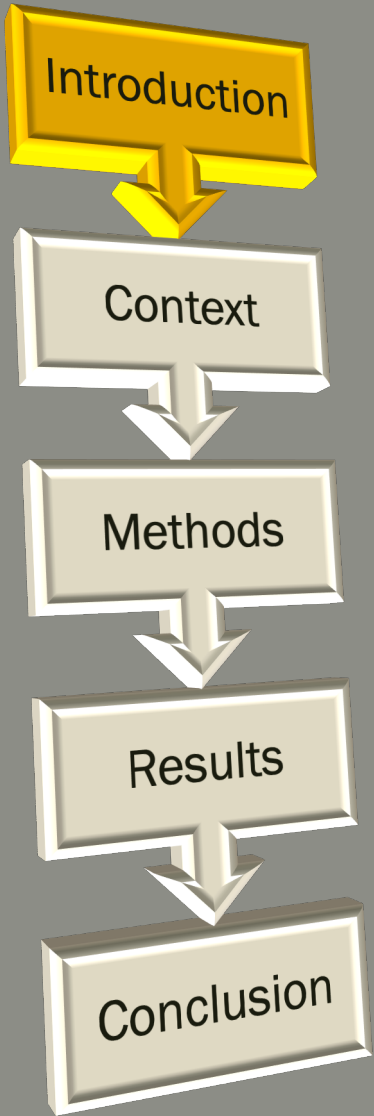


# RELEVANCE OF MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND SEMIOTIC SKILLS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEGAL ENGLISH

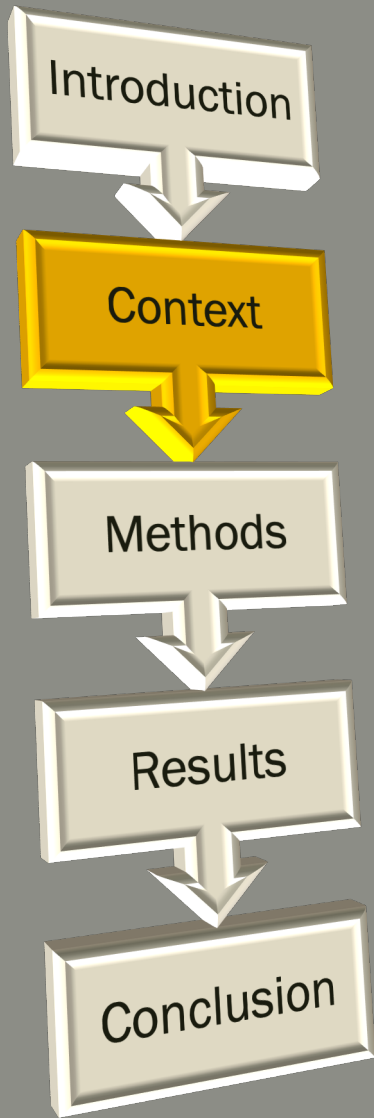
Carmenne Kalyaniwala

Nicolas Molle

*ATILF-CNRS (UMR 7118) & University of Lorraine, France*



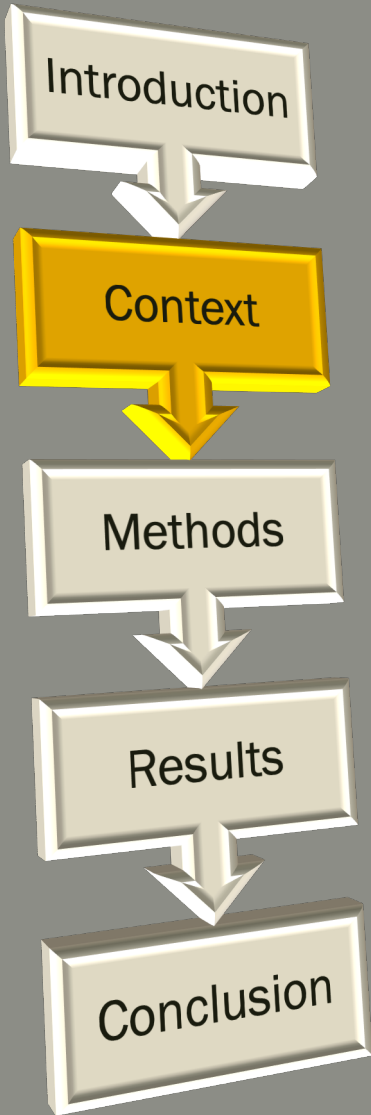
- Do students themselves understand what they write in legalese?
- Can the use of multiple semiotic modes help layman understanding of specific legal contexts?
- Need to analyze professional language needs by identifying relevant communicative situations (Reeves & Wright, 1996)



# Case brief: an introduction

- Summary of a legal decision
- “Legal genre” (Tessuto, 2012) and “professional competence” (Bhatia, 1993)
- Rigid structure

- 1 Identification
- 2 Facts
- 3 Procedural history
- 4 Issue
- 5 Holding and Reasoning
- 6 Impact on society

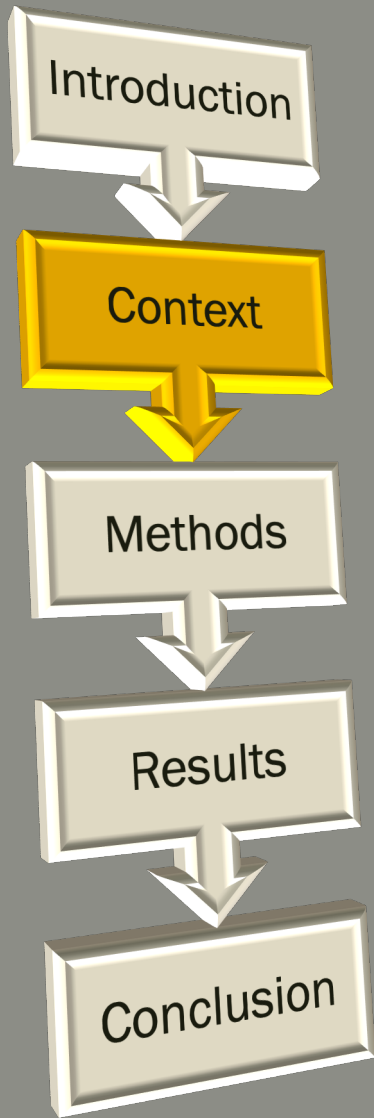


# Theoretical inspiration (Nelson, 2006)

Nelson, M. E. (2006). Mode, meaning, and synaesthesia in multimedia L2 writing. *Language Learning and Technology*, 10(2), 56-76.

