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Professor Zan

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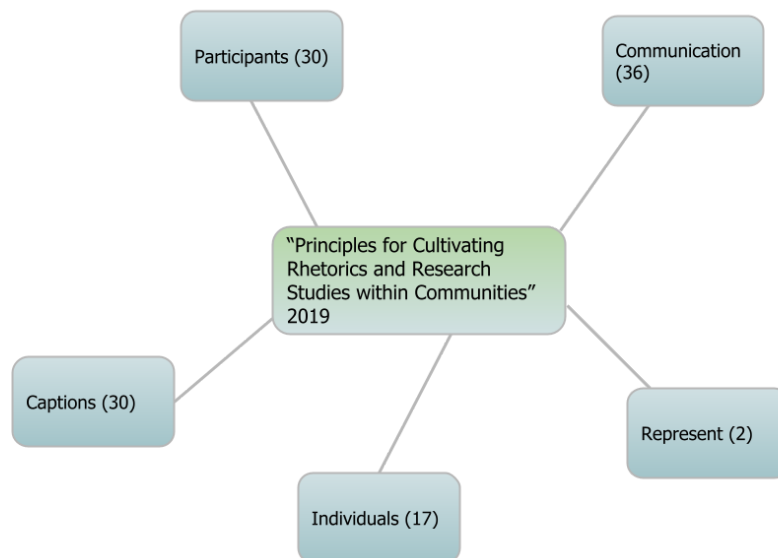
Captions in Media: Using Research to Improve Accessibility

Media is everywhere throughout our lives. From watching videos on our phones to seeing a movie with friends at a theater, we are constantly surrounded by media. With how often media is viewed in our lives, it is important for it to be as accessible as possible. Unfortunately for members of the deaf community, problems with caption implementation have left many deaf and hard-of-hearing people frustrated with the current state of accessibility within media. For this essay, I chose to research an article titled “Principles for Cultivating Rhetorics and Research Studies within Communities” by Janine Butler, due to my interest in media production and its use as a tool for communication. This article discusses 3 topics relating to the research of deaf accessibility within media, being the use of deaf-accessibility architecture studies for effective focus group research, the recognition of the diverse opinions of deaf participants within her focus group, and the ethics of translating American Sign Language (ASL) communication to printed English while accurately portraying the feedback from focus group members.

In order to research these topics further, a worknet will be used to show the four different aspects, also known as phases, of this article, and how they relate to each other. The first phase of a worknet phase is titled the “Semantic” phase, which highlights recurring words used in the article and their significance. Next is the “Bibliographic” phase, which identifies the sources used and their purpose. The third phase is the “Affinity-based” phase, which provides information about the author and their motivations for writing this article. Lastly is the “Choric”

phase, which examines current events from around the time of its publication that could be influential to the creation of this article.

Phase 1: Semantic



A visualization of word choices for the semantic phase, as well as how frequently they are used throughout the article.

My semantic research started with looking at the most frequently used word in this article, which was "Communication." It is commonly referred to as a broad word that signifies information being exchanged between others through a variety of behaviors, signs, and symbols. In the context of this article, it is shown as a tool that has limitations within the deaf community. Knowing this, Butler took precautions to improve the efficiency of communication while researching her focus group. To try to make her focus group as accessible as possible for her deaf

group members, she researched subtle details such as room architecture and layout with the goal of creating an environment that promotes deaf communication. Her research informed her decision to use u-shaped lecture halls in her focus group study, which allowed for increased visibility for ASL communication.

