ROCKING AND READING

EXPLORING MULTIMODAL MEDIA LITERACY IN AN ESL COLLEGE CLASSROOM

by

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Abstract

In spite of the multimodality of texts with which students interact nowadays, reliance on print-based literary textbooks in English classrooms prevails. This qualitative action research adopted a poststructuralist framework to examine the implementation of a unit in which students from an ESL literature-based composition course in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez 'read' rock music and videos, in addition to short stories from a standard textbook. Data was analyzed using a multimodal theory of communication, as well as theories from critical media literacy studies. After implementing the unit, students were able to: recognize multiple modalities in different discourses, utilize specific multimodal designs in their own productions, and explore various concepts related to music distribution. While analyzing different media texts, students critiqued various social issues that were relevant to their lives and began to transfer the skills they learned to their interactions with media texts outside of the classroom.

Resumen

A pesar de la multimodalidad de los textos con los cuales interactúan los/las estudiantes hoy en día, el uso de textos literarios impresos prevalece en los salones de inglés. Desde una perspectiva posestructuralista, este proyecto de investigación-acción cualitativa examina la implementación de una unidad de estudio en la cual los/las estudiantes de una clase de composición y lectura de inglés como segundo idioma 'leyeron' música y videos de rock, además de cuentos del libro de texto asignado en el curso. La información recopilada fue analizada utilizando una teoría de comunicación multimodal, además de teorías sobre la alfabetización mediática de los estudiantes. Después de implementar la unidad, los/las estudiantes pudieron: reconocer múltiples modalidades en diferentes discursos, identificar y utilizar diseños multimodales específicos en sus propias producciones multimodales y explorar varios conceptos respecto a la distribución de música y videos. Al analizar diferentes tipos de textos los/las estudiantes asumieron una actitud crítica sobre los temas sociales relevantes a sus vidas y ahora son capaces de transferir fuera del salón de clases las destrezas aprendidas a sus interacciones con textos de diferentes medios de comunicación.

I dedicate this thesis to my mommie.

Thank you for providing, for believing, for supporting, for always being there, for giving me life.

I love you and without you nothing in my life would be possible.

Dedico esta tesis a mi mamita.

Gracias por proveer, por creer, por apoyar, por ayudar, por siempre estar ahí, por darme la vida.

Te amo y sin ti nada de mi vida sería posible.

Acknowledgements

While there are a large number of people who have heard about and supported my progress in the completion of this thesis - some of those who are close to me and others who simply motivated me to keep going with encouraging comments - there are a number of individuals without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

I must first thank my cousin Saray for sharing her love of music with me. Here I also need to mention the guys and gals from the rock scene in San Sebastián who showed me that there actually *is* a large crowd of people who follow the same kind of music I do. Besides my friends who shared music interests with me as I was growing up (especially in high school), I am thankful I was able to meet many people who provided important insights about the development of this scene in western Puerto Rico. Among these, I thank Macoyo and Willy for their conversations about the Long Branch in Aguadilla and the overall rock scene in Puerto Rico.

I learned a lot more about other types of rock music subgenres from my friends in Aguadilla, among them Javy and José (great musicians who I encourage to keep playing). However, I am indebted to Ricky and his band mates for providing me with close experiences about what it is like to truly be in a rock band that aims to spread its music internationally. I sincerely wish you achieve this goal in the near future.

I also thank Ricky for enduring conversations about my thesis and for introducing me to his mom, Nilda Martinez, who encouraged me to consider Bob Dylan for my curriculum design, and ended up providing me with important insights about the rock scene in Puerto Rico during the 1970's. Without you, and your enlightening words, there would be a lot of information missing in the pages of this thesis.

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Chapter I: Introduction

...literary critical analysis can be applied to certain social phenomena other than 'academically respectable literature' (for example, the popular arts, mass communications) so as to illuminate their meanings for individuals and their societies. (Hoggart, 1966, as cited in Hebdige, 1997, p. 8)

"¡Oye, ese 'mix' está chevere!"[1] This is what J., a friend of mine said in the fifth grade after listening to a tape recording I had made for him. According to him, the best part was hearing me present songs from international artists such as Ace of Base, Sheryl Crow, and The Cranberries, whom my cousin - recently returned from the United States - had introduced me to. I also included songs by local artists that I would hear on the radio. At age 10, one of my favorite activities was recording songs on a cassette player, while using a tape recorder to introduce them, emulating the style of the DJs I listened to on local radio stations such as La Mega, which - in that period of time- was known for playing predominantly North American music, and KQ 105, which was notorious for its Top 40 countdown of a mix of English and Spanish songs.

These 'recording sessions,' would sometimes feature 'guest appearances' by my brother or our cousins, who would pretend to be artists that I would interview. For example, my brother once pretended to be the Puerto Rican rapper Vico C, whose song "Explosión" addressed serious drug issues. Yet, because of our ignorance about these issues at that age, the interview was focused on what 'Vico C' (my brother) was like as a kid. J. especially liked our rendition of the song "Informer" which was a reggae/dance song by a white Canadian musician called Snow. He particularly enjoyed our humorous version of this song because the artist himself was imitating Jamaican accented English. Also, because we were students of English as a Second Language,[2] the song lent itself to a comical mixed performance of blabbering following the rhythm of the song.

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[1] *Hey, that mix is super cool!* (This and all subsequent translations are my own.)
[2] English is taught as a second language in public schools in Puerto Rico, a subject I will address in detail in Chapter II. This phrase is sometimes abbreviated as ESL, and I will follow this practice throughout this document.

Perhaps this exercise was influenced by even earlier interactions with tape recorders. As a child, I recall my uncle recording sessions in which my cousins, my brother and I would sing nursery rhymes while he made jokes as a 'radio host.' Indeed, these early experiences with recordings seem to foretell the constant interactions that I would have with music throughout my life, especially after discovering the television channels MTV and VH1 in the sixth grade. Right after coming home from school, the first thing I would do was turn on MTV and watch the latest music videos from different musical genres. Eventually, however, I developed a particular preference for listening to alternative rock music.

Later on, a twelfth grade English teacher opened my eyes to a different way of listening to music. To break away from the monotony of using the textbook, she required us to analyze our favorite songs. Although it was common for me to write down the lyrics of the songs that I liked, this exercise made me aware of the fact that I could read these lyrics to develop certain assumptions about their 'messages.' The artist I chose was Fiona Apple because the chosen songs had to be in English, though she was one of my favorite artists regardless. Some of the lines that caught my attention in the song *Paper Bag* were ones in which she used metaphors that compared a 'bird' to a 'paper bag,' and a 'man' with a 'little boy,' expressing her expectations of something great that turned out to be insignificant. This made me aware of the strong feminist orientation and perspectives of this artist, and the assignment motivated me to analyze many of the songs that I listened to after that in a similar way.

In high school, the group that I spent most of my time with was referred to as *los rokeros*[3] by other students. Besides exchanging music and thoughts about rock music with them, I would also go to local clubs, parks and pizzerias to watch some of these friends play in punk or hardcore rock bands. Even though the topics of some of the bands' songs were mostly aimed at

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[3] *the rockers*.

making fun of everyday life experiences - with the occasional sexual innuendo - there were others that were more critical in orientation, such as the songs of the group Machete, which took its name from the revolutionary group *Macheteros*[4] and constantly criticized *el abuso de poder*[5] in their songs. Additionally, the experience of watching live bands helped me notice differences in musical instruments and the types of sounds they produced.

Framing the study

Unknowingly, the interactions with music that I narrated above were instances in my early youth and adolescence in which I would "participate in affinity spaces where expertise, stimulation, and point of view come free" (Knobel and Lankshear, 2005, p. 92). Exchanging thoughts about music certainly promoted my own evaluation of these 'texts,' but little did I know that various scholars had endorsed the analysis of media texts long before I was born (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972/2001; Hebdige, 1979). French poststructuralist Jacques Derrida, for example, redefined the notion of 'text' to include all social practices and products that lend themselves to being read, interpreted, picked apart or deconstructed, thus challenging the notion of any set structure constituting literature (Eagleton, 1996, p. 116). Also, more recent work on twenty-first century literacy skills (Buckingham & Sefton Green, 1994; Gee, 2003; Kress & Jewitt, 2003; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005) shows that the twenty-first century demands that a literate person also possess a wide range of abilities and competencies in reading and writing using a variety of media. This paved the way for my own study of media texts in a traditionally print-based literature class, the aim of which I present here.

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[4] The Ejército Popular Boricua-*Macheteros*- is a clandestine organization founded in 1978, whose aim is to achieve the political and economic independence of Puerto Rico. They were led by Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, who was assassinated by the FBI on September 23, 2005, because of his alleged robbery of millions of dollars from the Wells Fargo bank in Connecticut in 1983.
[5] *the abuse of power*

While pursuing graduate studies, I was able to participate in a teaching assistant program at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez (UPRM), and was assigned total responsibility for preparing and teaching ENGL 3202: Composition and Reading II. Taking my previous experiences into consideration, I believed my students might also fruitfully participate in reading processes that went beyond the use of print-based texts. I therefore decided to explore the media reading practices that students in the particular context of western Puerto Rico engaged in while analyzing rock music, as well as self-selected music. In order to do so, I created a two-part narrative unit in which students would read print-based texts as well as media texts, drawing particularly upon multimodality and critical media literacy. According to Lewis, "these fields are themselves interdisciplinary, drawing as they do from cultural studies, feminist studies, and critical theory," (1999, p. xi). Thus, in this study, I use the concept of multimodality as a theoretical framework to justify the use of media texts in English Education in Puerto Rico, and also employ multimodal analysis to explore my ESL students' interactions with multimodal media texts in comparison to their interactions with monomodal texts. I chose this kind of approach because I believed it might interest students in media in ways that rock interested me while growing up and also help make learning English more enjoyable and meaningful for them.

The course addressed in this study is an undergraduate English course at UPRM. It is a literature-based composition course, the fourth and last one that students who enter the university in the "Basic English Track" take.[6] The current policy for student placement at UPRM is that students who score less than 570 points on the English section of the College Board Entrance Examination are placed in the Basic English track. This track consists of two Basic English courses taken during their first year of undergraduate studies and two composition courses taken

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[6] The students who score 420 points or less in the English section of the College Board Entrance Examination are required to take a pre-basic course, which causes variation in their age and the semester that they take the subsequent required English courses.

at any point thereafter. The course under study was the second part of the English Composition and Reading courses (ENGL 3202), offered in the fall semester of 2008. The official description of the course provided in the university catalogue is: "Practice in writing compositions and making oral reports upon selected readings, including essays, short stories, poems, dramas and novels. Attention will be given as needed to grammar and idiomatic expressions" (2007, p. 152). Although the context of this study is the second of two composition courses that have the same general description, the first focuses mostly on the analysis of academic essays and the writing of different rhetorical essays, while the second focuses primarily on the reading and analysis of literary texts, using writing as the basis for evaluation.

Research questions

In this study, I specifically address students' multimodal critical media literacy practices with music and music videos, taking into consideration the social context of the study. Through participant observation, document collection, and interviews I was able to explore students' interactions with multimodal texts, as opposed to monomodal print texts; media texts, as opposed to 'traditional' literature; and rock music, as opposed to more traditional 'Puerto Rican' musical genres. My aim was to address the following questions, in reference to ESL college students in an English course in western Puerto Rico:

1) What modalities do students rely on for meaning construction while engaging with print-based and audiovisual texts?

2) How do students read multimodal media texts in comparison to monomodal print texts?

3) What are the different reading and writing practices that students engage in while interacting with rock music and videos, and subsequent to such activities?

I answer question 1 in Chapter IV by discussing the broad variety of modes used by students to respond to the material studied in class, as compared to those usually used in classes which focus exclusively on the production of print-based texts. When analyzing students' interactions and their productions of multimodal texts in response to the material studied in class, I pay specific attention to the four domains of practice in communication that Kress and Van Leewuen (2001) describe: design, production, discourse, and distribution. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the data collected in this study about the different modes used by students confirms the claims made by theorists of multimodal approaches about how these can expand the ways in which students construct meaning in an English classroom. The discussion is presented following the events of the class chronologically, focusing on how students 'read' music outside of class, their course work, a 'Reading Rock' series, and their own multimodal productions.

Following the same chronological order, I answer question 2 in Chapter V, but applying critical media literacy concepts. In order to do this, I first discuss the idea of critical media literacy employed by critical media literacy theorists Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) who see reading as a social process in which the construction of meaning is influenced by factors that are different in the case of each reader. I then discuss how the different social and individual interactions with texts, reading profiles, reading histories, and reading positions of students in the class shaped their reading practices and the ways that they responded to the texts studied. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the data collected in this study about how students responded critically to the texts studied confirms Buckingham and Sefton-Green's idea that meaning is constructed in social context, and shows the ways in which the use of different modes affected the kinds of readings students engaged in.

Although I present my reflections on question 3 in both Chapter IV and Chapter V, I provide a thorough discussion of this question in Chapter V by examining how students responded to rock texts in a variety of ways. As Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) propose, the ways students read and understand texts occur in a social context, and are subject to many different factors which include not only the particular modes used but also the specific content and the cultural associations particular texts may have for them. Given this, it was important to understand the different ways in which students in this particular class responded to the specific rock texts studied.

In addition, because this study is a participatory action research project guided by a poststructuralist paradigm, I examined how my own subjectivities shaped my findings by addressing the following research question in Chapter VI:

4) What are my perceptions of multimodality and critical media literacy before, during, and after exploring these concepts in a literature-based composition course in a higher education institution in western Puerto Rico?

At this juncture, I briefly describe the type of research I take up and follow this description with an overview of the principle notions posed by each of the theories that I adopted while engaging my research questions.

Research framework

There have been recent claims for the consideration of globalization in cultural investigations (Barbero, 2000), offering "new ways of looking inward and outward at the same time" (Denzin, 2007, p. xii). Taking into consideration globalizing trends in music, specifically focusing on the local context of Puerto Rico, I opted for an action research framework, which fosters the study of social interactions in a particular context with the intention of improvement,

while being present and aware of the process (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994; Creswell, 2005; Glesne 2006; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). In this case, the improvement that I sought was students' reading practices opening up to critical considerations of media texts, as these are texts they interact with in their daily lives which they are not encouraged to analyze as part of their academic studies. Furthermore, my being present and, of course, aware of the research process, allowed me to take into consideration the multiple and potentially contradictory expectations I may have had, and how these played out in the classroom, as well as in the analysis and interpretation of this study.

I then documented the results of using multimodal media texts, specifically in a western Puerto Rican ESL pedagogical context, with the explicit intention of improving my own teaching practices as well as students' multimodal media literacy. Therefore, the implementation of this unit can be classified as participatory action research. At present, many of the language policies informing literacy teaching and learning are based on quantitative research derived from positivist, objectivist paradigms. A significant example of this is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Public Law 107-110, which led to the implementation of educational standards that aim to comply with such policy mandates,[7] thus promoting the study of phonemic aspects of English to improve reading practices, while dismissing or marginalizing other possible approaches to literacy development (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007).

In contrast to the quantifiable, scientific-based studies that are used to determine language education policies, this study adopts a qualitative participatory approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation, by examining a small sample of students involved in

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[7] Through critical discourse analysis, Mateu Zayas (2007) examined how *No Child Left Behind* was implemented in Puerto Rico under the George W. Bush administration in 2001. This federal policy is perceived in Puerto Rico as having "far-reaching implications that redirect the course of education in Puerto Rico by imposing policies through a process that has not been participatory and has not been a result of locally informed initiatives" (p. 109).

literacy and language-based activities in an undergraduate English classroom. Thus, to understand the language practices of contemporary Puerto Rican college students as these are enacted in their interaction with English language media, I engaged in qualitative participatory action research design, which I thoroughly discuss in Chapter III, with a group of students from UPRM. To analyze these practices, I used a theoretical framework that encompassed multimodality and critical media literacy, while adopting a poststructuralist paradigm to examine my own subjectivities, biases, assumptions, and claims.

Multimodality

Considering that in English Education in Puerto Rico, the norm in literature-based courses is to use print-based texts (Caroll, 2005; Comisión de Educación, Ciencia y Cultura, 2001; Rodríguez-Bou, 1966), I decided to use multimodal texts in my own teaching because this can expand the ways in which students learn. Recent theories emphasizing individuals' literacy practices and processes of meaning-making call for the consideration of other kinds of texts, including media texts that students are prone to engage within their daily lives (Gee, 2003; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; New London Group, 1996; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). 'Multiliteracy,' a term coined in 1996 by a group of scholars referring to themselves as *The New London Group,* addresses the multiple ways in which meanings can be made. Inspired by their observations of diverse groups of students in contemporary classrooms, as well as by the phenomenon of globalization and the proliferation of new technologies, the group proposed that there are "modes of representation much broader than language alone," (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p.5) including the visual, audio, spatial, gestural, and multimodal.

The concept of multimodality, specifically, involves the use of more than one mode of representation, for example, audio-visual, and spatial-gestural among other combinations. As

Jewitt and Kress explain, "multimodality focuses on the modal resources that are brought into meaning-making" (2003, p. 5). Scholars of multimodality, then, are interested in ways in which different modes are present in different communicative events and how these might contribute to learning. This calls for attention to non-print based texts and the study of multimodal communicative events in the English classroom. Kress and Van Leeuwen note a shift "towards a view of multimodality in which common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes, and in which it is therefore quite possible for music to encode action, or images to encode emotion" (2004, p. 2). The latter description specifically refers to the multiple ways in which music and image are used in the media, which are the texts I focus on in my study.

A number of scholars have already integrated the kinds of media texts that I used in my study - music and video - in other studies of multimodal literacy. These studies have focused on meaning-making processes that do not rely solely on print-based texts, but rather on multiple modes, such as films, songs, and drawings. Burn and Parker (2003), for instance, studied a project that was carried out in an English film school, where students created a short film about a common folktale. They analyzed the students' productions taking the multimodality of the film into consideration by looking closely at characteristics such as the angles the students' used, their drawings of characters, the duration of the action, and the music and other audio effects they integrated. The authors recognized that each characteristic, including music, played an important role in what the students wanted to portray and that the multimodality of the text provided many opportunities for exploring students' interpretations of the story.

Additionally, scholars subscribing to New Literacy Studies perspectives propose that one has to see "literacy as a social practice," and that multimodality "opens up meaning-making to a multiplicity of modes" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006, p. 1). For instance, Stein and Slonimsky's

research (2006) emphasizes the multimodal literacy practices of three Johannesburg families. The authors found that although all three families came from different socioeconomic backgrounds, they all participated in a "multilayered combination of the use of spoken and written language, sound, image, gesture, body and space" (p. 123). The fact that these studies are situated in different parts of the world, motivated me to pursue this line of inquiry in the Puerto Rican context, where no studies to date have adopted the perspective of multimodality. In Chapter IV, then, I focus on the modes that students rely on for meaning- making as I analyze the various kinds of multimodal work they produced in my class.

Critical media literacy

Following the notion that there are various modes that might contribute to meaning-making (Burn & Parker, 2003; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2003; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2004; New London Group, 1996; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006), which would serve as a basis for a reconceptualization of the reading, analysis and interpretation of texts, it can be argued that media texts might prove particularly useful for this process. According to Ofcom, a communication agency in England, media literacy refers to "the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts" (Buckingham, 2004, p. 5). In this section I therefore provide a justification for using media texts in the English classroom, while refuting arguments made against such practices.

Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) found that some teachers have opposed the use of media texts in an English classroom as an alternative to traditional print-based literature claiming that the media have a seductive effect and might morally corrupt or otherwise affect students with the blatantly racist, sexist or consumerist ideologies that they promote. Such opponents believe students are "powerless to step back or resist: 'reading' or making sense of media texts is

regarded as an automatic process, in which meanings are simply imprinted on passive minds"
(Buckingham & Sefton Green, 1994, p. 17). The idea is that students are incapable of making
critical readings of the texts that they interact with, or that they exclusively perceive these texts
as "entertainment" (Rockler, 2002).[8]

I, on the other hand, share Buckingham and Sefton Green's view that "young people are,
on the contrary, extremely active, critical and sophisticated 'readers' of popular media" (1994, p.
18). From this perspective, they conducted their own study of students' interactions with
different kinds of media texts, such as television, films, newspapers and magazines. Similarly, I
want to "move away from a notion of reading as merely a matter of individual 'response,' and to
redefine it as part of a broader process of social circulation" (p. 18). In other words, my research
is based on the premise that students are able to make meaning out of media texts, and that these
meanings are produced, circulated and negotiated via distinct social processes and in particular
social contexts.

Sefton Green also argues that the notion of the media having simple effects on young
adults "restates a transmission view of pedagogy,[9] while more complex figurations of processes
of meaning-making by active audiences echo ideas about work done by learners in the
construction of their learning" (2006, p. 282). In doing so, he is arguing that students are not
passive recipients of received knowledge but rather active constructors of their own knowledge.
This scholar therefore recognizes that students have the capacity to be critical readers of the
media and that these meaning-making skills can be used and developed in both educational

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[8] It must be noted that Puerto Rican audiences have been recently referred to as "passive" and even fatalistic"
(Álvarez Curbelo, 2006, p. 7).
[9] This transmission view of pedagogy is termed the 'banking concept' by Freire (2000). In it, students are conceived
of as empty recipients in which teachers deposit 'knowledge'. Freire notes that "the more students work at storing
the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their
intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (p. 261).

contexts and sites of learning outside of school. This points to the importance of asking students about their real experiences of listening to rock and other music and videos in a Puerto Rican context in order to assess their critical media literacy.

The notion of being critical, particularly in educational circles, derives from critical pedagogy perspectives that characterize transformational pedagogy, and were developed in the seminal work and writings of the Brazilian scholar Paolo Freire. Even though there are many notions, such as the idea of *praxis* or learning through exercise and reflection that are contemporarily influenced by his work and applied in education literature, recent scholars have problematized the concept of being critical in the Freirian sense, where there is no explicit recognition of students' previous capacities. Buckingham and Sefton Green, for example, argue that being critical should not be seen as "a higher state of grace into which the elect are received. On the contrary, it is a social practice which takes place within specific social contexts and relationships" (1994, p. 208). It is important, then, to consider the contexts in which students are critical and how these instances occur, or are provoked.

MTV and VH1 are popular television channels in Puerto Rico (Lloréns, 2008), and as my research demonstrated, Puerto Rican students are familiar with, and able to think critically about, media texts like the videos on these channels. As Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) suggest, teaching media texts promotes critical media literacy by encouraging students to think about issues such as the relationships between cultural identities and musical preferences. Because cultural dynamics influence how students read and respond to texts, relationships between cultural identities and musical genre preferences, as well as representations of class, race, and gender were addressed in this study (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the content of the unit).

There are previous studies that focus specifically on Puerto Rico, which suggest that Puerto Rican students are disposed to engage in the kind of critical analysis of media texts that addresses issues of race, class, and gender. Arévalo, for example, has shown that the distribution of rock in Puerto Rico follows particular race and class markers, noting how "lower-class Afro-Puerto Ricans generally embraced salsa, while young, white teens were drawn to the ideologies of North American folk-rock singers" (2004b, p. 95). On the other hand, while Flores encourages the study of what are considered "traditional roles and life-choices" (2009, p. 3) in terms of gender, other scholars argue that although Puerto Ricans do "classify each other racially, or … act according to the racist implications of such classifications, … such classificatory practices are not consistently or permanently verbalized as pertaining to fixed racial identities" (Godreau, 2008, p. 8) which can also be applied to gendered identities. Thus, while these are salient issues that Puerto Rican students might be interested in discussing, their positions around such issues are not fixed or representative of the entire Puerto Rican population. In Chapter V, I present descriptions of this particular group of students' explorations and ideas in relation to these issues in their course-related work, and analyze their statements considering what previous studies suggest about politics around music preference, class and racial discussions, and gender identities.

Poststructuralist paradigm

A poststructuralist paradigm guides this study in several ways. First, poststructuralism is used here as it is used in literary theory, to broaden the definition of a text to include not only literary texts but also texts from popular culture or daily life, as well as to posit that texts have no determinate meaning. In other words, the author does not determine meaning, instead it is constructed by the reader from his or her own particular perspective (Eagleton, 1996). Second,

these assumptions about the nature of texts inform the way I interpret the data collected in the study. The poststructuralist notion of subjectivity is relevant for discussing students' reading processes because it enables me to describe the meaning-making processes of students "not as singular and fixed, but rather as multiple and constantly changing [which in turn suggests that] identity is seen to be constructed at least partly through and in relation to the 'subject positions' that are embodied in discourse" (Buckingham & Sefton Green, 1994, p. 30). Third, poststructuralist assumptions about how textual meaning is constructed influenced the strategies I used to teach the texts studied in class. In order to study the students' meaning-making practices, I encouraged them to analyze texts individually at first, and then in group discussions, noting how each student's multiple subjectivities came into play.

The poststructuralist paradigm I adopt "assumes that language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one's sense of self - one's *subjectivity*- is constructed" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961). Since this analysis is written from my own perspective, while studying language use by others, I aimed at recognizing subjectivities that may influence the study, including my own, as these are always present and are constructed via language. Weedon (1997) also recognizes that in poststructuralism, "the common factor in the analysis of social organization, social meanings, power and individual consciousness is *language*" (p. 21).

In describing aspects of language, poststructuralists believe that we need to understand how it defines us, as much as we define it, and how we are born into specific languages that we think we control (Marshall, 1992, p. 7). Finally, Richardson promotes the use of poststructuralism for qualitative research because it helps researchers understand "ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times … [freeing] us from

trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone … [thus] writing is validated as a method of knowing" (p. 962). A specific awareness of language use is thus helpful both in the study as well as in the description of the social practices I study, my own teaching and the students' various readings of monomodal and multimodal texts, which I explore in depth in Chapter VI.

Simply put, "the term post-structuralism is used for a broad range of theoretical discourses in which there is a critique of notions of objective knowledge and of a subject able to know him or herself" (Culler, 1997, p. 125). Thus, this qualitative participatory action research aims to explore the students' readings of media texts in terms of: the modes students rely on for meaning making about monomodal print-based texts and multimodal media texts; their 'critical' interactions with media texts; their musical preferences and how these can be related to their multiple subjectivities. Drawing on poststructuralist tenets, then, I argue for the need to take into consideration the social contexts and individual subjectivities involved and negotiated in the research process, as these provide insights into the different ways the research can be interpreted.

In this introductory chapter I aimed to present the problem under investigation and the theoretical frameworks with which it is studied and analyzed. In the following chapter I contextualize the development of English Education in Puerto Rico, and provide a brief historical synopsis of music and television media in the country, specifically focusing on the development of rock in comparison to other musical genres.

Chapter II: Contextualization

Traces leading us here

By historicizing the ethnographic relation, the reflexive presence of the writer may help contextualize cultural practice and dramatize the coexistence and interpenetration of historical periods, stages, and generations. While crossing multiple social spaces, the writer ignites associations across time not immediately visible at the site of cultural activity, yet latent as meanings and indispensable to its conceptualization. (Flores, 2000, p. 21)

It is important to historicize English Education policies and the particular relevance of media in English Education in Puerto Rico in order to contextualize my study's contributions to the areas of multimodal theorizing and media studies. A brief overview of music and television in Puerto Rico will contribute to the reader's understanding of the roles that these have played in the acquisition of English language and related cultural influences. Also, the description of the presence of the musical genre of rock in Puerto Rico is in dire need of being documented, as few scholarly works address it (Arévalo, 2004a; Arévalo, 2004b; Giovannetti, 2003). Lastly, a discussion of the ways that media have been and might still be integrated into English Education curricula in the island may illustrate the relevance of music and videos in relation to the design and development of multimodal curricula for English courses, thus contributing to media studies in - and from - Puerto Rico.

English language education, at all educational levels in Puerto Rico, falls short of acknowledging and engaging with culturally important art forms and phenomena, such as music and video, which hold meaning and interest for students. In the fall semester of 2008, when this study was carried out, there were few classes at UPRM that engaged with media, and only a limited number of students could actually take these. Some classes were offered as part of the university's Film Certificate. A few others were offered as English Department electives that students from the Intermediate and Advanced English tracks could choose to take after completing an initial year of required courses. On the other hand, students from the Basic

English track never have the opportunity to engage with these kinds of texts. Their four required courses focus exclusively on reading print-based literature and writing academic essays. This is unfortunate because, if studied in a classroom setting, media texts can expand the ways that students are able to read, reflect upon, interpret, and understand these kinds of texts outside the classroom. In this study, in order to justify this claim, I particularly focus on rock and roll music and videos, as well as other kinds of music and videos that could be taught in English classes, Toward this end, in the following section I briefly trace the historical development of the English language in Puerto Rico, as well as the roles that rock and other media have played in this process, from 1898, when Puerto Rico became a part of the United States, to the present day.

A look back in time: The politics of English Education in Puerto Rico

> *In Puerto Rico, everything is seen in the context of status politics.*
> *(De Jesús, 2008, p. 195)*

A synopsis of the uses of media in Puerto Rican English Education will prove helpful in contextualizing the study given new elaborations of English as a "translocal language, a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 6). But before dealing with media specifically, I will first discuss the detrimental effect that inconsistent policies influenced by changing political agendas have had on the teaching of English on the island. As a territory of the United States since 1898, Puerto Rico has endured the presence and influence of English in its political, social and economic relations, and education has played a central role in facilitating this process. However, there have been many problems with the ways English has been taught.

Historically, relationships between languages, national cultures, and nationalist discourses are tightly interwoven. Puerto Rico is not an exception. After four centuries of colonial rule under Spain, Puerto Rico was occupied by the United States during the Spanish-

American War in 1898 and has "remained a colonial dependency, even though it attained a limited form of self-government as a commonwealth in 1952" (Duany, 2002, p. 1). Puerto Rico's political status makes language preferences and use an ongoing and contentious issue for Puerto Ricans, with Spanish being the imposed vernacular for four centuries prior to the occupation by the United States in 1898, after which English was imposed to a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, adherents of distinct political parties in Puerto Rico make claims for either *both* the English and Spanish languages, or one or the other exclusively.