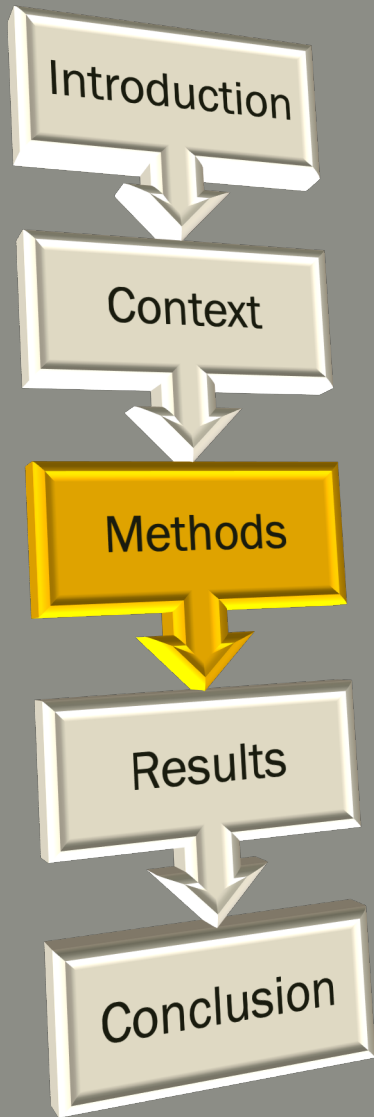
- Digital storytelling experimental course “Multimedia Writing” for freshmen
- Analysis of 4 undergraduate L2 writers’ multimedia text creation processes
- Results: Identification of facilitators and hindrances

Facilitators	Hindrances
1. Resemiotization through repetition	1. Over-accomodation of audience
2. Recognition of Language Topology	2. Influence of genre
3. Amplification of Authorship	



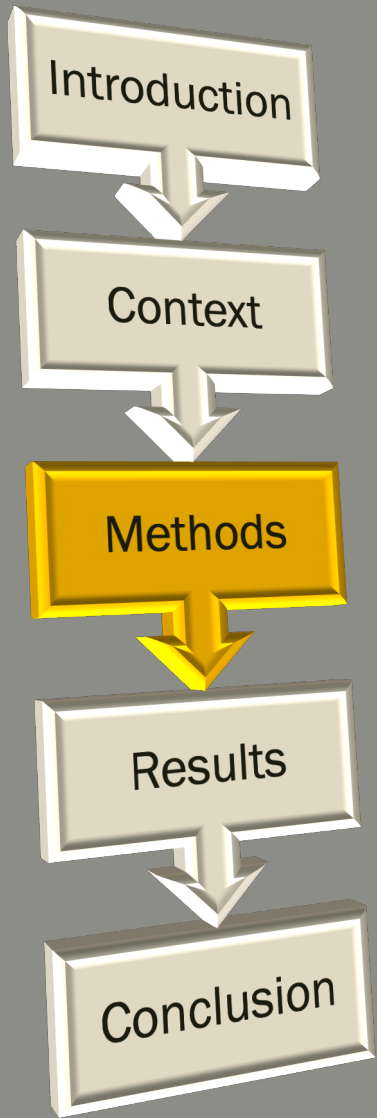
- **Population:** Third year undergraduate Magisterium (n=21)
- **Language proficiency:** B1+/B2/C1 (English as L2)
- **Period:** Second semester (Jan-Apr 2021)
- **Teaching medium:** Online (Moodle, Teams)
- **Main objectives:** Professional development & Multimodality
- **Participants:** 4 triads (n=12)

Main project	Aims	Skills targeted
(1) Prepare a formal case brief in groups	Summarize a legal decision	Writing
(2) Present the case brief in simplified English	Use simplified English (avoid legalese), Use a PPT/Keynote/Open Office format, Speak for 10 minutes max.	Speaking



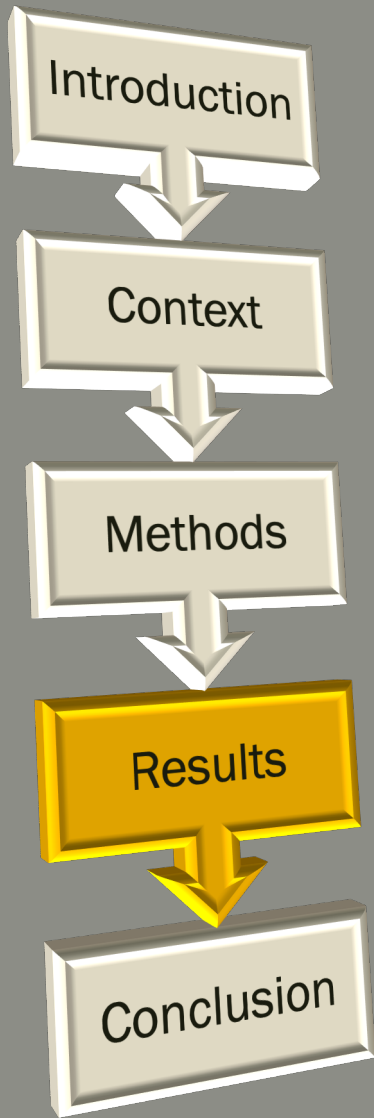
# Research questions

How do small groups of L2 ESP learners make use of multimodal communicative competence and semiotic skills in order to accomplish a professional task linked to the legal profession? What kind of meaning making does semiotic awareness allow them to achieve?

