

Janine Butler

# VISUALIZING VISUALIZING

## **CAPTIONS** — AND — **SUBTITLES**

THE EMBODIMENT OF ACCESSIBLE  
MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION



# VISUALIZING CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES

---

THE EMBODIMENT OF ACCESSIBLE  
MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION

JANINE BUTLER

COMPUTERS AND COMPOSITION DIGITAL PRESS, AN  
IMPRINT OF UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: CONNECTING WITH AND THROUGH CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES	1
Introducing Space for Captions and Subtitles	10
Multiple Modes Working Together	14
Defining Captions and Subtitles	22
Juxtaposition: Embodying My Message through Video Versions of Chapters	33
Overview of Chapters	35
1. AN EMBODIED MULTIMODAL APPROACH TO VISUALIZING CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES	39
<i>Speechless</i> : Embodying the Theme	39
Embodiment and Embodied Rhetorics	42
Space	49
Speechless: Integral Captions	53
Juxtaposition: Space and Embodiment in a Video	61
Access	63
Multimodality and Captions	66
Interdependence	68
Embodied Multimodal Approach	69
2. INTEGRAL SUBTITLES IN EMBODIED MULTILINGUAL AND MULTIMODAL SPACES	74
<i>Heroes Reborn</i> : Embodying the Spatial Proximity of Images and Text in Comic Books	76
Juxtaposition: Integrating and Moving with Subtitles	89
<i>Sherlock</i> : A Study of Word as Image	90
Communicating through Multiple Languages	106
3. THE DESIGN OF (DEAF) SPACE FOR CONNECTIONS	107
(Deaf)Space for Connections	107
Deaf Space on Film	112
Deaf Lens	125



Juxtaposition: Co-Construction of Multilingual and Multimodal Meaning	131
Show and Tell	133
4. INTEGRATION OF CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES, ACCESS, AND EMBODIMENTS	134
Born This Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud—Deaf and Hearing Worlds Together	134
Juxtaposition: Captioning and Subtitling Different Embodied Rhetorics	145
<i>Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution</i> —Accessing Differences	147
<i>The Company You Keep</i> : Hearing and Deaf Space	150
Integrating Captions and Subtitles in Our Lives	169
Integrating Our Worlds of Communication	174
5. INTERDEPENDENCE AND CONNECTIONS IN NEW AMSTERDAM: A CASE STUDY	175
<i>New Amsterdam</i> : Setting the Scene	176
Forming Connections and Interdependence	178
Visual, Textual, Embodied Connections	183
Something Real	193
Juxtaposition: Accessible Communication through Written Text	195
Cross-Cultural Communication: <i>Say Cheese</i>	196
Interdependence and Access	200
6. THE SENSATION OF SILENCE AND SOUND WITH WORDS ON SCREEN	201
The Sound of Silence	202
Exploring Silence	206
Listen/Watch Closely	209
I Didn't Get Any of That	215
Juxtaposition: Viewing the World Differently through Captions and Subtitles	225
I Didn't Quite Get That	226
Accessing Sound and Silence through Visual Words	229
Making Sound and Silence Accessible	230
Captioning the Sight of Sound	231
Feeling the Power of Silence	235
Reconceptualization of Sound and Silence	239

7. SPACES FOR CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES IN OUR CONVERSATIONS	241
Dialogic Space for Captions Online	242
Access and Aesthetics in Alignment	248
What Can You Do and Not Do?	256
Juxtaposition: Careful Consideration of Captions and Subtitles	257
Show How It Sounds	259
Promote the Value of Multilingual Spaces	266
Honor Multiple Languages in the Same Space	269
Communicate in Any Language	274
Embody the Fluidity of Languages	277
Make Captions and Subtitles Central in Our Conversations	279
Conclusion: Make Captions and Subtitles Part of Our Cultures	286
8. REFLECTIONS AND MORE	287
Composing the Self	289
Visualizing More	297
Advice and Guidelines for Video Creators	299
Juxtaposition: Open Up More Spaces	305
Making Captions and Subtitles Central in Video Composition	306
Bibliography	309
APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTS OF VIDEO VERSIONS OF CHAPTERS	322
Chapter 0: Introduction Video Transcript	322
Chapter 1 Video Transcript	324
Chapter 2 Video Transcript	325
Chapter 3 Video Transcript	326
Chapter 4 Video Transcript	327
Chapter 5 Video Transcript	329
Chapter 6 Video Transcript	330
Chapter 7 Video Transcript	332
Chapter 8: Conclusion Video Transcript	334

Copyright 2026 Janine Butler. Some rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-64642-898-4

Cover design by Shannon Connell. Digital book design by Tim Lockridge.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Note to users: A Creative Commons license is only valid when it is applied by the person or entity that holds rights to the licensed work. Works may contain components (e.g., photographs, illustrations, or quotations) to which the rightsholder in the work cannot apply the license. It is ultimately your responsibility to independently evaluate the copyright status of any work or component part of a work you use, in light of your intended use. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Published by Computers and Composition Digital Press, an imprint of Utah State University Press.

To view this project on the web, visit <https://www.ccdigitalpress.org/visualizing-captions>



## INTRODUCTION: CONNECTING WITH AND THROUGH CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES

**T**his digital book is a visualization of captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication. I ask readers to envision words on screen in all their forms, from traditional sentences at the bottom of the screen to highly dynamic text that moves across the screen, and to expand the possibilities for incorporating captions and subtitles as central components of video analysis and design. The chapters of this book unpack examples of broadcast media, streaming media, and online content with traditional closed captions, multilingual subtitles, and varied approaches that coalesce into a shared experience: communicating and connecting across languages and modes to make meaning accessible.

Analyzing and designing captions for spoken English and subtitles for multiple languages reveals how creators can bridge communication styles as we express our multifaceted identities to audiences with different lived experiences and embodiments, or ways of experiencing the world through our bodies. We connect multiple modes of meaning (including sound, visuals, and gestures) through captions and subtitles and enrich our strategies for connecting with audiences

across differences. And through this multimodal and multilingual process, we make our message accessible to our audiences.

Fostering these accessible and multimodal connections is indispensable in our multicultural and interconnected digital world of communication. To encourage scholars and creators to make captions and subtitles central in the analysis and design of on-screen media, including online media, I use the chapters of this book to examine effective examples of captioned and subtitled videos and to demonstrate the value of captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication. This introduction lays the groundwork for understanding varied types of captions and subtitles and the value of embodying accessible multimodal communication with words on screen.

To uncover how words on screen can enrich accessible multimodal communication practices, I previously wrote (2016, 2018b) about the vibrant visual lyrics of American Sign Language (ASL) music videos, videos in which signers perform songs side-by-side with dynamic visual text. Visual lyrics that move in rhythm with signs and sounds show how captions and subtitles can embody multimodal meaning, including the movement of bodies and signs—and these vivid examples show that we can create a space for the analysis and design of captions and subtitles. In this book, I go further in arguing that scholars and creators can analyze and design captions in all their forms, including as traditional lines of texts at the bottom of the screen, to embody the many ways that we all communicate and hope to connect with each other.

My endorsement of captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible communication is mirrored in an exhilarating music video that I had not previously explored: *Only ASL One*, a song by a D/deaf rapper, Warren “Wawa” Snipe. In this music video, Snipe signs and signs simultaneously with lyrics that appear in synchronization with the music around different spaces of the screen, including the bottom, middle, and top of the screen, as shown in the following images from his music video (Figures 0.1 and 0.2).



**Figure 0.1:** Warren "Wawa" Snipe's ASL music video with text visually fading in and out with the music



**Figure 0.2:** Warren "Wawa" Snipe's ASL music video with text visually fading in and out with the music

Snipe, who speaks and signs simultaneously in his songs, developed *Only ASL One* as a song and music video in which he performs the role of a hearing man who hopes to ask a Deaf woman out on a date. This role finds the hearing man starting to learn ASL to communicate with her, but he has only taken a level one ASL

course. Exploring this music video about multilingual communication underscores that captions and subtitles are vital means of accessible multilingual and multimodal communication while revealing the thrill and challenges of connecting with someone across languages, modes, and embodiments.

The temporal synchronization and dynamic placement of words around the screen accentuate viewers' access to the lyrical message as Snipe, in character, simultaneously signs and sings about his desire to connect with a Deaf woman. Throughout the video, he tells us that he has started to learn to sign, wants to learn how to communicate with her, and hopes she can teach him how to tell her he likes her, as shown in Figures 0.3 and 0.4.



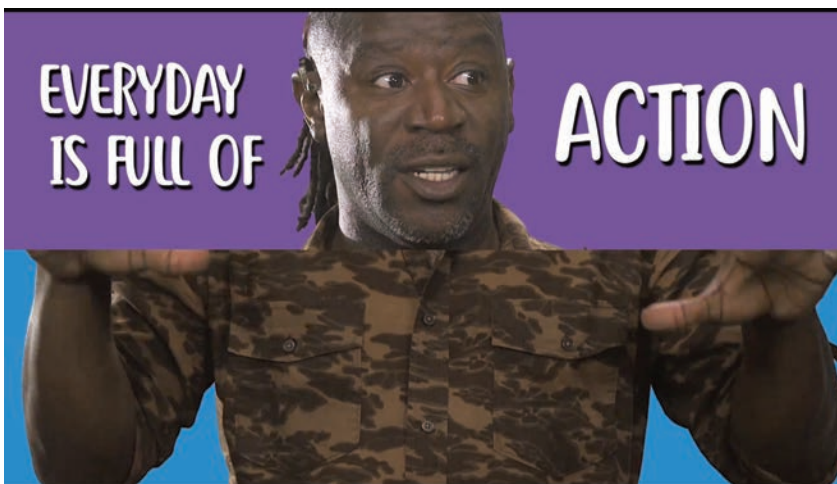
**Figure 0.3:** Lyrics reflecting the hope of communicating across languages





**Figure 0.4:** Lyrics reflecting the hope of communicating across languages

Visual text, signs, speech, and physical expressions juxtapose to reinforce the sensations of attempting to communicate across languages to connect meaningfully with someone. These multi-modal juxtapositions are recreated in the music video's split screens, as shown in Figures 0.5 and 0.6.



**Figure 0.5:** A multimodal juxtaposition of Snipe's face and body as he sings and signs alongside visual lyrics.



**Figure 0.6:** A multimodal juxtaposition of Snipe's face and body as he sings and signs alongside visual lyrics.

This music video illustrates real-world scenarios where communication is not linear, straightforward, nor simple, and where people can use multimodal strategies (including writing) to express themselves and understand each other. Removing the words from the screen would deprive this composition of its heart, as the written words connect speech with signs. And Snipe embodies this accessible multimodal, multilingual message in one moment of the song when he (in the role of the hearing character) says this of ASL: “fascinating language, wished it came with closed captions” (Figures 0.7 and 0.8).



**Figure 0.7:** Zooming into the value of language and captions as means of making communication accessible.



**Figure 0.8:** Zooming into the value of language and captions as means of making communication accessible.

This witty line by Snipe captures the power of captions and subtitles in bridging languages and modes and subverts conventional assumptions that captions are only for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) viewers. The hearing character here wishes that captions were available so that he could understand ASL and communicate

with the Deaf woman—just as those of us in the real world rely on captions and subtitles to understand each other across languages and modes, and just as Snipe the musician intuitively included words on screen to make his message accessible across languages. Snipe’s accessible multimodal message reminds us that captioning and subtitling videos and media enriches communication by making ASL accessible in English *and* by making spoken English accessible through the written form.

In the real world, digital media (televised, streaming, and online videos) will only become more prevalent in our lives, and so this is the time to entrench captions and subtitles as fundamental means of making multimodal communication accessible. From music videos to professional presentations to streaming media and other contexts, scholars and creators can embrace different strategies for incorporating written text on screen to embody the many ways of communication and connection with each other across differences. In an increasingly machine-generated world, this time can be and should be utilized to affirm our unique embodiments as humans seeking to connect with other humans.

Humans can, as the chapters of this book will show, appreciate different strategies for conveying who we are and who we want to be through captions and subtitles. While Snipe developed a visual design for his music video that emulates communication across spoken and signed languages, this book reviews other media and videos that reveal more possibilities for a variety of captioning and subtitling approaches. Each approach, including traditional captions at the bottom of the screen, reflects the embodiment of the creator or performers and the purpose or message of the program—such as broadcast programs in which spoken English is shown as captions at the bottom of the screen while the embodied language of ASL is translated to English immediately next to signers’ bodies. Captioning and subtitling approaches can create avenues for the audience to connect with the message, the performer, or the creator.

Studying different captioning and subtitling approaches is an act of maintaining a more human world, one in which we honor each

other's embodiments and commit to making digital meaning accessible across multiple modes of communication.

Captions and subtitles may be the driving force of this book, but to best understand how they can be the *embodiment* of accessible multimodal communication, we should first begin with understanding the vital concept of embodiment. *Embodiment* includes the ways that each human being experiences the world differently through our own body and how our bodies influence the way that we interpret the world (Knoblauch & Moeller, 2022; Melonçon, 2013; Wilson & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2001). My own embodiment as a Deaf woman has informed how I experience visuals and sounds and has shaped my dedication to multimodal communication. My lived experiences have accentuated my recognition of the value of communicating across modes, the power of challenging conventions to make sounds visual or textual, and the need for making our messages accessible to other human beings. These aspects of my embodiment have all intersected into a recognition of the significance of captions and subtitles and the potential for making them even more central in our analysis and design practices.

Embodiment is a complex term that has, as Knoblauch and Moeller (2022) note, resulted in various definitions of embodiment. I say that these various definitions are not a limitation because they reflect the complexity of who we all are as human *beings*. Embodiment also includes “the experience of orienting one’s body in space and amongst others” and can be the “result of connection and interaction” (Knoblauch & Moeller, 2022, p. 8). The examples of captions and subtitles shared throughout this book reflect or reinforce the desire for connections amongst individuals, languages, and modes.

The embodiment of meaning through words on screen may be most salient in ASL music videos, similar to when words appear around Snipe’s face and hands in “Only ASL One.” The embodiment of meaning through words on screen may be more subtle in other scenarios, such as in television programs in which a hearing character and a Deaf character attempt to connect across spoken English and ASL with the captions and subtitles visually displaying

when characters are successfully or less-than-successfully communicating (as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). In these and other ways, captions and subtitles are the embodiment of accessible embodiment communication in that their portrayal on screen can reflect how humans experience the world, are shaped by our bodies (including as Deaf individuals or hearing individuals who use different languages), and orient ourselves with each other as we hope to connect through communication.

The concept of embodiment serves a major role in the next chapter, which examines my embodied multimodal framework for analyzing captions and subtitles and delves deeper into the concepts of embodiment and embodied rhetorics. To work towards that framework, the latter sections of this introduction will review key details about various types of captions and subtitles. Throughout the review of these types, keep in mind that captions and subtitles of all types can be the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication. We also can create a space for all types of captions and subtitles in analysis and design practices to respect and support the many ways, languages, and modes that human beings all orient to and interact with each other.

## **INTRODUCING SPACE FOR CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES**

This book guides readers through a study of captioned and subtitled media in various forms, including:

- Videos that include captions when the same language is being verbalized on screen,
- Videos that include subtitles when a different language is being spoken or signed,
- Television programs and documentaries that include traditional closed captions at the bottom of the screen,
- Programs that embed stylized lines of words permanently into different spaces on the screen,

- Social media videos that integrate highly dynamic words across the screen,
- My own video version of each chapter, and
- Combinations of different captioning and subtitling approaches within the same video.

Such examples reinforce my argument that captions and subtitles can embody the multiple modes and languages through which we communicate and connect with each other (including facial and body language, and signed and spoken languages).

While we analyze meaningful examples of captioned and subtitled videos, we can make the design of captions and subtitles central in our own video composition processes, from academic contexts to social media and other contexts. When space is generated for captions in video analysis and design practices, the value of accessibility and inclusion is reinforced and extended. Video creators can bring together accessibility and creativity when creating different kinds of captions and subtitles that embody who we are as individuals and our multimodal message—all while making our content (including identity and message) more accessible to diverse audiences.

I have chosen to share my multimodal message with my audiences through this digital book to directly address those who are interested in the analysis and design of videos, including online content creators, academics, and students, and to encourage more creators to make captions and subtitles central in video creation processes. My lived experiences as a Deaf academic has led me to study and share videos in which captions and subtitles have been creatively incorporated into different spaces around the screen of a video, especially ASL music videos (Butler, 2016), and *Gallaudet: The Film* (Butler, 2018b). These innovative media—which were created primarily by and for Deaf individuals—manifest the concept of Deaf Gain, which frames Deaf experiences and our accessible multimodal communication practices as a positive *gain* for society at large (Bauman & Murray, 2010, 2014). A salient example is Sean



Forbes' (2011) "Let's Mambo" (Figures 0.9-0.11), an ASL music video in which lyrics pulsate on screen in sync with signs and music.



**Figure 0.9:** Dynamic lyrics in an ASL music video.



**Figure 0.10:** Dynamic lyrics in an ASL music video.





**Figure 0.11:** Dynamic lyrics in an ASL music video.

This book also draws from other examples and my Deaf identity to show the power of Deaf Gain that comes when we appreciate meaningful ways of incorporating captions and subtitles of all kinds on our screens, particularly in multimodal and multilingual contexts that represent our multicultural world of communication. I intend for the chapters of this book (and the examples within) to collaboratively transform the ways in which videos are studied and created: with captions and subtitles and accessibility at the center of our processes. When more people make captions and subtitles valuable in our analysis and design practices, we can contribute to greater accessibility and inclusion in video-based conversations and contexts, including through social media.

The incorporation of dynamic words on screen has exploded since I first studied ASL music videos in 2016, most saliently through TikTok, Instagram Reels, and related social media programs that allow creators to embed words of various styles on screen. As discussed in Chapter 7 of this book, dynamic visual text on screen has become elemental in the larger cultural moment for the aesthetics of social media videos. However, simply placing highly stylized visual text on screen does not make a video accessible, especially when the stylized words visually interfere with other

elements of the screen or do not actually caption exactly what the person in the video says.

The meaningful examples in this book—which carefully incorporate captions and subtitles of different kinds, including traditional captions at the bottom of the screen—can serve as models for the effective ways in which words on screen can be designed to be simultaneously accessible and aesthetic. Some of these media have been created by hearing production teams or creators for mainstream audiences while others have been created by and for Deaf individuals; each chapter’s study of these media encapsulates the Deaf Gain that comes when we more deeply appreciate and reinforce the value of captions and subtitles of all kinds in making our work accessible to each other. Before we study other programs and the possibilities for our own videos, we can begin with social media videos and appreciate how creators can balance accessibility and aesthetics when creating words on screen that embody their message and strengthen their connections with audiences.

## **MULTIPLE MODES WORKING TOGETHER**

We will now dive into the social media ecology with its growing integration of on-screen visual text and consider a video that effectively balances accessibility and aesthetics. In January 2020, Democratic Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey posted a video on Twitter announcing that he was suspending his campaign for president (Figure 0.12).



**Figure 0.12:** Tweet by Cory Booker with a video that has embedded open captions

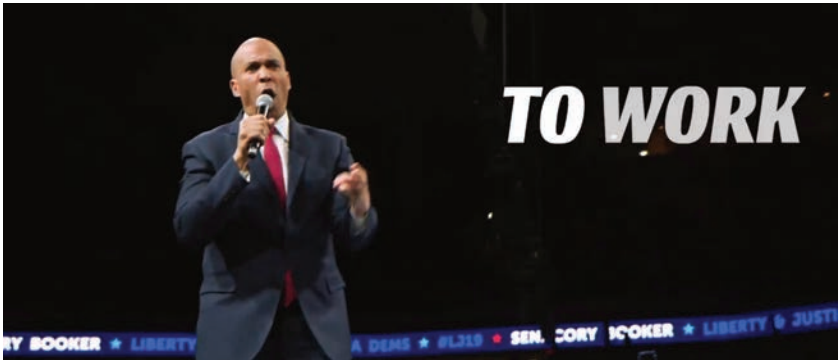
This minute-and-half long video is a montage that combines recordings of Booker giving public speeches with new footage in which he directly faces the camera and speaks to his online audience. Throughout these moments, the video incorporates open captions that are visible, or open, to sighted viewers<sup>1</sup>. These open captions resonate in social media’s highly visual and multimodal space and make Booker’s message pop out on online audiences’

1. As I discuss later, this book reflects access as a process and work-in-progress (Dolmage, 2008; Yergeau et al, 2013) and I recognize a major limitation of my work: that the visual focus of this book restricts access for blind and low-vision individuals. I recognize that when I use the term “viewers,” I am referring to sighted viewers.

devices and screens. The effective rhetorical design of the captions embodies his spirit and enhances audiences' connection with his message.

Booker's video begins with a black screen where white text slides up word by word to create the first line of captions at the same time he speaks each word. Halfway through the text appearance, the black screen reveals Booker speaking in one of the Democratic Party presidential debates, the captions continuing to appear in synchronization.

The video continues with clips of Booker's speeches as open captions appear word by word in temporal alignment with his phrasing. The following screen captures (Figures 0.13 and 0.14) show how equal space is dedicated to Booker and to the visualization of his words.



**Figure 0.13:** A scene in Cory Booker's video with open captions embedded in prerecorded content



**Figure 0.14:** A scene in Cory Booker's video with open captions embedded in prerecorded content

Intermingled with these clips of speeches are new moments in which Booker directly faces the camera as he speaks directly to his audiences. While describing his decision to suspend his campaign, he uses his voice, powerful direct gaze at the camera, and open captions to emphasize the value of everyone joining together to support each other and the common cause for the country, as shown in the following screen captures (Figures 0.15 and 0.16).



**Figure 0.15:** A scene in Cory Booker's video with space dedicated to captions



**Figure 0.16:** A scene in Cory Booker's video with space dedicated to captions

The open captions in Booker's video embody his cadence, spirit, and call to action, strengthen the connection between speaker and audience, and make his message visually accessible by showing viewers his voice as a speaker who values collaboration.

The design of the open captions varies throughout different moments in this video. Open captions have been added to the bottom of the screen or to the side of the screen in the recordings of speeches and debates depending on where Booker stands on each stage. When there is space next to Booker's body, captions are incorporated next to him (Figures 0.15 and 0.16).

Booker's video, presumably created for a predominantly hearing audience, encapsulates the power of connection created through designing captions that embody our identities and the value of multimodal communication through sound, visuals, and other expressive modes. Concurrently, the intentional design of these synchronized captions makes the deep spirit and heart of his voice accessible to a wider online audience in ways that exceed the affordances of traditional captions that might only transcribe his words in textual form. While the open captions speak to online audiences, the open captions even more crucially create visual access to his aural message for d/Deaf<sup>2</sup> and hard of hearing (DHH) viewers.

---

2. I use the capitalized term Deaf when referring to the cultural identity of members who identify with Deaf culture, a linguistic and cultural minority, including

When I first watched this video during that year's presidential campaign, the synchronized captions enhanced the sensation of Booker's voice reaching out past the screen and intensified his direct gaze at me, a Deaf rhetoric and composition scholar who is committed to improving the accessible design of captions that embody the many ways that we all communicate and connect with each other. The captions connect speaker with audience and reflect how we all interact with each other through multiple modes, or ways, of communication. We engage in multimodal communication through voices, body language, written text, and other communication strategies in different contexts online and in our physical lives.

Booker's video also reminds us that access to political conversations embodies the value of being able to engage in real-time conversations and participate in society amid the eternally exponential growth of online video content and the endless stream of films, series, and advertisements being created and distributed. Colleagues, students, social leaders, public figures, friends and family, and other individuals compose and create videos to share with each other online as DHH individuals navigate a world of captioned and subtitled television programs, films, and advertisements. Access to this cultural content occurs when we all caption our videos and media and affirm the importance of captioning for access online (NAD, 2023a, 2023c).

We must begin with the recognition that captions and subtitles are irreplaceable means of access to video content and we must center the needs of those who access sound through captions and subtitles: DHH individuals. With that fundamental truth, we individuals with all different hearing levels can embody our identities, our languages, our voices, and our connections with each other through the design of captions and subtitles on our screens.

To unpack the potential for captions and subtitles of all designs, this book is a curated collection of meaningful examples of captions and subtitles that make multimodal, multilingual, and multicultural

---

myself. I use the lowercase deaf to refer to the physical state of being deaf, including when referring to myself.

communication accessible to a wide range of audiences with different hearing levels. The variety of approaches to captioning and subtitling videos and media embodies the assortment of ways in which we communicate in our lives and the interdependent process in which dialogic participants coordinate and support each other's access to meaning through different modes, languages, and ways of understanding.

An ASL music video presented by the Deaf Professional Arts Network (D-PAN) reveals the value of captions and subtitles on screen, including when placed at the bottom of the screen. Throughout some moments in the ASL cover of 'The Clark Sisters' *You Brought the Sunshine* (D-PAN, 2013), the lyrics scroll out letter by letter at the bottom of the screen, as shown in Figures 0.17 and 0.18. The sensation and multiple layers of the words can be felt in the body as each lyrical moment appears in tandem with the music. In this case, the words do not need to be highly colorized or vibrant—and the tasteful design captures the vocals in textual form.



**Figure 0.17:** Lyrics scrolling out letter by letter at the bottom of the screen in an ASL music video





**Figure 0.18:** Lyrics scrolling out letter by letter at the bottom of the screen in an ASL music video

In this movement through a variety of captioned and subtitled spaces and screens, we will determine the affordances—the benefits and limitations—of captioning and subtitling multiple modes of communication (including multiple languages and embodiments) in different contexts. Our journey will be guided by the six criteria of my embodied multimodal framework; these six criteria serve as a paradigm for identifying and evaluating the accessibility, effectiveness, and applicability of each captioning and subtitling style or trend. As the variegated styles reveal, there is no one-size-fits all in our day and age; rather, there are rhetorical and aesthetic choices that each captioner—and we are all captioners—makes to embody the interdependent process of accessing communication in all its forms. The common thread of connection and access across different abilities, identities, modes, and languages ties together each trend.

The variety of approaches buttresses this book's argument for my readers: that we instructors, scholars, students, and creators who analyze and compose video content can value the design of captions and subtitles that embody the connections amongst participants in a dialogic situation: video creators and composers, actors and performers on screen, and audiences. I include screen captures and image descriptions throughout this book to give us the time and space to process each captured moment thoroughly, particularly the

visual representation of captions and subtitles on screen alongside the bodies of performers.

Captions and subtitles—from highly stylized captions that are integrated into the space of the screen to traditional captions at the bottom of the screen—are central in the screen-based conversations in this book. As we move through each space, we can recognize how *space* has been dedicated to captions and subtitles, from the literal design of space on the screen (such as the space next to Booker’s face) to dialogic space when video creators and audiences attend directly to the affordances of captions and subtitles.

These captioned and subtitled spaces verbalize the multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal times in which we live, depend on, and interact with those around us online and offline. As we center captions and subtitles in these explorations, we can ourselves embody direct access to communication and interdependence with each other when we recognize this commonality: the design of captions and subtitles is central to our video composition practices and our multimodal/cultural/lingual communities as we connect across differences.

## DEFINING CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES

Since I am asking my readers to appreciate the layers of captions and subtitles more deeply in video compositions, I will begin with defining key terms to lay the groundwork for our assessment of a variety of captioning and subtitling styles that connect participants in a conversation and creators with audiences.

Definitions of captions and subtitles are context-specific depending on our nationality, the technology we are referring to, and the media that the captions and subtitles appear on.

Depending on context, I use the umbrella term captions to refer to both captions and subtitles. However, the two terms deserve equal status, especially to reflect our multilingual world and the core value of communication access, including access across languages. The following definitions are used in this book:

1. **Captions:** Written text on screen that is in the same language as what is being spoken on screen
2. **Subtitles:** Written text on screen that translates the language being spoken or expressed on screen

Using that definition, then, Cory Booker's video as shown in Figures 0.13-0.16 includes English-language captions for his spoken English speech.

Also, in this book, *captions* refer to same-language text while *subtitles* refer to contexts in which the language on screen is different from the language being written. For instance, in ASL learning videos, English words are placed around the screen for new learners unfamiliar with ASL, the language being expressed on screen. So, if ASL is the primary language on screen, then English subtitles on screen provide access to ASL.

In literature from other nations, particularly England and Europe, definitions of captions and subtitles are flipped. Subtitles refer to those for DHH people, while captions refer to foreign-language contexts (for example, Matamala & Orero, 2010; Zárate, 2021). This is complicated further by the use of captions and subtitles specifically within the context of foreign language media and second-language acquisition scholarship. This scholarship distinguishes interlingual subtitles from intralingual subtitles. Intralingual subtitles are captions provided in the same language as that spoken on screen; that is, they are "same-language subtitles" (Gernsbacher, 2015, p. 197). Conversely, interlingual subtitles are translations of the spoken language into the viewers' language and the primary purpose of interlingual subtitles is to "grant wider-scale access to the audiovisual product by individuals speaking a different [first language]" (Ghia, 2012, p. 1). To emphasize, interlingual *and* intralingual captions and subtitles provide viewers with textual access to languages, and access to meaning, is at the heart of our multilingual connections with each other.

This book, which is grounded in the U.S., uses captions when exploring spoken English contexts and subtitles when exploring multilingual contexts. When exploring other videos with multiple

languages being expressed on screen such as spoken Spanish and when composing my own ASL videos, I use the term *subtitles* to refer to the written text that appears on screen. These subtitles translate the spoken or signed language into English for English-using audiences who might not be fluent in the original language, incorporating awareness or assumptions about the target audience's knowledge of the original language.

A subtitled video that demonstrates awareness of target audiences is a promotional video for The ASL App, an app for learning ASL that “is made by Deaf people for you!” (The ASL App, 2013). In this promotional video, the camera shows a barista at a coffee-house practicing the signs for ordering coffee using this app on his phone. He then waves hello to a customer at the counter who signs “Hello” back. The barista then asks, “COFFEE?” in a large blue uppercase font floating on screen between him and the male customer. “COFFEE?” fades off screen as the customer’s response, “YEAH!”, appears on screen in the same large blue capitalized font floating on screen in sync with their signs, as captured in the following shot (Figure 0.19). Each word appears closer to the person who signs the phrase, but always in the space between the bodies and in proximity to the hands.



**Figure 0.19:** Words appearing near signers in interaction

Through these and subsequent subtitles, hearing audiences can access the core message embodied in the app that has been designed to support the development of their ASL skills.

The focus on *both* captions and subtitles in this book reflects an international world of communication and becomes especially valuable in the exploration of subtitled multilingual and multicultural spaces throughout the chapters to come. By attending more closely to subtitled videos, we can further commit to designing inclusive spaces that layer multiple languages and cultures.

### ***Closed Captions and Open Captions***

In the exploration of captioned and subtitled media, we access meaning through closed captions as well as open captions and open subtitles. Open captions are embedded into the screen for all sighted viewers to see, as demonstrated in Booker's video. The words or lines of written text cannot be removed or moved by the viewer. Social media and other online videos have increased the use of open captions over the last decade or so, with that trend intensifying thanks to the creation of TikTok videos that incorporate open captions. The prevalence of open captions on social media for a predominantly hearing audience that might be watching videos with the sound on or off on their phones is a fertile ground for spotlighting the value of captions for audiences with all hearing levels. This is explored further in Chapter 7.

Subtitles are often open to viewers because of the assumption that general audiences might not know the target language and the subtitles provide them with access to the language being expressed on screen. It is important to note that open captions and subtitles are different from *closed* captions. The use of closed captions originated on television screens (NAD, 2023c) and the word "closed" reflects how they can be turned on or off (NAD, 2023e). Sighted viewers in the United States might recognize closed captions as white font against a black background at the bottom or top of the television screen, as shown in the following screen capture (Figure 0.20) from *Born This Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud* (Matlin, 2018),

which is explored further in Chapter 4. However, televisions and online content often have captions off as the default, which forces the viewer to actively turn on captions for access.



**Figure 0.20:** Closed captions at the top of the screen

While I, like the National Association of the Deaf (2023e), use the term “closed captions” to refer to captions that can be turned on and off, some only use “closed captions” to refer to captions that textualize English *and* include sound descriptions in brackets. Captioning expert Sean Zdenek (2015) clearly delimitates what counts as closed captions for his groundbreaking rhetorical study of closed captions. Closed captions provide “the full complement of sounds” for deaf and hard of hearing audiences (Zdenek, 2015, p. 35), notably with descriptions of sound in brackets.

The federally-funded, non-profit organization Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) (2023b) clarifies that captions “not only display words as the textual equivalent of spoken dialogue or narration, but they also include speaker identification, sound effects, and music description.” In essence, closed captions provide descriptions of sound for DHH audiences in addition to transcribing spoken English into written English. Sound descriptions include “[laughs]” when a character laughs, as shown in Figure

0.21, which comes from *New Amsterdam* and which is analyzed further in Chapter 5.



**Figure 0.21:** Closed captions with sound description in brackets

While specific styles and guidelines for closed captions differ across different organizations (Zdenek, 2015, p. 53), commonly suggested standards for closed captions are crucial to the development and application of possible caption/subtitle designs, open or closed.

The DCMP (2023a), provides an extensive captioning key that clearly establishes the “elements of quality captioning” (2023b). Furthermore, DCMP provides five points as the elements of quality captioning :

- **Accurate:** The captions are “errorless.”
- **Consistent:** The “style and presentation” of captions are consistent.
- **Clear:** “A complete textual representation of the audio” [including through description of non-speech sounds and speaker identification in brackets] “provides clarity.”
- **Readable:** “Captions are displayed with enough time to be read completely, are in synchronization with the



audio, and are not obscured by (nor do they obscure) the visual content.”

- **Equal:** “Equal access requires that the meaning and intention of the material is completely preserved.”  
(DCMP, 2023b)

These five points refer more specifically to closed captions but should be fundamental in any caption creator’s development, and these principles inform this book’s investigation of the accessibility of different approaches to captions and subtitles, including ensuring that captions and subtitles are displayed with enough time to be read completely and do not obscure or are not obscured by visual elements.

Maintaining a strict definition of closed captions can be challenging in different contexts. Notably, DVDs of spoken English films and shows often provide what they call “subtitles” for DHH viewers that can be turned on and off, and the visual text on screen for DVDs emulates the style of subtitles rather than closed captions.

Rather than treating these differences as complications, we would be well-served to seize this complexity in how we compose captions and subtitles of different varieties and multiple languages in the commitment to connecting with each other and our audiences. To study these varieties, the technical presentation and creation of captions and subtitles—whether they are baked into the video (open) or can be toggled on and off (closed)—and the distinction between same-language captions and subtitles for different languages can be distinguished as layers of meaning that strengthen access to multimodal and multilingual meaning.

### *Integral Captions and Subtitles*

A fundamental principle at the heart of this book is the power we all hold as creators who can compose access while embodying our identities. While there are benefits to automatically generated captions—including convenience and fast turnaround so that videos with spoken content can be quickly captioned—automatically



generated captions cannot capture our voices as creators expressing intricate meaning to each other. Automated captions are the opposite of what I call *integral* captions and subtitles, or captions and subtitles that creators carefully design to be essential elements of a video in coordination with sound, body language, and other modes of communication (Butler 2018b; *Rhetoric Review*). Integral captions and subtitles are a form of *open captions and subtitles* as opposed to *closed captions*.

Integral captions and subtitles are primarily open captions and subtitles because they are designed as part of the viewing experience, and they go further because they are integrated into the space of the video, interact with other elements of multimodal communication, and provide visual access. ASL music videos integrate highly dynamic visual lyrics—text that morphs, shimmers, and dances across the screen alongside signing bodies to make the spirit, beat, and heart of music accessible in visual form (Butler, 2016). In Sean Forbes’ (2011) electrifying “Let’s Mambo,” which is shown in Figure 0.22, and other videos, captions and subtitles<sup>3</sup> are not an afterthought, but are designed to interact with the sound and the action on screen, embodying the pulsations of the beat and the vibrations of the music.

---

3. I use the combined term captions and subtitles or dynamic visual text when describing the visual lyrics in ASL music videos because, while the visual text is **captioning** the original lyrics that are being sung, the primary language in these videos is arguably ASL, and using dynamic visual text portrays English and ASL with equal status.

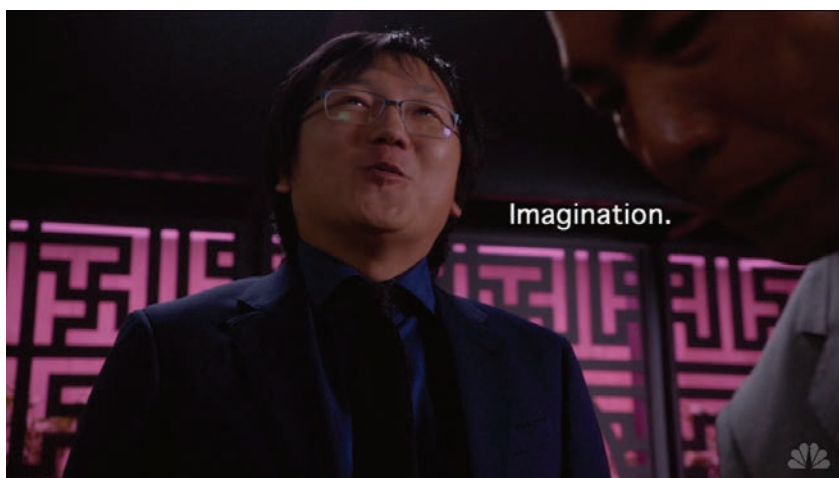


**Figure 0.22:** Highly dynamic visual lyrics in an ASL music video

While the highly vibrant lyrical text in some ASL music videos is suitable for these contexts, this book does not intend to argue that all videos should incorporate highly stylized visual text. There are many ways in which captions and subtitles—including linear captions and subtitles that do not necessarily move across the screen—can exemplify accessible multimodal communication. The first few chapters of this book guide readers through innovative integrative designs of captions and subtitles that enhance the creator-performer-audience connection. The examples of captions and subtitles embody performers' rhetorics while facilitating audiences' abilities to attend to meaningful moments on screen, including performers' facial expressions and other key nuances.

My commitment to integral captions and subtitles in certain contexts builds on my viewing experiences dividing my own attention between captions and subtitles at the bottom of the screen and performers' eyes, facial expressions, and action on screen. Studies have demonstrated that caption readers have to commit time to reading captions as opposed to viewing the screen (Jensema et al., 2000), that viewers focus more on faces than other images when dividing time between reading captions and subtitles and looking at the action on screen (Perego et al., 2010), and that captions and

subtitles “compete for visual attention with a moving image” by drawing viewers away from faces on screen (Kruger et al., 2015, n.p.). With performers’ faces and action embodying important messages, we can design a space for captions and subtitles next to bodies and bring viewers’ eyes to the heart of the video, as shown in Figure 0.23 (Densham & Raff, 2015) from *Heroes Reborn*, a show that integrates subtitles into the space of the screen in Japanese-language scenes.



**Figure 0.23:** Subtitles that are integrated into the screen and embody imagination

The integrative examples in this book can serve as models for the innovation and creation of videos in which visual text that captures our message and the hearts of our audiences is carefully composed. These models show the strength of multimodal communication through visual text that is meaningfully designed and placed in interaction with bodies, sound, and other modes of expression and reception.

More recently within the past decade, YouTube and a growing number of online platforms have provided online viewers with the option to customize the size, font, color, background, and other aspects of their “closed captions” for individualized reading experiences. This technological advancement facilitates visual accessibility

since viewers can choose the most comfortable size and color for reading. With this option available to viewers, content creators can continue to design intentionally creative and meaningful captions that capture the heart of our embodied messages and reveal who we are and what we want to be as humans to our audiences across languages, abilities, and experiences.

### *Integral, Open, and Closed Captions and Subtitles*

While integral captions and subtitles are models of accessible multimodal communication through visual text, my goal is not to argue that every single video creator should integrate captions and subtitles within the space of their screen every single time. All compositions are context-specific, and creators have their own purpose and embodiment, and integral captions and subtitles are one valuable instrument—but certainly not the only instrument—in our captioning orchestra. However, what I do want to demonstrate is how we create more possibilities for genuine connection and access to meaning when we play intentionally with different instruments, including in the same space, for all caption types. Content creators, instructors, students, and those who analyze and compose videos in different contexts should view captions *not* as an inanimate *tool* to deploy, but as an instrument that, when played in harmony with other instruments, can create a multilayered composition that in turn stimulates sensations in audiences.

The thread that ties together instruments and examples is the importance of carefully considering *how* to make communication accessible through visual text beyond simply adding captions to satisfy accessibility requirements. With new developments in technology occurring seemingly every second, we can maintain our strengths as common citizens of the world of humanity and engage in the interdependent process of composing captioned and subtitled access to multimodal and multilingual communication.

## **JUXTAPOSITION: EMBODYING MY MESSAGE THROUGH VIDEO VERSIONS OF CHAPTERS**

Through this book, I ask readers to imagine the possibilities for incorporating captions and subtitles more meaningfully in our video analysis and design processes. To illuminate the benefits of placing captions and subtitles at the center of video composition, I have created short videos in which I express my multimodal and multilingual message through signs that interact with subtitles. Each chapter includes such a video with voice-overs spoken by an ASL interpreter. This is so I can demonstrate my embodiment as a Deaf multimodal composition scholar *and* incorporate my multimodal and multilingual argument about the value of designing a space for captions and subtitles in video composition processes. The videos may become springboards that inspire video composers—including content creators, instructors, and students—to meaningfully include captions and subtitles in videos for online dissemination, academic contexts, and other spaces.

In addition to presenting my video in each chapter, I highlight key moments from each video, including moments in which I explicitly use the words on screen to embody my argument and emphasize how creators could design a space for words on screen in different creative processes. Through this process, I aim to demonstrate the potential and benefits of incorporating captions and subtitles in video creation processes, including in academic and professional contexts.

Let's begin with my first video.



Scan the QR code to view the Introduction video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/VwnJ5jjSN6Q> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

Several moments in this video demonstrate the possibilities for designing space for captions and subtitles on screen and strategies that creators can include when creating videos. Throughout the clip, words appear near my upper body and face as I purposefully look at and gesture to the space right next to me to draw viewers' attention to my expressions and the words.

The strategies that I use can be emulated and revised by video creators who might use different approaches to caption or subtitle videos. Near the beginning of this video, subtitles appear near my face and upper body that share my name. In this moment, I hold one hand under my name and use my other hand to fingerspell my name in ASL. Through this juxtaposition, I make my name accessible in ASL and English simultaneously. Creators can likewise celebrate the affordances, or benefits, of communicating through multiple modes and languages at the same time, and interact more meaningfully with words on screen to make messages accessible.

The final chapter includes my reflection on my process of composing these videos and my guidelines and implications for video creators.

## OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Each chapter works successively to guide readers through the design of captions and subtitles as the embodiment of our identities, as a reflection of how we engage in the interdependent process of communicating across modes and languages, and as a core component of our conversations about the value of access and differences in our multifaceted world. Below is a quick overview of each chapter.

### **An Embodied Multimodal Approach to Visualizing Captions and Subtitles**

To provide a foundation and a framework for visualizing captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication, this chapter first connects the key themes of embodiment, space, access, multimodality and caption studies, and interdependence. I then detail my embodied multimodal approach to analyzing the design of captions and subtitles. The embodied multimodal approach includes six criteria that foreground space, access, embodied rhetorics, multimodal and multilingual communication, rhetorical and aesthetic principles, and audience awareness. That in turn segues to the following chapters of the book in which we explore spaces that demonstrate the value of captions and subtitles in our collaborative work to communicate and connect across modes and languages.

### **Integral Subtitles in Embodied Multilingual and Multimodal Spaces**

This chapter presents my analysis of two contexts that were instrumental in the development of my original criteria for the analysis of integral captions and subtitles. I assess two examples from contemporary popular media—*Heroes Reborn* and *Sherlock*—to reveal the ways that these two shows' use of integral subtitles embodies their respective hybrid worldviews and the fluid interplay of modes in

each show. *Heroes Reborn* provides English-using viewers with visual access to spoken Japanese through English-language subtitles on screen while *Sherlock* integrates visual text and subtitles in scenes in which languages and modes other than spoken English play out on screen.

## **The Design of (Deaf) Space for Connections**

In this chapter, we design a (Deaf) space for connections to fully appreciate how the meaningful integration of captions and subtitles can create greater opportunities for experiencing embodied differences and multisensory connections. We begin with the principles of Deaf Space and Deaf Gain in preparation for our subsequent deeper dive into the holistic experience of *Gallaudet: The Film*, a short silent film that captures Deaf experiences. In a previous publication in *Rhetoric Review*, I succinctly analyzed how this film designs a Deaf Space for words on screen, particularly in classroom moments from this film (Butler, 2018b). In this current chapter, I apply the embodied multimodal approach in my full analysis of the holistic film to fully unpack how this film embodies deaf aesthetics with integral captions and subtitles that immerse viewers into a multidimensional space created through and for visual-spatial connections. The accessible and aesthetic design of captions and subtitles in this film shows us the value of designing spaces for learning through differences on our screens.

## **Integration of Captions and Subtitles, Access, and Embodiments**

In this chapter, we shall bring Deafness and disability to the center of our screens. Our journey will take us through several spaces in which DHH, hearing, and disabled characters communicate not only with each other, but with us, the audience through integral captions and subtitles that appear in predominantly closed-captioned productions. The integration of captions and subtitles in hearing media represents the benefits of designing a space for



different embodiments. These spaces include *Born this Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud*, *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*, and *The Company You Keep*. Through the embodied multimodal approach, we can explore how the languages and identities of real individuals and characters are made accessible through integral captions and subtitles. Most of all, the design of these captions and subtitles underscores the value of communicating and connecting across differences.

### **Interdependence and Connections in New Amsterdam: A Case Study**

While the previous chapters centered on integral captions and subtitles as the epitome of embodied accessible multimodal communication, we must recognize that highly aesthetic and creative design of captions may not be feasible or appropriate across different contexts. As we transition to the next few chapters in which I explore how captions and subtitles can reflect the many ways in which we connect with each other in our lives, this chapter presents a case study of one significant example in which two characters on a mainstream television show, *New Amsterdam*, engage in the interdependent process of learning to communicate with each other—and concurrently, the audiences engage in this interdependent process through accessing closed captions, open subtitles, and other visuals on screen. This chapter's analysis of the progression of the relationship between two characters in *New Amsterdam* reflects the interdependent reality of our lives as we bridge meaning across modes, technologies, and languages.

### **The Sensation of Silence and Sound with Words on Screen**

In this chapter, I explore examples in which sound and silence become embodied and accessible through captions and subtitles and visual text on screen, as in “silent episodes” in television shows in which characters do not speak for an entire episode and as in video compositions in which creators make perceptions of sound and

silent signs accessible through written words. My analysis of the benefits and limitations of these methods leads to the second part of this chapter in which I unpack some accessible practices of composers who make sonic and silent meaning manifest through accessible and aesthetic design of words on screen as the embodiment of the multifaceted world of communication that we all navigate online and offline.

## **Spaces for Captions and Subtitles in Our Conversations**

This chapter dives into the affordances of designing a space for captions and subtitles in our conversations, including online conversations and cultural and social conversations. I curate several conversations about and with captions and subtitles, including online videos and advertisements that incorporate subtitled multilingual conversations, videos that show sound through visual text on screen, and creators who meaningfully incorporate captions and subtitles in their videos to connect with audiences across cultures and languages. Through assessing these conversations as well as the benefits, limitations, and challenges of different captioning and subtitling approaches, we can better appreciate the options we have in embodying our rhetorics and committing to accessible multimodal communication online and offline.

## **Conclusion: Reflections and More**

In the conclusion, I reflect on the value, affordances, and implications of captioning and subtitling videos. I share my process of composing and subtitling the video version of each chapter and I discuss implications and guidelines for all of us who analyze and design captions and subtitles of all styles in our journey through accessible multimodal communication.

## AN EMBODIED MULTIMODAL APPROACH TO VISUALIZING CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES

**T**hroughout this book, I visualize closed and open captions and subtitles as instruments of connection that embody how we all communicate with each other through multiple modes and languages, including bodies, voices, and signs. To provide a foundation and a framework for visualizing captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication, this chapter first connects the key themes of embodiment, space, access, multimodality and caption studies, and interdependence, and then transitions to details of an embodied multimodal approach to analyzing the design of captions and subtitles. That segues into a journey through different captioned and subtitled screens. These examples demonstrate the value of captions and subtitles in our collaborative work to connect and communicate across different modes, languages, and identities.

### ***SPEECHLESS: EMBODYING THE THEME***

To illustrate the affordances of captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication, this chapter's discussion is intertwined with my own embodied responses to a

series of videos that integrate captions in meaningful ways. The Fall 2016 television season included *Speechless*, a mainstream show about a character, JJ, with cerebral palsy who uses a wheelchair, played by Micah Fowler, who has cerebral palsy in real life—a rarity in popular media<sup>1</sup>. In the days leading up to the show's premiere on ABC, the show's Facebook page released a series of short promotional videos designed for mobile viewing. These videos were mostly comprised of short scenes from the show with open captions in large white and blue fonts placed on screen in synchronization with the characters' speech, although the most rhetorically effective one designed genuine interaction with words on screen.

The prominent and visible use of open captions and textual synchronization with speech in these promotional videos embody how the character JJ communicates through eye contact with letters and words. JJ wears a laser pointer that is attached to his glasses and aims his pointer at words and letters on his communication board to form sentences that the person next to him then reads and vocalizes. By embedding open captions on screen, the videos recreate how JJ—and those who track the sentence he forms on his communication board—verbalizes thoughts through eye contact with written text. Each spoken word appears on screen one by one in synchronization with the character's speech. They are purposefully oversized and attract sighted viewers' eyes. Most of the videos with open captions use a mix of white and blue fonts reflecting the show's thematic colors, shown in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. The images show an open captioned scene that features a dialogue between JJ's mother and Kenneth, a school employee at JJ's new school who later starts working for the family.

---

1. A study released in 2016 (the year *Speechless* premiered) found that 95% of disabled television characters are played by able-bodied actors (Anderson, 2016).



**Figure 1.1:** Open captions in blue and white that embody the colors of *Speechless*



**Figure 1.2:** Open captions in blue and white that embody the colors of *Speechless*

In this promotional video, the blue and white words appear on screen in successive lines. This aesthetic color choice could facilitate reading speed because the contrast between blue and white makes each line stand out against—and complement—the ones above and below it. This color scheme embodies the thematic colors of the

show, blue and white, and accentuates the connections that viewers make between this scene and the entire show.