The view that this language tension may only be resolved with the final resolution of Puerto Rico's political status has been expressed by various scholars studying English Education in Puerto Rico (Algrén, 1987; Rodríguez-Bou, 1966). Others recommend a change in language policy as the clear solution for the language debate, without dismissing the relevance of politics (*Comisión de Educación, Ciencia y Cultura*,[10] 2001; Negrón-Muntaner, 1997; Mazak, 2008). One thing is certain: throughout Puerto Rico's history English has been embraced and rejected to varying degrees, yet it has slowly but undeniably made its way into the daily life of Puerto Ricans in a wide array of media.

For some nationalists "the defense of the Spanish language and other icons of the Hispanic heritage has the practical advantage of uniting the Puerto Rican people against a common foe: U.S. imperialism" (Duany, 2002, p. 14). On the other hand, recent language studies in Puerto Rico show how "English literacy practices [are] wound up in global capitalism, in terms of their relationship to commodities of popular culture, and in institutions, in terms of interacting with the federal government and schools" (Mazak, 2008, p. 69). Thus, English, as a 'translocal' and 'fluid' language, is not exclusively fixed to a political agenda, but is also embedded in globalizing popular culture practices as well.

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[10] *Commission of Education, Science and Culture*

Notwithstanding, according to renowned anthropologist Jorge Duany, "after more than one hundred years of U.S. colonialism, the island remains a Spanish-speaking Afro-Hispanic Caribbean nation" (2002, p. 1). It can be inferred that this situation has been caused by the struggles of numerous political figures to save 'the' Puerto Rican culture from the influence of the imperialistic English-speaking United States. Even Luis Muñoz Marín, the first elected governor of Puerto Rico in the 1950's who formalized ties with the United States, cautioned that institutionalizing the use of English could turn Puerto Ricans into "*semilingües en dos idiomas*"[11] using "*una mezcla de lenguas superficial y empobrecida*"[12] (Muñoz Marín, 1955, 1985, as cited in Roamé Torres 2008). The governor's fear, shared by subsequent defenders of Spanish as the official language, was that Puerto Ricans would become "a race of *tartamudos*,[13] unable to communicate either in English or Spanish" (quoted in Negrón-Muntaner, 1997, p. 270).

However, throughout history, there have been a series of amalgamations of the several languages spoken in Puerto Rico that have created particular manifestations of language. In his analysis of language use on MySpace.com, a popular social network on the Internet that is widely used in Puerto Rico, Carroll (2008) claims that the "language maintenance of [Puerto Rican Spanish] has been highly successful because of Puerto Ricans' acceptance and creativity in embracing new forms of expression" (p. 109). Therefore, instead of a race of stutterers, there is a description of a particular kind of Spanish, i.e. Puerto Rican Spanish, which includes vocabulary that is derived from the different cultures that have historically coexisted in Puerto Rico, be they Taíno,[14] African, European (Spanish, Canary Islander, Corsican, German) or Caribbean (including Cuban, Dominican, and Haitian, among others). Most recently, North

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[11] *Semilinguals in two languages*
[12] *A superficial and impoverished mix of tongues*
[13] *Stutterers*
[14] The pre-Columbian indigenous population of Puerto Rico

American cultures have also had an undeniable influence in Puerto Rico. The fact that Puerto Rico has been a colony throughout its recorded existence means that, "its destiny was [and still is] linked to the political movements and changes of both countries," (Rodríguez-Bou, 1966, p. 155) first Spain and then the United States. Not only does this apply to politics, but it also applies to educational policy decision-making that dictates how language is integrated in schooling.

Education and politics go hand in hand, and this was very much the case with the United States' occupation of Puerto Rico. Throughout the twentieth century, every political change has resulted in educational policy reforms. This began with Victor Clark, the first Commissioner of Education in Puerto Rico appointed by the United States government in 1898, who argued that there was no official language in Puerto Rico since:

> […] a majority of the people of this island does [*sic*] not speak pure Spanish. Their language is a patois almost unintelligible to the natives of Barcelona and Madrid. It possesses no literature and little value as an intellectual medium. There is a bare possibility that it will be nearly as easy to educate this people out of their patois into English as it will be to educate them into the elegant tongue of Castille. (Clark, as cited in Rodriguez-Bou, 1966, pp. 157-158)

Clark thus justified the implementation of one unifying and mandatory language and culture to pursue the goal of "Americanization." Notwithstanding, with the Foraker Act of 1902, both English and Spanish were established as the languages of the government of Puerto Rico (Comisión de Educación, Ciencia y Cultura, 2001). Upon his arrival, Clark's assimilationist stance led him to enforce English as the exclusive language of instruction (Rodriguez-Bou, 1966). Then, in 1901, Martin Brumbaugh reinstated the teaching of Spanish, but promoted the extension of English through an obligatory American patriotism in schools, such as saluting the

United States flag and singing its anthem among other patriotic songs (Malavet, 1987). Roland P. Falkner, who became Commissioner in 1904, was known for intense and strict testing of English teachers that led to simplification of curricula and reliance upon textbooks, while Edwin Grant focused on rural schools and, like Clark, on the implementation of English as the only medium of education when he took the post in 1907 (Pousada, 1999).

Before Paul G. Miller took the position of Commissioner in 1912, there were several bills requesting the inclusion of Spanish. Thus, he implemented a confusing policy in which Spanish was the medium of instruction in elementary grades, with the exception of the fifth grade that combined both languages and established English as the medium of instruction from sixth grade on, with Spanish as a required subject. This was followed by an equally confusing policy by José Padín in 1930, which established Spanish as the medium of instruction until the eighth grade, with English as a special subject, and inverted the role of the two languages for high school. Then, in 1937, Gallardo instituted elementary education in both English and Spanish. Finally, in 1949 Commissioner Villaronga prescribed "Spanish [as] the medium of instruction for all grades of the public school system with English taught as a preferred subject" (Algrén, 1987, p. 10). This last policy prevailed, and is still in effect in the majority of public schools in Puerto Rico today.

Nevertheless, there have been several attempts to change the 'official' language policies based on the interests of specific political parties. With the Foraker Act of 1902, both English and Spanish were legislated as the languages to be used in the government of Puerto Rico, allowing translations and oral interpretations from one language to the other as necessary (Comisión de Educación, Ciencia y Cultura, 2001). This is still the case, although there have been politicized attempts to change this policy.

In 1991, for example, the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD)[15] enacted a law that made Spanish the official language of Puerto Rico. A year after the newly elected *Partido Nuevo Progresista* (PNP)[16] made the elimination of the *Ley de Idioma*[17] a chief item on its agenda and implemented Law Number 1 on the 28th of November of 1993, adding English as a second official language (Comisión de Educación, Ciencia y Cultura, 2001). Negrón-Muntaner (1997) argues that "the signing of each of the laws (Spanish First and English Also) constituted scripted performances that broadened the audience and were intended to consolidate alliances around specific political proposals" (p. 274). I agree that these laws represent components of political agendas that strategically use the language issue to enhance a particular political platform, thus further complicating the scenario for English language education.

The latest attempt to enact language education reform was the *Proyecto para formar un ciudadano bilingüe*,[18] proposed by the controversial Secretary of Education Víctor Fajardo.[19] This was a linguistic-educational plan that aimed to teach sciences and mathematics in English in the elementary grades and to implement public bilingual immersion schools, in which all of the courses would be in English, except for Spanish (Torres, 2008). Moreover, the same administration that implemented the bilingual project also made amendments to an article in the Organic Law of Education that stated that "*la enseñanza se impartirá en español y/o inglés en las escuelas del Sistema*"[20] (Torres, p. 8). Current policy permits using either language in the public school system with no further significant change to the last policy.

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[15] *Popular Democratic Party*
[16] *New Progressive Party*
[17] *Language Law*
[18] *Project to form a bilingual citizen*
[19] During his tenure, Víctor Fajardo encouraged technology use and bilingualism in the public schools, but was subsequently incarcerated for embezzling millions of dollars from the Department of Education.
[20] *Education will be given in Spanish and/or English in the schools of the System*

More than a century after the US occupation of Puerto Rico, the difference in educational opportunities and attainment is still linked to socioeconomic status, and students from public and private schools demonstrate marked differences in language literacy. This is related to the language used for instruction, which in the case of private schools is mostly English. It is also related to marked differences in the qualifications of teachers, as well as the qualities of textbooks and school facilities that exist across private and public institutions (Torres, 2000). These differences often affect the English language proficiency that students acquire by the time they reach the level of higher education.

This overview frames my study inasmuch as the educational stance that guides my teaching is very much aligned with pedagogies that promote bilingualism, despite the absence of any bilingual education program systematically applied to the public schools on the island. I distance myself from the binary divide of one language over another, focusing more on the pedagogical advantages of bilingualism, and even multilingualism, which can be beneficial in an increasingly globalized society. Though I do not ignore how the English language was historically imposed in Puerto Rico, and the contemporary repercussions of such policies, I subscribe to the notion that culture and language are affected by "new technologies and communications [that] are enabling immense and complex flows of people, signs, sounds, images across multiple borders in multiple directions" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 25). As I continue to contextualize this study, I will therefore specifically focus on how media have contributed to English language development in Puerto Rico and how they will likely continue to do so, in light of the scenario depicted by Pennycook.

Media's relevance in English Education in Puerto Rico

The role that the media have played in English Education on the island is generally dismissed or condemned because of the political debates characterized above and the subsequent fear of US cultural imperialism. However, there has been recognition of the ways in which the Puerto Rican media channels have borrowed and adapted tools, distribution networks, and practices from the United States cultural milieu, in order to underscore their relevance for English Education (Rodríguez-Bou, 1966). Thus, media conventions have helped to enhance the ties and extend cultural practices between the United States and Puerto Ricans who have adapted these in their own cultural productions, be those in English or Spanish, or in a hybrid combination of both (Negrón-Muntaner, 1997). Here I provide a brief overview of the roles that English language media have played in English Education in Puerto Rico.

In the 1940's, under the supervision of Commissioner of Education José M. Gallardo, Puerto Rico implemented a program that twelve states in the US had already adopted as an educational tool. The *Puerto Rico School of the Air* was met with apparent success and was supposed to have been permanently established, though this did not ultimately happen. According to Atkinson (1942), the principal aim of broadcasting a series of educational programs on the radio was to "enrich the curriculum of the schools, to add variety to classroom teaching, and to provide students with more zest [*sic*] toward the school day by opening a new world through radio listening" (p. 21). The Department of Education would send instruction sheets for high school students to use while listening to radio lessons in Social Science, English, Arithmetic, and Music Appreciation, among other school subjects. These radio lessons were also intended to serve adults in rural areas, who would gather in groups to listen to WNEL and WKAQ, which were affiliated with the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and National Broadcasting Company (NBC), respectively (Atkinson, 1942). Simultaneously, there was

another educational program being developed, the *División de la Escuela de la Comunidad (DivEdCo)*.[21]

According to Marsh (2003) this program was developed by Luis Muñoz Marín's administration and implemented in 1948 in order to contradictorily promote the ideals of democracy and industrialization, while maintaining, or legitimizing, the cultural traditions and values thought to be particular to the Puerto Rican 'nation,' many of which were indelibly linked to its agricultural history. The program consisted of a series of books, posters and films that would capture "the" Puerto Rican way of life, while incorporating implicit lessons on democratic citizenry via presentations on hygiene, science, and health. Despite the conflicting ideals of some of the artists and intellectuals recruited for the program,[22] which often contradicted the regulating philosophies of Muñoz Marín's government,[23] this was one of the first media projects in which Puerto Ricans were featured.

In addition, referring to the clash of cultures that commenced when the US government imposed the Americanization process described earlier, Rodríguez-Bou (1966) states that this phenomenon may have continued indefinitely into the millennium were it not for the way that cultural productions in Puerto Rico were augmented by movies, radio, and television stations. This period saw the influx of "thousands of records in English (Beatles and all), the imitation of teenage rhythms, and dances, garments, costumes, symbols, and behavior" (p. 199) that the

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[21] *Division of Community Education*
[22] These included René Marqués and Rafael Tufiño, among others.
[23] At the same time that this program was being implemented in the developing Commonwealth, some productions were banned or disapproved. For instance, programs addressing gender, citizenship and specifically, the negative repercussions of immigration were censored. Moreover, the *Ley de la Mordaza*, or the Gag Law was implemented, which criminalized support for Puerto Rican independence (Marsh, 2003).

expanded means of communication made accessible; hence the rejection of United States cultural influences began to weaken due to the media.[24]

The integration of multiple cultural transmissions from one particular place (the United States) was reinforced through several media industries at work in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, Rodríguez-Bou (1966) linked the expansion of media venues in Puerto Rico to the improvement of English Education on the island, and called for better trained teachers who might improve methodologies "by supplementing [their teaching] with programs that avail themselves of new educational media, such as audiovisual aids, radio, television, movies, among other effective means of communication" (p. 271). The stance that the media might support cultural transmission and adaptation, then, was clearly suggested in the mid-1960's through the adoption of media-based technologies and practices in English classrooms in Puerto Rico, in a way which was different from the earlier *DivEdCo* program, which was mostly aimed at Spanish speaking communities.

Some thirty-five years later, Schweers and Vélez (1999) note an even more striking presence of English "U.S. popular culture that made its influence felt in movies, music, cable TV, large chain stores, and mass consumer items" (p. 26). Similarly, in a quantitative study of the resistance towards English among higher education students, Clachar (1997) found that a "sizeable proportion (37.4%) of the subjects preferred listening to American songs, compared to 56.4% who did not" (p. 84). She also states that the majority of students who preferred American songs were from intermediate level courses, implying that the higher the students' proficiency in English was, the lower their interest in Spanish-language media. Clachar's research clearly points to the significant presence and influence of North American popular culture in Puerto

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[24] I must acknowledge here that the United States was not the only country influencing Puerto Rican media. Mexican cinema, for instance, was highly influential, as was Cuban theater, radio and music, among many others.

Rico, which, although not preferred by the vast majority of students, nevertheless plays an important role for many students in higher education.

Contemporarily, the influence of media can be clearly observed in spaces where university students gather between classes. On any given day, when this research was taking place, one could see students walking from class to class with MP3 players, interacting with different media such as cell phones, and sharing music and ringtones with these devices. Many students were also observed using their computers in the hallways to listen to music while doing their homework, surfing the Internet, and taking advantage of social networks such as MySpace. Although I did not record the proportion of English to Spanish language media these students consumed, I think it is safe to say that a mix of English and Spanish could be heard across the campus on a routine basis.

At the same time, there are other sources claiming that there is too much preference for English language media in Puerto Rico. The 2001 *Informe sobre el idioma en Puerto Rico*[25] provides an overview of the way that both languages have been incorporated and perceived in Puerto Rican society and also claims that media do influence English language proliferation. The publication expresses concern over the "*dominio numérico de los canales en inglés en la televisión por cable y … el dominio del cine norteamericano, que ha desplazado casi por completo al cine español, y la difusión cada vez mayor de la música norteamericana, especialmente entre la población más joven*" (2001).[26] It is worth noting that this report was written under the PPD administration, which supports the continuation of Puerto Rico as a

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[25] *Report on language in Puerto Rico*
[26] *Numerical domination of English television channels and, the domination of North American cinema, which has supplanted Spanish cinema almost completely, and the ever increasing dissemination of North American music, especially among the younger population.*

commonwealth of the United States' government, but also the conservation of Puerto Rico's indigenous and Spanish cultures.[27]

Moreover, the view that media have transformed language practices in Puerto Rico is sometimes equated with a lack of Spanish language preservation. Proponents of this stance argue that younger generations of Puerto Rican students aren't able to accurately speak or write in either Spanish or English, "and instead remain stuck to a TV screen, watching and listening in English—thanks to the magic of cable TV— the last hit song of the latest American rock singer" (Maldonado, 1990, as quoted in Negrón-Muntaner, 1997, p. 271). This is a purist view of language, however, that is not consonant with poststructuralist stances that view language as fluid and ever changing.

In contrast, my study is not based on a language policy or pedagogical stance that seeks to impose or privilege a given language. My goal is to better understand the language practices of contemporary Puerto Ricans as these occur in their active interaction with English language media. More recently, Ríos's study of informal style and slang among high school students identified the relevance of the media and the rock genre for students in a Puerto Rican setting (2006). The author recalled her own media practices as a child and acknowledged the role that they played in her development of slang vocabulary. She quotes Eble, who recognizes the importance that music plays in slang dissemination as well. According to Eble, the 1981 MTV debut made song lyrics more accessible to young adults, enabling them to participate more actively in their preferred pastimes, music and television. As Ríos was implementing her

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[27] This party has not focused its conservation efforts on Puerto Rico's African-based cultural heritage, nor considered historical or contemporary overlaps between Afro-Puerto Rican and African-American communities and cultural influences emanating from the United States. Instead, as indicated above, it has focused primarily on indigenous and Spanish-based influences on Puerto Rican cultural heritage.

classroom-based study, her research participants noticed a group of *rockeros*[28] in their school, and were able to interview them as part of their exploration of subgroups in this site. According to Ríos, "the four subcultures that the students repeated the most … were the *cacos*, *rockeros, nerds,* and *popular people*" (Ríos, 2006, p.85). The word *cacos* is recently used to refer to those who listen to reggaetón, a musical genre developed in Puerto Rico and which she recognizes as "a topic about which the students are extremely positive" (p. 86).[29] This is due to the claim that reggaetón started in Puerto Rico, and has since become widely popular in other parts of the world as well, bringing recognition to national artists and art forms.[30]

In sum, there is evidence to suggest that there has been a historical relation between media and the history of English language acquisition in Puerto Rico, even if this phenomenon has not been systematically studied. Evidently, there is recognition of the important role that media have had in cultural transmission and language development. Although there are some discrepancies in the amount of attention that is given to one language or the other, there is agreement, for better or worse, that there is a number of English language media, or a mix of Spanish and English, established in Puerto Rico. While heated debates continue about language use and status in the island, many scholars like Negrón-Muntaner (1997) clearly affirm that, "Puerto Rico is no longer a monolingual nation" (p. 279). Rather, there are complex identities that are much more "*contradictorias, plurales e incluso fluidas que las imaginadas o deseadas por la elite política e intelectual del país*"[31] (Torres, 2008, p. 14). Because of this plurality, more attention should be given to media wherever these are present, with the possibility of exploring

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[28] *Rockers*

[29] The term *caco* means 'bad' in Greek, but it is used to refer to thieves in many countries of Latin America. During the 1980s in Puerto Rico the term was used to refer to young black men from "*caseríos,*" or public housing projects

[30] Critics of English language media should thus take the popularity of this largely Spanish-language musical genre into consideration. If English language media is indeed influential in Puerto Rico, the popularity of reggaetón in Puerto Rico and the United States should not be underestimated.

[31] *Contradictory, plural, and even more fluid than those imagined or desired by the political and intellectual elite of the country.*

such media in educational settings. In the next section I offer a sketch of the development of the music and video media in Puerto Rico's recent cultural history. Considering that Puerto Rico has a very rich and varied musical history, it is important to understand rock and roll in relation to this media history.

Brief history of music and television in Puerto Rico

Because its original indigenous inhabitants and the importation of enslaved Africans under Spanish rule particularly marked the musical history of Puerto Rico, the contributions of each of these groups should be mentioned. However, because numerous studies have already addressed this musical lineage in depth, I will only briefly explain the periods prior to North American presence in Puerto Rico, and then focus more in-depth on this last century specifically.

'Puerto Rican' music

> *Tócame la bomba.*
> *Tócamela bién*
> *Tócame la bomba,*
> *la de Mayagüez.*
> *(Felix Alduen)[32]*

The earliest historical records of Puerto Rico inform us that the indigenous population of the island, the Taínos, used music to announce storms, as a component of healing practices, and for religious and cultural rituals, among many other things. The name they used for their celebrations and oral histories was *areyto*, which combined the collective playing of music and dance. For these they used instruments that are still used today, such as *maracas*[33] and *güiros*,[34]

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[32] *Play me the bomba, play it to me well, play me the bomba, the one from Mayagüez.* Lyrics from traditional bomba music of Puerto Rico. This version of the lyrics hails from Mayagüez, one of the principal cities in the island where bomba developed historically and where it is still practiced today.

[33] Taínos used maracas as percussion instruments, but today they are still used in salsa and other musical genres.

[34] These are made of notched, hollowed-out gourds, and played by scraping up and down the fluting on their surface (MusicofPuertoRico.com).

which were incorporated into some Spanish musical traditions to form what is now referred to as "*música folklórica de Puerto Rico*"[35] (Vega and Malagón, 2001, p. 30).

Among the traditional music that is related mostly to Spanish heritage in Puerto Rico are the *villancicos*,[36] which were later turned into traditional children's rhymes, as well as choirs, *décimas* and *aguinaldos*,[37] which are still associated with distinctive Christmas traditions on the island (Vega and Malagón, 2001). There are other genres as well, either with origins in Spanish music or which have been strongly influenced by these, such as the *danza,* which is now considered a Puerto Rican classical music form, and trios or quartets, which are related to the "old time" music (Vega and Malagón, 2001).

African musical heritage is associated with drums made out of animal skin. A principal musical genre representing this heritage is *bomba*, which contains a song-dance formula that requires several drum players/singers and dancers. Other articles about this genre focus on its importance as a "national music of Puerto Rico" and how it is embraced and promoted by Puerto Ricans of the *diaspora* (Cartagena, 2004; Flores, 2000). Some of the drums used for *bomba* were later adopted by a broader segment of Puerto Rican society to play another important genre, *plena*. Thus, *bomba* and *plena* are usually paired as the musical genres that reflect the island's African heritage. Both genres are appreciated because of their associations with Afro-Caribbean culture, but are frequently marginalized for this same reason. Historically, the dance moves associated with *bomba* were referred to as grotesque and primitive, while the musical contributions of the Taíno and the Spanish have often been held in higher regard (Cartagena,

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[35] *Folkloric music of Puerto Rico.*
[36] Similar to what is referred to as "caroling" in the United States.
[37] The Puerto Rican *décima* is a poem of ten-line verses composed of rhymed isosyllabic lines, which descends from medieval Spanish ballads. The *aguinaldo* and the *décima* are often sung extempore. These songs are usually accompanied by Puerto Rican instruments, such as the *cuatro*, a guitar with ten strings (Puerto Rican Cuatro Project, 1999).

2004). Miller (2004) points out a historical resistance in Puerto Rico to *plena* and other Afro-diasporic phenomena as ingredients of a "national" culture.

Moreover, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, musicians in Puerto Rico began to travel to the United States "*para grabar sus canciones y perpetuar la voz… en las casas disqueras Victor, Columbia, Edison y Gramaphone antes de que éstas instalaran sus casas de grabación en Puerto Rico*"[38] (Ghighliotti, 1992). In that decade, numerous Puerto Ricans ascribed to nationalist perspectives, as Puerto Rico was granted autonomy by Spain on November 9, 1897, which promoted the establishment of what was considered strictly 'Puerto Rican' music (Díaz & Gómez, 1998). However, after the Spanish-American War, North American recording industries actually recruited musicians from across the Caribbean, searching for raw talent. They found composers such as Rafael Hernández, from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, who would participate in an early stage of mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States (Acosta, 2004), as well as other Latin American countries, such as Mexico. This facilitated the cultivation and dissemination of specifically Puerto Rican musical genres that could be distinguished from those of other Caribbean nations, and which had developed well before the arrival of the United States colonial power. In spite of other Latin American influences – the *bolero*[39] musical genre, for example - there were already a number of musical genres that were recognized as typically 'Puerto Rican' prior to the occupation.

Under the United States influence: From "patriotic songs" to rock and roll

Under the direction of the first US Commissioner of Instruction in Puerto Rico, Martin Brumbaugh, public school students were forced to sing "America, Hail, Columbia! Star

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[38] *To record their songs and perpetuate the voice … on record labels [such as] Victor, Columbia, Edison and Gramaphone before these installed their recording studios in Puerto Rico.*
[39] Bolero is a slow and romantic dance music that had its origins in Spain and was taken up by Latin American musicians, such as the Puerto Rican Rafael Hernández, who is recognized for his contributions to the genre.

Spangled Banner *y otras 'canciones patrióticas'*"[40] (Negrón de Montilla, cited in Malavet, 1987, p. 61). Even when the phonograph, radio and jukebox allowed for the rural broadcast of recorded songs by Puerto Rican singers in the educational settings of the 1920's, music used with students was not that of Puerto Rican composers. Indeed, the Commissioner of Education during that period, Juan B. Huyke, specified that "*deberá tocarse y cantarse música patriótica, enseñarse el significado de la bandera Americana y honrarse a la bandera*" (Carta Circular Num. 59, 1921, as cited in Malavet, 1987, p. 62).[41] This is consequence of the previously stated political influences on English education.

Nonetheless, there were other social factors that contributed to the proliferation of musical styles, genres and preferences in Puerto Rico. Specifically, the diaspora of Puerto Rican musicians grew with the passing of the century and with the creation of the *Estado Libre Asociado* (ELA) (Santiago, 1994). [42] This is the case of those artists who first migrated to the US to record their own music, then returned to the island bringing with them musical influences from the many cultures they interacted with in the United States. Moreover, a growing American presence on the island, with the expansion and influence of American military bases across Puerto Rico, marked the 1950's as a period of musical growth and musical hybridity. This process refers to "the transnational circulation of music in (post) colonial contexts. In other words, forms of popular music become hybridized and 'transculturated' as they cross national borders and cultural boundaries" (Aparicio and Jáquez, 2003, p. 8). Duany (2002) argues that "as Puerto Ricans move back and forth between the two countries, territorially grounded definitions of national identity become less relevant, while transnational identities acquire greater

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[40] *…and other 'patriotic songs'.*
[41] *Patriotic songs must be played and sung to teach and honor the significance of the American flag.*
[42] *Free Associated State or Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.*

prominence" in a diasporic *vaivén* (p. 2). [43] More recently, Flores (2009) has focused on the

reverse flow or 'counterstream' resulting from massive circular and return migration (to Puerto

Rico and the Caribbean in general) and the "ongoing remittance of cultural values and practices

through friends, relatives and the media" (p. 4).This illustrates the influence of media in

transcultural flows, including other Caribbean and Latin American countries such as Cuba, the

Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Thomas/St. Croix, Mexico, Panama and Argentina. Given the

focus of my study on Anglophone texts in an ESL class in the particular context of Puerto Rico,

however, here I emphasize those media influences coming from the United States, particularly

radio and, subsequently, television.

A medium through which the public began listening to songs and watching performances

of artists from other places, principally the United States, was the technological innovation of the

50's, television. In 1954, the year that television first broadcast a signal to Puerto Rican

households, there was approximately one television set for every forty-two inhabitants on the

island (Ortiz, 1991). In terms of language, "*la mayor parte de la programación era en español*

aunque WKAQ transmitía 30% en inglés y WAPA el 35%. (Algunos de estos programas tenían

subtítulos en español)"[44] (Ortiz, 1991, p. 244). This made possible the exposure of the Puerto

Rican population to artists from the United States. Emulating shows such as Dick Clark's

American Bandstand, Puerto Ricans started portraying local talent demonstrating their unique

adaptations of the rock and roll genre (Santiago, 1994). Therefore, with the arrival of television

in the 1950's, Puerto Ricans were further exposed to language and musical manifestations from

the United States.

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[43] *Coming and going*
[44] *The majority of the programs were in Spanish, although WKAQ transmitted 30% in English and WAPA 35%. (Some of these programs had Spanish subtitles).*

In the realm of music, the 1960's are referred to as the *Nueva Ola* decade,[45] as it supplanted the "old guard" of traditionally Puerto Rican musicians to promote rock and roll amongst a younger population (Santiago, 1994). Clearly there were strong Anglo-Saxon influences, such as The Beatles, who represented rock and roll internationally and who marketed their band through movies that would particularly draw young females to movie theatres. It was evident that "*el cine era un vehículo más para facilitar la exportación de la Beatlemanía al mundo, tal y como el video y MTV serían para Madonna y Michael Jackson en la década del 80*"[46] (Santiago, p. 186).

Another artist who resonated with Puerto Ricans was the folk rock singer Bob Dylan, who, in the period of the Vietnam War, influenced Puerto Rican artists such as Noel Hernández and Roy Brown to shift from the mainstream artistic scene to the "*canción de protesta*"[47] (Santiago, 1994, p. 315). This musical genre is commonly known as *nueva trova*, or *nova trova,* and has linked Puerto Rican artists to their Caribbean counterparts, such as renowned Cuban musician Silvio Rodríguez. The artists exemplified the international and pan American nature of this artistic movement. This genre is considered a kind of acoustic rock with elements from the traditional *trova*, in which a singer-songwriter plays a guitar and sings in a troubadour style. Its lyrical content, however, is mostly focused on political concerns, such as issues of colonialism and racism. It is still practiced by pioneers such as Roy Brown and Haciendo Punto en Otro Son, along with younger performers like Mike Villegas, Zoraida Santiago and Mikie Rivera, among others.

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[45] *New Wave*
[46] *The cinema was a tool to facilitate the exportation of the Beatlemania to the world, such as video and MTV would be for Madonna and Michael Jackson in the 80's.*
[47] *Protest song*.