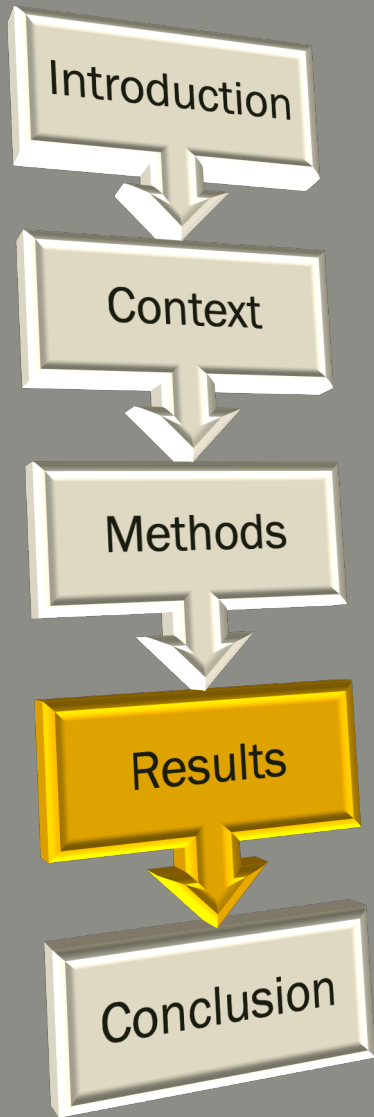


## Research design



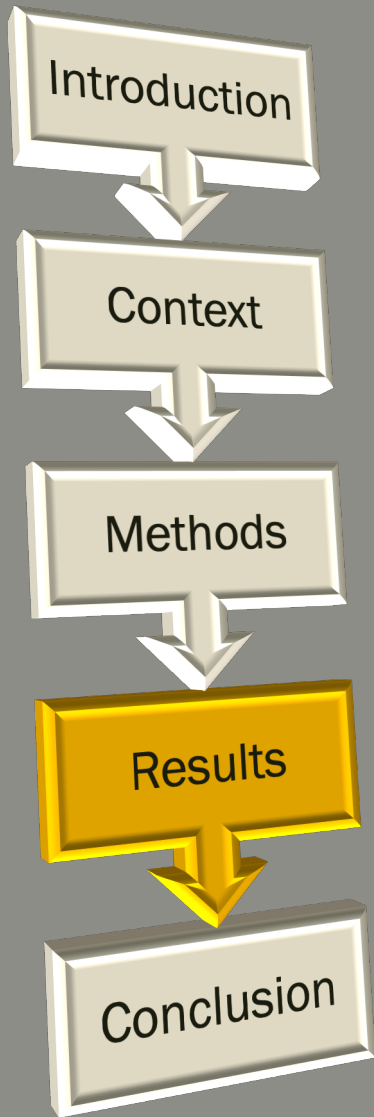


- Facilitators to multimodal authorship
- Hindrances to multimodal authorship
- Application to English for Legal Purposes context



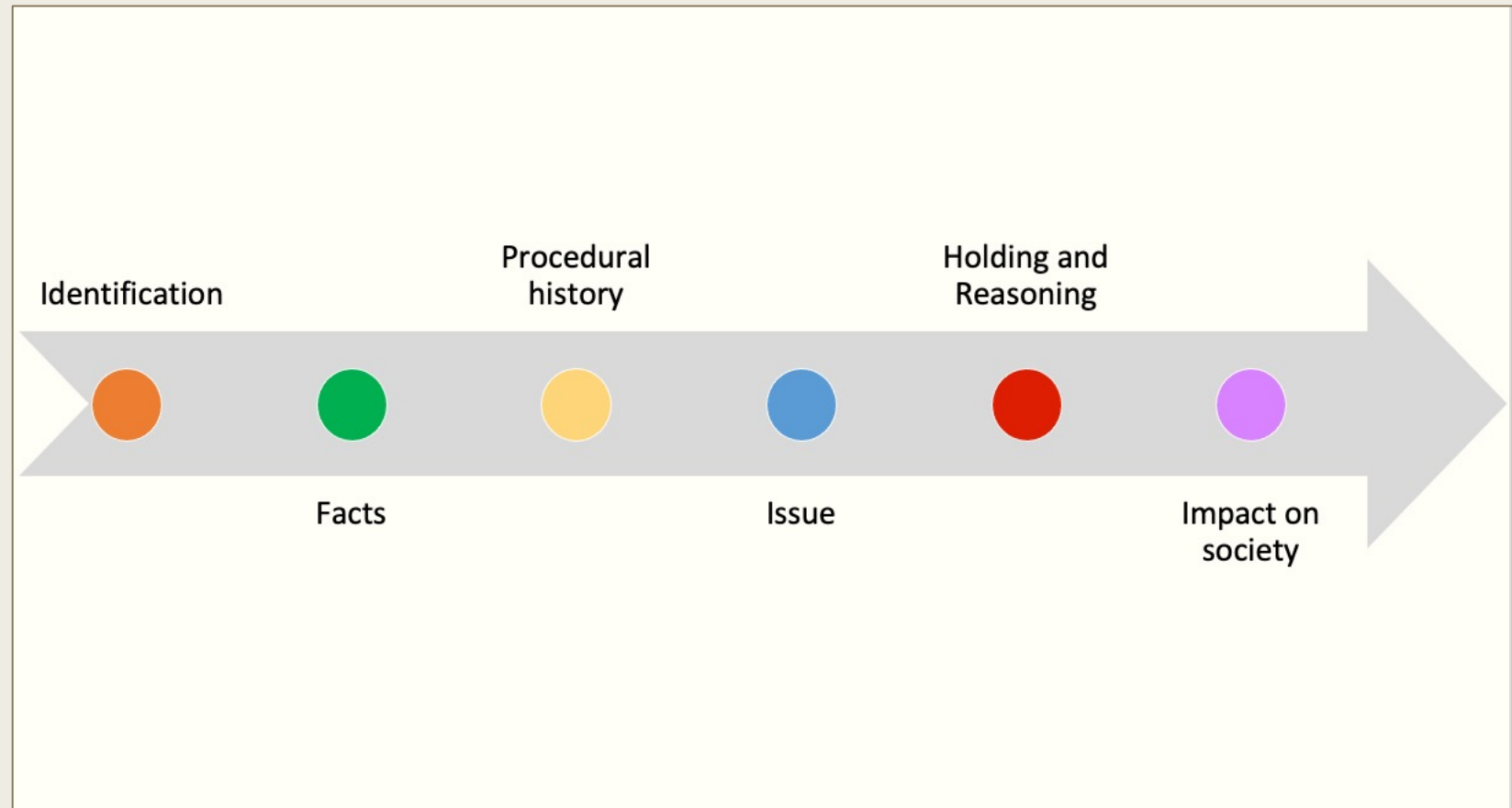
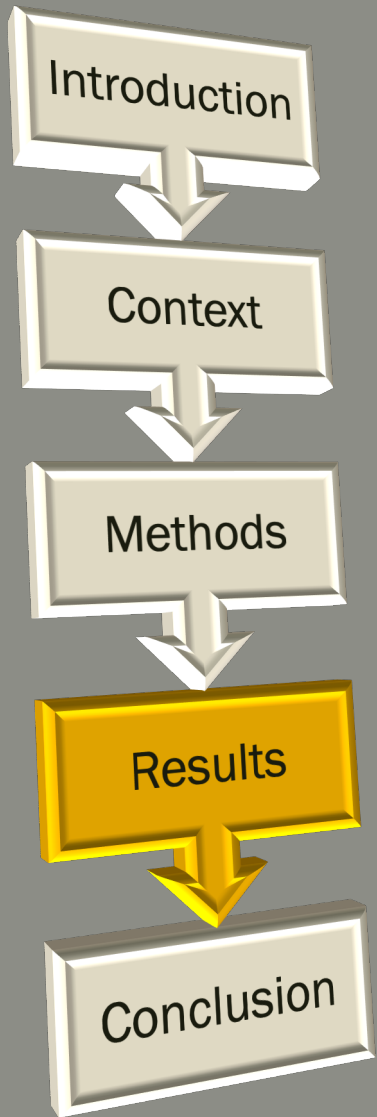
# Facilitators to multimodal authorship