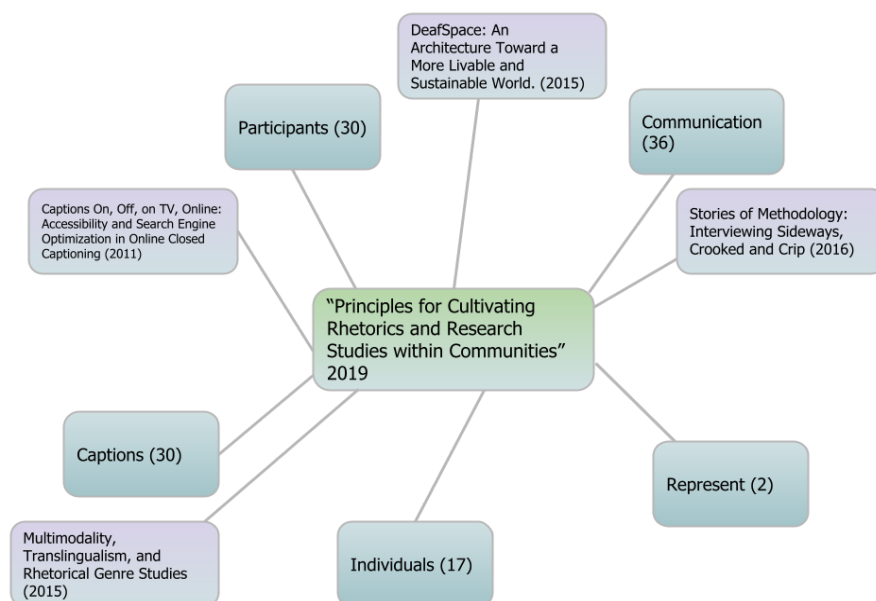
The second word that I noticed while reading was “Participants,” which is used to signify a person taking part in an activity or event. Butler used the word participants in two ways. It was most commonly used to refer to the members of her focus group. It was also used to distinguish between members of the deaf community, showing the importance of valuing members of the deaf community as individuals. By asking participants about their experiences with movie theater captioning devices. Butler was able to use the experiences from members of her focus group to acknowledge the dissatisfaction with captioning devices throughout the deaf community.

“Individuals” was another word that frequently came up while reading, especially when establishing the main idea for her focus group. The word is defined as a single person that is distinct from a group, class, or family. Although every participant in her focus group is related by deafness, Butler constantly stressed the importance of valuing everyone’s knowledge and personal experiences for her research.

While only used twice throughout this essay, the word “Represent” explains the author’s goal to accurately portray concerns within the deaf community by talking with members of her focus group and translating their opinions into evidence for her research. The word is defined as speaking or acting for someone, which is why she recognizes the caution she has to take while documenting her research to avoid misrepresenting deaf participants in her focus group.

The last term that I chose to highlight was “Captions” since a central message of this essay is the importance of improving caption accessibility. Captions are on-screen text that conveys the content’s audio for viewers and are vital for the accessibility of media for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers. In this article, captions are referred to as a solution for deaf media accessibility but were also mentioned for having bad implementation, mentioned with the frustration that many of the focus group participants shared their frustration with movie theater captioning devices that would fall over as the movie progressed.

Phase 2: Bibliographic



A visualization of the Bibliographic phase’s sources and their publishing years.

The sources included within this article focus on two main aspects, deaf accessibility, and the ethics of obtaining and translating feedback from the deaf community. A source used in this article titled “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning” from 2011 helped Butler establish the functionality and importance

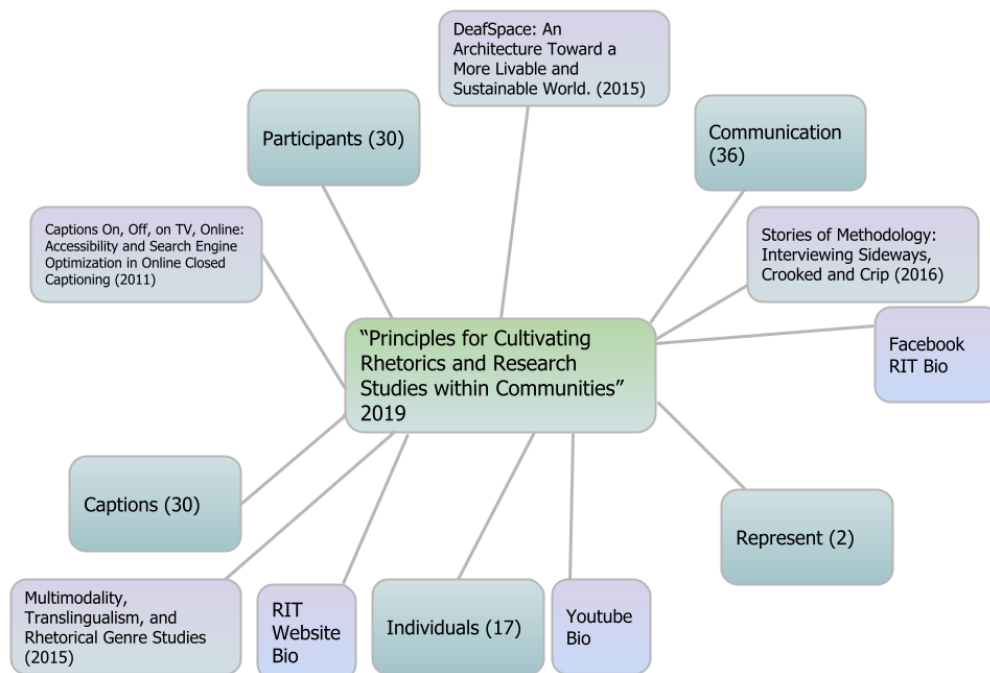
of captions to her audience. Butler quotes this article to define the users of captions within her focus group. She does this by stating that her “study centered on d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who use captions to “participate culturally and civically” in media-driven society (Butler 1). Her definition effectively defines her target audience for her focus group research.