As was the case in the United States, these protest songs and those who sang them and listened to them were/are commonly referred to as "hippies." Indeed, in 1971, there was a large gathering of hippies in the Puerto Rican town of Vega Baja for what could be called the "Puerto Rican Woodstock". The 'Mar y Sol International Pop Festival' gathered international artists primarily from the United States and England, including B.B. King, Alice Cooper, the Allman Brothers, Billy Joel, and Rod Stewart (Ramírez, 2008). Although the festival coordinator, Alex Cooley, was faced with many hardships caused by the police, government officials, and the press, the festival was carried out and has been the only music festival to date that was able to draw such a large number of diverse rock and roll musicians from the United States (Ramírez).[48]

The festival was perceived as a disaster by the sensationalist press after various crimes[49] were linked to it. Moreover, in tune with the times, scandalous drug use and uninhibited sexual exploits among other activities considered immoral and unacceptable took place at the event. The hippies were thus perceived as a threat to the conservative values of the period promoted by the nationalist elite (Feliú, 1972), who feared the loss of Puerto Rican culture and identity (El Imparcial, 1972). This official backlash has had ongoing repercussions in the ways that the rock music genre has been perceived by Puerto Ricans who were not participating in the festival but who were consuming the news stories and listening to the official discourses of that particular generation. Besides feeding the negative perception that everything that has to do with the rock and roll music genre is 'evil,' the events that occurred in 'Mar y Sol' may also have provided

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[48] Today, large numbers of Puerto Ricans attend concerts performed by classic rock and roll bands such as the Rolling Stones, Iron Maiden, and Metallica, as well as contemporary acts such as No Doubt, Incubus and The Killers. However, musicians such as these represent particular groups, rather than the wide array of artists presented at Mar y Sol. Although contemporary rock music fans have been requesting that US rock tours, such as Warped Tour, which also feature a variety of rock musicians, come to Puerto Rico, they have not yet been successful in achieving this aim.

[49] Young Americans drowned while trying to surf at the beach adjacent to the area of the festival and a mysterious murder occurred as well.

recurring excuses for those who are already biased against this musical genre and prefer genres more widely recognized as "authentically Puerto Rican".

The "new" Puerto Rican music

Mi gente. ¡Ustedes!
(Hector Lavoe)[50]

Although there was undoubtedly already a following for rock music and musicians on the island in the 1960's, there was also another prominent musical movement growing at the same time, which would thoroughly permeate Puerto Rico's musical trajectory. Berríos-Miranda (2004) describes salsa music as an expressive form of liberation and decolonization for Puerto Ricans in the 1970's. She argues that:

> Salsa's unprecedented international popularity resulted from the confluence of several distinct social conditions and historical events: the Puerto Rican dilemma of colonial status, the civil rights and black pride movements in the U.S., the Cuban revolution's promise of upliftment for the lower classes, urban migration, and the need for a Latino alternative to the hegemony of Anglo rock. (p. 159)

While she does not explain the hegemony of Anglo rock, or how it was manifested in Puerto Rico, she proposes several reasons why salsa was and still is strongly identified with a connection to Latin American populations, especially in Cuba and Puerto Rico. As Flores and Valentín-Escobar (2004) admit, "for vast audiences around the world, including Puerto Rico, Cuba, Latin America, and the Latino communities in the U.S., Latin music has come to be virtually equated with salsa" (p. 5). It is revealing, for example, that nine of the seventeen articles published by the *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* - in the second volume of a two part series dedicated to music from the 1950's to the present - focus exclusively on salsa. In addition, numerous other scholars have emphasized the cultural importance of this

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[50] *My people. You!* From "My People" by renowned salsa singer Hector Lavoe.

musical genre (Aparicio, 1988; Duke, 1992; Rondón, 1980; Quintero, 1998). The emphasis on

this 'Puerto Rican' genre has resulted in the on-going marginalization of other musical genres,

such as rock in Puerto Rico, which continue to go undocumented in scholarly journals, as noted

in Chapter I.[51]

Berríos-Miranda (2004) explains how "salsa's message of anti-imperialism and race and

class consciousness" was threatening and gradually evolved into a preference for the "safer"

salsa romantica.[52] This "kind of censorship" explained by the laws of "supply and demand" (p.

171) responded to the commercialization of the music industry, which expanded in the late 80's.

However, as the commodification and distribution of salsa as a less politicized, mainstream

genre took root, another musical revolution began to surface in the same decade: hip hop.

Raquel Rivera published in 2000 the groundbreaking text *New York Ricans from the Hip*

Hop Zone with the goal of "highlighting and celebrating Puerto Rican contributions to the

development of hip hop art forms; explaining how the experience of Puerto Rican hip hoppers is

an important part of history of Puerto Rican culture" and using the groups of New York Puerto

Ricans participating in hip hop to provide an example of the "similarities and shared histories

between 'Latina/o' groups and 'Black' groups" (2007, p. 353). In his book *From Bomba to Hip*

Hop (2000), Juan Flores had a similar aim, though his focus was different: to trace the

similarities between *bomba* and the hip hop movement. Like Rivera, he describes how boogaloo,

a musical collaboration between Cubans and Puerto Ricans, influenced salsa music in the 1960's

in New York. The most recent and documented adaptation of hip hop is Puerto Rican reggaetón,

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[51] While the writers who focused on salsa in the 2004 edition of the Centro Journal presented very specific
perspectives of a particular group of people (Puerto Ricans and others of the generation who grew up listening to
salsa), younger scholars, such as Negrón-Muntaner (2004) with her focus on 'boricua pop' acts like those of Ricky
Martin and Raquel Rivera with her recent explorations of reggaetón (2009), have started to write critically about a
wider variety of Puerto Rican music. At the same time, senior scholars like Flores (2000) are tracing music all the
way from bomba to hip hop, thus particular preferences for specific musical genres are not fixed, or dependent on
age.
[52] *Romantic salsa*

which, as noted earlier, has recently been receiving more scholarly attention (Báez, 2006; Dinzey-Flores, 2008; Lloréns, 2008; Rivera, 2004).

This overview of musical genres, movements, and influences in Puerto Rico, provides examples of what Pennycook (2007) terms *transcultural flows*. These, he indicates, are "the ways in which cultural forms move, change and are reused to fashion new identities in diverse contexts" (p. 6). This concept provides a theoretical framework for my interpretations of rock and English in Puerto Rico. My aim here is to explore how such transcultural flows affect, or are present in Puerto Rican adaptations of rock music, a musical genre which did not emerge from Puerto Rico, but has been embraced and adapted in numerous ways. In the following section I briefly trace how this movement has developed in Puerto Rico.

Rock in/from Puerto Rico

> *Aunque hay, hay una escena, hay una escena, que no come cuento con la mierda comercial.*
> *(Cultura Profética)* [53]

In the absence of a body of literature on rock music in Puerto Rico, I aim to make inroads in tracing the evolution and presence of rock in Puerto Rico from the 1970's through the present, in order to provide a justification for its use in my research. I draw on my own experiences and conversations with rock and roll enthusiasts, video documentaries, and the scarce literature that exists on the subject in order to do so.

As I discussed above, there was a following of rock, with the participation of over 20,000 Puerto Ricans in the 'Mar y Sol Festival' in Vega Baja in 1971. Yet, the fact that Puerto Ricans have been organizing their own rock bands, before and since then, has not been dutifully explored in scholarly literature. There is evidence, however, that in addition to the presence of already established artists, such as Roy Brown with his *nueva trova* or 'Puerto Rican' folk rock,

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[53] *Even though there is a scene, there is a scene, that doesn't give into the commercial crap*. Lyrics by recognized Puerto Rican reggae band Cultural Profética.

since the late 1970's local rock bands would either perform 'covers' (reproduce hit songs by established bands) or compose songs using lyrics in either English or Spanish. Examples of such bands are The Chryslers and The Challengers, who, according to individuals who grew up in the late 1970's, would play throughout the island. Nevertheless, these groups were not heard on air. The popular radio station referred to as KQ showcased top 40 music including rock and popular music from other countries, as well as Puerto Rican artists playing other 'local' musical genres instead.

By the 1980's Puerto Rican 'pop' rock artists who sang in Spanish, such as Menudo and Wilkins, also became successful integrating rock influences in their musical repertoires and achieved international fame. The Menudo phenomenon was one that motivated Latina/o groups to make use of electronic media to disseminate information about the group, which was uncommon for the period, as Rodríguez (1991) perceptively notes. The quickness with which information about the group was exchanged was surprising at the time because of the perception of followers of "rock music, as a quiescent and privatized community" (Rodríguez, p. 163). Nevertheless, these performers were not considered rock musicians but pop groups that merely integrated electric guitar sounds from the rock genre. There were, however, other groups who followed the rock music genre, who were not 'quiescent' about their musical tastes, and who critiqued commercial 'sell-outs' like Menudo and Wilkins.

Intriguingly, tensions between groups with distinct musical genre preferences emerged in this period and are perhaps best exemplified by the social struggle between '*cocolos*', youth who listened to salsa, and '*rockeros*,' those who listened to what was considered an English-only genre. While renowned Puerto Rican writer Rosario Ferré (1996) explores this cultural event in a

fictionalized short story, "Captain Candelario's Heroic Last Stand,"[54] filmmaker and scholar Ana María García (1992) produced a film documentary, *Cocolos y roqueros*, which described this phenomenon. The causes for these oppositions were rooted primarily in political, social, economic and racial suppositions about the rock genre being consumed exclusively by privileged, mostly white, Puerto Ricans (Arévalo, 2004b).[55] In other words, the perceived differences were especially class and race-based, as *cocolos* were thought of as dark-skinned, poor 'Puerto Ricans', while rock was considered a predilection of the upper-class and associated with lighter skinned Puerto Ricans following the style of North American popular role models.

Another notion that surfaced in this era was that if you listened to salsa, you were Puerto Rican-identified while if you listened to rock, you were a *vende patria*.[56] This dichotomy clearly circumscribed the potential limits of expression, or infusion, of Puerto Rican rock (Sabater, 2007). Nevertheless, nowadays "rock is regarded [as] less of a political threat despite its power to express different ideas about nationality and nationalism" (Arévalo, 2004b, p. 94). There are examples of Puerto Rican bands that use this genre to express nationalistic sentiments, as I will further explain below.

In spite of the presence of rock bands since the late 1960's, most of them influenced by international acts from the United States or the United Kingdom, the 1990's mark the 'boom' of *rock en español*[57] in Puerto Rico, according to rock musician Osvaldo (Macoyo) Rodriguez. This may have been caused by a greater exposure to rock bands from Mexico and South American countries, which were commonly heard on Puerto Rican radio stations. After listening to acts such as Maná, Enanitos Verdes, Jaguares, and Aterciopelados, among many others, rock

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[54] This text is also part of my curriculum unit.
[55] The racial categorization of music is also explored/questioned as part of my unit.
[56] A *"sell out"* or traitor who betrayed national cultural values and traditions.
[57] *Rock in Spanish,* as currently defined by contemporary top-40 radio programs.

musicians and enthusiasts were motivated to live out their preference for this genre. Because of a

lack of support from the local media industries, there was, and still is, an underground movement

of rock bands in Puerto Rico. These bands are influenced by bands in other countries, and

simultaneously integrate musical styles from the international scene – punk, ska, metal, hardcore,

emo, alternative, and a wide variety of style combinations. The shows they play have become

known as *la escena*.[58]

As Gómez Álvarez (2007) portrays in his video documentary of the same title, *La Escena*

united different subgenres of rock music and collaborated to form what has become the current-

day presence of rock bands in/from Puerto Rico. Although 'the' scene described in the

documentary is that of the 1990's punk rock scene in the metropolitan area, there were other

simultaneous rock 'scenes' throughout the island that experienced *la escena* differently. While

reminiscing about *la escena*, the interviewees in the documentary refer to the constant evolution

of music and the different subcultures involved in it. Some of the bands that have gone on to

achieve commercial success (like Sol de Menta) started out playing in these underground shows

with different names (Cat Sapphire). At different junctures, they have also changed members and

experimented with distinctive rock sounds.

This is an example of how transcultural flows (Pennycook, 2007) work in a specific

context. In this case, 'boricua rock' (Arévalo, 2004b) draws on other Latin American rock acts

and appropriates them in a very complex process, especially given the US influences already

present in Puerto Rico as a commonwealth of the United States. One of the many interesting

examples of these different interactions, or transcultural flows, is Mimi Maura. According to her

MySpace webpage, Mimi Maura was raised in the return diaspora from Chicago to San Juan. In

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[58] Literally translated as *"the scene"*, this term refers to the numerous rock shows that are organized in which rock music bands from the various subgenres play their music and get together with friends who follow the bands because of their unique sounds. These rock bands use a mix of lyrics in English and Spanish.

her teens she moved to Puerto Rico, where she formed a heavy metal band with her brother, and in the early 1990's formed an all girl band called Alarma! They were the opening act for several recognized Latin American rock bands, such as Maldita Vecindad, Dos Minutos and Fabulosos Cadillacs. She later moved to Argentina where she has collaborated with Argentinian musicians and fused musical movements from reggae and ska, while using both the English and Spanish languages. More recently, she has been traveling back and forth, playing for contemporary rock music followers both in Puerto Rico and Argentina.

Another example of a band that fused different musical elements is Puya,[59] a Puerto Rican band that went on to reach a wider audience by traveling to the United States to record its music. According to Vázquez, "the 1990's also witnessed the emergence of an island-based musical scene of foreign musical genres such as merengue[60] and rock music. The latter is seen in the emergence of groups such as *Puya*" (2004, p. 196, n. 1). Although Puerto Rican mainstream audiences were more receptive to danceable genres such as salsa, merengue and reggaetón, Puya was able to achieve international recognition as a Puerto Rican rock band and its album could be bought in chain stores across the United States. Although this band's success established a milestone for people who belonged to *la escena*, their hardcore sound was not as popular among rock listeners who preferred more commercial *rock en español* acts, as many of them were following the mainstream sounds of other Latin American bands, such as Maná.[61]

Other bands considered 'boricua' rock have also become relatively successful. By using Spanish as the language for their songs and incorporating nationalist ideals and sounds identified

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[59] The band used a combination of English and Spanish in their lyrics, and also fused hardcore rock sounds with the *tambores,* or drums, that were originally used by bomba players.

[60] Merengue has a faster beat than salsa, with a musical lineage from the Dominican Republic, rather than Puerto Rico.

[61] This band, although quite popular in Puerto Rico, was criticized in 2006 when the leading vocalist stated that they introduced rock music to Puerto Rico when the band got together with Puerto Rican promoter Angelo Medina to perform here (Soto, 2006). This is clearly untrue, given the trajectory of rock music I've outlined for this study, though they were indeed one of the more popular bands from *rock en español*'s 'boom' in the 1990's.

with Puerto Rico, Fiel a la Vega[62] became one of the most famous rock bands from Puerto Rico

(Vega and Malagón, 2001). In an acoustic concert, following the style of MTV Unplugged,[63] the

band performed many of their own songs, such as "Salimos de aquí,"[64] but also incorporated and

performed songs with Roy Brown, their own version of Juan Antonio Corretjer's "Boricua en la

luna".[65] This band still plays in important festivals around the island, especially for nationalist

holidays such as the 'Grito de Lares.'[66]

Currently, there are also many popular Puerto Rican rock bands that promote themselves

through underground rock shows and the Internet phenomena of MySpace. On the other hand,

more mainstream rock bands perform in music festivals such as the 'Indie Rock Music Festival,'

which for three years straight has brought together a number of local bands rock bands to

Aguadilla, with closing acts by recognized Latin American rock bands that are considered part of

the *rock en español* movement. There are also a number of Puerto Rican websites such as

Noctambulo.com or Frecuenciarock.com, where rock music followers can find new bands and

information about upcoming shows, be these by North American or local bands.[67] Some of these

local bands have even been nominated in several rock categories in the recently developed Latin

Grammy Awards, as is the case of Circo and Polbo, while other bands like Ícaro Azul and

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[62] The literal translation would be *Loyal to the Farmland*, but it might also signify the group's loyalty to the place where they grew up, which is called *Vega* Baja.

[63] This television program is a televised concert that portrays the featured artists' acoustic versions of their songs, often incorporating famous accompanying artists, which is followed by a separate CD audio version.

[64] *"We're from here,"* a song praising the band members' island-based origins.

[65] This translates as *"Boricua on the moon"*. In this song, which references a famous poem, the musicians proclaim that they would be Puerto Ricans even if they were born on the moon.

[66] September 23, 1868 was the day of the first organized military revolution against the Spanish government in Puerto Rico. Within 24 hours the revolt, which was twelve years in the planning, was defeated by the Spanish government, but shortly after Spain introduced many liberal reforms on the island in terms of slavery, the organization of political parties, among others. Because of this revolt, Lares is known as the birthplace of Puerto Rican nationalism.

[67] There has been commercial support of bands in the different subcultures associated with the rock genre in the past two years in particular. Numerous concerts have been funded by the entertainment business, perhaps because of the growing popularity of Internet based forums, or the creation of Puerto Rican television channels broadcasting a variety of music videos. These phenomena are also relevant topics for further investigation of music production and cultural practices in Puerto Rican society, but unfortunately do not fit within the scope of this study.

Negros Vivos have had exposure in various Latin American countries. These are just some examples of the numerous bands that have had an impact in the development of rock in Puerto Rico.

Implications for English Education in Puerto Rico

This brief synopsis of the historical transmission of musical practices and genres in Puerto Rico makes it evident that with the presence and influence of the United States on the island, there have been many changes that have unavoidably tied elements of American popular cultures to those of Puerto Ricans. The fact that most of the growth in the entertainment business in Puerto Rico occurred in media such as radio, television, and more recently, the Internet, confirms the importance of media in the cultural practices of any setting. These influence and are influenced by the media in different places, as part of the previously described transcultural flows of the globalized society we currently live in. In his previously cited study, Carroll (2008) justifies his choice of studying Puerto Rican language interactions through MySpace because "Puerto Rico ranks highest in Internet usage among islands in the Caribbean, with more than half a million people" (p. 98) and concludes that "as mass media has taken a stronger hold on everyday life on the island, Puerto Ricans have more access to English than ever before" (p. 110). Indeed, my own experiences and those of people I know corroborates Carroll's statement, as we are users of the Internet, specifically social networking websites and YouTube, which we use to share the media we prefer.

Taking into consideration the historical trajectory I provide above, it might be argued that different media have exerted great influences in the development of Puerto Rican English. It can certainly be argued that a hybrid media culture combining elements from various contexts has steadily emerged. It seems logical, then, to incorporate the kinds of media that many students are

already familiar with and enjoy into Puerto Rican English classrooms as an effective teaching

strategy that might contribute not only to pedagogical practice, but to debates about cultural

flows in the contemporary, mass mediated and globalized context.

Chapter III- Methodology

Framing the quest for knowledge

We believe people would be wise to conduct their own research into their own practices and situations.
(Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 600)

It's quality, not quantity

As mentioned in Chapter I, this study employed qualitative research methods. Qualitative methodologies seek "an exploration in which little is known about the problem" (Creswell, 2005, p. 45). In this case, the "problem" was the lack of scholarly studies that explore the integration of the multimodal media texts of rock music and music videos in ESL classes in the particular context of Puerto Rico. Hence, a qualitative framework seemed ideally suited to the study, which sought in-depth understanding of a specific group and context and not general understandings of a large group of participants.

I sought to understand the participants' experiences during the research process (Creswell, 2005), which differs from the quantitative goal of arriving at 'scientific' conclusions without extensive consultation – and even negotiation of research 'conclusions' with research 'subjects.' Indeed, the poststructuralist paradigm that is adopted in this study is one that troubles the concepts of 'subject' and 'conclusion'. Because a subject is not perceived as stable but rather as an entity that "can be reinterpreted, re-stored, reinscribed" (Derrida, 1995, p. 256, as cited in Pillow and St. Pierre, 2000, pg. 7), drawing any final conclusion about one's research 'subjects' is impossible. Citing Butler (1992), Pillow and St. Pierre (2000) suggest that the agency of a subject is not constituted within a discourse or cultural practice, but in its ongoing constitution.

Qualitative research is also known for its frequent "commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 4) because of the different insights that these may provide. In this study this can be observed in terms of the students'

"analysis of the politics of representation and the textual analyses of literary and cultural forms" as well as my own "investigation of new pedagogical and interpretive practices that interactively engage critical cultural analysis in the classroom" (Denzin, 2005, p. xv). In other words, I drew on multiple practices, both multimodal and critical media literacy theorizing, in order to elaborate on the implications these may have for the teaching of English in institutions of higher education in Puerto Rico.

Participating in methodology

The broader methodology that frames this study is participatory action research. According to Anderson, Herr & Nihlen "research techniques and approaches must always be tempered by practice and seen through a filter of one's own environment and needs" (1994, p. 107). It is thus common for researchers who are teachers to use their own educational contexts to conduct research that contributes to the field of learning. This is consonant with the poststructural theoretical framework I adopted for this study, as it encouraged my questioning of conceptions about my immediate contexts, and how those conceptions were formulated. As a graduate student interested in media education, teaching undergraduate English courses allowed me to study media reading practices in my own class and how they might have affected learning processes and outcomes. I therefore adopted the methodological framework of action research, since teachers use this type of study to improve "their teaching and the learning of their students" (Creswell, 2005, p. 53). Likewise, Glesne notes that "action researchers work with groups of people to make organizations, projects, curriculum, etc., 'better'" and that in this kind of research, "your being part of the organization is vital because the research is generally a beginning step in a longer, change-oriented process" (2006, p. 33). This is pertinent as these were the intentions behind the design of this study.

Unlike traditional action research, where an outsider studies a phenomenon and aims to 'represent' others with the aim of improvement (Lovett, 2007), I framed the study as participatory action research, in which participants "have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their *practices*, their *understandings* of their practices, and the situations in which they practice" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 563). It was by participating in the practices under study that I was able to more fully understand the development of the research. It also allowed me to be responsible for its development, as I built the curriculum for the class taking into consideration the research I was about to carry out. These are some of the issues that will be elaborated on in Chapter VI, in terms of the organization of the class, and the power I had as the research designer and as the teacher under study.

Kemmis and McTaggart state that in participatory action research, people can come to an understanding about the ways that "their social and educational practices are located in, and are product of, particular material, social, and historical circumstances that *produced* them and are *reproduced* in everyday social interaction in a particular setting" (2005, p. 565). The social and educational practices that I took into consideration were my own teaching and multimodal media practices as well as my students' engagements with multimodal media texts both inside and outside of the classroom, in an environment where the use of monomodal print-based texts is prevalent. The practices I and my students engaged in were limited by the master syllabi for the course, which dictated the use of an obligatory text. Each semester, hundreds of students are taught ENGL 3202 using a similar syllabus and textbook, and deviations are few and far between. It was after deviating from the norm, i.e. the exclusive use of print-based literary textbooks for composition courses, that I was able to understand this production/reproduction cycle in English classrooms.

While Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) describe many types of participatory action research approaches that have potential applications to my own investigation, I chose to use two of these approaches: *classroom action research* and *critical action research*. My study can be classified as *classroom action research* because it is research carried out in a classroom setting. Kemmis and McTaggart note that this form of action research has often been criticized because it tends to focus on teachers' practical understandings more than on the implications of having such understandings, such as the effects that my research has upon students. However, Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) defend this research practice because it promotes "self reflective research as an essential way of sustaining the notion of teaching as a *profession* rather than merely a system of 'delivery'" (p. 9). This kind of self-reflective exercise is also part of what Kemmis and McTaggart define as *critical action research*, which is a form of participatory action research that "expresses a commitment to bring together a broad social analysis—the self-reflective collective self-study of practice, the way in which language is used" while taking into consideration organization and power in a local context, and employing "action to improve things" (2005, p. 560). This describes what I set out to do in this study, namely improve my own teaching practices while specifically focusing on: the multiple modes in students' use of texts in/around my classroom, their ability to critically analyze traditional print-based literature in comparison to rock and other music and video media, and, finally, their interpretations of cultural issues such as music preference, race and ethnic identities, class, and gender. Thus, these two types of participatory action research best describe the specific approaches taken in my project because of its focus on the classroom, the self-reflective self-study of practice, and my aim of improving my own teaching practices, to contribute to the integration of multimodal media texts in the English classroom more generally.

A feature of participatory action research that is useful for my study is the notion that it can be practiced in community based, or educational settings where "teachers work together (or with students) to improve processes of teaching and learning in the classroom" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 565). In this case, the students were the ones who collaborated with me, by actively participating in the research and occasionally helping out with the various research-related tasks, such as preparing technological equipment. Perhaps their willingness to help was because, as Kemmis and McTaggart have observed, "the 'subjects' of participatory action research undertake their research as a social practice" (p. 563). Although this was not explicitly stated in the consent form that students signed when opting to participate in the study, it might have been implied in the following excerpt (see Appendix B for copy of consent form):

> Among the benefits that may result from your participation in the research is your better understanding of the research process at the undergraduate student level and how it can be used for the improvement of critical reading skills that can support your ongoing academic development as a student. These benefits are in addition to the contributions that this study represents for the theoretical areas of multimodal media literacy and the cultural studies repercussions, which are the foundation of the investigation. These, in turn, argue that engaging in the study of media, and researching these engagements, enriches aspects of your own personal lives.

Thus, the students may have approached the research as a serious endeavor that would contribute to education, the teaching community, and/or their personal lives. On the other hand, it's possible that they had other motives such as having their ideas and work recorded in the study, helping me graduate or simply trying to influence their grades. Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) suggest that students' actions are sometimes influenced by what they think the

teacher might want, as the teacher is their evaluator. Whatever the case may be, there is no way to accurately ascertain the students' motivations.

Because of the collaborative mode I employed, I also tried to create instances in which participants who were affected by the research had "a right to speak and act in transforming things for the better" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 579). I incorporated this into my own research by allowing students to clarify or correct any assumptions I had made about their readings as part of the classroom discussions, as they expressed their opinions of the use of media texts in a literature classroom and, finally, when I asked what they had learned from the experience. Also, as part of the unit, the students had to produce a research project, write an academic essay, and create a multimodal presentation about a particular song or music video that they chose on their own. In addition, as part of my regular teaching practices, I negotiated any amendments done to the class schedule with my students (mostly due to situations out of my control such as hurricanes and strikes).[68] These actions encouraged the students' continued participation in the research process.

Glesne (2005) adds that "practitioners who couple basic research theories and techniques with an action-oriented mode can develop collaborative, reflective data collecting … for their own practices and thereby contribute to the sociopolitical context in which they dwell" (p. 18). Her focus on reflection is also appropriate for the kind of collaborative research I conducted. To explore the 'sociopolitical context' in which this study was conducted, on-going reflection was necessary, and is incorporated in the form of record keeping, a method I will further discuss in the following section. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) also describe the reflective nature of action research, suggesting that the process is a spiral of self-reflective cycles consisting of

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[68] In the fall semester of 2008, classes were cancelled for two days due to hurricane threats, two days for water or power shortages and two days due to a system-wide strike across the various campuses of the university system. These events were followed by weekends or holidays, which also made it necessary to alter the class schedule.

several steps: "plan, act and observation, *reflection*, revised plan, act and observation, and again *reflection*" (p. 564). This was very much the case when I started planning a series of workshops by local rock bands and a rock video documentary presentation by a film professor/rock musician from the institution. From last minute cancellations, to endless locale searching, it required me to engage in this spiral of activity in order to be able to finally make the workshops possible, and to then reflect upon them. Another example of this was the necessary changes made to the lesson plans for course readings and/or class activities based on assessments of the students' interactions with the literary and media texts.

In sum, I used the different kinds of participatory action research reviewed in this chapter to achieve my aim of transforming "both theory and practice" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 568). First, I situated the research in my own educational context and specifically looked at my own, as well as my students' understandings of the social practices of teaching media texts and the students' readings of such texts. Second, although I conducted the research in the classroom, I used a *critical action* research approach characterized by a self-reflective approach to the study of language use which took into consideration issues of organization and power. As practitioner researcher, I believe it is of the utmost importance to consider how the frameworks I used for the development of the curriculum influenced the research and its outcomes. Therefore, before discussing data collection strategies, I provide here a description of the curriculum I designed using the approaches described above.

Research design: Media in my classroom

To study the ways that students read media in an English composition course I had to create and then implement a curriculum in which the media texts could be studied as part of the texts to be read for the class. Although faculty and teaching assistants at the university where I

conducted my study have integrated media that is familiar to students in English courses such as ENGL 3202, which include cartoon episodes, movies, and songs, until now there has been no specific curriculum developed for these exercises, nor has there been any formal assessment of the use of media in English classrooms. Thus there were no local models for the kind of study I undertook, or information from previous studies that could serve as guides for designing the course I taught. The goal of designing the syllabus was to encourage students to understand the languages of media in the same way as they had been taught to understand the language of the literary texts usually studied in composition courses. However, the unit was created around the requirements of the master syllabus to use a literature anthology, focusing on the languages of visual media and music that balanced with the existing literary text. By systematically incorporating media in a literature-based English course for the purpose of this study, then, I was able to explore and evaluate students' interactions with multimodal media texts and their analyses of them. This might provide useful insights, then, for teachers and scholars (of English and other fields) who are interested in multimodality and/or media literacy focusing on Puerto Rico.