Facilitators (Nelson, 2006)	Our study
<b>1. Resemiotization through repetition</b> = “additional meaning can accumulate within the same image as it is repeated due to the defining influence of what is said and shown” (p.63)	=> No evidence of repeating images

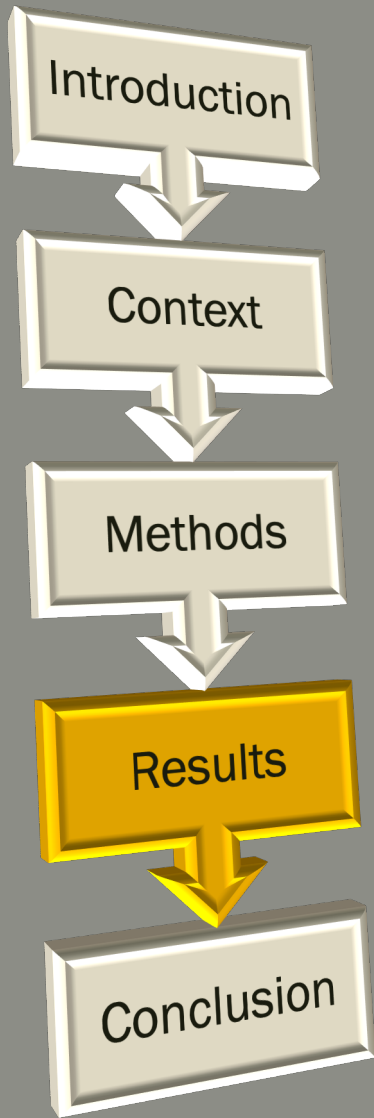


# Facilitators to multimodal authorship

Facilitators (Nelson, 2006)	Our study
<b>1. Resemiotization through repetition</b> = “additional meaning can accumulate within the same image as it is repeated due to the defining influence of what is said and shown” (p.63)	=> No evidence of repeating images
<b>2. Recognition of Language Topology</b> = “studying the theoretical distinction between what language says (relations of categorical distinction) and what it looks like (its layout, font, color, etc.)” (p.63)	=> Gr4. use of colour as “code”



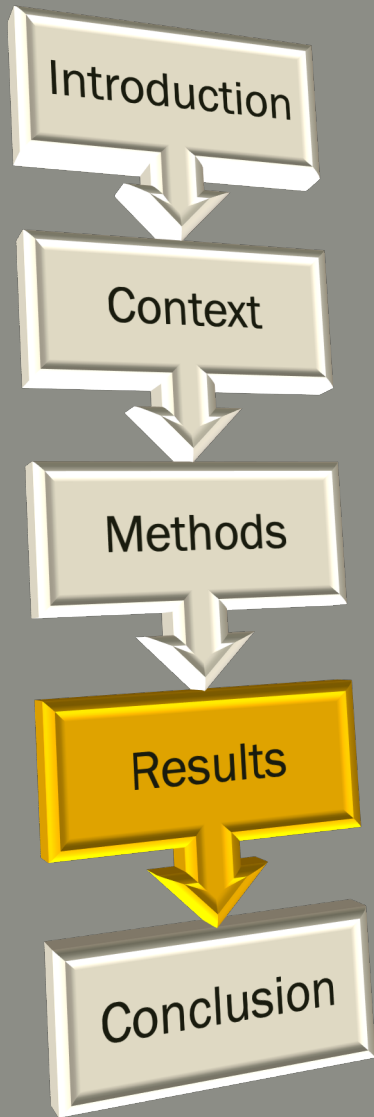
Example. Gr4



## Reasoning

18 U. S. C. §1028A “*knowingly transfers, possesses, or uses, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person*”.

Example. Gr4

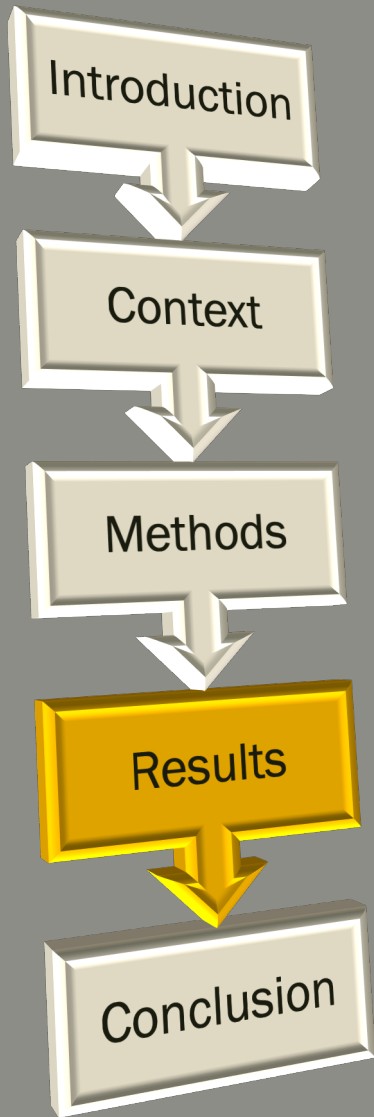


Holding and  
reasoning

## Reasoning

18 U. S. C. §1028A “***knowingly*** transfers, possesses, or uses, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person”.

