

# The Rhetorical Value of Multimodal Composition

Patricia George

Assistant Professor, CUNY Kingsborough Community College  
SoTL @ CUNY Virtual Conference

Teaching Informed by Scholarship, Scholarship Informed by Teaching

Friday, October 14, 2022



# agenda

INTRODUCTION  
3

---

OBJECTIVE  
4

---

IMPLICATIONS  
5 - 8

---

RESULTS  
9

---

CONTACT & PUBLICATION  
10

# Introduction

TOPIC: Classroom-based research focused on teaching with technology or across modalities.

Multimodality is the use of different media to create a single artefact, specifically in this case study, a capstone essay.

This case study employed a qualitative approach to examining the rhetorical value of multimodal composing practices among 21 first-year college students with diverse linguistic, academic, and sociocultural backgrounds.

Course: ENG12 / ENG12ALP (the first of a two sequence Composition course at Kingsborough Community College)

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

# Objective

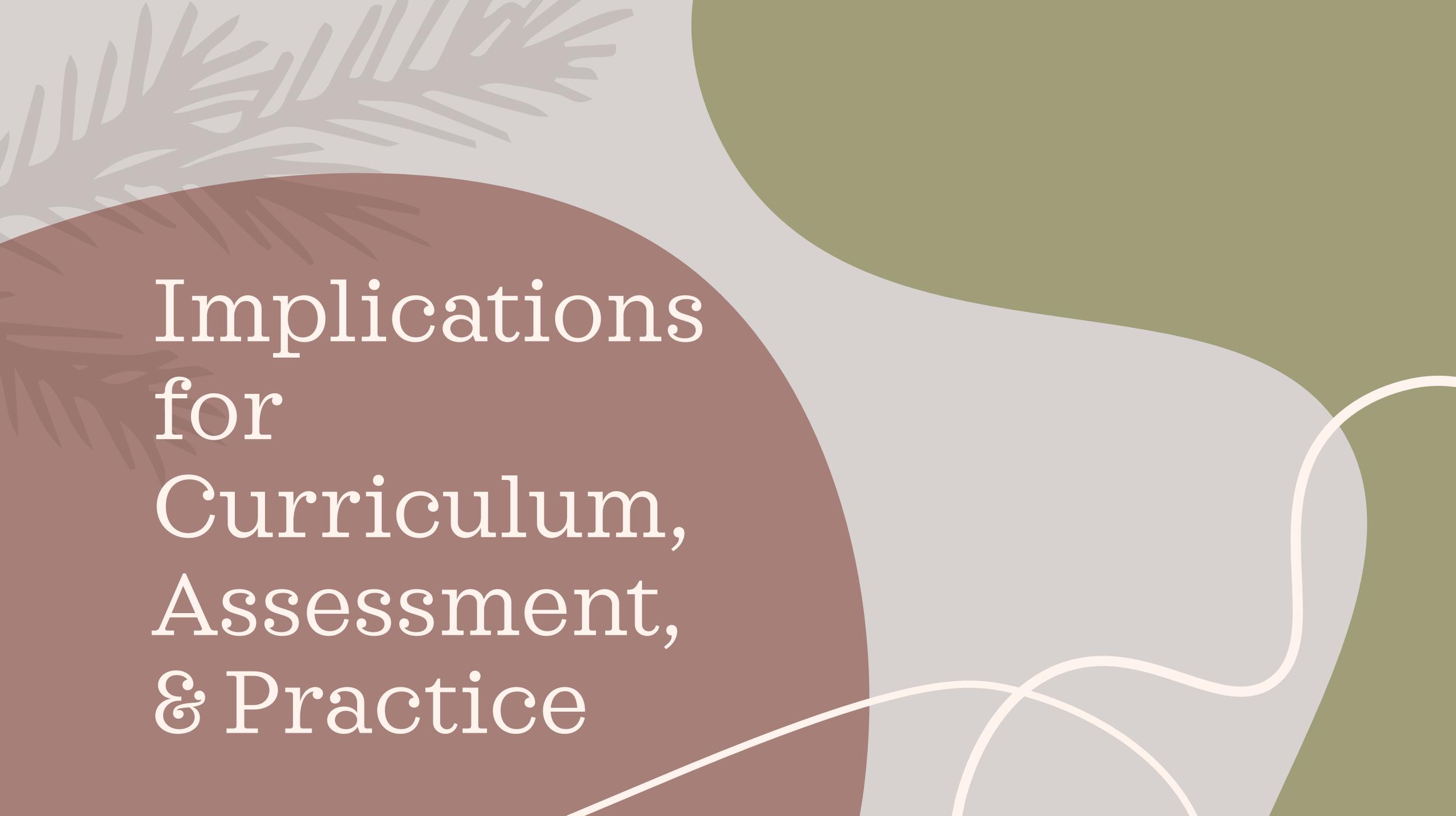
To address whether the inclusion of visual and technological literacy practices in an online setting enhanced:

**COMMUNICATION** Verbal and nonverbal communication

**COLLABORATION** Multiparty interactions

**MOTIVATION** Writing engagement

**AUDIENCE** Audience awareness

The background features a light grey base with a faint, stylized leaf pattern in the upper left. Large, overlapping organic shapes in muted green and brownish-red are present. A white line with a wavy, organic path curves across the bottom right.

# Implications for Curriculum, Assessment, & Practice

# Curriculum

## Theoretical Principles:

- Curriculum design that values the contribution of multimodal communication also provides increased opportunities for equity in that students are able to practice all areas of literacy and English language acquisition.
- This alone is reason enough to rethink a “one-size fits all” practice of teaching first-year composition.
- Centered around themes of resilience, perseverance, and responsibility, a scaffolded and demonstrative approach was used, with examples of multimodality built into the practice of delivering content (TED Talks, interviews, film, TV, virtual experiences).



# Practice

Multimodal pedagogy includes a broader view of literacy that emphasizes students' prior knowledge, personal experiences, and familiar content.

- Critical analysis of TEDTalks to develop arguments.
- Development of thesis statements and the intended audience.
- Discussion of selected media that suited their rhetorical purpose.
- Time management strategies that ensured successful completion.



# Assessment

Choice and flexibility in assessment motivated students to take ownership.

- Students were more engaged when they took ownership and saw the relevance of future transferability and an improvement in digital medium skills.
- Provided clear goals, criteria, and expected standards.
- Developed criteria to assess the quality of the artefact.
- Assessed the content and students' disciplinary understanding.
- Assessed students' active participation in the draft, feedback, and peer editing process.



# Results: Important Trends

- (1) Students at all levels of English development demonstrated advances in conventional composing practices, such as thesis statement development, essay organization, and essay content.
- (2) Students' multimodal practices contributed to higher levels of confidence, literacy competence, and creativity, specifically in the students' ability to communicate coherent arguments, cite sources, and interact effectively during the peer editing process.
- (3) Multimodal practices aligned well with conventional written instruction.
- (4) Using creative design to communicate meaning, the multimodal approach integrated critical thinking skills and multiple literacies in the context of argument-based, student-centered inquiry.





# Thank You

Patricia George, EdD  
CUNY Kingsborough Community College  
Patricia.George@kbcc.cuny.edu

Published Article: International TESOL Journal, Volume 17, June 2022

Available at:

<https://connect.academics.education/index.php/itj/issue/view/25/31>