JOCELYN

Here is my unscripted and unedited five-minute story. It was input as voice, and 'translated' from voice to text using the Dictation function of the Messages app on an iPhone.

My thoughts and reflections below are based on my understanding of this week's readings.

I'm someone who tends to plan out the points I want to make next even as I am speaking, so considering that this task requires an unscripted story, I decided to situate myself in an environment where I would have to tell the story as it happens. The text above was captured when I was in a moving car, describing what I saw along the way.

As a result, I believe this text — unscripted, oral language translated into a written format using voice-to-text software — deviates from the conventions of written English in that it is more of a stream of consciousness, whereas written English is typically more intentional and structured.

Firstly, irrespective of whether I'm communicating using oral or written language, the language I use is "the product of [our] culture" (Haas, 2009, p. 15). My thinking itself is influenced by my understanding of the culture through language. In addition to the technology of writing, this includes the consideration of other technologies used within our culture, and how these technologies and writing mutually influence one another. For example, in my text I referenced "vlog", which refers to "[a] blog composed of posts in video form" (Oxford University Press, 2021), a product that requires the understanding and use of technologies such as video production equipment and social media. I believe this reiterates Scribner and Cole's (1981) "claim that the practice of literacy is itself deeply contextualized" (Scribner & Cole, 1981, as cited in Haas, 2009, p. 19).

1) Translation from consciousness to text: Since my speech above, or "voicing" as Ong (2002) might call it (Ong, 2002, p. 13), was intended to be unscripted, I tried my best not to think about what I would ever say in my next sentence, and forced myself to blurt out my thoughts as they came to my mind. In other words, in considering this in terms of Ong's (2002) assertion that "[s]peech is inseparable from our consciousness" and Gnanadesikan's (2009) that "[w]riting is therefore a process of translating time into space" (Ong, 2002, p. 9; Gnanadesikan, 2009, p. 3), I think of this text as my consciousness and thoughts over time, which are voiced, and this voicing is in turn captured as text using voice-to-text software, where text is a form of space.

For written text, consciousness is translated by the mind into writing, where decisions are made in terms of what is written and how it is written. Consciousness, conversely, is also influenced by the understanding of writing, as "writing is a technology that restructures consciousness of individuals who use it" (Ong, 1982, as cited in Schmandt-Besserat & Erard, 2009, p. 20).

2) Past versus present: Writing creates "a disjunction between past and present" (Goody & Watt, 1968, as cited in Haas, 2009, p. 11), and with this transcribed text, my thoughts over the five-minute period in the past can now be revisited anytime in the present in the same way as written language. Similarly, since "information only exist[s] if someone could remember it" (Gnanadesikan, 2009, p. 2), this text could now serve as a documentation of my thoughts at that point in time; for example, I don't believe I would've noticed or remembered the kayak if not for this voicing and resulting text.

3) Perceptions of scholarly work: I can imagine that if my unscripted, oral text were to be compared to this written post, my oral text might be considered "as beneath serious scholarly attention" (Ong, 2002, p. 8), whether that is appropriate or otherwise, as Ong (2002) warned. On the other hand, this post may be considered to be more scholarly.

4) Content: There are details in my text that I would not have normally included in my writing. For example, further to my reference above to the word "vlog", I recall that as I voiced the word, I experienced Ong's (2002) hypothesis that "[a] literate person … will normally … have some image … of the spelled-out word" (Ong, 2002, pp. 11-12). I pictured how it compounds the words "video" and "log", and attempted to replace the word "video" with "audio" as I thought it would be more appropriate. This was captured in my voicing, but would most likely not have made it into my written language.

I believe what is "right" with the text is that it captured most of the words I used. However, as for what is "wrong", I'm reminded of Gnanadesikan's (2009) assertion that with writing, "much information about the actual speech is lost, such as intonation and emotional content" (Gnanadesikan, 2009, p. 9). The text looks more polished than I anticipated. Some elements that would've contributed to the text being less polished are missing, such as:
- **Pauses:** I took pauses throughout as I was waiting for my next thoughts.
- **The slight panic in my voice:** I think there was a slight panic in my voice from trying to come up with thoughts and words, which is completely lost in the text.
- **Laughter:** I immediately regretted trying to come up with a compound word for "audio log" and started laughing to the point I was tearing up. I thought some form of that would be captured, but aside from the "Oh my gosh. OK. OK.", there is very little trace of that in the text. (And if I were to be honest, I considered redoing my voicing because of that part, but I ended up keeping it simply because I thought it would be a good point to write about for this post!)

I also wonder how similar or different — or how much more "wrong" or "right" — the resulting text would've been if I used different voice-to-text software. In terms of hardware, I was limited to the use of my phone since I decided to narrate my journey, and I wonder if my desktop computer would've produced different results.

Aside from the lack of punctuation, I think the software did a decent job and any mistakes were minor, such as capturing "it is in the worst" instead of "it isn't the worst", "there's a bear traffic" instead of "there's a bit of traffic", and "ninth Street" instead of "Knight Street". I consider these to be mistakes in the sense they differ from what I believe I said and/or do not make sense in the context of the sentences.