Example. Gr4



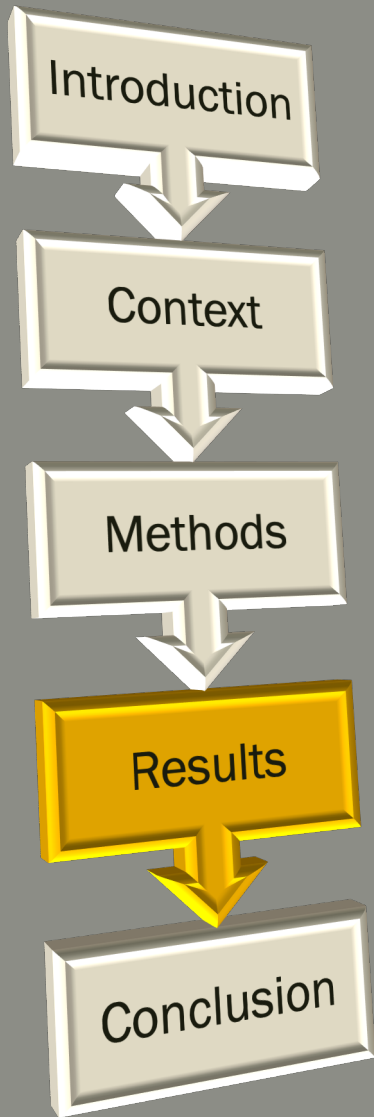
**Holding and reasoning**

## Reasoning

18 U. S. C. §1028A “**knowingly** transfers, possesses, or uses, without lawful authority, *a means of identification of another person*”.

Rules of ordinary English grammar → The adverb applies to the whole sentence

Example. Gr4



# Facilitators to multimodal authorship

## Facilitators (Nelson, 2006)

### 3. Amplification of Authorship

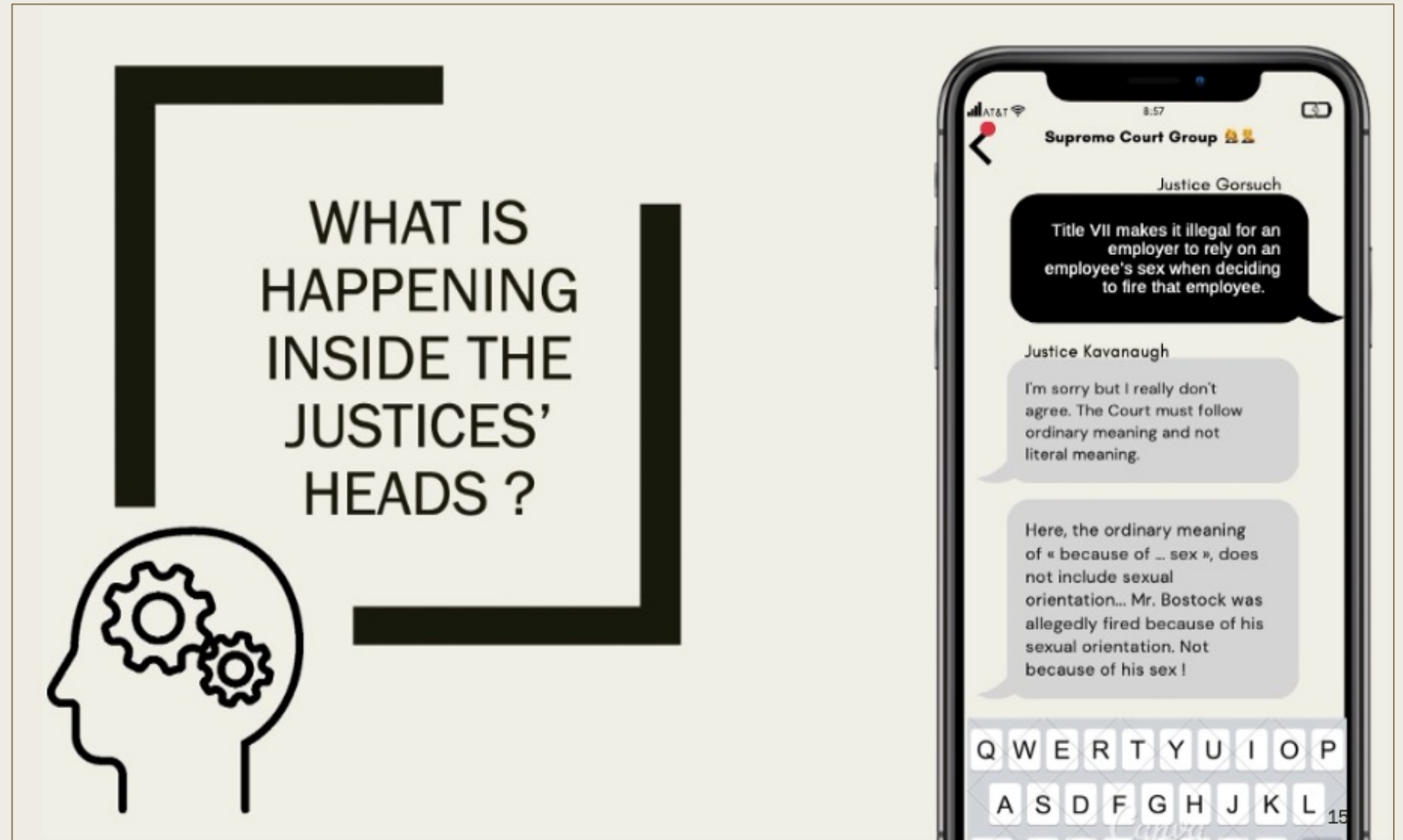
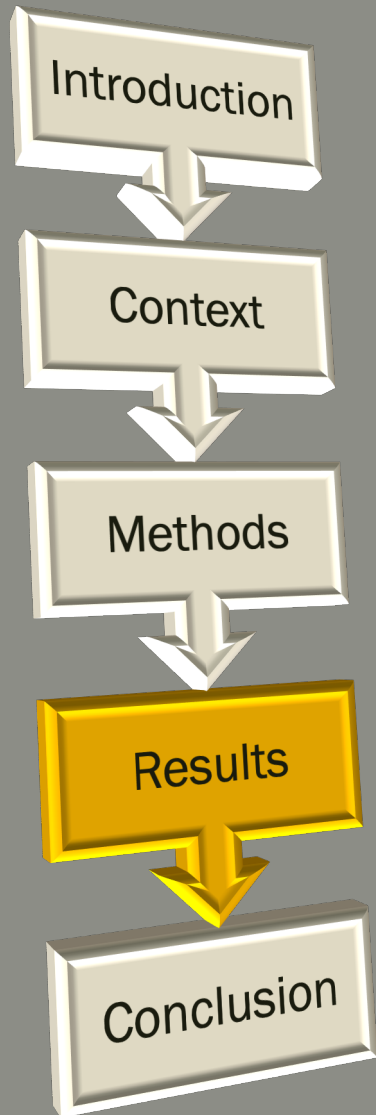
= “describes instances in which participants’ multimedia essays came to evince a deeper, fuller quality of meaning through the synaesthetic process of shifting expression across modal boundaries, i.e. transduction” (p. 65)