As I discussed earlier, the educational views to which I subscribe promote students' acquisition and development of different languages. Due to the constant *vaivén* (Duany, 2002) between the United States and Puerto Rico, however, Puerto Ricans have not only been exposed to a wide variety of languages, but also to signs, sounds and images that emerge from the 'complex flows of people' and media (Pennycook, 2007) referred to in Chapter II. For this reason, the texts to which I exposed students in this study originated from a variety of contexts. The rock music and video texts they engaged with were from the United States, England, and Canada but they also interacted with local rock music groups, who performed songs in both

English and Spanish. In addition, they were asked to analyze a self-selected media text. This text could have been in any language, but they were required to present and write about it in English. Thus, besides interacting with different languages, students also interacted with multiple kinds of media, and were therefore exposed to distinct terminology for each in order to promote their meaning-making and analysis, as illustrated in *Figure 3.1*

Film Terminology

Music Terminology

Print Texts

Video Texts ⟷ Narrative Analysis ⟷ Music Text

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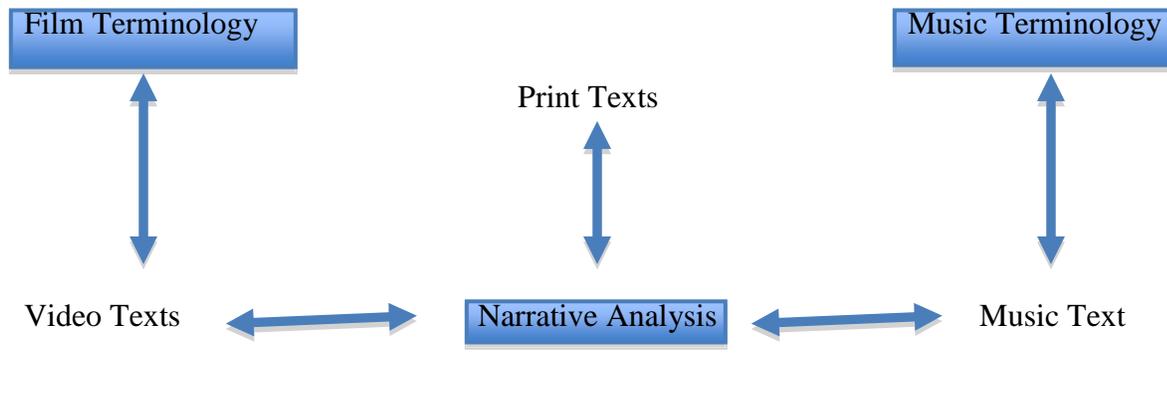
Figure 3.1- Teaching different conventions depending on the kind of text

Considering that students predominantly encounter traditional print-based texts in their formal schooling, but that they also habitually engage with numerous multimodal texts outside of this context, I used a variety of approaches for the study of both kinds of texts in the classroom. The main objective was for students to not only be able to convey the meanings they made in relation to their readings of these distinct texts, but also how they adopted particular opinions about them. For example, a narrative literary approach was used for the study of short stories. However, with the introduction of multimodal texts, specifically music and video, there was an opportunity for students to become familiar with music and film terminology and codes, enabling them to describe their multimodal readings more readily. In other words, I provided students with terminology and analytical frameworks for each of the three categories and, in every one of the three segments of the unit, I required them to apply the relevant terminology and frameworks

to the texts that pertained to that segment. This was done in order to consider how students would use specific discourses to understand the stories presented in traditional print-based texts, music, and videos. Not only did this enable me to compare the different ways that students made meaning in each case, but also to determine the various meanings they constructed.

Narrative terminology was used for the study of print-based texts. Many of the students were already familiar with this terminology because they had been exposed to it in previous years of schooling. Indeed, in Puerto Rico narrative techniques are covered in the English Curriculum Framework (National Institute for Curriculum Development, 2003) as a literary appreciation content standard that is repeated at every grade level. I can personally attest to this repetition of narrative techniques in my own K-12 public schooling trajectory. Taking both the institutional mandate as well as my own experiences into consideration, I agree with the notion that "any educational process has to begin by acknowledging what students already know" (Buckingham & Sefton Green, 1994, p. 117). Thus, my own students participated in a group activity at the start of the unit, in which they demonstrated their 'reading comprehension,' as previous English teachers at all levels of their educational trajectory most likely evaluated it. I will further discuss this in Chapter IV; what is important to mention at this juncture is that the students were briefly re/exposed to narrative analysis techniques in the introductory study of print-based texts.

Narrative terminology was not only used to study short stories, but also in song lyric analysis. Some have argued that songs, like poems, are non-narrative. However, Abbot points out, that even in the lyric poem, which is "pre-eminently a static form – dominated not by a story line but by a single feeling – you will still find a narrative" (Abbot, 2002, p. 2). The same is true of song lyrics. There are songs that are not dominated by a storyline, but there are other songs

that one can construct a plot around. In this case, I was interested in songs for which students could envisage storylines (see Appendix A for a list of the songs used).

In addition to exploring the ways in which students made meaning of and analyzed print-based texts, I also examined how they approached rock music texts. Copland (2002) refers to three planes in which the act of listening to music can be divided: the "sensuous" plane, when someone listens to the music generally focusing on its rhythm; the "expressive" plane, in which the listener focuses on the meaning of the song; and the "sheerly musical" plane, which refers to paying attention to the musical structure of the song, promoting an active kind of listening. In light of this perspective, I actively encouraged students to consider these categories before starting the media unit, and later exposed them to the four distinct elements of music that Copland describes: rhythm, melody, harmony, and tone color, which in turn provided them with a terminology for understanding the multiple modes with which they could describe their constructed meaning/s from a music-based text alone.

Moreover, in addition to the narratives that can be found in song lyrics, as well as the exploration of music's functions, there are additional possibilities for the construction of narratives when the component of video is integrated. As Elliot (2005) states, "video is primarily a narrative medium" through its use of camera shots and movements, among other film techniques, such as lighting and angles (Downes and Miller, 1998; Monaco, 2000; Stam, 2000). The students were exposed to this kind of terminology as well with the purpose of enabling them to have access to the conventions used in the study of film, as they had already done with print and music texts.

Thus, throughout the semester, students engaged in close readings of literary and media texts using the corresponding terminology or academic discourse for both forms. For the study of

media texts the students read scholarly articles about the music that they were to interact with, which provided them with examples of the kind of analysis that they were to partake in. The purpose of designing the class in this way was for students to be able to draw *their own* convictions about the narratives in the texts and to learn how to express them using the appropriate *academic* and media terminology. At the end of the unit students performed a multimodal presentation about a self-selected music or music video. This approach was taken in order to help students acquire the capacity to analyze the assumptions they had about different media texts in academic terms, and perhaps expand or challenge them.

Paths to 'understanding': Methods of data collection

In this section I describe the research tools that were used to collect the data that would inform my research questions. As I will highlight below, my research included participant observation, document collection, and two sets of interviews, prior and subsequent to the print and media components of the unit. Before discussing these methods in detail I will first describe the sampling strategies I adopted in order to select research participants.

Sampling strategies

I employed two sequential sampling strategies in order to identify the participants of my study: homogeneous and extreme case sampling. Homogenous sampling is when the researcher "samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (Creswell, 2005, p. 206). This was the case in my original sampling as all of the participants in my classroom-based study were enrolled in the same course, had to engage in the same activities and might have had previously taken the same prerequisite courses.[69] My

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[69] Another reason for students taking this course at different times is because those students who have a very low score on the College Board English exam must first take a pre-basic English course. Not all of the students have necessarily participated in this pre-basic course, but they must have previously taken the three required Basic English courses to comply with the institutional policy of taking four English courses in order to graduate.

homogeneous sample consisted of the entire class, as all twenty-one students consented to participating in the study. When I refer to a *homogeneous sample*, it is important to clarify that I mean the generational homogeneity of the group in terms of age group (20-21) and course placement (Basic English track), rather than gender, race or class.[70] As a researcher, these issues can be explored in terms of the students' choices of texts for in-depth and individual analysis of specific topics portrayed in the texts they choose, and the different dynamics that the students focus on.

Before implementing the study, however, I employed extreme case sampling to choose specific focal participants for the interviews. This is defined by Patton (1990) as a "case that is enlightening, or a case that is noticeable for its success" (as cited in Creswell, 2005, p. 204). The students chosen as participants were those who participated regularly in the class discussions, and who were also willing to engage in interactive dialogue with me about their experiences. Although one can assume that these participants would best illustrate the students' critical readings of multimodal media texts, there were other possibilities for "data rich" cases as well. Stake suggests that it is sometimes "better to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a seemingly typical case … Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is often more important" (2005, p. 451). Therefore, I also used extreme case sampling to identify interview participants who exhibited difficulties with the classroom interactions and discomfort in the analyses of texts, in addition to those who I deemed "successful" at this.

Studying two pairs of "successful" and two pairs of "struggling" students assured a variety of positions from which to address my research questions, as well as my own perceptions

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[70] Taking into consideration the recent criticism of the notion that the Puerto Rican nation is homogeneous in terms of language (Torres, 2008) and race (Duany, 2002; Negrón-Muntaner, 1997), I have to be specific in the ways that I describe this 'homogeneous' sample. Thus, when analyzing the data, it is important to note inevitable differences in the composition of the group of research subjects based on gender, race and class, and other factors such as language proficiency.

of the students and the class. In addition, I selected male and female pairs to assure balanced subject participation by gender and to provide more nuanced and complex insights as I reflected on my research questions. For all four extreme cases, however, race was not used as a 'category' to identify the participants because of my own 'slippery' (Godreau, 2008) assumptions about race, tending to view Puerto Ricans as one single race, not considering skin color or other racial features.[71] Nor was social class explored, but this was done to maintain students' confidentiality and because of time constraints. Nonetheless, after conducting the study, I must admit that the socioeconomic status of the students in the class was closely related to the way that they read and interpreted assigned texts and to their overall English proficiency.

Since there was a group of students who were interviewed to provide further insight into their reading practices before and after the study of first print-based and then multimodal texts, these are the students that I focus on throughout the data analysis chapters (Chapters IV and V). Two of these students, Daniel and Margaret, were chosen because they had already been my students and proved to be highly motivated and willing to participate. Although I had not previously given classes to Billy and Adelina, they also demonstrated marked enthusiasm towards the project, but did not seem as proficient in the English language, as their participation in-class was minimal. This motivated me to further inquire about their experiences in the research project, as they had more difficulty expressing their interactions with the material studied in class.

At the same time, because I had observed all of the students in my class as part of the methodological practice of participatory observation, while analyzing the data there were other

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[71] Godreau identifies 'slippery semantics' as a "recurrent linguistic inconsistency in racial identification processes" (2008, p.7). While I understand that race is a social construct, I use the term here to mean how different phenotypes are perceived as markers of different races. Thus, I avoid the use of this category to identify the participating students.

cases, beyond the extreme case samples previously selected for interviewing, that also proved to be informative in relation to the questions considered in this study, and consequently, I selected four additional students to highlight in this study. While Manuel and Betsy provided critical observations related to various texts studied in class as well as in their multimodal productions, Juan and Caryn's work contained rich material that could be analyzed from the perspective of the way different modes were used and from the perspective of critical media literacy. In *Figure 3.2* I provide a chart that identifies the different subjects of my study.

Extreme case samples: *Chosen for interviews*	*Informative cases:* *Chosen while analyzing data*
Daniel	Manuel
Margaret	Betsy
Billy	Juan
Adelina	Caryn

Figure 3.2- Cases highlighted in the data analysis chapters

Participant observation

As mentioned above, a primary method of data collection I employed was participant observation, which allows researchers to "demystify what is actually going on as opposed to what one might hope or assume is happening" (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 129). The task of the participant observer is described as one that researchers adopt when taking part in the activities they are observing (Creswell, 2005). I adopted this observational role while the entire group of students partook in the curricular activities I designed for the course.

Spradley (1980) contends that "teacher researchers are considered total participant observers because they are already regular participants in the classroom" (as cited in Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 131). However, Glesne (2006) points out that an irony arises when teachers participate more than they observe as "you risk losing the eye of the uninvolved outsider; yet the more you participate, the greater your opportunity to learn" (p. 50). This opportunity to learn more was my primary motivation for using participant observation as the principal method of data collection for my study. To mediate the tension posited by Spradley and Glesne, I made video recordings of each of the classes I observed. With the use of digital video recording I was able to tease out and complicate my roles as both instructor and researcher more than if I were doing traditional observations alone. Using this technique "the practitioner researcher takes off his or her hat as participant and puts on the researcher hat and analyzes the data at his or her leisure" (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 148) facilitating the role transitions. Indeed, numerous researchers have promoted the use of video recordings in fieldwork in order to separate teacher and researcher roles more readily (Creswell, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Delamont, 2004).

As an additional benefit, video recording was implemented with a *wide angle lens,* which allowed me to "observe everything [that] is occurring" (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 133). The importance of using a *wide angle lens* is that I was able to explore the practice of multimodality, as the principal purpose of this technique was to notice the minute details that one would otherwise not pay attention to due to class size. For my study, this entailed noticing the students' facial expressions, gestures, or any signs of response, including reluctance to engage in the class dynamics and activities. Moreover, this data gathering tool allowed me to record the students' descriptions of the readings they engaged in for different types of texts and to observe

myself in the classroom, which increased my ability to be self-reflective about my teaching practices.

On the other hand, we must recognize that video recordings have the potential of discomforting students, disrupting the natural dynamics of the classroom, and causing ethical dilemmas that might negatively affect students' participation in the study. To avoid this, Creswell (2005) suggests planning ahead, discussing the possibility of videotaping with the students, and positioning the camera in a place where it might not make the students uncomfortable, advice that I heeded during the course of my classroom research. I explicitly clarified to students that those who did not agree to participate in the study would not be video recorded and that they would be grouped on a side of the room beyond the camera's purview. However, all of the students in the classroom agreed to participate and I was thus able to avoid the tedious and time-consuming process of separating participants from non-participants.

Despite the fact that my students did agree to be videotaped, the beginning of any videotaping process is likely to find subjects gazing towards the camera. To minimize this, I tried to 'habituate' them to the camera by using it several times prior to commencing the research. This enabled me to "enhance data gathering in a naturalistic setting" (Anderson, 1994, p. 149). Thus, by the time the research actually started, students were already accustomed to the video camera and the dynamics of the class did not appear to be interrupted by any discomfort caused by its use.

Document collection

In addition to participant observation by means of video recordings, a supplementary technique of data gathering was the use of students' written work[72] as qualitative documents.

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[72] These included written assignments, written work done in class, essays, online discussions, and journal entries they would submit online as well.

Creswell states that "documents represent a good source for texts (word) data for qualitative study [since] they provide the advantage of being in the language and words of the participants" (2005, p. 219). This ensures a more accurate portrayal of students' reflections about their readings and the understandings they reach, as their own words are used to describe them. For example, journals kept by students "can inform the teacher/researcher about changing thoughts and new ideas and the progression of learning" (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 153). These are particularly useful when comparing how students interact with print texts and audiovisual texts respectively, and are also a useful method for providing further insights into the students' different readings of texts that they may not have discussed explicitly in the classroom setting.

Additionally, journals present "a reflective stance on the part of the writer, and can provide a rich source of data on the daily life of a classroom" (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 154). The importance of using students' reflection journals as data can accordingly be summed up by saying that "the discipline of going back over the same ground in a different medium helps to develop new understandings" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 162). Journals were therefore collected once a week, allowing time for the students to reflect on their experiences while they were analyzing the materials discussed in class. These reflections were not submitted as hard copies, but posted in an online forum. Keeping in mind that as "social life becomes more saturated with Internet-based media for communication, researchers will be able to creatively design projects that utilize these media to … interact with participants, or collect artifacts" (Markham, 2006, p. 120), I opted to use an institutionally-based online platform for students to turn in their journals, respond to each other's comments, and communicate with me via its e-mail application. Through this medium, students had more time to reflect on classroom activities, and

I saved time since I did not need to wait for meetings in the classroom to communicate with students.

In addition to reading students' journals, I also analyzed their essays, which went through a series of peer revisions, as well as revisions by me as their instructor. Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) caution, however, that essays can be "perceived as a demonstration of 'pure understanding' produced primarily for the benefit of an examiner" (p. 162) that is, the teacher. There is a possibility, then, that when students are asked to demonstrate "pure understanding," they may suppress ideas of their own that they think might not be accepted in that type of assignment. Therefore, interviews were also used as a method of data collection in order to acquire greater insights into (a subsample of) the students' perceptions of the texts used in class, as well as their use of these texts in their leisure time.

Interviews

According to Delamont (2004), interviews are an essential element of participant observation. They effectively enable a researcher "to know how a person feels about the events that have happened or are happening, [and] they are also important in gaining a perspective on how others understand and interpret their reality" (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 115). However, poststructuralist perspectives on interviews have critiqued the notion "that 'reality' can be named or defined through research" and propose instead that it is an "interactive construction" between the researcher and the interviewee (Scheurich, 1997, p. 76, n. 7). Thus, although I sought to document how the interviewees described their 'reality,' I'm aware that what they told me or what I ultimately discovered in the interview process should not be labeled "reality". Instead, their interviews were a co-construction of what I might term personal understandings. The negotiation of meanings was significant in the interview process. As Fontana & Frey note,

and consonant with the poststructuralist critique of interviews noted above, qualitative researchers are aware that "interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (2000, p. 646). Thus, I opted to conduct unstructured interviews to foster the active participation and negotiation of meaning with the students interviewed.

In unstructured interviews, as Fontana and Frey note, there is an "establishment of a human-to-human relation with the respondent and the desire to *understand* rather than to *explain*" (2000, p. 654). In this flexible process, I wanted to convey to students that these interviews were their opportunity to teach me something, as opposed to me guiding the discussion. Glesne states that "casting yourself as learner correspondingly casts the respondent as teacher. For many this is a flattering role that enhances the respondent's satisfaction with being interviewed" (1999, p. 84). This further complemented the students' collaboration in the research.

Rather than conducting a group interview, which might have been feasible given my focus on four extreme cases in particular, I conducted in depth, one-on-one interviews with the research participants, so that they would not to be influenced by the responses of their peers. Creswell notes that individual interviews "are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably" (2005, p. 215). This is one of the advantages of the extreme case sampling method: it potentially yields the most revealing data in the process of the interactive dialogical interviews in contrast to a more inflexible structured interview. Using this type of interview provided a space in which 'atypical' cases, that is, those students who didn't usually participate in class could talk with the researcher/instructor. I also used guiding questions (see Appendix C for list of interview questions) that helped to build

understanding of how students reacted to the print-based texts and their media counterparts as well as questions about their reading practices with these different modes of texts outside of the classroom.

As mentioned above, the interviews were carried out in two parts: first, after the students analyzed print-based texts and, again, after they engaged with the multimodal media texts. Each of these interview phases consisted of two separate interviews with each of the four members of the extreme case subsample. Referring back to the sampling strategies, the extreme cases highlighted in the interviews were two pairs of female and two pairs of male students: a "successful" pair who demonstrated interest in the course, and a pair of "struggling" students who didn't markedly participate in class. Thus, the four focal participants were interviewed four times in total. In each phase of interviews (one for print, one for media) the first interview was followed by another interview to clarify my interpretations of the first round of student responses. These provided the opportunity for students to clarify anything they said or left unsaid in the first interview, and to clarify any assumptions I had made about their answers. Once again, this reinforced the students' collaboration in the research process and the negotiation of meaning between us. Thus, in the post interviews I would tell students how I had interpreted their answers, which gave them an idea of how they were being defined, and also the opportunity to offer their own 're-definitions,' by accepting, clarifying or challenging the interpretations I offered about their interactions with monomodal print texts and multimodal media texts.

Besides providing insights into the ways students approached the different types of texts, interviews supplemented my understandings of students' multimodal analysis. I therefore asked students to reflect upon the process of reading print, music and video-based texts covered in the course and those they interacted with outside of the classroom. My intention was to promote

students' active reflection about their multimodal reading practices and to facilitate my description of the different modalities they relied on for meaning-making, as well as their media/print literacy practices. At the same time, and in light of the poststructuralist framework that guided my research, I recorded my on-going perceptions of the research process in order to later reconsider how my subjectivities might have affected my depictions of the findings.

Record keeping

To ease the tensions of maintaining my roles of teacher and researcher separate I constantly analyzed my own feelings and considered any subjective reactions towards my roles as the research was carried out. The instrument that I used to do so was record keeping, which Anderson, Herr and Nihlen define as "keeping a detailed record of the events watched and the reactions to these events" (1994, p. 133). In doing so, I questioned the theoretical perspectives adopted in the study as well as my methodological framework.

Also, as a supplement to participant observation, Creswell suggests keeping *reflective fieldnotes* to "record personal thoughts that researchers have that relate to their insights, hunches, or broad ideas or themes that emerge during the observation" (2005, p. 214). Thus, after every class, I would record these by writing down my reflections on the events that occurred, considering the implications of these in relation to the study. Before concluding this section, and in keeping with the poststructuralist perspective that informs this research, I must reiterate that there is no single "valid" meaning, but only the multiple meanings derived from my students and my own "baggage," (Scheurich, 1997)[73] which was brought into the design, implementation, participation, and analysis of the research. In the following section, I further elaborate the concept of validation in qualitative research in general and in reference to my study in particular.

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[73] Scheuric refers to the "training within a particular discipline, epistemological inclinations … conceptual schemes about story-telling or power, social positionality (the intersection of race, class, gender, sexual orientation among other key social locations)," (1997, p. 73) all of which are also ambiguous and complex.

"Validation" versus "crystallization"

In post-positivistic orientations to research, a description of the ways in which the researcher aims to validate the data gathered in the study is customary. However, poststructuralism, as stated earlier, "rejects the notion that 'reality' is directly apprehensible or that 'truth' is value-free … neither the observer (the subject) nor the observed (the object) are autonomous entities; rather they are culturally constituted, culturally interpreted, and mutually referential" (Marshall, 1992, p.49). Along these lines, Richardson (2005) questions the notion of "validation" since it implies the search for objective, correct, or valid outcomes, as opposed to the acceptance of the multiple subjectivities that might influence the study of "reality." Taking into consideration, then, the poststructuralist notion that "truth" is defined in terms of the interaction between "subjects," that subjectivities guide the way I construct or define my research interactions, and that these interactions are influenced by social, or cultural constraints, I also question the idea of validation.

In qualitative research practice, validation is frequently secured by means of *triangulation*, which "allows researchers to use different methods in different combinations" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 668). Though I did use different methods in my fieldwork, in order to gather, analyze, and interpret my data I adopted Richardson's concept of *crystallization* (2005) rather than *triangulation* to describe how different techniques might shed light on the questions I pose in this study. As opposed to using a two dimensional triangle,[74] Richardson suggests using the metaphor of crystals, since these "reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963). Crystallization permits me to

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[74] It is two-dimensional as it is drawn, unlike the pyramid that is a three dimensional triangle.

complicate how *knowledge* (my own and the students') is represented without making an absolutist claim of *truth*. To further explain the concept, I quote the authors at length:

> Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963)

As described above, I reflect on my own biases, assumptions, and claims in this study, addressing "subjectivity by incorporating and openly discussing it" (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994, p. 111). I adopt this explicit consideration of my subjectivities as a kind of crystallization technique, as I do not assume that subjectivity does not influence the process, but rather that it inevitably does. Drawing from the multiple sources of data I generated in my research, the following chapters provide an analysis of the data collected in relation to the two main areas of inquiry informing this study: multimodality and critical media literacy.

Chapter IV- Data analysis (Part I)

Multimodal communication in the classroom

We see the multimodal resources which are available in a culture used to make meanings in any and every sign, at every level, and in any mode… we see multimodal texts as making meaning in multiple articulations. (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 4)

Approaching data analysis

While the data collected in this research project is analyzed using a multimodal theory of communication, a second theoretical framework, critical media literacy, also informed each of my research questions. I use multimodal analysis in this chapter to discuss the *modalities that students rely on for meaning construction while engaging with print-based and audiovisual texts*. In the next chapter I apply a critical media literacy framework to look at *how students read multimodal media texts in comparison to monomodal print texts,* and *the different reading and writing practices that students engage in while interacting with rock music and videos* and subsequent to such activities. As previously stated, I will address the *subjectivities that might have affected the research process and the way that it is described here* in Chapter VI.

In order to more readily organize the information gathered from the implementation of the narrative/media unit, for both chapters I focused on the four major dimensions that comprised the unit. These are: 1) students' perceptions of how they listen to music; 2) students' work and reflections on narrative and media texts; 3) the 'Reading Rock' Series, which I organized for the purpose of this unit, and where local bands and artists from the rock industry in Puerto Rico performed for the students and the general public at the University; and finally 4) the students' own multimodal analyses of self-selected songs. I then explored each dimension in relation to the different theoretical areas that inform my research questions. Therefore, in writing this chapter, which addresses multimodality in meaning-making, I looked at the dimensions of the class in terms of Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2001) conceptions of *discourse*, *design*, *production* and

distribution. In the next chapter, which deals with critical media literacy, I analyzed the same four dimensions using Buckingham and Sefton Green's (1994) descriptions of the *social character of reading*, *reading profiles*, *reading positions*, and *reading histories.*

The four domains of practice highlighted in a multimodal theory of communication tend to overlap and intersect, as they are all involved in meaning construction (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). Thus, I applied them to the particular dimensions of the class under study, interweaving the concept of design and production, which had more visible repercussions throughout, while focusing on all of them for the discussion of students' multimodal projects. A similar pattern is followed in Chapter V, when I address the questions related to students' critical reading practices. Then, to close each chapter, I provide a discussion of the research questions in relation to the specific theory that informs the data analysis. *Figure 4.1* provides a visual representation of the organization of this and the subsequent chapter.

Dimensions of the class under study	Chapter IV- Multimodal theory of communication	Chapter V- Critical media literacy's reading parameters
How students listen to music	*Multimodal practices outside of the classroom*	*Students' social and individual readings inside and outside of the classroom*
Students' work and reflections on narrative and media texts	*Discourse, design and production in students' class work and reflections*	*Expanding students' reading profiles*
'Reading Rock' Series	*Design, production and distribution in the 'Reading Rock' Series*	*Reading positions in the 'Reading Rock' Series*
Students' multimodal projects	*Students' multimodal productions*	*Reading histories in students' multimodal productions*

Figure 4.1- Structural organization of data analysis in Chapters IV and V

I begin both chapters by providing brief explanations of the theoretical frameworks used to analyze the data discussed in these chapters, and then engage in data analysis and discuss my findings. At the end of each chapter, I provide a discussion of the research questions in terms of the theory that informs the data analysis.

Multimodal theory of communication

Multimodal analysis allowed me to explore students' literacy practices using both traditional print-based texts and multimodal media texts. To clarify, multimodality not only functions as a theoretical framework in this study, but it is also applied as a data analysis technique. A multimodal theory of communication is concerned with: "(1) the *semiotic resources* of communication, the modes and the media used, and (2) the communicative practices in which these resources are used" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 111). Thus, this theory is pertinent for my discussion of the modes that students rely on for meaning making in a series of communicative practices inside and outside of the English classroom. I therefore actively adopted multimodal analysis to explore my own students' interactions with different multimodal texts, focusing on the four domains of practice via which Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) claim that meanings are made: design, discourse, production and distribution. Below I provide a brief overview of each domain and how it pertains to each of the dimensions of the class under study.

Design

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) define design as the "conceptual side of expression," (p. 5). Thus, before expressing something, in any given mode, there must be a design to guide and shape that expression. While studying my students' interactions with, and productions of, print-based and media texts, I consider that "'grammars' of design, like the grammars of semiotic modes, may remain at the level of 'habit', or they may be brought into consciousness and

deliberateness as overt, codified prescriptions" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 48). This is significant because it means that the students in my class may have been following prescribed notions about how to study and construct texts they interacted with in the unit. They may have developed these habitual grammars of design from their previous participation in English courses, or from their previous interactions with the kinds of media texts used in the unit. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) say that multimodality involves "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined" (p. 20). Using this definition, I also discuss the kinds of modes, or the kinds of arrangements of discourses students identified, or used, in the variety of texts they interacted with or produced as part of the unit, and the possible intentions for their focus on particular designs.

Discourse

Another feature of multimodal analysis is a focus on discourse, which refers to "socially constructed knowledges of (some aspect of) reality developed in specific social contexts" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p.4). In this study, the focus is on the kinds of discourses that students identified in the texts they interacted with, as well as those that they themselves used to communicate in the classroom and beyond. If students interact with music and video texts as part of their regular activities outside of the classroom, then it must be argued that "simple everyday objects, which might be considered purely practical and functional, can nevertheless invoke discourses through the way material qualities are articulated" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 81). Whether formal or informal, any discourse could potentially communicate students' knowledge about the specific topics discussed in class. Thus, I introduced new discourses (formal or academic terminology about these media texts) to supplement students' everyday

discourses around such texts, or their "text talk" outside of the class. In other words, I looked at how, during the media unit of the class, students interpreted the discourses used in music and video texts, how they described the ways they listened to music, and how/if they expanded their ideas about how it is possible to listen to music. I also compared the modes students focused on when interacting with music and video texts prior to the research project, how these changed while participating in the research, and more pertinently, how they talked about these modes during this process.

Production

If design deals with the abstract conception of expression, production refers to its "actual material realization" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 6). Throughout this study, my students interacted with literary, music, video, and live performance texts, which can also be understood as products. Given that "humans have the ability to match concepts with appropriate material signifiers on the basis of their physical experience of the relevant materials," (p. 75) then it's important to note how students recognized particular material signifiers from their previous interactions with each text, and more importantly, how they used/adapted these in their own multimodal productions. Since "production is common to both articulation and to interpretation," (p. 75) I paid specific attention to the students' articulation choices, or the material signifiers they used in their productions in class.

Distribution

The 'Reading Rock' Series was an opportunity for bands to distribute their songs, as it has been previously established that "'distribution' has produced enormous gains in accessibility – first of the printed word, later also of pictorial art, music, and drama, all of which we can now buy and take home in the form of reproductions and recordings" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001,

p.89). Also, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen, there are two aspects of distribution, 're-encoding' and 'transmitting,' which are different, but can also be combined. For example, re-encoding refers to changing a text for a particular context, and transmitting refers to the dissemination of such a text. In this case, the bands did both. In this component of my unit, I therefore considered the ways in which students reacted to the ways in which the bands decided to distribute their products, which informed the students' choices about how they would distribute their own multimodal productions for the purpose of encoding and transmitting these to a specific audience (their own peers and instructor).