When I watched the pilot episode a few days after the promotional videos were released, this same scene was shown in its original format with closed captions at bottom of the screen instead of open captions. I did not feel the same connection to the broadcast version because the quick back-and-forth conversation between these two characters did not register as effectively without the open captions. While it might not have been practical to watch this entire 30-minute episode with rapid-fire open captions, the implementation of open captions in social media contexts succeeded in connecting with this viewer.

The proliferation of open captions on social media and the related affordances of open captions are reviewed in further depth in Chapter 7. Before we reach that point, we can start with the fundamentals of our exploration and the importance of attending to the embodiment of human beings, including performers on screen and those of us in the audience. My embodiment as a Deaf viewer may have accentuated the appeal of aesthetic captions in *Speechless*' promotional videos for me, and my experiences as a rhetoric and composition scholar may have made me commend how the captions embody the main character's communication practices. And these coalesce to strengthen my recognition of the potential for captions and subtitles in rhetorically and aesthetically conveying a message and connecting with audiences. Captions and subtitles can embody the communication practices of speakers, signers, and those who use communication boards.

## EMBODIMENT AND EMBODIED RHETORICS

A core message in this book is that captions and subtitles can be the *embodiment* of multimodal communication and that we can learn from Deaf-embodied experiences, or *embodied rhetorics*, to strengthen captioning and subtitling practices. To continue and build on the previous chapter's introduction to embodiment, the term *embodiment* includes how we experience the world differently through our body

and how our body influences the ways that we interpret the world (Knoblauch & Moeller, 2022; Melonçon, 2013; Wilson & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2001). We interpret and navigate the world because of the bodies that we have and our “particular senses and experiences” (Wysocki, 2012, p. 3). People with different bodies communicate differently and may choose to communicate differently *because* of their bodies—as I may because of my embodiment as a Deaf rhetoric and composition scholar. This difference in embodiments is crucial for recognizing how different captioning and subtitling approaches can make multimodal communication accessible.

Scholarship in rhetoric and composition and related fields strengthen our understanding of embodiment and embodied rhetorics, including Knoblauch and Moeller (2022), who note the complexity of these terms and how they are defined by scholars. As I discuss in the introduction, this is not a limitation, but rather a benefit because the complexity of the term embodiment reflects the complexity of being a human being. And the intricacy of being a human being is reflected in the variety of captioning and subtitling approaches, including those at the bottom of the screen or those around the screen. As discussed throughout this book, captions and subtitles of different types can embody the different ways that we each communicate with each other—and even at different moments in the same conversation, such as when someone switches from spoken English to ASL or from English to Spanish and vice versa.

The design of captions and subtitles can embody an individual’s communication practices, emotions, and conversations with others on screen. This reflects how embodiment is “a result of connection and interaction,” and includes “the experience of being a being with a body” and “the experience of orienting one’s body in space among others” (Knoblauch and Moeller, 2022, p. 8). Throughout this book’s study of captions and subtitles, we should be conscious of our own embodiments and the embodiments of those on screen. After all, as Johnson et al. (2015) write in a key concept statement on embodiment, embodied rhetorics, and embodying feminist rhetorics in scholarship, “our bodies inform our ways of knowing,” and embodiment “conveys an awareness or consciousness about how

bodies—our own and others’—figure in our work” (p. 39). They add that researchers “can make all bodies and the power dynamics invested in their (in)visibility visible” (p. 39). Through this book’s study of captioning and subtitling approaches, we all should strive to be even more attuned to our own and different individuals’ bodies and identities.

To make embodiments visible and value differences, this book shows how captions and subtitles can be designed in ways that honor a creator’s or performer’s identity and make them visible. Traditional lines at the bottom of the screen can transcribe Spanish words instead of stating “[Speaking non-English],” which renders the original language invisible for those reading the captions. In other contexts, creative subtitles can embody the four-dimensional language of ASL, including the dimension of time, and make the dimensions visible beyond linear text. Various captioning and subtitling approaches affirm the value of different embodiments *and* different individuals’ *embodied rhetorics*, or how we communicate and actively make meaning.

I use *rhetoric* and *rhetorics* in this book to refer to how each individual might communicate through various, different, and multiple modes in interaction with audiences to make meaning and accomplish a particular purpose, including to connect with audiences. My definition of *embodied rhetorics* aligns with Knoblauch and Moeller’s (2022) definition: “multilayered, encompassing linguistic and textual markers of the body, the body itself as rhetoric, discussions of visual or textual representations of the body, and bodily communicative practices” (p. 10). Later in this book, I use the term *embodied rhetorics* to highlight how captions and subtitles can make it possible for viewers to sense and access the embodied rhetorics of performers or creators of a video. To return to an earlier example, ASL music videos with dynamic visual text are multilayered as visual lyrics move in interaction with musicians’ bodies and facial expressions and the multisensory sonic rhythm. The pulsating words on screen provide access to the embodied rhetorics of the musicians, including how they communicate the song through ASL.

Embodied rhetorics can become salient when considering how



ASL is an embodied language created through the movement and interpretation of coordinated gestures and facial expressions. Brueggemann (2009) argues that we can learn about language and rhetoric through the study of ASL “as a nonprint, nonwritten, visual, and embodied language” (p. 34) and articulates the value of deafness through ASL and English (2013). Sanchez (2015) writes that “spoken and written language can be separated from the body, whereas there can be no disembodiment of ASL” (p. 25). Deaf rhetorics are, then, embodied rhetorics in which signers essentially make meaning through our bodies. And several of the examples throughout later chapters of this book, especially Chapter 3, show how subtitles can provide viewers with access to signers’ embodied rhetorics.

By foregrounding Deaf rhetorics in this study of captions and subtitles, I intend to argue for the benefits of captions and subtitles for our multimodal and multilingual world along with the importance of accessibility for DHH individuals. This process reflects Knoblauch’s (2012) suggestion that attending to our embodied knowledge “can highlight difference instead of erasing it in favor of an assumed privileged discourse” (p. 62) and Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson’s (2001) “embodied rhetoric of difference” (p. 18). I further endorse Kerschbaum’s (2014) rhetoric of difference, which calls on us to “acknowledge [our] responsibilities to others in communication” and to be open to different possibilities for interacting with others (p. 118) as well as the ensuing attention to disability in “everyday movements in the world” (2022, p. 22). Different possibilities include open and closed captions and subtitles.

When I explore embodied rhetorics on screen, I build on Jay Dolmage’s (2014) presentation of the “central role of the body in rhetoric— as the engine for all communication” (p. 3)—and more crucially, on how “all rhetoric is embodied” (p. 89) since, among other points, “rhetoric, as a tool and an art and a way to move, mediates and is mediated by the body” (p. 89). Disability studies scholarship informs our appreciation of embodied rhetoric and communication by reminding us of how our dis/abilities shape how we know, communicate, and move in different ways and how

rhetoric is not about “flawless delivery” of ideas but “as the embodied struggle for meaning” (Dolmage, 2014, p. 235). Throughout this book’s review of various examples of captions and subtitles, we must remember that rhetoric is not simply about accurately conveying information in one direction to a viewer—rather, we can explore how creators, performers, and audiences interact with and through captions and subtitles to connect.

Embodiment is a process of experiencing the world amongst fellow human beings, and as a Deaf individual, I am always aware that we all live in a predominantly hearing world where sound is a major source of communication. I recognize that my embodiment as a Deaf woman influences my research approaches as I make “sense with, of, and through other embodied people and our social worlds,” as Ellingson (2017) underscores in concluding *Embodiment in Qualitative Research* (p. 196). Captioned and subtitled access to sound echoes with scholars in rhetoric and composition and sound studies who approach sound as an embodied experience that can be sensed through multiple senses and through the body in our spaces (for example, Buckner & Daley, 2018; Fargo Ahern, 2013; Hocks & Comstock, 2017; Selfe, 2009; and Shipka, 2006). Notably, Ceraso’s (2018) approach to embodied listening intrinsically values the multi-sensory experience of engaging and composing with sound. Through creating a space in our conversations and compositions for open and closed captions and subtitles, we can visualize and verbalize access to sound and signs in textual form.

Throughout the rest of this book, different embodiments and embodied rhetorics (or lived experiences as well as communication practices) will be honored as we explore examples of effective strategies and new possibilities for captioning and subtitling accessible multimodal communication.

### ***Speechless: Embodying Multimodal Communication***

Let’s turn to another promotional video for *Speechless*. While this video has added captions to pre-recorded scenes, it embodies the overall experience of *Speechless* as a show that challenges conven-

tional portrayals of communication as well as the online context of this captioned video, which was intended for online dissemination.

One of the videos, “This father-son heart to heart...,” shows JJ’s father and younger brother holding a spoken conversation in the car (*Speechless*, 2016a). The open captions, along with emoticons and icons, appear on screen throughout their conversation, including one mistyped word, “dissappointed” [sic]. The inclusion of a mistyped word in this video’s open captions, which cannot be edited as easily as captions that can be turned on and off because open captions are embedded into the video file, should serve as a reminder to composers to always verify spelling during the video editing process.

This same video also includes occasional emoticons and icons, as when the father talks about their house, and an icon of a house appears below the text, or when icons appear to symbolize “right” and “lazy,” as shown in the following images (Figures 1.3 and 1.4).



**Figure 1.3:** Open captions and symbols, including an emoji, that illustrate meaning multimodally in a video about *Speechless*



**Figure 1.4:** Open captions and symbols, including an emoji, that illustrate meaning multimodally in a video about *Speechless*

The icons supplement the words and may not be fully necessary, but they do embody the textual and multimodal communication that occurs with JJ and through this show, showcasing the creators' awareness of how to appeal to social media and online viewers. One commonality is true in these videos: the captions appear in the space below or between bodies to avoid covering arguably the most important visual element in these scenes: the faces of the performers.

## SPACE

If we are to design a space, literally, for captions and subtitles on screens and design spaces for captions and subtitles in our real-world conversations, then we should consider the concept of space itself. I

have argued previously for the value of designing a space for captions and subtitles so that these words become *integral* components of our screens (Butler, 2018b). My interpretation of space is informed by my identity as a Deaf multimodal composition scholar who processes and moves through the world of communication in predominantly visual ways, including through ASL. I and members of Deaf culture value eye contact, and our “push [of the boundaries of vision] springs from the innate human need to communicate” (Bahan, 2007, p. 99)<sup>2</sup>.

I also apply the architectural principles of Deaf Space, which designs a space for Deaf values and embodied communication (Hansel Bauman, 2015), to show how spaces can be created for integral subtitles to recreate embodied communication. Deaf Space is the intentional design of architectural space for embodied and visual-spatial communication. When spaces are designed for visual and embodied experiences, such as creating open walkways allowing individuals to see each other from different floors, individuals can extend their connective space.

When composers design a space for captions and subtitles on our screens, they are designing Deaf Space “as viewed through the lens of visual ways of seeing the world and the enhancing of one’s place in space” (Leigh et al., 2014, p. 358). As hearing architect Hansel Bauman (2015) explains in a video, Deaf Space creates “a greater connection” between people and buildings, or “body and design,” and Deaf people have for many years known innately “how to alter the environment so that it fits their way and their embodiment.” Deaf Space as “embodied design” (Bauman, 2015) can likewise inform the design of integral captions and subtitles that bring together written, signed, and spoken words on screen—and this

---

2. While I value eye contact, I recognize that everyone experiences eye gaze differently and we cannot always expect eye contact. Price (in an individually written section in Price & Kerschbaum, 2016) reflectively interrogates the importance placed on eye gaze and describes “eye contact as exhausting” because “processing information on faces is cognitively demanding” (p. 43). We must recognize the diversity of experiences in our exploration of the design of captions and subtitles on screen.

Deaf experience can augment the relatively limited discussion of captions and subtitles in our fields.

In what turns out to be a demonstration of how captions and subtitles can intensify connections, the embodied experiences of Deaf sound artist Christine Sun Kim are illustrated through an online video entitled *Exploring the Sound of Silence with Christine Sun Kim* (Uproxx, 2016). This video introduces audiences to Kim, whose performances and art engage with sound, particularly the vibrations of sound as felt through the body. Each time Kim signs to the camera, open subtitles are embedded on screen in the space to embody how she experiences sound.

The Uproxx (2016) video opens with a clip of Kim performing and the subtitles running across the middle of the screen reading, “What is sound?” with a wavelength image running horizontally across the screen to visualize the performance of sound. Viewers then watch Kim engage with her art and performances as voice-over and large captions on screen translate into English what she says. The sans serif subtitles are significantly large in a conspicuous way that draws attention to them, and they are alternatively white or black depending on the composition of the background to accentuate readability. A few words or lines appear on screen at once and each successive line appears to complete the sentence. To provide visual access to her emphasis, some phrases or words appear larger than the words around them, and the other words are already relatively large for captions, as in the following screen captures (Figures 1.5 and 1.6). The saliency of the large open subtitles on screen—which often occupy half of the screen itself—foregrounds the visual and spatial experience of sound. The design scheme in which subtitles seem to blend on and blend off screen reflects the appearance and disappearance of sounds and signs.



**Figure 1.5:** Open subtitles that emphasize the meaning of sound and silence



**Figure 1.6:** Open subtitles that emphasize the meaning of sound and silence

This video is illuminative because only Kim's statements are incorporated into the space of the screen, while the captions for sound descriptions, such as "(train noise)" and "(muffled train station noise)" and hearing speakers, are kept at the bottom of the screen. This juxtaposition amplifies the multimodal and visual nature of Kim's signs and her own embodied interactions with the world of sound and silence—which is key since this video intentionally centers on her experiences. At the same time, the incorporation of highly salient words on screen in different scenes shows the



potential for designing a space for captions in videos with spoken languages.

This video's incorporation of open subtitles for mainstream audiences underscores that we can intentionally draw from Deaf experiences to design a more accessible world of multimodal communication. We can expand spaces in our conversations about captions and subtitles and access, including through traditional open and closed captions and subtitles as several examples later in this book reveal, and intensify the value of our captioned and subtitled connections.

## **SPEECHLESS: INTEGRAL CAPTIONS**

The first two major elements of my approach, embodiment and space, are key in the analysis of how captions and subtitles can support accessible communication practices, especially when examining captions that are integral to the meaning of a video. Embodiment and space come to the forefront in what I find to be *Speechless*' most interactive and appealing use of open and *integral* captions. This particular scene from *Speechless*, "Meet the dynamic duo...", shows Cedric Yarbrough next to Micah Fowler. Fowler plays JJ in the show and is shown with his communication board as Yarbrough, who plays Kenneth, stands next to him. Kenneth has been hired to vocalize JJ's words in the show.

Yarbrough greets viewers with large-sized "HEY!" text that appears next to him on screen. He then speaks directly to viewers explaining who they are and how they communicate. Open captions appear and disappear from the space around him in alternative blue and white font as he speaks, "In the show, I play Kenneth (JJ's voice). JJ spells out what he wants to say on his board and I speak it for him. We'll show you..." (see Figures 1.7 and 1.8).



**Figure 1.7:** Large captions in blue and white that show the audience how the characters communicate in a video about *Speechless*



**Figure 1.8:** Large captions in blue and white that show the audience how the characters communicate in a video about *Speechless*

Fowler then directs his laser pointer to letters on his communication board and Yarbrough reads the words out loud as they appear on screen.

This promotional video goes beyond simply placing captions on screen; the actor begins to actually interact with the captions, as the following images show (Figures 1.9, 1.10, and 1.11). After Yarbrough introduces the name of their show, *Speechless*, with the first syllable in white and the second syllable in blue, he uses his right arm to “push” the word off screen.



**Figure 1.9:** Interacting with the title of the show, *Speechless*, by pushing it offscreen



**Figure 1.10:** Interacting with the title of the show, *Speechless*, by pushing it offscreen



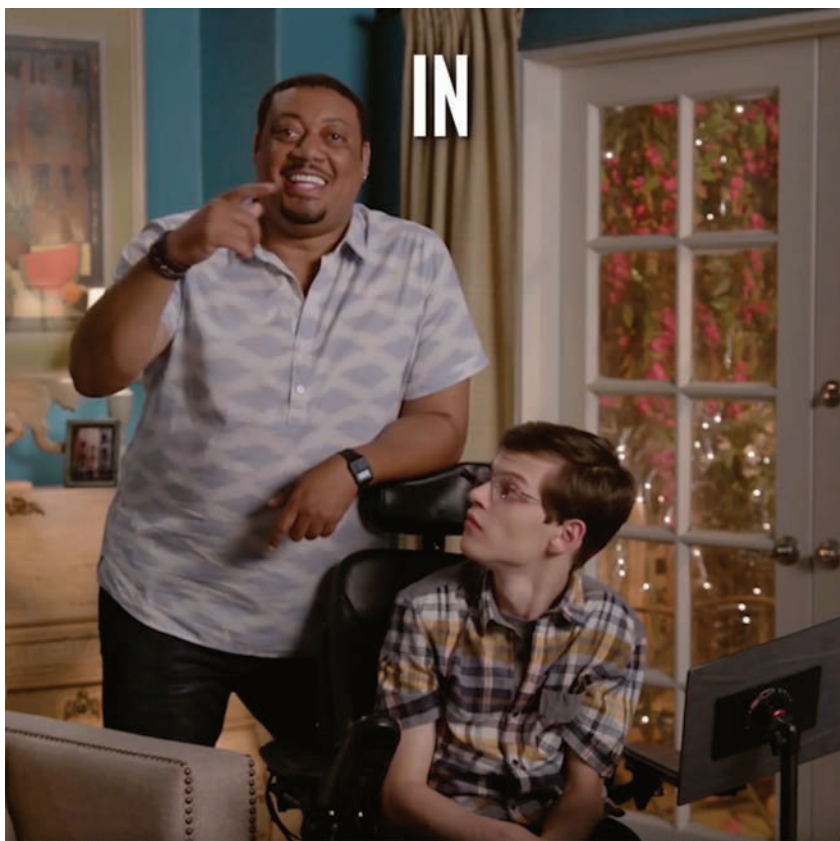


**Figure 1.11:** Interacting with the title of the show, *Speechless*, by pushing it offscreen

These physical and textual interactions—two of which are shown in the following images—are effective in making viewers experience the construction of meaning through multiple modes: speech, bodies, and visual text. After Yarbrough pushes the word *Speechless* off screen, his arm returns to his side and he points to the viewer. In Figure 1.12, Yarbrough’s gesture guides viewers’ eyes to the next word that appears on screen next to him.

The second screenshot (Figure 1.13) is taken from later in the promotional video. When the sentence Fowler is spelling out starts to become suggestive, Yarbrough uses his arms to physically brush the words on screen away and to say to a laughing Fowler, “Keep

this clean!” The natural, informative, and lighthearted feel of the scene organically welcomes viewers into their communication dynamics.



**Figure 1.12:** Interacting with captions by waving them offscreen



**Figure 1.13:** Interacting with captions by waving them offscreen

While the other two *Speechless* promotional videos embedded open captions into prerecorded scenes from the pilot episode, this particular promotional video was intentionally designed to interact with the words on screen. The fact that Yarbrough physically brushes the captions away clearly indicates that the action was premeditated. This promotional video also reorients the camera to a portrait orientation so that there is space for both the seated Fowler and the standing Yarbrough with captions appearing above Fowler's head (and thus next to Yarbrough's face) or below Yarbrough's head (and thus next to Fowler's face).

Embodied meaning is constructed through the synchronization of eye contact and words, as just the character JJ verbalizes meaning



through the movement of his eyes in contact with his communication board. The captions in this singular video are integral: space has been designed for the captions during the production and editing process, the captions provide visual access to their bodies and facial expressions, and they embody the multimodal nature of communication in this show. Yarbrough and Fowler immerse viewers their interdependent process of supporting each other to communicate to their online audience.

I shared the *Speechless* clip of Yarbrough and Fowler with deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) participants as a small component of a larger research study devoted to DHH individuals' perspectives on captions (Butler, 2020). Participants had different responses to the rate at which the stylized captions in this *Speechless* clip appeared; a factor seemed to be their hearing level. Some who used their hearing approved of and enjoyed the pacing of captions, some profoundly Deaf participants felt that the words appeared too rapidly on screen, especially when popping up on opposite sides of the screen. At the same time, some recognized that the design choices reflected the social media context as well as the potential for the world to become accustomed to captions on screen. With the rise of vertical short-form videos and the increase in visual communication in social media videos, DHH and hearing individuals may be becoming more attuned to dynamic captions, as explored further in a later chapter. As captioning practices evolve, we should continue to recognize the importance of balancing aesthetic/alternative approaches (or stylized appearance, as commonly found in social media videos) with accessible approaches (Butler, 2020).

## **JUXTAPOSITION: SPACE AND EMBODIMENT IN A VIDEO**

The fundamental themes of space and embodiment coalesce in the *Speechless* video, further reinforcing how captions and subtitles can be seen as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication in our videos. Below is a link to a video; as you view it, consider the affordances, or benefits, of designing a space for captions and subti-

bles so that they embody multimodal and multilingual messages in accessible ways.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 1 video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/3ECN0iZHpLs> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

In this short video, I capitalize on the affordances of subtitled videos to reinforce the value of space and embodiment. At one moment in the video, I begin to sign, “Now, let’s think about space.” After I sign, “...about,” I look next to me and place my hands under the subtitles to emphasize that line. Then, as one hand remains under the subtitles for emphasis, my other hand signs the word “space” and I move that hand around the line. By using both hands to reinforce the concept of space in more ways than one, I explicitly show and celebrate my embodiment and embodied rhetorics. Creators can likewise consider different strategies for foregrounding multimodal and embodied communication with subtitles on screen.

By integrating subtitles into the space around me, and signing around the subtitles, I am advocating for the value of my embodiment as a Deaf multimodal composition scholar in ways that might not be possible with more traditional subtitles found at the bottom of the screen. Video creators can now carefully consider the most suitable approach for captioning and subtitling your own videos in different contexts. While we might not always integrate captions or

subtitles into the center of the screen, we can all consider how we can use captions and subtitles to embody the ways in which we experience the world and interact with each other through multiple modes and languages.

The key themes of space and embodiment connect with the other themes in my embodied multimodal approach, including the theme of access.

## ACCESS

I recognize the limitations of endorsing captions as access since captions are a visual mode of communication. I consciously focus on *visual* access—which is not full access—when valuing captions and subtitles in improving the accessibility of multimodal communication. This is enhanced by Kleege (1999, 2005, 2016a, 2016b), who vividly makes readers sense her embodied experiences as a legally blind individual and understand that transmission of messages through reading, writing, and communication can occur and be accessed in multiple and different ways with the goal of connecting to another individual outside the self. Kleege<sup>3</sup> (2005) also informs my use of visual terms, particularly when she writes about how our “language” has been “designed by and for the sighted” (p. 180) and that Helen Keller argued that “to deny her the use of seeing-hearing vocabulary would be to deny her the ability to communicate at all” (p. 185). With full awareness of the sighted language that I use, I ask readers to work with me and attend to how we exclude certain bodies from our compositions and to how we can design access into our compositions for different bodies.

My exploration of captions and subtitles demonstrates the benefits and the limitations of different styles and approaches in full alignment with the work of disability studies scholars who have articulated that access is always a work-in-progress and a process,

---

3. Kleege (1999) distinguishes between literal vision, or “the ability to receive and process visual stimuli,” and figurative vision, or “the ability to have, manipulate, and communicate ideas” (p. 145).

not a checklist to satisfy and complete, particularly Jay Dolmage (2008, 2009, 2017). A collaborative web article shows the value of designing inclusive multimodal compositions while attending directly to the needs of users and creators with disabilities (Yergeau et al., 2013). As Yergeau states regarding participatory design of access, we must include different bodies in “the design of social and virtual spaces” and design is “an act of embodiment and reclamation” (Yergeau et al., 2013, n.p.). Such scholarly works remind us of a main purpose of accessibility and multimodality: making rhetorical and aesthetic decisions that enhance a composition while always ethically attending to viewers/readers with specific embodiments.

This book can further contribute to a culture of access in rhetoric and composition and related spaces (Brewer et al., 2014; Hubrig et al., 2020; Womack, 2017) as well as in digital media accessibility and participation through access to captioned media (Ellcessor, 2012, 2016, 2018). We can pull captions and subtitles to the *center* of our online and offline conversations.

In my theoretical framework, I build on Kerschbaum’s call for us to “transform the reactive dimensions of providing access” by communicating meaning as equally as possible across multiple modes (Yergeau et al., 2013, n.p.). Like Kerschbaum, I do not challenge the use of modes to complement each other, “such as the way a musical score can enhance an audience’s feeling or mood alongside visual cues during a well-realized film” (n.p.). Rather, this approach critiques “the way that multimodality almost universally celebrates using multiple modes without considering what happens if a user cannot access one or more of them” (n.p.). As Dolmage (2017) asks in his disability studies-informed interrogation of multimodality, “In what ways will the [multimodal] text move, move through, or move past (which bodies)? Reception needs to be reconsidered in terms of accessibility—this expands the author’s responsibility” (p. 113). Furthermore, “Which bodies can take up texts and move (with) them?” (p. 114).

Throughout this book, I center Deaf individuals, who are arguably more mindful of the value of captions given our reliance on captions to access spoken content and our awareness leading to

the captioning/subtitling of our own videos. Hamraie (2016) argues that universal design—through which we design for differences—should not use disability-neutral terms such as “all users” (p. 297) because such discourse suggests that design is stable and does not need to be adapted for individual differences. Instead, we should be informed by critical disability theories that “claim disability, treat disabled users as valuable knowers and experts, understand accessibility as an aesthetic and functional resource, and foreground the political, cultural, and social value of disability embodiments” (Hamraie, 2016, p. 304). In this book, the exploration of captions and subtitles is appropriately informed by Deaf experiences to increase the accessibility of multimodal communication across different spaces while strengthening our understanding of the value of open and closed captions and subtitles for composers and audiences with a range of hearing levels.

My line of research and this book intersect with the translation and accessibility work of filmmaker and academic researcher Pablo Romero-Fresco of Universidade de Vigo in Spain. He has published consistently on media accessibility and subtitles, including an article (Romero-Fresco, 2021) that builds on my exploration of *Gallaudet: The Film* (Bauman & Commerson, 2010) and Sean Zdenek’s (2018) *Kairos* article. In two more recent articles, Romero-Fresco and Dangerfield (2022) provide an academic study of creative and alternative media access and creative media accessibility (Romero-Fresco, 2022), along with subtitling practices that “seek to become an artistic contribution in their own right and to enhance user experience in a creative or imaginative way” (Romero-Fresco & Dangerfield, 2022, p. 23; Romero-Fresco, 2022, p. 305). These explorations of practices that show the subjective, creative, transformative, and individualistic nature of subtitles also include Romero-Fresco’s studies of subtitled and captioned media created by Deaf and disabled creators. As he points out, more analysis, study, and training in this area need to occur.

Romero-Fresco’s research and activities include an in-depth exploration of how films are translated and subtitled in different languages. His intensive work includes a commitment to accessible

filmmaking, “the consideration of translation and/or accessibility” (2019, p. 5) during the creation of the original media so that filmmakers can make choices in how their films are translated and made accessible across languages and other versions (p. 6). In other words, there can be more of a collaboration between filmmakers and translators that benefit “persons with sensory disabilities and foreign viewers” (p. 17). Choices include consideration of subtitles and creative subtitles that include consideration of font, size, placement, rhythm and display mode, and effects (p. 209-210). By making the filmmaking process more accessible, filmmakers can strengthen not only “access to content,” but also “access to creation” (p. 14).

The aesthetic benefits of integrating subtitles are supported by Fox’s 2017 study of placement strategies in various commercial films and her study (2018) of how minimizing the distance between subtitles and the intended focus point on screen can improve viewers’ attention to visuals and the aesthetic experience. In this book, I guide us through different trends and styles to demonstrate the benefits and limitations of closed and open captions and subtitles in all their forms and placements on screen so that we can expand our commitment to captions and subtitles in our conversations and compositions—and thereby embody the value of accessible multimodal communication.

## MULTIMODALITY AND CAPTIONS

Multimodal studies in rhetoric and composition—as revealed in Palmeri’s 2012 history of the field and contemporary scholarship in multimodality and Zdenek’s (2011, 2015, 2018) line of work—reveal the importance of written text in interaction with other modes. I have long perceived captions and subtitles as a bridge across multiple modes: aural, visual, gestural, spatial, and linguistic (Arola et al., 2013). In other words, written text on screen embodies multimodal communication through sound, visuals, gestures, space, and language. Captions and subtitles seem like a natural extension of Selfe’s (2009) argument for aurality as an important part of multimodal composition, especially since when we compose

captions and subtitles, we are designing multiple modes—visual, textual, and other modes—to reach our audiences (Kress, 2003, 2005; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007).

When attending carefully to the role of captions and subtitles in bridging sound, visuals, body language, and other aspects on screen, we can recognize how the modes interact and contribute to what Halbritter (2012) defines as *multidimensional rhetoric*: “rhetoric that integrates a variety of modes, media, and genres—sound, images, language, music, etc.” (p. 26). In aural-visual compositions, as Halbritter makes clear, the layers of aural media and visual media overlap and interact in certain ways as they participate in the overall rhetorical mission of the filmmaker’s composition (p. 104). For instance, what is the significance of a change in the aural layer when the visual layer remains the same, such as when the music changes abruptly but the characters remain still? If the scene is uncaptioned, viewers who rely on captions might not be able to answer that question.

Any study of captions must credit Zdenek for bringing a rhetorical approach to captioning studies. His 2015 book, *Reading Sounds*, thoroughly investigates the rhetorical choices that professional captioners of films and television shows make in transcribing sound in written form when creating closed captions, such as how different captioners might describe the same sound as [dramatic music], [music playing], [♪], or other effects in square brackets for DHH audiences (2015). Professional captioners and amateur video creators, such as students in Lueck’s (2013) composition course, do “make significant rhetorical decisions about how voice, identity, language(s), and meaning are represented on the screen” (n.p.). It is certainly important to consider the choices professional captioners make in describing music, ambient noise, and other non-speech elements of our compositions to make meaning accessible to viewers. However, Zdenek reminds us that television shows and films are captioned by captioners who are independent from, and often never in touch with, the directors/producers of these media, an argument that Udo and Fels (2010) make when pointing out that captioning is usually not part

of the creative process of television and film. The examples explored in this book as embodied, multimodal moments are more often than not examples of captions and subtitles that are relatively more central to the creative process or composition than the examples of closed captions created by professional captioners that Zdenek studies.

In contrast to Zdenek's 2016 extensive study of nonspeech sounds, usually found within brackets in closed captions, this book is a curation of open and closed captions and subtitles that embody accessible communication—such as moments in which creators, performers, and audiences connect through words on screen. In a challenge of the conventions of captions, Zdenek's continuing work on captions bring us his published experiments using Adobe After Effects to create enhanced and animated captions for popular clips from movies and television shows, and his call on us to “*make room for captions*” and “futures [for captioning] that ... elevate the needs of viewers who are deaf and hard of hearing” (“Designing Captions,” 2018, n.p.). He asks, “What if we didn't simply argue for the importance of closed captioning but treated it as a significant variable in our multimodal analyses and productions?” (n.p.).

## INTERDEPENDENCE

At the heart of communication across differences, including accessible communication and multilingual communication, is the *interdependent* nature of our connections. In meaningful, multilayered conversations and compositions, each participant (from creator to performers to audiences) in a dialogue contributes to the construction of meaning.

The use of *interdependence* in this book draws from a 2020 article I collaborated on with Laura Gonzales in which we brought together multimodality, multilingualism, and accessibility in writing studies through interdependent and intersectional approaches. This article extended the recognition of intersectionality and interdependence, and Gonzales' inspiring accomplishments in making her translation studies and interviews accessible across languages and modes,



including multimodal and multilingual videos in Spanish and English with subtitles and captions (Gonzales, 2018).

Building on Julie Jung's 2014 exploration of interdependency in writing studies, Gonzales and I defined interdependency: "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" (n.p.). Jung's work on interdependency was in turn dependent on the work of disability studies scholars who fully recognized the interdependent nature of our lives; Jung pointed to the value of depending on each other and the possibilities of forming new connections (2014).

Captions and subtitles embody the interdependence of these connections, and this book brings together scholarship on interdependency in disability studies (Jung, 2014; Price, 2012; Price & Kerschbaum, 2016; Wheeler, 2018), disability justice (Berne et al., 2018; Hamraie, 2013; Mingus, 2011), digital writing research (Van-Kooten, 2019), and multilingual and multimodal writing (Gonzales & Butler, 2020). Interdependency and access dovetail in Price and Kerschbaum's (2016) collaborative description of their "interdependent disability-studies (DS) methodology" (p. 20) and "our commitment to collective access—i.e., access not just for our participants alone, or for us alone, but for all of us together" (p. 28).

Just as Price and Kerschbaum worked with and relied on each other and their participants to ensure access for different bodies and experiences, I ask readers to consider the valuable role of captions and subtitles in supporting the interdependent nature of multilayered communication. Throughout the examples in this book, we will explore how individuals are interdependent in the process of understanding meaning across languages and modes of communication and how captions and subtitles enhance the connections we form with each other.

## **EMBODIED MULTIMODAL APPROACH**

Space, embodiment, access, multimodality and caption studies, and interdependence coordinate to form the foundation for our journey

through (closed and open) captioned and subtitled screens. They are core components of the six criteria in my embodied multimodal framework, which serves as a paradigm for identifying and evaluating the accessibility, effectiveness, and applicability of captioning and subtitling styles that embody the interdependent process of accessing and connecting meaning across modes of communication.

The embodied multimodal framework attends directly to captions and subtitles and accessible, embodied, multimodal communication as informed by multimodal analysis approaches that analyze how modes are interrelated and work meaningfully together (Maier et al., 2007; Norris, 2004; Norris & Maier, 2014; Scollon & LeVine, 2004). Norris (2004) explains how the multimodal analysis framework makes apparent when modes are “interlinked and often interdependent” (p. 102); Maier et al. (2007) point out how the approach includes “the connections across communicative modes” (p. 454); and De Saint-George (2004) notably attends to the “spatial emplacement” of language use in action (p. 72). We communicate within and through different *spaces* with other bodies to construct meaning, and this meaning can be shaped by the spaces themselves.

Furthermore, the embodied multimodal approach recognizes the moments in which captions and subtitles are designed to be integral components of a video as opposed to captions and subtitles that are added to a video while also identifying the effectiveness of traditional captions and subtitles in embodying multimodal communication with audiences. That recognition supports the analysis of the benefits and limitations of different caption and subtitle styles in this work.

Since many of the scenes analyzed in this book foreground multilingual communication, including ASL on screen, the embodied multimodal approach is supplemented by an understanding of Fraiberg’s (2010, 2013) multilingual multimodal approach. Fraiberg’s approach studies how individuals mediate meanings through various modes of communication, including languages, in the same space as they construct meanings “in a multilingual dialogue not only with one another, but with other texts...” (p. 23). The fluidity of language that Fraiberg celebrates

is sensed in the spatial arrangement of captions and subtitles on screen, which in turn reflects Fleckenstein's celebration of the "multidimensionality" of *imageword*, or how we make meaning through the relations between words and images (2003, p. 21). As a salient example, to borrow from Sanchez (2015), ASL is "dramatically, visible" (p. 28) and can help us understand the "intersections between images, bodies, and text" (p. 31). As discussed throughout the book, creators, performers, and audiences can engage in a multilingual, multi-textual dialogue with ASL, captions and subtitles, and other embodied modes of communication.

The six criteria I developed are based on years of research. The criteria began as five that I developed for the explicit purposes of analyzing and designing integral captions and subtitles, particularly those that creators intentionally design a space for within the screen (Butler, 2018b). In a later collaborative research project (2023), my colleague Stacy Bick, a visual communications senior lecturer, and I interviewed DHH filmmaking students about their experiences composing videos with sound and captions; the analysis revealed the depths to which DHH creators considered the communication preferences of a predominantly hearing audience and the access needs of DHH audiences and themselves. Our findings led to the addition of a sixth criteria on audience awareness, for the analysis and development of accessible multimodal compositions.

These criteria, attending specifically to the visualization of captions and subtitles, are:

**1. Space for Captions and Subtitles and Access:** Space has been reasonably designed for captions and subtitles.

This may mean that literal space on screen was dedicated to captions and subtitles (as when performers act with the awareness that integral captions and subtitles will be added next to their bodies in post-production).

This may mean that space has been committed to captions

and subtitles (as in media that incorporate open subtitles alongside closed captions).

This may mean that space has been opened in dialogues (as in conversations about captions and subtitles or increased attention to the value of captions and subtitles).

**2. Visual or Multiple Modes of Access:** Captions and subtitles create or support visual access or multiple modes of access to the meaning of the video.

This may mean that captions and subtitles are placed strategically in key locations around screen (as when captions and subtitles are integrated next to faces or bodies).

This may mean that captions and subtitles enable readers to access meaningful sounds or moments occurring on screen.

**3. Embodied Rhetorics and Experiences:** Captions and subtitles enable audiences to experience meaning through the body in different ways.

This may mean that captions and subtitles enable viewers to sense performers' embodied rhetorics (as in integral subtitles that move alongside signing bodies).

This may mean that captions and subtitles enable viewers to experience sound through the body.

**4. Multimodal and/or Multilingual Communication:** Captions and subtitles support the interdependent nature of multimodal and multilingual communication and the interconnection of modes, languages, and meaning.

This may mean that captions and subtitles capture different languages in written form.

This may mean that captions and subtitles represent meaning through different modes, such as emphasis of sounds or signs, or through interaction with other modes.

**5. Rhetorical and Aesthetic Principles:** Captions and subtitles reasonably enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of the video.

This may mean that captions and subtitles are clearly incorporated to support the purpose of the video and to communicate the creator's message.

This may mean that captions and subtitles are clearly and aesthetically presented, including through appearance and readability.

**6. Audience Awareness:** Captions and subtitles are presented in a way that demonstrate awareness of how different audiences would engage with and access the composition in different ways.

This may mean that captions and subtitles are included to support audiences' understanding of a different language.

This may mean that captions and subtitles are included to strengthen audiences' connection.

This may mean that captions and subtitles are presented to show the value of access.

Each criterion structures our journey through the collection of examples in this book as we explore the effectiveness of captioned and subtitled moments to appreciate the central role of captions and subtitles in engaging with differences throughout our multilayered spaces of communication.

## INTEGRAL SUBTITLES IN EMBODIED MULTILINGUAL AND MULTIMODAL SPACES

As an opening act for our journey through scenes of captioned and subtitled accessible multimodal and multilingual communication, this chapter presents an examination of two contexts formative in the development of the original criteria for the analysis of integral captions and subtitles. Two examples from contemporary popular media—*Heroes Reborn* and *Sherlock*—are assessed to reveal the ways the use of integral subtitles embody each show's respective hybrid worldviews and the fluid interplay of communication modes. *Heroes Reborn* provides English-using viewers with visual access to spoken Japanese through English subtitles on screen while *Sherlock* integrates visual text and subtitles in scenes in which languages and modes other than spoken English play out on screen.

The integration of subtitles may be most rhetorically and aesthetically effective in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Subtitles that are moved or placed into the spaces around and between bodies in conversation make more salient the verbal and embodied interconnections between languages and cultures. As mentioned in Chapter 1, subtitles (and captions) are integral to a video when space has been designed for subtitles during the produc-

tion and editing process, subtitles provide visual access to performers' bodies and facial expressions, and subtitles embodies the multimodal nature of communication in the video (Butler, 2018).

To study the effective design of subtitles that are aesthetically and rhetorically integral to the meaning of a composition, reviewing the six criteria of the embodied multimodal approach may be helpful:

1. Space for Captions and Subtitles and Access
2. Visual or Multiple Modes of Access
3. Embodied Rhetorics and Experiences
4. Multimodal (including Multilingual) Communication
5. Rhetorical and Aesthetic Principles
6. Audience Awareness

Subtitles can be designed<sup>1</sup> to immerse viewers into the multilingual and multimodal interactions amongst bodies and modes. Integral subtitles *interact* with, rather than remain below—or *subservient*<sup>2</sup> to—the content of the video. At the same time, while the visual text on screen may enable certain viewers to visually access the meaning within the space of the screen, we can make these media even more inclusive by creating audio descriptions that vocalize the visual text and make the content aurally accessible.

---

1. The technology for enhancing subtitles is available, as media journalist Rawsthorn (2007) asserts in criticizing filmmakers for being slow to take advantage of digital technologies that would allow them to develop creative subtitles. As she points out, “Every other area of movie aesthetics has a proud design history, except subtitling” (n.p.).

2. Sinha (2004) describes the limitations of “superimposed” subtitles that “come from outside to make sense of the inside.... They remain pariahs, outsiders, in exile from the imperial territoriality of the visual regime” (p. 173). He follows up this condemnation with a stronger criticism of the physical location of subtitles: “the spatial placing of the subtitles at the lowest spectrum of the screen betrays its almost contemptuously lower status, its inferior origin in the hierarchy of image and sound ... a product conceived as an after-thought rather than a natural component of the film” (p. 174).

## **HEROES REBORN: EMBODYING THE SPATIAL PROXIMITY OF IMAGES AND TEXT IN COMIC BOOKS**

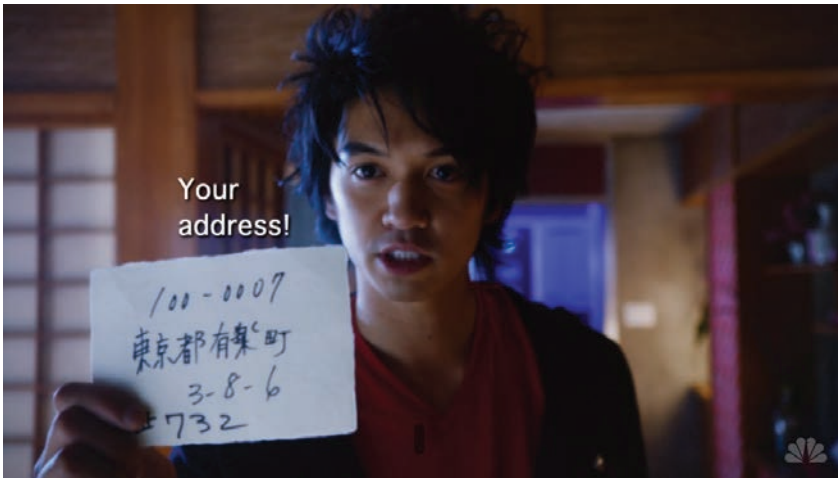
The embodied multimodal approach will now be applied to what I consider one of the most effective designs of integral subtitles in contemporary media. The 2015–2016 miniseries *Heroes Reborn* is a follow up to NBC's 2006–2010 science fiction hit *Heroes*; this show, like its predecessor, features an international ensemble of characters in a science fiction program about individuals with special powers.

In *Heroes Reborn*, one of the protagonists, Miko Otomo, speaks Japanese. Her Japanese conversations with her father, Hachiro Otomo and friend, Ren Shimosawa, are subtitled in English. However, in contrast to traditional subtitles at the bottom of the screen, these subtitles are designed to be visually engaging and draw the eye around the action on screen. Continuing the subtitle design tradition that began with the original *Heroes*, this series successfully integrates the subtitles into the composition of the show, as shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.2. This further allows English-speaking audiences to join these characters and their embodied conversations.



**Figure 2.1:** Subtitles next to characters and their gaze in *Heroes Reborn*





**Figure 2.2:** Subtitles next to characters and their gaze in *Heroes Reborn*

In scenes such as these, the spatial proximity of the subtitles to Japanese speakers' faces and body language intensifies the articulation of their statements; although these characters are speaking in Japanese, sighted viewers immediately see their statements translated into English on screen. Instead of a temporal-spatial gap in going from one language to another at the bottom of the screen, viewers visually access the embodied rhetorics of the Japanese speakers and their intentions in spatial proximity. The subtitles draw viewers not only to characters, but to their message and the spirit of the show.

*Heroes Reborn* embraces the influence of graphic novels, manga, and digital games in storyline content and visual design. The interplay of visual and textual modes certainly may be at its most salient in comic studies, as words can be placed to guide readers through their interaction with the page (as revealed in the 2015 *Composition Studies* special issue on comics, as well as Losh et al.'s 2020 graphic textbook, *Understanding Rhetoric*).

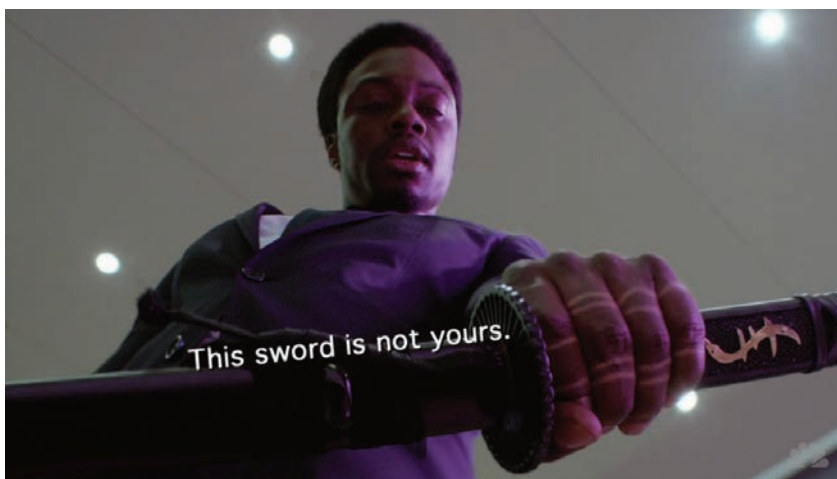
The design of the subtitles in *Heroes Reborn* capitalizes on the affordances of the live-action genre of videos by integrating visual text into the space and temporal sequencing of its scenes. The show's use of visual text is not limited to foreign language subtitles,

extending to descriptive text on screen that indicate the time or location of the scene. In one scene, “Odessa suburbs” appears painted on the wall that a woman character then walks in front of and obscures as she passes the words. In another scene, lines of text explaining that another character is now 7,000 years in the future expand in size as they three-dimensionally fly off the screen into our viewing space, drawing our eye into the scenery behind the words. The interaction of visual text with action on screen resembles the visual-verbal interplay of modes in graphic novels, comic books, and manga<sup>3</sup>. In this way, *Heroes Reborn* embodies the hybrid, interactive culture of these texts and strengthens its rhetorical message as a show that blends cultures, genres, and (superhero) abilities.

Capturing how subtitles move with the action on screen in one scene of *Heroes Reborn*, the line, “The sword is not yours” is slanted in alignment with the sword that the speaker refers to, as shown in Figure 2.3. Since we view the sword and the speaker from the main character Miko’s perspective lying on the ground after losing a battle, the slant and alignment are effective in aesthetically and rhetorically conveying the misalignment she senses at the moment.

---

3. Comics scholar McCloud (2009) observes that comics are a visual medium that “try to embrace all of the senses within it” through different elements, such as bold-face, italicized, or enlarged text that is emphasized visually to embody meaning: “Vision is called upon to represent sound and to understand the common properties of those two and their common heritage, as well. Also, to try to represent the texture of sound, to capture its essential character through visuals.” Vision, sound, and text can merge.



**Figure 2.3:** Alignment of subtitles and scene

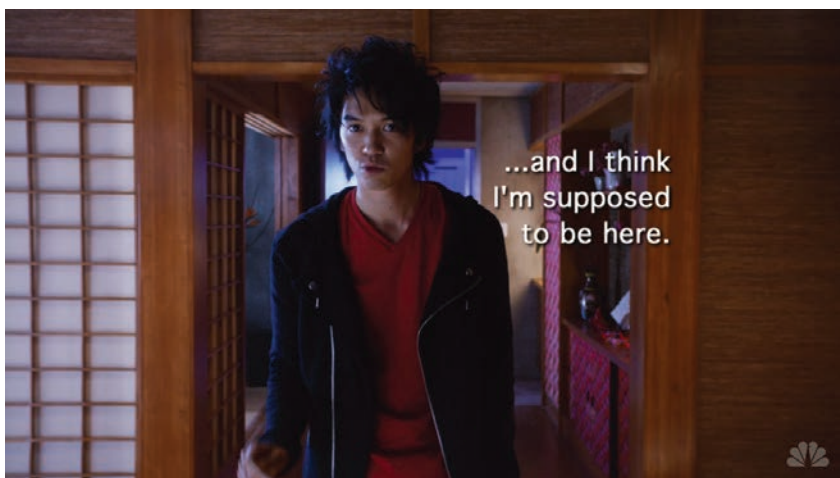
The design of the English subtitles for Japanese speech is rhetorically and aesthetically effective in terms of the placement on screen, the typography, and the pacing. The subtitles sometimes appear on the bottom of the screen, but mainly are placed around the screen as the characters converse or move around each other. By tracing the characters' actions and remaining near their faces, the subtitles keep our eyes with the action on screen. The effect is that the visual design is enhanced and the rhetorical content is more accessible.

The bold white typography for the integral subtitles is clear and readable in a variety of lights and settings. This shows effective design consideration in allowing the subtitles to be placed around the screen in different conversational and social contexts. This makes them—from a design perspective—more readable than white subtitles that are added on after the fact and sometimes are difficult to read when read on top of a light compositional background, as will be revealed in the next section's exploration of *Sherlock*.

The subtitles do not seem to have a singular placement strategy that is used in each episode or scene. During any conversation or single speaker's statements, the subtitles may appear at any location on screen. This is not disruptive since the subtitle changes in place-

ment keep the eye engaged around the video composition. This seems to be the intention—to purposefully not pull the eye down to the bottom of the screen and instead to maintain our visual engagement in the action and the characters' faces as they navigate through genres and modes in the science fiction world of the show. As such, the visual/textual hybridization in the Japanese-language scenes in *Heroes Reborn* can be explored through the embodied multimodal approach and its six principles: space, visual access, embodied rhetorics, multimodal/lingual communication, rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of a video, and audience awareness.

The hybridization begins when we first meet Miko at the same time as Ren. Ren opens the door into her residence and they immediately engage in a back-and-forth conversation figuring out who the other is (Kring & Shakman, 2015). The sudden immersion into their storyline is accompanied by subtitles that stand high up on the screen right next to their faces. The location of the subtitles is appealing and draws the eye not only into the novelty, but also into the intriguing dialogue between two characters who are meeting for the first time as we also meet them for the first time. In this way, and as shown in Figures 2.4 and 2.5, the subtitles embody the multimodal social interaction of two individuals facing each other for the first time.