## Our study

⇒ Questions of collective authorship are raised: Lines between creation and appropriation of artefact are blurred (Gr6 v. Gr4)

⇒ Examples of transduction

## Example 1. 'Binding' audience with common cultural codes



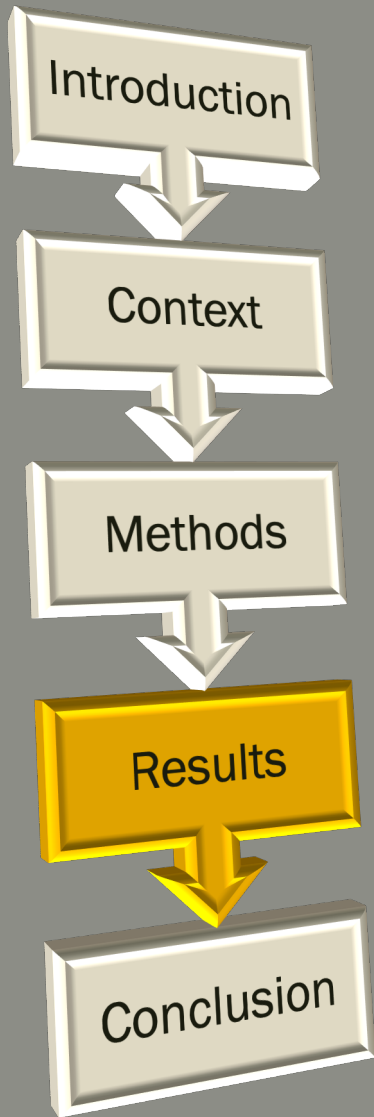
## Example 2. Using image to vulgarize and elucidate legal context



Example. Gr4

*It can be compared to a house. Let's imagine a house built on a swampy ground, which is not stable, you can be lucky and the house can be very beautiful and never collapse. But now let's imagine another house built on another swampy ground. But it collapsed. The first house didn't collapse, but the second one did. Yet the base is the same and it was unreliable in both cases. In the first house, we were lucky and we got something right. But in the second house we were unlucky and the end was catastrophic.*

*This swampy ground can be compared to the foundation of this case. In the case of Mr. Phillips Victoria, we have arrived at a good solution which works like the first house. But in other cases, with the same unreliable foundations, we could have arrived at an unfair, illogical solution that wouldn't have held up like this second house.*

