**Computers and Writing 2018**

**“Exploring Pedagogies for Synchronous Video Writing Instruction**

Rochelle Rodrigo:  *@rrodrigo*

Kimberly Fahle: @*kafahle*

Collin Bjork: *@collin\_bjork*

In online writing instruction (OWI), researchers often overlook synchronous pedagogies in favor of asynchronous modalities. Scott Warnock, for instance, admits that his monograph on OWI focuses on “using asynchronous communication via message boards” (2009). Mick and Middlebrook, too, note that asynchronous modalities of educational communication “have been and currently remain dominant” (in Hewett and Depew, 2015: 144-5). But as videoconferencing technologies become increasingly accessible and affordable, this scholarly lacuna becomes more problematic. After all, Principle 3 of the CCCC’s Position Statement on OWI states that “appropriate composition teaching/learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment” (2013), but comparatively few strategies have been suggested for synchronous multimodal teaching.

This panel investigates various judgments that online writing instructors make in synchronous multimodal environments. Based on a combination of rhetorical theory, pedagogical research, and personal experiences, these presentations examine how pedagogues a) craft their digital teacherly ethos, b) select methods of discursive engagement, and c) assess the impact of synchronous participation. Although this panel is situated within the context of OWI, the implications of our research also address other forms of synchronous multimodal communication, including webinar hosting and online job interviews.

**GSOLE/ROLE**

If you’re looking for a scholarly community with plenty of resources for online writing instruction (OWI). Check out—and consider joining—the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators (GSOLE). We are all members. It’s a lively and fruitful group of researchers and educators from around the world. We also run two peer-reviewed journals. And, in particular, I’d like to promote the multimodal born digital journal for which I am a section editor, Research in Online Literacy Education (ROLE), which just had its first release in January of this year. You can see this issue at roleolor.weebly.com. Our ultimate plan is to be hosted on Cheryl Ball’s VEGA platform when that is released later this year, but for now, we have built our cite in Weebly (which, unlike most other website builders, allows you to export your HTML at any time).

**Teacherly Ethos in Synchronous Multimodal OWI**

My dissertation, “Chronologies of Character: Rhetoric, Time, and Ethos,” argues that both rhetoric and theories of ethos can gain complexity by understanding how non-kairotic conceptions of time—such as intervals and sequences—impact rhetorical ecologies. Through the analysis of cultural texts and digital media, I develop a theory of “cumulative ethos” that reveals how character accumulates rhetorical force over time. As such, this presentation demonstrates the pedagogical implications of my dissertation research.

In this presentation, I claim that—although rarely discussed in research about OWI—”teacherly ethos” matters to online teaching, even if it is a messy and ongoing process that emerges from multimodal interactions during synchronous video instruction.

Collin Bjork

*csbjork@iu.edu*

*@collin\_Bjork*

*www.collinbjork.com*

Digital rhetoricians and new media scholars have long explored the ways that ethos emerges in online environments, but these theories are only occasionally imported into scholarly discussions of online writing instruction (OWI). While Scott Warnock (2009) addresses the crafting of instructors’ “online personality” in the opening chapter of his monograph, the rest of his book--like much other OWI scholarship (see, for example, Hewett and Depew, 2015)--foregrounds pedagogical strategies and administrative decisions.

Following Booth (1988), who suggests that teachers always act as rhetoricians attempting to persuade their students, Gregory (2013) Gregory contends that instructors ought to spend more time considering their identity or, in his words, “who the teacher seems to be *as a person*” (202). But while I agree with Gregory’s claim, I want to leverage rhetorical theory to complicate his notion of “ethos,” which—as it stands—is a bit too nebulous.

Many scholars have contributed to our contemporary understanding of ethos. This slide offers a short list. But, without time for a thorough literature review in this presentation, I want to simply emphasize a couple of things.

First, ethos is NOT the same as subjectivity, identity, or persona. Although each of those terms and ideas overlaps with and impacts ethos in certain ways.