Multimodal practices outside of the classroom

Music is a mix of feelings expressed by an instrument. Betsy[75]

It was important to inquire about students' reading practices – both with print-based and with multimodal media texts – to establish the way students engaged with these texts in their everyday lives before participating in my study, and to more readily compare how they used these texts at the conclusion of the media unit. This was helpful in considering the effects of the particular approach I utilized in the creation of the course. When asked how they generally read, most students in the classroom claimed a preference for reading in quiet places in their homes, taking notice of different themes or characters and making annotations in the text. Additionally, in one of the interviews conducted Billy[76] claimed to not read for pleasure at all, as he stated, "I just read for the classes, do my work for the university, and that's it!" (personal communication, September 6, 2008).[77] Thus, the students tended to associate the activity of 'reading' with printed

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[75] As specified in the methodology chapter, I use pseudonyms to refer to the students to protect their identities. These pseudonyms were chosen following gender and language (English or Spanish) conventions. The quotations used in the introduction for each of the following subsections come from the students' journal reflections.

[76] Refer back to *Figure 3.2* for an overview of research participants highlighted in this chapter and Chapter V.

[77] While quoting the students' words I leave their grammatical errors intact to avoid changing their statements by incorporating my own corrections, and because this offers an appreciation of the ESL context in which the study took place. It is also my intention to point out that traditional approaches to grammar instruction in English

literature. Because of my own interest in the use of different media as texts, I kept asking him questions to find out what kinds of 'texts' he read in his spare time, which was the original question. After probing for more information on his everyday reading practices, he admitted to watching television all the time.

Although Billy's account provides evidence of one student's media interactions, the kind of music-based media I focused on for this study was not the kind of media with which he claimed to interact. Instead, these were primarily television channels that incorporate cartoons and television programming aimed at children and young adults. Even if music is used in these programs, the music listening practices that I am concerned with here deal with the music industry more explicitly.

While describing their music listening practices outside the English classroom, some students admitted to listening to music across all three of the musical planes that Copland (2002) describes (sensuous, expressive, and sheerly musical) because as Daniel said, "it is something intuitive that we all do when we listen to music". Most of them, however, expressed a preference for the rhythm, or the sensuous plane, of the song prior to its actual content. This was confirmed in a group discussion focusing on how they choose the music that they like. Students specified that the first thing they notice when listening to new music is the rhythm. In addition, students who were interviewed also specified that they notice the rhythm and then proceed to focus on the lyrics, or the 'message' of the song.

In most cases, there was a connection between listening to music while "doing" something else, such as driving, doing schoolwork, or house chores. Similarly, other students mentioned that they listen to different kinds of music depending on the "moods" that they are in.

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classrooms do not foster critical thinking nor captivate students' interest, as they learn grammar in such contexts with no practical or immediate purpose in mind, besides that of memorization.

For example, Caryn described how she listens to punk music when she is angry, or slower music when she wants to relax. Therefore, music can be used to create a certain kind of atmosphere, or be played as a consequence of one. Both reflect the idea that music is often associated with feelings. This is another notion that several students had about music prior to the implementation of the unit.

An interesting case surfaced in Juan's reflection of the ways he listens to music, when he clarified that, "most challenging to me is listening clearly because I'm deaf". Despite the fact that this student was indeed clinically deaf, he had a hearing aid and was able to fully participate in classroom activities. While the university recognized his disability, and had his professors make the necessary accommodations to assure his full participation in class, such as sitting in the front row, he sometimes complained about his hearing aid not working properly. Nevertheless, he could read lips and feel the rhythm of the music shared in class due to the bass emanating from the speakers. Indeed, he noted that, "thanks to my developed skills I can play any kind of music with only listening to it, but sometimes is hard." The case of this student interestingly underscores multimodality's focus on the senses. It demonstrates that there must be recognition of the physicality of human beings, with their possibilities, as well as their limits.

The students' descriptions of how they approach media texts confirmed my suspicions that students were not used to, or motivated to, consider the media texts they interacted with as texts that can be read and interpreted. It was also important to be reminded of the physical limitations of human beings, how these affect reading processes differently, and how these physical limitations might be mediated. These notions were taken into consideration while implementing the research-based unit, and were later revisited to elaborate upon my overall findings.

Design, discourse, and production in students' class work and reflections

The teaching unit under study was divided into two consecutive parts: the study of narrative technique in literary print-based texts, and the study of audio and visual music-based texts. This enabled me to compare the students' interactions with these three kinds of texts and analyze the different kinds of modes that they relied on for meaning-making when engaging with them. To do this I focused on the design and the discourses students used in their print-based productions, as well as the design and discourses they identified in multimodal media products.

As explained in the description of how media would be used in my classroom in Chapter III, the students participated in an introductory activity for the first part of the unit. In this activity, they were required to specify the story elements that they were familiar with for the discussion of the first short story they read, "Raymond's Run" by Toni Cade Bambara. They formed groups to exchange ideas about the different elements of a story, such as setting, plot, characters, conflict and resolution. While some asked for the definitions of these elements, I did not provide them given that the purpose of the activity was for them to offer what they thought were the correct answers. In contrast, others asked if they should provide even more elements, such as a division between main and secondary characters.

Example # 1

Raymond's Run

-Characters:
1. Gretchen
2. Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker (squaky)
3. Raymond
4. Cynthia
5. Rosie
6. Mary Louise
7. Mr. Pearson

-Setting
• Broadway, N.Y.
In the track.

- Plot
The story is about squaky the faster runner and his brother Raymond.

- Conflict
- Gretchen vs. Squaky
- Raymond vs. Squaky

Example # 2

RAYMOND'S RUN

SETTING:
The story take place at NEW YORK!

CHARACTERS:
Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker →main
Raymond... George... Mother & Father
Gretchen... Mary Louise... Rosie...
Mr. Pearson

PLOT:
Hazel was practicing a breathing exercises with her brother Raymond, later she was found a girls and then she compete at run's competition at May Program and won the competition, and she was surprised with the manner that her brother Raymond ran.

CLIMAX:
The most excited part was at run's competition at May Day Program.

Example # 1   *Example # 2*

Figure 4.2- Examples of students' story elements discussion

As can be observed in *Figure 4.2*, the students were able to construct a list of the elements that the story presented but their answers varied in terms of the explanation that was given for each as well as their organization. The differences in their sequencing of characters and setting might suggest the importance that the students placed on each in order to discuss the story. The purpose of this activity was to explore the students' choices in discussing the print-based short story. Thus, not providing a specific structure for students to identify the 'story elements,' contributed to this aim. For example, the unequal designation of main versus secondary characters can be observed, as well as the focus on conflict versus climax. This might be due to the attention to detail exhibited by the members of the group that produced *Example # 2*, as is evident in the lengthy description of the plot. It is possible that this choice was made due

to their personal preference for detail or because they were imitating the descriptive detail of the story itself.

This group also emphasized the setting, specifically the city of New York, by using capital lettering and even an exclamation point, which might indicate a certain allure that the city has over the student who actually wrote it. It is also significant to point out that in *Example #1* the students use "Broadway" as if it were a borough of NY. This textual reference is an index of the distance between that setting and the students' experiential world, which varied in both cases. Another interesting observation is that while one group establishes a hierarchy: a vertical and numbered list of characters, the other group lists the characters across the page, separated by an ellipsis (…) thus marking a line of continuity. This may signify the different ways these students view the way characters are either fixed and static or constantly changing. All of this can be determined by closely looking at the design that the students used to arrange their story elements.

The use of color in the examples provided in *Figure 4.2* was promoted by the fact that I provided markers for them to provide a 'decorative' component to their descriptions. However, I believe the use of colors here is merely that, decorative, and does not provide any additional meaning to their interpretations. Rather, the focus of this activity was predominantly language-based, which provides a significant amount of meaning. Nevertheless, the aim of this study, consonant with multimodal theorizing, is to consider different modes in which meaning can be made, thus other print-based activities were also explored.

In the discussion of another short story from the textbook, I asked students to draw a 'scene' from "Romero's Shirt" by Dagoberto Gilb, this time using only their pencils. In the story, the main character, Romero, reminisces about the hard work he has done to obtain minimal material possessions for himself and his family as he watches an old man he hired to landscape

his house. All of these characters are linked by the fact that they originally came from Mexico to work and live in Texas. In doing this exercise, the students portrayed several of the elements discussed previously, which they were clearly familiar with already. Their drawings, however, provided me with a unique opportunity to observe what they were representing in their productions while interacting with the design of another text. Interestingly, these drawings allowed for a visual exploration of issues they considered most significant in relation to their discussion of the story, such as the reliance on material possessions and working class life.

In the example I provide in *Figure 4.3*, Juan, like many of the other students, focused on issues of immigration by drawing the border between Mexico and the United States. Intriguingly, he chose to imitate the 'mode' of a virtual map, much like an image taken from Google Earth. Even though he was using a pencil and paper to produce a two-dimensional picture, Juan decided to draw a map of the home in which the story takes place, then added another layer to the illustration: an arrow that depicted the larger context in which the story occurs, which lent an air of three-dimensionality to the design. This map provides a view from above, like that of a satellite image of El Paso, Texas and the border between Mexico and the United States. It highlights, or zooms into, a visual of the home. Thus, although Juan's production was print-based, he drew on his knowledge of design to convert this production into a virtual map.
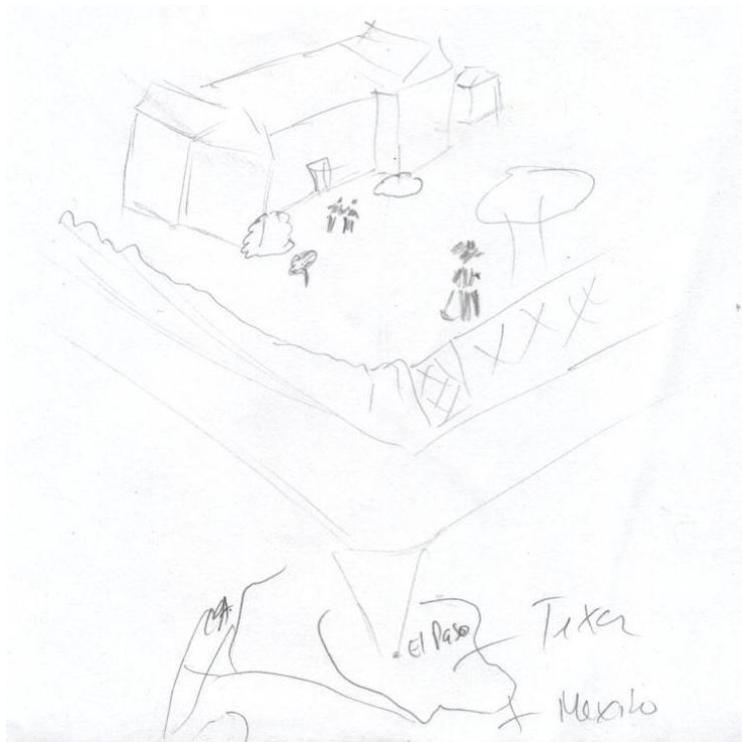
Figure 4.3- Example of Juan's picture representation of "Romero's Shirt"

In most cases, however, students described how they 'pictured' the story in flat, two-dimensional landscape, much like that of a painting. While some included all of the characters, others, like Juan, focused primarily on the old man and Romero. In addition, some students included Romero's car (one of his few material possessions, according to the story), while others included the tree that the old man was hired to cut. With very few exceptions, most students depicted the house where the story took place. Intriguingly, the focus on locality, or on the materials that might represent the characters' interests and how these are related to class (Stein and Slonimsky, 2006), provided an example of the multiple modes that students rely on for meaning construction even with print-based texts. In this case, by drawing the house and the car the students highlighted the material gains for which Romero had worked so hard. Conversely, when depicting the old man actually striving so hard to barely survive, students honed in on the

working class and the struggles they endure to meet basic needs. This was later confirmed as the students wrote their descriptions of the characters in "Romero's Shirt", as part of an online discussion. All of the students described Romero as a hard-working man, who needed to work in order to provide for his family. Caryn even went as far as to praise him for working hard, encouraging other people to do the same, so they could "no longer [be] maintained by federal funds". While Caryn's comment praises Romero for working, it also indicates a denigration of those in Puerto Rico who, potentially for reasons beyond their control, cannot work.[78] Certainly, given the economic crisis and general levels of poverty and education on the island, Caryn's interpretation was limited in its scope. At the same time, it does point to her personal understanding that some individuals on federal assistance take advantage of the system and prefer to be "maintained" rather than to "work hard" like Romero.

It is clear, however, that students were actively interpreting Dagoberto Gilb's product by producing other texts themselves. The design used in their productions provides insights into their interpretative processes, that is, the ways in which they made meaning of texts. Moreover, it enabled them to produce different meanings of a print-based text in a visual mode not frequently engaged in the English classroom.

For the discussion of media texts in class, I provided students with printed handouts of the lyrics to the songs or music videos that were going to be discussed in order for them to write down their interpretations (see Appendix D for an example). The multimodal discussion of these texts focused first on the print-based lyrics alone. Specifically, students would write their interpretations of each stanza, prior to listening to the song. Then, after playing the song or music

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[78] Although the working class in Puerto Rico in 2008 constituted 34 percent of the population, the percentage of the population below poverty level constituted 44.8 percent at the time (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Thus, many people in Puerto Rico still do, in fact, rely on federal assistance as there are clearly not enough jobs to fill the demand and people, do, after all, need income in order to survive.

video, students were encouraged to add different interpretations to their initial annotations, focusing on the musical or video conventions discussed in the class. Considering that "discourses are articulated in modes other than speech or writing" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 29), this afforded an opportunity to determine the different discourses that students relied on for making meaning across the different modalities with which they interacted.

For example, in the discussion of "The End" by The Doors, the students engaged in the process outlined above and later reflected upon it in their journal entries. Caryn mentioned the relationships between the sound of "The End," its perceived 'message,' and the story to which it was being compared: Conrad Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow". While The Doors' song is a psychedelic interpretation of the end of things, in which the character described expresses that he is about to kill his father, Aiken's story focuses on a first person description of the daily events of a boy who is possibly developing schizophrenia. Considering, then, both the instruments and the lyrics of the song in relation to the print-based story, Caryn noted:

> When it was finishing there is a part that begins a game with the instruments and every second that passes is more intense. This part I drive myself to despair that for a moment they gave to me desire of shouting. Probably this game of the song has some similarity with Secret Snow's reading because the baby in this history has double personality and in the song also one sees this double life, both in the melody and in the message.

From Caryn's comment about the 'game with instruments' driving her to 'despair,' causing in her a 'desire of shouting,' one could infer that she was not used to this kind of song, or that she simply did not like the way that it made her feel. Thus the emotion of 'despair' that Caryn felt could have been caused due to the intensity of the music. Moreover, "the 'unknown' of what will happen," as Daniel described the climatic and open ending of "Silent Snow, Secret

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Snow" can also cause desperation, which is how he connected both texts. Other students were also able to notice the different melodies and tones used in the song and how these contributed to the overall meaning they were able to construct in relation to the lyrics, thus, they were able to recognize the different modes drawn in these "semiotic ensembles" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 53), or the multi-layered designs of both the song and the story.

Another example of students' comparisons across printed stories and music-based media texts is found in their various descriptions of the Canadian indie rock band, Arcade Fire's "No Cars Go" performance. At first, they paid specific attention to the different instruments that the group uses in the song, especially the violins, and even expressed a predilection for this text because of it. They also relied on the lyrics to make meaning of the song. This exercise highlights how students not only noticed the ways artists use different modes to evoke different discourses, but also made assumptions across the music- and print-based texts. For example, in an online discussion focusing on lyrics, Manuel made connections between the end of the short story "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" where the boy is trying to fall asleep but feels the cold 'winter' whispering to him, and the "No Cars Go" lyric line: "between the click of the light, and the start of the dream". Similarly, following Manuel's lead, other students in the class began to make connections between dreams, life, and death in relation to both the music lyrics and the short story.

Furthermore, the film terminology that students were exposed to, as mentioned in Chapter III, provided them with the academic discourse necessary for them to describe their analyses of music videos, and the multiple discourses encompassed by their design. For example, when discussing music videos by the bands No Doubt and Hole, both featuring female singers, students focused on how the lights and shots contributed to the distinction made between men

and women. Besides noting that "both directors connect a story with the words of the song," Daniel wrote that in No Doubts' video for "Just a Girl," there is "a lot of light in some points, especially when she is focused, and dark light in the boy's bathroom," which contributes to the gender distinction. Also, Margaret specified in a journal entry "that these techniques can influence in the meaning because I have more knowledge to think beyond and then reach to more conclusions than when I read the song". This comment clearly points to how the modes of lighting and shots, among others, might contribute to meaning-making in modes that extend the limits of monomodal printed lyrics alone.

Another example of this surfaced in students' discussion of Blink 182's "Stay Together for the Kids" when they made connections between the mise-en-scène and the content of the song. In their journal entries, several students argued that the video made it easier for them to understand the song. Among some of the examples they provided were that: "the steel ball is like the problem, the divorce, and how it destroys households;" "the grafittis written in the walls are a symbol of free expression;" and "also the ambient was gray and there was not sun, it look like a sad day". These statements clearly provide insights into how students' descriptions of the design of the music video overlapped with the lyrical content of the song.

A further noteworthy example of students' meaning-making across modes occurred in relation to the analysis of color in audiovisual media, when Betsy noticed that in the video there "predominates different tones of blue color giving to the setting a cold atmosphere". Taking the above examples into consideration, it is safe to say that students were able to apply the music and film terminologies they had learned to analyze the different modes present in the design of various music-based texts. Moreover, they were able to identify how each mode communicates different discourses, and enriches the meanings of each text.

Overall, the discussion of music-based texts provided numerous opportunities for students to analyze different modalities within one text, i.e. the printed lyrics, the recording, and then the video, each with their respective terminologies. Their interactions with these multimodal resources made it possible for them to recognize the distinct meanings that could be made across multiple modes. In contrast, by using a standard print-based literary textbook, the stories that students read rely solely on written language. This is not to say that all print-based texts are monomodal – as Juan's example of a multimodal two-dimensional drawing clearly demonstrates – but that in standard textbooks, most short stories follow the same design in terms of font type and size. Undoubtedly, a number of contemporary literary texts include images and other features that provide multimodal resources from which the reader can gather meaning. However, print-based literary textbooks, such as the one used in the class, rely mostly on written language, while music recordings and music videos have a wider number of modes from which students are able to make meaning of the texts' content and design.

Design, production and distribution in the 'Reading Rock' Series

By the time the students participated in the series of presentations that enabled them to interact with local rock musicians and artists, they had already engaged in several analyses of different print and media-based texts, as described above. Many of the students admitted that they had not frequently, or previously, engaged in the activity of watching bands perform. Thus, the series was a relatively unique experience for most. It provided them with the opportunity to identify the design of the bands' performances, by noticing the different instruments and sounds that distinct rock bands use, as well as to interact with the musicians and to ask them questions about their songs, and about their writing, recording, and performance experiences, which all pertain to the distribution of their products.

The way the musicians designed their performances for this particular audience points to ways in which they re-encoded their music texts by considering the venue and context for the 'Reading Rock' Series. Indeed, because "communicational practice consists in choosing the realisational modes which are apt to the specific purposes, audiences and occasion of text-making," (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 30) it is understandable that the bands were curious about the concept of the activity beforehand. When I mentioned that the purpose was for students to see a live performance while getting the opportunity to ask questions about the songs, the reaction of the lead singer from the band Octavo Día was to plan for a kind of 'Storytellers,' a television program where artists perform acoustic versions of their songs and explain the stories behind them. Thus, they designed their performance as an acoustic set between two guitarists, one a singer and the other a back-up vocalist.

It is clear that students were specifically reacting to the unique design and production of the performances based on their varying reflections on each of them. In their reactions to the series as part of a journal entry assignment, some students expressed a preference for specific bands depending on the different instruments they used. For example, the first band, Octavo Día presented acoustic versions of their songs with guitars, but only two of the band members performed. Subsequently, several students expressed that they would have liked to see the entire band, admitting that it would have provided a different sound. In contrast, Caryn preferred the "intimate and personal" interaction of musicians and audience, while Adelina mentioned enjoying the "incredible" voice of the singer.

For the second performance, several students mentioned enjoying the fact that Blindfold Drive's entire band was there, making it feel more like a rock concert. They were also pleased that the bass player had brought a classical instrument, or, as Betsy described it, a "very

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beautiful" double bass (also known as stand up bass). The use of the stand-up bass, as well as acoustic guitars and drum brushes was also influenced by the venue chosen for the activity, the Figueroa Chapel Amphitheater at UPRM, which again pertains to the element of design.

Certainly, the two bands who participated in the series were aware of how sound options would influence their overall product. Indeed, the location of the series required them to plan for a more intimate and personal design quite different from the ones they are used to in formal public performances at other locations. On the other hand, the bands' performances were definitely different than the formal conferences that are usually given in the venue of the college amphitheater. In fact, the artists themselves were looking forward to performing in this venue because of the acoustic sound the amphitheater afforded.

After witnessing different sounds of rock music in a live venue, the students questioned the musicians about their writing process, asking them what came first, the lyrics or the music. Both bands replied that they never created their songs the same way, and clarified that different band members might come up with different riffs, or melodies, and later adapt the lyrics to the song, or that the lyrics might come first, and even that both might be created simultaneously. This may be because "production plays an independently variable semiotic role in communication and does not 'merely' realize what we have called designs" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 66). In other words, the designs of the songs change depending on the occasion and venue; hence the productions constantly change as well.

On the other hand, both bands approached the opportunity to play in an amphitheater at a college setting as favorable for the distribution of their products. While one band was preoccupied with the biographical information that I would provide for the audience, the other band conducted various rehearsals before the activity. Nevertheless, each of the bands' song

performances was a re-encoded version for the activity; that is, the bands changed the format of the songs and performed them acoustically. At the same time, their production was transmitted through the campus online radio. Therefore, in both regards, the bands' productions enabled them to distribute their product to new audiences at UPRM. This is significant, in that it necessarily influenced how the students would approach these series or how they would react to them, thus, they played an important role in the meanings that students would actually construct. In both instances, the bands were preparing to perform and distribute their music in a setting where they were to be 'read' as artists, as the students themselves would do with a self-selected song the following week.

Students' multimodal productions

The numerous presentations that the students carried out underscore several instances in which they interacted with different modalities while choosing the modes that were to be used to present their analyses of self-selected songs. Students were required to incorporate a multimodal component into their presentations, thus, some of them prepared audiovisual presentations that included, but were not limited to, a visual slide show, original videos, compilations of already produced videos, and a song. Others prepared printed handouts such as a brochure and a magazine. In addition, some prepared Power Point presentations or other printed visuals such as posters or collages.

Some of the students clearly specified the modes that supported the analysis of their selected song or video. For example, Betsy's analysis of a song by Rammstein was definitely dependent on sound, as this is a German rock band, and she could not understand the language used in the song. Therefore, although she went on to provide an English translation for the lyrics her initial reaction was to sound alone. When asked about her reasons behind her preference for

the song, she specified that she had heard it with a friend and thought it was emotionally stirring.

Also, the fact that she knew other songs from this band, which is particularly known for its heavy

sound, made her even more attracted to this song in particular, because, in her opinion, it was

soothing, and thus provided an atypical sound in relation to the band's usual repertoire.

While some students expressed that they had chosen particular songs because of their

accompanying music videos, others remained focused on the print-based discourses represented

in the lyrics. This was true in the case of Manuel, who focused on Ricardo Arjona's use of irony

in his songwriting. Although the assignment of analyzing songs and videos offered a rare

opportunity for students in an English class to focus on multimodal – and even multilingual –

forms of communication, some students still relied on the ingrained practice of adopting print-

based discourse. In this case, Manuel struggled with the assignment, as he opted to simply make

copies of the print-based lyrics including his analysis of irony in two of Arjona's songs. He did

not follow the instructions to use a multimodal format for the presentation, and also had

difficulties using the English language overall, relying on Spanish to communicate his analysis.

On the other hand, most students used multimodal designs for their productions, which

provided insights into the kinds of modes that they perceived as relevant in presenting their self-

selected songs. For example, in a journal reflection, Margaret expressed confusion as to what

mode she would use for the presentation of her song, but finally expressed, "I decided to make a

video that included some songs by Hillsong United that I liked, and in this way present the

Christian Music as an option for all of my classmates". In other words, she wanted to use a mode

that she perceived 'all of her classmates' liked in order to promote this kind of music more

effectively. Margaret knew that she had to use a mode that she had already experienced as

effective for the purpose she had in mind. Thus, she perceived that video would be the appropriate mode for distributing Christian music.

In terms of the modes used for their productions, some students also relied on print-based conventions to present their multimodal media texts. Unlike Manuel, who simply used printed handouts of the song he analyzed, Daniel and Billy decided to write poems based on the media texts that they were analyzing, and successfully presented them using both printed handouts and a Power Point presentation. The fact that these students also used print-based conventions to analyze media texts, however, demonstrates a habitual reliance on the printed mode (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). This goes back to the idea of how students reproduce their readings, as well as to my own teaching practices in ENGL 3202 classrooms, topics addressed previously in Chapter III. It could also be a consequence of the fact that, for some people, reading is strongly connected to print-based conventions and is also associated with the acquisition of knowledge. This did seem to be the case for some in the class since several students stated in their first in-class reflection that "reading is knowledge," or "the form of acquiring knowledge about different themes," referring to print-based reading practices. However, this did not mean that they did not also find value in using other modes. This occurred in the case of Daniel and Billy, who relied on printed modes to demonstrate their readings of multimodal media texts, but also used different fonts and color schemes for their Power Point presentation design, incorporating multiple modes in their productions after all.

As stated previously, other students constructed print-based materials that focused on multimodal media communication to present their analyses. These included collages, brochures and magazines. Most interesting, perhaps, is the case of Caryn's multimodal project, a mock

magazine, for which she wrote articles addressing the topic of the song she analyzed, *Ayo Technology* by Justin Timberlake and 50 Cent.

| First Page | Last Page |

Figure 4.3- Example of Caryn's *Cyber-@ge Newsletter*

As evidenced in *Figure 4.3*, her production followed the conventions of the magazine genre, including a title, an index, and articles of related information that were taken from an essay she had previously written on the topic. She also incorporated advertisements for different companies, and a description of the magazine. Caryn's magazine can be referred to as a "'realist' sampling, aiming at imitating a particular instrument" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 96) because she incorporated several components of the mode of an actual magazine.

In general, then, the students used a combination of print-based and multimodal conventions to present their analyses of different self-selected songs. Although they were asked to integrate a multimodal component into their presentations, some of them relied on

technologies they had used previously, such as Power Point and printed handouts, while others went on to experiment with a variety of modes, such as video, music, and print-based media publications. Nonetheless, this provides evidence that students are capable of integrating multiple modes of interpretation into their analyses of texts in English classrooms and conveying a range of meanings via this process, rather than relying solely on the traditional academic print-based essay to do so.

Modes used in the classroom

While Jewitt and Kress (2003) propose that "societies and specific communities may, and indeed do, value certain modes more than others" (p. 2), I argue specifically that individuals value modes differently depending on their own experiences with distinct modes and the amount of exposure they have had with each. This can be seen in my discussion of the students' descriptions of the designs of print-based literary texts, and music or video productions, as well as their use of discourse in their own production designs.

In observing and categorizing the different modalities students relied on for making meaning from print-based and audiovisual media texts, I noticed that they focused on a wide array of modalities while interacting with both. In this chapter I aimed to describe the possible motivations behind students' reliance on certain modes for certain communicative practices. For this reason, I paid specific attention to the four domains of practice in which meaning is made; design, production, discourse, and distribution, in terms of the students' interactions with print-based literary texts and multimodal media texts, how they 'read' live performances, and produced multimodal texts.

By analyzing students' interactions with print-based literary works, I was able to draw some preliminary conclusions about the ways in which students create multimodal texts to help

them make sense of the literary aspects of monomodal short stories. For instance, students actively interpreted print-based monomodal productions by producing multimodal depictions of their readings of such texts. In this case, "every act of realization, from design through production, involves choices, even in a monomodal conception of the world" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 51).

The students' reflections on listening to music prior to the engagement with the media unit provided interesting insights into this particular group's multimodal practices. Most students claimed to listen to music on the sensuous plane, not paying attention to the content of the lyrics of the song and focusing primarily on its rhythm. Because of this focus on rhythm most students claimed to use music as background for another activity, or to set moods. It's already been suggested that rhythm accompanies "human activities … and form[s] a background for action, whether the communicative action of singing a melody or some other action" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 94). In this case, the statements students made about using music as background for an activity - whether cleaning, studying, or driving - expressed a function of music for them.

Juan's reflection on his physical disability raised a different issue: the relevance of human physiology in relation to the effects, and possibilities for, different modes of meaning making. This recalls Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2004) assertion that a semiotics that is "intended to be adequate to a description of the multimodal world will need to be conscious of forms of meaning making which are founded as much on the physiology of humans as bodily beings … as on humans as social actors" (p. 28). I agree that when incorporating a focus on multimodality one always has to take into consideration the limitations, as well as the potential, of the human

body. Thus, while Juan's disability made it difficult for him to construct meaning in certain modes, other modes enabled him to do so more readily.

When discussing different multimodal texts students were able to analyze different modalities within one text by focusing on the printed lyrics, the music, and the video conventions. This provided them with more opportunities to make meaning of the discourses in each of the texts in question than would have been possible if a monomodal approach had been adopted. They were also able to make connections between the designs of printed short stories and rock music and videos. For example, in Betsy's discussion of color in Blink-182's video, in which it "takes on the functions of a mode and is used to articulate aspects of a discourse of living" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 25), the connection was evident when she suggested that grey represents the darkness of divorce. This demonstrates the relevance of focusing on the multimodal aspects of a text, which can also be applied to many of the other modes students noticed, such as instrument use in songs, and lighting, camera position and props in videos.

Besides noticing the different instruments the bands used in the 'Reading Rock' Series, students also made claims about how these provided for different kinds of performances, and explicitly linked these to the bands' production designs. Since the 'Reading Rock' series came after their intensive work on multimodal texts, students were already prepared to reflect on the different modes present in the artists' performances and to consider the writing processes in which the bands might have engaged in as they designed and produced their songs. Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest that "semiotic choices, such as microphone distance… can, for instance, signify intimacy in a context where formerly only formal, public modes of address would have been possible" (2001, p. 87). Accordingly, the kinds of statements students made about how the performers used their instruments and the space in which they performed clearly point to how

they were interpreting not only the words and music but also all the other signifiers associated with these performances.