Another prominently used source in this article was “Stories of Methodology: Interviewing Sideways, Crooked and Crip” Published in 2016, this article was used to cover a wide variety of topics relating to deaf research, mainly to show the constant change in deaf research methodologies over time and the importance of making linguistic choices that respectfully translate feedback from deaf participants in studies. Butler heavily relied on the article’s advice to improve accessibility by focusing on making a comfortable research space for the deaf participants. This is shown with her choice to email the members of the focus group asking about their communication preferences before meeting with the focus group participants.

When establishing the environment for the focus group, Butler took advice from Hansel Bauman’s book “DeafSpace: An Architecture Toward a More Livable and Sustainable World” published in 2015. She used the book’s research on effective environments for deaf communication to show the importance of u-shaped lecture halls for improved ASL recognition, while also explaining its importance for her research plan. While establishing her plan for her focus group research, Butler mentions the importance of the u-shaped lecture room for communication and data collection. “Maintaining continual connection with each other person in the room supported our real-time discussions and my later transcription and analysis” (Butler 2). This architecture decision allowed for an in-depth analysis of the data from her focus group.

After gathering information from the focus group, she based her data analysis practices on Laura Gonzales' article about ASL visualization software. “Multimodality, Translingualism, and Rhetorical Genre Studies” from 2015 was used to show how video analysis software can help with the visualization of ASL communication. This source helps Butler establish ethos in her writing by showing her intent to gather data as accurately as possible by referring to previous deaf communication research.

Phase 3: Affinity



The newly added boxes connect the author's past and current experiences to their article.

To properly analyze an article, research about the author and their history with their research topic is important for establishing their credibility. Butler’s credibility academically is well-documented, since the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) website provided information on her past degrees. She has a bachelor’s degree in English with a concentration in

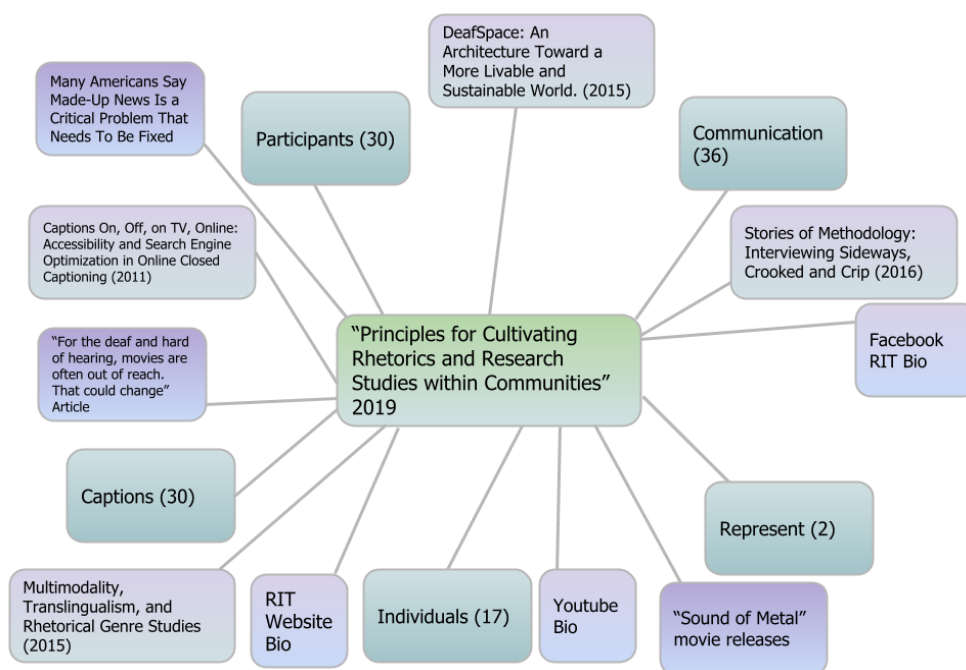
Language, Writing, and Rhetoric with a minor in Philosophy also from the University of Maryland. She also has a master's degree in English with an Emphasis in Writing Studies from Montclair State University, and a doctoral degree in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication from East Carolina University. RIT's website also mentions the current classes that she teaches at the university. These classes are Rhetoric of Leadership, Leadership and Accessible Technology, and a First-Year Writing Seminar. Previously, she taught a Science, Technology, and Values class through RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Her bio also explains the topics found in her research projects, which connect her interest in media accessibility through captions: "Her research projects explore strategies for improving access to digital media and compositions, particularly through captions" (RIT). This bio establishes Butler's credibility through her variety of degrees relating to English and rhetoric, while also describing her interest in improving media accessibility through her research.