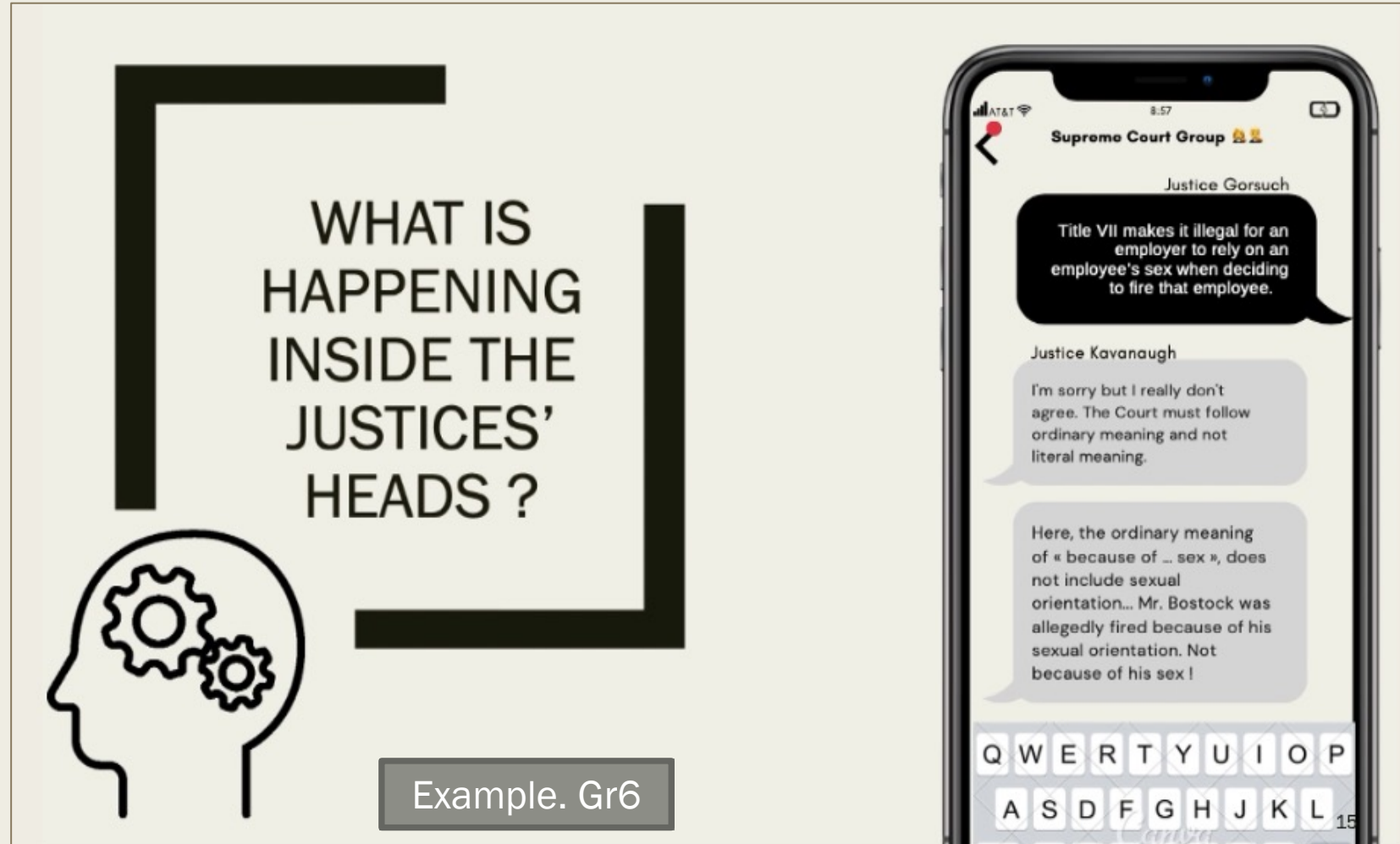


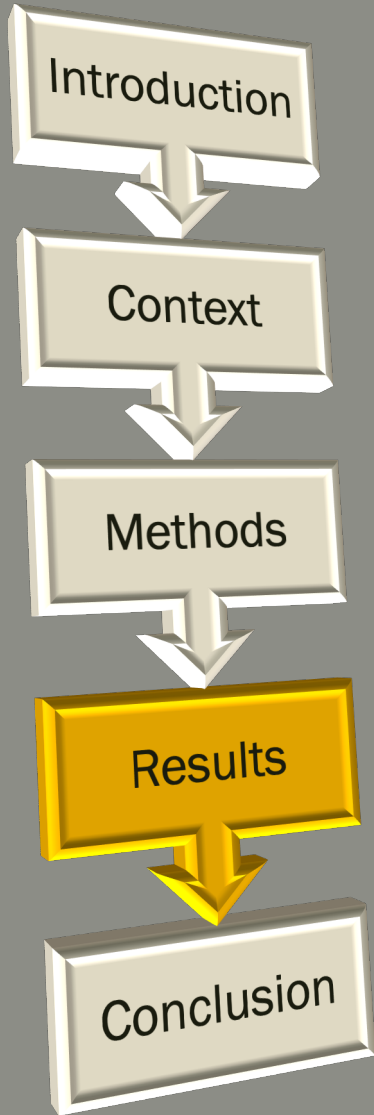
## Hindrances (Nelson, 2006)

### 1. Over-accomodation of audience

## Our study

Use of multiple semiotic modes to create meaning for the audience (Gr6)

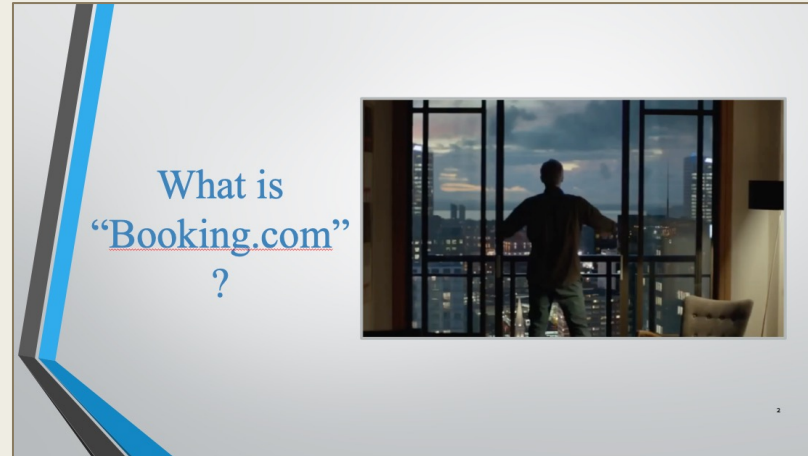




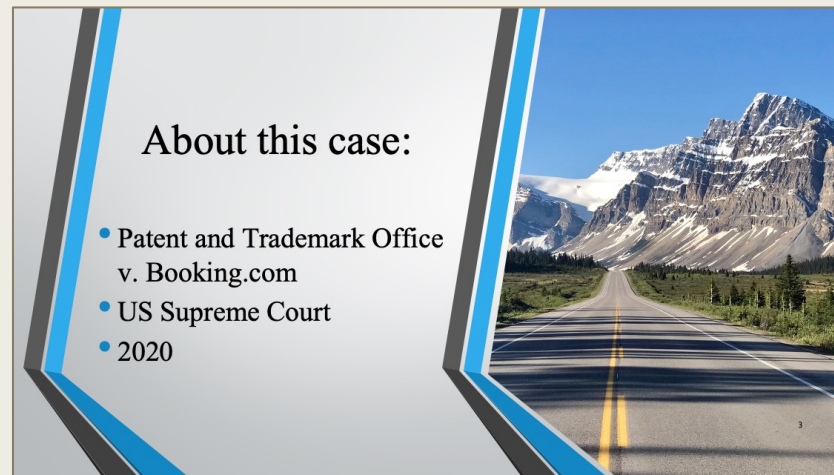
## Hindrances (Nelson, 2006)

### 1. Over-accomodation of audience

“tendency to propagate stereotypical forms of representation” (p.70)



Slide 1



Slide 2

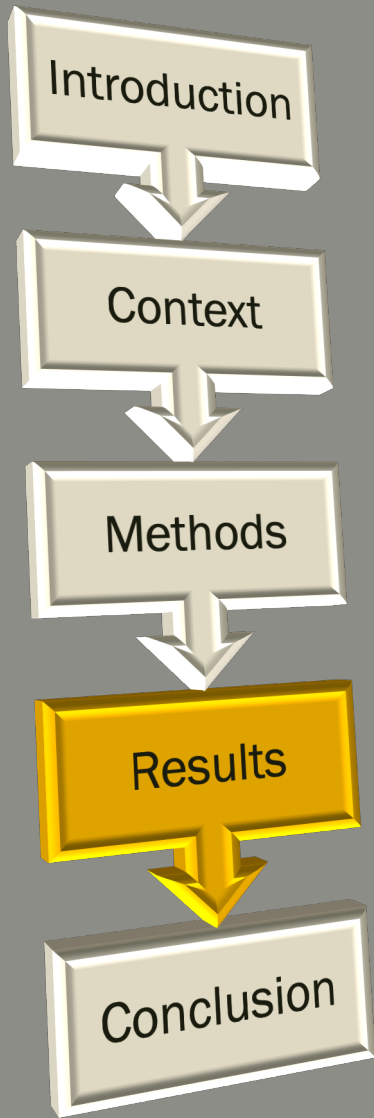
## Our study

Gr2: Use of mountains to represent “travel”