Considering that, as Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest, "interpreting 'production' is never a matter of passive reception," and that "there is a fluid boundary between the production and the active perception of material qualities," there is also a connection between "reading texts and using artefacts" (2001, p. 67). In this case, the musicians designed a performance using certain artifacts, i.e., their musical instruments, which were taken into consideration in students' readings of each performance. Consequently, this blurring also indicates the extent to which the four domains of meaning-making (design, distribution, production and distribution) can, and in fact do, overlap.

For the students' presentations of their self-selected song analyses, they relied on a variety of print-based and multimodal conventions. In some cases, they relied on particular modes to support their analysis, as in the case of rhythm and melodies for Betsy, or lyrical irony for Manuel. In addition, students picked different modes to present their analyses based on their previous interactions, or experiences, with them. While some students used their productions for the purpose of focusing their audience's attention on particular aspects of their analyses, as in Margaret's use of video, others demonstrated familiarity with print-based modes, as Daniel and Billy's poems exemplify. In all of these instances, however, students clearly demonstrated their understandings of the different modalities used in each of their 'realist samplings,' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001).

The work that students produced provided me with abundant opportunities to explore the reasons behind their production and distribution choices. Overall, students relied on a variety of modes not only to discover meaning in different kinds of texts, but also to produce meaning,

whether this was through written reactions, drawings, video, or print publications. Basically, "speakers need access to discourses, knowledges, which are socially structured for the purpose at hand; they need to know how to formulate these knowledges in the appropriate register and how to embed them in an (inter) active event; and they need to be able to speak" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 9). This can be interpreted as the students requiring the academic discourse to describe their perceptions around media texts for specific academic purposes, and also requiring the opportunity to express these in/outside the classroom. By interacting with multimodal texts, and focusing on the different modes that comprise these, the students demonstrated that they were capable of describing their socially constructed 'knowledges' in order to more fruitfully engage with other knowledges in the future, and in other contexts.

The focus on multimodality, then, not only allowed me to consider the multiple ways in which students can make meaning out of texts, but also how they can construct meaning. Students in this class relied on a multiplicity of modes to perform these processes, as I detailed above. However, the reliance on particular modes changed as their experiences with texts broadened. Moreover, the modes they used depended greatly on the context in which these experiences occurred, i. e. their music listening practices outside/inside the classroom. Studying multimodal texts formally, and learning to apply the terminology associated with particular modes to each text, helped students to develop more complex interpretations of the texts studied.

Chapter V- Data Analysis (Part II)

Critical media literacy in/outside of the English classroom

The changing nature of the domestic and social contexts in which texts are used and read, combined with the increasing dominance of digital technologies, is altering the very acts of reading and writing. (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 215)

Questions concerning critical media literacy

This chapter looks at how students in this study responded to multimodal media texts as compared to monomodal print-based literary texts, and the types of readings they engaged in with both. In order to understand students' perspectives more fully, during the research project I gathered information about the differences between students' interactions with print-based readings and audiovisual media; specifically focusing on how 'critical' they were of these texts in their interactions with them, both inside and outside of the English classroom. Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) present some ideas about the ways in which students interact critically with media texts outside of the classroom:

> The fact that young people are able to be 'critical' of the media – on both aesthetic and ideological grounds – does not necessarily mean that they can create their own meanings irrespective of the constraints exerted by the text. Their critical 'resistance' to a given text should not be generalized into broader assertions about their resistance to all texts, or indeed to broader ideological or political resistance. The diversity and ambiguity of some aspects of popular culture and of the ways in which they are read by audiences, are very far from infinite. (p. 38)

In other words, different constraints, those of the texts and those of the social context in which students engage with them, have an influence on the ways in which they will (or will not) analyze the texts they interact with, whether in their daily lives or in the classroom. Since media texts are not usually taught in English classes at UPRM, the students in my class were more

likely to have encountered the media texts I used in the classroom *outside* of it than inside it, and were less likely to have studied them formally in the classroom in the way they had studied monomodal print-based texts. Yet, because the primary aim of media literacy is to help students exercise critical reading skills that can later be employed to read a plurality of texts, students in the class were exposed to different analytical frameworks that they could consider for studying such texts. After engaging with several kinds of media in the classroom, such as print, music and video texts, they did in fact become more aware of their ability to critically read the multiplicity of texts that they might come across outside of the classroom.

A significant topic that was explored while implementing the unit of rock music and music videos was the types of readings that students engaged in. There are multiple ways that their discourses may be interpreted, but Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) argue that the "discourses interpreters or users bring to bear on a semiotic product or event has everything to do with their place in the social and cultural world, and also with the content" (p. 8). Studying the different readings that students engaged in while interacting with rock music and videos allowed multiple insights into their perceptions of rock music, racial miscegenation in rock music and other musical genres, as well as their analyses of social issues focusing on gender, class, and politics.

It was also important to explore students' media preferences, and how these facilitated discussions of social issues like gender, religion and politics in Puerto Rico. Choosing a song/video that they would typically enjoy listening to or watching, analyzing it using the media conventions discussed in the unit, and preparing a multimodal presentation, allowed students to showcase the multimodal media texts with which they engage in their daily lives. It was important to illustrate what it was that these Puerto Rican students preferred to listen to or watch,

as "claiming particular tastes and preferences and discussing readings of specific texts are part of the process by which individuals come to define their identity and social position in relation to others" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 22). Although students might have been influenced by the kind of ('rock') texts that we were studying in class, most students chose songs that reflected their own musical preferences. These preferences, in turn, provided insights into the identities and social positions related to the music with which they identified.

According to Luke, students' interactions with "intertextual and multimodal analyses and performances become sites where [they can] research and document, map and explore the politics of identity: converging and contradictory representations of gender and colour and class" (1994, p. xiii). In this case, specific attention was given to how different students perceived the cultural issues of language, politics, gender dynamics, and race. As mentioned before, students analyzed one self-selected text of their own preference in addition to participating in workshops with local rock bands whose songs mix Spanish and English. Thus, even though all of the students in the classroom considered themselves Puerto Ricans, during this unit they interacted with multilingual, multicultural texts, as members of a global society that included their own local context and extended far beyond it (New London Group, 1996). A quote from Olalquíaga, who writes about the transfiguration of nationality, is helpful in explaining the issues that I am concerned with here:

> 'los procesos sincréticos se realizan a través de una economía en cuya modalidad de intercambio el significante de allá – el del otro – es consumido (leído) conforme a códigos locales, ya preexistentes; esto es, códigos de acá'… Se trata de la manera idiosincrática en que cada cultura 'lee' lo Americano y de la multiplicidad de formas en

que se lo apropian y, en muchos casos, hasta lo subvierten'. (Olalquíaga, 1992, p. 16; as

cited in Pabón, 2002, p. 29)[79]

In other words, the political significance of language and music preference, among other

cultural issues, informed the different readings that the students performed on all the texts. As

Puerto Ricans, the interactions that students engaged in with texts from other countries such as

the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, was necessarily influenced by the ways that

they interacted with Puerto Rican music and video texts, and probably with genres other than

rock, as delineated in Chapter II. Certainly, students' preferences or tastes in terms of the texts

that they chose to analyze individually cannot be hastily summarized, but one should "read such

statements in terms both of the social functions that they might serve and of the social context in

which they are produced" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 54). Thus, the kinds of texts

that the students chose to analyze provided insight into the ways in which they perceived the

rock music genre, and how this genre, which came from the United States and other places, *de

allá,*[80] is perceived *acá.*[81]

Critical media literacy and reading parameters

To further discuss the students' reading practices I follow Buckingham and Sefton-

Green's (1994) notions regarding reading processes. They describe reading as an "inherently

social process [because] what we 'think' about texts and how we use them in our daily lives

depend to a great extent on how we talk about them with others, and on the contexts in which we

do so" (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994, p. 29 In other words, the ways we perceive or

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[79] *The syncretic processes are achieved through an economy of exchange in which, the significant from 'over there' – of the other – is consumed (read) conforming to preexisting local codes, that is, codes from here… It's about idiosyncratic ways in which each culture 'reads' American texts and the multiplicity of forms in which it is appropriated and in many cases, subverted.*
[80] *from over there*
[81] *down here*

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describe texts are based on social interactions, be these within an academic setting or outside of

this context. However, Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) avoid a determinist account of

reading, where readers are classified in terms of their gender, race, or class, stating that "different

readers may make sense of one and the same text in quite different ways" (p. 31). Taking into

account that individual readers read texts differently, they identify several parameters of the

social process of reading, which they term *reading profiles, reading positions* and *reading*

histories. I consider these parameters while analyzing the work that students did in the media

unit.

The social process of reading

When discussing how students listened to, or how they 'read' music, I considered the

constant circulation of meanings that occurred during discussions of music-based texts, in which

meanings shared across students and myself as the instructor were then "'read back' into

individual responses, thereby generating a dynamic interplay between 'social' and 'individual'

readings" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 29). Even when meanings are supposedly

"individual", they always come from somewhere (a social context), thus, they are never purely

individual and are always multi-layered. Nevertheless, when I mention individual readings I refer

to the actual reading act, in which students read the texts for themselves first, and would then

discuss these readings with other students and myself. This dynamic interplay in the social

process of reading is explored when I discuss how the students 'read' music while participating

in the media unit.

Reading profiles

It has been suggested that as students "read a range of texts at any given time, and they

situate a particular text by comparison with other texts, defining it in terms of what it is and is

not," (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 31) they enrich their reading profiles. When students read media texts they situate these in comparison with other texts they have read before, be these literary print-based texts, or other media texts. This is how they construct their reading profiles. Although students may have various reading profiles, which depend on the kinds of texts they have read before, these influence the ways they perceive new texts, shaping their different tastes and preferences. It can then be inferred that students' reading profiles influence the positions they assume with regards to specific texts, and also that the kinds of texts that we choose for them to read in our classes influences their future reading profiles.

Reading positions

According to Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994), tastes or preferences "serve as markers of social distinctions and positions … yet the *meanings* of those distinctions and positions … are not simply given but are actively reconstructed and renegotiated through social interactions" (p. 30). In other words, while students adopt particular reading positions, which affect the way they perceive new texts, these perceptions may change after engaging with such texts in different contexts, such as studying them in a formal academic setting. In this study, their reading positions are explored in terms of their perceptions of the rock music genre after participating in the media unit.

Reading histories

While analyzing students' multimodal productions, I considered how "young people develop their cultural competencies as readers, while simultaneously constructing identities for themselves" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 35). This is how students construct their individual reading histories, and showcase them in their analyses of particular media texts. It soon became clear that these histories were mostly influenced by their different media

interactions outside of the classroom. Therefore, the students' reading histories provided revealing insights on their identities in terms of the music that they interact with as Puerto Rican young adults.

Given the above overview of reading parameters, I will discuss the ways students read multimodal media texts in my class as compared to monomodal print-based texts, and the different reading and writing practices they engaged in when doing so.

Media literacy outside of the classroom

Music is a very important thing in my life. Margaret

In general, it is known that students prefer studying media to reading literature in English. Indeed, several students in my research seemed hesitant or indifferent to engaging with literary texts from a North American textbook anthology as homework for the course; therefore, the use of media texts presented a rare opportunity for students to actually engage with the kinds of texts that comprise part of their daily routines outside of the classroom. Nevertheless, their reactions to media-based assignments were not uniformly enthusiastic either. When discussing the syllabus at the start of the course, I reviewed each of the texts that would be covered in class. After reviewing the video tapes of that class, I noticed that the students were paying attention but did not noticeably react to the print-based literature that was to be read. Some of them, however, did act surprised when I mentioned a few of the more contemporary popular texts from the media unit, opening their eyes widely, and saying things like, "yeah!" or "nice" with a smile on their faces. Others, however, acted equally unaware of the majority of the media-based texts they would read as part of the narrative unit.

Moreover, while some students had no previous interaction with a number of the texts that were presented in the media unit, they later encountered these in their lives outside of the classroom. For example, as part of my participant observations, Manuel communicated that he

was watching an episode of the cartoon TV series *The Simpsons*, and noticed that they had

played the song "The End" in an episode in which Homer was smoking marijuana. He then went

on to specify that he had noticed that the psychedelic music was connected with the use of

hallucinogenic drugs. Thus, although he was not familiar with the song previously, after

analyzing it and reading about it in class, he was able to come to understandings about its

presence in popular culture texts with which he interacts on a daily basis. Perhaps more

importantly, he engaged in a multimodal reading/analysis of this text outside of the classroom.

On the other hand, as discussed previously, students' musical tastes or preferences can

reveal a great deal about the musical genres that circulate in their particular setting. Though the

participants in my study group can by no means be considered representative of the entire Puerto

Rican population, they provide examples of the kinds of music that some Puerto Rican young

adults interact with in their daily lives. In turn, studying students' musical preferences provides

insight into the presence of rock music in Puerto Rico, a musical genre in need of much further

scholarly study in relation to Puerto Rican cultural studies.

As expected, there was a wide array of musical genres that students regularly listened to.

When asked about rock, specifically, there was also a variety of reactions. For example, while

describing his interactions with rock music texts in an interview, Daniel mentioned that he liked

rock *fresita*.[82] Pushed for detail, he mentioned using MTV as a guide for knowing what's "good"

music, in spite of being aware that part of the function of this media venue is to filter what kind

of artists are 'in.' This points to students' awareness of the effects that corporate media can have

on consumers of the music industry.

Overall, students seemed more enthusiastic about studying media texts than they were

about the literary print-based texts, as these are texts that they have encountered in their media

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[82]*strawberry*- this refers to alternative ballad rock.

consumption outside of class. Furthermore, they admitted to using different media channels to identify new music, in spite of their awareness that this is the purpose of such channels. With this in mind, I was particularly attentive to how students read these kinds of texts after participating in my study. Thus, in the next section, I provide a description of how students perceived the rock musical genre after participating in the rock media unit, a unit of study that further revealed students' perceptions of culture, class, race and gender in contemporary Puerto Rico.

Students' individual and social readings inside and outside the classroom

In this section, I once again take into consideration how students choose the music they like to hear outside of the classroom, but also consider their perceptions about music and identities in the context of Puerto Rico. I do so in order to study how their social and individual interactions with texts affect this process. Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) suggest that the *social character* of reading can "be traced more closely, in the ways in which individuals interpret specific texts or genres" (p. 35). As mentioned in Chapter IV, there is evidence of the students hastily focusing on the ambience that the rhythm or sound songs create, which might suggest a conscious act of ignoring the content of the song for the purpose of entertainment exclusively, but this depends greatly on the context. In one of the interviews, for example, Margaret mentioned that she would not like to analyze songs or videos outside of the classroom because she would feel like she is doing homework, and that she engages with such media in order to escape from the academic responsibilities she has as a student, to be entertained, and to not really think about what she is listening to or watching.

On the other hand, throughout several interviews, the focal participants described the ways in which they choose what it is that they will listen to or watch, or how they 'discover' new music or videos. Several students mentioned the website YouTube.com, which has been, since

its creation in 2005, widely used to share and access videos from television, or personal videos uploaded by different users. Through YouTube, students are able to see music videos and other video clips, such as episodes from their favorite shows or clips that other people upload. More than a decade ago, Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) noticed that for students, "swapping and borrowing texts was thus a means whereby tastes and relationships were formed, and where evaluations and judgments were established and debated" (p.22). Today, these interactions with texts are frequently carried out using an electronic format, especially given the speed and range of the Internet.

YouTube was also a means through which students 'evaluated' or 'debated' media texts. For example, one of the students interviewed for this study mentioned that she would use YouTube to search for music videos that her friends had talked about. Thus, the physical activity of sharing texts by simply talking about them still applies. Consequently, meanings are created in and through social interaction, particularly through talk, in a process where individual and social reading shifts back and forth. In the case of the students interviewed, they specified that they would listen to the song or watch the music video recommended to them by their friends, but that didn't necessarily mean that they would immediately like it. However, after discussing the texts with friends, and further interaction with the song and its lyrics, their opinions may change, hence the interaction between social and individual readings. Therefore, Internet sharing practices seem to contribute to more critical readings and evaluations of media texts than just listening to them in isolation.

Another manifestation of this was witnessed in one of the interviews in which a student described how he applied this exercise to his radio listening practices. Daniel described how he was with a friend while listening to a popular, yet controversial, song on the radio, and was

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struck by the fact that she was singing the song without paying attention to the lyrics. After participating in several exercises in the classroom in which students had to analyze song lyrics, he was actively listening to the lyrics of the song on the radio. The song was called "Kissed a Girl" by Katy Perry, in which the singer relates the experience of kissing a girl, and challenges taboos of sexual orientation by stating that she 'liked it.'

This was the first time Daniel noticed that he was able to 'evaluate' a text and share this evaluation with one of his friends who "had no idea what she was singing about" (personal message, November 24, 2008). Besides students' already-mentioned preference for listening to the rhythm of a song before interpreting its lyrical content, this may have been due to the fact that the song was performed in English, the students' second language. Nevertheless, this student recognized his ability to individually evaluate a text and then share this in a social encounter, which suggests that "talk about popular media also serves functions involved in constructing and negotiating social relationships" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 29). In this case, Daniel claimed that he wanted his friend to be aware of what she was singing and to encourage her to question her understanding of the lyrics, not because the song has lesbian connotations, but because she was singing loudly and might avoid embarrassment. He claimed "*es mejor hacer el ridículo sabiendo lo que haces a hacerlo sin saber lo que haces*" (personal message, February 12, 2009).[83] He later clarified that the "ridiculous" act he referred to was singing at the top of her lungs, and perhaps more importantly, implying a preference for the statements made in the song, even though his friend didn't understand them.[84]

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[83] *"it's better to make a fool of yourself knowing what you're doing, than doing it without knowing what you're doing".*

[84] This clarification was made during post interview questioning to determine if Daniel was questioning her preference for the song because of its lesbian connotations, thus potentially indicating some degree of homophobia on his part. Yet, although it would have been interesting to engage in a conversation about his perceptions in relation to sexual orientation, he focused his response solely on her acting ridiculous by singing loudly, in this way gearing our discussion away from any other possible innuendos he might have been making

To discuss how they listen to music outside of the classroom, the students described various interactions with music. These involve both 'social' and 'individual' constraints. To 'find' new music, students rely on each other, the Internet, radio and, less often, television.[85] This indicates that students do participate in active evaluations of media texts individually as well as socially, particularly outside of the classroom. While these evaluations are based on a wide variety of modes that students did not necessarily address explicitly, I argue that by systematically participating in the analysis of different modes of meaning in the classroom students will carry these practices over to spaces beyond academic settings. In other words, my goal was to help students develop the kinds of analyses of media texts they were already performing outside of the classroom by applying the terminology used to describe the way music and video texts function, as discussed in Chapter III. I was persuaded that such practices would help students find more meaning in the kinds of texts they were already discussing and analyzing in their daily lives.

An example of how I aimed to do this was by having students read "Captain Candelario's Heroic Last Stand" by Rosario Ferré,[86] and then watch a clip from an old television news report on different perceptions of *cocolos* and *rockeros*,[87] in order to later write about connections between political views and music in their final essay. Most students chose to write an argumentative essay on this topic as it was/is present in Puerto Rico. Particularly important, for the purposes of my study, was identifying how politics are related to musical preferences in the

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[85] One would expect television but, as Daniel expressed, students have numerous expenses and paying for cable is one that is unnecessary because you can currently watch most popular television programs via Internet websites, such as YouTube.

[86] In this story, Ferré explores an imaginary futuristic post-independence Puerto Rico, and uses music to describe the split political positions in the island, where the *salseros* who lived in the island's slums were referred to as a threatening group to the Metropoli (US), while the *rockeros* were depicted as a middle class and neutral group that accepted their political fates.

[87] The video can be found in the following link, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ugr-adcn5RM.

students' discourses, as well as the interplay between individual and social positions evidenced in their writing.

While, generally, students noted that musical genres can be associated with a particular nation, Daniel made a more explicit connection between the two "invasions" that Puerto Rico endured, first by Spain and later by the United States, noting that the island has been/is influenced by whichever country is in power. Manuel, on the other hand, made a clearer connection between musical preference and the status of Puerto Rico, specifying that the ELA identified Spanish as our "idiom" [*sic*], suggesting a linguistic influence. Because Spanish is the main language promoted by the longest standing political status of Puerto Rico (ELA), he infers that most of the population would prefer music that is in Spanish. Both accounts conveyed students' understandings of Puerto Rico's political status, which they defined as a territory of the United States, with an autonomous government and various social strata. Pabón's (2002) claim that the term *nation* is constructed through the descriptions and exaltations of all that is 'Puerto Rican,' is supported by the fact that most students agreed that salsa music 'represents' the Puerto Rican nation better than "foreign" rock music.

Several students also associated music with freedom of expression, whereas politics were perceived as limiting or controlling. Margaret, for example, stated that "the music depend of the people, in change the people 'depend' of the politic". This perhaps refers to the notion that music is a cultural phenomenon, whereas politics are related to the laws of a country, or the rules by which a country is governed. Here, then, Margaret focuses on the social implications of politics and music, and the relationship between the two, in a situation where the kind of music that is produced or consumed depends on people, who are in turn shaped by the politics of place.

Daniel's final statement pointed to an understanding of how students' musical preferences are not necessarily fixed to cultural identity, when he stated that "it doesn't matter if you are a Puerto Rican who likes Chinese music, the important thing is that you know who you are". Similarly, Frances Negrón-Muntaner (2007) suggests that "the access to global culture through mass media has produced a context where people may imagine themselves in ways that defy narratives based in fixed identities, including that of colonial" (p. 439-440). In this case, Daniel demonstrated that this was true for some individuals in the context in which he lives, while recognizing, although he does not approve of it, that there are others who relate musical preference to individual political identities. He observed the conflict of identities that arose when salsa fans were perceived solely as nationalists and rock music fans as statehooders (Arévalo, 2004b). Therefore, he focused on individual musical preferences being representative of individual identities, though he had first mentioned the social implications of politics in a nation as being significant in shaping those preferences. Finally, he argued for the importance of simply understanding the reasons why people develop musical preferences related to the particular identities they have assumed.

Overall, the social and individual interactions that students have with texts influence the ways in which they perceive them, as well as how they will perceive other texts in the future. Whether these interactions are social or individual, each one has effects on expanding the students' reading profiles, which I aimed to do in my study and will proceed to describe in the next section.

Expanding students' reading profiles

As teachers, we are constantly choosing the kinds of texts that will be incorporated into our courses, paying close attention to the content that is to be discussed. By doing this we are

contributing to the enrichment of the students' reading profiles. However, when discussing students' reading profiles, it is also important to consider the kinds of interactions that they have had with texts that they have 'read' outside of the classroom. Using music and video media texts allowed students to compare their interactions with these kinds of texts prior and subsequent to participating in the media unit.

While outside of the class students greatly relied on their peers, in class they were mostly motivated to arrive at individual conclusions about such texts, which were later discussed with the class collectively, although there were a few in-class activities where students were initially gathered in small groups. Besides the 'story elements' activity described previously, students were grouped in pairs to discuss elements of intertextuality (see Appendix D for an example of the handout used for such group work). Nevertheless, they all had to read the same texts, and while the print-based literary texts were read with no particular supplementary references, the media texts were discussed with the help of a secondary reading, which would help students understand the sub-genre and/or artist that was to be studied. As previously stated, reading profiles are enriched by making explicit comparisons between texts read, therefore, for some of the songs, I encouraged students to make connections with the print-based literary texts they had read in the narrative unit.

One of the examples where this was applied was in the different interpretations students elaborated in relation to one particular text, the song "Helicopter" by British indie rock band Bloc Party. Some students associated the video's black and white lighting techniques with Bloc Party's singer, who is black, and who critiques (a) white race.[88] However, Betsy mentioned a similarity with the story "D.P." by Kurt Vonnegut, which is about a black orphan boy raised by

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[88] In later class discussions about the text, students established that it was particularly the white American race to whom the singer referred since he asks the character he is criticizing to, "stop being so American" (Okereke, 2005).

an order of nuns in a German town after World War II, in relation to the description of chocolate being compared to dark skin. Here, students made connections between the racial critique highlighted in the lighting of the video, and the explicit use of the word chocolate in both the song´s lyrics as well as the short story. Other students made explicit comments about the anti-American sentiment of the song. Juan, for example stated that "American life style maybe look like an helicopter, an unstable machine which a miracle of adding an helix on the tail to makes it more stable than before". In this case, Juan assumed that the title of the song refers to the American way of life. However, he did not mention what the helix represented for him or how it would cause the miracle of stability. Caryn went on to suggest that "this song is a message of protest for the President in order that it stops the wars and after-taste being waiting for miracles and looks for a solution in you see of allowing that the persons should continue suffering". It should be stated that Juan's WebCT comment was made previous to that of Caryn, and she apparently took his abstract description into consideration, making more concrete connections to contemporary political events. Thus, reading and discussing other people's statements may also affect the students' reading profiles, as these reflections can also be considered texts.

Reading profiles, and the exercise of critically reading, may also be affected by different experiences, even with the same text. For instance, in a WebCT discussion about the messages in "Helicopter," by actively reading it, Manuel admitted that "I listen this song before this moment, and I like. Now, i Understand the message and is so interest". In other words, although he had already *heard* the song he had not previously paid any attention to the content of its lyrics, nor had he seen the video before. More importantly, his prior interaction with the song was based on playing it in the recent video game *Guitar Hero*, in which the user plays classic and contemporary rock songs using a guitar shaped controller. This intriguingly connects the notion

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of being critical to particular modes being emphasized. Here, critical media literacy may have to

take into consideration the multimodal notion that while reading, "any mode may become fore-

grounded; that different modes have potentials that make them better for certain tasks than

others," (Jewitt and Kress, 2003, p. 3) which affects the kind of reading that takes place. Thus, in

an individual context of physically "playing" the song in a guitar-based videogame, Manuel's

focus on guitar playing diminished his attention to the actual content of the song's lyrics, but in

the social context of the classroom it was enhanced.

As Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue, in reading and in talking about what we read

we are "defining our identities as readers" (1994, p. 30). An informative case of the classification

of race in terms of musical preference was the class discussion in relation to the issue of

miscegenation in music and how this inevitably prompts reflections on race. After the students

read "A paler shade of white: How indie rock lost its soul" by Sasha Frere-Jones (2007),[89] they

were able to explore this concept in depth, referring to music and other contexts in which there is

miscegenation.

Daniel looked at this concept through a social perspective, as he recognized in a journal

entry that these racial classifications in music are socially constructed: "I know that 'black'

genres (designed by society), such as R&B or Hip Hop, have their special touch, but in order to

create those genres, they had to be inspired by someone and I'm pretty sure that a white people

were presented," which he associated to what occurred with rock music. He makes an interesting

case, as rock and roll is often seen as an appropriation of black music. For instance, in multiple

televised interviews both Bob Dylan and Keith Rogers admitted listening to blues chord

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[89] In the article, Frere-Jones (2007) describes how rock and roll has historically been influenced by particularly "black" music, such as blues and reggae, mentioning the Rolling Stones and The Clash as examples of this. However, focusing on Arcade Fire, which was the band that students were to read that week, he claims that rock and roll "underwent a racial re-sorting in the nineteen-nineties" (p.176).

progressions in order to incorporate them into their own music. Conversely, more recently, hip hop artists and 2009 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees, Run-DMC, admitted the importance of rock and roll in their initial mixing techniques and in the ensuing evolution of hip hop. Daniel sees a mixture of black and white people participating in the development of both genres even though we tend to categorize these genres as either "black" or "white," thus he recognized how classifications of musical genres are socially constructed, but are also constantly merging.

A further example of this concept is the video for The Offspring's "Pretty fly for a white guy," which portrays a suburban white young man wanting to be (wannabe) like a black, or Latino 'guy' who identifies with the hip hop subculture. Nevertheless, this text was also part of the musical and racial miscegenation discussion, thus, in their journal reactions to this text, the students particularly noted the ways in which The Offspring incorporated the Spanish language and other 'Latin' musical features in the song, which differs from a typical American rock song. In other words, while Latino ethnicity is a big part of this Californian band's upbringing, the students noticed how they characterized racial/ethnic identifications with specific music. Caryn, for example, compared how the character in the music video had to dance like the black dancers to be able to be accepted to the ways that people in the United States identify Puerto Ricans with salsa, and "how they expect us to be able to dance it". While most students focused on the stereotypical descriptions of the different characters in the video, Adelina criticized how women were exploited in the video, by being used merely as sexual objects. Thus, the students were being critical of both the gender and ethnic/racial dynamics that were presented in the music video.

The media discussed over the course of the unit provided heterogeneous 'symbolic resources,' which, according to Buckingham and Sefton Green, "young people may actively use

in seeking to define and to resist the various social identities that are available to them" (1994, p. 30). Therefore, in considering students' class work, I deduced that they were indeed capable of being critical of texts, be these monomodal or multimodal, specifically when focusing on the texts' repercussions in their own lives, or how they related to, or rejected, the meanings they made of each text. In other words, the students' previous interactions with different texts, and talk about these, affected the ways they made sense of other texts, which validates the importance of enriching their reading profiles by encouraging critical consideration of the various texts they encounter in the future, making connections between the previously read texts, and their own lived experiences. As previously discussed, this can be done through the comparison between print-based texts and media texts, group discussions, careful reconsideration of the same text, or questioning individual/social conceptions around a specific issue.