**Figure 2.4:** Subtitles that show characters meeting each other for the first time



**Figure 2.5:** Subtitles that show characters meeting each other for the first time

The first scenes between Miko and Ren, integrally subtitled, set up the hybridity and fluidity of their worlds. After entering her apartment, Ren tells Miko that he is a gamer and an expert at the game *Evernow*. He unlocked a secret message that gave him Miko's address. Despite her confusion, he realizes that she is *Katana Girl*. After she kicks him out of the apartment, he soon returns with a copy of a manga about *Katana Girl*. As soon as she opens the door, Ren declares that she is *Katana Girl* from the manga series that her father created. After recognizing herself in *Katana Girl*, Miko unearths a katana (a Japanese sword) in her father's study and is transported into the digital game, where she enters into battle with the katana.

Miko's ability to immerse herself and viewers in the game's digital space is reflective of how *Heroes Reborn* blurs the boundaries between reality, manga, comic books, and digital games. Such immersion complements scholarship in comic studies that interrogate the spatial arrangement of images and text (word balloons and captions) and how their relative positions can draw viewers through the page as they attend to the characters (Groensteen, 2007; Humphrey, 2015; among others).

The strategic placement of subtitles near faces and bodies in

*Heroes Reborn* makes the intentions of characters even more apparent. When Miko and Tommy converse in English about saving the world, she mentions a crucial element that identifies her as Katana Girl—the ribbon in her hair that her father gave her—and points to the ribbon in her hair, as shown in Figure 2.6 (Elkoff & Kondracki, 2016). The subtitle for this word appears in the space created by her arm pointing to her head, purposefully directing viewers' eyes to the meaningful physical element that we need to attend to: the significant ribbon.



**Figure 2.6:** Strategic placement of a word within an embodied space

The design of the integral subtitles in *Heroes Reborn* enhances the viewer's ability to follow the interactions between bodies, which makes them more successful in rhetorical, aesthetic, and accessible terms. The most successful rhetorical element of the subtitles is the consistency with which the subtitles are consciously placed close to speakers' bodies, and perhaps more importantly, their faces. The subtitles do not simply co-exist on screen; they are synchronized with the spoken words and visible emotions that appear and disappear from the characters' bodies. The visual proximity of text and speech aligns the speakers with words and allows viewers to follow

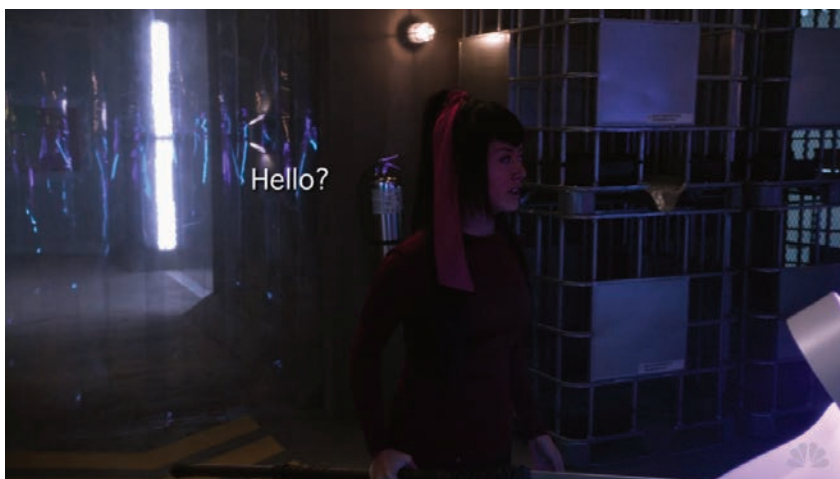
the dialogue between Miko, her father Ren, and at times Hiro Nakamura, with ease and pleasure.

Throughout the episodes, the subtitles are integrated into the show in various ways, some more rhetorically successful than others. For instance, when two characters are engaged in dialogue, the subtitles are frequently placed in the space created between the bodies to show the co-creation of meaning. When a character moves out to one edge of the screen or directs her attention to another edge (as shown in Figures 2.7 and 2.8), the placement of the subtitles gravitates our eyes towards each direction.



**Figure 2.7:** Strategic placement of words at each side of Miko to embody her search

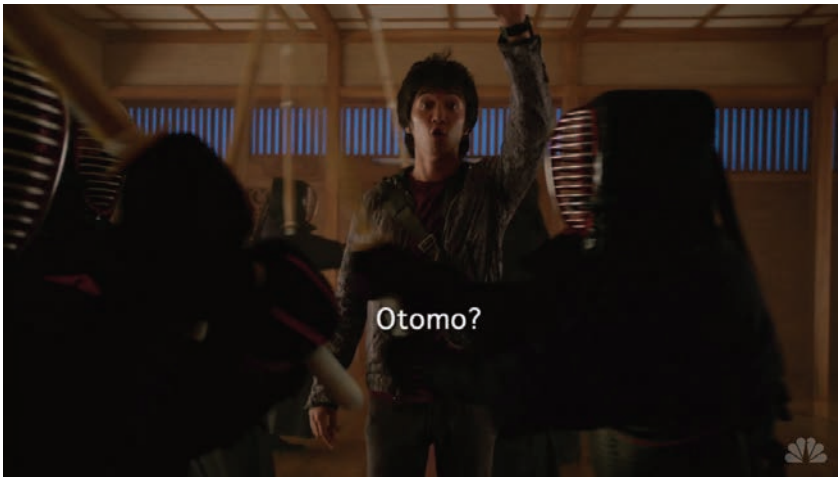




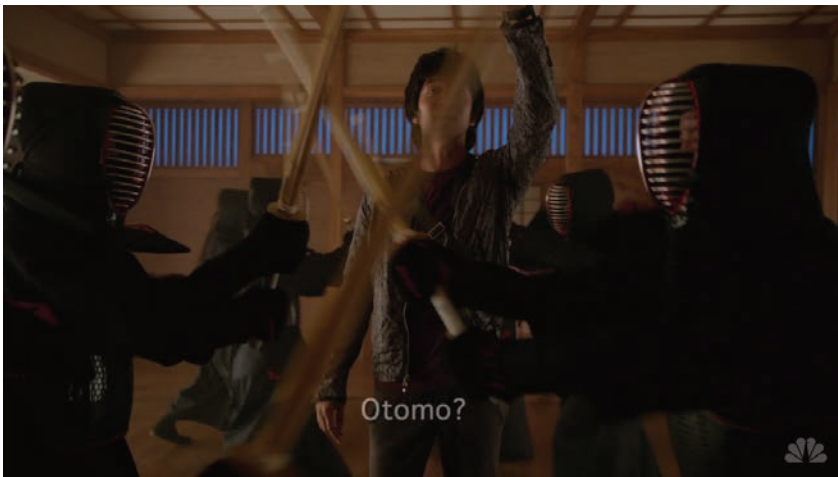
**Figure 2.8:** Strategic placement of words at each side of Miko to embody her search

There are effective moments in which the subtitles subtly and cleverly interact with the action on screen to maintain the flow of action and eye gaze. In addition, there are several moments that stand out as being especially aesthetic use of subtitles that embody the action on screen and the ways that hybrid genres direct viewers' eyes in nonlinear forms. For instance, when Ren helplessly watches Hachiro Otomo walk away from him, his fruitless calls to "Otomo" fade and drift down the screen (Fahey & Kondracki, 2015). The fading movement of the subtitles visually reinforces that his voice is not being attended to by Otomo and that his voice is disappearing into thin air as Otomo ignores him, as shown in Figures 2.9 & 2.10.





**Figure 2.9:** A question that visually falls and fades out in front of Ren



**Figure 2.10:** A question that visually falls and fades out in front of Ren

Such syntheses of physical and textual embodiment indicate the potential for subtitles in animated, live-action genres beyond print graphic novels and comic books. Subtitles not only can synchronize with the action on screen, they can also accentuate viewers' responses. In a pivotal moment, Ren finds an unconscious Miko and excitedly talks to her with the subtitles popping on and off screen as she recollects herself. He realizes that she doesn't seem to recognize

him and states, crestfallen, “Don’t you remember me?” These subtitles fall in a floating and graceful way down the screen with the final question mark directing our eyes to Ren staring at her in disbelief and sadness (Figures 2.11 and 2.12).



**Figure 2.11:** Another question that visually falls and fades out in front of Ren

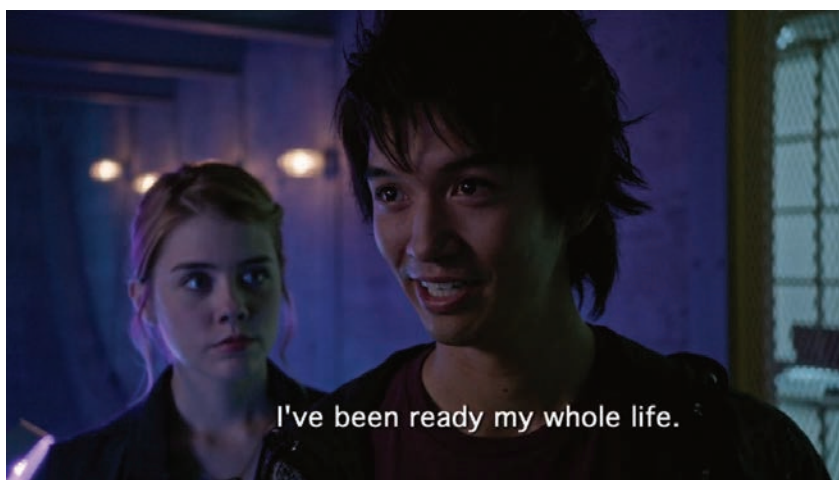


**Figure 2.12:** Another question that visually falls and fades out in front of Ren

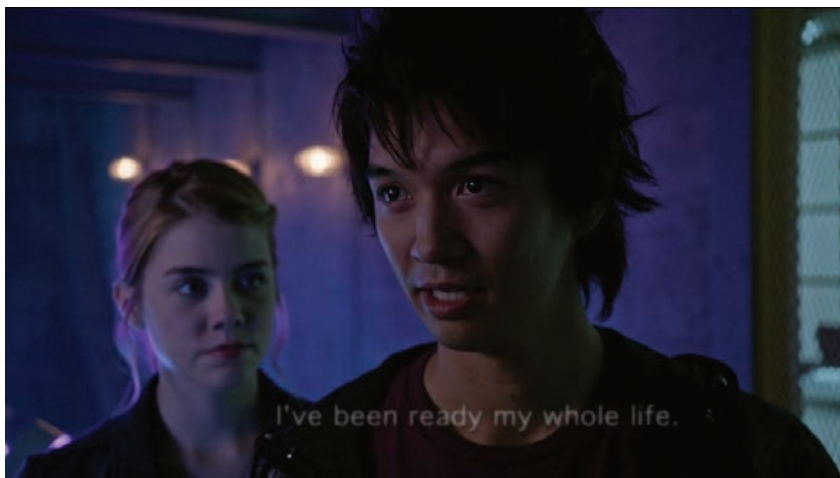
Viewers are shown Ren’s crestfallen face, which is magnified by the subtitles that seem to have lost all their energy and air. The

design of the subtitles is thus effective in aesthetically and rhetorically paralleling his current embodiment and appealing to audiences' emotions.

The spatial movement of embodied subtitles continues in a scene in the miniseries' final episode. The subtitles allow viewers to sense Ren's discovery of self-confidence when Hachiro Otomo puts all his faith in Ren's ability to enter "Evernow" as a warrior in their final mission. As Figures 2.13 and 2.14 depict, Ren's confident look is reflected in the subtitles, "I've been ready my whole life" when the subtitles fade out in sync with a rise in what the closed captions describe as dramatic music. Instead of a question that literally falls downward, he makes a strong statement that stays in line on screen and that embodies his steady confidence.



**Figure 2.13:** A statement that does not fall down and that shows Ren's steady confidence



**Figure 2.14:** A statement that does not fall down and that shows Ren's steady confidence

This climatic synchronization of emotion, music, subtitles, and live action is followed by Ren and Miko transporting into the digital game as warrior versions of themselves.

The characters' ability to enter digital games or identify themselves in manga and comic book series reflects the integration of the visual and verbal in hybrid genres and represents the creators' awareness of audiences who are watching this genre of a science fiction show. The integral subtitles in *Heroes Reborn* serve as an effective example of how we can likewise integrate subtitles in rhetorical, aesthetic, and visually accessible ways to express our multilingual identities and connect with multilingual audiences through subtitles that engage with bodies and languages on screen. Subtitles can be used to strengthen multimodal messages to audiences in the ways that this science fiction show's use of integral subtitles strengthens the series' emotional content and message about the fluidity of worlds, genres, and modes.

## JUXTAPOSITION: INTEGRATING AND MOVING WITH SUBTITLES

Studying integral subtitles in a multilingual program can inspire creators to develop effective rhetorical and aesthetic strategies for incorporating subtitles in other contexts, including professional and academic contexts. These thoughts are fundamental in my video for this chapter, which I now invite you to play. As you watch the video, consider how creators can incorporate subtitles that create access to embodied and multilingual communication.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 2 video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/4Mn4zFWfokg> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

One moment in this video highlights how we can learn to develop strategies for accentuating the rhetorical and aesthetic message of a multimodal composition. I describe a subtitled moment in *Heroes Reborn* in which Miko walks through a space calling out “Hello?” and the subtitles appear on two sides of the screen, directing viewers’ gaze. While recording my video, I physically moved myself and my hands to replicate this performance. I consciously moved from one side of the frame to the other and signed the word “Hello?” with attention to where the subtitles would appear in different spaces throughout each moment of this perfor-

mance. To emulate this scene from my analysis of *Heroes Reborn* and to ensure that viewers could attend to the correct space of my screen, I placed the subtitles for “Hello?” near my face and arms as I signed the word.

My analysis and emulation of a program’s integral subtitles in this video is an example of how to balance rhetorical and aesthetic qualities in professional contexts while guiding viewers’ attention and without detracting from the purpose of a video. Multimodal and multilingual movements in interaction with subtitles can be activities that celebrate our embodiments (our experiences of the world) and our embodied rhetorics (how we communicate with each other). And we can continue to learn from programs that have effectively integrated subtitles to embody the show’s worldview, from *Heroes Reborn* to *Sherlock*, the latter of which we will explore in the second half of this chapter.

## **SHERLOCK: A STUDY OF WORD AS IMAGE**

The BBC series *Sherlock*, which aired 14 episodes from 2010 to 2017, places the title detective and his companion, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson in modern-day London. The spirit of the original stories remains true with Sherlock and Watson solving crimes, and the first episode immediately immerses viewers into the genius detective’s perceptive worldview. For instance, when Sherlock observes bodies and materials for clues, words representing his deductions float around different elements of the body. This strategic fusion of word and image reflects Sherlock’s way of identifying connections between objects and bodies in the world.

*Sherlock* drew positive attention for its predominant use of visual text on screen (McMillan, 2014) such as text messages that appear next to characters’ bodies during the episodes airing between its premiere in 2010 and 2014. In January 2016 a special episode aired, “The Abominable Bride” (Moffat et al., 2016), that featured a scene with integral subtitles in which the characters communicate in British Sign Language (BSL). Subtitles directed the viewer’s eyes to the characters’ signs and facial expressions. However, one subtitled

scene was not imposed without warning; instead, it seamlessly continues the show's practices of integrating visual text on screen in many of its scenes.

First, let's discuss the series' use of visual text to reinforce how the hybridization of visual and verbal on screen embodies Sherlock Holmes' approach to reading the world through words and images. As embodiments of multimodal meaning, the integration of visual text is important for understanding the strength of integral subtitles in making meaning visually accessible. Throughout this analysis, keep in mind that audio description must be provided when visual text appears on screen to ensure equitable access. At the same time, *Sherlock* can be utilized as a unique instance of a show designed by hearing individuals that embodies the fluidity of accessible multimodal communication.

### ***Entering an Immersive World***

In the first episode, "A Study in Pink," the camera fluidly follows Sherlock's movement through spaces, from inside the apartment as he leaves to the world of London on the street; later he enters another apartment to a crime scene (Moffat & McGuigan, 2010). When characters are traveling in a car, the camera frames them from outside the car so that viewers observe the characters through the car window *and* the reflection of the visual cityscape that they are moving through on the windowpane. The continual fluidity of embodied movement through space accentuates the sense of experiencing the world through our eyes and bodies.

The series stands as one of the earlier chronological examples of a series that integrates written and typed messages into the space of the screen, and this fusion enhances the fluidity of the camera as it moves through scenes. When someone gazes at their phone or reads off their computer, the camera does not cut to a shot of the phone or the computer; instead, the message appears on screen in white text. The result is a seamless integration of visual text and the space of the screen.

For instance, in "The Sign of Three," Detective Inspector



Lestrade is alarmed when he receives two texts from Sherlock pleading for immediate help (Thompson et al., 2014). The camera looks up at his body from the ground, creating a sense of disorientation that is reinforced by the placement of the text messages on Lestrade's body. As shown in Figures 2.15 and 2.16, disorientation reflects Lestrade's own disorientation—as shown on his face—in needing to leave an important arrest in order to help Sherlock.



**Figure 2.15:** Framing the disorienting sense of receiving alarming text messages in *Sherlock*

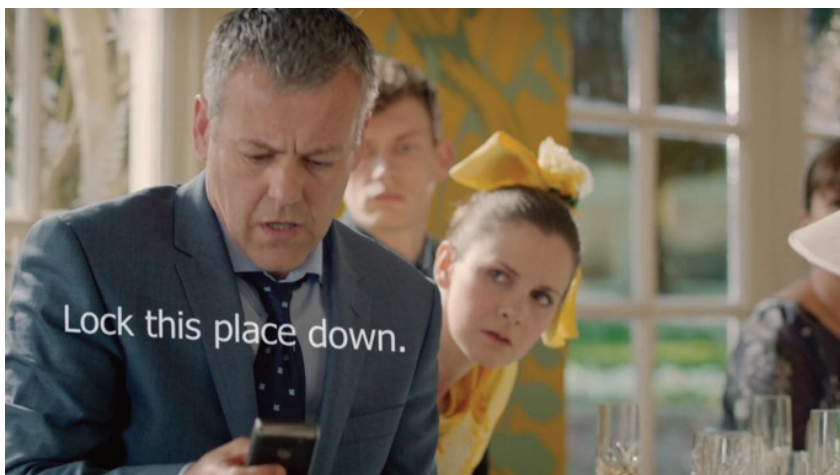




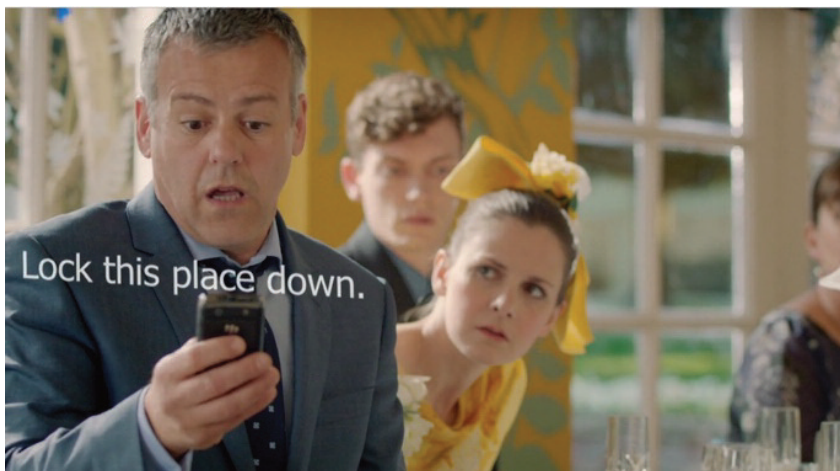
**Figure 2.16:** Framing the disorienting sense of receiving alarming text messages in *Sherlock*

By physically keeping the text message with Lestrade, instead of separating the words from his feelings, this design strategy embodies the rhetorical message of the moment: Lestrade is (and viewers are) disoriented by what he has just read. Instead of cutting the camera away to a close shot of the character's phone—which disrupts the viewer's attention to the character's face, and his reaction to the text message—the structure makes it possible for viewer to read the text message *and* the character's reaction to the text message simultaneously without losing a sense of how the message affects the character and the scene.

Figures 2.17 and 2.18 show another scene where Detective Inspector Lestrade has a visible response to a text message that Sherlock has just sent him. Instead of drawing viewers eyes away from the embodied moment, the text message moves with his body and facial expressions.



**Figure 2.17:** Framing the disorienting sense of receiving an even more alarming text message



**Figure 2.18:** Framing the disorienting sense of receiving an even more alarming text message

The most visually effective programs, including *Sherlock*, have designed the text messages so that only the words along with a clear display of a phone screen appear on screen. In this way, the words become a part of the scene and a component of communication. The seamless incorporation of text messaging on screen in a growing number of recent shows reflects the potential for integral

captions and the hybridization of visual and text in contemporary culture.

The integral and strategic use of visual text on screen seems to have originated from a simple purpose. In an interview with *Wired UK* magazine, *Sherlock* producer Sue Vertue explains, “It was really as simple as [director] Paul McGuigan not wanting to do close ups of a whole load of phones whilst we read the texts” (McMillan, 2014, n.p.). In the same interview, Vertue notes that the first episode, “A Study in Pink,” featured the most use of visual text in the first season because it was the last one to be written and filmed. The first episode to be filmed, “The Blind Baker,” didn’t use visual text as much “as it had already been written, and the script didn’t lend itself so easily to the style in post-production” (McMillan, 2014, n.p.).

In contrast, “A Study in Pink” was designed to have visual text and so it “could make the best use of onscreen text as additional script and plot points, such as the text around the screen of the pink lady” (McMillan, 2014, n.p.). The contrast between these two episodes becomes a salient example of how integral captioning must be a design consideration from the very beginning of the drafting and filmmaking process. The first episode that was filmed could not incorporate visual text after the fact while later episodes designed a space for visual text; these later episodes are strengthened by the incorporation of visual text that hybridizes word and image.

Sherlock’s embodied rhetorics—his interactive interpretation of the world through close observation—are reflected in the interlaying of clean white font and action on screen. As Sherlock tells Lestrade in “The Great Game” when the Detective Inspector has trouble understanding Sherlock’s point, “You do see, you just don’t observe” (Gatiss & McGuigan, 2010). We may see dead bodies as images on screen, but through the lens of *Sherlock*, we observe specific clues; in a particular scene in “The Empty Hearse,” Sherlock sniffs the air around a dead body for clues. The word “Pine?” emerges in the space around him until it is knocked up and out by the word “Spruce?” that in turn is knocked up and out by the statement, “Cedar.” This textual visualization embodies Sherlock’s mental

processing of the world as word and image, and this is recreated throughout the various episodes of the series.

While articles, blogs, and reviews at the time responded positively to *Sherlock*'s visual text and integration of text messages (Banks, 2012; Bennet, 2014; Calloway, 2013; Dwyer, 2015; McMillan, 2014), an embodied multimodal approach reveals *how* the integrated visual text and subtitles in the BSL scene immerse audiences into Sherlock's rhetorics and the way he makes meaning through mixing various modes. *Sherlock* embodies the fusion of image and text (Mitchell, 1994), or image and word (Fleckenstein, 2003); in other words, how we make meaning and interpret the world through a multidimensional synthesis of images and words. The fluid interplay of visual text and images in *Sherlock* guides viewers through Sherlock's worldview as he, and we, bring alphabetic text into the visual mode and vice versa.

Certain scenes seem to indicate that space was designed explicitly for visual text during the filmmaking process. In "The Reichenbach Fall," Sherlock is in a laboratory with bright white lighting and washed-out background. The text messaging, which appears as a white font on screen, is placed exactly in the dark area created by a bottle in the laboratory (Thompson & Haynes, 2012). This clear design consideration attends to making visual text accessible to viewers. In the same scene, Sherlock is seated with his feet up on the desk next to him and the text message appears in the open triangular space created by his body.

The integration of visual text embodies Sherlock's mentality in a particular scene in "The Empty Hearse" in which Sherlock is tied up and being interrogated by Serbians in a dark scene (Gatiss & Lovering, 2014). The foreign language subtitles for the Serbian speakers appear in conventional form on the bottom of the screen and are not integrated into the scene itself. This seems to be an embodiment of Sherlock's mentality because in this moment, Sherlock's hands are bound to his side and he is bent forward. Figure 2.19 portrays how Sherlock cannot sense the world panoramically at this moment and the design of the subtitles reflect his isolation from any meaning in the world.



**Figure 2.19:** Traditional subtitles at the bottom of the screen

The conventional design of the subtitles for the Serbian language embodies Sherlock's inability to process the world in contrast to other scenes in the special episode, "The Abominable Bride" (Moffatt et al., 2016). This episode sets the characters in Victorian England (and near the end of the episode, viewers discover that the episode was a dream that took place in Sherlock's mind). This translates the series' visual integration of text messages to the historical context in scenes in which recipients open hand-written and telegram messages sent on paper. When characters read these messages, visual text appears in the space next to them, allowing the audience to read the message and characters' responses at the same time, as in Figures 2.20 and 2.21.



**Figure 2.20:** Handwriting on screen showing words that are being read at the moment



**Figure 2.21:** Handwriting on screen showing words that are being read at the moment

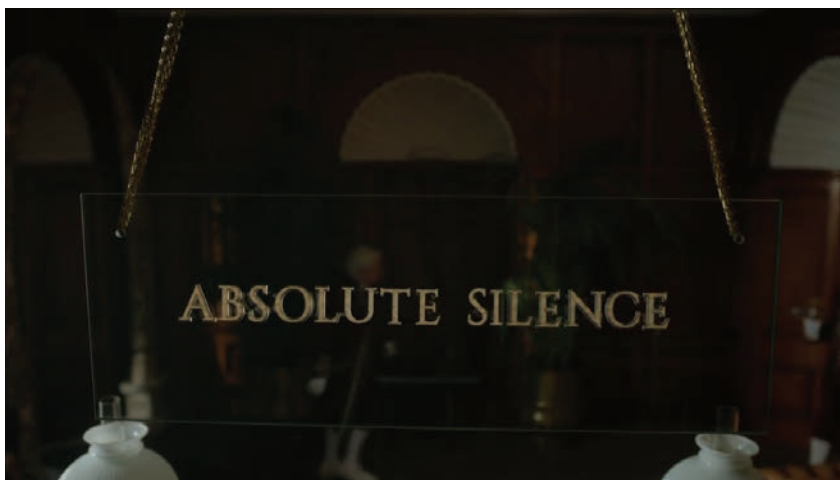
### *Silent Communication*

Sherlock's multimodal way of communicating across modes and even languages reaches its apex in a scene in this episode, "The Abominable Bride." An embodied multimodal analysis of this pivotal scene is strengthened by its setting within the series' theme

of multimodal interpretation of the world.

In this scene, Sherlock, Watson, and a porter named Wilder engage in an extended conversation in British Sign Language (BSL) with none of them moving their mouths. Although we have never seen the two main characters sign until this moment in the series, the silent conversation is treated as natural and not out of the ordinary by the characters since the characters never comment on the signed exchange before or after the scene. Sherlock's ability to sign and the integration of subtitles around their bodies embodies his fusion of word and image, of language and signs.

Sherlock and Watson enter the Diogenes club and the letters on the plaque rearrange before our eyes to another plaque that reads "ABSOLUTE SILENCE." The visual text, as shown Figure 2.22, explains the purpose: members cannot speak within the club.



**Figure 2.22:** Silence being requested through written words

Sherlock engages in a signed conversation (in BSL) with the man at the front desk, a porter named Wilder, as shown in Figures 2.23 and 2.24. Sherlock signs fluidly and comfortably and Wilder responds with equal level of comfort. The subtitles organically accompany their bodies and appear in the space along their bodies—not at the bottom of the screen. They scroll out as they are being



signed instead of popping on and off screen, which creates ease in following the conversation without disrupting the flow of the overall narrative. The scrolling motif allows for words to appear on screen in tempo with the signs and the cadence of the conversation, enhancing the aesthetic design of the scene.



**Figure 2.23:** Subtitles next to signers for a conversation in British Sign Language



**Figure 2.24:** Subtitles next to signers for a conversation in British Sign Language



As a viewer who does not know BSL, I found the subtitles effective in spatially guiding me through the conversation and temporally through the specific signs that appeared on screen at the same time as the words. The proximity of words and signs (of two languages and images) succeeds in embodying Sherlock's fusion of word and image and communication as visual, spatial, and linguistic.

While the actors who play Sherlock (Benedict Cumberbatch) and Dr. Watson (Martin Freeman) learned BSL signs specifically for this scene (O'Brien, 2016), the coordinated placement of BSL and subtitles in this scene certainly is an indication of Deaf Gain, or how mainstream society can benefit from Deaf perspectives and experiences. Leigh et al. (2014) write that Deaf Gain provides a "way of relating to the world through the eyes in addition to the other sensory experiences the human body and culture make possible" (p. 359). This certainly seems true in this scene, which shows how integrating embodied subtitles on screen benefits hearing and DHH viewers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean by showing what is being signed on screen and how well or not well it is being signed by the characters.

The proximity of word and image makes the crucial moment of the scene visually accessible and underscores the rhetorical message: that Watson is not an expert in BSL. The humor begins when Sherlock introduces Watson to the porter, who compliments Watson's publication. It is immediately clear that Watson is not as adept in sign language as the other two. The camera frames Watson's upper body (above his waist) and the subtitles appear next to his head and shoulders, making the synchronization of signs and words as clear as possible to viewers. As Figure 2.25 depicts, Watson signs back, "Thank you. I...am...glad...you...liked it."



**Figure 2.25:** Lack of full confidence in a language made evident through ellipses.

Watson continues to be oblivious to his incorrect signs. He inadvertently insults the porter's appearance several times while also mis-signing the name of his own publication. The following images depict the porter's confusion and Watson, who continues to state nonsense like "I am glad you liked my potato." The spatial closeness between the signs and words appearing on screen allows for our eyes to see the word "potato" and also immediately see in the same space Watson signing "potato." This allows for us to see him signing with the reaction that Sherlock and Wilder have: puzzlement. However, as Figures 2.26 and 2.27 show, the brightness shining in from the window next to the porter can hinder the readability of part of the subtitles. This limits the full effectiveness of these subtitles.



**Figure 2.26:** Miscommunication made evident through subtitles



**Figure 2.27:** Miscommunication made evident through subtitles

The subtitles' placement and temporal pacing allow the viewer to experience the actors' embodied performances, including the differences in signing fluency.

The scene and the integral subtitles end with Sherlock staring at Watson who breaks the code of silence and says "Sorry, what?" as Sherlock walks away. This spoken line is not accompanied by integral subtitles, although the spoken line appears in closed captions at

the bottom of the screen. Also, the signed scene did not include closed captions at the bottom of the screen because no messages were spoken in this scene—until Watson spoke.

After Sherlock walks away, Watson then gives the porter an awkward thumbs up and follows Sherlock out of the room. The scene would not have the same significance to viewers—and the rhetorical message would not be as successful if the subtitles were conventionally placed at the bottom of the screen. If all viewers had to draw their eye to the bottom of the screen to read “I...am... glad...you...liked it” and “I am glad you liked my potato,” they likely would not have fully appreciated the humor and awkwardness of the situation. The design of the integral subtitles thus embodies the process of making meaning through multiple modes and languages.

The six principles of the embodied multimodal approach have been implemented here. As in other scenes in this and previous episodes of *Sherlock*, space has been designed for visual text throughout the filmmaking process. We sense multimodal *and* multilingual communication in interaction through BSL and English words on screen. The scrolling motif and proximal placement of the subtitles enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of this silent scene. Finally, the scene shows awareness of how audiences who are not fluent in BSL could engage with the performance visually.

### ***Open Subtitles and Closed Captions***

The integration of subtitles in the signed scene in “The Abominable Bride” stands in stark contrast to how the closed captions in the prior and posterior scenes are portrayed. Again, closed captions are traditional captions that appear at the bottom or top of the screen only if the viewer has turned them on. In the prior scene Watson is talking to a maid and, as Figure 2.28 shows, the placement of the closed captions divides the viewer’s attention between the bottom of the screen and the woman’s facial expression near the top of the screen.



**Figure 2.28:** Closed captions at the bottom of the screen away from the speaker's face

In the next scene Sherlock and Watson are talking to Sherlock's brother Mycroft and viewers see them from behind Mycroft's figure. Again, the closed captions appear around Sherlock and Watson's knees, regardless of who is speaking. The contrast between the sandwiching scenes is so striking that it is almost as if the distance between bodies in the sandwiching scenes were designed on purpose to reinforce the proximity of embodied rhetorics in the signed scenes.

The integral visual text and subtitles in *Sherlock* fuse with the imagistic composition to guide viewers through Sherlock's interpretations of the space around him. Taking away the visual text—and the subtitles in the signed scene—would deprive each scene of its organic meaning and prevent viewers from being able to access Sherlock's mind. Instead, the words on screen allow us to experience Sherlock's embodied rhetorics and become the close observer of the world in all its forms, modes, and languages.

## COMMUNICATING THROUGH MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

*Sherlock* and *Heroes Reborn* are distinctive examples in popular media that show composers—media creators, instructors, scholars, students, content creators—innovative approaches for integrating subtitles that embody multimodal and multilingual communication. We can, as *Sherlock* and *Heroes Reborn* have, embrace the hybridity/fluidity of image and text to embody how we interdependently work to understand each other through multiple languages and modes. When we engage in dialogue in videos, whether through presentations, dialogue, interviews, or other contexts, captions and subtitles can be integrated to make our rhetorical and aesthetic world accessible while demonstrating our value for audiences who communicate across different languages and modes.

The signed scene in *Sherlock*, created and performed by hearing individuals, certainly reveals the Deaf Gain that comes from designing a space for subtitles that embody a scene's message.

## THE DESIGN OF (DEAF) SPACE FOR CONNECTIONS

While *Sherlock* and *Heroes Reborn* integrated subtitles into the space around hearing actors, in this chapter, we will design a (Deaf) space for connections to fully appreciate how the meaningful integration of captions and subtitles can create greater opportunities for experiencing embodied differences and multisensory connections. To first understand the principles of Deaf Space and Deaf Gain is essential to prepare for our subsequent deeper dive into the holistic experience of *Gallaudet: The Film*, a short silent film.

In an article in *Rhetoric Review* (Butler, 2018b), I briefly analyzed how *Gallaudet: The Film* designs a Deaf Space for words on screen, particularly in classroom moments from this film. The accessible and aesthetic design of captions and subtitles in this film shows us the value of designing spaces for learning through differences on our screens.

### (DEAF)SPACE FOR CONNECTIONS

This chapter's centering of the Deaf experience extends the work on Deaf Gain circulated by Deaf Studies scholars Dirksen Bauman

and Joseph Murray (2014). Deaf Gain frames being Deaf not as a hearing *loss*, but as a valuable visual-spatial sensory orientation, or *gain*, that can contribute intrinsically to mainstream and hearing society (Bauman & Murray, 2014). Deaf Gain and Deaf Studies scholars maintain that hearing “individuals would be enriched by becom[ing] a bit more Deaf ... more acutely aware of the nuances of communication, more engaged with eye contact and tactile relations ... [and] more appreciative of human diversity” (Bauman & Murray, 2010, p. 222). Reimagining captions and subtitles is certainly Deaf Gain, and a creative gain, that can benefit the world of communication. Take Armstrong (2014) and his statement that, “investigation of Deaf Gain has the potential to influence the productive use of the new communication technologies... [and the] capacity to communicate using the visual medium” (p. 88). With this in mind, it becomes apparent that the potential for captions and subtitles to embody the many ways that we all communicate is great.

The embodied nature of multimodal communication might be at its most salient in conversations between two members of Deaf culture moving through spaces together, such as down a hallway, as shown in Figure 3.1 from a video about Deaf Space (Vox, 2016).



**Figure 3.1:** Visual text on screen showing how Deaf Space includes space to sign

Through our embodied rhetorics—our Deaf rhetorics—we sign



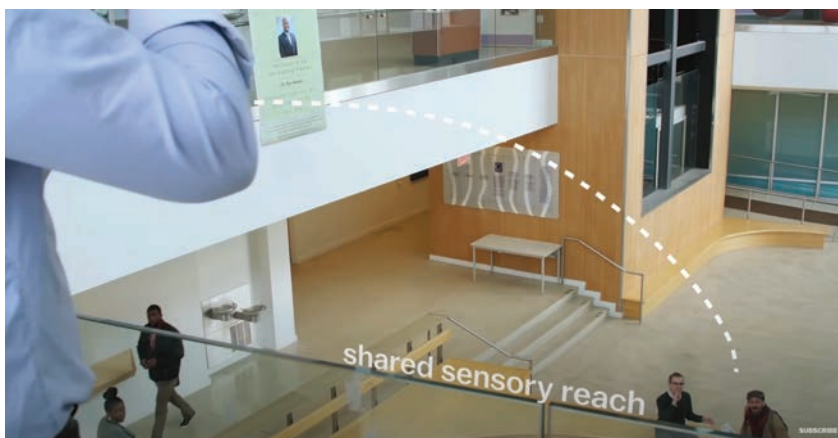
and respond to each other's movements and maintain constant eye contact while we cue each other in to sounds or sights that may be out of the other's periphery. This commitment to maintaining visual and spatial connections as we move through shared spaces informs the design of integral captions and subtitles that embody multisensory connections, as evident in *Gallaudet: The Film*, a short silent film that embodies Deaf cultural values.

Before analyzing the film, it is wise to begin with exploring the concepts of Deaf Space as a Deaf Gain in an enactment of Brueggemann's (2013) celebration of "deaf insight" and her (2002) call for us to consider how experiencing the world through deafness, blindness, or a "disability enables insight—critical, experiential, cognitive, and sensory" (p. 321). The insight created by being Deaf is sensed in the DeafSpace<sup>1</sup> Project at Gallaudet University, which was directly informed by the values that Deaf people place on embodied communication and continual visual connections. In a signed TEDx Talk entitled "An Insight from DeafSpace," Robert Sirvage (2015), a design researcher for the DeafSpace Project, demonstrates the importance of signers maintaining eye contact and a sense of trust as they navigate space in coordination and co-construct a panoramic visual space through the intersectionality of their eye gaze as they create a 360-degree view of what is happening all around both of their moving bodies.

The intentional design of barrierless spaces extends ASL users' "shared sensory reach" (Figure 3.2), as shown in a video about Deaf Space (Vox, 2016).

---

1. The typographical conventions of Deaf Space dictate that it be spelled as two words when discussing the general concept of Deaf Space and as one word, DeafSpace, when explicitly discussing the DeafSpace Project and its involved architects at Gallaudet University.



**Figure 3.2:** Visual text on screen showing how Deaf Space supports shared sensory reach

The cultural commitment to facilitating embodied communication is echoed by Hansel Bauman (2014), an architect involved with the DeafSpace Project, as he explains how participants in a signed conversation interact with and through the space around them. Reflecting the importance of mobility, proximity, and flexibility, the conversation circle or triangle changes dynamically in shape and size as participants join and leave the conversation (pp. 390–391). The architecture principles of DeafSpace embody these physical relationships as “derived from the innate desire for sustained interpersonal and spatial connection” (p. 391).

The principles of DeafSpace—“architectural patterns addressing space, light, composition, order, form, and materiality”—originated in a 2005 DeafSpace Workshop at Gallaudet University (H. Bauman, 2014, p. 380). The workshop led to the DeafSpace Project, a three-year design-and-research course at the ASL and Deaf Studies department, that developed an architectural language for expressing “the dynamic connection between space, place, and human relationships” (H. Bauman, 2014, p. 381). These collaborations in turn led to groundbreaking projects designed with DeafSpace patterns on the campus of Gallaudet University in 2008 and 2012 and were embodied in 2010’s *Gallaudet: The Film*.

Sirvage himself conveys the complementary nature of Deaf-

Space in *Gallaudet: The Film* when he is shown presenting on Deaf Space and describing how the practice “transcends the notion of access and pursues aesthetics,” as shown in Figure 3.3. Accessibility and aesthetics are embodied in this space.



**Figure 3.3:** Design researcher Robert Sirvage presenting on Deaf space in *Gallaudet: The Film*

The “unique sensory and spatial dimensions” of the design coordinate with “visual language and deaf sensory abilities” in ways that reflect and express Deaf culture (H. Bauman, 2014, p. 379). Instead of hard corners, soft curves are used; instead of closed rooms, there are open spaces; instead of blocked views, there are clear views from different angles. In this way DeafSpace creates “a visually legible environment as a fabric, weaving together visual cues about destinations, pathways, and the use of space seamlessly” (H. Bauman, 2014, p. 386).

A core component of DeafSpace is its practice as an actively participatory process. DeafSpace architect David Lewis says, “This isn’t about accommodating.... It’s actually about using the deaf experience as a challenge to make better space” (as cited in Stinson, 2013, n.p.). DeafSpace “does not focus on issues of accommodation, but rather on Deaf cultural aesthetics that are embodied in the built environment” (Bauman & Murray, 2010, p. 218).

When space is designed, it becomes embodied rhetoric rather than an object because it becomes a meaningful and aesthetic part of communication. Take Hansel Bauman's insistence that instead of adapting buildings to meet the needs of deaf people, we can move to "creating an aesthetic and meaning that emerge out of the ways deaf people inhabit and construct their spaces" (2014, p. 378). Leigh et al. (2014) note that "this [design] aesthetic has been around for a long time, as witness buildings that are open and airy in space" (p. 358). However, the potential has been largely untapped, just as the potential for intuitive captions and subtitles has been relatively underexplored in videos.

DeafSpace may be designed particularly for Deaf individuals, but those involved insist that many others could benefit from thoughtful design. Bauman and Murray (2010) explain that although Deaf Space generates "from designing the optimal environment for Deaf signers, the basic precept is that Deaf space principles would create exceptional buildings for everyone, regardless of audiological status" (p. 219). Stinson (2013) reports that:

[Lead architect David] Lewis is quick to point out that DeafSpace principles could (and perhaps should) be the basis for any architecture project. Oddly enough, it seems like having all senses intact has a way of dampening our expectations—we start to make excuses for clunky architecture and unintuitive design, mainly because we're capable of navigating those obstacles without too much trouble. (n.p.)

Let us transition from architectural space to video space.

## DEAF SPACE ON FILM

Deaf Space as the aesthetic design of flexible space for embodied communication is a driving principle in the design of *Gallaudet: The Film* (Bauman & Commerson, 2010), an eight-minute silent production that embodies the ethos of the nation's only liberal arts university for DHH students. Narration and dialogue are written

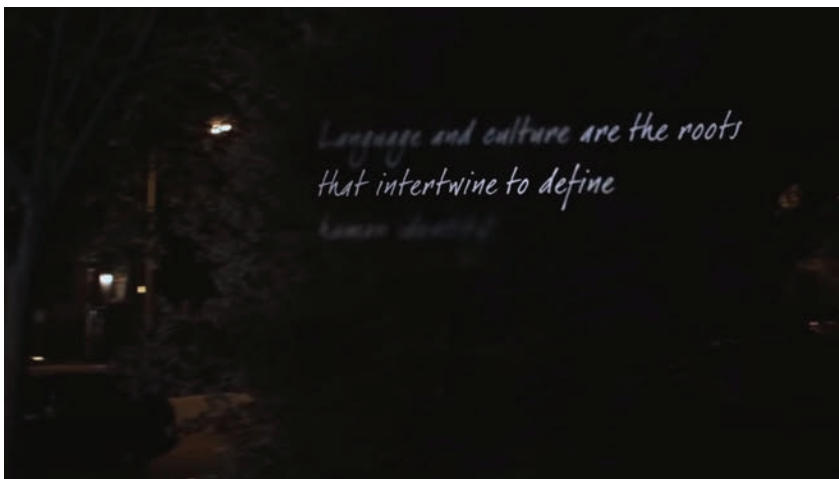
throughout the campus of Gallaudet University on screen as viewers are immersed into a multidimensional space created by and for visual-spatial connections.

This eight-minute film involved over 200 members of the Gallaudet community, and the producing team included current and former faculty members and students, including producer Dirksen Bauman, director Ryan Commerson, director of photography and editor Wayne Betts Jr., and set designer Ethan Sinnott. With a mostly Deaf filmmaking team, it should be little surprise that the film itself is completely silent. The fluidity of the camera with the captions and subtitles becomes a form of Deaf rhetorics and embodied rhetorics—or the construction of meaning through the body in interaction with the world around us. The interpretation of meaning through ASL and English words intermingling on screen enriches the multisensory experience of the Deaf world that is in *Gallaudet*.

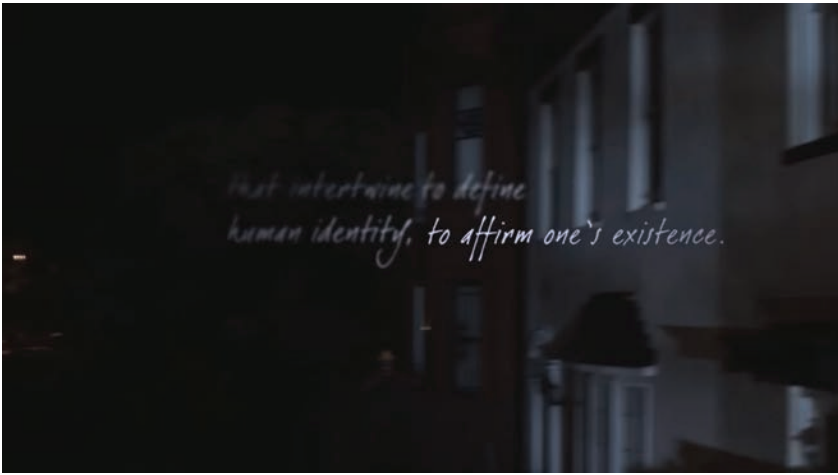
Bauman and Murray (2014) describe the soundless film as “one example of a culturally deaf aesthetic within filmmaking” (p. xxxi). The beginning of *Gallaudet: The Film* establishes the multisensory experience of interconnected and embodied space by drawing viewers into Deaf Space: the camera zooms into an artist’s sketchpad of a tree which transforms into a man’s sign language performance of a tree with roots extending around and into the body. The man’s ASL performance ends with trees appearing around him and extending to audience members seated in front of him. They visually applaud (by silently oscillating their hands in their air) as the camera smoothly pans around the room to show us their faces. It is as if we are gracefully navigating through the room to meet each person as white text appears around their bodies with their names, alumna years, and job occupations. The effect is that we become part of the multilingual community and its roots without a single sound—and without a single cut.

The seamless integration of visual text extends to integral captions and subtitles as the camera continues to move amongst these individuals’ bodies and guides us outside into the night. The camera pans around the nighttime outdoors space as white hand-

written captions gracefully appear on the upper right area of the screen. “Language and culture are the roots that intertwine to define human identity, to affirm one’s existence” appear on screen in three lines, but not all at once. Instead, a few words appear on screen in sharp white font while others stylistically fade into the background to pace viewers through reading the subtitles and absorbing the message. The white font against the dark background keeps the attention on the words while the background scenes move us through Deaf Space, as shown in Figures 3.4 and 3.5.



**Figure 3.4:** Visual handwriting that is written across a dark night scene in the form of silent narration



**Figure 3.5:** Visual handwriting that is written across a dark night scene in the form of silent narration

Whereas mainstream filmmaking practices may impose voice-over narration in such scenes, these handwritten captions enhance visual access to meaning and the aesthetic qualities of the video: we are traversing through the significance of this culture and its history. Each line in the textual narration gradually appears on screen to become crisp white text and then fade away as the next line appears on screen. This blurring effect—in which certain phrases and words blur on and off screen to provide emphasis to each other—guides us through the significance of the message: the value of language, culture, and identity.

The cultural values of visual fluidity and panoramic sense of connection with spaces and places are recreated through the constant movement of the camera and the captions. The camera does not cut between scenes; rather, the aesthetic sense of flow immerses us into this world. The embodied journey through Deaf history and culture visually guides viewers towards a beautiful sunny day around Gallaudet campus in which the captions appear in the center of the screen connecting the blue sky with the green grass.

In the same handwritten font as earlier in the film, we experience the value of history and identity. Each phrase and word in the statement gradually appears on screen and begins to move up

towards the sky and be erased as the next line appears in its place. As shown in the following captures (Figures 3.6 and 3.7), the subsequent line in turn moves up toward the sky and gracefully disappears as the successive lines and words appear to finish the powerful statement: “History has carved a path toward equality and justice ... toward a future of innovation and prosperity.” These words appear around the middle of the screen and move up as they fade out, keeping the viewer’s eye in the center of the screen—the meaningful part of the scene—as we travel through Gallaudet campus on a bright day with students walking around.



**Figure 3.6:** Visual handwriting that is written across Gallaudet University’s campus in the form of silent narration





**Figure 3.7:** Visual handwriting that is written across Gallaudet University's campus in the form of silent narration

To fully experience the value of integrating fluid captions and subtitles, the flow of the camera a few moments later shows a man walking up a staircase while talking on his phone (although no speech is made audible). The captions indicating his speech appear in a contemporary sans serif font in the spaces around him as he travels up the staircase. After he turns to take the next flight, the captions appear on the other side of his body to accompany his body's change in direction. The captions do not appear all at once; rather, they scroll in and out to accompany the temporal pacing of his spoken words (Figures 3.8 and 3.9).



**Figure 3.8:** Integral captions that stay next to a speaker in motion.



**Figure 3.9:** Integral captions that stay next to a speaker in motion.

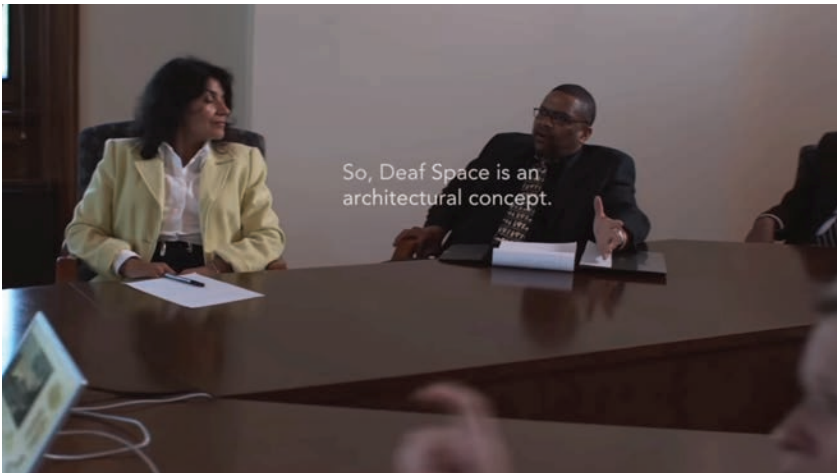
After he removes his phone from his ear, he and viewers read a sign on an easel that states he is entering a Deaf Space Institute workshop titled “Architecture Shaped by Our Bodies,” hosted by Gallaudet University.