Considering the cases of "is in"/"isn't" and "bear"/"bit of", it makes me wonder to what extent the software considers phonetics versus syntax. Upon reflection of how I pronounce "isn't" and "bit of", I noticed I tend to drop the "t" in "isn't" and pronounce "bit of" closer to "bi'ov", and I can see how they could sound like "is in" and "bear", respectively.

I also found it interesting that in reference to gas prices, the text captured was formatted as "2:25.9" instead of "225.9". I wonder if it might have something to do with Canadian gas prices being listed at cents per litre — I'm thinking that since Apple is based in the United States (Apple, n.d.), where gas prices are listed at dollars per gallon, perhaps the software learned from datasets that are primarily American and "225.9" made little sense in the context of gas prices. This makes me think of the Vygotskian theory that language is "the product of [our] culture" (Haas, 2009, p. 15).

If I had scripted the story, I think I would've planned for a much more logical flow in my storytelling, as opposed to the jumpiness in my text above. I also would like to think that I would've used less "so", "also", "I guess", and "what else" — in reading over my text, I noticed there are lots of instances of these in my voicing!

I think oral storytelling differs from written storytelling primarily in that oral storytelling could include context that comes from "tone, cadence, and tempo" as well as "intonation and emotional content" (Peña, 2022; Gnanadesikan, 2009, p. 9), which could give the audience clues on the intentions of the words presented. Similarly, as Haas (2009) pointed out, "Ong, Havelock, and Goody … each [identified the contrast between] the decontextualization of the spatial form (writing) with the contextual richness of the temporal form (speech)" (Haas, 2009, p. 12).

On the other hand, I think it is possible that written storytelling allows more room for the audience's imagination, which could be interesting if more creative or personal interpretations of the text would strengthen the meaning of the text for the audience.

As a side note, the concepts of 'unscripted versus scripted stories' and 'oral versus written storytelling' remind me of a class discussion I participated in during my undergrad in Visual Art, on painting versus photography. I recall we discussed how painting is about making decisions on what goes within the frame, in the context of the artist's interpretation of the world; whereas for photography, it's about making decisions on what goes within and stays outside the frame, in the context of the real world. I think there are parallels between unscripted-scripted, oral-written storytelling, and painting-photography, in that the first of each set focuses on individual consciousness, and the second of each set focuses on (re)interpreting this consciousness in the world.

AGNES

For this exercise, I used the voice typing tool embedded in Google Docs. I chose to describe a narrative of my move from Ontario to Saskatchewan. Immediately following the completion of my narrative, I doubted I would have spent this long consecutively speaking to another person. When I am speaking during my conversations, I often rely on the listener to give me cues about what they are interested in. For example, in certain parts, I may elaborate more on, if the listener wanted to hear more details, or had clarifying questions. In oral storytelling, the information communicated is often collaborative with what the engaged parties want to hear. As a result of my unorganized collection of thoughts on the move from Ontario to Saskatchewan, the facts are included throughout the story, but there lacks organization and critical writing elements.

The voice-to-text tool actually stopped twice, and so I had to backtrack my story and then restart where it left off recording text. I also did not speak at the speed I typically do, my speech was slow, choppy and monotone. I naturally did this, and tried to speak in a more natural tone but kept veering back to a slower speech. Maybe this was because I thought I wanted to be understood by something less intelligent than me (my computer) and for the tool not to miss my message, and ensure it was working. When reviewing the printed text, it is quite evident the punctuation is incorrect, and my text is not academic, as it is a more relaxed and conversational style. It is harder to read because punctuation helps to determine expression, so someone reading it will find trouble reading it aloud. Tenses were not always correct; past, present and future. Another aspect that happened a few times was a word by the voice-to-text program was written out of context, for example, 'coal' became 'Kohl'. However, the text was all spelled as recognizable words.

If I had scripted the story, then I would feel less self-conscious about posting my story below. I feel if I published the story without context attached, then I may be judged for not having effective writing skills. The writing of my story (which still remains unedited) in terms of grammar and punctuation would be compared to a grade 4-5 writing level. As graduate students, we are expected to have exceptional communication skills, so having that expectation placed on ourselves and publishing text that does not deliver a clear and concise message, is difficult.

It is rare I just speak for long periods of time uninterrupted, recalling an event. This made me think of my childhood, growing up with many siblings, feeling that I had to make my stories short and to the point, or impactful if I wanted to keep the attention of my family members. Along the same lines of keeping stories short and to the point, I find that the majority of us want information received to be timely, as well as pertinent. When it comes to our own stories, shortening our words into slang while texting is common to quicken it for the recipients of our messages. Voice to text is often used when texting others. In these instances, the sayings may come across as abrupt and not as friendly.

My final thoughts on this are that voice-to-text is accessible to most students, but highly encouraged for students who need support to transfer their ideas into writing. This exercise showcases that this tool cannot fully align with transferring oral language into written text that fully transits my intended meaning. Therefore, we as educators should remember that this tool cannot fully transport the meaning of our students' ideas as well. This is certainly something I will consider in supporting students who use voice to text.