

Context

I teach at an independent American school located in Taipei, Taiwan. The student body is fairly homogeneous: students are generally expats or Taiwanese with overseas passports, socio-economically privileged, well-travelled, and preparing to enter college in the U.S. or elsewhere abroad. We are an English-medium school, although students come in with a variety of English proficiency levels and experiences in previous English classes. The school takes a conventional academic approach to English education, greatly prioritising canonical literature texts, timed analytical writing, and scores from external examinations like the AP and IB.

Overall Pedagogical Goals

As an English teacher, I want my students to develop positive personal relationships with reading and writing, while learning associated skills such as critical thinking and multimodal communication. I emphasise that writing is a process and an important tool available to everyone. I try to instil the importance of planning, drafting, and revising, although Palmeri's suggestions for incorporating visual-spatial modes into the composition process could make it more creative and comprehensive (Palmeri ch. 1). As Wiener notes, students are often overly concerned about finding the 'correct' answer (Palmeri ch. 3); I actively dispel the myth that there is a correct answer in literature and composition, and instead focus on making and supporting logical arguments.

Because of my school's academic focus, I tend to focus on alphabetic and analytical writing to prepare students for college writing and external examinations. Nevertheless, I incorporate multimodal approaches to composition and analysis, including oral presentations and artistic projects. Burnett and Thomason cite several advantages to multimodal assignments: they can engage students who may otherwise find alphabetic writing less stimulating, students gain experience with important multimedia technologies, and they develop skills that support conventional alphabetic composition (Palmeri ch. 3). However, I want to be careful not to present non-alphabetic modes as inferior or only relevant when in service of alphabetic writing. Even though we focus on alphabetic composition, I still want to teach my students "to discover – to choose – the modalities that best help them convey what they want to communicate" (Palmeri ch. 1).

More generally, I want my students to grow as responsible, ethical, global citizens. Literature and discussion can help develop empathy and understanding of different experiences. Despite – or because of – their relative privilege, I want my students to feel motivated and empowered as agents of change. Relatedly, I encourage them to be proactive about their learning. Through group work and student-led discussions, they become "active participants in creating knowledge" instead of merely "passive recipient[s]" (Palmeri ch. 3).

Incorporating Technology

Echoing Laura Guertin's Teaching with Technology Philosophy Statement, I want to effectively integrate technology into my classroom as a means to an end, not an end in itself. I hope to encourage collaboration among students, make processes of completing and

submitting work more convenient and efficient, and make our lessons more interesting and relevant to what is happening in their lives and the world around us. Finally, as familiarity with a variety of technologies is increasingly useful and essential both inside and outside academic contexts, I want to provide students with opportunities to work with these technologies.

I work at a 1:1 school where students are accustomed to using their laptop and other digital technologies in class. I have students turn in their homework by sharing a Google Doc through Canvas, which streamlines the grading process. Students also complete in-class writing on shared Google Docs or Slides, which not only allows me to monitor their progress in real time but also later allows them to consult each other's work. Students also use Padlet to provide feedback to their classmates for presentations, or create image boards as starting points for discussion of a particular text.

Palmeri extends Flower and Hayes' definition of composing as translating, describing it as a "dynamic process of moving between internal multimodal representations of knowledge (in the mind) and external multimodal representations (on the computer or the page)" (ch. 1). We ask students to read, understand, process, and analyse literature by translating their thoughts into alphabetic essays. In addition, larger multimodal assignments such as oral presentations and open-ended creative projects require students to produce analysis of literature through different modes, while also appealing to interests outside what is traditionally expected in the English classroom. Using various digital and non-digital technologies, students have created card games, filmed and edited videos, created digital art, and coded computer games exploring motifs in *Macbeth*.

Works Cited

Palmeri, Jason. *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*. Kindle ed., 2012.