We accompany this man in entering the workshop space, and before we even see the bodies in the space, italicized subtitles on screen tell us what the Deaf Space presenter is signing in the room.

As shown in Figures 3.10 and 3.11, we and the man enter the space and see the presenter, the next lines immediately appearing in the space under the presenter's body.



**Figure 3.10:** Integral captions and subtitles that appear near signers and speakers in interaction.



**Figure 3.11:** Integral captions and subtitles that appear near signers and speakers in interaction.

This continuous moment in which the subtitles direct our eyes to the appropriate location on screen encapsulates the cultural values

of visual flow, eye contact, and designing a space for embodied communication.

As the man navigates through the room and finds a seat in the triangular-shaped table, we experience the presenter's statement: "We look at human sensory experience and we also look at how our language influences the way that we occupy space." As the man sits down, the camera pans around to a seated participant who speaks in response to the presenter and the subtitles appear by the respondent's body. The conversation continues as the presenter, and subtitles by his body, show that "Deaf Space transcends the notion of access and pursues aesthetics."

The presenter's integrally subtitled and signed statement is powerful. Deaf Space is space designed *for* and *by* Deaf people, so embodied communication is organically infused into every rounded corner. The buildings—and this video—are not assembled for only functional purposes to ensure that certain bodies can walk from one side to the other with ease. Rather, these community places are developed to embrace shared sensory orientation and seamless visual-spatial conversations. The wide walkways and clear views enhance the agreeable experience of moving through space seamlessly; sharp corners, steep steps, and small rooms are barriers that need to be navigated around *and* visual-spatial obstructions that take away from the aesthetics of a building. With its aesthetic and embodied design, Deaf Space is a pleasing atmosphere in which visual-spatial communication flourishes. The use of integral captions and subtitles likewise moves through Deaf Space in a way that could not be encapsulated through conventional subtitles at the bottom of the screen.

To show how Deaf Space pursues aesthetics, Sirvage and the camera move to a model that represents Deaf Space and then the camera dives into the model, which transforms into a computer animation. Without a single cut, we are led to a classroom setting.

This critical classroom scene encapsulates the cultural values of Deaf Space, eye contact, visual flow, and circular connections. The instructor and students are seated in a circle and engaging in a signed discussion as integral subtitles appear in the spaces around

their bodies to guide us not only through their signs but also through the connections they are making with each other. The camera never stops as it pans the room showing different bodies and perspectives to embody Deaf rhetorics in a shared space.

Allow me to pause again to contextualize the classroom scene. This scene guides viewers through what film producer Dirksen Bauman (2015) describes organically as the “deaf classroom ecology” that is always fully or semi-circular so that all participants can establish eye contact and connections with every other participator. In his critique of how being hearing limits the way we shape our built environment, Bauman challenges the seat and row configuration of conventional classrooms that lack human connection and create isolation in the classroom. A professor of Deaf Studies at Gallaudet, he argues that knowledge gained from sign language changes how we approach language and “the meaning of text,” particularly “how humans learn through visual, gestural, and spatial modes [in ways that have really] increased our access to knowledge.”

The deaf classroom ecology in this scene in the film and the accentuated subtitles intensify the connections between instructor, students, and viewers in accessing meaning across multiple modes and languages. The instructor, Lindsay Dunn, begins with the key question, “Is the concept of ‘beauty’ universal across cultures?” Each word appears in tandem with his signs and the term “beauty” appears in yellow font to stand out against the other words in white font and emphasize the concept to be discussed: beauty.

As in Figures 3.12 and 3.13, the camera rotates around the instructor’s body while the subtitles stand still next to his body; the camera travels through the subtitles. In the same movement, the camera turns behind the instructor’s body to show the students and the back of the subtitles in reverse. This unique design effect of the subtitles aesthetically and rhetorically presents his question to the students—to students and viewers who can visually access his embodied rhetorics.



**Figure 3.12:** Integral subtitles that stay right next to an instructor who is signing as the camera moves around the room

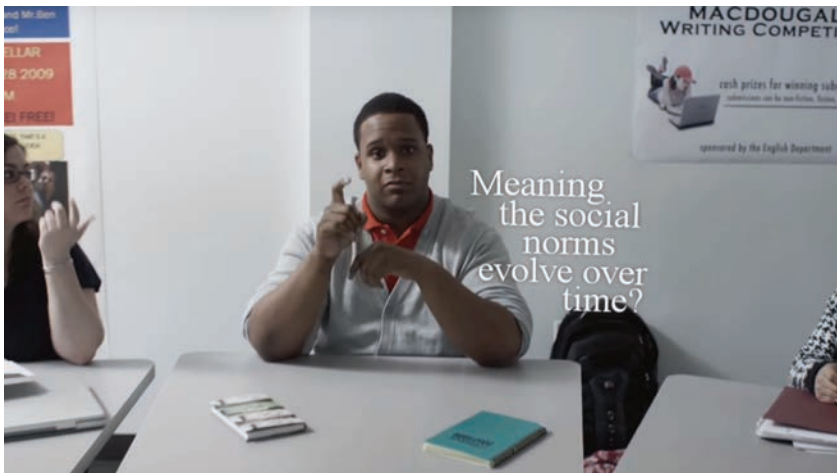


**Figure 3.13:** Integral subtitles that stay right next to an instructor who is signing as the camera moves around the room

The aesthetic design of subtitles continues with the first student to respond. She is seated at her desk and the subtitles appear in alignment with the desk in front of her as if she were holding a sign in front of her. This succeeds in making the textual display of information as important as the signed statement, rather than delegating subtitles to a subservient position. This student discusses the

contrasting standards of beauty across time, the time eras appearing in yellow text to reinforce the difference between the standards of the past and the standards of the present. Each word that she signs quickly flips up, creating a full sentence. That sentence remains on screen as she signs new words that then replace the words already on screen one by one; in this way, the standards of the past flip into the standards of today.

The signed responses and questions of the other students occur organically as we move around the room experiencing different perspectives and the subtitles appear in the spaces around their bodies (Figure 3.14). The aesthetic design of the subtitles transcends access to different modes of communication by intensifying the interpersonal connections created between Deaf bodies in this classroom ecology.

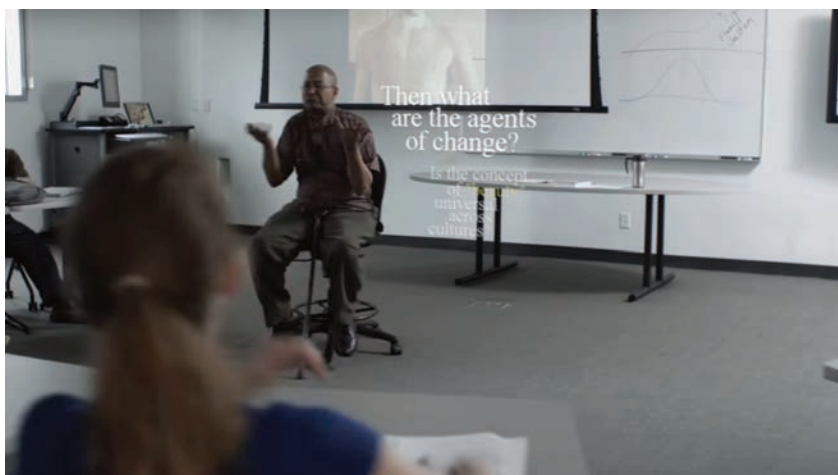


**Figure 3.14:** Integral subtitles that appear right next to a student who is signing

The transcendental scene nears an end when we view the instructor from the students' perspective, his opening question, "Is the concept of 'beauty' universal across cultures?"—appearing softly and set back near his seated body. He is not stating the question at the moment, but the driving topic of the discussion remains open to embody the meaning that is being considered by those in the room.



To continue the discussion, his next signed question appears in larger and brighter font next to his body, and on top of the faded original question (Figure 3.15). The effect is as if he has written the question on the board, and it remains visually accessible to the students. The scene ends with a view of the instructor from the students' perspective as a student responds "media" with the subtitles appearing in mirror reverse to reflect how we are viewing the instructor from her angle. While the instructor would theoretically be able to read the subtitles from his position, we are on the student's side and see the reverse figure. This is the multimodal, multilingual interpretation of embodied space.



**Figure 3.15:** Integral subtitles that show the sequence of questions asked by the instructor

Although the film guides us through Gallaudet and its members for another two minutes, this classroom scene is the pivotal moment that shows how *Gallaudet: The Film* encapsulates Deaf rhetorics, Deaf Gain, and Deaf Space in ways that transform conventional expectations about the design of videos. Viewers are guided through a world where the absence of sound might not be missed and where meaning is made through the visual-spatial-gestural interaction of bodies and modes. The camera flows through scene after scene to connect all



these spaces into one Deaf Space. The intricate integration of subtitles throughout the various scenes becomes the embodied rhetorics of fluidity in spaces. The subtitles are not added to provide access to meaning; rather, they are rhetorical and aesthetic components of the film to become one with the space around them.

By reorienting viewers to the fluidity of embodied communication through spaces, this film shows the potential for challenging conventional practices in today's screen-mediated world. This film shows that sound is not necessary for creating mood or atmosphere and that subtitles do not have to be accommodations added to the bottom of the screen. The silence is an explicit message that is a part of the rhetorical and aesthetic quality of the Deaf film—yet, incorporating audio descriptions of the visual text, captions and subtitles, and movements would be necessary to encapsulate this perceptual experience for different bodies.

## DEAF LENS

The limitations of mainstream filmmaking practices that do not consider embodied multimodal communication are underscored in a signed TEDx Talk by Deaf filmmaker Wayne Betts Jr. (2010), who edited *Gallaudet: The Film*. During his presentation, in which he reflects on his filmmaking practices and shows moments from *Gallaudet: The Film*, he reveals that he creates films with the clear intention of embodying the world through his “Deaf Lens,” including the cultural values of eye contact and visual-spatial fluidity. He further demonstrates how mainstream filmmaking practices such as the reliance of sound in off-screen narration and other techniques do not reflect his experience. Rather than accepting audio-centric filmmaking practices, Betts directly challenges the conventions through his Deaf embodiment so that he could make “a Deaf film.”

One such rule that he challenged was the use of camera cuts to flip back and forth between two hearing speakers. After performing the camera abruptly cutting back and forth between two speakers,

he explains<sup>2</sup>:

I looked at this uniform practice and when we talk in ASL, do we carry on conversation facing one another [*flipping back and forth abruptly*]? ...

... [*Shakes his head to show no, we don't do that.*]

We normally maintain eye contact throughout the conversation. Even when we're walking, we maintain eye contact in conversation. Telephone poles come between us, and we still maintain eye contact.

It doesn't matter which direction we go or if there are obstacles. We stay connected to each other. We must be attuned to each other, so we can maintain that connection. Therefore, the camera should be fluid and constant. This will appeal to our inner values. "Yes, this is just like my world." (Betts, 2010)

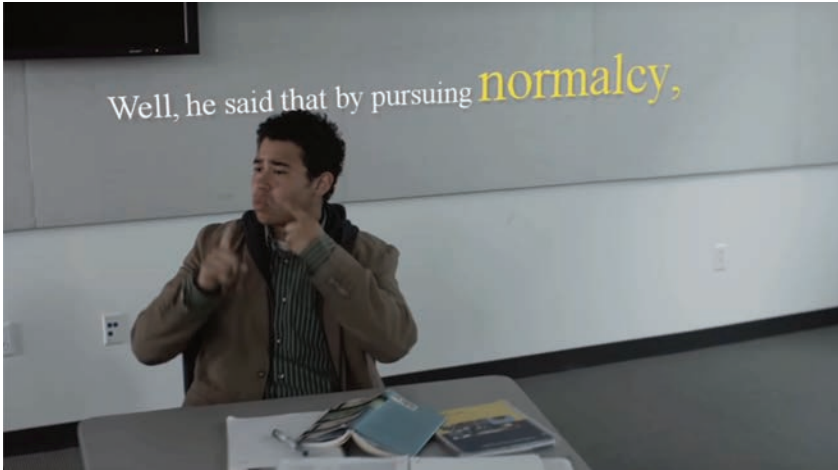
Betts emphasizes the value of eye contact, connection, and visual fluidity to reinforce the inner values of embodied communication. He also describes his use of Steadicams, or attaching the camera to the filmmaker, to embody the fluidity of visual procession and conversations in Deaf culture. He describes how "the camera bounces steadily" while he walks, which "makes me feel more connected to the action." A sense of connection between bodies and the camera creates a fluid sense of space.

Following this statement, Betts shows a scene from *Gallaudet: The Film* of students signing in a classroom discussing changes in cultural perspectives of beauty. This scene uses a Steadicam with dynamic visual text emerging and fading around the screen in sync with the sign language. The camera flows around the room as individuals sign and the visual text fades in and out, as in Figures 3.16 & 3.17. The movement around the room is graceful and reflective of the

---

2. Since this is a written translation of Betts' signs in English, I have chosen to follow the captions from his recorded TEDx Talk. The captions, and my corresponding quotes, for Betts' presentation have been updated since I previously published on this topic in 2018.

continual connection that is important in communication in Deaf culture and pedagogy.



**Figure 3.16:** Integral subtitles that appear with words in white and yellow for emphasis while the camera moves



**Figure 3.17:** Integral subtitles that appear with words in white and yellow for emphasis while the camera moves

After this scene ends, Betts immediately states the following, with emphasis through facial expressions and body language (as shown in Figures 3.18 and 3.19):

Notice the captions? They weren't fixed to the bottom of the screen [*He places his hands down near the lower part of his body and keeps his lips tightly closed as the captions play near the bottom of his body. He slightly shakes his head as if something feels wrong and continues signing.*]

Those captions feel just like an abrupt break in the edit. [*with an emphasis on BREAK*]. My eyes are drawn to the bottom of the screen. Just as I'm making eye contact with the actor, I have to look away to read the captions. [*He uses his right hand to show his eyes rapidly and drastically falling down to the bottom of the screen. He repeats this falling movement again and shakes his head to show how wrong it feels.*]

I want that eye contact! [*with an emphasis on signs for SEE and STAY*].

I wanted to maintain eye contact, so I had the captions appear around the actors. [*He moves hands representing his eyes closer to the actor's eyes to represent the eye contact*].

Now my eyes are able to follow the captions as they appear.

[*Without shifting momentum, he keeps the hand representing the actor in front of him while his right hand becomes the captions rotating the actor to show how the captions are occurring panoramically around the actor in the scene. Smiling, his eyes look around the space in front of him naturally*].

My eyes can still feel the flow in the sequence. I feel connected to what's going on. [*He nods and gently moves his connected hands to show the harmonic connection.*]

And that's my world.<sup>3</sup>

---

3. I adhere to Betts' use of the term captions in this section, although throughout the rest of this book I use the term subtitles to refer to English-language text on screen that provides visual access to ASL.



**Figure 3.18:** Wayne Betts, Jr. showing the value of placing words on screen near actors to maintain eye contact



**Figure 3.19:** Wayne Betts, Jr. showing the value of placing words on screen near actors to maintain eye contact

This embodied multimodal statement by Betts communicates the value of integral captions in guiding viewers' eyes through the action on screen and creating a connection between viewers and actors on screen. This embodies the value of flow, fluidity, and contact in Deaf culture. This is a deaf filmmaking practice that immerses viewers into embodied rhetorics. Instead of being trapped in film language and its sets of rules, he creates films through Deaf Lens; "It's as if you could see the camera through my own eyes and my own perspective. See my world, how we see. Fluidly. That's new. Deaf lens without a box. There are no limits."

This aesthetic and inclusive filmmaking practice that embodies accessible multimodal communication with captions and subtitles on screen translates into direct connection between audiences and those in this Deaf space. We become—or are meant to *want* to become—a part of this world. This feeling is reinforced with the film's concluding close-up of a confident Gallaudet student looking out into the distance (Figure 3.20). Handwritten words appear along

the direction of his gaze and show us “You” (which then fades into black with white text, “You are Gallaudet”). We follow his gaze from right to left. This design and placement of the captions strengthens our simultaneous identification with this current student and this inclusive world—past, present, and future all in the same time and space.



**Figure 3.20:** Visual handwriting on screen that connect the eye gazes of the actor and you, the audience

These filmmaking practices reveal the affordances of integrating captions and subtitles into the space of the screen and enhancing our multisensory connections. This is a rhetorical and aesthetic gain for D/deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing audiences and creators.

## JUXTAPOSITION: CO-CONSTRUCTION OF MULTILINGUAL AND MULTIMODAL MEANING

In full affirmation of integral captions and subtitles as a Deaf Gain for filmmaking practices, I have integrated subtitles into the space of my videos. One moment in my video for this chapter reinforces how creators can learn from Deaf embodiments and embodied rhetorics to strengthen the accessible, rhetorical, and aesthetic qualities of videos. As you watch this video, consider how creators

can engage in multimodal analysis of videos with captions and subtitles.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 3 video. You can also view the video at [https://youtu.be/\\_39SffiVjeQ](https://youtu.be/_39SffiVjeQ) or read the transcript in the Appendix.

In this moment, my signs and subtitles model the classroom scene from *Gallaudet: The Film*. I describe how the instructor starts with a discussion question that appears next to him, but I add to this performance by gesturing to the subtitles next to me. In similar ways, instructors who create online pedagogical content could gesture to questions placed next to them on screen. In the next part of this video, I describe how the students respond in ASL with subtitles that appear around them, and I sign right next to the subtitles to emphasize the alignment of words and signs. These interactive strategies can be used by instructors and students in course videos and projects to visually reinforce key terms and call extra attention to significant concepts on screen. Likewise, online content creators can gesture purposefully to words on screen in social media and other contexts to drive home their messages.

What is crucial when placing words on screen is this: we must be deliberate about the words that we want to place on screen and how we want to portray them so that they embody our language(s) and make our multimodal, multilingual message accessible to audiences.



A careful consideration of the words we interact with on screen will remain an important element of this book, particularly in Chapter 7 when we explore conversations about captions and subtitles.

## SHOW AND TELL

The journey through the Deaf spaces of *Gallaudet: The Film* is guided by integral captions and subtitles as multimodal enactments of embodied rhetorics. The visual text is the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication as discerned by the embodied multimodal approach: space has been intentionally designed for captions and subtitles in ways that create multiple modes of visual access to the film's narration, signers, and ethos (principles 1 and 2); through the movement of captions and subtitles, we directly experience the embodied rhetorics and multimodal, multilingual communication practices of those on campus (principles 3 and 4); and the design of words on screen amplify the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of this film as it shows awareness of how audiences can navigate the unique world on screen (principles 5 and 6).

Through the accessible and aesthetic design of captions and subtitles—which *show* and *tell* viewers about the Deaf world—viewers connect with those on screen and are immersed into the rhetorical space, and this consolidation may be the most effective way to activate this embodied rhetorics and embodied knowledge in the mind and heart of the viewer. While *Gallaudet: The Film* sets the standard high in transcending access to subtitles, it is not the only one that has integrated captions and subtitles rhetorically and aesthetically to provide visual access to embodied rhetorics. Other media in various contexts have integrated subtitles and designed a (Deaf) space for captions and subtitles.

## INTEGRATION OF CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES, ACCESS, AND EMBODIMENTS

To further expand a space for differences in our compositions, this chapter immerses us into several spaces in which DHH, hearing, and disabled characters communicate with each other and with us, the audience, through integral captions and subtitles that appear in predominantly closed-captioned productions. The integration of captions and subtitles in hearing media represents the benefits of designing a space for different embodiments, including *Born This Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud*, *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*, and *The Company You Keep*. Through the embodied multimodal approach, we can explore how the languages and identities of real individuals and characters are made accessible through integral captions and subtitles. Most of all, the design of the captions and subtitles underscores the value of communicating and connecting across differences.

### **BORN THIS WAY PRESENTS: DEAF OUT LOUD— DEAF AND HEARING WORLDS TOGETHER**

In 2018, A&E TV aired a documentary that was executive produced by Marlee Matlin, an Academy Award winner and well-

known Deaf actress. In this hour-long documentary, *Born This Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud* (Matlin, 2018), three families are spotlighted: the Mansfield family, the Garcia family, and the Posner family. The couples and their children represent a mix of D/deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing individuals who use different communication practices.

Throughout the hour, these couples share their lives and their values as they raise their children. The entire documentary is presented from their perspectives. Originally airing on mainstream television for general audiences, this documentary program is effective in showing the world the range of communication practices and identities in the deaf community, especially through the incorporation of a mix of closed captions and open subtitles. The open subtitles sometimes are placed at the bottom of the screen and other times placed next to individuals' faces and upper bodies.

The documentary did not create open captions for every single line uttered in the show. The parents and children who speak appear on camera without open captions; their words are available via closed captions. The mix of spoken and signed conversations is captured in a conversation that Mick and Rachel have in a car about their child. Figure 4.1 shows Mick signing with open subtitles that appear next to him while closed captions at the bottom of the screen show the words that his wife Rachel speaks.



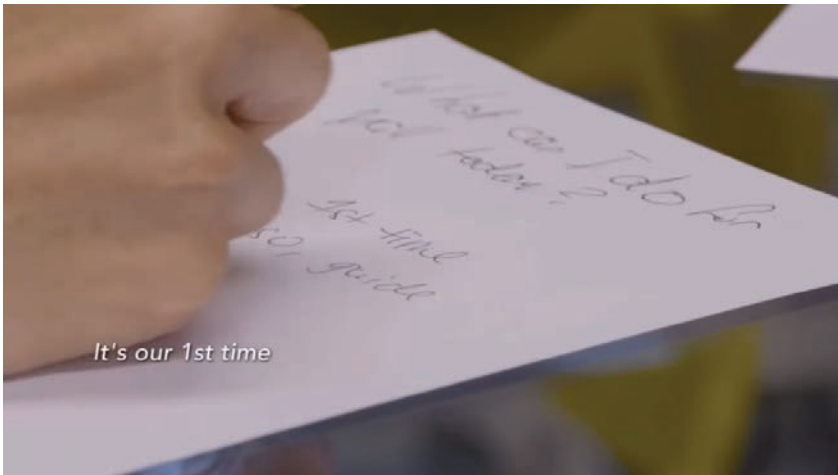
**Figure 4.1:** Open subtitles and closed captions in different places of the screen at the same time in *Born this Way Presents: Deaf: Out Loud*

Instead of framing the lack of fully open captions as a limitation, we can recognize how the use of closed captions for the speakers seems to be more effective in showing viewers—both those reading the closed captions and those listening to the speech—the communication practices of these individuals. By incorporating open subtitles specifically for non-speaking ASL usage, the documentary effectively embodies the visual and multimodal power of signers with open subtitles. After all, if open captions and subtitles were included for every single speaker and signer, the visual power of the open subtitles would likely be diminished.

With closed captions used for speakers, the moments in which ASL users sign with open subtitles next to their bodies become ever more striking. It is the subtitled moments that draw in viewers' eyes as we directly connect with the signers' embodiment: their eyes, faces, and signs. The opening moments of the documentary bring viewers into Sheena McFeely and Manny Mansfield's world, as shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. The subtitles appear near them at the bottom of the screen as they sign to each other while communicating in writing with a hearing individual.



**Figure 4.2:** Subtitles showing audiences what is being signed and what is being handwritten



**Figure 4.3:** Subtitles showing audiences what is being signed and what is being handwritten

The couple's genuinely accessible and embodied rhetorics as ASL users are captured as the documentary brings us into their home environment with their two daughters: one Deaf and one hearing, both native ASL users. While some scenes incorporate subtitles at the bottom of the screen when they sign to each other, the most powerful moments come when the subtitles are integrated

into the space around them, allowing viewers to see their signs and the words at the same time. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show Sheena and Manny working with their daughters on math and language activities as subtitles are integrated effectively near Manny.



**Figure 4.4:** Subtitles that stay near a father and daughter having a signed conversation



**Figure 4.5:** Subtitles that stay near a father and daughter having a signed conversation

Through this strategic integration, we can pay attention to this

family's communication and connection with each other. The integral subtitles further reinforce the family dynamics in this home where ASL is the primary language.

At another point in the documentary, we are brought to Paco and April Garcia in their own kitchen as they sign to each other with subtitles appearing next to them. When April speaks to her son, closed captions are used (if you have them on), which shows caption readers that she is speaking. The strategic design of captions and subtitles (Figures 4.6 and 4.7) shows awareness of the different hearing levels of audiences and provides multiple ways of engaging with the different modes of communication and identities on screen.



**Figure 4.6:** Subtitles for ASL and closed captions for spoken English in this family's home





**Figure 4.7:** Subtitles for ASL and closed captions for spoken English in this family's home

The subtitles are most effective when they appear close to signers. We are later shown the Garcia family at their son's potential new school, and open subtitles appear between the signers' bodies, maintaining our eye contact with their signed conversation (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).



**Figure 4.8:** Subtitles between bodies in a signed conversation





**Figure 4.9:** Subtitles between bodies in a signed conversation

Interposed with these real-life moments are narrative stages in which each parent individually or as a couple addresses the camera directly against an entirely white background. For those who sign, sometimes their signs are voice-interpreted, with closed captions showing that an interpreter is voicing for them.

At other times, open subtitles are integrated next to them in proximity to their eyes and signs. The open subtitles appear striking clear against the white background, as shown in the following captures (Figures 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12).



**Figure 4.10:** Strategic placement of subtitles in different spaces of the screen to embody meaning



**Figure 4.11:** Strategic placement of subtitles in different spaces of the screen to embody meaning



**Figure 4.12:** Strategic placement of subtitles in different spaces of the screen to embody meaning

Viewed through the embodied multimodal approach, the holistic documentary creates space for multiple styles of captions and subtitles and modes of access. Each style embodies the experiences and multimodal and multilingual communication practices of these DHH individuals while reflecting effective rhetorical and aesthetic principles of the documentary style and demonstrating awareness of the different ways that DHH and hearing audiences would engage with the program.

Here, I am reminded of Brueggemann's (2009, 2013) concept of "betweenity," particularly how people with different degrees of hearing loss may identify in different ways in the spaces between capitalized Deaf, lowercase deaf, and other aspects of our identities. While "attending to the value of being *between* worlds, words, languages, cultures even as we can be contained in each one" (Brueggemann, 2009, p. 24), we can, like Brueggemann, explore opportunities for better understanding culture, identity, and language across differences. The captions and subtitles in *Born This Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud* create paths towards deeper appreciation of commonalities and differences in communication—and especially how we can make the spaces between us more accessible.

While the televised documentary used a mix of captions and

subtitle styles, the online trailer (McFeely, 2018) that promoted the show embedded open, large, and stylized captions and subtitles throughout the entire trailer, including open captions for spoken English and for signs. These are shown in the following screenshots of the trailer (Figures 4.13, 4.14, and 4.15).



**Figure 4.13:** Strategic placement of larger and more visual subtitles for a trailer promoting *Born this Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud*



**Figure 4.14:** Strategic placement of larger and more visual subtitles for a trailer promoting *Born this Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud*



**Figure 4.15:** Strategic placement of larger and more visual subtitles for a trailer promoting *Born this Way Presents: Deaf: Out Loud*

The design of the large captions and subtitles in the online trailer reflects the visual nature of DHH experiences while embodying the accentuated visual nature of online media communication, effectively appealing to the viewer who might be watching on a mobile device regardless of hearing level.

By integrating stylized captions and subtitles, the trailer embodies the spirit of the documentary and its message to audiences: the value and diversity of being DHH with different communication practices and the power that comes when bringing DHH and hearing worlds together.

## **JUXTAPOSITION: CAPTIONING AND SUBTITLING DIFFERENT EMBODIED RHETORICS**

With appreciation of the many ways that DHH and hearing people communicate, I created this book and my videos to celebrate the potential for different subtitling and captioning approaches while highlighting the power of integral captions and subtitles. My video for this chapter in particular foregrounds how we can design words on screen to create access to different communication practices. I

encourage you to keep the value of different communication practices in mind as you play the video.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 4 video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/4sPbxPNjLIU> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

In this video, I discuss how *Born This Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud* uses different captioning and subtitling styles when D/deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing individuals sign and/or speak on screen. I integrate different styles of captions and subtitles, including integral subtitles near my face or upper body as well as replications of closed captions in front of me near the bottom of the screen. With each line, I move my signs closer to where the text appears on screen, as by when I sign near the captions that appear near the bottom of the screen. In doing so, I guide the viewer's gaze to the correct area of the screen to pay attention to and I reinforce my message about the value of communication access across modes.

In this case, I integrate subtitles into the space around me to embody my own practices as a Deaf scholar, but different creators who design videos certainly can create captions or subtitles that embody their own multimodal and multilingual practices, including when moving between languages or modes of communication. This multimodal movement will intensify throughout the next few chap-

ters of this book as we are inspired by programs with a variety of captions and subtitles.

## ***CRIP CAMP: A DISABILITY REVOLUTION— ACCESSING DIFFERENCES***

Just as *Deaf Out Loud* embodies the value of being Deaf, deaf, and hard-of-hearing and communicating through multiple modes, *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* (Lebrecht & Newnham, 2020) is a direct argument for the power that comes when people with disabilities connect and advocate for disability rights and transformation in society. The documentary, released by Netflix in 2020, centers on interviews with individuals who became central in the Disability Rights Movement during the 1970s.

While *Crip Camp* does not focus on those who advocated for closed captions, the advocates' work led to laws requiring closed captions. In this section, however, I want to focus on several moments in the documentary that integrated written text on screen to make individuals' even more messages accessible to audiences.

In this documentary, Denise Jacobson and Neil Jacobson are individuals with cerebral palsy who are fierce advocates for disability rights. Figures 4.16 and 4.17 show closed captions at the top of the screen in brackets indicating who is speaking. Along the side of the screen, captions are integrated to show sighted viewers Denise's words in textual form.





**Figure 4.16:** Open captions showing Denise's spoken English in textual form with closed captions showing that she is speaking



**Figure 4.17:** Open captions showing Denise's spoken English in textual form with closed captions showing that she is speaking

The captions are synchronized with her speech to make her message accessible to audiences. Figures 4.18 and 4.19 show how, as Denise shares her story on camera, open captions appear as large, synchronized words and phrases in temporal pacing with her speech. They are written across the screen next to her and also appear next to key images in the historical footage at other moments in the documentary.





**Figure 4.18:** Open captions appearing word by word in temporal pacing with Denise's speech



**Figure 4.19:** Open captions appearing word by word in temporal pacing with Denise's speech

To emphasize, in this documentary about disability rights and access, open captions are integrated in ways that embody her message *and* the value of access for audiences. This metaphorically echoes *Speechless*' integration of captions for a range of audiences. Juxtaposed side-by-side, these examples demonstrate the power of visual text in multimodal expression and connecting across differences to access each other.

## **THE COMPANY YOU KEEP: HEARING AND DEAF SPACE**

While the documentaries *Deaf Out Loud* and *Crip Camp* integrate captions and subtitles in ways that embody the value of multimodal access across differences, mainstream television programs can integrate captions and subtitles in rhetorically and aesthetically effective ways to express their messages to general audiences while embodying the value of accessible multimodal communication.

A more recent example comes in the form of ABC's *The Company You Keep*, which premiered in 2023. This network show with hearing characters features Milo Ventimiglia as the main male lead, Charlie Nicoletti (alongside the main female lead, a CIA agent played by Catherine Haena Kim), and Charlie's affectionate family of con artists, including his parents and sister. The youngest member of his family is his niece, Ollie, played by Shaylee Mansfield (who previously appeared in *Born this Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud* and has advocated for captions on social media as a Deaf person).

Throughout the beginning of the pilot episode (Cohen et al. & Younger, 2023), viewers follow Charlie and the adult members of his family in their activities. We are immediately drawn to them, essentially rooting for these likable characters. As Charlie explains in a later episode, the family only targets people who deserve to be conned.

Midway through the pilot episode, the camera brings us into his family's bar where several members of his family are present. While the characters have spoken in the entire episode up to this moment (with closed captions), the camera now shows two individuals who we soon come to understand are Charlie's niece, Ollie, and Charlie's father/Ollie's grandfather, Leo. This scene is remarkable for its natural integration of the Deaf character and subtitles in ways that quickly draw viewers into the everyday life of this family. We see the characters sign to each other with subtitles integrated into the space next to their faces and between them. The design effectively connects them with each other and viewers with performers,

instilling in all of us the strong sense of love that thrives in this family.

Making this introduction to Ollie even more salient is the topic of conversation as Leo and Ollie discuss magic tricks and Ollie makes a point of stating, “I can see the card in your hand.” Viewers likewise see her hands, which move right next to the subtitles—and we continue to see the hands of signers throughout this scene, as shown Figures 4.20 and 4.21.



**Figure 4.20:** Subtitles in *The Company You Keep* appearing next to Ollie and Leo as they sign, with closed captions showing that there is no audible dialogue



**Figure 4.21:** Subtitles in *The Company You Keep* appearing next to Ollie and Leo as they sign, with closed captions showing that there is no audible dialogue

Accessible multimodal communication intensifies when Charlie enters the bar with an urgent situation that moves the story forward, and we are shown the larger scene. Ollie's mother, Birdie, is at the bar and wants to get Ollie's attention. Leo supports that connection by drawing Ollie's attention to her mother.

Before Ollie leaves the area, she faces Charlie and signs to him with subtitles integrated in the space next to her, as shown in Figure 4.22.



**Figure 4.22:** Subtitles that appear right next to Ollie as she addresses her uncle

Charlie, who viewers up to this point did not know could sign, then signs back. The young girl then leaves the room, and the adults discuss the urgent situation in spoken English, and the episode proceeds with no mention of ASL or Deaf people, which further intensifies the integration of Deaf people as a natural component of their lives. Instead of artificially writing a forced comment about Ollie being Deaf or about ASL in the script to try to introduce her identity to hearing viewers, this show integrates subtitles and invites audiences into this family's accessible multimodal world of communication.

The integral subtitles strengthen audiences' connection with them through the design of space for subtitles that rhetorically and aesthetically enhance visual and multimodal access to their conversations and the embodied rhetorics of this multigenerational family that signs. This invitation appeals to viewers who would ideally return for the episodes that follow this pilot.

### *Returning to This Space*

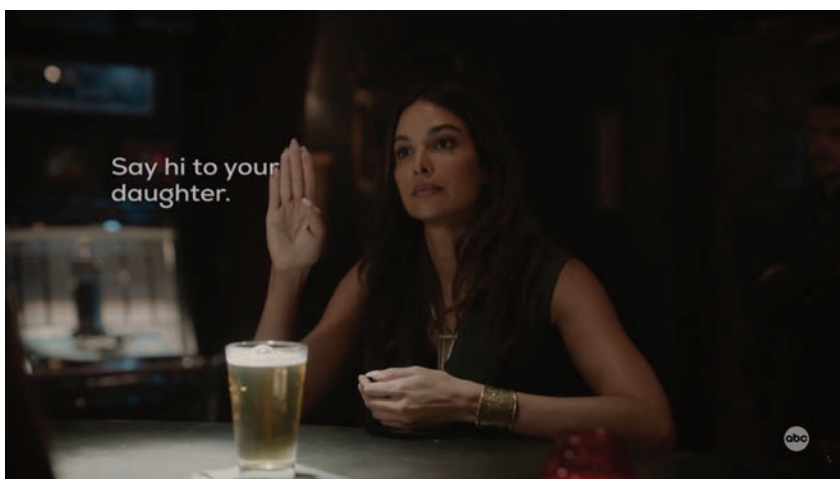
Viewers meet Ollie again in several scenes throughout the season's 10-episode run. The two episodes that follow the pilot integrate

subtitled scenes seamlessly as audiences are welcomed into these adult characters' everyday lives as hearing members of a family that has a Deaf child. The design and placement of subtitles alongside their bodies stitches these familial scenes into the fabric of the show.

The visual integration of subtitles in the space of the screen in the pilot episode makes more sense as the second episode (Cohen et al. & Mock, 2023) opens with the Nicoletti family pulling off a con; as each individual works from a different angle, highly stylized split screens and intercuts show viewers several characters at the same time within the same frame from different areas of the room and building. This visualization continues throughout the subsequent episodes as they carry out different cons. Likewise, when Charlie receives and sends text messages in this and later episodes, text message bubbles appear on the screen next to him.

The stylized visuals lead to only one instance of integrating subtitles right next to a signing character's face in the second episode—but this design is subtle and effective. At this point, the Nicoletti family are in debt to another crime family, and a leading member of the other crime family, Daphne, pays an ominous visit to their bar.

After verbally interacting with Birdie at the bar, Daphne silently signs, with integral subtitles appearing right next to her stern, immobile face and intense eye gaze, "Say hi to your daughter." The threat is immediately clear, as reinforced by the integration of the words right next to Daphne's facial expression, which enables sighted viewers to see word and intention at the same time (Figure 4.23).



**Figure 4.23:** Subtitles that stay near a threatening sign of greeting

After that threat, to which Birdie's facial expression clearly shows her emotional response, Charlie comes over and speaks, "Sign language. That's not necessary." Daphne responds, "Well, I just wanted to make sure I was being understood." Her intentions have indeed been understood more powerfully than they would have been through speech.

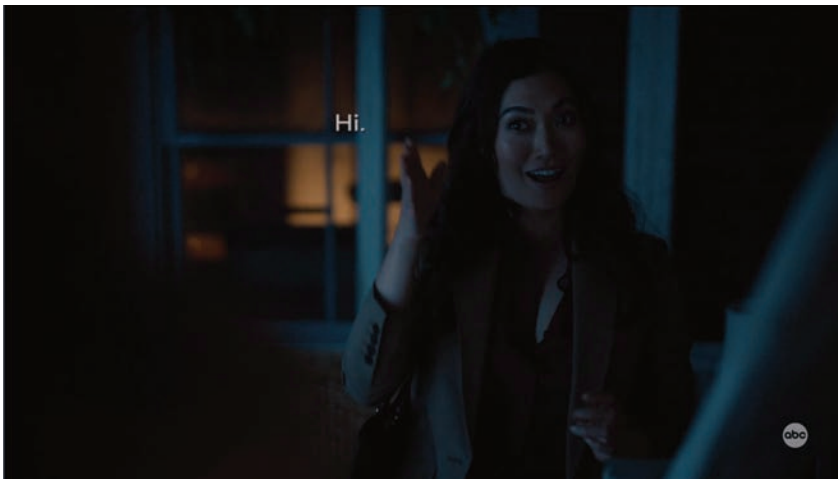
Importantly, Ollie is not portrayed as someone who needs help, and she claims her agency throughout this series. The next time Daphne enters the bar in the following episode, Ollie tricks Daphne by pretending to compliment her purse—with subtitles integrated next to her—while sneaking a tracking device into Daphne's purse, proving to us that Ollie is fully capable of sleights of hand and defending her family.

### *Stitching a Circle of Connections*

While Ollie appeared briefly in the second episode, her increased presence in the third episode (Cohen et al. & Straiton, 2023) leads to several scenes in which subtitles are integrated effectively around the space of the screen next to various characters' embodied language. This episode proves that it is rhetorically and aesthetically effective

to design a space for captions and subtitles in extended conversations with multiple performers. Through these scenes, the subtitles stitch together characters—and these scenes are in turn weaved seamlessly into the overall arc of the show itself.

Early in the second episode, Emma, the main female lead who is in a new relationship with Charlie, meets Ollie for the first time. She introduces herself using the signs that we have previously seen her practice with Charlie (Figure 4.24). The subtitles appear next to her, allowing the audience to read her words through embodied language and text while Ollie reads the words on her hands. (Later in the episode, Emma meets Ollie for the second time and introduces herself again with subtitles appearing in the same location next to her; this time her signs appear more fluently, as Ollie observes.) The contrast between Emma's smiling greeting and Daphne's unsmiling threat is apparent.



**Figure 4.24:** Subtitles that stay near a friendly sign of greeting

After Emma and Ollie meet for the first time, the following scene presents one of the most effective manifestations of the potential of integral captions and subtitles in stitching together characters with each other and with audiences as we are given the opportunity to experience this family's natural form of embodied communica-



tion in the presence of Ollie. While most scenes of the series show the adults speaking, they—and subtitles—seamlessly slide to ASL when they are with the Deaf member of their family.

What makes this scene stand out is how an extended conversation occurs with multiple characters, including characters joining the circle, and subtitles are always integrated into the space next to them, heightening the visual access to their embodied meaning. Audiences are not drawn away from their signs to words at the bottom of the screen but can stay with eyes, faces, and body language alongside text. Bodies and words are read at the same time. This is not a silent scene as the hearing characters variously use a mix of signs and speech, including by only signing when addressing Ollie directly or by signing and speaking at the same time.

The scene begins with Charlie and his sister Birdie, Ollie's mother, in their home verbally talking about their family's situation. Ollie comes in, catches the last thing they said, and signs with subtitles appearing, and staying, next to her as she walks into the room. Charlie responds by explaining that it's "grown-up stuff."

Ollie reveals that Charlie and Emma are in a relationship, which prompts Birdie to make comments to her brother about his love life. The adult siblings reignite their spoken conversation—but by speaking without signing, they are preventing their Deaf family member from accessing this conversation. In response, Ollie thumps the table and calls them out for being "rude" (Figures 4.25 and 4.26).



**Figure 4.25:** Reinforcing the importance of accessible communication

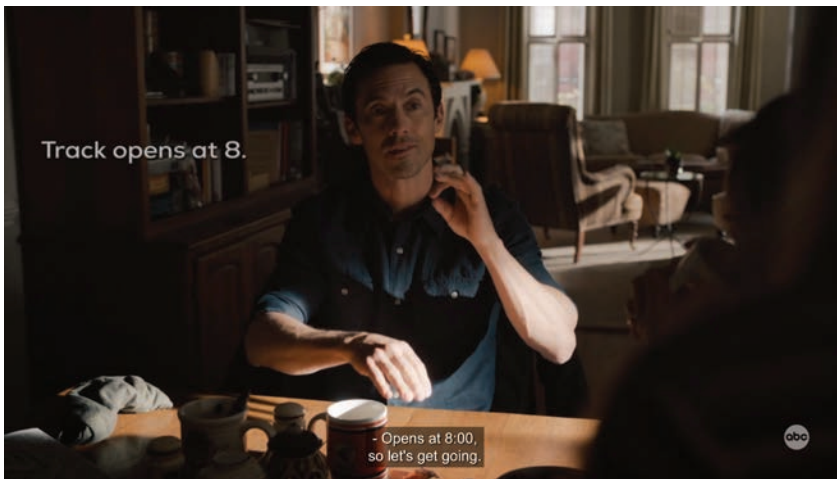


**Figure 4.26:** Reinforcing the importance of accessible communication

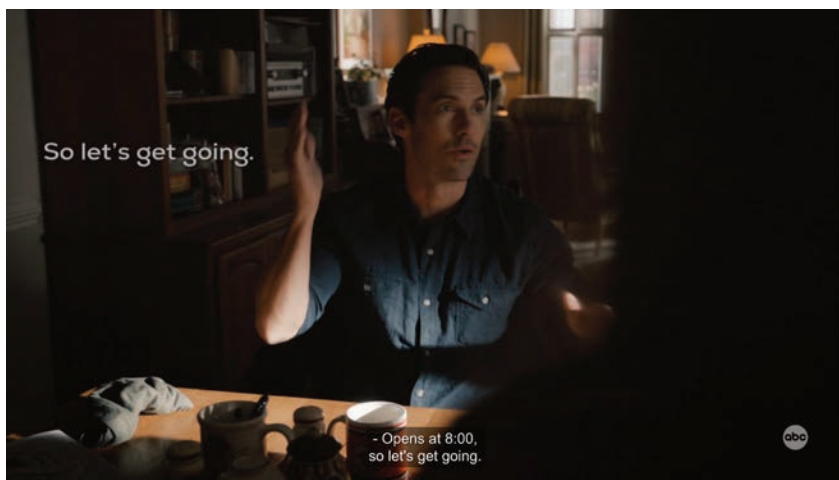
Charlie immediately signs “Sorry,” and Birdie signs directly to Ollie explaining that Charlie doesn’t realize that his love life is a “liability” for the family. At this point in the conversation, the siblings sign back and forth to each other with subtitles appearing next to each individual, which proves that they recognize the importance of signing even when addressing each other directly, so that Ollie can access their dialogue.

The conversation continues and deepens in its multilayered stitching of meaning as the siblings' parents enter the space. Leo catches the last thing that was said and asks what he missed. Ollie informs him, with subtitles appearing next to her, that Charlie has a girlfriend. Leo's surprised response is embodied through his mix of ASL (with subtitles integrated next to him) and spoken English.

The simultaneous expression of integrally subtitled ASL and spoken English is continued in Charlie's response as he changes the subject to remind them about their plans to go to the track (Figures 4.27 and 4.28)—and in Birdie's signed, spoken, and subtitled apology for what she said.



**Figure 4.27:** Subtitles and closed captions at the same time for a message that is being simultaneously signed and spoken



**Figure 4.28:** Subtitles and closed captions at the same time for a message that is being simultaneously signed and spoken

This scene is a major demonstration of the affordances of integrating subtitles in extended multi-person conversations as audiences become part of the circle of bodies in interaction. In just this one extended family conversation, we are shown that space has been designed for captions and subtitles and multiple modes of access for Ollie and audiences and we sense the embodied rhetorics and experiences of this family of hearing and Deaf individuals as they communicate through multiple modes and languages. The rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of the scene are heightened, not detracted from, as the show shows awareness of the ways that audiences could engage with this kindhearted family in this scene and with their stimulating story in this series.

The seamless integration of subtitled scenes into the fabric of the show stitches together the Nicoletti family's love for each other in their private family scenes with the dynamic exploits of these family members in the world. Throughout other scenes of the show, heightened visuals include text message bubbles on screen, tweets that appear as bubbles on screen, and—in this episode at a horse track—cash values that are visualized through green text on screen above the bodies of bettors and odds that are visualized through white text. Their multilingual conversations are a natural part of

their lives and this show, a sense that is reinforced by the episode's transition from the family conversation to the next scene: right after the family conversation, we join them at the horse track and begin with Ollie and her grandfather signing (with subtitles next to them), then we proceed with the main storyline in the hearing world.

### ***Intentional Inaccessibility***

The accessibility and interdependence of the Nicoletti family's integrally subtitled conversations stands in contrast with exclusively spoken scenes, as in short scenes in later episodes. These short, subtitled scenes reinforce distance rather than connection.

The physical separation between speakers and subtitles exists with other spoken languages in this show. In one episode (Cohen et al. & Huertas, 2023a), Daphne, a leading member of a crime family, is with two male members of another crime family. The scene opens with the three of them speaking in English. At one moment, one of the two male characters adds a private comment to his uncle in Mandarin, with the closed captions saying “[speaks Mandarin].” When he speaks and when his uncle answers with a curt request to stop talking, subtitles appear at the bottom of the screen. After this brief exchange, they resume speaking in English with Daphne.

In another episode (Cohen et al. & Mastro, 2023b; Episode 6), Birdie is at a party in which the attendees listen to an opera singer and no subtitles appear to provide access to the language of the singer, reflecting the attendees' lack of familiarity with the language. In a later episode (Cohen et al. & Mastro, 2023a; Episode 8), Emma, a CIA agent, is in disguise as a criminal meeting with another criminal. During this conversation in English at an outside table on a sidewalk, she momentarily speaks Korean on her phone. The subtitles are placed at the bottom of the screen closer to the characters' feet under the table, a distance that reinforces the distance created by her conversation in Korean, which the other person is not meant to be able to access.

The traditional approach in these scenes contrasts with the integration of subtitles in signed scenes in other episodes. In these

spoken scenes, the aural message is purposefully not meant to be understood by the other person in the space or the others in the space are clearly not fluent in the language. Conversely, the signed scenes reinforce a community of access—and communication access occurs through interdependence and multiple modes of engagement with each other.

### *The Tangible Nature of Familial Connections*

Ollie remains a recurring character in several episodes, and when she does appear, it is in scenes that reinforce the family's love for each other. Throughout the second half of the season, the familial connections amongst the Nicoletti are intensified through the integration of subtitles in the spaces they share.

The placement of subtitles shows us their eye gaze and embodied connections, shown in a pivotal episode that introduces us to Ollie's father (Cohen et al. & Mastro 2023a). To help the family carry out an art con, Birdie reaches out to her ex-boyfriend, Simon, who she has not seen in eight years and who Ollie is not aware is her father. After the adults succeed in their mission, two back-to-back scenes with integral subtitles bring audiences into the emotions of these characters and their desire to connect with each other.

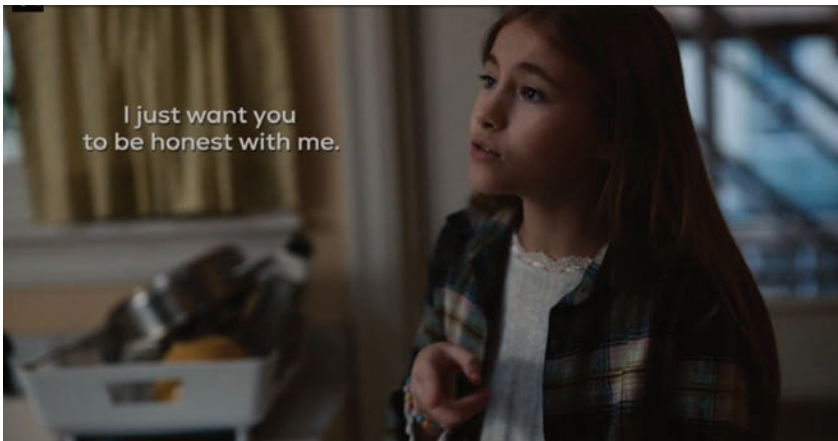
Near the end of the episode, Birdie, Charlie, and Simon are wrapping things up in the bar basement. Simon notices Ollie spying on them and recognizes her as his daughter right away. Simon signs, "Hi, I'm S-I-M-O-N," as each letter appears one by one on screen with a hyphen in between reflecting his slow fingerspelling. This contrasts with Emma's more fluid spelling of her name the first time she met Ollie. The subtitles stay by Simon's hand, including as the camera switches to show us Charlie's realization that Ollie is there. This allows viewers to see two things at the same time: Simon signing and Charlie seeing Ollie.

The adults' concern is profound because up to this point, Ollie has not been in the basement, the place where they work on their cons, and Ollie has not been told that the adult family members are con artists. The concern becomes further evident when, after Ollie

introduces herself to Simon, Birdie walks in the middle of the two physically severing their connection. As she signs to Ollie, her body and words block her and us from Simon.

Ollie then stomps off and Birdie pursues her, leaving the two men in the basement. Simon remarks on how beautiful his daughter is, and Charlie rebuts by emphasizing that Ollie is smart, too. Charlie asks Simon how long he's been signing and Simon explains that he's been taking classes online: "I'm clearly not fluent, but I'm working on it." Audiences can recognize this through the subtitles that reflected his slow progression.

Although Birdie created a physical barrier in the basement, the next scene shows Ollie and her in the interdependent process of working together to be honest and trust each other. They are in their kitchen, engaging in an extended signed, silent, and subtitled conversation in which they maintain eye contact and clearly express their emotions and struggles. Their clear expression of their emotions is evident when Ollie asks her mother to be honest with her, and subtitles are integrated near her face just below the direction of her eye gaze as she looks at her mother (Figure 4.29).



**Figure 4.29:** Direct eye gaze being reinforced through the placement of subtitles

Through this mother and daughter's commitment to open and honest communication with each other and subtitles that stay with



each signer's facial expressions and body language, we are shown how Birdie works to overcome her hesitancy and allow herself to answer Ollie's questions directly with the truth about what the family does and how they, in Ollie's words, steal from others.

Their connection continues as Birdie agrees to tell "no more lies" and Ollie asks if Simon is her father (Figures 4.30 and 4.31).



**Figure 4.30:** Eye contact between characters supported by the placement of subtitles



**Figure 4.31:** Eye contact between characters supported by the placement of subtitles



The placement of the subtitles maintains the connection between them **and** our connection with them as we sense their emotions. After asking about her father, Ollie closes her eyes momentarily and sighs deeply, which is sensed immediately thanks to the placement of the subtitles near her face.

Birdie succinctly nods, and Ollie then nods in recognition, then, with emotion evident on her face and hands as she prepares to ask her next question, we feel her emotions (Figure 4.32).



**Figure 4.32:** Ollie's emotions being made apparent through the placement of her words next to her eyes

Birdie honestly tells her daughter that she's not sure yet, and Ollie goes to her for a hug. After this extended process of reading their heartfelt emotions on their faces and the subtitles near their eyes and hands, we feel what they feel in this honest, touching conversation between mother and daughter.

### *Look at This*

Subsequent episodes continue the meaningful integration of subtitles around characters in this close-knit family. Several scenes show the characters connecting with each other as subtitles are placed next to signers, including right in front of other characters in the scene. By placing subtitles in conversations amongst several charac-

ters, we are shown all members of this family and their connections with each other.

As an example, in one scene (Cohen et al. & Armaganian, 2023), Charlie and Birdie are next to each other in the bar, and Birdie signs to Ollie. We see Birdie and Charlie from Ollie's perspective, and the subtitles are placed in front of Charlie, who is next to Birdie. This does not interfere with the composition because we read the words in front of Charlie's body and Charlie likewise is reading Birdie's signs. We essentially become Ollie as we connect with Birdie and Charlie at the same time. Beyond the storyline, the design of these subtitles shows us that subtitles can—when designed in rhetorically and aesthetically effective ways—theoretically be placed anywhere in a multimodal and multilingual conversation near, around, and in front of bodies in connection.

The connection between these family members reaches an especially aesthetic and poignant moment when subtitles stay on screen through two shots, tying together two signers through one message (Figures 4.33 and 4.34). This scene places Ollie and her father at one side of the bar counter with Birdie and Charlie at the other side of the bar counter. Ollie and her father head out together and Ollie waves goodbye to her mother using the ASL sign for “I love you,” waving her hand back and forth while signing “I love you.” In the next shot, Birdie signs “I love you” back. While these two moments are two separate shots or frames, the subtitles remain the exact same location on screen, magnetizing the two slices into one cohesive message of love and connection between mother and daughter.



**Figure 4.33:** The fixed location of “I love you” on screen across shots stitching together mother and daughter



**Figure 4.34:** The fixed location of “I love you” on screen across shots stitching together mother and daughter

This enduring message of love is written on screen across two shots. The metaphorical embrace of mother and daughter is intensified by the message’s near-central placement on screen. To experience the literal centrality of subtitles, we can end with the season’s final episode.

The analysis of *The Company You Keep* can conclude with one

final subtitled moment during the show's final episode (Cohen et al. & Huertas, 2023b). In this scene, Ollie has discovered a key document and shows the document to her mother. Subtitles are placed at the center of the screen underneath the document that Ollie holds (Figure 4.35). Sighted eyes remain at the center of the screen with the subtitles and the document.



**Figure 4.35:** “Look at this” at the center of the screen.

The group of words, “Look at this,” suggests where to place our eyes. This warrants a look at the possibilities for connecting through words and embodiments at the center of our conversations.

Through the many meaningfully subtitled scenes in *The Company We Keep*, viewers join the warm company of this loving family and recognize the effectiveness of the subtitles. With the embodied multimodal approach in mind, we can discern how the series reveals that space can certainly be designed for captions and subtitles and access. A major revelation of this show is its warm incorporation of subtitles in family conversations with multiple bodies, and the subtitles’ placement in front of, around, and next to bodies that are in close proximity to each other.

Through the design, the subtitles enhance visual and multiple modes of access to these conversations, including their conflicts and their connections. We directly experience their embodied rhetorics as they communicate through their eyes, smiles, and love for each

other. They embody multimodal and multilingual communication *and* embody the series' rhetorical and aesthetic qualities for us audience members. The dynamic visual nature of the show about pulling cons and winning people over shows awareness of how we audience members could engage with the characters and be charmed by the familial community they have formed. We ultimately connect with them and their world of communication across subtitles, signs, and sincerity.

## INTEGRATING CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES IN OUR LIVES

Throughout this chapter, we have been brought into different spaces where multiple identities and communication practices are embodied through integral captions and subtitles. Interactions and connections occur between real individuals, actors, and characters—and this extends the reality of our lives, as reflected in actress and advocate Mansfield's creations on social media. Many of her videos on social media incorporate written text in apparent ways on screen to embody the value of captions, both when she actively calls for better access to captions and when she incorporates them naturally as necessary components of an accessible video.

While a review of the many social media videos that she has created and appeared in since she was very young is beyond the scope of this book, the videos she posted around the time that *The Company You Keep* aired on NBC reflect how captions and access are innate, intrinsic values in her life and culture and how captions and access should be valued by all in society. In a video posted on Instagram (Mansfield, 2023b), she shows viewers what it is like to be a Deaf actress and introduces viewers to different parts of the sound-stage, including her trailer.

Through visual text embedded on screen, she shows viewers that interpreters are not only for her, but for all hearing individuals involved with the production as well. Most notably, she introduces CJ Jones, a Deaf actor and ASL consultant for the show (Figures 4.36 and 4.37).



**Figure 4.36:** Shaylee Mansfield and CJ Jones in an Instagram video with subtitles.



**Figure 4.37:** Shaylee Mansfield and CJ Jones in an Instagram video with subtitles.

The video describes how CJ is serving as an ASL consultant for the show. They then list out numbers on their hands while captions



on screen describe different aspects of his job, including teaching hearing actors ASL (Figures 4.38 and 4.39).



**Figure 4.38:** Shaylee Mansfield and CJ Jones explaining his job through words on screen.





**Figure 4.39:** Shaylee Mansfield and CJ Jones explaining his job through words on screen.

This part of Mansfield's video gives viewers a backstage look at the world behind the show and those individuals who contribute to ensuring that ASL is represented authentically on screen. At the

same time, the incorporation of visual text closer to the center of the screen—including subtitles for signs and captions for words that she does not sign—reinforces the value of designing a space for captions and subtitles on screen and connecting across cultures and languages in our lives.

## INTEGRATING OUR WORLDS OF COMMUNICATION

The integral captions and subtitles in *Deaf Out Loud*, *Crip Camp*, and *The Company You Keep* reflect the design of variously shared spaces for embodied rhetorics and communication practices. These integrally captioned and subtitled programs draw audiences immediately into the lives of different individuals and embodiments, and in doing so, underscore how we all live in a world of differences and commonalities. As we express our embodiments, we can connect and access each other. Just like these media, video creators can continue to design a space for integral captions and subtitles that embody our identities and the value of accessible multimodal communication in our communities and shared world. At the same time, we can celebrate the affordances of closed captions and other strategies for connecting across differences.

## INTERDEPENDENCE AND CONNECTIONS IN NEW AMSTERDAM: A CASE STUDY

While the previous chapters centered on integral captions and subtitles as the epitome of embodied accessible multimodal communication, it is imperative to recognize that highly aesthetic and stylized design of captions and subtitles may not be feasible or appropriate in certain contexts. Our world is full of contexts and media in which closed captions and open captions and subtitles at the bottom of the screen are rhetorically and aesthetically effective. Captions and subtitles might not be placed next to characters' faces or appear in temporal synchronization with speech or signs, but they certainly embody the value of accessible multimodal communication.

This chapter presents a case study of a significant example in which two characters on a mainstream television show engage in the *interdependent* process of learning to communicate with each other; concurrently, the audiences engage in this interdependent process through accessing closed captions and open subtitles at the bottom of the screen and other visuals on screen.

In the multilayered scenes of NBC's *New Amsterdam*, how the characters communicate with each other through multiple modes of meaning embodies the reality of our lives as we work together to

understand and empathize with each other across languages and differences.

The six criteria of the embodied multimodal approach are synthesized throughout this case study:

1. Space for Captions and Subtitles and Access
2. Visual or Multiple Modes of Access
3. Embodied Rhetorics and Experiences
4. Multimodal (including Multilingual) Communication
5. Rhetorical and Aesthetic Principles
6. Audience Awareness

This chapter's analysis of the progression of the relationship between two characters in *New Amsterdam* reflects the interdependent reality of our lives as we bridge meaning across modes, technologies, and languages. Like Dr. Max Goodwin and Dr. Elizabeth Wilder, we can accept the challenges of designing access and the possibilities for forming deeper connections across multiple modes of engagement with each other.

## **NEW AMSTERDAM: SETTING THE SCENE**

*New Amsterdam* is a hospital-centered show (and the name of the hospital) that aired on NBC for five seasons starting in 2018 and stars Ryan Eggold as Dr. Max Goodwin. Over the first four seasons, audiences watch Max advocate for the rights of his patients as he loses his wife and falls in love with a colleague, Dr. Helen Sharpe (played by Freema Agyeman), only to have Helen abruptly abandon him and leave the country.

At the beginning of the fourth season, viewers are introduced to Dr. Elizabeth Wilder, a Deaf oncologist played by Sandra Mae Frank, who is Deaf. While Frank initially appears in only three episodes in the first half of the fourth season, she appears in the entire back half of the fourth season in the last 11 episodes and becomes a full-time character for the entirety of the 13-episode fifth and final season.

Throughout the fourth and fifth seasons, Wilder interacts directly with the other characters at New Amsterdam with the presence of Ben Meyer, her designated interpreter (played by Conner Marx). Her colleagues, patients, and others address her directly with Ben in the background voicing Elizabeth's signs and signing their spoken words. This portrayal modeled effective communication across ASL and English in real life, and closed captions could be turned on by viewers to access the spoken English.

At the start of the fifth season, a remarkable progression begins to occur as Wilder and Goodwin communicate more frequently and grow closer. In tandem with the growth of their friendship is the increased use of multiple modes of communication on screen, and the layers of modes of meaning on screen aesthetically and rhetorically capture the interdependent process of working together to create access in dialogue.

An analysis of interdependence in these two characters' relationship reflects key points from the opening chapters of this book, including how "we all rely on other human beings in various ways through different relationalities" (Gonzales & Butler, 2020) and how interdependence involves "our commitment to collective access—i.e., access not just for [other individuals] alone, or for us alone, but for all of us together" (Price & Kerschbaum, 2016, p. 28). Through what Kerschbaum (2014) calls answerable engagement, characters and we recognize how we are all "accountable to one another and willing to step forward not only to acknowledge but also to engage difference" (p. 119).

By studying scenes between Goodwin and Wilder in progression together and recognizing these experiences in our own lives, a reality is demonstrated: our screens are replications of our lives and authentic representation of communication—including the challenges—can intensify our appreciation for how each one of us works together to support each other and our shared commitment to learning from each other across differences.

## FORMING CONNECTIONS AND INTERDEPENDENCE

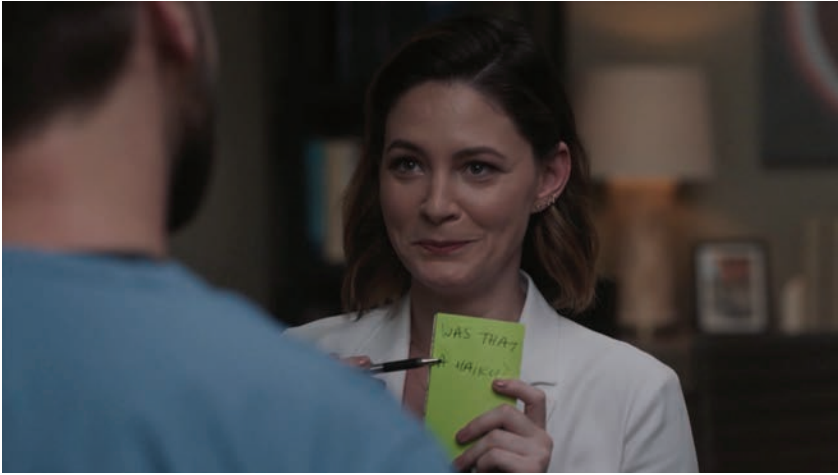
While Max and Elizabeth interact on a regular basis throughout the previous season, often with Ben interpreting, Episode 2 of Season 5 creates the first subtitled scene in which audiences begin to sense the connection being formed between Max and Elizabeth.

In this scene during “Hook, Line, and Sinker” (Ginsburg et al. & Denysenko, 2022), Max comes to Elizabeth’s office committed to addressing her directly and meaningfully. He starts to sign without voice, and subtitles appear on screen so that sighted viewers can access his signs (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). He starts signing, “I am...,” and then immediately mis-signs one word with the subtitles showing him signing “nf@z;v#n[e.” After that he signs, “we are...” and “football.” The subtitles appeal to viewers by making us sense Max’s earnestness as well as the humor that occurs when attempting to learn a new language.

Elizabeth, with the embodied knowledge of Deaf people who regularly use different strategies to communicate with hearing people, responds by writing on a sticky note, “Was that a haiku?” and showing the sticky note to Max with a smile.



**Figure 5.1:** Max’s miscommunication to Elizabeth embodied in garbled subtitles and remedied through writing in *New Amsterdam*



**Figure 5.2:** Max’s miscommunication to Elizabeth embodied in garbled subtitles and remedied through writing in *New Amsterdam*

Max verbally answers in the negative and Elizabeth laughs, as the closed captions show. After Elizabeth offers the pen and paper to Max for him to write, he declines, saying “I don’t want to use this,” wanting to make his signed message clear to her.

Trying again, his signs improve as the subtitles show. However, instead of signing, “football,” this time, he signs, “hamburger.” She explains his mistake to him and shows him the sign for FRIEND. The scene ends with both of them signing the word “friend” without captions or subtitles.

This is their first moment of direct connection, and the captions and subtitles reinforce audiences’ recognition of their interdependence as they communicate through spoken English, signs, and text that was literally written down.

The next episode, “Big Day,” (Valdivia et al. & Carbonell, 2022) ends with a meaningful scene between Max and Elizabeth that shows yet another interdependent strategy that can be used to connect through visual text and multiple modes of communication. After a challenging day at work, Max and Elizabeth are seated outside the hospital at night. Despondent, Max uses his phone to write a message that he then shows to Elizabeth. While Max holds his phone for Elizabeth to read the message, the message appears as

a blue bubble akin to a real text message in the space between their bodies.

Through this aesthetic and rhetorical integration (Figures 5.3 and 5.4), the visual text shows viewers not only the message being written and read, but also turns us into Elizabeth herself. Like her, we are reading the message, directly connected to Max, who is physically next to the phone.

Continuing the exchange, Elizabeth uses the same phone to write her response and shows Max. The proximity of this message in between Max's face and the phone means that we are like Max reading the message *and* are like Elizabeth seeing Max's facial reaction. Through this integration of the message, we directly connect with both characters and their despondence after a rough day at work.



**Figure 5.3:** Text message bubbles that show how Max and Elizabeth write and read their messages to each other in real time





**Figure 5.4:** Text message bubbles that show how Max and Elizabeth write and read their messages to each other in real time

After this exchange, Elizabeth signs to Max that he should go and hug his daughter. He copies her signs and speaks, “Go?” and “hug,” and then turns off his voice and emulates her in finger-spelling his daughter’s name as the letters appear one by one in open subtitles on screen. This joint spelling of Luna connects them and viewers as well.

When evaluating any captioned or subtitled scene, the choices that writers and creators may have made when developing a scene should also be dissected. The fourth episode of the fifth season of *New Amsterdam*, “Heal Thyself,” (Foster et al. & Martin, 2022) included a storyline in which Elizabeth required surgery that would prevent her from operating for several weeks, yet she miraculously was recovered by the next episode and this storyline was not mentioned again. Throughout the episode, she understandably was resistant to having the surgery because of the temporary loss of use of her hands. After she realizes the need for the surgery sooner rather than later, the episode ends with her in her hospital bed post-surgery, Max by her side.

In his commitment to making communication accessible for Elizabeth, Max has created a form of a communication board with words on the whiteboard. Max signs, with subtitles showing his

steady pace as he commits to signing clearly, “I... will... be... your... hands. If you want.” The scene, and episode, ends with Max seated next to Elizabeth, placing his hand on her shoulder. The subtitles in this scene embody Max’s earnest commitment to ensuring communication access for Elizabeth and his growing use of ASL without spoken English. In addition to this visualization of interdependence, the final frame shows Max’s hand literally on Elizabeth as their connection becomes ever more direct.

While previous episodes ended with conversations between Max and Elizabeth, the sixth episode, “Give Me a Sign” (Legere et al. & Lee, 2022), opens with Max and Elizabeth running together on city streets. Elizabeth occasionally signs some phrases with no subtitles. The focus is not on the actual conversation but rather, the connection between the two as they run and music plays in the background. When they stop at a riverfront spot, Max signs, “You okay?” with subtitles as they catch their breath.

Elizabeth replies, “Yeah.” Then she adds, “You?” The second word shows up next to the first word to become one, as opposed to two separate thoughts. She starts running, and they continue to run into the next scene.

In contrast to their first dialogue in this episode (which includes only subtitles), the final scene of this episode shows how the layers of captions and subtitles can create different meanings for viewers who might be reading the closed captions and viewers who might have the closed captions turned off.

As part of the storyline for this episode Max and others are in the middle of painting a street crosswalk, and Elizabeth shows up to contribute. She signs, “How can I help?” Max, who is holding paint rollers, speaks since his hands are occupied. His spoken statements show up as captions: “You can help...” “there.” He then asks, “Shall we?”

She signs, “After you.” For viewers who have the closed captions on, the subtitles appear above the closed captions that are still on the screen for “Shall we?” This juxtaposition creates different meanings for different viewers, since those who are reading the closed

captions will see the two words side by side just as the two of them are facing each other side by side.

At the same time, the layering of spoken English (with and without closed captions) and subtitled ASL shows that it is possible to connect through multiple languages. This connection is reflected throughout this episode when Max and Elizabeth's colleague, Iggy, a psychiatrist, treats a deaf child who has experienced language deprivation syndrome, introduces Elizabeth as a successful deaf surgeon to the child's parents. Iggy also provides them with resources for bilingual (ASL-English) education. Iggy advises the parents, "Unfortunately, medicine—our world—is still very much filtered through an able-bodied perspective." This articulates the value of appreciating different embodiments and the intrinsic need for communication and language that we have.

## **VISUAL, TEXTUAL, EMBODIED CONNECTIONS**

As the season progresses, the show relatively realistically represents the time that it takes to learn a new language as Max works steadily to communicate through ASL. In Max and Elizabeth's first scene together in Episode 8, "All the World's a Stage..." (Palmer et al. & Leiterman, 2022), Max enters Elizabeth's office with coffee for both of them—but she also has two cups of coffee. He speaks and signs, "Great minds," with closed captions representing his speech. Elizabeth signs, "Think alike," with subtitles showing her signs (Figures 5.5 and 5.6).



**Figure 5.5:** Closed captions showing what Max speaks, and open subtitles showing how Elizabeth finishes his thought through ASL



**Figure 5.6:** Closed captions showing what Max speaks, and open subtitles showing how Elizabeth finishes his thought through ASL

In true interdependent spirit, the two of them create complementary parts of a sentence through two languages, and audiences can engage with that through spoken English or closed captions and open subtitles.

Audiences once again join them in the use of different strategies and technologies to communicate, especially when Max then takes

out his phone to text a more complicated message, and Elizabeth writes her own text back (Figures 5.7 and 5.8). Through this rhetorical and aesthetic design, audiences stay connected with the characters in proximity as blue bubbles for the texts appear next to their bodies.



**Figure 5.7:** Text message bubbles that show their conversation with each other, and closed captions showing what Max says at the same time



**Figure 5.8:** Text message bubbles that show their conversation with each other, and closed captions showing what Max says at the same time

Their direct connection is further sensed through the final part of this conversation as they switch to ASL, shown in subtitles. Lest audiences presume that they will always communicate directly with each other, a scene later in the same episode shows Ben interpreting for the two of them. If audiences wonder about the show's intention for Max and Elizabeth, we start to get an answer in the final scene, a scene that encapsulates the multimodal nature of communication as well as the challenges of connecting with each other.

In this final scene, both are in Elizabeth's office working on a medical document. After they complete the document, we see words typed out one by one on the computer screen: "And someone thought this would be a snoozefest." Elizabeth and audiences then see the next word that Max types out: "Dinner?" The typed words essentially serve as captions.

Elizabeth signs, "Like a date," shown in subtitles. However, Max does not understand, so she types it out for him and us: "Like a date?"

He reads the screen, and utters, "Oh. Uh...", then looks at her directly and speaks, "Yeah, like a date."

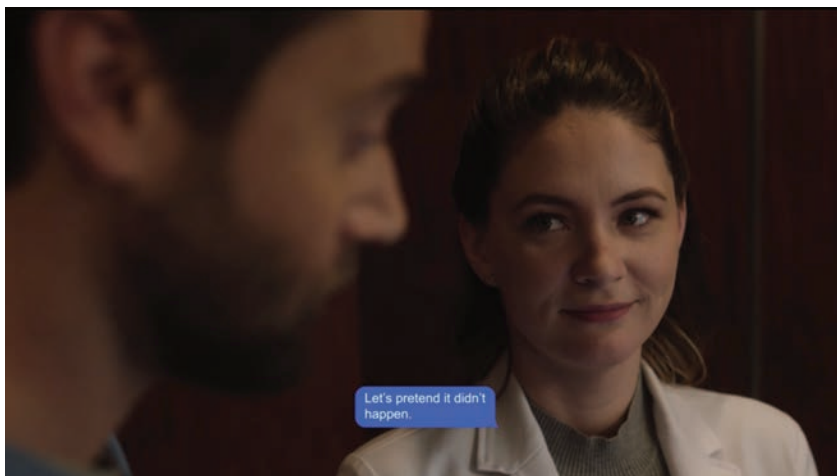
She signs back, "No."

To understand why she declines requires waiting until the next episode, but this scene shows several modes of communication in the same space, including text on a computer screen that characters and viewers are shown at the same time. The text on a computer screen becomes captions and reflects the strategies used in real life to connect with each other through embodied and technological modes.

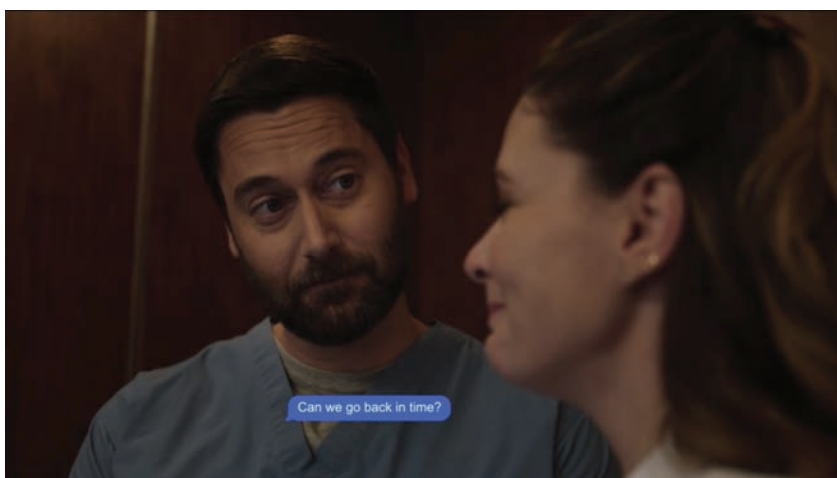
The challenges of forming connections with others and the value of working to understand each other are sensed in the ninth episode, which is called "The Empty Spaces" for a reason that soon becomes apparent. Elizabeth and Max's first scene together finds them in a hospital elevator with subtitles showing Max signing how he learned "I am sorry" in his ASL class. It seems like he is making progress until he signs, "I made things very... puppet."

She smiles and tells him it's fine and that she's glad that he is

learning ASL. Viewers see her meaning through the subtitles, but he is still learning and does not capture her meaning.



**Figure 5.9:** Text message bubbles that show how they work to connect through the phone



**Figure 5.10:** Text message bubbles that show how they work to connect through the phone





**Figure 5.11:** Text message bubbles that show how they work to connect through the phone

She takes out her phone and they text back and forth, as shown in Figures 5.9 and 5.10. The third screen capture in this sequence (Figure 5.11) shows their hands together on her phone.

However, while prior episodes showed them connecting through their phones, the feeling is different in this episode, as embodied in Elizabeth's face when Max struggles to understand her signs. This lack of direct communication intensifies in the final scene of this episode when Elizabeth's face shows clear disappointment when Max takes out his phone to write a message. Max's text shows clearly that there is "something" between the two of them, and Elizabeth agrees, which leads Max to ask why she is pushing him away (Figure 5.12).





**Figure 5.12:** Max's emotional question being shown through a text message bubble

In response, Elizabeth signs an eloquent message that is fully subtitled for audiences to access (thereby accomplishing the scene's rhetorical purpose and appealing to audiences' emotions). However, Max's face clearly shows that he does not understand her signs and in essence misses her point.

When he asks her to slow down, she signs, "I don't want to slow down for you. For anyone . . . I can't be with someone who doesn't know my language. I know you're learning ASL." She adds, "And it's so endearing. And often hilarious."

She explains, that, since he doesn't fully know ASL, she can't share everything she's feeling with him in a way that he'll fully understand. She says that while she feels everything between them, she also feels "the empty spaces." She doesn't want to live and fall in love in "an empty space," as shown in the following capture (Figure 5.13).



**Figure 5.13:** Elizabeth's eloquent signed message being shown to audiences through subtitles

After that eloquently signed message, Max responds that he's sorry but he didn't get "all of that." Elizabeth signs back, "I know."

With that exchange, and lack of communication, audiences access Elizabeth's embodied rhetorics. We sense her powerfully signed message and what Elizabeth is feeling: how Max did not understand what she said and what we understood. We are one with her as we sense the missed connection, the empty space where participants in a dialogue cannot access each other's meaning. The open subtitles continue to reflect an awareness of the multiple ways that audiences could engage with Elizabeth's emotions: those who don't know ASL can access her language through subtitles and through her facial expressions and embodied performance, while those who know ASL could access the language through watching her directly. Yet all can sense her eloquence and desire for someone to fully know her.

Elizabeth's emotional appeal at the end of the ninth episode is an effective dramatic set-up for a full exploration of her feelings about her role at *New Amsterdam* in the subsequent episode. The 10<sup>th</sup> episode, "Don't Do This for Me" (Foster et al. & Voegeli, 2022), begins in Max's office as he engages in a signed and spoken conver-

sation with his ASL instructor, who congratulates him on his progress; she then asks him where he got his “motivation.”

Not coincidentally, as soon as she asks that question, Elizabeth enters the office and, with firm conviction, signs to Max, telling him, “Don’t do this for me.” She leaves without giving him the chance to respond, and as she departs, audiences are given a moment of levity. Max’s ASL instructor asks him, “Did you get that?” In response, Max signs and speaks his answer, “Oh, yeah. No, I got that one. Crystal clear.”

With this opening scene, we sense the conflict, which prepares us for the main storyline of this episode for Elizabeth. Her mentor from medical school, played by Marlee Matlin, is opening a new medical school for deaf people. She invites Elizabeth to teach there and become a mentor for the next generation of deaf doctors. Matlin’s character emphasizes that at the medical school, Elizabeth would be with other deaf individuals. Elizabeth deliberates this offer throughout the episode.

Midway through the episode, Elizabeth reaches out to Max from across a common area at the hospital and signs (with subtitles) asking to talk. Once they enter his office, Elizabeth begins with a professional stance as she signs with Ben voicing and informs Max that she is leaving. Max, in response, asks that they be alone.

After Ben departs, Max signs to Elizabeth and asks her if this is really what she wants, and he emphasizes that he is asking about *her* (as opposed to what she thinks she should do). He adds that he’s not learning ASL “for you,” but “because of you.” He continues, “When our hospital interacts with you... we realize... what we thought were your limits... were actually our own.” He adds, “I see you.”

Through this scene, Max shows the value of differences and embodies access not as something for one individual, but rather as a process that everyone engages in to learn from each other, see each other, and grow as individuals in the interdependence process of connection (as shown in Figures 5.14 and 5.15).



**Figure 5.14:** Max and Elizabeth signing—with subtitles—to show that Elizabeth is seen at the hospital



**Figure 5.15:** Max and Elizabeth signing—with subtitles—to show that Elizabeth is seen at the hospital

By the end of the episode and their shift at the hospital, Elizabeth has made the decision to stay and informs her mentor, “Here they do see me.” She then catches up with Max as he starts to leave the hospital to tell him, “I’m staying.” She then asks him to take her home.

However, in a dramatic twist, Max hears—and the closed

captions show—his ex-fiancé, Dr. Helen Sharpe talking on the television set in the hospital corridor about how she is back in New York City. The episode ends with this dramatic pause as audiences are left with the uncertainty of what will happen next.

## **SOMETHING REAL**

Audiences continue to sense the duo's connections, and missed connections, through a mix of technologies and modes. Light humor is created as it becomes clear that Ben, the interpreter, wants to avoid the awkward personal situation between Elizabeth and Max. In their first scene together in the antepenultimate episode, "Falling" (Mansour et al. & Horton, 2023), Max meets up with Elizabeth and Ben in a hospital corridor. Max asks Ben to stay and interpret because, as Max says verbally, "I'm just a little more clear when I'm not using the wrong words, or, uh, unintentionally swearing." This indeed reflects a reality of multilingual communication as we all work hard to ensure that we express ourselves clearly through a different language, especially one that we are learning.

However, as Elizabeth has shown us throughout the last few episodes—particularly when showing how she does not want to fall in love in an empty space—she wants to communicate directly with Max. She asks Max to not "include Ben in our private conversations," which Ben voices. Subtitles then appear when Elizabeth signs, "If there's something you want to tell me, you say it," as in, sign it. Ben departs and Max signs to Elizabeth about how his ex-girlfriend is not in his life anymore and that Elizabeth is. He asks her if that made sense and she shares her own story of avoiding an ex. It turns out that he was indeed clear. Through this subtitled conversation, they extend bridges to each other.

Later in the episode, Max and Elizabeth have a signed and subtitled conversation in which Max shows Elizabeth text messages from his ex-girlfriend asking to meet up. He tells Elizabeth that he is not going to see his ex-girlfriend, but she tells him to "look at her" and then decide what he really wants. The importance of looking for a sighted deaf person plays a part in this scene as we look at the

phone to see what Max wants to show and as Elizabeth, looking directly at Max, asks him to look before he decides.

Max does go to the bar and looks at his ex-girlfriend and leaves without entering the bar. Instead, he goes to Elizabeth's place and signs to her, with subtitles, that he has made a choice: her. The door closes behind them.

With Max and Elizabeth connecting at the end of the episode—with two more episodes to go in this drama series—we will end our analysis here; readers are encouraged to watch the season in its entirety and analyze the two characters' interdependent communication practices.

Let us now reflect on the progression of Ryan Eggold and Sandra Mae Frank's characters as visualized through captions, subtitles, and text on screen. The incorporation of multiple forms of written and textual words on screen signifies that space is being created for multiple modes of access in this show. Through the subtitles for ASL scenes, the characters articulate for themselves to portray their embodied experiences. With the mix of captions and subtitles, text messages, and other written text, multimodal/lingual/textual communication becomes accessible while reflecting the rhetorical and aesthetic principles of this hospital show on network television. Just as the characters show audience awareness in working through the challenging and rewarding process of attempting to understand each other, the series asks its audience to join these characters in their dramatic journey being pulled away from and toward each other.

Alongside their personal connections and increased number of subtitled lines, throughout these episodes, Max and Elizabeth continue to interact professionally around the hospital with Ben interpreting and closed captions. Through these mixed scenes, we navigate a multidimensional world of communication. There is no empty space between them as they come together through languages, modes, and means of access.

## JUXTAPOSITION: ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION THROUGH WRITTEN TEXT

My video for this chapter shows several ways in which creators can apply an *analysis* of programs to the *design* of captioned and subtitled videos. As you play the video version of this chapter, consider strategies to make communication accessible through written text on screen.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 5 video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/5AMFx1Cr5-Q> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

In this video, I discuss and replicate communication strategies that Max and Elizabeth use with each other, specifically written text. When I discuss how Max may speak when he does not know the signs for words, the integral subtitles first appear in the space next to my face and then end with replications of closed captions at the bottom of the screen. This emulates how the show may switch to or from subtitles in the middle of a conversation when the characters change how they communicate.

I also recreate how Max and Elizabeth share text messages with each other when I show that the show replicates their text messages on screen in the space between their bodies so that audiences can read the message and see their reaction at the same time. In my

case, I had consciously prepared for space in the center of the screen and used my hands to frame the center of the screen while moving from one side to the other of the screen. That embodied performance draws attention to the center of the screen where the message appears for audiences.

By further detailing the different strategies that Max and Elizabeth use—including text messages, I hope to show creators how we can open ourselves up to imagining different ways to depict text on screen. From pedagogical to social media contexts, creators could incorporate text messages and handwritten messages more intentionally on screen to embody contemporary digital communication practices when sharing content online. Foregrounding these strategies here is one way of showing the potential for enhancing the accessibility of our videos through text in various forms, just as Max and Elizabeth use various forms.

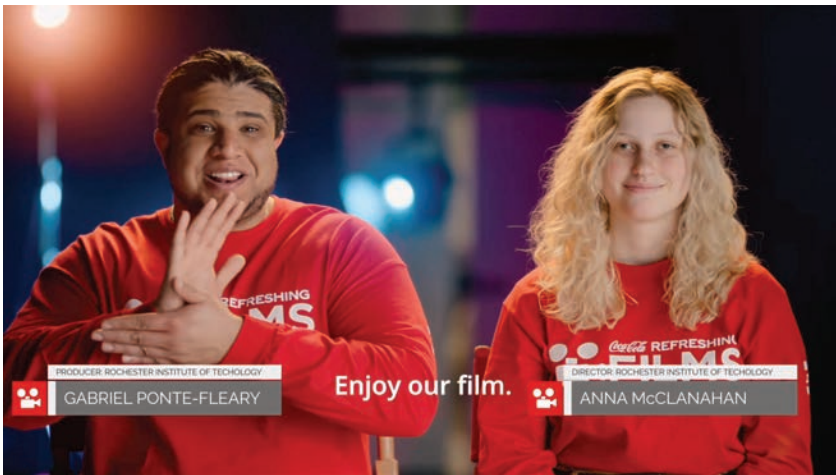
## **CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: SAY CHEESE**

The interdependence of the two characters in *New Amsterdam* are dramatic portrayals of how we each collaborate with others across languages and modes to connect, including with audiences. This interdependence is further affirmed in a student production from my university, Rochester Institute of Technology, *Say Cheese*, that teaches audiences some new signs. I had no role in the creation of the short film and serve here as a celebrant of this interdisciplinary collaboration between students from different backgrounds: Two film and animation students, Gabriel Ponte-Fleary and Anna McClanahan, produced and directed a short film that won the Coca-Cola Refreshing Films program's grand prize in 2022 (Swartzenberg, 2022); the film was shown in theaters around the country and online.

In published interviews, these students (one hearing and one Deaf) and their fine arts and theater professors and members of the production celebrate the cross-cultural collaboration, a collaboration that grew out of our institution's rich mix of DHH and hearing



students from a wide range of backgrounds (Kiley, 2022; Swartzenberg, 2022). Ponte-Fleary states, “We wanted to show that any kind of relationship between deaf and hearing individuals is possible.” Furthermore, McClanahan says, “The human connection conveyed in the film is applicable to everyone’s lives and relationships.” They are shown in the preliminary introduction to the film, as shown in the following screenshot (Figure 5.16) as Ponte-Fleary signs the word “film.”



**Figure 5.16:** Film and animation students who produced and directed a short film

The sweet and lighthearted film shows a hearing male character attempting to ask a Deaf student out in ASL. The subtitles show him signing the word “cheese” instead of “film,” which is easy to do since the two words are similar in ASL, as shown in the following screen captures (Figures 5.17 and 5.18).



**Figure 5.17:** Miscommunication due to the similarity between the sign for cheese and the sign for movie



**Figure 5.18:** Miscommunication due to the similarity between the sign for cheese and the sign for movie

He follows up with fingerspelling the word M-O-V-I-E (Figures 5.19 and 5.20) and she laughs. They then go to the movie theater. In the clip's crescendo, she interrupts his signs, saying "Shh, the 'cheese' is starting."



**Figure 5.19:** Finding ways to go beyond miscommunication and to connect



**Figure 5.20:** Finding ways to go beyond miscommunication and to connect

Through this conversation, and the real-world collaboration that made this production possible, viewers can be inspired by the uplifting sensation of connecting across cultures and languages. “Mistakes” are a part of this interdependent process of learning from each other and extending connections across differences, especially as this film succeeds in teaching mainstream audiences the signs for cheese and movie.

## INTERDEPENDENCE AND ACCESS

These students' and characters' interdependence and commitment to communication access replicates real-world conversations in which all dialogic participants contribute to access. Their strategies are strategies that ordinary people would use in real life when communicating with each other through different technologies and media in the collaborative process of ensuring mutual understanding. Just think of how many web conferencing meetings there have been with participants using the text chat feature as a core component of or complement to the video conversation itself, not to mention live captions. How many times have participants used the text chat to ask for clarification or to follow up on moments that might have been missed or lost in transmission? These are moments of access through visual text, and we can further our commitment through collaborative projects and compositions.

The multi-textual nature of *New Amsterdam* and its dedicated portrayal of characters who learn to open themselves up to each other through all means of connection embodies the value of captions and subtitles and visual text as means of direct connection and interdependence. Access is not *for* one side of the conversation; access is *because of* everyone in the dialogue, from creators to actors and characters to audiences, as we all navigate access as a work-in-progress and an extension between ourselves and those we interact with.

## THE SENSATION OF SILENCE AND SOUND WITH WORDS ON SCREEN

The spaces explored up to this point have included multimodal and multilingual communication with captions and subtitles and visual text of some form on screen. These spaces prepare us for a full exploration of silence and (silent) sound as portrayed in media and embodied in creators' compositions with the presence of captions and subtitles and visual text on screen. More specifically, I now explore examples in which sound and silence become embodied and accessible through text, as in "silent episodes" in television shows where characters do not speak for an entire episode and in video compositions where creators make perceptions of sound and silent signs accessible through written words.

The two parts of this chapter form complementary components of how sound and silence become manifested through captions and subtitles and visual text on screen. I analyze select examples of "silent episodes" of television shows that incorporate words on screen as "alternative" ways to verbalize messages. My analysis of the benefits and limitations of these methods leads to my unpacking of accessible practices by composers who manifest sonic and silent meanings through accessible and aesthetic design of words on

screen as the embodiment of the multi-textual world of communication. These underutilized methods for communicating through sound and silence immerse audiences into a multisensory world in which sound and silence are sensed through the eyes and bodies as facilitated by captions and subtitles and visual text on screen, which intensifies greater connections amongst creators, performers, and audiences. What sets this chapter's examples apart from other instances of silence is the incorporation of visual text, including captions and subtitles, that intensifies the feeling of access to embodied experiences and meaning.

While prior chapters analyzed captioned and subtitled conversations and scenes, this chapter intends to critically unpack what we learn from reframing silence and sound in our screen-mediated conversations. In essence, we can reflect on and examine the reframing of silence and sound in our drive towards a deeper recognition of the affordances of captions and subtitles and visual text on screen that embody multimodal, *multisensory* connections and communication.

## THE SOUND OF SILENCE

While navigating through silent spaces, my embodied rhetorics as a Deaf viewer who does not find it unnatural to watch videos without sound must be acknowledged. At the same time, I have navigated through the greater world, often referred to as the hearing world, my entire life and I interact with hearing people who hold expectations for sound on a daily basis. I embrace novel approaches to sound, as in *The Sound of Metal*, a 2019 film that immerses viewers into the multisensory world of a hearing drummer's gradual loss of hearing and his jarring sonic experiences when he gets cochlear implants. Riz Ahmed's Academy Award-nominated performance and the closed captions make us literally and metaphorically hear what his character, Ruben Stone, hears at each stage of his hearing progression.

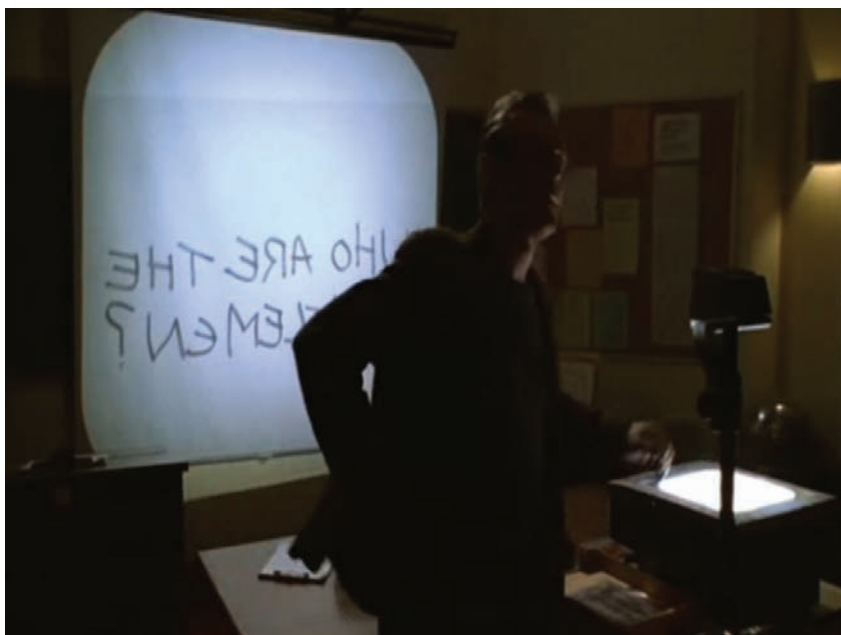
My cognitive attunement to our world of sound aligns with my embodied, multisensory, and visual engagements with sound in all

its forms. As an audience member, I become the characters on my screen, who often are hearing. This is where I want to take us now: into spaces in which we sense the world differently. These spaces reframe the meaning of sound and the meaning of silence as characters and audiences engage with the world of communication in novel ways, which in turn teaches us all to expand the definitions of sound, silence, and communication.

My first experience with a silent episode came in the form of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s 1999 episode, "Hush" (Season 4, Episode 10) (Whedon, 1999), an episode I recently rewatched as an adult along with what has long been one of my favorite episodes of the series, 2001's "Once More, With Feeling" (Season 6, Episode 7). *Buffy*'s musical episode has been praised by many as one of the best musical episodes ever (Brown et al., 2021) primarily for its fresh composition of meaningful lyrics that progresses the storylines and reveals characters' emotions as well as the actors' masterful and heartfelt performances.

*Buffy*'s silent episode (Whedon, 1999), which has likewise been praised (Pallotta, 2014), was a revelation in how the wit and heart of the show and characters could be transmitted non-vocally after everyone in town suddenly could not speak. First airing on television at the turn of the previous millennium, however, "Hush" did not incorporate visual text on screen prominently. It was and is a product of its time; as shown in one scene in which Giles, Buffy's watcher (mentor), uses an overhead projector to communicate his message to Buffy and her friends about the demons who have created this state of silence in their town, the Gentlemen.

While Giles has clearly taken the time to prepare his message by writing on a series of transparent sheets to be projected to Buffy, Willow, and the others—communicating through writing—he begins with a moment of inadvertent miscommunication caused by the technology of the time, as shown in the following screen captures (Figures 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3).

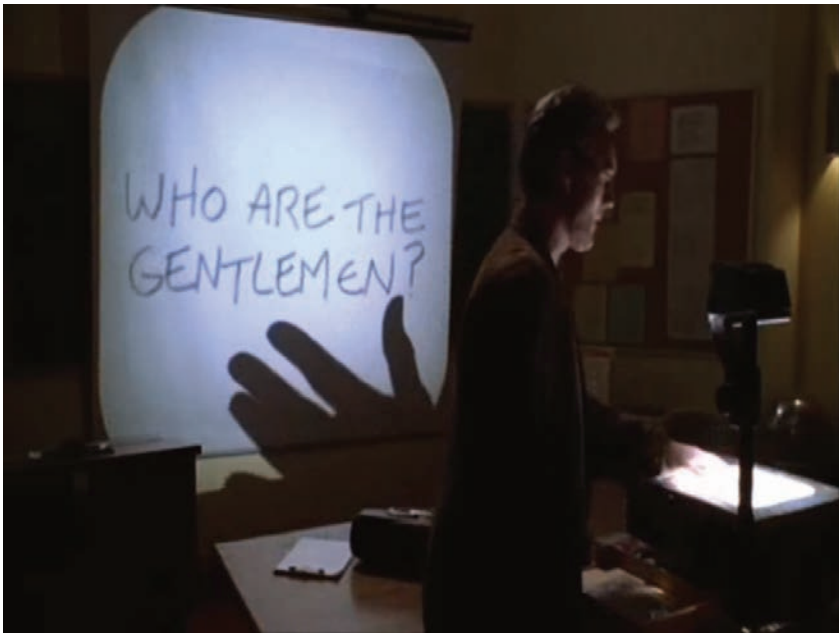


**Figure 6.1:** Silent communication through the technology of the time in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*





**Figure 6.2:** Silent communication through the technology of the time in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*



**Figure 6.3:** Silent communication through the technology of the time in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Transparent sheets have to be placed on the projector backwards to be readable by the classroom viewers. But Giles does not realize this until his audience points out the situation. He solves the issue and continues. This communication through the projector in a highly effective silent episode uses written messages and body language to create humor and connection that would not feel the same if this occurred through their everyday spoken language.

Across time and space, what silent episodes accomplish is challenging writers, characters, and audiences to discover and construct non-vocal means of communication and connection with each other.

## EXPLORING SILENCE

I want to highlight how non-vocal ways of communication and connection can be enhanced through captions and subtitles, text

messaging, and other visual text on screen, which reflects the reality of our lives as we connect with each other through digital devices.

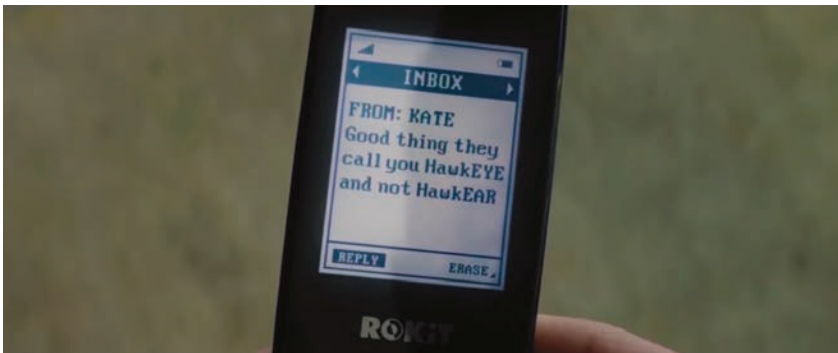
*Evil*, a streaming series on Paramount Plus, presented a silent episode entitled “S Is for Silence” (Season 2, Episode 7) (King & King, 2021), in which the main characters investigate a death at a monastery where silence is honored. The characters work through the mystery and interact with each other without vocally speaking a word.

One moment stands out when one character, David Acosta, struggles to suppress his inappropriate thoughts. While an average episode might use his voice-over to *tell* audiences what he is thinking in spoken English, this silent episode includes open captions to *show* his thoughts, and the captions go beyond static lines of text. As the thoughts race through his head and he starts to curse to himself, the words start to stream from the right side of the screen to the left side of the screen in a continual motion, embodying the thoughts coursing through his head. In essence, his stream of consciousness is embodied in the captions. The implementation of silence becomes an opportunity for creative approaches to communication that we might not consider or realize otherwise, and we can challenge ourselves to communicate more effectively through strategies that we have not used enough in the past.

In addition to having non-speaking characters, other programs take the approach of having characters temporarily lose their hearing. *Hawkeye* on Disney Plus portrays a Marvel Comics character who lost his hearing due to trauma, wears a hearing aid, and functions as a hearing person (and is played by a hearing actor). The first season of the series introduced Maya Lopez, “Echo,” an Indigenous character (who is played by Alaqua Cox, who is Deaf). She later leads her own Disney Plus spinoff, *Echo*.

While *Hawkeye* does not experiment with captions and subtitles creatively, the show portrays the communication barriers that can occur across modes after Clint Barton’s (Hawkeye) hearing aid is damaged in battle (“Echoes,” Season 1, Episode 3) (Bert & Bertie, 2021; Mathewson et al., 2021). He and his companion Kate Bishop are shown failing to communicate with each other. After one

moment, Kate erroneously assumes that Clint understands her and remarks, “Hey, we’re communicating!” but the audience sees the miscommunication. In another scene, they talk **to** each other, not with each other, and at different times in the conversation, each one mentions that they need to walk the dog. These misconceptions contrast with other moments in the episode in which they write on notepads and use text messages on a phone to communicate with each other (Figure 6.4).



**Figure 6.4:** Communicating silently through a text message in *Hawkeye*

While the moments of miscommunication are generally used for levity, they reflect the reality of struggling to connect with each other when there is a lack of communication access. In contrast, the two main characters express and receive their thoughts more clearly through writing and texting to teach other.

This same episode of *Hawkeye* introduces viewers to Maya Lopez’s background as Deaf person and native user of ASL, including through a subtitled flashback to her childhood and a signed conversation with her father, as shown in the following capture (Figure 6.5).



**Figure 6.5:** Open subtitles at the bottom of the screen for ASL in *Hawkeye*

These scenes work together to guide viewers through deaf experiences, including through that of a late-deafened person and that of a Deaf ASL user.