In a bio published by Butler on her Youtube channel, she gives more insight into her interests and teaching experience at RIT. At the time of this video's upload in late 2020, she stated that she was an assistant professor that primarily taught RIT's first-year writing course. At the end of the video, she explains her interest in teaching rhetoric to students, since it gives her an opportunity to continue learning about different ways rhetoric can be communicated. Her bio explains why she places a lot of emphasis on accurately representing the feedback from her focus group, due to her value in understanding rhetoric from others.

Lastly, in a monthly spotlight for RIT's Department of Liberal Studies, Butler gives information on when she began to work for RIT. In this Facebook bio, she states that she started working at RIT in 2017, establishing her experience as a rhetoric teacher. This bio also mentions her enjoyment of reading, shown with her favorite quote being Oprah's explanation of her love

for reading. Her enjoyment of reading could have been a factor as to why she chose to pursue an English degree in college, and her eventual career in teaching First-Year Writing. Her teaching also establishes her ethos as a rhetoric teacher, which builds credibility for the research done in the focal article.

Phase 4: Choric



The dark purple boxes show current events from the year of this article's release that could have affected Butler's writing process.

Looking at other events that happened around the release of the focal article helps identify events that could have affected Butler's writing choices. A few months before the publishing of the focal article, *The Washington Post* published an article mentioning similar issues with movie theater captioning devices. It also included interviews with movie viewers that had issues with these devices, listing their disappointment with the device's issues of missing

dialogue and dead batteries (Sullivan). This could have sparked the author of the focal article to direct her focus group's attention towards mentioning the topic in her article. This article also shows Butler's Kairos with the timing of her article's release, which backed up the claims of many deaf movie viewers with well documented research at a time when this topic had a large amount of attention.

Later in 2019, the movie "Sound of Metal" premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. Sound of Metal is about the impact of hearing loss for a metal drummer named Ruben. (IMDB) During the production of this movie, many actors were cast from the deaf community. Ruben also learned ASL to communicate with the cast and add realism to the movie. (Clement) The movie's theme of increasing accessibility and access for deaf viewers aligns closely with Butler's messaging in the focal article. This movie's large focus on the deaf community could have also spiked interest in topics relating to deaf research near the time of the focal articles release.

In an article published by Pew Research Center in 2019, Americans were shown to be worried about the impact of poorly researched/false news. While this article mostly focused on the concerns of false news for politics and entertainment, concern for the legitimacy of academic studies about current issues and their documentation were also shown as important for Americans. Skepticism surrounding the legitimacy of made-up information could have made the focal article's author more concerned with her planning and documentation for her research, leading to her carefully specifying her methodology for her focus group research.

Butler's focus on the many aspects of deaf research was shown and developed by her personal experiences and the environment around her. Analysis shown by the four aspects of the

worknet allows for the audience to gain an in-depth understanding of Butler's article, as well as the outside factors that affected the focal article. Throughout the article, Brown's exigence was inspired by her dissatisfaction with the current state of captioning within online media. She uses pathos throughout her essay by acknowledging each individual's diverse opinions within her research, while also caring about each individual's accommodation throughout her research. Ethos is established through her education, rhetoric teaching, and research with captions. Logos is present throughout her research methodology with the use of academic studies to improve accessibility within her focus group. Kairos was also used to publish this article at a time when discussion on theater captioning was popular to audiences outside the deaf community. Her experience and research into the topic provide insight into the issues with current captioning practices in today's media, as well as ways to improve accessibility with conducting research with deaf individuals.

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