Reading positions in the 'Reading Rock' Series

Another advantage of focusing on the different modes involved in the construction of texts is the awareness of 'misconstructions' of these. Since the students were tuning into the different modes used in rock songs in class, they were able to scrutinize the performances of live bands in the series organized as part of the class curriculum. This exercise enabled students to take a "reading position based on notions of expertise and 'insider knowledge'" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 34). While none of the students were familiar with the songs that were played, as part of the media unit they had already been encouraged to consider the multiple modes used in the bands' song productions and how these contributed to the meaning they made out of the songs. For this reason, it is important to consider in greater detail how students interpreted and critically responded to the performances by the bands.

An interesting case surfaced when the singer of one of the bands admitted to me, privately, that he had made a mistake playing one of the songs. Later, a student indicated that she had noticed when the singer/guitarist had made this mistake. That is, although she was not familiar with the song previously, she noticed that there was a chord progression that did not fit in with the rest of the song, which suggests that she read the performance on the sheerly musical plane, by paying specific attention to the musical structures of the song, which is a more active kind of listening than the preferred sensuous plane (Copland, 2002). Her reading position went from being a passive audience member to an active musical critic, after having participated in class exercises in which she was encouraged to pay close attention to the multiple modalities of a song's production.

This series also allowed me as the researcher to pay attention to the number and the kinds of questions that the students asked the bands. Although I had made a list of questions that the students were to use, just in case they couldn't generate enough dialogue to cover the allotted time for the class, there was no need for it. Students were curious about the kinds of processes a rock band has to go through in order to write songs, organize shows, and establish a name for itself in the rock scene. An interesting question had to do with the identities of these musicians and what they did besides playing rock music. Overall, "learning about popular culture can provide important opportunities for exploring questions of identity and subjectivity, as well as their relationships with broader social forces" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 209). Thus, by gaining insights into the song writing process, the rock music industry and the alternative scene, as well as the personal identities of the musicians, students were certainly able to explore those social forces. Besides being critical of their performances, the students were also curious about the lives of those involved in the rock music scene in Puerto Rico. This might have

been due to the fact that few of them had previously watched a band's performance with the aim of analysis in mind. Although many of them might have seen live performances by other artists, these are artistic performances that are typically based on entertainment alone and do not allow time for audience interaction with the performers.

After having participated in these presentations, students claimed that, although rock was not particularly their favorite musical genre, they were nonetheless able to learn about it. Indeed, they described the experience of watching bands and being able to ask questions to rock musicians in person as something that they hadn't done in any previous class. As a result, the students were able to read the bands' performances from positions that they had previously not even considered possible. As Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) argue, the "intricate nature of relationships both between everyday discourse and academic discourse, and between discourse and critical understanding" (p. 167) can be found in the union of English and media studies. Although teachers sometimes organize multimodal activities of this nature that revolve around the study of drama or poetry, the connection with music, a text that they more typically engage with in their daily lives, affords a rare opportunity to break the monotony of the English classroom.

The notion of transcultural flows (Pennycook, 2007) is one that I use to describe how language, as well as music, is taken up, adapted, or transformed in different contexts. Interestingly, one of the presenters in the 'Reading Rock' Series mentioned a "*flujo de ideas*,"[90] referring to the ways in which a group of Puerto Ricans would share ideas about the different musical aspects of punk shows in which Puerto Rican rock bands play. Guillermo Gómez Álvarez, a guitar player in a recognized punk band[91] and film professor at UPRM, presented his

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[90] *flow of ideas*
[91] La Experiencia de Toñito Cabanillas

documentary on "the" punk scene in Puerto Rico, *La Escena.* While watching the documentary, students laughed at the humorous criticisms of the perceptions of those who listen to, watch performances, or actually play in punk rock bands. They also seemed to enjoy the comical critiques of the mainstream *rock en español*; however, there were some students who declared "*no se metan con ellos*"[92] when the successful Argentinean rock band Enanitos Verdes was mentioned. Clearly, there were at least two different reading positions among this group of students.

A clear distinction was made in the documentary, and among the audience in the amphitheater, between mainstream music listeners and others who prefer more underground music movements (the latter being perceived as more dedicated rock and roll fans). The fact that some students were more interested in mainstream music than these movements might be due to their lack of exposure to rock bands, or simply because of their individual tastes. If meanings of individual preferences are constantly renegotiated through social interactions, then, students came in to the 'Reading Rock' Series with specific reading positions, but after experiencing and questioning rock music performances, and a documentary about the rock music scene in Puerto Rico, their respective positions might have been challenged or at least questioned.

Because of their general lack of exposure to underground rock bands in Puerto Rico, the students were not familiar with any of the groups in the series. Certain students noted that this kind of music is not widely known in Puerto Rico, because, as Betsy stated in her reaction to the series, "the bands are suffering the saturation of other predominant genres like Reggaeton." This was also noted explicitly by both bands in their presentations. In these cases, students either indicated their awareness of the influence that local media such as radio or television have on their music listening practices, where there is a preference for what are considered more 'Puerto

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[92] *don't mess with them*

Rican' genres (reggaetón, salsa, etc.), or they were made aware of this by the bands' comments. Either way, they were exposed to a musical genre that they did not know much about and were able to compare it to the music they usually listened to, reconsidering their reading positions in the process.

Reading histories in students' multimodal presentations

In concordance with the media unit and the classroom objectives, for the oral presentation assignment students were encouraged to employ media that are not frequently found in English classrooms. Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) argue that in addition to reading profiles and reading positions, students also have reading histories, which usually reflect changes over time. In addition, as the students' experiences of texts widens, so does the way that they situate these texts. This could be seen in the work students produced for this assignment, when they not only incorporated notions derived from their prior media consumption, but also transformed them for their particular purposes in the assignment. In order to gain insights into students' reading histories, or the kinds of texts students listened to outside of the classroom, I asked them to choose a song or video that they would typically enjoy listening to or watching, and to analyze it. To encourage the writing component of media literacy practices I also asked the students to prepare a multimodal presentation to share their analyses with the rest of the class. It is important to provide students with an opportunity to illustrate what it is that they prefer to listen to/watch as these provide insights into their identities and social positions (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994). Although these identities or social positions were not openly discussed because of time constraints, students were able to compare their own work and the kind of music that they liked to listen to with those of their peers from the same age group.

As mentioned previously, Margaret opted for using video because it would grab students' attention, as her purpose was to promote the religious rock group Hillsong United. Judging from her own reading history she chose video because she thought it would be adequate for her persuasive purpose. In other words, she was already familiar with Christian rock and brought this knowledge to bear when putting together her presentation for this assignment, thus her previous consumption of this genre constituted part of her reading history. In this case, the video she created is evidence of the way she transformed the kind of text she was already familiar with and resituated it. For example, in a reflection about her presentation Margaret stated, "I want to invite indirectly my classmates to think about God, reflection about their lives and establish a curiosity to meet God or simply to say them: 'God is here for you and is good have God in our lives'". Therefore, she presented an argument that invited other students to accept her religious beliefs. Her choice of religious music attests to Christian faith-based belief systems in Puerto Rico and students' affiliations with these. This is an example of an individual identity based on the social character of reading, which shows how reading history aids in the construction of identities. By focusing on the promotion of Christian beliefs, Margaret provided a glimpse of her identity outside of the classroom.

On the other hand, referring back to Caryn's magazine in *Figure 4.3*, it is particularly interesting to note the San Juan address that she provided for the magazine office. This is relevant because most newspaper, magazine, television and radio media are located in San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, and perhaps she considered this by specifying this city as the publishing source for her magazine, as opposed to the local context of her university in western Puerto Rico. This implies that, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) suggest, the institutions that create new technologies, and I might add the contexts where these technologies are developed,

"have power and cultural prestige" (p. 90). As such, by specifying San Juan as the area in which her production was published, Caryn demonstrated her awareness that it is common for other media productions in the island to have publishing houses in San Juan.

While the students participated in these multimodal presentations, they had to consider possible reasons for their peers' multimodal analysis of songs, and as they compared these with their own they considered not only why the texts were analyzed in the ways they were, but also how they might be analyzed differently. When describing the reading and writing process, Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) argue that it "should be seen as an inherently *social* process, as something which takes place within, and is motivated by, a particular set of social relationships" (p. 164). This did, in fact, happen in the class. Although the students were choosing 'their' songs, it became evident that these decisions were part of a 'social process' or 'social relationships'.

This social process could be observed when students' productions indicated manifestations of their socially shaped ideologies. An example of this was Adelina's discussion of infidelity in Usher's *Confessions*, a series of songs in which the singer tells the story of how he 'cheats' on his girlfriend. In this case, she discussed the multiple consequences of the concept of infidelity in society, such as divorce, which creates single mothers and children with absent fathers. To further discuss infidelity in terms of gender, she interviewed ten students from the university; five females and five males, asking if they believed the situations described by Usher were normal or acceptable in our society. While presenting a poster with the results of these interviews she stated that "*obviamente los hombres van a simpatizar mas con la situación,*"[93] as 60% of them said that it was 'ok', as opposed to only 20% of females who sympathized with the situation. Subsequently, she clarified that this was because males would identify more with

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[93] *obviously the men were more sympathetic to the situation*

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Usher, who is male himself. Thus, she implies that the students' decisions were not based on critical considerations of the issue, but rather on some kind of male camaraderie.

An exceptional case in which transcultural flows of music were manifested was the case of Juan's song *Anti-Thesis*. Despite the fact that this student has a hearing disability, he was the only student who composed an original song. His song was based on Antonio Cabán Vale's *Antonia*, in which the recognized Puerto Rican songwriter criticized the assassination of a student from the University of Puerto Rico by the ROTC in a strike against military presence in the UPR-Río Piedras campus in the 1970's. In spite of the political implications of the song on which it is based, "Anti-Thesis" is a plea for peace and understanding, as well as a criticism of militarism.

Figure 5.1-Example of an image used in Juan's video

To present his song he also prepared a video[94] with images underscoring the contentment that can be derived from the beauty and tranquility of nature. In addition, he also used explicit imagery from war sites and the site of the murder criticized in Vale's song, as well as murals related to the event, such as the one depicted in *Figure 5.1.* This contrast was explained in his lyrics as well as in superimposed sentences in the song's *cuatro* solo. While the images paralleled the notions highlighted in the song, the use of the *cuatro* is a significant example of how students' reading histories could be recognized in their multimodal productions. The fact that Juan had previously stated in class that he liked *nueva trova* explains the use of a *cuatro* in his song, as this is an instrument that is not only typically used in Puerto Rican *nueva trova*, or protest music, but is also considered a national icon and has been used in a wide array of other musical genres.

Despite the fact that Juan uses the guitar and sings in English, the use of the *cuatro* might cause one to believe that this is indeed a Puerto Rican rock song. However, in addition to the use of English, there was another transcultural manifestation in the song with the integration of the Japanese word *Onegai*, meaning *please,* which was entirely unexpected. When asked about it, Juan mentioned that he enjoys Japanese rock songs, which he interacts with while watching anime.[95] While designing his song, he took his musical influences into consideration, and incorporated them in several ways. He went on to specify that his *cuatro* solo was actually based on an electric guitar solo in one of the songs from the Japanese band Aqua Time. If "transnational cultural products, in whatever direction they appear to be traveling, do not simply replace local ones but are refashioned and given new meaning" (Connell and Gibson, 2003, p. 191, as cited in Pennycook, 2007, p. 94), then this is an excellent example of the ways in which

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[94] The video can be found in the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Pi-_kG4wjk
[95] Anime is a style of animation developed in Japan, characterized by stylized colorful art and often adult themes.

musical features from another culture can be transformed and combined with traditionally considered Puerto Rican musical expressions, as explained in Chapter II.

If creativity and reflection are some of the most important aims of media education (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994), then Juan certainly was one of the exceptional cases in this research project. In describing a Malaysian hip-hop artist, Pennycook (2007) points out the "clear sense of both locality and a global hip-hop community" (p. 3) in his work. Both these aspects can be identified in Juan's song, as he combined local sounds, the Puerto Rican *cuatro* and the acoustic guitar, typically used in *nueva trova,* with the global rock convention of guitar solos. Learning about the particular reading histories of the students discussed in the examples above was important because it demonstrates an interaction with a wider array of texts than might normally be expected.

Students' reading practices

As previously stated, the position I took while studying students' reading practices is that being "critical" is not a higher state of grace into which the elect are received, but a social practice that occurs in specific contexts (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994). In light of this, my aim was to find out how this 'social practice' was carried out in the specific context of the English classroom. Studying students' individual interpretations of texts, created an opportunity to explore the different readings that students engaged in while interacting with rock music and videos. Issues raised by these interpretations included the relationship between music and politics, musical and racial miscegenation, issues of language in music preferences, as well as other social issues analyzed by students in their multimodal presentations.

Initially, students characterized their music listening practices as individual acts, the sole purpose of which was entertainment. However, when pressed further they admitted to making

evaluations about the kinds of songs they prefer in a more social environment, with friends, and particularly via online venues. After participating in the media unit, several students admitted to consciously paying close attention to the lyrics of the songs they listened to, and one of them went as far as to encourage a friend to question her preference for a song she was publicly singing. Lastly, they were asked to write their final essay on the relationships between music preference and political points of view. While some admitted that the language policies of a place may affect the musical preferences of the majority of the population, others admitted that there may be individual identities within a nation that do not necessarily signify political affiliations. Thus, there is an apparent interplay between social and individual readings (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994) in the ways students individually listen to music, how they debate different evaluations of music texts socially, and the ways they express their opinions about the relationships between music, language, and politics.

During the course, students enriched their reading profiles by reading a wide range of texts, comparing them with other texts they had previously read, by considering the same text as it was experienced in different contexts, and interacting with other people's opinions about specific texts. Students were encouraged to compare their ideas about particular topics as they were presented in the printed and audiovisual texts read in class. There were also cases in which the students admitted to having experienced a text differently in a context outside of the classroom. In their discussions they were able to make connections and formulate different 'conclusions' about specific issues they identified in the music videos studied, such as the exploitation of the female body, as well as stereotypes having to do with race and music preference. After having the students participate in such exercises, I became aware of how their

reading profiles affected the ways in which they interacted with various kinds of texts, and of the kinds of discussions provoked by specific issues addressed in these texts.

An advantage of introducing students to different media conventions is that students' reading positions may shift. Before learning about these conventions, students in the class tended to engage with music and music videos rather quickly, or superfluously. Afterwards, they considered the multiple meanings that these conventions could imply more carefully. This happened during the 'Reading Rock' Series, when several students took up alternative positions. One of these positions was that of an expert with a kind of insider knowledge (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994) about music. This occurred when students read/studied the musicians' performances and were able to discern mistakes in them. The other example of how students may have shifted their positions occurred when they analyzed the role of mainstream radio in promoting different musical genres and the effects of the policies of these radio stations. However, the success of this unit should not be measured by whether the students' positions were changed or not. The main objective was for them to reconsider their positions carefully, and to better understand their own identifications, in terms of the identities presented in the texts as well as their musical preferences. This is part of the overall goal of having students engage in critical considerations about the repercussions of their reading practices.

Students' reading positions were also affected by their reading histories, which were showcased in their analyses of self-selected media texts. These analyses demonstrated which kinds of media students preferred to consume, which media they preferred to use for their multimodal projects, and the social concerns they preferred to explore in the songs they chose. Students manifested their ideologies in different ways in these projects. As discussed above, Juan's presentation was particularly interesting to analyze because his creative presentation

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allowed me to decipher his reading histories, as evidenced in his song, "Anti-Thesis." Therefore, cases such as this were significant in demonstrating how different influences can shape the reading histories of Puerto Rican students in diverse ways.

Overall, my research supports Buckingham and Sefton Green's (1994) claim that literacy is not exclusively an act of individual cognition, but rather develops through a set of social practices and relationships (p. 213). Focusing on students' means of gaining access to music, on the differences between individual media reading practices and those performed in the context of the English classroom, on their interpretations of different media, and on their multimodal production processes helped me understand the reading profiles, reading positions and reading histories of this particular group. All of these affected students' reading practices. The study showed how the subjective stance of each individual student shaped his or her reading position. But it also showed how students evaluated and renegotiated their reading positions by participating in social interactions around the same texts, and how these interactions helped them expand their reading profiles and enrich their reading histories.

Comparing the students' interactions with both media and print-based texts provided me with the opportunity to judge how critical students were with each of the texts. Indeed, students formulated critical assumptions about media texts, although, as previously mentioned, this would vary depending on the context. My overall focus on multimodality, however, allowed me to observe how their focus on particular modes, which is in itself dependent on the text and the context, determined the kinds of reading that students could engage in.

While the different readings and writings that students engaged in while participating in the media unit have been discussed in detail above, I must reiterate that the reading and writing practices that students engaged in while participating in this class were necessarily influenced by

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conceptions they already had concerning the issues in question. It was, therefore, important to consider this particular group of Puerto Rican students' assumptions about particular social issues, and how these informed the way they read the different texts they encountered in their daily lives.

As part of the poststructuralist stance I adopted, it is of utmost importance to consider my own participation in this research, and how it may have affected the outcomes of my study in the process of exploring the social practices delineated above. From choosing the texts that were to be used in the unit, to the implementation and teaching strategies that I used to do so, as well as the data gathering techniques and how these affected the students' interactions, it is relevant to take these into consideration while analyzing my findings. Thus, in the next chapter I address how my own subjectivities affected the data I gathered as I discuss how my assumptions about multimodality and critical media literacy may have affected my analysis and interpretation.

Chapter VI- Un/settling subjectivities

A practitioner's perceptions of multimodality and critical media literacy applications

> *It is by knowing where you stand that you are able to judge where you are.*
> *(Welty, 1956, p. 67, as cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 260)*

Rethinking positions

In this chapter, I actively examine my subjectivities by addressing my own views on multimodality and critical media literacy before, during, and after exploring these concepts in a literature-based composition course in a public institution of higher education in western Puerto Rico. It is important to discuss my own roles in this research process, as they inevitably affected the ways in which the research was framed, described, and analyzed. I therefore aim to provide a discussion of the 'conclusions' I reached after studying my students' reading practices while foregrounding the multiple subjectivities that came into play as I made connections between these and the theoretical areas addressed in this study.

Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) suggest that there can be multiple subjectivities that are constantly changing, implying that identity is constructed through the different 'subject positions' embodied in discourse. This is relevant to the ways I "read" and "wrote" my students' reading practices and points to how the positions I adopted while describing these are constantly evolving. It also explains my reluctance to refer to this section as *the* conclusion, since the particular perspectives I presently adopt influence the writing, but are certainly subject to change, which underscores the impossibility of one fixed and everlasting conclusion.

Since I myself am the subject of this chapter, one who is constituted "within discourse and cultural practice" (Pillow and St. Pierre, 2000, p. 6), it is important to point out that as this curriculum was developed and implemented, I explored my own views of multimodality and critical media literacy by taking into account my own "biases, values and assumptions and

actively writing them into the research" (Creswell, 2005, p. 50). Through such reflexive

processes, a researcher and her readers can arrive at a better understanding of how her research

process was guided and how she came to analyze and interpret her study in particular ways and

not others. Biases and assumptions based on my subjectivities cannot be resolved, but they can

certainly be mediated by an explicit discussion of how they informed the research.

In addition to this reflexive approach to writing about my subjectivities, "poststructuralist

concerns and questions—about language, texts, interpretation, subjectivity, for example—

specifically lend themselves to larger historical, social and cultural questions" (Marshall, 1992,

p.8). Therefore, I will also explore these larger contexts while considering the ways in which my

subjectivities influenced how I approached, analyzed, and interpreted my students' reading

practices.

In the following sections I aim to provide a glimpse of my understandings of the two

theories that were applied in the process of this particular research project, multimodality and

critical media literacy, followed by closing statements about the limitations and contributions of

this study, and some suggestions for further research.

Multimodality

In *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education,* Bové

(1990) posits that poststructuralists should ask the following questions about any discourse or

cultural practice: "How does it function? Where is it to be found? … What are its social effects?"

(in Pillow and St. Pierre, 2005, p. 8). In studying and defining education, or any other discourse,

the answers to these questions provide more complex notions about the subjects described. Thus,

by discussing what the concept of multimodality meant to me prior to studying how my research

participants engaged with multimodal texts, and how my understandings of multimodality may

have shifted after studying it in depth, I complicate my explanations of the assumptions I had/have about this theory.

When first considering multimodality as a theoretical framework for this study, the concept seemed clear; I thought my approach was multimodal because I would be focusing on audiovisual texts, which clearly involve more than just print-based texts. However, after reading scholarly literature in the area, I became aware that while multimodality does refer to the use of more than one mode in the design of a product, it also refers to a type of communication. This communication is a "process in which a semiotic product or event is both articulated *and* interpreted or used" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20). Thus, the concept of multimodality was not only a theoretical justification for the kinds of texts I was using in the classroom, but one I could also engage in *my* analysis of how students interacted with multimodal texts. However, I came to this realization after collecting all of my data.

As mentioned in Chapter III, students did not explicitly participate in multimodal analyses as described by Kress and Van Leewuen (2001), but they were encouraged to consider the different modes of meaning in media texts to be able to interpret the media texts, just as they were exposed to literary conventions when studying print literary texts. In retrospect, having them focus on discourse, distribution, design, and production in addition to the narrative, music, and film terminology would have been too much for them to grasp at once. The students would benefit more by being able to describe the modes that they used to make meaning, as opposed to engaging in analysis of the reasons why those particular modes come into play. Since the students were introduced to terminology that they could use to describe music and film conventions, I did provide them with tools they could use to describe their analyses. Not asking students to perform multimodal analyses may have been a necessary limitation in the design of

the research project imposed by time constraints and the scope of the class (a Basic English composition course). However, given that the students did manage to learn how to use specific academic discourses to interpret multimodal texts in a short period of time, it did not seem to negatively affect the quality of students' learning.

For the 'Reading Rock' Series, because most of the participating members in the bands were friends of mine, they were very much involved in the preparations for the event in terms of organization, promotion and design. In a way, this series was my own multimodal presentation. It took a specific process to design, and required attention to the discourses used in the design, which later on influenced the way the series was received (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). While planning the design for the series, there were some tensions between the bands' and my own visions for the related activities.

For example, at one point I presented a member of one of the bands with a preliminary promotional flyer for the event. After thoroughly studying it, he mentioned that the information was correct, but that the 'design' should not be exclusively academic, and that the activity should be promoted like any 'rock show' flyer that could grab the attention of the university population writ large. The multimodal nature of promotional images, specifically, made me aware of what the band members had in mind as the sign for the series. As Jewitt and Kress (2003) argue "a sign functions both in representation and in communication as a representation of the sign maker's meaning. At the same time, a sign functions in the communication of these meanings adapted to the intended reader" (p. 11). In other words, the 'sign' would be communicating or providing a representation of what would be happening in the series, and thus the band members were concerned with how the prospective participants would read it. In a larger cultural context, then, there was an inherent tension in having a rock band perform in an academic setting, where

the bands wanted to promote particular readings of their products, but were also aware that students would be engaging in academic readings of their performances, an event that typically doesn't occur. Paying attention to what the musicians contributed to the design of the series is consistent with the poststructuralist idea that meaning is something that we collectively construct.

Moreover, the students' presentations of their own multimodal texts as interpretations of another text enabled me to compare my expectations of how they would use media with what actually occurred. While analyzing the students' productions I observed their "medium of execution," or "the material substance drawn into culture and worked over cultural time" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 6). I did this by examining the students' use of different modes in their multimodal productions and how they took them up from specific cultural perspectives. This allowed me to explicitly consider their reliance on different modes of meaning-making. As a teacher interested in media studies, and as this was an assignment that pertained to media texts, I assumed that most of the students would engage in multimodal productions involving communication media. Nevertheless, while some students did use modes such as videos, music or magazines, most of them used modes that are more commonly used in English classrooms, such as Power Point, print-based collages, and print-based handouts. This confirmed my previous belief that students do engage in reproductions of practices in English classrooms by utilizing presentation methods that they are regularly asked for in previously taken courses. However, this might also be a significant finding in terms of the students' socioeconomic status and their technological abilities.

I found Kress and Van Leewuen's (2001) theory of communication useful in analyzing the data gathered from the study. Considering the discourse, design, production and distribution

of texts and events in the classroom, as well as outside of it, allowed me to pay attention to the implications of using or teaching specific texts in certain ways. Because of the fact that I only realized the possibility of applying these theoretical concepts to my data analysis after collecting the data, it was particularly troublesome to separate the data into categories like discourse, design, production and distribution because the categories tended to overlap. Although it would have been useful to have engaged in data gathering taking these concepts into consideration, which would have provided opportunities for recognition and further exploration of each, it was still useful for me to consider them subsequent to data collection and to explore how they played out in the classroom. Because the texts that students interact with outside of the classroom are becoming progressively more multimodal, multimodality is another academic discourse that might be fruitfully taught and applied by students in the classroom.

Critical media literacy

To understand the multiple subjectivities that influenced the study in terms of the findings concerning critical media literacy, I actively consider the types of reading that I myself engaged in before, during, and after discussing the print, audio and audiovisual texts chosen for the media unit under study.

In the beginning of the project, before reading various perspectives on critical media literacy, my teaching stance was based on 'saving' students from particular media influences. Specifically, my aim was to make students aware of their misunderstandings, assuming they had any, about the rock and roll music genre. Nevertheless, after reviewing pertinent scholarly literature on students' media literacy practices (Buckingham, 1998; Buckingham, 2004; Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994; Gee, 2003; Sefton Green, 2006), I began to realize that students might indeed already be critical in terms of evaluating media consumption practices,

especially given particular social contexts. This would certainly be confirmed as I conducted my own study. At the time, however, doubts remained as to the extent of this capacity. Notwithstanding, I kept in mind the possibility that students may not exercise this capacity in formal sites of schooling, as most of their reading practices in the English classrooms focus on responses to readings that they would not normally engage in outside of class.

While creating the media unit, I must admit that the texts chosen (see Appendix A) reflected my own musical predilections. I intended to enrich my students' reading profiles with readings about rock music texts and the analysis of rock music and videos. Nonetheless, these texts were not solely chosen based on personal preference, as I had to conduct extensive research in order to identify rock-based texts that would explicitly connect to the content of the short stories that would be read. I was obliged to select these stories from a required textbook, which provided a limited amount of short stories to choose from, and which also guided the content of the class discussions. This is one of the limitations of the systematic use of a particular departmental textbook for specific courses, a constraint that merits further research in the future.

While evaluating the ways in which I interpreted the varied meanings that students constructed for different texts, I was obliged to take into consideration my own previously held beliefs and understandings about them. Buckingham (2004), states that "within media education, the concept of 'audience' relates to the awareness of one's own and others' responses to, and readings of, the media" (p.19). In order to understand my own responses, I reflexively considered how I read the print and media texts assigned to students in the course prior to and during their implementation, and compared my own readings and responses to theirs. The readings and positions I had about the texts definitely shifted in the process.

The fact that I am a Puerto Rican who prefers rock music and that I was incorporating rock music texts in an ESL classroom certainly influenced some of the ways in which I analyzed students' interactions with rock music. It also affected how I presented particular texts and topics in the space of the classroom. St Pierre (2000) notes that "women construct their subjectivities within the limit and possibilities of the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them" (p. 258). In other words, my position as a *rockera* may have, at different moments, conflicted with or complemented my identity as instructor. For example, as a person with a decided preference for communication media since early childhood - from the time I pretended to be a radio DJ playing my favorite songs to the present time in which my academic studies encourage me to actively consider the multiple meanings in the media texts I encounter - I must admit that I had predetermined expectations in relation to students' interaction with different media. Because of this, when students first expressed their own preferences for listening to music merely as background "noise," or in a passive manner, I was motivated to engage them in critical readings of rock songs so that they could transfer this practice to their daily lives with texts that they would typically enjoy. This is a practice that I constantly engage in with all of the texts I encounter, thus I was motivated to likewise encourage students to systematically analyze texts that might not have been of their preference. In doing so, I anticipated this practice would carry over to other texts they do like.

In spite of my critique in Chapter II of the academic focus on musical genres from the past that saturate the literature about music cultures in Puerto Rico, I decided to follow a generational or chronological approach to the teaching of rock media texts. This was also due to my own exposure to video documentaries that chronicled the development of the rock and roll

music genre.[96] Although this was helpful in providing students with relevant background information about the genre, when engaged in a final group discussion about the media unit, some students claimed that the older texts were hard to understand, and that I was trying to cover too much in too little time. Nevertheless, when Manuel expressed to me personally that he had recognized one of the texts studied in the unit, the chronological approach I employed seemed to have been useful. Therefore, I acknowledge that the extensive focus on providing texts from different time periods and sub-genres may have proven to be overwhelming for some students, but am also convinced that some students may now recognize these texts, and that they will bring to mind the critical analyses in which they engaged.

On the other hand, the ideas that I had about the texts I chose myself definitely changed during the process of conducting my own research, particularly in class discussions when students pointed out different ideas about them. Although I was familiar with the media texts prior to the development of the media unit, after researching them in greater depth in terms of context, content, and authorship, my understandings and assumptions about these texts shifted and were also enriched by my students' critical readings and responses to them. This was certainly the case in the discussions focusing on Blink-182's music video for "Stay together for the kids" in which students pointed out several symbols that they connected with the theme of 'divorce' that I had not considered before. Conversely, as in the case of Manuel's readings of Block Party's "Helicopter," students also benefited from my prompting them to consider alternative modes of meaning, and how these affected the overall meanings they might make of the media texts studied. Therefore, both the students and I participated in an interplay of individual and social readings of the texts that comprised the media unit.

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[96] The ones that influenced me the most in the development of the media unit were *The History of Rock and Roll* (1995) and the recent VH1 Classic documentary *The Seven Ages of Rock*.

When considering the 'Reading Rock' Series and the bands' concern with the public's perceptions of them, I became curious about the implications of this activity for the rock music scene in the western area of Puerto Rico, one in which I have participated in since my early teenage years. Surprisingly, all of the activities were transmitted through the recently created *Radio Colegial*,[97] whose broadcasters also asked the artists to provide their music digitally for them to play on the radio. In this sense we both shared an interest in promoting local rock bands. Thus, by organizing this activity I provided my students and the audience writ large with a glimpse into the rock music scene in Puerto Rico, specifically in the area of Mayagüez. This was also facilitated by the support of rock music enthusiasts including the individuals working with *Radio Colegial*, as well as the artists highlighted in the series.