Intriguingly, *Hawkeye*, a show adapted from comic books, places traditional subtitles at the bottom of the screen, which stands in contrast to the integration of subtitles in *Heroes Reborn*. This episode of *Hawkeye* and other episodes in mainstream television shows with hearing characters (including short scenes in which hearing characters want to communicate from across a large room) might not always integrate words on screen—but just as crucially, writing and texting become means of access and connection to other characters.

## LISTEN/WATCH CLOSELY

Multisensory, multi-textual communication—including subtitles and visual text—occurs in *Only Murders in the Building* across several episodes, starting with its silent episode in Season 1. It is helpful to focus on the affordances, or benefits and limitations, of such alternative approaches to embodying sound and silence in the presence of subtitles and visual text on screen.

Hulu's *Only Murders in the Building* is a series in which the three main characters, Charles-Haden Savage (Steve Martin), Oliver Putnam (Martin Short), and Mabel Mora (Selena Mabel), live in the same apartment building and investigate a crime while releasing a

podcast about their ongoing investigation. A recurring character on the show, Theo Dimas (James Caverly, who is Deaf), is a former resident of the building where his father still lives.

The series received attention and praise for its creative use of a silent episode without spoken dialogue (Cheung, 2021; Gajjar, 2022; Maas, 2021; Mazzeo, 2021; McCullar, 2022). “The Boy from 6B” (Season 1, Episode 7) (Martin et al. & Dabis, 2021), centers on Theo and, while the characters’ voices are not made audible, music, environmental sounds, and muffled speech (as heard through Theo) are made audible and closed captioned. The director of the episode worked with Caverly and the creative team to ground the representation, such as ensuring that Theo could always read other characters’ lips and that they would not “undermine the silence of the deaf character” (McCullar, 2022, n.p.).

While most reviews focused on the novel portrayal of an episode without vocal dialogue, I want to focus on how that episode and a later episode incorporate open captions and subtitles and visual text to embody the benefits and limitations of the multilingual and multimodal conversations that we have in our own lives. In these three episodes, Theo’s point-of-view is heightened with the presence of multiple modes of communication on screen that embody how he engages with the world. This is a major instance of Deaf representation in media—a rarity as underscored in a 2022 report about, among other points, the importance of access, captions, and authentic representation of experiences in film, television, and other media (National Research Group, 2022).

By framing the silent episode through Theo’s eyes, this episode (Martin et al. & Dabis, 2021) challenges audiences to sense the world differently. As Caverly said, “Framing the entire episode in the perspective of a Deaf person is a subversive act. It forces the audience to listen closely, but with their eyes instead of ears” (Mazzeo, 2021, n.p.). The episode itself is not presented without sound; rather, different scenes portray sound and visuals differently.

When the camera frames events and spaces through Theo’s eyes in this episode, captions and subtitles appear on screen. These captions and subtitles appear when characters, such as Theo and his

father, sign in ASL so that the audience can access the meaning of these signs. When the camera shows us what Theo is looking at, such as other characters speaking to each other through spoken English, their voices are not made clearly audible; rather, what they say is embedded as open captions for us to read just as Theo reads their lips.

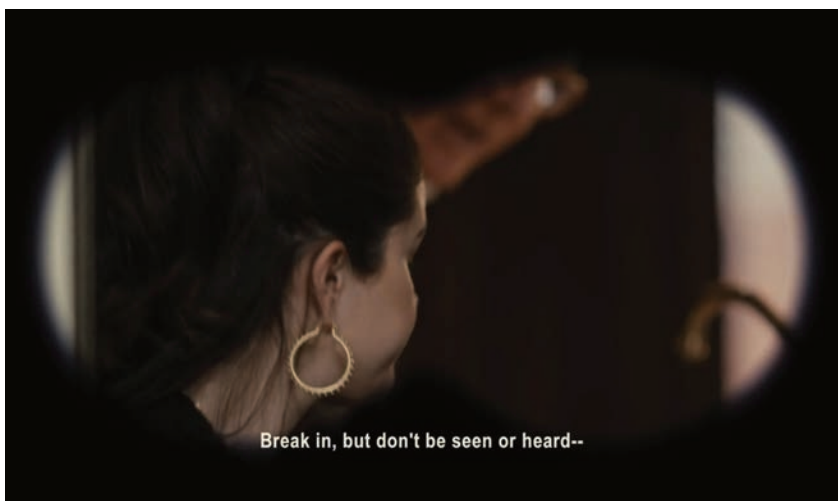
In the opening moments of the episode in this apartment building in New York City, Theo is shown spying on his neighbors, the main characters, with binoculars through his window into another apartment across the courtyard on the other side of the building. As he looks through the binoculars, open captions appear while he reads their lips, an affordance that would not be possible at that distance if relying on sound (Figures 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8).



**Figure 6.6:** Open subtitles showing how Theo reads characters' lips in *Only Murders in the Building*



**Figure 6.7:** Open subtitles showing how Theo reads characters' lips in *Only Murders in the Building*



**Figure 6.8:** Open subtitles showing how Theo reads characters' lips in *Only Murders in the Building*

As we read the captions and subtitles, we become Theo who is reading other individuals' lips or signs, including when Charles emphasizes how the three characters need to break in an apartment without being "seen or heard." The captions and subtitles become



an instrument for us to join Caverly in his portrayal of how Theo listens to and reads the world through his eyes.

Elsewhere in the episode, the three main characters continue their often humorous and entertaining pursuit of clues and discoveries as they sneak around and attempt to crack their case. They often communicate through texting each other, with these messages projected on screen as bubbles next to characters' bodies and faces, enabling us to read the production and reception of each message and their reactions at the same time. Figures 6.9, 6.10, and 6.11 come from a scene in which Oliver, a theater director, uses text messages to connect with Charles and Mabel.

Oliver, Charles, and Mabel work together, sneaking around and spying to find out more information about Theo's father Teddy Dimas. In this scene, Oliver is next to Teddy and has to communicate with Charles and Mabel without Teddy's knowledge. Oliver is shown texting (in real time with letters appearing one at a time) a theatrical-themed message in code to his partners in crime so that he does not tip off Teddy.

Soon after, Charles receives another theatrical-themed text message in code from Oliver and shows his phone to Mabel. At the exact same time, the same message appears as a bubble next to Charles's face, allowing sighted viewers to read the message at the same time as Mabel while viewing Charles's facial expression of urgency.



**Figure 6.9:** Text message bubbles on screen that show characters' interactions



**Figure 6.10:** Text message bubbles on screen that show characters' interactions



**Figure 6.11:** Text message bubbles on screen that show characters' interactions

What makes these text messages especially ingenious is how they prevent others around these characters from accessing their communication. We are given a portal into Charles, Oliver, and Mabel's silent, textual conversations at the same time that they prevent the other characters in the building around them from catching them.

The incorporation of contemporary technologies is a modern-day version of Giles' classroom projector in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and continues our very-human desire to compose our messages in any way that can be accessed by our audiences.

## I DIDN'T GET ANY OF THAT

*Only Murders in the Building* extends its incorporation of subtitles—and the challenges of connecting with others across languages and modes—when Theo returns for two episodes in Season 2. In “Here’s Looking at You,” (Season 2, Episode 4) (Martin et al. & Weng, 2022), Oliver is spying on Teddy, Theo’s dad, through Teddy’s apartment wall and sees father and son having a heated argument in sign language. In what could be interpreted as a rhetorical move (especially in light of the creative team’s commitment to diversity and authentic representation of the Deaf character), the show does not subtitle this signed argument, underscoring how this

conversation is being seen through Oliver's perspective; Oliver does not know ASL. Oliver's reaction makes us sense that he clearly understands enough to see the anger to know that it is not a friendly chat.

Theo plays a large role in "Flipping the Pieces" (Season 2, Episode 7) (Martin et al. & Teague, 2022), an episode in which Theo and Mabel work through attempting to communicate with each other across languages as they track down a mysterious individual, "Glitter Guy," who had an altercation with Mabel on the subway. These challenges are represented through the mix of subtitles and visual text on screen. With this being the first real time that Theo and Mabel have interacted and Mabel being not fluent in ASL, an early interaction goes as follows:

1. Theo signs with subtitles while Mabel speaks with closed captions.
2. When Mabel does not understand Theo, Theo takes out his phone and shows a video of Mabel with Glitter Guy.
3. Mabel speaks with closed captions and Theo gestures and signs with subtitles.
4. After Mabel says, "I don't know ASL," Theo uses a pen and paper to write to Mabel. Mabel (and the viewer) picks up and read the note.
5. Theo shows Mabel a card that explains how only a third of what people say can be caught through lipreading. Mabel picks up the card and reads the card at the same time.
6. Mabel speaks with closed captions and Theo signs with subtitles.
7. After Mabel does not understand Theo again, Theo takes out his notepad again.

After using videos and writing to communicate, this is the moment where the screen transforms. While Theo writes down on the notepad, the visuals take us back to the subway with Theo's written words superimposed over the action on the subway. The

timing of each word's appearance emulates Theo's real-time writing of these words as we join him in returning to the moment of the alteration, as shown in the following screen captures of this scene (Figures 6.12, 6.13, 6.14, and 6.15).

The visual handwriting of Theo's note transporting us in real time across the subway scene in *Only Murders in the Building* emulates the narration that is written across the campus of Gallaudet University in *Gallaudet: The Film* and the joint embodiment of fluid, visual-spatial communication.



**Figure 6.12:** Visual handwriting that appears across the screen as silent narration



**Figure 6.13:** Visual handwriting that appears across the screen as silent narration



**Figure 6.14:** Visual handwriting that appears across the screen as silent narration



**Figure 6.15:** Visual handwriting that appears across the screen as silent narration

The visual frame then brings us back to the handwritten note from Theo that Mabel reads. This innovative transformation of the screen to include handwritten message directly connects us with the event Theo is sharing. The handwritten message serves as what some would call a voice-over of an event in another context.

However, this is the only innovative use of visual text in this episode; the majority of the episode shows Mabel talking to Theo (with closed captions) and Theo signing to Mabel (with subtitles). Right after Mabel reads Theo's note, she starts asking about Glitter Guy. Theo responds with the sign for glitter, as shown in the subtitles (Figures 6.16 and 6.17).





**Figure 6.16:** The same word being signed with open subtitles and spoken with closed captions



**Figure 6.17:** The same word being signed with open subtitles and spoken with closed captions

Mabel shows that she recognizes that sign and vocally states, “Is that ASL for ‘glitter’”? When Theo responds yes, she describes that as “fun.” Throughout the rest of the episode, Mabel mainly speaks and Theo signs<sup>1</sup>.

1. Mabel does sign “Glitter Guy” later in this episode (Episode 7) and again in the ninth episode that season. In the later episode, Mabel and Charles are speaking with



During Mabel's and Theo's journey through the city together looking for Glitter Guy in "Flipping the Pieces" (Episode 7), each one confesses their deep regrets. Closed captions show what Mabel says and subtitles are shown to represent what Theo signs. After Mabel tells her story, Theo signs, "Sorry. I didn't get any of that."

Mabel nods, snuffles, and speaks, "Maybe it's better that way." While they fail to fully connect, they understand enough to know how much they did **not** get, and they are honest about their inability to connect in this moment.

As they say goodbye in their final scene together that night, Mabel closes her mouth—reinforcing that she is not going to speak—and signs this line: "Thank you for stealing my fish." These words are shown in open subtitles that reflect the halting pace of her signs, and then the closed captions show: "[laughs] Was that right?" In response, Theo smiles with the look of someone who has experienced this in the past and gives her a thumbs up.

This episode, as an extension of the silent episode, shows the limitations of understanding each other when only one language is expressed, such as when Mabel speaks without signing and when Theo signs and she does not understand (although the episode does seem to overestimate how much Theo can lipread, such as when he is driving and she is speaking). At the same time, the series provides audiences with access to Theo's signs through subtitles on screen every time he signs, so that audiences know the important messages that he is expressing.

What makes this episode especially striking is their acceptance of the challenges and limitations of not accessing each other's languages—as reflected in the subtitles and captions. Most of all, when viewed in retrospect and in light of future events in the show, we can recognize how this episode instigates the growth of their friendship.

---

each other about the mystery man they have finally identified; Mabel unconsciously signs "Glitter Guy" when speaking that name to Charles. In response to Charles' quizzical look at her hands, Mabel explains that "It's ASL for 'glitter,'" to which Charles remarks, "Oh. That's kind of fun."

Theo's next appearance on the show comes in the seventh episode of Season 3, "CoBro" (Martin et al. & Dabis, 2023). Although audience members have not seen him since the previous season's seventh episode, his first scene in this episode shows him communicating with Mabel with relatively more ease and success, and they appear to be comfortable and familiar with each other, including by making each other laugh and interacting in close proximity.

Throughout this episode, Theo continues to sign (with subtitles) while Mabel continues to speak (with closed captions), although she now signs more of what she says and understands more of his signs. They can sustain upbeat conversations throughout several scenes in this episode. The two demonstrate the growing pains of learning a new language and the advantages of playing with languages. In one scene, Mabel talks to another hearing character, trying to stealthily gather information for their murder case. Theo stands in the background silently giving Mabel cues about what to say to the other character, but no subtitles appear on screen—meaning that viewers who do not know ASL are forced to guess what Theo says, just like Mabel. In this case, Mabel misunderstands some of Theo's signs and inadvertently says what is clearly the wrong thing to the other character, creating humorous outcomes.

A major advantage of connecting across languages and modalities also occurs in this episode. After Theo passionately shares a substantial amount of information about a movie related to their case, Mabel laughs and says she "understood maybe half of what [he] said." However, this is not the end of her spoken remark, as she adds, "It is clear that you are a giant nerd." While speaking, she signs the word *nerd* by bringing her hand to Theo's face (instead of bringing her own hand to her own face). Through this action, as shown in the following screen captures (Figures 6.18 and 6.19), Mabel plays with ASL and connects with Theo to form one sign through two bodies.



**Figure 6.18:** Embodied connection across languages



**Figure 6.19:** Embodied connection across languages

Their friendship is evident through such interactions, and Theo proudly claims “no shame” in enjoying the movie. In a later scene, their inside joke continues as Mabel becomes the one who shares a substantial amount of information and Theo asks (with subtitles), “Now, who’s the giant nerd?”

The challenges and rewards of connecting across communication modalities continue as they now are friends. However, this episode does not incorporate visual text as aesthetically as in Theo’s

previous episodes, even when Theo writes a note to another character in this episode; we are shown the notepad itself instead of words overlaid on screen.

Along with the challenges of learning to communicate in different ways is the potential for connecting more directly through visual text, as revealed in these characters' use of various technologies, including the traditional technology of pen-and-paper as well as sending texts and showing videos on phones to illuminate meaning. This realistically portrays the different ways that we can communicate silently with each other in our lives beyond sound-centric speaking and hearing, including the benefits and limitations of trying to communicate in ways that we might be more or less comfortable with or accustomed to.

In the most rhetorical and aesthetically effective moment, the visual text for Theo's handwriting superimposed over the flashback to the subway scene (in the seventh episode of Season 2) embodies the merging of image and text to intensify accessible multimodal communication. This integration of visual text and image reveals that the absence of sound is not a limitation, but a means of looking directly and deeply at the world—and at each other.

### *Space for Subtitled Silence*

Several major themes emerge that we can apply in our analysis and design of video compositions as guided by the six criteria of the accessible multimodal approach. First and foremost, silent moments are opportunities for us to design a space for captions and subtitles and access so that we create opportunities for us, our dialogic partners, and audiences to access meaning across multiple modes beyond sound alone. Without relying on sound, we can attend to means of expressing our embodied rhetorics and experiences in interaction with each other as we communicate through multiple modes and languages—including the linguistic mode and written language. We can enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of our work by strategically and creatively making written text visual and integral to our message. Most of all, we can show awareness of

our audiences' expectations in several ways. We can subvert general audiences' expectations for what they will hear and provide them with opportunities to engage with our message in ways that may be novel for them. We should provide them with multiple means of engagement and coordinate in the common process of designing accessible aural, visual, and linguistic communication.

How can we do all that? Through writing words on screen and in our lives.

## **JUXTAPOSITION: VIEWING THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY THROUGH CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES**

With the value of writing words on screen in mind, I now present my video for this chapter; consider how we can make our experiences of sound and silence accessible to audiences through captions, subtitles, and visual text.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 6 video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/MGZYucG6X0E> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

In this video, I show how *Only Murders in the Building* uses subtitles and visual text on screen to show audiences how Theo experiences and interacts with the world. The design of open white subtitles at

the bottom of the screen is used to replicate the show's use of open subtitles. I then return to black subtitles near my upper body to continue my argument about how creators can use captions and subtitles to create access to other characters' or individuals' experiences of sound and silence.

Through this video, I serve as a creator who emulates different subtitling approaches to match the experience of viewing the show through Theo's eyes. I consciously go further in my analysis and design by meaningfully interacting with the subtitles around me and drawing attention to them throughout my discussion. In doing so, I hope to accentuate audiences' access to Deaf embodiments and embodied rhetorics, including the potential for connecting across multiple modes and senses at the same time.

Creators—such as those who incorporate sound and music in their videos, including sound studies scholars and students or online content creators—could likewise develop different subtitling and captioning styles to create access to various sonic and silent moments in videos. Through carefully designing different styles that enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of videos, we can enrich the possibilities for audiences to experience and access different embodiments and worldviews.

## I DIDN'T QUITE GET THAT

Silence becomes not the absence of sound, but rather the amplified presence of visuals in a commercial for Amazon Alexa (Bell, 2022) that plays with the concept of captioning sound. The commercial opens as a spoken interaction in the Wild West between two cowboys. They are then vocally interrupted by a hard of hearing woman on a couch who says, "I didn't quite get that."

Immediately, the cowboy (played by actor Monte Bell) holds up a large sign akin to a cue card, and the other cowboy holds up his own sign (Figure 6.20).



**Figure 6.20:** Characters in an Amazon Alexa commercial holding literal signs that caption their speech

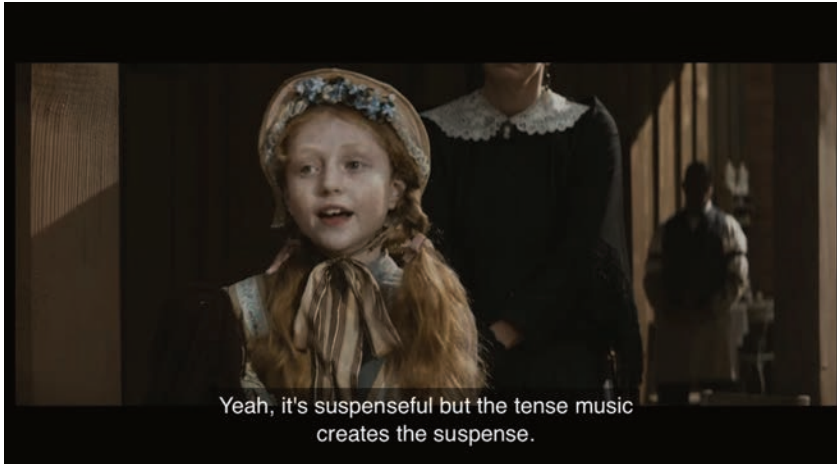
Bell then brings out a second sign that reads, “TENSE MUSIC PLAYS” (Figure 6.21).



**Figure 6.21:** Characters holding literal signs that caption their speech and now description of sound

Other characters in the Wild West scene remark about the meaning of tense music versus suspenseful music. If you have the

closed captions on, the captions appear at the bottom of the screen for this spoken dialogue (Figure 6.22).



**Figure 6.22:** Character commenting on sound description in closed captions

Bell asks them to move on, and the cowboys continue their standoff, which is now on a television screen as the camera takes us to the woman's living room where she vocally asks Amazon Alexa to turn on the subtitles, and all viewers are shown closed captions reading "[Tense music plays]." Those of us who have turned on the closed captions for our personal devices and screens also read the woman's spoken command to Alexa to "turn on subtitles" (Figure 6.23).





**Figure 6.23:** A television set with closed captions being shown on the television set—along with the closed captions turned on for this commercial

The composition of this commercial shows the possibilities in playing with layers of sound and silence and making closed captions visible to audiences.

## ACCESSING SOUND AND SILENCE THROUGH VISUAL WORDS

Silent episodes can reveal the challenges and possibilities of communicating through our entire bodies. To unpack these affordances further, we can learn from composers who actively innovate and capitalize on the affordances of different modes and technologies to access the multisensory nature of holistic meaning and to make their multilayered messages accessible to audiences. Video composers, including Deaf filmmakers and filmmaking students along with artists and online creators, prove that sound and silence are not a dichotomy and we can connect in ever more nuanced ways through the interlinking of words, signs, images, and feelings in our hearts, minds, and bodies. That significance is carried through captions and subtitles and visual text on screen.

## MAKING SOUND AND SILENCE ACCESSIBLE

While *Gallaudet: The Film* confirms the rhetorical power of designing access and aesthetics in unity through words and images moving together on screen *without sound*, other video creators actively engage with sonic, silent, and textual modes throughout the entire composition process. Their accessible multimodal practices and values reveal the role that captions and subtitles can play in embodying sonic and silent meaning through the textual mode and connecting creators with audiences.

Through a collaborative research project with Stacy Bick, a senior lecturer at Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf who teaches filmmaking and visual communications courses, a case study of her videography course was performed along with interviews with DHH students about their experiences composing with sound and captions in their video projects throughout different filmmaking and related classes.

It must be made crystal clear that students actively engage in the interdependent process of accessible multimodal composition with sound and captions. The aforementioned case study and interviews (Butler & Bick, 2021) revealed how students actively wielded various technologies and accessible and interdependent practices as they worked to accomplish their video projects. Several strategies that students use include writing captions that voice-over talent could read to produce the sound for a video; monitoring visual indications of sound in video editing programs; checking with others with different hearing levels to ensure that sound, captions, and visuals align; and using visuals to represent meaning, such as through pulsating images on screen to embody the rhythm and beats of a song.

The interviews furthermore demonstrated the value of advocating for captions, communicating with others about the importance of captions (Butler & Bick, 2023). For instance, one student purposefully designed “craptions,” awful captions with words eliminated from the captions to persuade her classmates and instructor to caption the projects that they shared in class. At the same time,

these students worked to ensure that audiences with all hearing levels, including hearing audiences, could access their message by captioning and subtitling signed and sonic moments. Their direct attention to captions and subtitles as access for DHH *and* hearing people should be an inspiration for creators.

It is one thing to say that access is important; that value becomes so much more meaningful and authentic when we consciously and empathetically engage in the interdependent process of working together and advocating for captions and subtitles as instruments of connection in sonic and silent spaces. This value is reinforced by Buckner and Daley (2018), who embraced the collective negotiation of sound when Daley was the only deaf undergraduate student in Buckner's Multimodal Composition course. They and the other students in the course all worked through the process of visualizing and feeling sound through different modes and ensured access for all in the course.

With full appreciation for the diversity of embodied differences and experiences with sound to silence, we can all learn from and through each other's embodied rhetorics and knowledge in our interdependent process of accessing multilingual and multimodal communication across different contexts.

## CAPTIONING THE SIGHT OF SOUND

An individual who composes with sound in novel ways is the pioneering sound artist Christine Sun Kim, who is Deaf and whose internationally renowned sound art, exhibits, and performances interrogate sound, language, and the body (McCarthy, 2020; Murad, 2022). While Kim's profound explorations across a range of spaces exceeds the scope of this book, two of her works spotlight her perspective of sound as depicted through non-speech sound in brackets in closed captions. These artistic approaches to closed captions show us her embodied experiences while reflecting her aesthetic and rhetorical approach to artistically presenting sound through her words as a Deaf sound artist.

As part of the Manchester International Festival, Kim created a

physical exhibit called “Captioning the City,” in which she composed descriptions appearing in brackets and superimposed large text on buildings and spaces around Manchester. Figures 6.24 and 6.25 come from a video of the exhibit (Factory International, 2021), which includes open captions with sound descriptions.



**Figure 6.24:** Open captions created by Christine Sun Kim that describe sound as experienced through the body and mind



**Figure 6.25:** Open captions created by Christine Sun Kim that describe sound as experienced through the body and mind

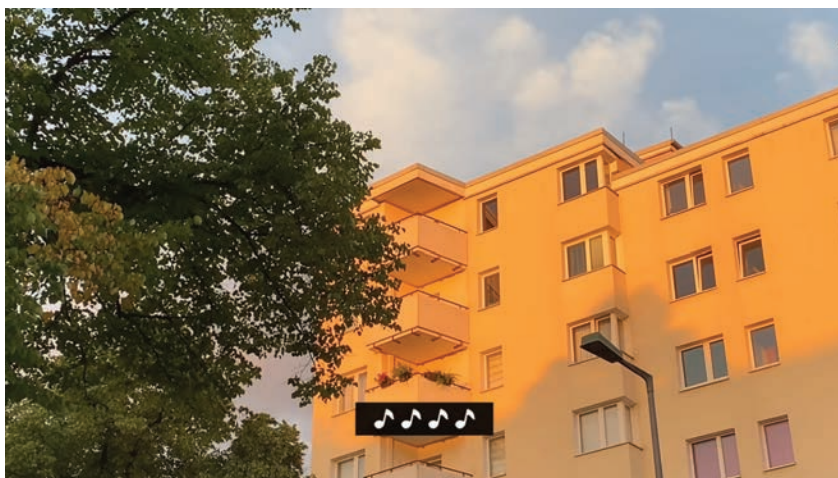
By literally captioning the physical spaces of the city and composing descriptive captions as part of the video, Kim makes the physicality of sound as sensed in the body tangible through written form.

The substance of sound comes forth in another artistic video entitled “[Closer Captions]” in which Kim composes rich description of sound in brackets throughout every line of the video poem (Pop-Up Magazine, 2020). Explaining that people who create closed captions “have a very different relationship with sound” than she does, she presents her visual footage and lines as “[the sound of anticipation intensifies]” (Pop-Up Magazine, 2020). Her captions are actually open captions embedded into the video, but they are portrayed in the style of traditional closed captions of white text against a black background to embody her message about closed captions.

Several of her lines emphasize the multisensory nature of sound with focus on the body, as in “[sweetness of orange sunlight]” and “[glitter flirting with my eyeballs].” Near the end of the poem, she writes, “[then the note fades away as musician’s arms drop down]” and a line with 10 eighth notes shorten as one eighth note is erased at a time, leaving one and then none. This visual playing with musical symbols reflects a visual connection with music, as shown in the following captures (Figures 6.26, 6.27, and 6.28).

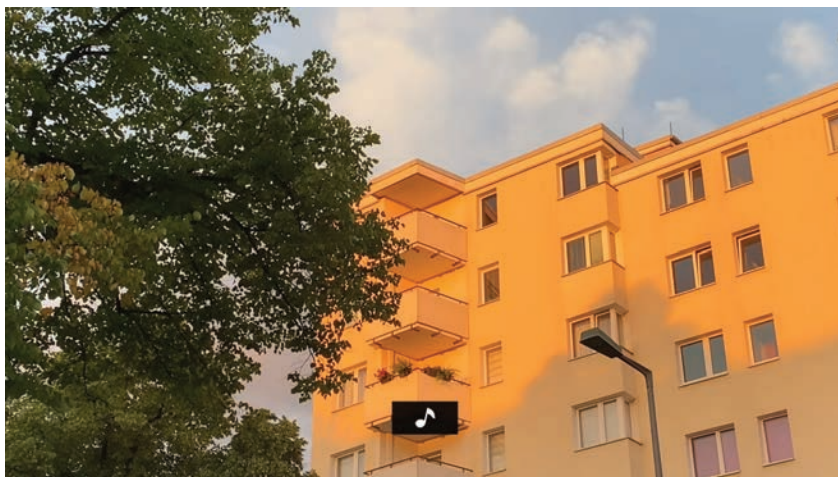


**Figure 6.26:** Open captions (in the style of closed captions) created by Christine Sun Kim that progressively delete musical notes to show music fading



**Figure 6.27:** Open captions (in the style of closed captions) created by Christine Sun Kim that progressively delete musical notes to show music fading





**Figure 6.28:** Open captions (in the style of closed captions) created by Christine Sun Kim that progressively delete musical notes to show music fading

Romero-Fresco & Dangerfield (2022) analyzed the creative accessibility of Kim’s captions, particularly the subjective and poetic nature of her captions (p. 23), as an example of how access can be a conversation rather than a one-way monologue (p. 28).

When we claim captions as creative works of art and access for all of us rather than tools for DHH “users,” we break open the restrictions of the screen and compose silence, sound, and everything we feel everywhere all at once. Creators of the past, present, and future embody their rhetorics and knowledge through the design of captions and subtitles.

One commonality threads through the multitude of approaches: the intrinsically undeniable value of access that captions and subtitles create (to sound, visuals, language, meaning, our place in the world around us).

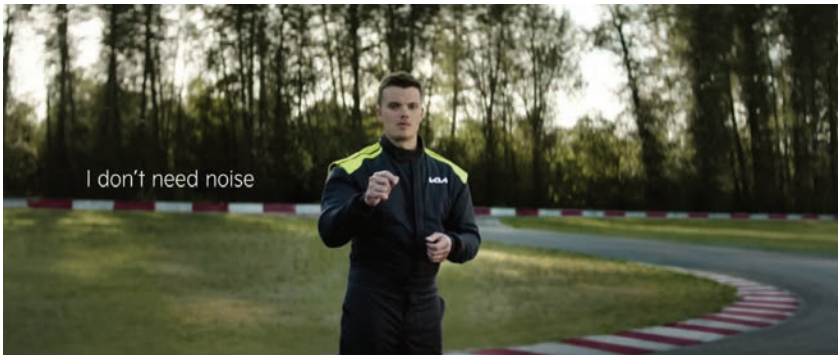
## FEELING THE POWER OF SILENCE

Visualizing captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication is not an activity that one sense engages in, but a multisensory experience through which audiences are invited to hear sound, see sound, and *feel* the vibrations of sound

and silence. The tactile experience of sound becomes more accessible through Kia's advertising campaign featuring deaf professional race car driver Kris Martin.

A television commercial, "Silence is Powerful" (Kia America, 2023), promotes one of Kia's electric vehicles and shows Martin facing the camera and communicating through ASL to share his and Kia's words with audiences. His signs are interspersed with footage of him racing the vehicle, inviting viewers to join him in experiencing silence in motion. Subtitles appear side by side alongside his signs to connect viewers' eyes with his message.

The power of silence begins to be felt through Martin's statements to the audience: "I don't need noise" appears to his right then "to tell me something is fast" appears to his left (Figures 6.29 and 6.30).



**Figure 6.29:** Subtitles that appear right next to Kris Martin in a commercial for Kia's electric vehicles



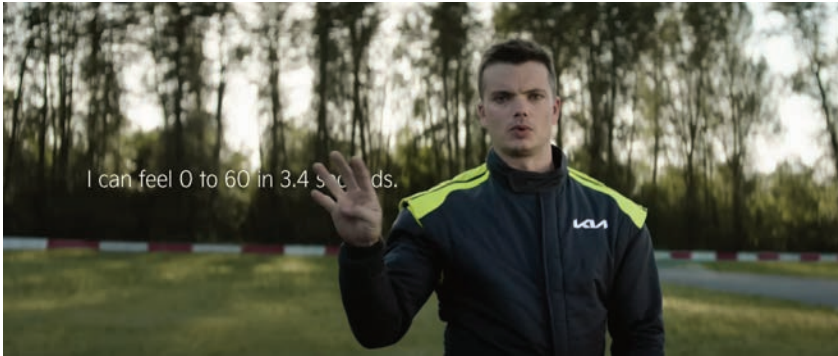


**Figure 6.30:** Subtitles that appear right next to Kris Martin in a commercial for Kia's electric vehicles

ASL and English become one when Martin explains how he can “feel 0 to 60 in 3.4 seconds” and his signs for the numbers 3 and 4 move in front of the subtitles for these words next to him, as shown in the following captures (Figures 6.31 and 6.32).



**Figure 6.31:** Overlapping Kris Martin's signs and subtitles in a commercial for Kia



**Figure 6.32:** Overlapping Kris Martin's signs and subtitles in a commercial for Kia

Through this design scheme, subtitles and signs connect so that the subtitles are not add-ons; instead, they are integral components of our connection with Martin (and ultimately with Kia, which is promoting the relatively silent power of its electric vehicle).

With Martin as spokesperson, audiences are immersed into his experiences as a professional race car driver. He tells and shows us that being deaf since he was born taught him one thing (Figures 6.33 and 6.34): "Silence is Powerful."



**Figure 6.33:** Subtitles next to Kris Martin that show the power of silence in a commercial for Kia



**Figure 6.34:** Subtitles next to Kris Martin that show the power of silence in a commercial for Kia

With that, we are left with the powerful sensation of silence as felt through our bodies through vibrations, other tactile experiences, and unspoken messages visualized in the form of captions and subtitles.

Just as being deaf accentuated Martin’s potential and success in his chosen profession, we can reframe access to sound and captions and subtitles through the body and continue to be committed to always learning from each other as we drive towards ever more meaningful accessibility and inclusion.

## RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOUND AND SILENCE

Captioning and subtitling sound and silence—in physical sound art and sonic-visual poetry, in our interdependence and advocacy in our video composition courses, in our collaborations with co-creators and audiences, in silent episodes that are striking for the absence of sound—can be profound acts of empowerment and transformation. Creators with a diverse range of embodiments and relationships with sound can and do challenge the conventions, including conventional expectations of what it means to hear and expectations that media will include sound as it is “normally heard.” Creators can embody the power of silence and connect across senses.

These challenges expand the space for captions and subtitles

and visual text, which are embedded with the qualities we might conventionally ascribe to other modes, including the movement of bodies in written text and the nuances of speech transmitted through words moving across the screen. Sound and silence become accessible, multi-textual means of connection—and this potential for multi-textual connection intensifies when joining conversations about and through captions and subtitles in our multilingual world.

## SPACES FOR CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES IN OUR CONVERSATIONS

**T**he multi-textual screens that we have navigated throughout the last few chapters have created a four-dimensional map (including the dimension of time) of the intersecting worlds within which we interact with each other. Social media and its associated digital technologies, including the ability to create videos with captions on our personal devices, seems to be the singular social development that has made adding text to videos a much more common practice for content creators outside of professional filmmaking and media, and outside of composition courses where instructors were asking students to experiment with dynamic visual text in videos before the launch of TikTok (Butler, 2016). The wide variety of approaches include creating closed captions that can be turned on and off for relatively longer YouTube videos, embedding lines of open captions at the bottom of intimate Instagram videos, and experimenting with adding TikTok's highly visual text to short-form vertical videos.

With social media users creating content on a more frequent basis than ever before, we are at an ideal moment for designing a permanent space for captions and subtitles in our conversations and in our videos. Rather than survey the unfathomable number of

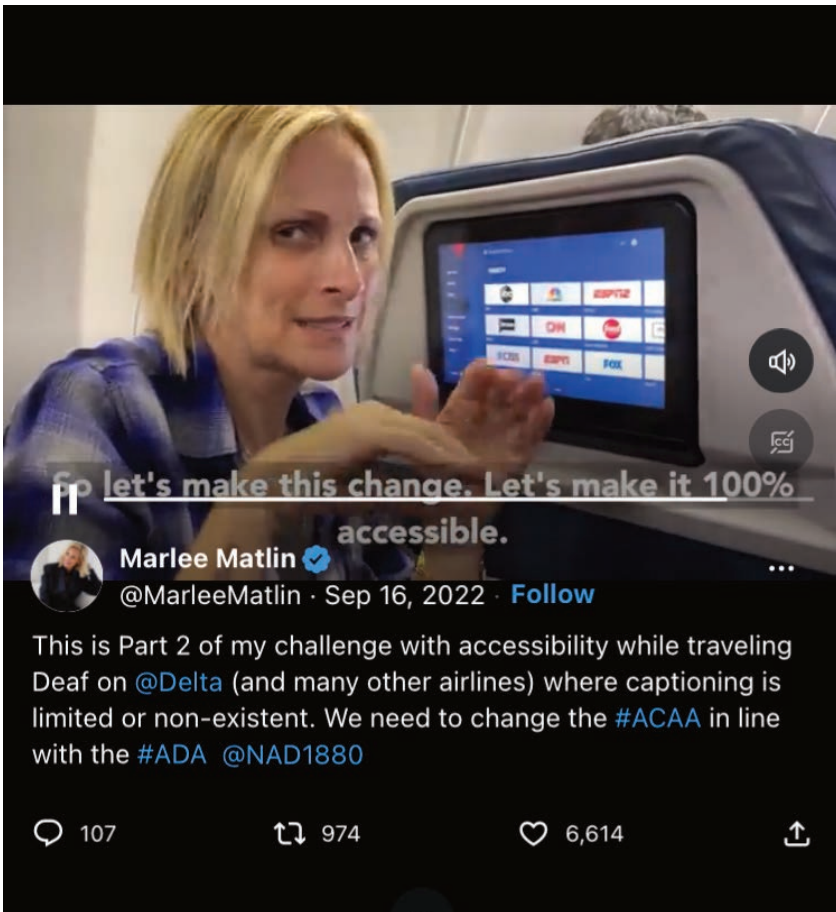
videos online, this chapter dives deep into the affordances of designing a space for captions and subtitles in our conversations, including in our screen-based online conversations and on our video screens.

This examination of captions and subtitles includes advocacy for captions and subtitles, online videos and advertisements that incorporate subtitled multilingual conversations, videos that explicitly show sound through visual text on screen, and creators who meaningfully incorporate captions and subtitles in their videos to connect with audiences across cultures and languages. This exploration also includes the benefits, limitations, and challenges of different captioning and subtitling approaches. Through this process, we can better appreciate the options we have in embodying our rhetorics and committing to accessible multimodal communication online.

## DIALOGIC SPACE FOR CAPTIONS ONLINE

The fight for captions and access dates back to the early decades of uncaptioned television in the twentieth century, as captured in *Turn on the Words! Deaf Audiences, Captions, and the Long Struggle for Access*, and the “battles” for access moved online in our century with the explosion of mostly uncaptioned video content (Lang, 2021). While the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) fought, made significant progress, and continues to fight for more captions and access, Ellcessor’s (2016) review of the history of digital media accessibility makes manifest how online users cannot be legally required to caption their videos. As a result, it is up to individuals, communities, and organizations to advocate for captions and access and create more dialogic spaces for captions online.

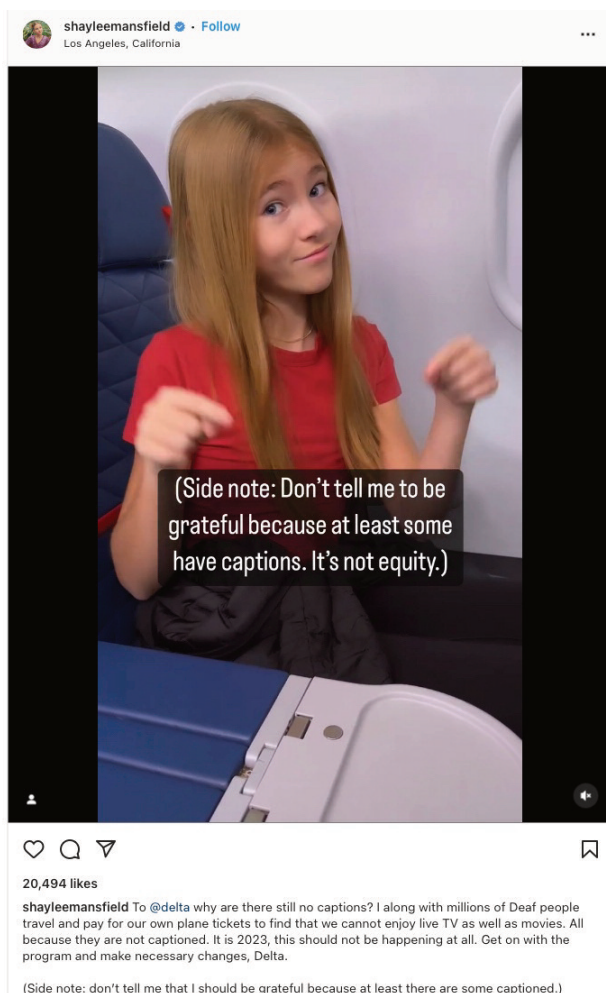
Ellcessor (2018) has further analyzed how Matlin, one of the most famous celebrities who is Deaf, has used her social media platform to engage in online activism. Notably, she has shared her personal experiences struggling with the lack of captioned media on airplanes and called on social media followers to advocate for captioned in-flight entertainment, as shown in the following screen capture (Figure 7.1) of a social media post (Matlin, 2022).



**Figure 7.1:** Advocacy online for captions and access

The need for captions and access reaches across the generations, with young actress Shaylee Mansfield, also Deaf, likewise capitalizing on her social media reach to advocate for captions on airplanes. In a vertical video posted on Instagram with open captions embedded near the center of the screen, Mansfield (2023a) demonstrated the struggles of having to search through the seatback monitor for a limited number of media with captions. At the end of the video, instead of signing the last part, she points to words that appear on screen, as shown in the following screen capture of her post (Figure 7.2).





**Figure 7.2:** Pointing to captions that show a side note (that is not signed or spoken in the video) about the importance of access

In this video, Mansfield consciously creates a space for subtitles and captions to appear and points to the captions to emphasize what ends up a powerful counterargument against those who might accept the status quo.

Matlin and Mansfield are only two of many activists who spread awareness of the need for companies and individuals to caption their videos. This collaborative commitment to access is to be cele-



brated while we acknowledge the frustrating reality of having to advocate for access in the first place because too many videos posted online have not been captioned effectively or immediately. The lack of equal and immediate access to online video content is the driving force behind users' comments and original videos throughout social media platforms asking platforms and users to make captions available. Li et al. (2022) visually capture the widespread advocacy in their paper's opening figure: a collage of screen captures of 10 content creators' videos with the visual hashtag, #NoMoreCrap-tions. They build on their analysis and survey of YouTube content creators to recommend, among other points, improving captioning quality (including through algorithms and community captioning), and most intriguingly, recommending that videos ensure "opportunities with lip-reading" (p. 19) that would increase DHH viewers' access to information in a video. The sentiment is clear: more and better captions are always needed.

At the risk of excluding countless other moments of activism, I will evaluate one effective example here to show how advocates can improve captions and access online, and to show how we can create new dialogic spaces for captions as shown in Figure 7.3.

In response to an uncaptioned video that actor Ryan Reynolds posted on Twitter (now X) in December 2019, a Deaf user, cryssie, commented about the lack of captions and offered the actor captioning resources. In response, Reynolds posted an open captioned version within the next day and even included sound description in brackets.



**Figure 7.3:** Tweet thread that shows how advocacy and access is a collaborative effort

What makes this quick response even more memorable is his follow-up tweet explaining that for some reason the sound did not work in his captioned video and that he is “not good with technology” (Figure 7.4).



**Figure 7.4:** Tweet by Ryan Reynold that shows how creating videos with captions and sound is a process

Following this post, the thread shows other users who also captioned the video and those who included audio in captioned versions, showing collective commitment and effort. This example captures the beauty of captioning access: that access is a process, not a perfect solution, that we can all learn from each other while making mistakes along the way and while developing new skills for working with technology, and that we can all contribute to a community and culture of access.

What we cannot discount is this: this public figure was willing to post a video without sound so that a captioned version would be available, and in doing so, he transformed the video into a silent space and created a collective experience for all sighted users. This version of the video made captions a viable means of access for viewers to engage with the message, including the music. Furthermore, the multiple versions of this one video in the same thread with and without captions show how these users created a dialogic space for captions. Scrolling through Reynolds's social media page in later years shows that he continued to include open captioned videos. The message implanted itself: there is always time and space for captions here.

This one social media thread produced several different captioned versions of the same video created by different users, including Reynolds himself. That multiverse was created by the choices each user made in captioning their video, and these users chose to create traditional lines of words at the bottom of the screen, making their message readable and accessible on social media. The choices social media users might use to caption the same video might be different in a different social media context, such as the dissemination of vertical videos with visual text on platforms like TikTok, and that is where we will launch to next.

## **ACCESS AND AESTHETICS IN ALIGNMENT**

On TikTok and similar platforms in which users are provided with more options for embedding colorfully visual text in relatively more informal short-form videos on that platform, the benefits and limita-

tions of designing a space for words on a vertical smartphone screen may be discerned.

The ability to choose from a colorful and dynamic variety of styles is an incredible affordance, or benefit, for several reasons. New creators can recognize the variety of ways in which they can express themselves, they can enjoy the enhanced process of selecting different ways to show exactly how they feel in any given video. They can hopefully appreciate the value of making words visual and making visuals textual. Their integration of words and images on screen can further bring attention to the multi-textual nature of communication—and most of all, with every new video that they create, they contribute to our multi-textual society and intensify our fellow citizens' ease with languages on screen. That, in turn, could further transform captions into a core value for video communication in society, especially in light of the relatively prominent role of TikTok in young adults' lives and the frequent nature to which users scroll through social media with phones on mute in public places.

The visual nature of online communication is captured by Justina Miles, a Deaf nursing student who received widespread acclaim during the 2023 Super Bowl when she performed the ASL version of Rihanna's halftime show as well as the ASL version of Sheryl Lee Ralph's pregame performance of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (Breen, 2023). Her performances were streamed live online as part of the NAD's continual commitment to providing live access to the ASL version of each year's Super Bowl performances. In a post-Super Bowl interview "CBS Mornings," Miles described the importance of using her body to visually perform the songs (Breen, 2023).

The power of visual performance—and written words—is discerned in just one instance of a TikTok-style vertical video posted on her Instagram page in which she signs part of a song with visual text embedded above her (Miles, 2022). Colorfully visual captions for the lyrics are superimposed right above her head as she signs each word. The following screen captures (Figures 7.5, 7.6, and 7.7) show three moments in her clip as she signs the word "side" with three different typographical choices.



**Figure 7.5:** Three different choices for the colorfully visual design of the same word in a vertical video



**Figure 7.6:** Three different choices for the colorfully visual design of the same word in a vertical video





**Figure 7.7:** Three different choices for the colorfully visual design of the same word in a vertical video



This shows the range of options for embedding visual text on screen, including placing words near faces as embodied messages are performed. This example also reflects the incorporation of visual text at the top of the screen, a placement practice or trend that seems to be used relatively more frequently in vertical videos than in horizontal videos. From the designer's perspective, the placement of text at or near the top of vertical videos capitalizes on the extra space and draws mobile viewers' attention to the key information in the text. From the viewer's perspective, the placement of text near the top can facilitate our gaze as we read the words and the faces and action right underneath the words. From both perspectives, designers and viewers connect through the text's placement above those on screen and the top part of the screens that we hold in our hands.

A major positive affordance of social media platforms like TikTok's incorporation of visual text options is certainly the variety of choices that users have and the ease to which we can choose different ways to project words on screen. The act of embedding words on screen, especially words next to faces and bodies, can embody how we communicate through words, images, and our bodies in interaction. However, to make the aesthetic message rhetorically effective and visually accessible to audiences, each user would have to make deliberate choices in how best to convey meaning through words on screen. While we might not be able to educate every single user of informal social media platforms, we and those in our networks—including in our professional and academic contexts—can support each other's alignment of accessibility and aesthetics in our video composition processes.

While I do not claim to set down in stone best practices or exemplars of online platforms amid rapidly changing online contexts, the benefits and limitations of different styles of visual text across different screens can certainly be recognized. If current and future generations dedicate more time and space to vertical videos with visual text embedded, we can commit to improving how the visual text embodies accessible multimodal communication in these contexts.

While Miles included the words of lyrics through visual text, not all creators use the visual text to create word-for-word captions. Often, the visual text is used to symbolize messages not actually spoken on screen, as when someone places one word on screen for 10 seconds and speaks a completely different statement. With TikTok's introduction of automatically generated captions, users can provide word-for-word captions that are turned on and off by their viewers. The layers of embedded text and automatically generated captions create a whole new dilemma, as revealed by Emily Lederman (2022) in her graduate capstone project, "An Exploration of Accessibility and Captioning Practices on TikTok." Lederman reviews the accessibility and captioning options available on TikTok, analyzes tweets, and presents findings from her survey of 67 DHH and hearing participants and their experiences with TikTok captions. Among other significant points, the results reveal the limitations of automatic captions that include errors, the limited number of TikTok videos with captions, and the challenges of double captions being displayed in videos.

There are two different kinds of double captions to keep in mind. One case occurs when a creator creates open captions that they add to the bottom of the screen, and also provides closed captions of the same exact words. When open captions are embedded at the bottom of the screen, if closed captions are turned on, sighted viewers will see two lines of captions (closed captions layered on top of open captions). In such cases, sighted viewers need to turn off the closed captions and read only the open captions, as shown in Figure 7.8 showing a video by Christine Sun Kim.



**Figure 7.8:** Double captions that occur when captions are embedded at the bottom of the screen and closed captions are turned on

In other cases, those who create videos and embed highly dynamic visual text on screen without fully transcribing every word being expressed in the video can create conflicting layers. A common practice with vertical videos is to embed specific words as dynamic text that stays on screen for a certain period of time while different words are being spoken or expressed in the video. However, if the dynamic text is embedded at the bottom of the screen and word-for-word lines of captions are generated, the captions will block the viewer's visual access to the dynamic text—and thus the holistic experience of video.

The concept of double captions should prompt content creators to embed open captions or visuals away from the bottom of the screen so that closed captions can be displayed separately from and not on top of key visuals on screen. That way, the layers will not interfere with each other and can be read separately.

Ideally, however, vertical video content creators should design a space for both visual text and full captions: consider carefully the placement of all of your components when you embed excerpted visual text and convey the fully spoken or expressed message through word-for-word captions.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO AND NOT DO?

As we create space for visual text and captions, findings from researchers in human-computer interaction, user experience design, and related fields can inform our understanding of the affordances of visual text in online videos. Early experiments with dynamic captioning and subtitling demonstrated approaches to kinetic typography that embodies rising pitch or loudness (Forlizzi et al., 2003), emotive captioning that use typography to visually represent emotional content (Fels et al., 2001; Fels et al., 2005; Lee et al., 2007; Mori & Fels, 2009), and visualizations of music (Fourney & Fels, 2009). The dynamic nature of subtitles should be moderate, though, and not extreme, as suggested by Rashid et al.'s (2008) comparison of user responses to three levels of captioning: conventional captions, enhanced animated captions, and extreme captions that provided sound effects around the screen while there were also captions on the bottom of the screen at the same time.

