Chapter 14
Using Google Drive to Write Dialogically with Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, a teacher educator and three practicing teachers consider how their experiences in an English education methods course that explicitly used Google Drive to support dialogic writing and learning has informed their teaching practices. The teacher educator frames the use of Google Drive in the methods course within a sociocultural perspective of writing as a distributed, mediated, and dialogic process of invention. Drawing on autoethnography as a method of inquiry, the teacher educator and the three practicing teachers consider the ways they wrote and learned in the methods course with Google Drive and how that experience is shaping the way they are supporting dialogic writing in their own teaching. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the major benefits and drawbacks of teaching writing within a sociocultural framework, including the issue of "heavy borrowing" and other tensions that arise within the institutional constraints of teaching writing within schools.

INTRODUCTION

In an English education methods course within a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program at a large, suburban university in the southeast United States, Ryan introduces pre-service English teachers to a sociocultural framework for teaching writing. This sociocultural framework is consistent with a programmatic emphasis on social processes of learning and the support and development of literacy practices within classrooms (Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2012). Ryan introduces this

sociocultural framework, in part, by modeling writing pedagogies and sharing examples from practicing teachers' classrooms as representations of teaching practice (Grossman et al., 2009). At the time Kim, Hannah, and Caitlin were enrolled in Ryan's methods course. He was beginning to use Google Drive to organize the course content online and to provide an online, dialogic space for the enrolled pre-service teachers to create and share their coursework. Ryan was initially interested in leveraging the affordances of Google Drive to model approaches to teaching writing consistent with a sociocultural framework and to encourage the pre-service teachers to learn from and with each other by sharing their coursework in an open platform such as Google Drive.

Ryan initially set up the share settings of the Google Drive folders to allow anyone enrolled in the course to access the documents placed within those folders. By default, this setup enabled the pre-service teachers to see each other's documents from the first keystroke to the final edit, including any revision suggestions or comments made along the way. Ryan established this open arrangement for the express purpose of supporting a writing community, in which pre-service English teachers wrote with and for each other on individual and collaborative assignments; enacting a sociocultural approach to writing development and learning that involved constructing meaning within and across texts; and modeling writing instruction that explicitly expanded notions of authorship in acknowledgement of the socio-historic resources writers draw on when writing (Bazerman & Prior, 2004; Dyson, 1993; 1997; Prior, 2006; Razafar & Gutierrez, 2003; Schultz & Fecho, 2000). Not all of the pre-service teachers were initially comfortable with this open arrangement of composing, sharing, and receiving feedback. Ryan encouraged the pre-service teachers enrolled in the course to change the share settings of their Google Drive documents if they felt uneasy or exposed by any aspect of the open arrangement.

Since taking the course with Ryan and completing the M.A.T. program, Kim, Hannah, and Caitlin are now practicing English teachers, who are considering how to support approaches to teaching writing informed by sociocultural theory in their own classrooms. Some of these approaches involve the use of digital tools like Google Drive that allow for online, synchronous sharing and composing; however, other approaches involve little to no digital technology but aim to support similar writing environments, in which writing is openly shared in various stages of development. When teaching the course, Ryan was explicit that enacting sociocultural approaches to teaching writing may be supported by, but are not dependent on, online digital tools like Google Drive. In more recent conversations, