, I had to acknowledge that some of our transcription choices may have differed

in relatively minor ways, but that both approaches articulated the signer's original intentions. In the end, reading transcripts created through another mindset productively compelled me to recognize expanded possibilities for transcribing visual statements in written English—and that will benefit me in the future.

After finalizing the transcripts, I used a qualitative data analysis program (MAXQDA), proceeded with the next steps in the research process, and disseminated our findings (Butler and Bick). While scholars certainly use such digital programs to analyze content in videos and delve deeper into digital and multimodal research methods—including methods reviewed elsewhere in this edited collection—the relatively traditional process of articulating multimodal messages in written English persists as an interdependent and digital method in our toolkit that we can use to improve how each one of us accesses and represents one mode in another mode.

Transcribing with 360-Degree Cameras: A Relatively Novel Method

My confidence in traditional methods for transcription parallels my professional enthusiasm for new digital methods of collecting data that can enrich our access to participants' voices. I used a relatively exciting method when I conducted a qualitative research study that I designed as part of a larger team project with colleagues in engineering departments who aimed to develop voice assistant interfaces (such as those for Alexa, Siri, and Google Assistant) that would be more accessible for D/deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. To inform the team about voice assistant users' current needs and preferences, my qualitative study began with two small focus group discussions so that I could first collect information from D/deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals about their experiences giving voice commands to voice assistants.

Since participants in this study used spoken communication, I decided to reassess my methods for recording participants' statements. First, I wanted participants to be comfortable deciding whether they wanted to speak or sign their responses in their focus group discussions. I arranged for sign language interpreters to voice in real-time during the focus groups for the participants who preferred to sign while other participants chose to speak. I obtained two separate recording devices: a digital voice recorder and a 360-degree video camera that I would use to capture panoramic visual footage of all individuals in our shared space during the discussions.

Prior to the focus groups and in accordance with the team project's timeline, I contracted a captioning agency who would create a transcript of the focus group discussions based on the audio file. I anticipated that the captioning agency might not catch every audible statement made by participants who spoke; thus, the footage captured by the 360-degree video camera and the audio captured by the digital voice recorder could provide me with access to participants' signed and spoken statements when verifying the initial transcripts and analyzing the

data. As it happened, having a recording of the panoramic visual-temporal scene made it possible for me to fully access participants' *voices* within the context of our discussion. For instance, one participant sat next to me and looked directly at me while speaking without signing; I in turn looked directly at him and regularly nodded to indicate my understanding. At times, including when reaching the end of thoughts, he would lower the volume of his voice and whisper a few words or sign these final words. These moments were not captured by the captioning agency, which left these moments incomplete in the transcripts—and I was able to fill in these gaps with my access to the panoramic video. In other words, through this interdependency with the transcription service and the 360-degree camera, I was able to access and articulate this participant's voice.

Regardless of the size of a research study, digital writing researchers should embrace the concurrent use of multiple digital tools and interrelations since these combinations will increase our chances of making voices accessible to ourselves and ultimately to our audiences.

Recording and Accessing Participants' Voices: Conclusion

In each one of these qualitative research studies, my role as researcher has seen me coordinate interdependently with other human beings and various technologies to access and articulate participants' voices. No single method is infallible, but each technology and collaboration can bring forth novel possibilities. As another example of a collaborative project (Butler, Trager, and Behm), two colleagues and I used a custom automatic speech recognition program to automatically generate a rough transcript of our interviews with participants. We then cleaned up the transcripts to correct the errors and prepare the transcripts for analysis. Automatic speech recognition programs may become more reliable in the years to come—but it is crucial to always triple-check all transcripts for accuracy so that we can trust the subsequent analysis and findings. The malleable nature of digital writing research, especially in the face of technological advancements, means that we all will always have to continue to evaluate the affordances of each method for accessing and articulating participants' voices.

Implications: Accessing + Articulating Voices

The intertwining of interdependency, access, and jointing of multiple modes of communication productively enables the articulation of voices in digital writing research. The methodology and methods detailed in this chapter can be redesigned by other scholars in the continual process of improving how we all capture and disseminate our research findings with each other. I encourage such redesigns, which would—as I mentioned earlier—embody Jung's insistence that our field's intellectual work is interdependent, and that each individual's scholarship would not exist without the scholarship of colleagues in our field (107). We

design each new project within the current context of scholarship in our field; with consideration to the affordances of traditional tools; with attention to the ever-evolving technologies that may have emerged since our previous research project; and with recognition of the need for different methods. Through being flexible and innovative with our methods, we can respond to Halbritter and Lindquist's forceful questions about speaking with and through "an audible voice, one that is not your own."

My experiences visualizing sounds and sounding visuals underscore that voice is not a singular property owned by a person who utters audible sound—sound that is heard by those who hear and not heard by those who do not hear. Voices—a researcher's voice, participants' voices, interpreters' voices, and others' voices—are shared entities through which our visual, aural, and other modes of communication are jointed and interrelated. Our interdependency and our continual commitment to designing access will enable us all to reassess and improve every project that we work on. Through this commitment to each other and to ourselves, we create novel possibilities for different individuals to articulate their own voices in rhetoric and composition. We show the value of making sound visible, of making visuals sonic, of sharing multiple voices with those who hear, see, feel, and communicate in different ways.

By always assessing our current research methods and methodologies, we can make rhetoric and composition even more inclusive and unveil new ways of articulating voices that can further expand the reach of audio and video to new audiences—and new researchers—in our field. I conclude this chapter by encouraging readers to actively engage with sound in visible ways, with visuals in sonic ways, and with other interrelated modes to enable as many people as possible to access and articulate our voices as writers, researchers, and fellow contributors to digital spaces.

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