Brown et al.'s (2015) assessment of hearing participants' reactions to dynamic subtitles indicates participants' positive feedback to how dynamic subtitles make it easier to follow the action when they are integrated into the frame rather than at the bottom of the screen. The reactions seem to show that integrating subtitles into videos improved the aesthetic quality, the usability, and the users' sense of involvement with the video content. Other researchers have specifically explored the benefits of developing systems that would place subtitles closer to speakers and regions of interest on screen (Akahori et al., 2016; Mocanu & Tapu, 2021; Tapu et al., 2019). Social media captions and subtitles are a relatively underexplored field, and it is important for those of us who analyze and create videos to endorse the inclusive design of accessible and aesthetic videos in vertical and horizontal formats.

We should always be acutely aware of what we can do with our text and the limitations of the video editing software or automatic generators that we use, such as what is provided by each social media platform. As van Leeuwen (2014) writes of kinetic typography, "The software designer has decided what moods will exist and

how they are expressed. The software designer has created the language with which you are to express your ‘mood.’... The question has to be asked: What can you do ... and what can you *not* do?” (p. 23). Van Leeuwen’s question rings true for any technology and social media platform we use as we create captions and embed visual text on screen to embody our messages.

What we can do is commit to aligning accessibility with aesthetics as we embody our messages through multiple modes in interaction. We can meaningfully integrate words in the space next to us instead of randomly embedding colors and emojis around the screen. We can, as the characters and the creators have shown us throughout the previous chapters of this book, commit to the interdependent, interactional process of committing to access and design a meaningful space for captions.

## **JUXTAPOSITION: CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES**

Throughout this book, I have shared my videos in which my predominant approach has been to integrate black subtitles in the space next to me near my face and upper body. As discussed in the final chapter, that subtitling approach provides access to my professional message within this book’s context. In my video for this chapter, words are used on screen to visually demonstrate the message that creators should carefully consider best practices for integrating captions and subtitles in online contexts. As you watch this video, consider the limitations of randomly creating highly visual text for social media videos.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 7 video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/ygr6HBXCbkE> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

In this video, I briefly incorporate some words in colorful text to show what happens when we change the audience's reading experience. First, I include only the words, “visual text” in blue—a color that is relatively more accessible than other colors when considering colorblindness and other factors—within a sentence about visual text in videos, and follow that up with another sentence that includes the word “positive” in blue. These two sentences demonstrate modest incorporation of colorful words in a relatively accessible color. These two sentences model my balance of accessibility and aesthetics.

To counterbalance a rhetorical use of color, I then follow that up with two subtitle blocks that are entirely in blue to replicate social media videos. Those are followed by a sentence in which I say, “But we should *not* just add any color or any style,” with the first three words in different colors. That embodies my argument that just adding any color or style can render our words inaccessible and ineffective. Through this design, I show and tell audiences that careful consideration must be paid to our typographical choices, including how and why we are choosing different colors, sizes, or fonts.

Creators can and should likewise consider the best rhetorical

and design approaches for their own videos and balance aesthetics with accessibility. We can all carefully consider effective design practices for captioning and subtitling our videos so that we can make our spaces of communication more accessible. As the affordances of technologies continue to evolve, we can all continue to engage in conversations about effective practices for captioning and designing videos.

## **SHOW HOW IT SOUNDS**

Conversations about and through captions and subtitles and visual text occur not only by talking about captions, but just as effectively by embracing and valuing the fluid interplay of visual, textual, and sonic modes. The multisensory vibrations of sound and emotions can be conveyed through visual incorporation of prominent words on screen, as captured in a video that U.S. Open Tennis posted on Twitter (now X) in September 2022 after Iga Świątek of Poland won the U.S. Open Tennis Championship.

The supersized emotions that tennis fans feel when watching the gripping decisive moments of a final, and the thrilling moment of victory, are heightened through this online version of the match that originally aired on television. When watching a live television match, caption readers are presented with captions for words uttered by commentators several seconds earlier. In essence, caption readers are in two timeframes at once as we continually reconcile the rapidly unfolding live action with the commentary that is being typed on screen several seconds after the fact. Our access is further limited by the fact that key utterances by officials on court, including “out,” “fault,” “let,” and other decisions are often not captioned. Viewers rely on the visual action, players’ reactions, and the commentators’ explanation several seconds later, to determine the result of any point.

Limited access to real-time sounds in televised tennis has its opposite in the highly engaging video that U.S. Open Tennis (2022) posted after the match that accompanies a post that states, “How it sounded when @iga\_swiatek became a #USOpen champion.” This

28-second video starts with the final moments of the match and immediately places large captions right at the center of the court—and the video. We are shown each word that is uttered at once, word for word, as shown in the following screenshots (Figures 7.9, 7.10, and 7.11).



**Figure 7.9:** A tweet that includes a video with large open captions that emphasize the calls in a tennis match





**Figure 7.10:** A tweet that includes a video with large open captions that emphasize the calls in a tennis match



**Figure 7.11:** A tweet that includes a video with large open captions that emphasize the calls in a tennis match

As a viewer of televised tennis for the past 20 years, I was astounded by the level of access I had to the sounds and the heightened emotion of this moment. Watching this video over and over, not only do I experience for the first time direct access to every single decision being uttered in real time (“FOR SWIATEK,” “FOREHAND CROSS,” “MISSES,” “LONG”), I **feel** the antici-

pation, the increase in excitement, and the collective exhilaration. I feel, hear, and sense the collective celebration as she wins the “2022 US OPEN TITLE.” That visualization is shown in the following screen captures (Figures 7.12, 7.13, and 7.14).



**Figure 7.12:** A tweet that includes a video with large open captions that emphasize who won the 2022 US Open Title



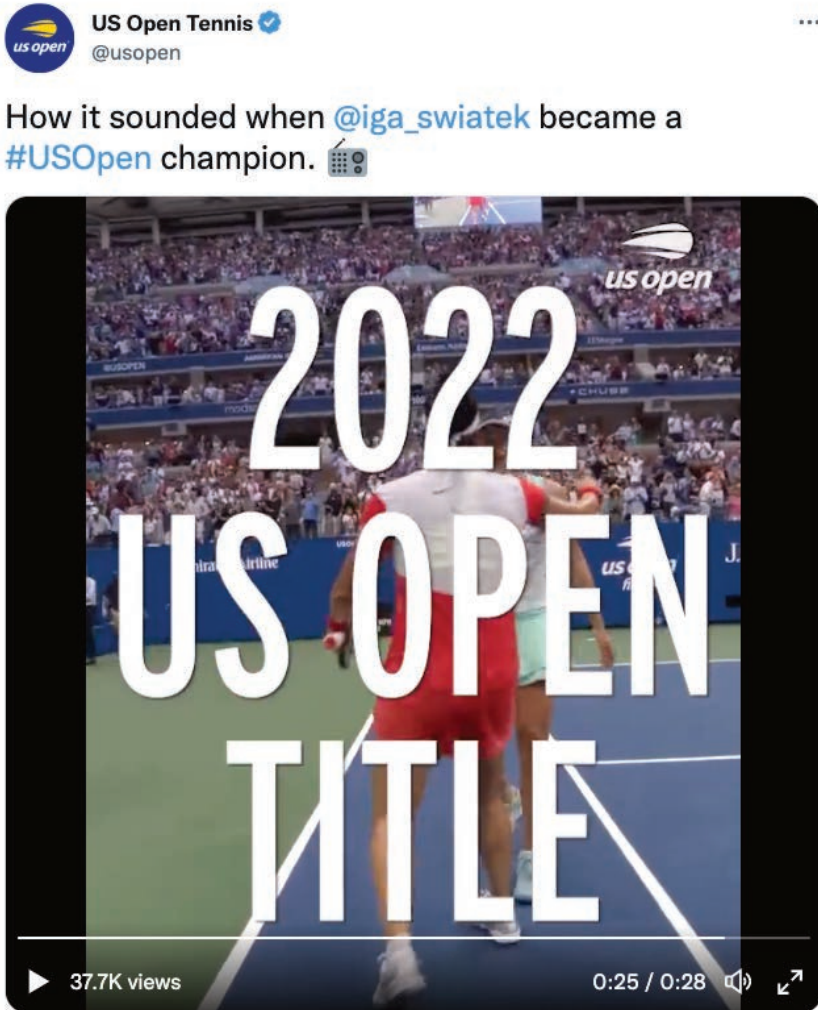
US Open Tennis   
@usopen

...

How it sounded when @iga\_swiatek became a #USOpen champion. 🎧



**Figure 7.13:** A tweet that includes a video with large open captions that emphasize who won the 2022 US Open Title



**Figure 7.14:** A tweet that includes a video with large open captions that emphasize who won the 2022 US Open Title

This visualization of words brings the viewer into the multisensory space of Arthur Ashe Stadium. While accessibility might not have been the driving force behind the creation of this video, this video clearly embodies the benefits of multimodal, multi-textual communication in connecting with audiences.

## PROMOTE THE VALUE OF MULTILINGUAL SPACES

While we can celebrate the multi-textual integration of sound and visuals and concede that English is a common language in the international world of tennis, we should also recognize the limitations of this video in communicating solely through English. Other multilingual spaces show us the power and affordances of captions and subtitles in bridging multiple languages. In order to fully celebrate these spaces, we need to begin with the problems of limited access to multiple languages.

I consciously do not use the word “foreign,” including when discussing ASL and Spanish in our multilingual society. However, as a closed caption reader, I am too often exposed to the phrase, “[speaking foreign language]” during live televised settings and prerecorded films and television programs in which the captioner might not know or type out the actual language being spoken. That phrase fails to convey which language is being spoken as well as the actual words being spoken in that language. For instance, if individuals are speaking Spanish, then, certainly, these words should be typed out in Spanish to honor and recognize the intrinsic value of all languages, cultures, and identities.

The value of incorporating different languages in closed captions became apparent on social media and traditional media when the closed captions for CBS’ live telecast of the 2023 Grammys only displayed “SINGING NON-ENGLISH” during Bad Bunny’s Spanish and English opening performance of a medley from his album, *Un Verano Sin Ti*, and “SPEAKING NON-ENGLISH” during his Spanish and English acceptance speech for winning the award for Best Música Urbana Album (Hailu, 2023; Schneider, 2023a, 2023b). This clear conversation, and CBS’ subsequent addition of Spanish-language captions in replays of the Grammys, foregrounded the value of inclusive captioning practices and a shared commitment to recognizing multiple languages in the same space.

This communal action reminded me of another moment in



which closed captions—and the lack of access to multilingual dialogue—were spotlighted, but not to the same degree of action that effected change. Back in 2019, I watched the first Democratic debate of the 2020 election cycle and had seen the closed captions read “[SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE]” when several candidates spoke in Spanish, including Julián Castro, Beto O’Rourke, and Cory Booker. The next day, I watched a replay of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*’s monologue in which the politically attuned host critiqued the debate (The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, 2019). While Colbert and his writing team took a comical take on different moments from the debate, an important takeaway for me was that Colbert’s reaction spotlighted the limitations of writing “[speaking foreign language]” in closed captions for audiences.

Early in Colbert’s monologue, he shows a clip from the debate in which O’Rourke switched to Spanish. He remarks, “This is true—in the closed captioning, it said, just said ‘speaking foreign language.’” To show that, *The Late Show* inserted a frame of the debate with the closed captions they had on screen and enlarged the closed captions to visually emphasize the phrase, [SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE] (as depicted in Figures 7.15 and 7.16).



**Figure 7.15:** Colbert’s observations of how “[speaking foreign language]” is used in closed captions



**Figure 7.16:** Colbert's observations of how "[speaking foreign language]" is used in closed captions

Colbert then laughs and remarks, "Really got through! Really penetrated!" Throughout the rest of his monologue, as he continues to critique the debate itself, he uses "speaking foreign language" as a recurring theme, including, "The moderators were not ready to take 'speaking foreign language' as an answer," and "I don't speak 'foreign language'" (Figure 7.17).



**Figure 7.17:** Colbert's reaction to how "foreign language" is used in closed captions



Although Colbert takes a comedian's take on the portrayal of Spanish in the closed captions, this spotlights the immense significance of authentically representing our languages in our captioning and subtitling practices. As captioners ourselves, we must break down—rather than create—linguistic and cultural barriers and extend bridges across languages.

While Colbert was making fun of the closed captions in the original debate, *The Late Show's* closed captions for Colbert's monologue used the line "Speaking Spanish" instead of showing the actual Spanish words. Indicating the actual language is absolutely a major step forward; now, how could we go even further and include the actual language itself in our captioned and subtitled spaces?

## HONOR MULTIPLE LANGUAGES IN THE SAME SPACE

The Sunday after Bad Bunny performed at the 2023 Grammys stirred up Super Bowl and cultural conversations about that year's Super Bowl advertisements. Three of these advertisements, shown to millions of people, portray multiple languages in interaction with captions and subtitles. Together, these advertisements promote (in addition to their products), the value of inclusion and access to each other's messages while, unfortunately, replicating the reality of mistranslations and mis-transcriptions.

As shown in Figures 7.18 and 7.19, McDonald's 2023 Super Bowl commercial featured rappers Cardi B and Offset along with a montage of other couples addressing the camera about their relationships and knowing each other's fast food order as a sign of love. While most of these conversations are in English, one spoken line is in Spanish, with closed captions showing a woman speaking about her partner's order. While the attempt to be more inclusive in the captions and subtitles makes the meaning more accessible, the words are unfortunately mistyped and represent the language inaccurately, such as the misspelling of *sorpresa*, or surprise.



**Figure 7.18:** Closed captions for English and Spanish speech—with errors in the Spanish captions—in a McDonald's commercial



**Figure 7.19:** Closed captions for English and Spanish speech—with errors in the Spanish captions—in a McDonald’s commercial

Just as the mistake is unfortunate, this incorporation of Spanish in closed captions is a too-rare recognition of the value of multiple languages in our society, and we must commit to more inclusive captioning and subtitling practices that would be faithful embodiments of our languages and identities, including accent marks. At the same time, we should consider how to make meaning accessible across languages to those who might not know a language.

The value of multiple languages extended to two other 2023 Super Bowl advertisements that incorporated subtitles. General Motors and Netflix’s collaborative commercial (General Motors, 2023) showed Will Ferrell incorporating electric vehicles in different Netflix programs. The commercial includes a moment from *Squid Game* with English subtitles showing the translation for the Korean dialogue, “You moved!” and “I did not.” The closed captions in Figures 7.20 and 7.21 replicate these words in English with description in brackets showing that the speaker is using Korean.



**Figure 7.20:** Open subtitles and closed captions for Korean speech in a commercial for General Motors and Netflix



**Figure 7.21:** Open subtitles and closed captions for Korean speech in a commercial for General Motors and Netflix

The New York Mets' (2023) commercial, shown to regional viewers, centered on the concept of "We wanna hear you," as in, "We want you to buy tickets and come to our games." The commercial showed Mets players at an office taking calls from fans. One of these players was simultaneously on the office landline and on a video call with Kodai Senga on his smartphone. Senga's

Japanese speech is subtitled in English, as shown in Figures 7.22 and 7.23.



**Figure 7.22:** International communication and subtitles for Japanese speech in a commercial for the New York Mets



**Figure 7.23:** International communication and subtitles for Japanese speech in a commercial for the New York Mets

The subtitles and captions in these scenes call on viewers to read these speakers' messages as opposed to listening to a translator. Directly reading their messages embodies the multilingual and

multicultural worlds we navigate through, including the international media we watch and the international members of the “local” teams we root for.

These linear captions and subtitles do not dance around the screen yet are just as rhetorically effective in embodying the connections we form across languages, cultures, and identities in our interdependent commitment to designing inclusive spaces.

## COMMUNICATE IN ANY LANGUAGE

The cultural conversations around “speaking non-English” expanded when Bad Bunny hosted Saturday Night Live (SNL) in late 2023, reflecting the affordances of using captions and subtitles to convey meaning across multiple languages. Bad Bunny’s episode was multilingual, with several sketches including some spoken Spanish (particularly a sketch about telenovela actors and actresses) and with the closed captions for DHH audiences showing the words in Spanish—a rare instance of having access to the original language through closed captions.

The cultural power of captions and subtitles was conveyed in Bad Bunny’s opening monologue satirizing the 2023 Grammys’ depiction of him as “speaking non-English” (Saturday Night Live, 2023a). Although he begins his monologue in English, he soon switches to speaking in Spanish. Suddenly, large open captions appear on screen for all sighted viewers, reading, “[SPEAKING IN NON-ENGLISH].” Bad Bunny interrupts his own monologue when he notices the open captions, and calls for the captions to be changed. Figure 7.24 shows Bad Bunny pointing to the open captions; the real closed captions appear at the top of the screen and show DHH audiences what he is actually speaking at that moment: “Cámbienme eso. Cámbienme eso.”





**Figure 7.24:** Bad Bunny speaking in Spanish when hosting *Saturday Night Live*

In response, the open captions are changed to “[SPEAKING A SEXIER LANGUAGE].” The audience laughs and applauds, and Bad Bunny gives two thumbs up, as shown in Figure 7.25.



**Figure 7.25:** Bad Bunny celebrating Spanish when hosting *Saturday Night Live*

While this demonstrates how captions and subtitles can embody access and connections across languages, the very next moment

eliminates some of the victory, as the host then gestures to the captions and says, “You know what? I don’t trust ... this thing,” and brings in his actor friend Pedro Pascal to translate for him instead. Although this might seem to be an unfortunate instance of suppressing captions and subtitles, the monologue should be celebrated for honoring multiple languages.

Another sketch in the episode satirizes the Age of Discovery and is entirely in spoken Spanish (Saturday Night Live, 2023b). This pre-recorded sketch shows explorers who have returned from the “New World” and who show their king and prince their “discoveries,” such as the tomato. The actors in this four-minute sketch all speak Spanish, and open English subtitles appear at the bottom of the screen throughout the entire sketch. Just as thrillingly, the closed captions provide access to the speakers’ original language by transcribing Spanish. Figure 7.26 shows this mix of languages with open subtitles at the bottom of the screen providing the translation for spoken Spanish. The closed captions at the top of the screen provide DHH audiences with sound descriptions in English such as “[Laughs]” along with the original spoken words in Spanish.



**Figure 7.26:** Subtitles and captions in a pre-recorded *Saturday Night Live* sketch

While including open subtitles may be more feasible with pre-recorded content, this sketch and episode is a unique instance of



accessible multilingual communication on SNL and shows the rich potential for captions and subtitles in enriching humor and connections across languages. There is much potential for providing more deep and richer access to sound and languages through captions and subtitles.

## EMBODY THE FLUIDITY OF LANGUAGES

The international connections that we all engage in daily occur when watching interviews with international players on our home teams or at sports tournaments or international content through streaming providers, or when interacting with others on social media. All these moments are opportunities for challenging monolingualism and accessing meaning across languages, including with captions and subtitles as bridges that bring modes, languages, and individuals together.

One notable challenge to monolingualism comes in the multicolored subtitles for Korean, Japanese, and English in Apple TV+'s *Pachinko*, a show in which the predominant languages are Korean and Japanese as detailed by Sonia Rao (2022) in a *Washington Post* article. Open subtitles appear on screen in yellow when characters speak Korean and in blue when characters speak Japanese. If the viewer has the Apple TV+ option for English captions turned on, these captions appear in white. As detailed by Rao, series creator Soo Hugh felt that it was “intuitive” to color-code the languages in the subtitles so that audiences “outside Korea and Japan” would know when “the languages handed off” (n.p.). This was important not just for knowing which language is which, but also because the show would not be able to work if “we as an audience aren’t able to feel the fluidity of how language works in the show—and also the restrictions of it and the imprisonment of it” (Hugh, as quoted in Rao, 2022, n.p.). This audience awareness enhances the rhetorical, aesthetic, and accessible qualities of *Pachinko*.

The fluidity of language is made explicit in the subtitles for the character Solomon, since, as Rao (2022) explains, “the yellow and blue capture how his Korean heritage both challenges and inter-

twines with his Japanese upbringing” (n.p.). This visualization is conveyed through a tweet in which a viewer (Whelan, 2022) highlighted the use of different colors for different languages (Figure 7.27).



**Kelsey Whelan**  
@kelseymwhelan



watching pachinko and the subtitles  
are color-coded by language  
(korean/japanese), even in the same  
sentence!



10:58 PM · Mar 27, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

3 Retweets 27 Likes

**Figure 7.27:** A tweet highlighting *Pachinko*'s color-coded subtitles

Rao (2022) details another powerful scene that uses the visual representation to provide audiences with access to “power dynamics between the characters,” such as one scene in which “the blue and yellow subtitles denote two simultaneous, contradictory conversations” (n.p.). Hugh explains in Rao’s article how characters who can “traverse between different languages” have “access to both places” (n.p.).

Through this simultaneous textualization and visualization of multiple languages in interaction, this series creator capitalized on the affordances of subtitles in embodying the experiences and rhetorics of each character through multiple languages. The actors did not need to act with space for subtitles next to them to make the subtitles essential.

The visualization of languages in subtitles is essential to the meaning of this composition, and we can likewise make captions and subtitles meaningful embodiments of our rhetorics and our commitment to access and inclusion.

## **MAKE CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES CENTRAL IN OUR CONVERSATIONS**

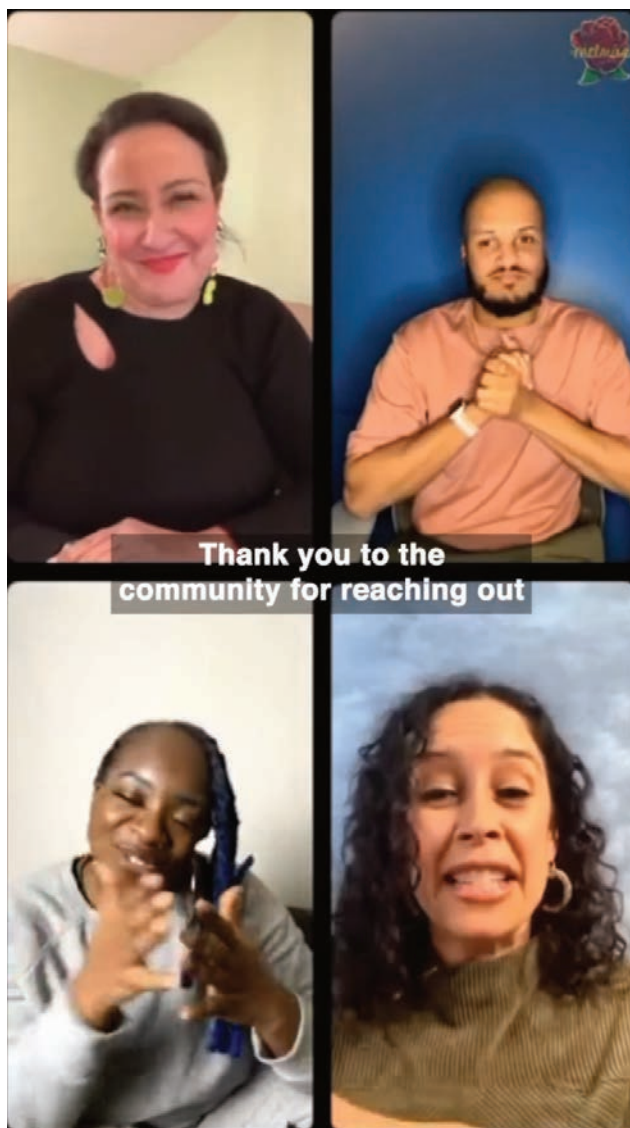
The growing trend of including captions and subtitles on our shared screens, from television to smartphone screens, leads to affirming the importance of making captions and subtitles accessible in several related ways: easily read, readily available (easy to turn on or already open), and easily shared with others. Through the continual dissemination of videos with captions and subtitles, we can show, not tell, that captions and subtitles are central in our conversations and our commitment to connecting with each other.

One such space in which captions and subtitles have become more prominent is in the form of interviews shared as vertical videos. With different individuals appearing at the top and the bottom of the frame, these become natural spaces in which captions and subtitles are placed in the center, anchoring the two parts of the vertical frame. That in turn can support viewers’ abilities to saccade from one individual’s statements and face to the next.

Content creator Melissa Elmira Yingst, who is Deaf and the host of the online series *Melmira*, exemplifies the power of storytelling and connection within and across communities through her online videos. While she has for many years published traditionally horizontally framed in-person interviews as well as Zoom interviews with traditional subtitles, she has more recently published versions in vertical format for viewing on a smartphone. Her vertical interviews literally place captions and subtitles at the center of the interview, as shown in Figures 7.28 and 7.29 (Yingst, 2022b, 2023).



**Figure 7.28:** Interactions with CAS at the center of vertical videos



**Figure 7.29:** Interactions with CAS at the center of vertical videos

Yingst is far from being the only one to centralize captions in these vertical interviews. The commonality between Yingst's Deaf spaces of communication and others' hearing spaces with spoken communication shows an alignment, or overlapping, of benefits for

communication. Podcaster and host Josh Horowitz, who interviews celebrities from a range of backgrounds and publishes the full interviews in horizontal mode, including on YouTube, has also marketed his interviews through short-form vertical videos that embed open captions in the center of the screen. One such example comes from his interview with actor Ke Huy Quan (Horowitz, 2023), as shown in Figure 7.30.



**Figure 7.30:** Written words and emoji at the center of a vertical video

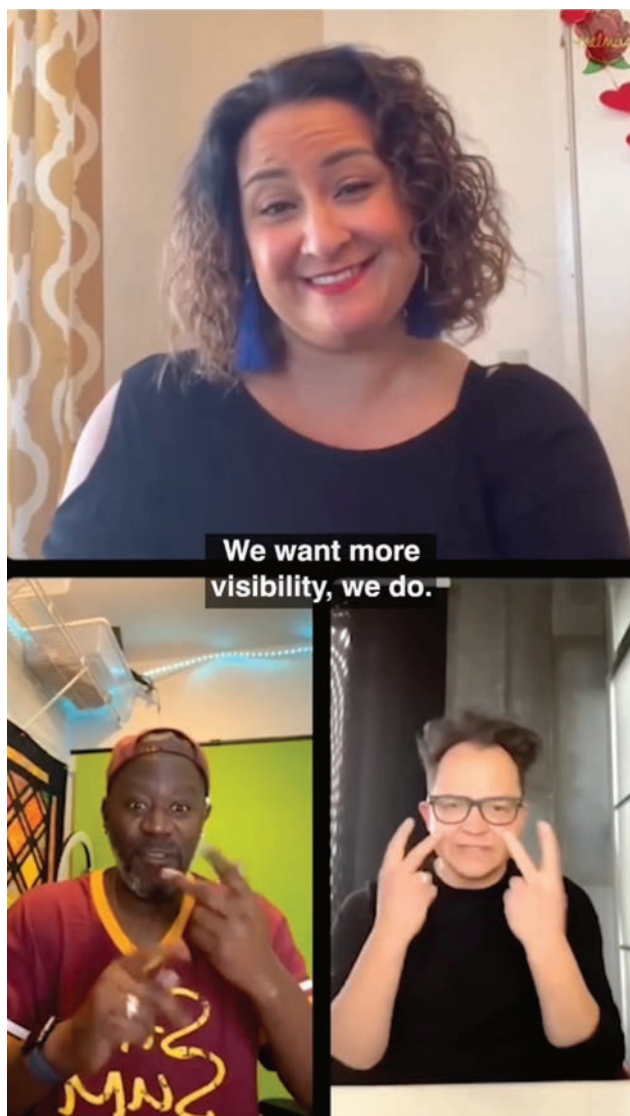


Horowitz's (2023) and others' vertical videos appeal to viewers on smartphones and, through the natural incorporation of captions, they become accessible. However, the principles of accessibility are not consistent across video genres or platforms since the open captions often only appear in the short vertical video version of these spoken interviews, including through YouTube Shorts and other social media platforms. When watching these full interviews on YouTube, in which the two images are placed side by side (instead of vertically) the viewer has often been left with automatically generated captions that are relatively more difficult to process.

With more content creators producing short-form vertical videos, including through YouTube Shorts, captions and subtitles are literally becoming central in more of our spaces without the participants pointing out or commenting about the captions and subtitles or, in too many cases, even thinking about access itself. However, by incorporating captions and subtitles as a natural component of the vertical video for audiences to read in a variety of contexts (including without the sound on), content creators contribute to the multiplication of captioned videos and the familiarity that audiences (who might also be content creators) have with seeing captioned videos. Through this acculturation and enhanced values for words and images on our screens, content creators can, whether intentionally or not, contribute to the accessibility of our spaces and conversations.

With this, we come full circle among advocates who clearly and directly call for captions and access to those who contribute to access without realizing it. The multitudes of stories, rhetorics, and knowledge collectively co-exist as individuals of all kinds are exposed to different experiences, captions and subtitles approaches, and strategies for connecting with audiences and creators. This is exemplified through Yingst's (2022a) interview with Deaf rappers Warren "Wawa" Snipe and Sean Forbes about their experiences performing in ASL during the 2022 Super Bowl and their desire, as captured in Figure 7.31, for "more visibility" in the world at large.





**Figure 7.31:** Visibility and CAS at the center of a vertical video

We can continue to visualize the many ways that individuals express ourselves, including the benefits and limitations of each approach, and collaborate in the ongoing process of designing access and connection across our communities and cultural spaces

so that each one perceives and senses the power of our differences and commonalities.

## **CONCLUSION: MAKE CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES PART OF OUR CULTURES**

These are crucial thematic principles: we can design dialogic space for captions online, align access and aesthetics, and critically reflect on the affordances of our captioning and subtitling technologies. We can create captioned access to the multisensory experience of sound, promote and honor the value of multiple languages in the same spaces, embody the fluidity of languages, and make captions central in our conversations. These are not fixed skills or technologies to use, but values for our society as each one of us commits to visualizing captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal, lingual, textual communication in our cultures: music, sports, politics, the news, entertainment, and everything in between.

Through each moment, we reflect the embodied multimodal approach of designing a space for captions and subtitles and access, creating visual or multiple modes of access, embodying our rhetorics and experiences, communicating through multiple modes and languages, enhancing the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of a video while showing awareness of how audiences may engage with and access our composition. These principles ring true across different screen-mediated contexts and stages, as evident through another study on theater captions in which D/deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing participants underscored the value of balancing creativity and the art of the show with accessibility so that one does not outweigh the other and that we always work to ensure that our art is accessible (Butler, 2023b).

Our desire for connection should motivate us to keep captions and subtitles part of our cultures while we continue to always recognize the benefits and limitations of communicating through written text in interaction with other modes.

## REFLECTIONS AND MORE

**E**ach chapter of this book has been a portal into spaces in which captions and subtitles become the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication. We have examined different media, videos, and conversations that affirm the vitality of captions and subtitles and access in our cultures. Although we have now reached the last chapter of this book, this is not the ending of our journey.

I have certainly not reviewed every single video and conversation about captions and subtitles in this book, and I have not included the legions of accessibility activists, scholars, students, and everyday citizens who advocate for captions and subtitles online and offline. Rather, this book is an extension of advocates' and creators' ongoing work to support access and an ongoing celebration of the power of captions and subtitles as instruments of connection. Readers are invited to build on this book and visualize captions and subtitles—in all their forms, including open and closed captions and subtitles—as essential features of our videos and conversations. That message is embodied in my Introduction video (Figures 8.1 and 8.2).



**Figure 8.1:** Embodying a message through integral subtitles



**Figure 8.2:** Embodying a message through integral subtitles

## COMPOSING THE SELF

This book would not be complete without my own creation of videos in which I present my multimodal and multilingual argument to audiences through integral subtitles. By incorporating a short video of mine into each chapter of this book, I aimed to show my audiences my embodiment and to show video creators my message about the value of designing a space for captions and subtitles of different types in video analysis and design processes. Within each chapter, I used alphabetic text to highlight key features of the chapter's video, including to reinforce how we can capitalize on the affordances of words on screen and to demonstrate how creators could meaningfully include captions and subtitles in video creation processes.

It has been helpful to reflect on the process of creating my videos to show readers how captions and subtitles can be central in video composition processes. So that we can further visualize captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication, I will now share my process of creating my videos for this book. My purpose here is to emphasize the *human* factor in designing captions and subtitles since each one of us is a human creator who has a unique identity, linguistic and cultural background, and purpose for connecting with our audiences. As humans, we can work through our limitations and share our commitment to always learning through the process of making our messages more accessible, and I do that here.

By creating (Deaf) space for subtitles, I honor my languages and cultures, including Deaf culture, and allow for ASL and English—written and spoken—to interact in the same video space. Most crucially for this book, I have integrated subtitles in the space next to me to embody the value of making this book's message accessible through multiple modes and languages in interaction. The subtitles are integral to my message; without them, I might not fully express the points I make, as shown in the following screen capture of my Chapter 6 video (Figure 8.3).



**Figure 8.3:** Paying attention to words on screen

Lest I erroneously seem like I am arguing that every single creator should integrate captions or subtitles in the space next to them, I want to clarify: every creator and context is different, and we all have many options for how we can make captions and subtitles and access central in our videos and conversations. Each approach presents its own challenges and benefits, and we must always be open to exploring new practices for connecting with our audiences through multiple modes of access and communication.

My creation of videos reflects the embodied multimodal approach and its six points: I have designed space for subtitles during the entire video composition, recording, and editing process. With my subtitles, I provide multiple modes of access to the meaning of my video. The subtitles support audiences' experiences of my embodied rhetorics, or the meaning that I express through my signs, body language, and facial expressions. They support the interdependent nature of multimodal and multilingual communication and the interconnection of modes, languages, and meaning. They reasonably enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of the video. They show my awareness of how different audiences—

including signers and non-signers—would engage with and access the composition in different ways.

Now, as shown in the following Chapter 1 video capture (Figure 8.4), let's begin with space.



**Figure 8.4:** Thinking purposefully about space

Committed to creating my own videos, I designed a space for subtitles throughout the entire video composition process, beginning with the development of my scripts for each chapter. As I worked on my scripts, I visualized how I would appear on screen with space next to me for subtitles. For each video, I recorded myself signing with full awareness of how I would later add subtitles in the space next to me. That included ensuring that the camera framed me appropriately with space next to me. Knowing that black font would be the most effective and readable color for my subtitles, I chose a light-colored background. I also kept in mind how I would later incorporate voice-over audio created by an interpreter, and I paced my signs accordingly for both ASL and spoken English.

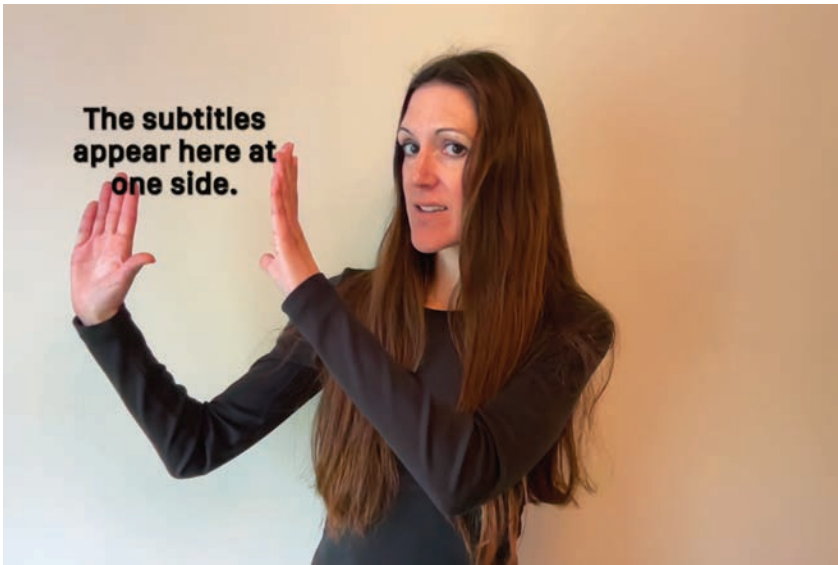
As a right-handed person, I positioned myself mainly on the right side of the camera; that allowed me to use my dominant hand

to interact with the subtitles that would appear in the space next to me. When I felt that it would be rhetorically effective to move myself and the subtitles, I moved to the center of the screen or the left side, as in the following screen captures of my Chapter 2 video (Figures 8.5 and 8.6)



**Figure 8.5:** Interaction with subtitles in different areas of the screen





**Figure 8.6:** Interaction with subtitles in different areas of the screen

Elsewhere, when I discussed conventional subtitles that appear at the bottom of the screen, I moved myself to the center of the frame and placed the subtitles at the bottom of the screen. In these cases, I planned to change the color of the subtitles to white to embody the traditional color for captions/subtitles and to make them readable when they appeared in front of me.

After recording each video, I used Adobe Premiere Pro to embed subtitles into the space next to me. Affordances of this program include being able to edit the design of captions (subtitles), including the placement, color, font, and size of words that appear on screen. In response to my academic context, I decided on a straightforward design for the subtitles: mainly black font. That design would allow me to present my message professionally while still interacting purposefully with the subtitles, as reflected in the following screen capture of my Introduction video (Figure 8.7).



**Figure 8.7:** A professional and purposeful introduction

I also intended for my subtitles to reflect the guidelines for quality captions (DCMP, 2023b), including ensuring that the subtitles are readable. Readability includes ensuring that subtitles appear on screen long enough to be completely read by viewers with different reading speeds. To support the consistency, clarity, and readability of my subtitles, I consciously ensured that enough words appeared on screen at the same time.

In other, less formal contexts, I could shorten the number of words that appear on screen and experiment with having single words and phrases pop on and off quickly and in different colors. If I wanted more stylized words on screen, I would switch to another program that affords more experimentation with movement of text on screen. This was not the context for highly stylized or colorful words on screen around me, but I could interact with the subtitles, as shown in the following screen capture of my Chapter 1 video (Figure 8.8).



**Figure 8.8:** Multimodal interaction on screen

By including more words on screen and in the relatively same location next to me in a relatively consistent design, I also intended to replicate two benefits of traditional captions that appear at the bottom of the screen. Traditional captions are effective in accommodating a relatively large number of words along the bottom of the screen from the left side to the right side—and viewers know the words will appear in the same space and are prepared to read fast and ahead. Viewers of my videos could likewise attend to the same relative space and read my signs and the written words next to each other.

This is an ideal point to discuss a few related limitations of integrating subtitles, starting with the time and effort required to dedicate ourselves to embedding subtitles permanently into the space of a video. We can create videos with voice-over audio, and then use video editing programs or YouTube to automatically generate captions; those captions would be synchronized to the audio, and we could clean up the captions to ensure accuracy. When embedding subtitles into the space of a video, as I did, we must dedicate more

time to the rhetorical and aesthetic process of considering how (and where) best to create each subtitled moment and line in a video.

In my case, the subtitling process was naturally lengthened by my incorporation of voice-over by an ASL interpreter who read my subtitles out loud. I then aligned the audio with the subtitles while accepting that spoken English and ASL—as two different languages that take place in different modalities—might not always be temporally synchronized word-for-word. Of course, not all creators will permanently embed captions and subtitles into a video, and other creators will have different aspects to consider that will lengthen or shorten their composition processes.

To make my content accessible across multiple modes and languages, I also included traditional captions that could be turned on and off through YouTube. That way, viewers would have the option to read captions and subtitles at the bottom of the screen—and, with YouTube’s automatically generated translations, be able to choose different languages (although automatically generated translations might not be accurate). This counterbalances the limitations of embedding subtitles that viewers cannot change to their target language.

Most of all, we must continue to recognize one major limitation of captions and subtitles, which appear through the visual mode. I celebrate the increased incorporation of audio and visual description, which makes on-screen content more accessible. But commendation is not enough, and I must include myself in our collective effort toward increased accessibility across modes and senses.

These limitations are invitations for us all to consider the best ways to express our messages through captions and subtitles and other modes on screen. Your video composing process may be, or will be, different from my own, but we all have the same truth: we are all human rhetors, or creators, who can make deliberate decisions and work through challenges in making our own words accessible.

## VISUALIZING MORE

To fully sense captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication in all its forms and varieties, I ask you to reflect on the curated collection of meaningful examples of captions and subtitles in this book. The embodied multimodal approach affirms how a variety of designs, styles, and practices for captioning and subtitling videos reflect and enrich our interdependence and our commitment to connecting with each other. Creators, characters, real individuals, and audiences discover and create strategies for communicating through multiple languages and modes in interaction. This drive for more accessible multimodal communication cannot end, and we can incorporate the analysis and design of captions and subtitles of all styles more deeply into our lives.

On a daily basis, we can be inspired by the accomplishments of professionally recorded media (*Heroes Reborn*, *Sherlock*), extraordinary collaborative efforts (*Gallaudet: The Film*), documentaries and television shows that spotlight differences as natural (*Born This Way Presents: Deaf Out Loud*, *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*, and *The Company You Keep*), spaces that prove the power of interdependence and learning to communicate (*New Amsterdam*), “silent episodes” and media that show the sensation of communicating through silence and feeling sound through the body (*Only Murders in the Building*, among others). Finally, we can join social media advocates, online video creators, and related conversations that make captions and subtitles and access central in our cultures (and there are happily too many to list in this limited parenthetical space). Let us, as I show in the following screen capture of my Chapter 1 video (Figure 8.9), continue to design space for captions and subtitles in our videos and conversations.



**Figure 8.9:** Designing space for captions and subtitles

There will continue to be many more instances. Imagine the many different ways that words appear on the screens in your life. Perhaps a character is reading a text message, and then the words that she's focusing on become enlarged, leading you to focus on the exact same words as the character. And that makes her emotional state of mind even more accessible and felt within you. Maybe at another point, you'll watch a video tutorial about how to solve a Rubik's Cube and struggle to read the captions at the bottom of the screen at the very same second that the solver is rapidly rotating the cube. At that moment, you might realize how integrating color-coded captions in closer proximity to each rotation would strengthen your comprehension of the steps to take to accomplish each move. Consider the effectiveness of these practices and appreciate the connective strength of words in interaction with other modes.

## **ADVICE AND GUIDELINES FOR VIDEO CREATORS**

To promote a more inclusive future for video composition, there are suggestions and guidelines that content creators, instructors, and students could use to apply an embodied multimodal approach when creating videos with captions and subtitles.

Persistent changes in technologies and rapid technical advances make it infeasible to present you with a concrete list of free video editing software programs and social media tools, but rest assured that video creators can explore available options for incorporating different styles of captions and subtitles when creating videos, from traditional closed captions to highly stylized integral captions and subtitles.

My earliest years of creatively integrating captions and subtitles as a student occurred exclusively with Windows Movie Maker, a free video editing program that went out of existence during the last decade. Since then, Adobe Premiere Pro has remained my primary software for integrating captions and subtitles, but there are an array of programs that you can explore and use to meet your needs and preferences.

These programs may have limitations and might not let you fully customize captions and subtitles in the ways that you want, such as changing the color or size, but use such limitations as a challenge: criticize the limitations of these programs, reflect on the importance of what you want to accomplish with your written text (for instance, what message are you trying to convey through changing the color or size of only one word?), and challenge yourself to explore the affordances of different programs and develop your captioning and subtitling skills.

As you become more comfortable with different programs or learn more about yourself as a composer of captions and subtitles, continue to critique the limitations and make informed rhetorical choices about your use and creation of captions and subtitles of different kinds. Most importantly, share your knowledge with others,

including members of your online networks and students in your courses.

The following guidelines are grounded in the criteria of the embodied multimodal approach and can serve as a heuristic for promoting more inclusive video composition practices, particularly in academic and online spaces. These guidelines are further oriented to the future, a future in which we human creators may interact more frequently through social media and online technologies that include artificial intelligence (AI).

## **1. Design a Space for Captions and Subtitles and Multiple Modes of Access**

Social media and AI both have had an accelerating effect on our communication practices, with video creation and content creation occurring at an ever-intensifying pace. In years past, more time was needed to create, caption/subtitle, revise, and share a video; that time does not exist now with content creators posting videos on a more frequent basis (even multiple times a day) and with AI's potential in streamlining different aspects of production processes. These social and technological changes do not remove the crucial factor: that we are humans who have a message that we want to share and who can design a space for captions and subtitles and multiple modes of access in our videos.

While we might be able to more rapidly disseminate a video, here are some points that creators, instructors, and students should consider:

1. Design a space for captions and subtitles in each video.
  - a. Content creators—especially those who record a substantial number of videos—can remind themselves to take the time to ensure that there will be space for captions to appear on screen in ways that can be read and understood by online audiences, including those viewing content on phones.



- b. Instructors can create instructional videos in which they design a space for captions and subtitles. These can include informal videos in which they introduce themselves to students before the first day of class, videos in which they teach new concepts and interact with key terms on screen next to them, or videos in which they pose and respond to questions that appear on screen.
- 2. Critique different programs and technologies and find more suitable options.
  - a. If a program does not give content creators options for stylizing captions and subtitles in the ways that they want, they can create a video that demonstrates the limitations and advocate for better options.
  - b. Instructors can develop class discussions, activities, and assignments that ask students to experiment with and discuss the affordances of different programs. Students can interrogate current and new options that are available for making meaning accessible across multiple modes, including sounds, visuals, and texts.
- 3. Appreciate our identities as human creators who want to connect with other humans through video composition, especially since these connections often rely on our own experiences, identities, and values.
  - a. Content creators can contribute to online conversations that promote the importance of designing a space for captions and subtitles, including by reminding others of the possibilities for stylizing captions and subtitles in effective ways and by modeling their own effectively captioned and subtitled videos.
  - b. Instructors can create their own captioned and subtitled videos that show students that they value access and connecting with others—which is crucial in human composition and communication.

## **2. Embodied Rhetorics and Multimodal, Multilingual Communication**

Creating a video—especially one in which we record ourselves or are being recorded—is dramatically different from writing a text since we are presenting our physical selves on screen in addition to our argumentative voice or our message. With our physical bodies appearing on screen, we have the unique opportunity to more fully convey our embodied rhetorics and our use of multimodal communication—including multiple languages that may be spoken in the video. To capitalize even more deeply on the affordances of the medium, we can interact more directly with captions and subtitles and use them to highlight the power of our embodied rhetorics and multilingual practices.

With attention to embodied rhetorics and multilingual communication, here are some guidelines for content creators, instructors, and students.

1. Share your identity through your choice of captioning and subtitling designs and interactions.
  - a. Content creators, instructors, and students can use captioning and subtitling tools with different social media platforms and video editing programs to highlight their own embodied rhetorics and experiences. Instructors can model these approaches to students and ask students to create discussion board posts and projects that use captions and subtitles to embody their unique experiences.
    - i. For example, someone could choose only a few words to place right next to them and use their hands or body to emphasize these particular words, whether by holding on to these words with their hands, moving the words from one part of the screen to another, or another approach that comes to mind.

- ii. Someone else could use their voice, their facial expressions, or their eyes to emphasize those words without moving their bodies. By taking your own approach to interacting with captions, you could show—through the captions and subtitles—how you communicate and interact with meaning and the world around you. Showing your unique self would embody the human nature of communication and connecting across differences—including with and through written text.
2. Honor your languages through captions and subtitles.
- a. Content creators, instructors, and students can show how they communicate fluidly through multiple languages by creating videos with captions *and* subtitles in different languages, including and beyond English. Instructors can attend to multilingual experiences when developing assignments, such as interview-based projects in which students interview a community member or research-based projects in which students build on primary and secondary research in several languages.
    - i. For example, someone could create their own multilingual video in which they speak in their language(s) as well as English—and create different captions and subtitles for these languages. They could choose to use different colors or design schemes for different languages and show the value of multilingual communication in our world. Students could create group projects in which they bring together their languages and create a multilingual dialogue that becomes accessible through captions and subtitles. In such ways, captions and subtitles can highlight multilingual communication while making the message

accessible to audiences who use different languages.

### **3. Rhetorical and Aesthetic Principles and Audience Awareness**

In English and other languages, the rise of AI has brought with it a rise in automatically-generated captions and improvements in the accuracy of these automatically-generated captions—and these factors will certainly continue to increase in the years to come. But we cannot forget about human creativity and our desire to share our own unique identities and perspectives with our audiences. We will hopefully always seek out innovative ways to share our messages with each other as we balance rhetorical principles for making messages clear and aesthetic design principles—and as we remain aware of how different audiences may be engaging with our content.

To honor the human experience of creating videos for audiences with rhetorical and aesthetic principles in mind, content creators, instructors, and students can consider the following guidelines.

1. Make your captions or subtitles as traditional or as unconventional as you wish, depending on your purpose, context, and audience—as long as they are accessible and you show awareness of how your audience may engage with your work.
  - a. Content creators and instructors can assess their own videos to ensure that the captions and subtitles maintain the balance between accessibility and aesthetics.
  - b. Instructors can ask students to review each other's video drafts and provide constructive feedback on the design of their peers' captions and subtitles. This provides students with time to reflect on their design, how audiences may or may not access their work, and finalize their captions and subtitles. This peer

review process embodies the interdependent process of working together and advocating for accessible multimodal communication.

2. Celebrate the rhetorical, aesthetic, and accessible qualities of written text on screen.
  - a. Content creators, instructors, and students can always be reminded that access is a shared responsibility *and* a meaningful opportunity for us all to interact in multilayered and creative ways with our screens and our modes of communication as we connect with each other. Through our videos and discussions, we can celebrate the new experiences we gain when we design a space for captions and subtitles.

## JUXTAPOSITION: OPEN UP MORE SPACES

The principles of the embodied multimodal approach have guided this book's study of the analysis and design of captioned and subtitled media and culminated in this final chapter's recommendations for creators. One moment in my video for this conclusion chapter embodies my overall message to readers and my request for greater incorporation of captions and subtitles in our analysis and design processes. I now invite you to play this final video and to reflect on the value of integrating captions and subtitles into our rhetorical and creative processes.



Scan the QR code to view the Chapter 8 video. You can also view the video at <https://youtu.be/mCFN1NlrXII> or read the transcript in the Appendix.

In this segment, integral subtitles and my embodiment—including my signs and my facial expressions—become a unified rhetorical message as I pointedly gesture to the subtitles and use my physical expressions to appeal to my audience. I call on creators to make captions central in video composition processes, and I emphasize “central” in my signs and subtitles. I call on creators to design a space for captions and subtitles, and I emphasize “space.” This *composition*, this *coming together* of text and embodiment, intensifies my final call to audiences to open up more spaces for captions and subtitles in video analysis and design processes. While each creator will have your own approach to captioning and subtitling your videos, we can all contribute to making accessible multimodal communication more inclusive.

## MAKING CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES CENTRAL IN VIDEO COMPOSITION

As humans who engage in and contribute to accessible multimodal communication, we can capitalize on the affordances of captions and subtitles in connecting meaning across modes, languages, and embodiments. We can, as I ask us to do in my Introduction video

(Figure 8.10), place captions and subtitles at the *center* of our video composition processes.