Slide 3

Example. Gr2



# Hindrances to multimodal authorship

## Hindrances (Nelson, 2006)

### 2. Influence of genre

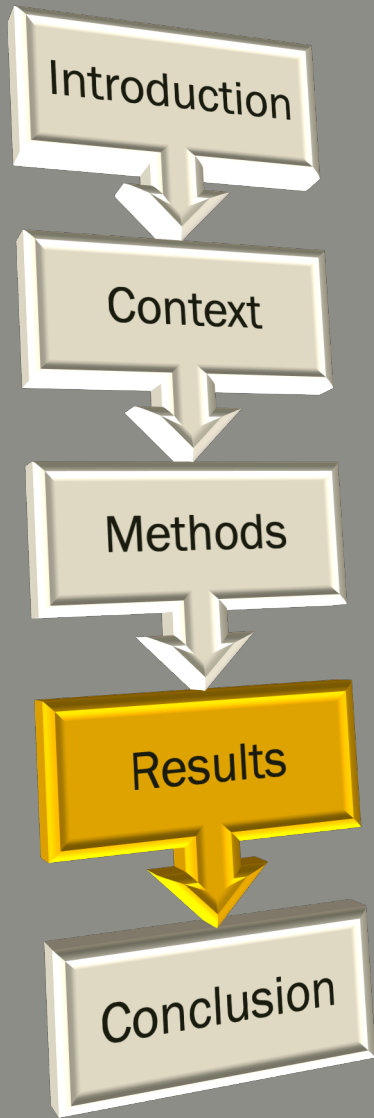
“Genre conventions are operationalized, in a sense, in the form of expectations about parameters for the proper representation of ideas on the parts of both the producer and receiver of an utterance. For instance, when one recognizes a text as belonging to the genre "action film," one expects its content to adhere to minimum standards of pacing (fast), excitement (high), and so forth; needless to say, one's expectations for a one-person stage production are likely quite different.” (p. 68)

## Our study

- Case brief as writing genre

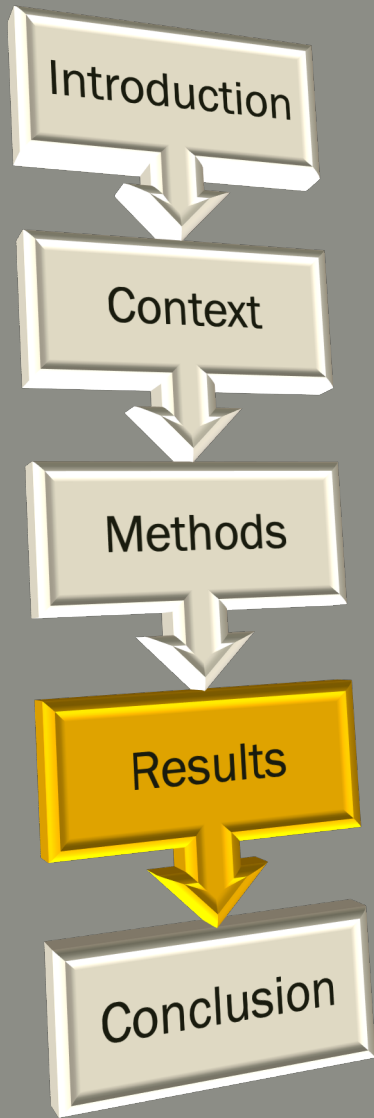
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- Artefact/multimodal support as genre



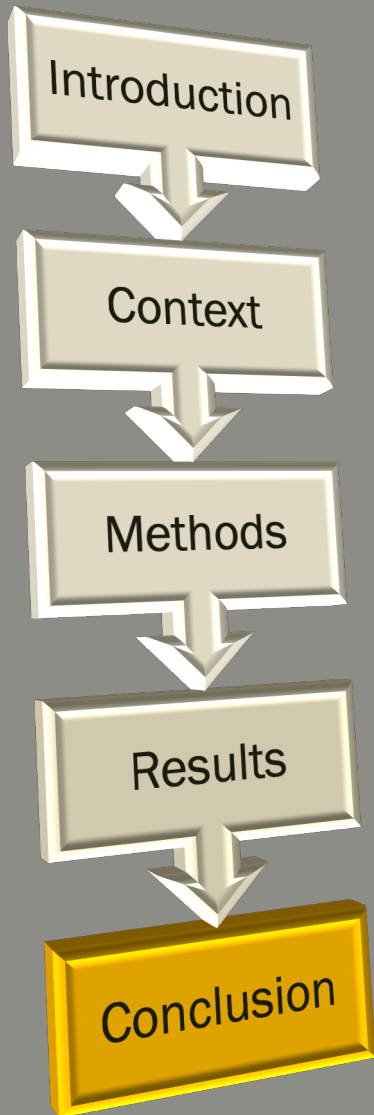
## Application to English for Legal Purposes context

- Influence of genre problematic at the outset of the study
- Use of multimodal communicative competence and semiotic skills
  - *Precise, rigid format of a case brief provides structure to the presentation*
  - *Language stays formal, yet understandable*
  - *Shift in semiotic modes convey meaning*
- Transformation of influence of genre from ‘hindrance’ to ‘facilitator’



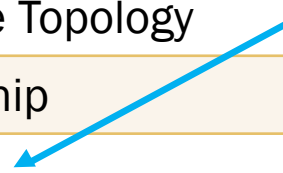
# Task design as catalyst to meaning making in multimodal authorship in English for Legal Purposes

- Reflection encouraged
- Awareness of complexity of legal system and legal reasoning
- Awareness of layman audience
- Use of semiotics for purposes of comprehension rather than aesthetics



How do small groups of L2 ESP learners make use of multimodal communicative competence and semiotic skills in order to accomplish a professional task linked to the legal profession?  
 What kind of meaning making does semiotic awareness allow them to achieve?

Facilitators	Hindrances
<del>1. Resemiotization through repetition</del>	1. Over-accomodation of audience
1. Recognition of Language Topology	<del>2. Influence of genre</del>
2. Amplification of Authorship	
3. Influence of genre	
4. Task as catalyst	



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- Reeves, N., Wright, C. (1996). *Linguistic auditing : a guide to identifying foreign language communication needs in corporations*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
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# THANK YOU

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