In the end, numerous students admitted having enjoyed the series as a component of their English course curriculum, and particularly their interactions with the musicians. My objective, however, was not only for my own students to reconsider their reading positions around rock music, but also to invite other students from the university and the general UPRM public. Intriguingly, a majority of students who attended the presentations were not from my course section and attended because they had seen the flyer, read the e-mail I had sent to the entire university population, or heard about it by word of mouth. This means that the rock fans who attended this series were attracted by the opportunity of learning more about this genre in Puerto Rico, much as I am. In addition, the presence of these *rockero/as* enabled my students participate in reflections about rock music's "*cultural* status" (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994, p. 62). The event, therefore, surpassed my expectations, not only because my own students were able to engage in reconsiderations of the cultural status of the rock musical genre, but also because

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[97] University radio that is transmitted through a website

students who were not enrolled in my class were able to participate in an event in which they could explore their identities as *rockero/as* with the *rockeros* who were presenting their material.

While this chapter focuses on my subject position as a teacher, it is important to mention that I also played the role of organizer in the case of the 'Rocking and Reading' series. This series constituted my own multimodal presentation since I chose particular texts and considered the academic implications of encouraging students to engage in discussions about them with the authors/artists. For the last band that played, I provided an introduction that provided a comparison of how Copland (2002) describes a music writing process that is similar to the academic essay writing process, in that there must be a pre-writing stage, multiple drafts, and revisions of the texts. Consequently, a dynamic amalgamation of identities occured when the *rockera* in me was organizing the event and presenting rock songs – much like I had pretended to do when I was a child – whereas the teacher in me was focusing on the bands' discussions of their song creation process.

The students' presentations definitely provided information about their media consumption and reading practices, specifically their reading histories, and also made me reflect on my own assumptions. While I specified that they could analyze *any* kind of music text, as a *rockera* I would have liked for more students to have chosen the rock music genre. However, after analyzing students' work, and reading more about young adults' critical media literacy (Alvermann, 2000) I must admit that their selection and analysis of texts that they would typically enjoy outside of the classroom was more applicable to their own life practices. Moreover, I realize that I might have incorporated more instances in which students, rather than the teacher, chose the media texts to be discussed in class. Despite their freedom to select a musical selection of their preference for the multimodal presentation, some students claimed not

to have any idea about what text they should choose. Although I suggested a number of options and encouraged them to be creative and original in this regard, some neglected their personal preference for reggaetón because they assumed that using a rock text would assure a good grade. This became evident when one of the students expressed frustration about how to present her song, and was considering changing her song to another one from the reggaetón genre. I reminded her that the kind of text that she chose should be one that she enjoyed because she would be doing research about it, writing an essay, and presenting it to the class. Yet, while she acted surprised when reminded of this, she still completed her research and presentation on Evanescence's "Bring me to life". Optimistically, I suggest that this student was eager to put her unfolding knowledge of rock, multimodality, and critical media literacy into practice. It is equally possible, however, that her intention was to give a presentation that could be perceived as 'pure understanding' of the material studied, thus, she could have chosen rock music primarily for the examiner's benefit (Buckingham and Sefton Green, 1994). This is one example of the disadvantages of having to grade the students' work, and having the responsibility of examining their efforts.

To try to mitigate this, in my evaluation, I put much less weight on the content of students' presentations and instead constructed a rubric that would enable me to focus on their oral presentation skills, such as preparation, voice, posture, time, contact with audience, and creativity. While I encouraged students to produce texts such as brochures, posters, paintings, or even videos, poems, and songs, and many of them did, others relied heavily on the more 'traditionally academic' Power Point presentations to present their analyses, a product that is commonly used in academic settings, but not in the music industry. This trend signals another instance of the reproduction of habitual practices in English classrooms. While the repeated use

of Power Point might have been avoided by requiring a specific presentation format, I feel that, the emphasis on students' reading histories was more important in this case. It enabled students to use and apply what they already knew, and consequently presented me with another opportunity to explore their everyday media practices.

While rereading my data using Buckingham and Sefton Green's (1994) formulation of the social aspects of reading, that is, reading profiles, reading positions, and reading histories, I observed clear instances among my own research participants that illustrated these parameters "in action" and provided me with further insights in relation to students' reading practices. In addition, the different perspectives (multimodality and critical media literacy) via which I studied these instances influenced how I finally described them. As happened when I analyzed the multimodal dimensions of the study, these parameters tended to overlap, each one intricately interconnected with other parameters. Nevertheless, considering them each in turn proved useful as I explored the significance of students' work throughout the media unit in relation to the research questions that guided the study.

In terms of the position taken while implementing the media unit, a balance between 'saving' students from the media or leaving them to their own devices seems difficult to achieve. The former obliges us to take a missionary stance toward our students in relation to our use of media in the classroom, while the latter requires us to avoid it altogether. Thus, a balance between the two, as difficult as it may be, is the most suitable solution. Rather than "saving" my students, I have come to describe my own practices in the implementation of the media unit as providing students with specific tools to support critical readings of texts. Particular analytical frameworks and academic discourses helped students to reconsider their readings of the everyday texts with which they engage and to draw their own realizations about these. Applying media

studies in English classrooms, and analyzing the results, while questioning the purpose of using specific processes, provided opportunities to study this unexplored field in Puerto Rico. It is evident now that students in this context are indeed capable, and should more frequently engage in analyses of media texts in English classrooms. In so doing, they learn to make connections between academic discourses and social issues within texts that are pertinent to their everyday lives.

So far in this chapter I have explored the multiple subjectivities that may have affected the ways I carried out the research. I also considered the ways in which these subjectivities may have influenced my understandings and applications of the theoretical perspectives adopted to conceptualize this study. Adopting poststructuralism as my overarching epistemological framework obliged me to turn a critical eye on the ways "discourse, knowledge, truth, reality, rationality, and the subject" (Pillow and St. Pierre, 2000, p. 17, n. 2) were addressed in the process. It was therefore necessary for me to explore the notions posed by Pillow and St. Pierre (2000) and to consider how they affected the positions I took up in terms of multimodality and critical media literacy while discussing the overall findings of the study in this chapter.

Contributions of this study

This study aimed at exploring students' multimodal critical media literacy practices in an English class in a public university in the western region of Puerto Rico. It is clear that students who participated in the study relied on a variety of modes depending on the texts they interacted with. This was true for both their reading and writing practices. For instance, the participants in this research project used a wide array of modalities to interpret and produce monomodal as well as multimodal texts. By doing this they were participating in "(inter)active events" where knowledge was gathered and transformed" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 9). This was

especially the case when they performed their own 'scholarly' research in relation to a self-selected media text, to later present their analyses in multimodal formats.

While looking back on the process of implementing this unit I especially appreciate how, at its conclusion, students admitted that they were now motivated to consider the literal content of songs and/or music videos they interact with, as well as the social implications taken up in these. My focus on helping students to think critically outside of the classroom might suggest that students' formal education is secondary to their development outside of that context. Yet, while this thesis has been concerned with types of texts that are not commonly used in the classroom, I believe that the educational system does indeed have the potential to help students become more critical human beings. The 'conclusions' that students reached in class in relation to monomodal texts demonstrated their previous understandings of topics discussed in this context, but also showed that they were motivated to consider them in other kinds of con/texts. As Buckingham and Sefton Green (1994) suggest, "the vital need is surely to preserve what is good about print literacy while at the same time embracing egalitarian and creative potential of the new media technologies" (p. 217). In short, we must find ways in which media education can improve students' current understandings and practices and to elaborate upon them, as many of my students did in their different interactions with media texts both inside and outside the classroom.

Exploring the cultural issues that were part of the media unit (rock music and politics, racial and musical miscegenation) and students' analyses of self-selected texts in relation to issues of gender, class, and political persuasions, provided interesting insights as to this particular group's perspectives on such issues. Also, exploring the students' media preferences in relation to the rock music genre provided insights into issues of language in music preference, as

well as 'transnational cultural manifestations' (Pennycook, 2007). This became evident when students chose to analyze texts from different cultures in their multimodal presentations, as well as when they used different conventions for their own multimodal productions. As young adults studying in the academic context of the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez, these students provided examples of the multiple subjectivities that they bring to classrooms and how these affect their readings of texts they encounter daily.

Lastly, yet of no less importance, this research aimed to address a significant gap in the scholarly literature focusing on multimodality and/or critical media literacy in the actual context of Puerto Rico. As mentioned in Chapter II, there are a few studies that take the implementation of media texts in Puerto Rican schools into consideration, but none of these have considered the multimodality of texts that can be used in English classrooms. After creating and implementing a media unit that focused on rock music, and engaging in thorough analysis of its repercussions, I can comfortably state that the students who participated in the study did, in fact, appreciate the incorporation of media texts and were able to critically analyze such texts. Moreover, the opportunity that they were given to analyze self-selected texts was also one that motivated students to participate in class. Because the English language is a second language in this context, students frequently lack the motivation to learn it, especially when the texts that are read in these classes have no relevance to their lives. Nevertheless, as this study demonstrated, incorporating media texts focusing on multiple modalities, and critically considering how these affect the overall meanings that can be made of such texts, benefited students in their English acquisition process. After participating in the study, students could apply the techniques learned for engaging with multimodal media texts outside of the classroom. Overall, then, this study paves the way for other scholars to consider the application of multimodality and critical media

literacy theories both inside and outside the English classroom, as well as other disciplines that may benefit from such perspectives.

Pedagogical implications

After using media texts in my class, I am in a position to share my findings and pinpoint recommendations for multimodal critical media literacy in Puerto Rico. Focusing on the multimodality of texts and on students' reading practices while they engaged in a study of media texts and after, provided examples of the modes students relied on for meaning-making, and the kinds of discussions generated around texts from popular culture.

It is relevant to point out how culturally relevant the texts the students engaged with in the study were. This means that the students typically interacted with these kinds of texts outside of the classroom. Although the majority of the students were unfamiliar with the majority of the rock music texts I used as part of the unit, there were several instances in which students admitted interacting with these texts at times of leisure. Given the historical trajectory I outlined in Chapter II, rock can indeed be a culturally relevant text. It is particularly interesting to note the contradiction of rock being considered a foreign musical genre, i.e. not Puerto Rican, yet one that a number of Puerto Ricans identify with. Thus, students had to explore this paradox by considering how their own Puerto Rican identities affected their perceptions of rock and, conversely, how rock affected their own perceptions of Puerto Rican identities.

They also chose one media text that was of their preference, and for this they necessarily considered texts that are part of their present culture, even if these were in Spanish. The fact that they were allowed to use texts in Spanish is consonant with the bilingual stance I described in Chapter II. I encourage teachers to use students' musical preferences as texts, because it will allow the students to go 'beyond' the rhythm of the song and look into the implications of its

content, while encouraging systematic consideration of other texts they may encounter. Indeed, there is nothing that requires a student to write about or discuss a media text in the language in which that media text was produced. If this were the case, Betsy would have been required to present Rammstein's song in German. Rather, the students' multi-layered and multilingual work with music and video points to ways in which they creatively combined languages and modes to engage in savvy analyses of contemporary popular culture and social issues. Interestingly, adding media texts to an English classroom also allows students to undertake literal consideration of the multimodal texts they may encounter as part of their popular culture. While these instances are also determined by context, this is only one example of how the interdisciplinary collaboration between multimodality and critical media literacy can be successfully incorporated into the English classroom.

Though my research makes inroads in these fields of scholarly inquiry, there were nevertheless some limitations in relation to pedagogical practices. Because of the focus on media texts, there is an implicit need for audiovisual equipment, which is a significant concern for many teachers, particularly in the public sector. As with most courses that require such equipment, there were occasions when the equipment was unavailable or it simply would not work. At the same time, regardless of problems like temporary power outages or equipment malfunctions, I was often able to cover this material in out-of-class forums due to the accessibility of media texts on the Internet, or the possibility of uploading them from other online platforms.

The university provides the online platform WebCT for professors who want to incorporate it as a component of their classes. While I decided to use this forum, there are many other alternatives for integrating online media content as a component of an English class.

Whether they use blogs, Facebook, or Gmail accounts, it is not uncommon for students to go online to participate in discussions, submit assignments, or retrieve important documents, as occurred in the case of my students. Since the majority of the texts for the media unit could be found online, a good percentage of their work of the class took place in this forum, rather than on paper, even one of the printed rock readings, which I scanned for the students. This is also a reflection on the fact that the design of the class was itself multimodal, which is probably atypical for an English class.

Another advantage of using an Internet component in the English classroom is that it provides students with the opportunity to engage with the required texts and their peers at any moment. This enables students' interactions in the class to be more open and flexible. In other words, they do not have to wait to physically be in the classroom to share an idea about a certain text, or to ask questions about the assignments, and so on. As such, the use of online platforms as part of the media unit was valuable.

At the same time, there are various activities that can engage students in critical media literacy practices that do not involve online media per se, but rather a focus on print-based media. Alvermann and Hagood (1999), for example, engaged their intermediate school students in exercises that allowed them to scrutinize the way several artists were portrayed in magazines, or even on their album covers or CD jackets. In my case, students had to read articles from magazines, book chapters, and even scholarly articles about the different rock music to be covered in the class. Thus, teachers who are skeptical about a focus on critical media literacy because of a lack of audiovisual equipment can alternately consider engaging students with multimodal texts. In other words, a lack of institutional media equipment or access to the Internet is not an excuse to avoid the study of media, particularly because most classrooms are already

saturated with it given that students bring laptops, mp3 players, and cell phones into such spaces and these are technologies that are ever-present in their lives.

Suggestions for further research

The findings of this study certainly point to the need for further explorations of the theoretical areas covered in my study in the Puerto Rican context.[98] Incorporating media texts in the classroom supports students' more nuanced understandings of the varying media texts they are "reading" each day and helps teachers better understand how meaning-making and learning can occur in relation to multimodal media texts in contemporary English classrooms.

Moreover, a focus on multimodality has not previously been taken up in reading and composition courses for second language learners in higher education in Puerto Rico. Because these texts are not usually studied in courses where there is a focus on reading, students' analyses of such texts outside of class are not guided, informed, or enriched by academic theory. After thoroughly engaging in the study of terminology from each media field, however, the research participants in this study were able to notice that there are conventions used in the production of media that might contribute to the overall meaning that they make out of multimodal media texts. When students were provided with the pertinent terminology they were able to apply specific academic discourses to their study of multimodal media texts, and this enabled them not only to recognize different modes of meaning, but also to utilize them as they engaged in their analyses. I employed the specific analytical framework of multimodal communication to analyze the modes the students' relied on for meaning making in an English classroom, but scholars from a wide range of fields in Puerto Rico might also usefully employ this approach.

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[98] Although Rios (2006) briefly explored how her students perceived different musical subcultures in a school in Aguadilla, in her study media played a secondary role in relation to the topic of music since it was usually used as a supplement for another text or topic of discussion.

Lastly, the role of rock in the scholarly literature addressing Puerto Rican musical culture is scarce. In this study I considered rock as a subject of study in the English composition classroom specifically, but it is my intention to further study the phenomena of the rock musical genre in Puerto Rico and its implications for Puerto Rican cultures more generally. However, multiple perspectives are always useful when exploring and depicting cultural phenomena, and this is not less true in the case of Puerto Rico. For this reason, I suggest that scholars from different academic disciplines might research rock in Puerto Rico from distinct angles and scholarly orientations. What I believe deserves particular attention are contemporary musical representations of rock and the use of digital technologies for promotion and recognition of rock in the music industry, as well as the multiple subgenres of rock that are ignored because of the focus on 'popular' mainstream music. My interest in studying and promoting rock and roll in a Puerto Rican context is in sync with my interest in expanding the ability not only of students, but also of other individuals and groups, to read and think critically about such cultural texts.

To more readily understand the significance of the topics discussed in a classroom it is relevant to look into the larger cultural context of the place under investigation. Thus, while I have repeatedly mentioned the lack of literature about the rock music genre, it is also worth noting that there are several other areas in equal need of attention in the English classroom. Among these are the politics around race, gender, identity, and language, which were touched upon in this study, but were not its primary focus. Like rock, these topics could each be addressed at great depth and length in English composition classrooms in Puerto Rico. Thus, there is much to be done in this respect. A study of critical media literacy and multimodality might indeed focus on any one of these topics individually. These media literacy gaps need to be filled by those who participate in educational contexts regularly.

As teachers, the content that we choose to teach in our classes matters and needs to be presented in a way that is interesting and relevant for students. In order for this to happen, teachers need to be invested in, and knowledgeable about what we are teaching, as well as aware of and attentive to the ways in which students from a variety of backgrounds are able to engage with these texts in meaningful ways. The difference between students' interactions with different media and how they learn from each other in this context is always subject to sociocultural factors. The approach I adopt in this study to consider these issues has been used minimally in Puerto Rico, and similar studies in the future would be useful because they would provide us with more information about what happens when multimodal critical media literacy approaches are used in distinct English classrooms and institutions in this context.

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Printed texts	Content discussion topics	Multimodal Texts: song (S)/video (V)
"Gaston"- William Saroyan, Song Lyrics	Divorce, identities, individuality	"Stay Together for the Kids"- Blink-182 (V)
"Raymond's Run"- Toni Cade Bambara Excerpt from "Characterizing Rock Music Culture"-William Straw (2004), Song Lyrics	Gender roles, female hypocrisy, identities, attitudes towards women from different gender perspectives	"Just a Girl" - No Doubt (V) "Doll Parts"- Hole (V) "Whole lotta love"- Led Zeppelin (S)
"Silent Snow Secret Snow"- Conrad Aiken, Song Lyrics	Death, escaping reality, authors saw parent's death	"Dazed and Confused"- Led Zeppelin(S) "The End" -The Doors (S)
"Romero's Shirt"- DagobertoGilb, "England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond"- Jon Savage (2001), Song Lyrics	Conformity of living conditions, cynicism, religion, individualism	"Anarchy in the UK"- The Sex Pistols(S) "God Save the Queen"- The Sex Pistols(S)
"Black Boy"- Kay Boyle, Song Lyrics "Homenaje a los Rasta con Música Gratis en Jahmusik.org"- Review in Natural Awakenings	Interracial relationships/ influences[99], minorities' work conditions	"London Calling"- The Clash (S), Album artwork image
"D.P." - Kurt Vonnegut Jr. "A Paler Shade of White: How Indie Rock Lost its Soul"- Frere-Jones (2007), Song Lyrics	War, post-war generations, racial stereotypes	"All Along the Watchtower" Jimmy Hendrix in *Plugging In- The History of Rock and Roll* (Time Life, 1995) (V) "Pretty Fly for a White Guy"- The Offspring (V) "Helicopter"- Bloc Party (S), (V)
Song Lyrics, Video Subtitles	Punk/Rock Discourse, Design, Production, Distribution	*Bad Religion Live at Palladium*- Bad Religion (V)
Video Documentary Subtitles	'Reading Rock' in/from Puerto Rico	Local bands, Octavo Día and Blindfold Drive perform and explain their songs and lain their writing processes (S) *La Escena* (V)- Filmmaker Prof. Gómez Álvarez explains motives behind documenting P.R.'s punk scene.

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[99] The band The Clash is said to be heavily influenced by the reggae genre, both in musicality and in fashion (Hebdige, 1979).

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The following is an invitation to participate in a study about the use of music and videos as texts in an ENGL 3104-Intermediate English II course, the second part of the ENGL 3103/3104 Intermediate English series in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. I will be carrying out this investigation as part of the research for my master's thesis in this same institution. You do not have the obligation to participate in the study. However, if you do decide to do so, then you should know that you have the right to withdraw from it at any given moment without it affecting your grade or your relation to your instructor, the English Department or the University

The purpose of this study is to explore the academic effects that integrating music and videos as texts in the curriculum of this class. The unit integrated in the curriculum will be studied by the entire class, but data will be collected from those who agree to participate in the study. The students participating will: be observed in the class discussions, have the opportunity of having the documents turned in the class being published, possibly be chosen for case studies and be interviewed.

My roles as investigator will be maintained separated from roles as the instructor to try to avoid ethical problems. This will be achieved through the use of video recordings of various classes, which provides me with the opportunity to verify class discussions after the class is over, not taking time from the class. Also, every discussion about the investigation will be scheduled for times that do not conflict with the office hours of the class.

To study the effects of using music and videos as texts the data will be gathered through interviews, video recorded observations and the analysis of documents turned in while participating in the study. Thus, you should provide authorization to be observed, possibly interviewed and, and authorize the possible publication of your work.

If at any moment there are questions or concerns about the investigation, please do not hesitate to ask before accepting to join the study. At the end of the research you will have the

opportunity to verify if your data was used by asking me. However, it is important for you to know that your identity will be protected with the use of a pseudonym in my thesis, or any other presentation or publication that may rise from this research.

It is extremely important for you to understand that participating in the study will not affect your grade in any way; neither will it have any dangerous repercussions. The expected results of the study are the possible inclusion of music and videos in other English classes, and the appreciation of the possibility of using other types of texts that are not print based.

If you accept to participate in the study please sign in the space provided below. By signing you are confirming that you have been oriented about the nature and the purpose of the procedures in which you will be participating. You will have access to a copy of this informed consent, as well as the preliminary timeline of the investigation.

_____   _____

Student's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Student's Name   Date

Appendix C-Protocol for unstructured interviews

Pretend I am a journalist interviewing you, and I'm going to write a news report about your reading practices. Teach me how I can learn from these, or why I should imitate them. Keep in mind that I don't know anything about how you read. Please remember I have no knowledge of you as a student.

General Reading Practices (Informal)

- ✓ In what ways do you prefer to read in your spare time?

    - o Do you follow a specific process or read in a particular place, space, or time? Explain

- ✓ What kinds of texts do you usually read in your spare time? (Those that are not for your classes).

    - o Which is your favorite? Why?

- ✓ While you are reading that text…

    - o What do you look at first?

    - o What do you look at second?

    - o Is there a regular pattern that you follow?

- ✓ How does this process help you to understand what the text is about?

    - o What does each step tell you?

Required Reading Practices (Formal)

- ✓ Are you following the same process to read the required texts in your English class, specifically?

    - o Why, or why not?

- ✓ In your English class …

- o What do you pay attention to the most as you are reading a text?

    - ▪ What do you focus on the most, as you are reading?

- o What strategies do you use to understand and/or interpret the stories in the texts you read?

✓ Would you read these kinds of texts in your spare time?

✓ Why or why not?

✓ Did you like some of stories?

✓ (If yes) Which of the stories covered in your class did you like the most? Why?

Multimodal Reading Practices (Music + Videos)

✓ In what ways do you prefer to "read" audiovisual texts in your spare time?

- o Do you follow a specific process or read in a particular place, space, or time?

✓ What kinds of audiovisual texts do you usually read in your spare time? (Those not for assigned for classes).

✓ What features of texts do you pay attention to the most as you are "reading" …

- o Songs

- o Music videos

✓ While you are reading that text…

- o What do you focus on first?

- o What do you focus on second?

- o Is there a regular pattern that you follow?

✓ How does this process help you to understand what the text is about?

- o What does each step tell you?

Required Reading Practices (Formal)

- ✓ Are you following the same process to read the required texts in your English class, specifically?

    - o How did you read the songs in class?

    - o How did you read the music videos in class?

- ✓ Would you read these kinds of texts in your spare time?

    - o Why or why not?

- ✓ Did you like some of songs or videos? (If yes)

    - o Which of the texts covered in your class did you like the most? Why?

Future Reading Practices

- ✓ How would you apply the reading techniques discussed to read your favorite genre?

- ✓ Do you think that the reading style discussed in class has any pertinence to your own life?

    - o Why, or why not?

Overall

- ✓ How would you describe the experience of reading music and music videos compared to the way you read print literature?

INTERTEXTUALITY

London Calling **By The Clash**

London calling to the faraway towns
Now that war is declared-and battle come down
London calling to the underworld
Come out of the cupboard, all you boys and girls
London calling, now don't look at us
All that phoney Beatlemania has bitten the dust
London calling, see we ain't got no swing
'Cept for the ring of that truncheon thing

CHORUS

The ice age is coming, the sun is zooming in
Engines stop running and the wheat is growing thin
A nuclear error, but I have no fear
London is drowning-and I live by the river

London calling to the imitation zone
Forget it, brother, an' go it alone
London calling upon the zombies of death
Quit holding out-and draw another breath
London calling-and I don't wanna shout
But when we were talking-I saw you nodding out
London calling, see we ain't got no highs
Except for that one with the yellowy eyes

CHORUS

Now get this
London calling, yeah, I was there, too
An' you know what they said? Well, some of it was true!
London calling at the top of the dial
After all this, won't you give me a smile?

I never felt so much a' like

How does this article relate to the concept of intertextuality? What do you think about The Clash incorporating reggae music conventions in their songs and their fashion? Discuss this with your partner and write a paragraph about your conversation, below the article.

Homenaje a los Rasta con Música Gratis en Jahmusik.org

Únete a Jahmusik y celebra la sabiduría Rasta con su nueva producción titulada "Dreads In My Heart". Este proyecto musical de los artistas independientes Glenn López y Lawrence Reyes fue hecho en Puerto Rico y producido por Nano Cabrera, quien además participa como guitarrista en el mismo.
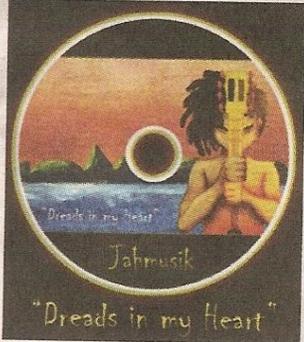
"Dreads In My Heart" es un agradecimiento musical a la filosofía de vida Rasta y a los mensajes que nos revelan a través de su lírica y música. Jahmusik fusiona Reggae y Rock con sabor Latino. Es como una mezcla de Bob Marley, Santana y The Beatles con la percusión latina que nos caracteriza como Boricuas.

Jahmusik está regalando los "downloads" de sus doce canciones a través de su página de Internet www.jahmusik.org para que se difunda el mensaje Rasta de "One Love" a la mayor cantidad posible de personas alrededor del mundo. Jahmusik ya tiene fanaticada en Brasil, Canadá, EEUU, Holanda, Inglaterra, Portugal, Puerto Rico y Suiza.

Class Schedule Guideline

1st Day of Class: August 8. 2008- Introductions

Class Orientation/Research Orientation

2nd Week of classes- August 11-15, 2008- Writing about Literature

Syllabus discussion/Class diagnostic activity- *What is Reading?*

Reading of: *"Gaston"* (pp. 2-6)/Appendix B (pp. 311-321)

Homework (Writing Activities)

3rd Week of classes- August 18-22, 2008- Analyzing Literature- Writing an essay

Reading of: *"Silent Snow Secret Snow"*(pp.79-90) – Imagery, Symbolism

Writing Assignment- Analysis Essay Exercise

Journal on: "How I Read"

4th Week of classes- August 25-29, 2008- Analyzing Literature- Writing an essay

Reading of: *"Raymond's Run"* (pp.21-26) -Characters, Narration /

"Black Boy" (pp.254-257) – Conflict, Irony, Metaphors and Similes

Journal on: "Black Boy and Conflict"

5th Week of classes- September 3-5, 2008 *(1-Labor Day)*

Reading of *"D.P."* (pp. 132-139) - Gaps, Closure/

Reading of: *"Romero's Shirt"* (pp. 231-235)- Focalization, Setting

Assignment- Reading of article How to Listen to Music

Journal on "How you listen to music"

6th Week of classes- September 8-12, 2008- Multimodality of songs

Design and production in songs- Drums and Guitars in *Whole lotta love* and in *Dazed and Confused/* Denotation and Narrator's reliability in *The End* – excerpt from Oliver Stone's *The Doors/*

Library Orientation

ESSAY First Draft - Compare and Contrast

Assignment- Reading of an excerpt from Characterizing Rock Music Culture by William Straw (2004)

7th Week of classes- September 15-19, 2008- Analyzing Videos

Mise-en-scéne in *Stay Together for the Kids*/

Camera and Lighting in *Just a Girl* and *Doll parts*

ESSAY Final Draft- Compare and Contrast

Assignment- Reading introduction from England's dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, punk rock, and Beyond by Jon Savage (2001)

8th Week of classes- September 22-26, 2008- Author styles

Voice and Agency in Sex Pistols' *Anarchy in the UK* and *God Save the Queen/*

Intertextuality in *London Calling* and album work/Reading of Puerto Rican reggae music review

Assignment- Reading of A paler shade of white: How indie rock lost its soul

9th Week of classes- September 29- October 3, 2008- Racial/Genre stereotypes

Jimmy Hendrix's *All Along the Watchtower* in video documentary "Plugging In" from *The History of Rock and Roll* (Time Life, 1995)/

Bad Religion Live at Palladium (Bonus Feature Documentary) featuring the band performing and explaining their ideologies/

Assignment- Song and Video analysis of *Pretty Fly for a White Guy*

Writing Assignment- Annotated Bibliography

10th Week of classes- October 6-10, 2008- Reading Rock Series

My guitar and Me- Acoustic performance by Octavo Día/

La Escena- Video Documentary presentation by Prof. Guillermo Gómez Álvarez

Rock Music Writing Process- Semi-Acoustic performance by entire band

ESSAY First Draft- Research

11th Week of classes- October 15-17, 2008- Preparation for multimodal adaptation presentation of research paper

12th Week of classes- October 20-25, 2008- Multimodal Presentations

Week 13-16th was spent on poetry unit

ESSAY EXAM-In class writing of Essay #3

17th Week of classes- November 24-26, 2008- Reviews

Last day of classes- December 2, 2008- Final Exam Preparation