**Figure 8.10:** Placing captions and subtitles at the center

The central message here is: There is so much more that we can accomplish with and through words on screen, and so much *more* ahead of us when we open up even more spaces for connection. We can all continue visualizing captions and subtitles as the embodiment of accessible multimodal communication.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahern, Katherine Fargo. (2013). Tuning the sonic playing field: Teaching ways of knowing sound in first year writing. *Computers and Composition*, 30, 75–86.
- Akahori, Wataru, Hirai, Tatsunori, Kawamura, Shunya, & Morishima, Shigeo. (2016). Region-of-interest-based subtitle placement using eye-tracking data of multiple viewers. *Proceedings of the ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video*, pp. 123–128.
- Anderson, Tre'vell. (2016, July 18). Study shows lack of opportunity for disabled actors. *Los Angeles Times*. <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-disabled-actors-hollywood-20160717-snap-story.html>
- Armstrong, David. (2014). Deaf gain in evolutionary perspective. In H-Dirksen L. Bauman & Joseph M. Murray (Eds.), *Deaf gain: Raising the stakes for human diversity* (pp. 77–94). University of Minneapolis Press.
- Arola, Kristin L., Sheppard, Jennifer, & Ball, Cheryl E. (2014). *Writer/Designer: A guide to making multimodal projects*. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- The ASL App. (2013, September 28). *The ASL App at Peregrine Espresso!* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5Ss\\_Sxdgg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5Ss_Sxdgg)
- Bahan, Benjamin. (2007). Upon the formation of a visual variety of the human race. In H-Dirksen L. Bauman (Ed.), *Open your eyes: Deaf studies talking* (pp. 83–99). University of Minnesota Press.
- Banks, David. (2012, January 25). Sherlock: A perspective on technology and story-telling. *Cyborgology*. <https://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2012/01/25/sherlock-a-perspective-on-technology-and-story-telling/>
- Bauman, Hansel. (2014). DeafSpace: An architecture toward a more livable and sustainable world. In H-Dirksen L. Bauman & Joseph M. Murray (Eds.), *Deaf gain: Raising the stakes for human diversity* (pp. 375–401). University of Minneapolis Press.
- Bauman, Hansel. (2015, April 6). A new architecture for a more livable and sustainable world [Video]. TEDxGallaudet. <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/A-New-Architecture-for-a-More-L>
- Bauman, H-Dirksen (Producer), & Commerson, Ryan. (Director). (2010). *Gallaudet: The film* [Film]. Gallaudet University.
- Bauman, H-Dirksen L., & Murray, Joseph M. (2014). Deaf Gain: An introduction. In H-Dirksen L. Bauman & Joseph M. Murray (Eds.), *Deaf Gain: Raising the stakes for human diversity* (pp. xv–xlii). University of Minneapolis Press.
- Bauman, Dirksen. (2015, March 9). *On becoming hearing: Lessons in limitations, loss, and respect* [Video]. TEDxGallaudet. <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/On-Becoming-Hearing-Lessons-in>
- Bell, Monte. (2022, Feb. 24). *Amazon Alexa - Cowboy commercial feat. Monte Bell* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bxiAOjsvug>
- Bennet, Alannah. (2014, August 18). From Sherlock to House of Cards: Who's

- figured out how to translate texting to film. *Bustle*. <http://www.bustle.com/articles/36115-from-sherlock-to-house-of-cards-whos-figured-out-how-to-translate-texting-to-film>
- Berne, Patricia, Levins Morales, Aurora, Langstaff, David, & Invalid, Sins. (2018). Ten principles of disability justice. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 46(1/2), 227–230.
- Betts Jr., Wayne. (2010, June 22). *Deaf lens* [Video]. TEDxIslay. <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxIslay-Wayne-Betts-Jr-Deaf-L>
- Booker, Cory [@CoryBooker]. (2020, Jan. 13). *It's with a full heart that I share this news* [Video attached] [Post]. *X (formerly Twitter)*. <https://x.com/CoryBooker/status/1216751780345864193>
- Breen, Kerry. (2023, Feb. 17). Justina Miles, deaf performer who went viral at Rihanna's Super Bowl halftime show, opens up in first interview since the game. *CBS News*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/justina-miles-deaf-performer-rihanna-super-bowl-halftime-show-first-interview-snce-game/>
- Brewer, Elizabeth, Selfe, Cynthia L., & Yergeau, M. Remi. (2014). Creating a culture of access in composition studies. *Composition Studies*, 42(2), 151–154.
- Brown, Andy, Jones, Rhia, & Crab, Mike. (2015). Dynamic subtitles: The user experience. *Proceedings of the ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video*, pp. 103–112.
- Brown, Tracy, Lee, Ashley, Phillips, Jevon, & Burkes, Dawn. (2021, Nov. 4). 20 years ago, “Buffy” aired the perfect musical episode. Why it’s still the best. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2021-11-04/buffy-the-vampire-slayer-once-more-with-feeling-best-musical-episode-turns-20>
- Brueggemann, Brenda Jo, White, Linda Feldmeier, Dunn, Patricia A., Heifferon, Barbara A., & Cheu, Johnson. (2001). Becoming visible: Lessons in disability. *College Composition and Communication*, 52(3), 368–398.
- Brueggemann, Brenda Jo. (2002). An enabling pedagogy. In Sharon Snyder, Brenda Brueggemann, & Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (Eds.), *Disability studies: Enabling the humanities* (pp. 317–336). Modern Language Association of America.
- Brueggemann, Brenda Jo. (2009). *Deaf subjects: Between identities and places*. New York University Press.
- Brueggemann, Brenda Jo. (2013). Articulating betweenity: Literacy, language, identity, and technology in the deaf/hard-of-hearing collection. In H. Lewis Ulman, Scott Lloyd DeWitt, & Cynthia L. Selfe (Eds.), *Stories that speak to us: Exhibits from the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives*. Computers and Composition Digital Press. <https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/stories/brueggemann.html>
- Buckner, Jennifer J., & Daley, Kirsten. (2018). Do you hear what I hear? A hearing teacher and a deaf student negotiate sound. In Courtney S. Danforth, Kyle D. Stedman, & Michael J. Faris (Eds.), *Soundwriting pedagogies*. Computers and Composition Digital Press. <https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/soundwriting/buckner-daley/index.html>
- Butler, Janine. (2016). Where access meets multimodality: The case of ASL music videos. *Kairos*, 21(1). <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/21.1/topoi/butler/index.html>
- Butler, Janine. (2018a). Embodied captions in multimodal pedagogies. *Composition Forum*, 39. <http://compositionforum.com/issue/39/captions.php>

- Butler, Janine. (2018b). Integral captions and subtitles: Designing a space for embodied rhetorics and visual access. *Rhetoric Review*, 37(3), 286–299.
- Butler, Janine. (2019). Perspectives of deaf and hard of hearing viewers of captions. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 163(5), 534–553.
- Butler, Janine. (2020). The visual experience of accessing captioned television and digital videos. *Television and New Media*, 21(7), 679–696.
- Butler, Janine. (2023). Writing the central role of captions in live performances. *College English*, 85(6), 498–521.
- Butler, Janine, & Bick, Stacy. (2021). Sound, captions, action: Voices in video composition projects. *Computers and Composition*, 62, 1–15.
- Butler, Janine, & Bick, Stacy. (2023). Audience awareness and access: The design of sound and captions as valuable composition practices. *College Composition and Communication*, 74(3), 416–445.
- Calloway, Mariel. (2013, March 8). The game is on(line): BBC's 'Sherlock' in the age of social media. *Mariel Calloway*. <https://marielcalloway.com/2013/03/08/the-game-is-online-bbcs-sherlock-in-the-age-of-social-media/>
- Ceraso, Steph. (2014). (Re)educating the senses: Multimodal listening, bodily learning, and the composition of sonic experiences. *College English*, 77(2), 102–123.
- Ceraso, Steph. (2018). *Sounding composition: Multimodal pedagogies for embodied listening*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Cherney, James L. (2011). The rhetoric of ableism. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 31(3), <https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/1665/1606>
- Coca-Cola Refreshing Films. (2022, April 14). *Say cheese | Rochester Institute of Technology - 2022 Coca-Cola refreshing films* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPGK4GrMQdw>
- Cohen, Julia et al. (Writers), & Younger, Ben (Director). (2023). Pilot (Season 1, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Cohen, Julia, et al. (Writers), & Mock, David (Director). (2023). A sparkling reputation (Season 1, Episode 2) [TV series episode]. In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Cohen, Julia, et al. (Writers), & Straiton, David (Director). (2023). Against all odds (Season 1, Episode 3) [TV series episode]. (2023). In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Cohen, Julia, et al. (Writers), & Huertas, Jon (Director). (2023a). The spy who loved me (Season 1, Episode 5) [TV series episode]. In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Cohen, Julia, et al. (Writers), & Mastro, Anna (Director). (2023a). The art of the steel. (Season 1, Episode 8) [TV series episode]. In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Cohen, Julia, et al. (Writers), & Mastro, Anna (Director). (2023b). The real thing. (Season 1, Episode 6) [TV series episode]. In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Cohen, Julia, et al. (Writers), & Armaganian, Andi (Director). (2023). The truth shall set you free. (Season 1, Episode 8) [TV series episode]. In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.

- Cohen, Julia, et al. (Writers), & Huertas, Jon (Director). (2023b). The truth hurts. (Season 1, Episode 10) [TV series episode]. In Julia Cohen et al. (Executive Producers), *The company you keep*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Cohn, Neil. (2013). Beyond speech balloons and thought bubbles: The integration of text and image. *Semiotica*, (197), 35–63.
- Densham, Nevin (Writer), & Raff, Gideon (Director). (2015). Game over [TV series episode]. In Tim Kring (Producer), *Heroes reborn*. Universal Television.
- De Saint-Georges, Ingrid. (2004). Materiality in discourse: The influence of space and layout in making meaning. In Philip LeVine & Ron Scollon (Eds.), *Discourse and technology: Multimodal discourse analysis* (pp. 72–87). Georgetown University Press.
- Described and Captioned Media Program. (2023a). Captioning key: Guidelines and best practices for captioning educational video. <https://dcmp.org/learn/captioningkey>
- Described and Captioned Media Program. (2023b). Captioning key: Elements of quality captioning. <https://dcmp.org/learn/captioningkey/599>
- Dolmage, Jay. (2008). Mapping composition: Inviting disability in the front door. In Cynthia Lewiecki–Wilson & Brenda Jo Brueggemann (Eds.), *Disability and the teaching of writing* (pp. 14–27). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Dolmage, Jay. (2009). Disability, usability, and universal design. In Shelley Rodrigo & Susan Miller (Eds.), *Rhetorically re-thinking usability* (pp. 167–190). Hampton.
- Dolmage, Jay. (2014). *Disability rhetoric*. Syracuse University Press.
- Dolmage, Jay. (2017). *Academic ableism*. University of Michigan Press.
- Dpanvideos. (2013, Nov. 24). *D-PAN ASL music video: "You brought the sunshine" by The Clark Sisters* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lr8SZqKWctM>
- Dwyer, Tessa. (2015). From subtitles to SMS: Eye tracking, texting and Sherlock. *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media*, 25. <https://refractory-journal.com/dwyer/>
- Elkoff, Peter (Writer), & Kondracki, Larysa (Director). (2016). Send in the clones [TV series episode]. In Tim Kring (Producer), *Heroes reborn*. Universal Television.
- Ellingson, Laura L. (2017). *Embodiment in qualitative research*. Routledge.
- Ellcessor, Elizabeth. (2016). *Restricted access: Media, disability, and the politics of participation*. New York University Press.
- Ellcessor, Elizabeth. (2018). "One tweet to make so much noise": Connected celebrity activism in the case of Marlee Matlin. *New Media & Society*, 20(1), 255–271.
- Enhanced Captioning Research Project (2015). Ryerson University Inclusive Media and Design Centre. <http://www.ryerson.ca/imdc/projects/captioning.html>
- Factory International. (2021, July 18). *Tour of Captioning The City | Christine Sun Kim | MIF21* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UbBYGICp0>
- Fahey, Seamus Kevin (Writer), & Kondracki, Larysa (Director). (2015). 11:53 to Odessa [TV series episode]. In Tim Kring (Producer), *Heroes reborn*. Universal Television.
- Fels, Deborah I., Lee, Daniel G., Branje, Carmen, & Hornburg, Matthew. (2005, August). Emotive captioning and access to television. *AMCIS 2005 Proceedings*, pp. 2330–2337.

- Fels, Deborah I., Polano, Lorelle, Harvey, Terry, Degan, Singh S., & Silverman, Charles H. (2001, August). Towards emotive captioning for interactive television. *Proceedings of HCI International 2001*, pp. 303–307.
- Fleckenstein, Kristie. (2003). *Embodied literacies: Imageword and a process of teaching*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Forbes, Sean. (2011, May 31). *Sean Forbes “Let’s mambo” ft. Marlee Matlin* [Video]. YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2KYAlcTQno>
- Forlizzi, Jodi, Lee, Johnny, & Hudson, Scott E. (2003, April). The Kinedit system: Affective messages using dynamic texts. *Proceedings of the ACM CHI 2003*, pp. 377–384.
- Foster, David et al. (Writers), & Martin, Darnell (Director). (2022). Heal thyself (Season 5, Episode 4) [TV series episode]. In David Schulner et al. (Executive Producers), *New Amsterdam*. Universal Television.
- Foster, David et al. (Writers), & Voegeli, Andrew (Director). (2022). Don’t do this for me (Season 5, Episode 10) [TV series episode]. In David Schulner et al. (Executive Producers), *New Amsterdam*. Universal Television.
- Fourney, David, & Fels, Deborah I. (2009, September). Creating access to music through visualization. In *Science and Technology for Humanity* (pp. 939–944). Paper presented at the IEEE Symposium on Human Factors and Ergonomics. Toronto, ON.
- Fox, Wendy. (2017). A proposed set of placement strategies for integrated titles: Based on an analysis of existing strategies in commercial films. in *TRAlinea: Online Translation Journal*. [https://www.intralinea.org/specials/article/a\\_proposed\\_set\\_of\\_placement\\_strategies\\_for\\_integrated\\_titles](https://www.intralinea.org/specials/article/a_proposed_set_of_placement_strategies_for_integrated_titles)
- Fox, Wendy. (2018). *Can integrated titles improve the viewing experience?: Investigating the impact of subtitling on the reception and enjoyment of film using eye tracking and questionnaire data*. Language Science Press.
- Fraiberg, Steven. (2010). Composition 2.0: Toward a multilingual and multimodal framework. *College Composition and Communication*, 62(1), 100–126.
- Fraiberg, Steve. (2013). Reassembling technical communication: A framework for studying multilingual and multimodal practices in global contexts. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 22(1), 10–27.
- Gatiss, Mark (Writer), & Lovering, Jeremy (Director). (2014). The empty hearse [TV series episode]. In Sue Vertue & Elaine Cameron (Producers), *Sherlock*. BBC.
- Gatiss, Mark (Writers), & McGuigan, Mark (Director). (2010). The great game [TV series episode]. In Sue Vertue & Elaine Cameron (Producers), *Sherlock*. BBC.
- General Motors. (2023, Feb. 7). *Why not an EV? | GM x Netflix* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jymEz9xkPQ>
- Gernsbacher, Morton Ann. (2015). Video captions benefit everyone. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 2(1), 195–202.
- Ghia, Elisa. (2012). *Subtitling matters: New perspectives on subtitling and foreign language learning*. Peter Lang.
- Ginsburg, Aaron et al. (Writers), & Denysenko, Olenka (Director). (2022). Hook, line, and sinker (Season 5, Episode 2) [TV series episode]. *New Amsterdam*.
- Gonzales, Laura. (2018). Designing for intersectional, interdependent accessibility: A

- case study of multilingual technical content creation. *Communication Design Quarterly*, 6(4), 35–45.
- Gonzales, Laura, & Butler, Janine. (2020). Working toward social justice through multilingualism, multimodality, and accessibility in writing classrooms. *Composition Forum*, 44. <https://compositionforum.com/issue/44/multilingualism.php>.
- Groensteen, Thierry. (2007). *The system of comics*. (Bart Beaty & Nick Nguyen, Trans.). University Press of Mississippi. (Original work published 1999).
- Hailu, Selome. (2023, Feb. 8). Congressman Robert Garcia calls out CBS for ‘disrespectful’ lack of closed captioning during Bad Bunny’s Grammys performance. *Variety*. <https://variety.com/2023/tv/news/congressman-closed-captions-bad-bunny-grammys-1235517322/>
- Halbritter, Bump. (2012). *Mics, cameras, symbolic action: Audio-visual rhetoric for writing teachers*. Parlor Press.
- Hamraie, Aimi. (2013). Designing collective access: A feminist disability theory of universal design. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 33(4). <https://dsq-sds.org/article/id/109/>
- Hamraie, Aimi. (2016). Universal design and the problem of “post-disability” ideology. *Design and Culture*, 8(3), 285–309.
- Hocks, Mary E., & Comstock, Michelle. (2017). Composing for sound: Sonic rhetoric as resonance. *Computers and Composition*, 43, 135–146.
- Horowitz, Josh. (2023, Jan. 10). *Ke Huy Quan is ready for a Short Round TV series!* [Video.] YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twLKKqFMCkc>
- Hubrig, Ada, & Osorio, Ruth (Eds.). (2020). Enacting a culture of access in our conference spaces. *College Composition and Communication*, 72(1), 87–117.
- Humphrey, Aaron. (2015). Visual and spatial language: The silent voice of Woodstock. *Composition Studies*, 43(1), 19–30.
- Jensem, Carl, Sharkawy, Sameh El, Danturthi, Ramalinga Sarma, Burch, Robert, & Hsu, David. (2000). Eye movement patterns of captioned TV viewers. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 145(3), 275–285.
- Johnson, Maureen, Levy, Daisy, Manthey, Katie, & Novotny, Maria. (2015). Embodiment: Embodying feminist rhetorics. *Peitho Journal*, 18(1), 39–44.
- Jung, Julie. (2014). Interdependency as an ethic for accessible intellectual publics. *Reflections: Public rhetoric civic writing and service learning*, 14(1), 101–20.
- Kerschbaum, Stephanie. (2014). *Toward a new rhetoric of difference*. NCTE.
- Kerschbaum, Stephanie L. (2022). *Signs of disability*. NYU Press.
- Kia America. (2023, May 9). *Silence is Powerful | The 2023 Kia EV6 GT* [Video.] YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CsM5DtHy\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CsM5DtHy_k)
- Kiley, Rich. (2022, April 29). Pioneering RIT and NTID collaboration garners the Coca-Cola Refreshing Films grand prize. *Rochester Institute of Technology*. <https://www.rit.edu/news/pioneering-rit-and-ntid-collaboration-garners-coca-cola-refreshing-films-grand-prize>
- King, Robert, & King, Michelle (Writers), & King, Robert (Director). (2021). S is for silence (Season 2, Episode 7) [TV series episode]. In Robert King & Michelle King et al. (Executive Producers), *Evil*. CBS Studios.
- Kleege, Georgina. (1999). *Sight unseen*. Yale University Press.



- Kleege, Georgina. (2005). Blindness and visual culture: An eye-witness account. *The Journal of Visual Culture*, 4(2), 179–190.
- Kleege, Georgina. (2016a, January 22). Dear readers: My history with aural texts, part 4. *Common Touch*. <http://commontouch.librarycompany.org/dear-readers-my-history-with-aural-texts-part-4/>
- Kleege, Georgina. (2016b). Current standards, future innovations, larger implications. *Representations*, 135(1), 89–101.
- Knoblauch, A. Abby. (2012). Bodies of knowledge: Definitions, delineations, and implications of embodied writing in the academy. *Composition Studies*, 40(2), 50–65.
- Knoblauch, A. Abby, & Moeller, Marie E. (2022). Introduction: Bodies, embodiment, and embodied rhetorics. In A. Abby Knoblauch & Marie E. Moeller (Eds.), *Bodies of knowledge: Embodied rhetorics in theory and practice* (pp. 3–19). University Press of Colorado.
- Kress, Gunther. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. Routledge.
- Kress, Gunther. (2005). Gains and losses: New forms of texts, knowledge, and learning. *Computers and Composition*, 22, 5–22.
- Kress, Gunther, & van Leeuwen, Theo. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. Oxford University Press.
- Kring, Tim, & Craley, Zach (Writers), & Jones, Jon (Director). (2016). Project reborn [TV series episode]. In Tim Kring (Producer), *Heroes reborn*. Universal Television.
- Kring, Tim (Writer), & Shakman, Matt (Director). (2015). Brave new world [TV series episode]. In Tim Kring (Producer), *Heroes reborn*. Universal Television.
- Kruger, Jan Louis, Szarkowska, Agnieszka, & Krejtz, Izabela. (2015). Subtitles on the moving image: An overview of eye tracking studies. *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media*, 25, <https://refractory-journal.com/kruger-szarkowska-krejtz/>
- Lang, Harry G. (2021). *Turn on the words! Deaf audiences, captions, and the long struggle for access*. Gallaudet University Press.
- The Late Show with Stephen Colbert. (2019, June 27). *Stephen Colbert unpacks the first debate of the 2020 campaign* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jke4r28INDQ>
- Lebrecht, James & Nicole Newnham (Directors). (2020). *Crip camp: A disability revolution* [Documentary]. Netflix.
- Lederman, Emily. (2022). *An exploration of accessibility and captioning practices on TikTok* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Rochester Institute of Technology.
- Lee, Daniel, G., Fels, Deborah I., & Udo, John P. (2007, April/June). Emotive captioning. *Computers in Entertainment: CIE-Interactive TV*, 5(2), 1–15.
- Lee, Johnny C., Forlizzi, Jodi, & Hudson, Scott E. (2002, October). The kinetic typography engine: An extensible system for animating expressive text. *Proceedings of the 15th Annual ACM Symposium on User Interface Software and Technology*, pp. 81–90.
- Legere, Gisselle et al. (Writers), & Lee, Jean E. (Director). (2022). Give me a sign (Season 5, Episode 6) [TV series episode]. In David Schulner et al. (Executive Producers), *New Amsterdam*. Universal Television
- Leigh, Irene W., Morere, Donna A., & Pezzarossi, Caroline Kobek. (2014). Deaf gain: Beyond Deaf culture. In H-Dirksen L. Bauman & Joseph M. Murray (Eds.), *Deaf gain: Raising the stakes for human diversity* (pp. 356–371). University of Minneapolis Press.

- Li, Franklin. M., Lu, Chen, Lu, Zhicong, Carrington, Patrick, & Truong, Khai N. (2022). An exploration of captioning practices and challenges of individual content creators on YouTube for people with hearing impairments. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 6(CSCW1), 1–26.
- Losh, Elizabeth, Alexander, Jonathan, Cannon, Kevin, & Cannon, Zander. (2020). *Understanding rhetoric: A graphic guide to writing* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Lueck, Amy. (2013). Writing a translingual script: Closed captions in the English multilingual hearing classroom. *Kairos*, 17(3). <https://kairos.technorhetoric.net/17.3/praxis/lueck/index.html>.
- Maier, Carmen Daniela, Kampf, Constance, & Kastberg, Peter. (2007). Multimodal analysis: An integrative approach for scientific visualization on the web. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 37(4), 453–478.
- Mansfield, Shaylee [@shayleemansfield]. (2023a, Jan. 25). *To @delta why are there still no captions? I along with millions of Deaf people travel and pay for our own plane tickets* [Video]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn18UlqjJS1/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn18UlqjJS1/?img_index=1)
- Mansfield, Shaylee [@shayleemansfield]. (2023b, March 1). *(Flashing lights warning) I've been acting since I was 8. So, people have been curious about what it's like for me* [Video]. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CpQBoFcj0CB/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/CpQBoFcj0CB/?img_index=1)
- Mansour, Mona et al. (Writers), & Horton, Peter (Director). (2023). Falling (Season 5, Episode 11) [TV series episode]. In David Schulner et al. (Executive Producers), *New Amsterdam*. Universal Television.
- Martin, Steve et al. (Writers), & Dabis, Cherien (Director). (2021). The boy from 6B (Season 1, Episode 7) [TV series episode]. In Dan Fogelman et al. (Executive Producers), *Only murders in the building*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Martin, Steve et al. (Writers), & Weng, Jude (Director). (2022). Here's looking at you (Season 2, Episode 4) [TV series episode]. In Dan Fogelman et al. (Executive Producers), *Only murders in the building*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Martin, Steve et al. (Writers), & Teague, Chris (Director). (2022). Flipping the pieces (Season 2, Episode 7) [TV series episode]. In Dan Fogelman et al. (Executive Producers), *Only murders in the building*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Martin, Steve et al. (Writers), & Dabis, Cherien (Director). (2023). CoBro (Season 3, Episode 7) [TV series episode]. In Dan Fogelman et al. (Executive Producers), *Only murders in the building*. 20<sup>th</sup> Television.
- Mass, Jennifer. (2021, Sept. 28). How 'Only Murders in the Building' got through an entire episode with just 1 line of dialogue. *The Wrap*. <https://www.thewrap.com/only-murders-in-the-building-silent-episode/>
- Matamala, Anna, & Pilar Orero. (2010). *Listening to subtitles: Subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing*. Peter Lang.
- Mathewson, Katrina, et al. (Writers), & Bert & Bertie (Directors). (2021). Echoes (Season 1, Episode 3) [TV series episode]. In Jonathan Igla et al. (Executive Producers), *Hawkeye*. Marvel Studios.
- Matlin, Marlee (Executive Producer). (2018). *Born this way presents: Deaf out loud* [TV broadcast]. A&E.
- Mazzeo, Esme. (2021, Sept. 29). Inside the making of an 'Only Murders in the Building' episode with only one line of dialogue—and why Deaf star James Caverly



- wants to 'dismantle' the 'tired portrayal of disabled characters on TV.' *Insider*. <https://www.insider.com/only-murders-in-the-building-deaf-non-verbal-episode-2021-9>
- McCarthy, James. (2020, Oct. 15). Christine Sun Kim: From RIT/NTID alum to international artist. *Rochester Institute of Technology*. <https://www.rit.edu/diversity/news/christine-sun-kim-ritntid-alum-international-artist>
- McCloud, Scott. (2009). The visual magic of comics [Video]. *TED*. [https://www.ted.com/talks/scott\\_mccloud\\_on\\_comics/](https://www.ted.com/talks/scott_mccloud_on_comics/)
- McCuller, Emily. (2022, Aug. 10). How that silent 'Only Murders in the Building' episode got made. *Backstage*. <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/only-murders-in-the-building-silent-episode-director-interview-75413/>
- McDonald's. (2023, Feb. 12). *Knowing their order (extended)* | *McDonald's* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_LpH8qdT6g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_LpH8qdT6g)
- McFeely, Sheena. (2018, Aug. 24). *A&E's Deaf Out Loud trailer* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_cN1K4meQuA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cN1K4meQuA)
- McMillan, Graeme. (2014, Feb. 1). What Sherlock's text messages tell us about ourselves. *Wired*. <http://www.wired.com/2014/02/sherlock-tech/>
- Melonçon, Lisa. (2013). Toward a theory of technological embodiment. In Lisa Meloncon (Ed.), *Rhetorical accessibility: At the intersection of technical communication and disability studies* (pp. 67–81). Baywood.
- Metzner, M. Raven (Writer), & Arkush, Allan (Director). (2015). June 13<sup>th</sup> part two [TV series episode]. In Tim Kring (Producer), *Heroes reborn*. Universal Television.
- Miles, Justina (The Realist) [@\_jtay\_] (2022, Sept. 30). *This Side* [Video]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CjJJoPLAzlQ/?hl>
- Mingus, Mia. (2011, February 12). Changing the framework: Disability justice. *Leaving evidence*. <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-framework-disability-justice/>
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (1994). *Picture theory*. University of Chicago Press.
- Mocanu, Bogdan, & Tapu, Ruxandra. (2021). Automatic subtitle placement through active speaker identification in multimedia documents. In *2021 International Conference on e-Health and Bioengineering* (pp. 1–4). Paper presented at the 2021 International Conference on e-Health and Bioengineering (EHB), Iasi, Romania.
- Moffat, Steven, & Gatiss, Mark (Writers), & Mackinnon, Douglas (Director). (2016). The abominable bride [TV series episode]. In Sue Vertue & Elaine Cameron (Producers), *Sherlock*. BBC.
- Moffat, Steven (Writer), & McGuigan, Mark (Director). (2010). A study in pink [TV series episode]. In Sue Vertue & Elaine Cameron (Producers), *Sherlock*. BBC.
- Mori, Jorge, & Fels, Deborah I. (2009). Seeing the music: Can animated lyrics provide access to the emotional content in music for people who are deaf or hard of hearing? In *Science and Technology for Humanity* (pp. 951–956). Paper presented at the IEEE Symposium on Human Factors and Ergonomics, Toronto, ON.
- Murad, Susan. (2022, Jan. 6). RIT/NTID names artist Christine Sun Kim distinguished alumnus. Rochester Institute of Technology. <https://www.rit.edu/ntid/news/rit-ntid-names-artist-christine-sun-kim-distinguished-alumnus>
- National Association of the Deaf (NAD). (2023a). *Captioning for access*. <https://www.nad.org/resources/technology/captioning-for-access/>

- National Association of the Deaf (NAD). (2023b). *Closed captioning quality*. <https://www.nad.org/resources/technology/television-and-closed-captioning/closed-captioning-quality/>
- National Association of the Deaf (NAD). (2023c). *Online closed captioning*. <https://www.nad.org/resources/technology/television-and-closed-captioning/online-closed-captioning/>
- National Association of the Deaf (NAD). (2023d). *Television and closed captioning*. <https://www.nad.org/resources/technology/television-and-closed-captioning/>
- National Association of the Deaf (NAD). (2023e). *What is captioning?* <https://www.nad.org/resources/technology/captioning-for-access/what-is-captioning/>
- National Research Group. (2022). *Spotlight on: Deaf representation*. <https://www.nrgmr.com/our-thinking/the-state-of-deaf-representation-in-media-and-entertainment/>
- New York Mets. (2023, Feb. 9). *We wanna hear you* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObTV0F9JU9g>
- Norris, Sigrid. (2004). Multimodal discourse analysis: A conceptual framework. In Philip LeVine and Ron Scollon (Eds.) *Discourse and technology: Multimodal discourse analysis*, (pp. 101–115). Georgetown University Press.
- Norris, Sigrid, & Maier, Carmen Daniela (Eds.). (2014). *Interactions, images, and texts: A reader in multimodality*. de Gruyter Mouton.
- O'Brien, Sarah. (2016, January 4). Our amazing sign language tutor taught BSL to Sherlock and Dr. Watson for hit BBC show. *Hearing Dogs for Deaf People*. <http://blog.hearingdogs.org.uk/2016/01/bbc-sherlock-sign-language/>
- Pallotta, Frank. (2014, July 28). Geek god Joss Whedon faced an epic challenge in this nearly silent “Buffy” episode. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/buffy-episode-hush-was-a-masterpiece-2014-7>
- Palmer, Brandy E. et al. (Writers), & Leiterman, Rachel (Director). (2022). All the world's a stage... (Season 5, Episode 8) [TV series episode]. In David Schulner et al. (Executive Producers), *New Amsterdam*. Universal Television.
- Palmeri, J. (2012). *Remixing composition: A history of multimodal writing pedagogy*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Pop-Up Magazine. (2020, Oct. 13). *Artist Christine Sun Kim rewrites closed captions* | *Pop-Up magazine* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfe479qL8hg>
- Price, Margaret. (2012). Disability studies methodology: Explaining ourselves to ourselves. In Katrina M. Powell & Pamela Takayoshi (Eds.), *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflexive and ethically responsible research* (pp. 159–186). Hampton Press.
- Price, Margaret, & Kerschbaum, Stephanie. (2016). Stories of methodology: Inter-viewing sideways, crooked and crip. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 5(3), 18–56.
- Rao, Sonia. (2022, April 15). How the colors of subtitles in “Pachinko” nod to decades of colonialism. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2022/04/15/pachinko-subtitles-soo-hugh-interview/>
- Rashid, Raisa, Vy, Quoc, Hunt, Richard, & Fels, Deborah. (2008). Dancing with words: using animated text for captioning. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 24(5), 505–519.
- Rawsthorn, Alice. (2007, May 27). The director Timur Bekmambetov turns film

- subtitling into an art. *New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/25/style/25iht-design28.1.5866427.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/25/style/25iht-design28.1.5866427.html?_r=0)
- Reynolds, Ryan [@VancityReynolds] (2019, Dec. 7). *Here you go, @eissyrc!* [Video attached] [Post]. X. <https://x.com/vancityreynolds/status/1203398695938674688>
- Romero-Fresco, Pablo. (2019). *Accessible filmmaking: Integrating translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process*. Routledge.
- Romero-Fresco, Pablo. (2021). Creativity in media accessibility: A political issue. *Cultus: The Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*, 14, 162–197.
- Romero-Fresco, Pablo. (2022). Moving from accessible filmmaking toward creative media accessibility. *Leonardo (Oxford)*, 55(3), 304–309.
- Romero-Fresco, Pablo, & Dangerfield, Kate. (2022). Accessibility as a conversation. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 5(2), 15–34.
- Sanchez, Rebecca. (2015). *Deafening modernism*. New York University Press.
- Saturday Night Live. (2023a, Oct. 22). *Bad Bunny monologue – SNL* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQKGsvLH\\_Rw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQKGsvLH_Rw)
- Saturday Night Live. (2023b, Oct. 22). *The Age of Discovery – SNL* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G31E4ML9ViY>
- Schneider, Michael. (2023a, Feb. 6). CBS adds Spanish closed captioning to replays of Bad Bunny’s Grammys performance after backlash. *Variety*. <https://variety.com/2023/tv/news/bad-bunny-grammys-performance-spanish-closed-captioning-1235514408/>
- Schneider, Michael. (2023b, Feb. 10). CBS chief George Cheeks says network will review closed captioning for live events after Grammys Bad Bunny controversy. *Variety*. <https://variety.com/2023/tv/news/cbs-live-closed-captioning-bad-bunny-grammys-controversy-1235519958/>
- Scollon, Ron, & LeVine, Philip. (2004). Multimodal discourse analysis as the confluence of discourse and technology. In Philip LeVine and Ron Scollon (Eds.) *Discourse and technology: Multimodal discourse analysis*, (pp. 1–6). Georgetown University Press.
- Selfe, Cynthia. (2009). The movement of air, the breath of meaning: Aurality and multimodal composing. *College Composition and Communication*, 60(4), 611–663.
- Shipka, Jodi. (2006). Sound engineering: Toward a theory of multimodal soundness. *Computers and Composition*, 23, 355–373.
- Sinha, Amresh. (2004). The use and abuse of subtitles. In Atom Egoyan & Ian Balfour (Eds.), *Subtitles: On the foreignness of film* (pp. 171–192). MIT Press.
- Snipe, Warren. (2017, October 2). *Only ASL one* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVEDCRwjEEo>
- Sowelle, Allen L. et al (Writers), & Gomez, Nick (Director). (2022). The empty spaces (Season 5, Episode 9) [TV series episode]. In David Schulner et al. (Executive Producers), *New Amsterdam*. Universal Television.
- Speechless. (2016a, September 16). *This father-son heart to heart...* [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/SpeechlessABC/videos/1626447520981410/>
- Speechless. (2016b, September 21). *Meet the dynamic duo...* [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/SpeechlessABC/videos/1629421014017394/>

- Speechless. (2016c, September 21). *"I don't care!"* [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/SpeechlessABC/videos/1629588927333936/>
- Stinson, Liz. (2013, August 26). The radical challenge of building a dorm for the Deaf. *Wired*. <http://www.wired.com/2013/08/what-architects-can-learn-from-a-dorm-designed-specifically-for-deaf-students/>
- Swartzenberg, Felicia. (2022, July 11). RIT and NTID student film "Say Cheese" now screening at Cinemark theaters nationwide. *Rochester Institute of Technology*. <https://www.rit.edu/news/rit-and-ntid-student-film-say-cheese-now-screening-cinemark-theaters-nationwide>
- Takayoshi, Pamela, & Selfe, Cynthia L. (2007). Thinking about multimodality. In Cynthia Selfe (Ed.), *Multimodal composition: Resources for teachers* (pp. 1–12). Hampton Press.
- Tapu, Ruxandra, Mocanu, Bogdan, & Zaharia, Titus. (2019). DEEP-HEAR: A multimodal subtitle positioning system dedicated to deaf and hearing-impaired people. *IEEE Access*, 7, 88150–88162.
- Thompson, Stephen (Writer), & Haynes, Toby (Director). (2012). The Reichenbach Fall [TV series episode]. In Sue Vertue & Elaine Cameron (Producers), *Sherlock*. BBC.
- Thompson, Stephen, Moffat, Steven, & Gatiss, Mark (Writers), & McCarthy, Colm (Director). (2014). The sign of three [TV series episode]. In Sue Vertue & Elaine Cameron (Producers), *Sherlock*. BBC.
- Udo, John-Patrick, & Fels, Deborah I. (2010). The rogue poster-children of universal design: Closed captioning and audio description. *Journal of Engineering Design*, 21(2–3), 207–221.
- Uproxx. (2016, April 26). *Exploring the sound of silence with Christine Sun Kim | HUMAN* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FI5Z\\_aw3Fc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FI5Z_aw3Fc)
- US Open Tennis [@usopen]. (2022, Sept. 10). *How it sounded when @iga\_swiatek became a #USOpen champion* [Video attached] [Post]. X. <https://x.com/usopen/status/1568738950956683265>
- Valdivia, Laura et al. (Writers), & Carbonell, Nestor (Director). (2022). Big day (Season 5, Episode 3) [TV series episode]. In David Schulner et al. (Executive Producers), *New Amsterdam*. Universal Television.
- VanKooten, Crystal. (2019). A research methodology of interdependence through video as method. *Computers and Composition*, 54, 1–17.
- Van Leeuwen, Theo. (2014). About images and multimodality: A personal account. In Sigrid Norris & Carmen Daniela Maier (Eds.), *Interactions, images, and texts: A reader in multimodality* (pp. 19–23). de Gruyter Mouton.
- Vox. (2016, March 2). *How architecture changes for the deaf* [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNGplaviGvE>
- Whedon, Joss (Writer & Director) (1999). Hush (Season 4, Episode 10) [TV series episode]. In Joss Whedon et al. (Executive Producers), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Television.
- Whelan, Kelsey [@kelseymwhelan]. (2022, March 27). *watching pachinko and the subtitles are color-coded by language (korean/japanese), even in the same sentence!* [Image attached] [Post]. X. <https://x.com/kelseymwhelan/status/1508277220359372802>

- Whitfield, Margot. (2013, December 5). *EnACT video tutorial* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBjF3iupOYc>
- Wilson, James C., & Lewiecki–Wilson, Cynthia. (2001). Disability, rhetoric, and the body. In James C. Wilson & Cynthia Lewiecki–Wilson (Eds.), *Embodied rhetorics: Disability in language and culture* (pp. 1–25). Southern Illinois University Press.
- Womack, Anne-Marie. (2017). Teaching is accommodation: Universally designing composition classrooms and syllabi. *College Composition and Communication*, 68(3), 494–525.
- Wysocki, Anne Frances. (2012). Introduction: Into between—On composition in mediation. In Kristin L. Arola and Anne Frances Wysocki (Eds.), *Composing (media) = Composing (embodiment): Bodies, technologies, writing, the teaching of writing* (pp. 1–22). Utah State University Press.
- Yergeau, M. Remi, Brewer, Elizabeth, Kerschbaum, Stephanie, Oswal, Sushil K., Price, Margaret, Selfe, Cynthia L., Salvo, Michael J., & Howes, Franny. (2013). Multimodality in motion: Disability and Kairotic spaces. *Kairos*, 18(1). <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/18.1/coverweb/yergeau-et-al/pages/index.html>
- Yingst, Melissa Elmira (MELMIRA). (2022a, Feb. 17). *MELMIRA I SEAN AND WAWA ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS (SUPERBOWL 2022)* [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/melmira/videos/melmira-i-sean-and-wawa-answer-your-questions-superbowl-2022/362732382519923/>
- Yingst, Melissa Elmira. (2022b, Feb. 21). *MELMIRA I SUPERBOWL LOGISTICS WITH THE NAD* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqIHlLnjqBQ>
- Yingst, Melissa Elmira. (2023, Feb. 15). *MELMIRA I RAVEN & PARIS FROM NETFLIX'S THE CIRCLE* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayU00S5EOpc>
- Zárate, Soledad. (2021). *Captioning and subtitling for d/deaf and hard of hearing audiences*. University College London Press.
- Zdenek, Sean. (2011). Which sounds are significant? Towards a rhetoric of closed captioning. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 31(3), <https://dsq-sds.org/article/id/1054/>
- Zdenek, Sean. (2015). *Reading sounds: Closed-captioned media and popular culture*. University of Chicago Press.
- Zdenek, Sean. (2018). Designing captions: Disruptive experiments with typography, color, icons, and effects. *Kairos*, 23(1). <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/23.1/topoi/zdenek>

## APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTS OF VIDEO VERSIONS OF CHAPTERS

**V**ideo **Description:** Janine Butler is a light-skinned woman with long brown hair and brown eyes. She is wearing a dark long-sleeve shirt. She is standing in front of a beige background. Throughout each video, subtitles generally appear as black text in the space next to her near her face and upper body. She signs in each video while facing the camera and occasionally looks at the subtitles, points to the subtitles, and gestures around or places her hands underneath the subtitles.

### CHAPTER 0: INTRODUCTION VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Visualizing Captions and Subtitles:  
The Embodiment of  
Accessible Multimodal Communication

Hello! I'm Janine Butler.  
I am integrating open subtitles

into the space around me  
to create visual access to my embodiment,  
to how I express myself.  
These integral subtitles  
make American Sign Language  
accessible in English.  
This integration is  
the heart of my book.  
Captions and subtitles  
embody how we communicate  
with each other  
through multiple modes  
and languages,  
including bodies, voices, and signs.  
In my book I ask you to  
join me in  
visualizing captions and subtitles  
as the embodiment  
of accessible multimodal  
communication.  
We can analyze and design  
different captions and subtitles,  
including:  
open captions for spoken English,  
open subtitles that translate  
different languages to English,  
and other visual text  
embedded permanently into a video.  
We can create closed captions  
[with sound descriptions in brackets]  
that you can turn on and off.  
Through captions and subtitles,  
we can embody accessible multimodal communication.  
We can place captions and subtitles  
at the center of our video composition processes.

## CHAPTER 1 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

In my book, I show how  
we can analyze and design  
captioned and subtitled videos  
through my embodied multimodal approach.  
My approach builds on several themes, including,  
embodiment and  
embodied rhetorics,  
and space.  
Embodiment includes our experience  
of being in the world  
and interacting with each other.  
Our embodied rhetorics  
include how we make meaning through our bodies.  
Now, let's think about space.  
My concept of space is influenced  
by who I am  
as a Deaf multimodal  
composition scholar.  
Like members of Deaf culture,  
I experience and interact  
with the world  
through multiple modes  
of communication,  
including visuals and movement.  
Creators can learn from  
Deaf embodiments and  
embodied rhetorics  
to design space for captions and subtitles,  
and we do that in this book.  
Written text can interact with  
other modes and  
we can show the  
value of captions and subtitles  
in accessible multimodal communication.



## CHAPTER 2 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

In this book,  
I present my analysis  
of different programs  
and videos that incorporate  
captions and subtitles.  
These examples show creators  
strategies that  
we can use to  
caption and subtitle  
our videos.

In one portion of my book,  
I analyze how multilingual programs  
integrate subtitles  
to create access across languages.  
I use the example of  
*Heroes Reborn*,  
a science fiction miniseries.  
One main character is Miko,  
who speaks Japanese.  
Her scenes are subtitled in English.  
The subtitles for Japanese scenes  
are placed  
meaningfully  
near faces and body language.  
They draw viewers to the characters'  
emotions and the action on screen.  
Here's an example.

In one scene,  
Miko walks through a space  
calling out, Hello? Hello?  
The subtitles appear here at one side.  
And then appear here at the other side.  
That guides viewers' eyes in each direction of her search.  
The integral subtitles

maintain our connection  
with the person on screen.  
As creators,  
we can thoughtfully  
integrate subtitles around the screen.  
We can make our embodiments,  
our multimodal messages,  
accessible.  
We can connect through words on screen.

### CHAPTER 3 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

In my book,  
I emphasize how we can  
learn from Deaf  
embodiments  
and embodied rhetorics  
to create captions and subtitles  
in multilingual and  
multimodal spaces.  
In one portion of my book,  
I focus on *Gallaudet: The Film*.  
This short film meaningfully  
integrates words on screen  
to guide viewers through  
Deaf experiences and values  
at Gallaudet University.  
I analyze scenes in the film  
to show how the integral design  
of words on screen  
immerses us into this world.  
One key scene is a classroom  
scene with an instructor and students.  
The instructor begins with  
signing a discussion question  
that students then discuss in ASL.

As they share their responses,  
large white subtitles  
appear word by word  
next to each signer.  
And some words appear  
in yellow for emphasis.  
Each individual's words  
remain by their side  
as the camera rotates  
around the room.  
That design intensifies  
our access to their  
multilingual and  
multimodal conversation.  
Creators can likewise  
integrate words on screen  
and interact with these words  
to make our multilingual  
and multimodal  
conversations accessible.

## **CHAPTER 4 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

In my book, I analyze  
different programs  
that use different  
captioning and subtitling  
approaches to embody  
different communication practices.  
Using these approaches  
can show the value  
of various experiences  
within the same space.  
One portion of my book  
focuses on a documentary  
called

*Born this Way Presents:  
Deaf Out Loud.*

This documentary spotlights  
the experiences of  
three families of D/deaf,  
hard-of-hearing,  
and hearing individuals.

This documentary uses  
a mix of closed captions  
and open subtitles  
to embody how these  
individuals communicate.

Individuals who speak  
are shown on camera  
with closed captions  
if you turn on the closed captions  
to read what they speak.

When individuals  
sign without speaking,  
open subtitles appear on screen  
—sometimes near the bottom  
and sometimes near  
individuals' faces  
and upper bodies.

This mix of different styles  
shows the value of  
different communication  
practices and the value of  
communication access.

Creators can incorporate  
a mix of captions and subtitles  
in the same space  
to embody  
accessible multimodal  
communication.

## CHAPTER 5 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

In my book,  
I analyze programs that  
include captions and subtitles  
at the bottom of the screen  
and other approaches.  
These programs show creators  
how we can use different  
approaches to make  
communication accessible.  
One portion of my book  
studies the final season  
of the television show,  
*New Amsterdam*.  
I analyze how two characters  
in this hospital show  
learn to communicate  
with each other.  
The characters are Max,  
who is hearing,  
and Elizabeth,  
who is Deaf.  
After Elizabeth starts  
working at the hospital,  
Max starts to learn ASL  
and the two develop  
strategies for communicating  
with each other across  
languages and modes.  
Their strategies include  
them signing slowly  
with open subtitles  
that appear at the bottom  
of the screen for  
audiences who don't know ASL.

Sometimes Max speaks  
when he doesn't know  
how to sign words,  
and his spoken English appears  
in closed captions for those  
with the closed captions turned on.  
Other times,  
Max and Elizabeth  
write text messages  
on their phones and  
show their phones to each other.  
In these scenes,  
the text message also appears  
on screen  
between their bodies.  
That way, we read the  
message and  
see their reactions  
at the same time.  
We access that  
connection  
at the same time.  
The program shows how  
creators can use a mix of  
captions, subtitles,  
and visual text  
to make communication accessible across  
languages and modes.  
We can place captions  
within the space between  
bodies to  
strengthen our connections.

## CHAPTER 6 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

In my book,

I also study programs and videos  
in which silent communication  
becomes accessible through  
captions, subtitles, and written text.  
These videos show us  
how we can make  
communication and silence  
even more accessible  
through words on screen.  
One example that  
I explore is  
*Only Murders in the Building*.  
Several episodes include  
a Deaf character named Theo  
and these episodes show  
audiences how Theo  
experiences the world.  
Several scenes with Theo  
include traditional  
open subtitles  
at the bottom of the screen.  
In one scene,  
Theo reads the other characters' lips  
and no sound is played.  
In this moment,  
audiences need to read  
the subtitles to know  
what the other characters say—  
just like Theo.  
Similar scenes include  
subtitles when characters  
sign without speaking.  
The subtitles make ASL  
accessible to audiences  
who do not sign,  
including hearing audiences.

In one scene,  
Theo is writing a message  
by hand, and his  
handwritten words  
appear across the screen.  
Audiences can read his words  
and see the action  
on screen at the same time.  
These examples show  
creators how we can use  
captions, subtitles, and visual text  
to share our experiences  
of sound and silence  
with audiences with  
all hearing levels.  
We can make silence  
accessible and connect  
across senses  
through the design of words on screen.

## CHAPTER 7 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

In my book,  
I also explore conversations  
about captions and subtitles,  
including in online videos  
and online spaces.  
I emphasize how we can  
design space for  
captions and subtitles  
in our conversations.  
We can continue to  
work together to contribute  
to more meaningful  
incorporation  
of captions and subtitles



in videos.

Online video creators  
should be aware that  
social media and  
video creation  
programs may give us  
specific options about  
how and where  
we can embed  
visual text in our videos.

That is a positive benefit.

We can embed words near faces.

We can place colorful  
text near bodies.

But we should NOT  
just add any color  
or any style.

We need to  
meaningfully consider  
where and how  
to place words on screen.

We need to carefully  
consider the best ways  
to make our messages  
accessible.

We can contribute to  
more accessible  
online spaces,  
such as by advocating for  
captions and subtitles in online videos.  
Through this process,  
we can make captions and subtitles  
central in our conversations.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

In my book,  
captions and subtitles become  
the embodiment of  
accessible multimodal  
communication.  
They can become central  
in video analysis and  
design processes.  
In my video,  
the subtitles are integral  
to my message and  
make my message  
accessible across  
languages and modes.  
Different creators may  
choose various captioning  
and subtitling  
approaches for  
different contexts.  
These practices embody  
the many ways in which  
we can connect through  
captions and subtitles,  
including across languages.  
Now,  
I ask my audiences to  
build on this book  
and make captions and subtitles  
essential features of  
our videos and conversations.  
Please share the value of  
captions and subtitles  
and access  
with those around you

and design space for  
captions and subtitles  
in your video analysis  
and design processes.  
Together, we can continue  
visualizing captions and subtitles  
as the embodiment  
of accessible multimodal communication.  
Thank you!