Second, the following adjectives describe the many facets of ethos: rhetorical, ethical, socio-cultural, discursive-material, digital, emergent, and cumulative.

These adjectives are derived, in part, from the research of the following (selected) list of scholars: Isocrates; Aristotle; Fleckenstein, 1999; Amossy, 2000; Crowley & Hawhee, 2009; Ryan, Myers, & Jones, 2016.

But, because we’re talking about teaching ethos in online environments, I want to focus on Fleckenstein’s (1999) description of “cybernetic ethos.”

Fleckenstein links Aristotelian ideas of ethos with Batesonian cybernetics to craft a sense of digital ethos that—rather than residing within any single human agent—is distributed across a network of human and nonhuman actants. She writes: “Good character” does NOT reside within a single individual. Instead, it operates within “the entire array of pathways in action” (Fleckenstein, 1999).

In the synchronous video OWI classroom, that means that teacherly ethos does NOT *only* reside in teachers’ discursive interactions and their visual presentation (although those are key components) but, instead, it also emerges from the digital and material elements of the dynamic interface (e.g. the videoconferencing software platform) that mediates the OWI.

But, while Fleckenstein is reluctant to find value in pointing to specific elements of ethos in digital environments, I believe that—despite this emergent behavior of ethos—there is some value in doing so. Because…

…Ethos is also cumulative, **especially in digital and online environments.** (This is my dissertation research). Ethos repeats, becomes patterned, and elements of it can begin to ossify over time.

In an effort to attend to the accretive force of *ethos* over time, I posit a third kind of rhetorical character—“cumulative *ethos*”—that helps articulate the relationship between artistic and inartistic *ethos*. Cumulative *ethos* denotes the nonlinear procedure by which an artistic *ethos* in one moment may contribute to a subsequent instantiation of a rhetor’s inartistic *ethos*, and vice versa. According to this model, as each new artistic *ethos* folds into the past, it jostles and redirects the evolution of the rhetor’s inartistic *ethos*, which is, itself, the accrual of prior figurations of the rhetor’s artistic *ethos.* But this inartistic *ethos* is not passive or without suasive potential in present or future rhetorical interactions. Instead, it retains some degree of its rhetorical power by becoming both the constraints and the components for subsequent iterations of a rhetor’s artistic *ethos*. Unlike prior theories of artistic and inartistic *ethos*, however, cumulative *ethos* does not refer to a single rhetorical strategy or a feature that an agent *possesses*. Instead, cumulative *ethos* identifies an ongoing *process* of accumulation that shapes a rhetor’s *ethos* over time.

So, returning to Fleckstein, I believe that we can point to specific nodes in a network and say, yes, there’s an element that contributes to the emergence of ethos because, over time, certain aspects of that **ethos** begin to (re)appear in **repeated patterns**, which leads to a kind of **“semi-ossification”** of aspects of cybernetic ethos in digital spaces.

Regrettably, I do not have time to fully trace all the possible digital-material components that can influence the way in which one’s teacherly ethos appears to emerge in synchronous video OWI, so, instead, I will focus on a few examples and leave time for more dialogue at the end of the presentation.

Two obvious elements that contribute to one’s teacherly ethos are **discursive** and **material** factors. But in online synchronous video instruction, these elements are always intertwined with **machines**.

**Discursive**

For example, it’s not just about the specific words that you choose and their array of contextualized meanings. It’s also about their digital delivery and circulation, which involves microphones, CPUs, software platforms, and internet protocols.

**Material**

For example, it’s not just the visual display of human bodies on a computer screen. It’s also about how machines like webcams translate 3D bodies in 3D spaces into code that represents them on 2D screens.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me (contact information listed below). For more information about my research and teaching, you can visit my website: www.collinbjork.com. Thank you for your time!

Collin Bjork

csbjork@iu.edu

@collin\_bjork

www.collinbjork.com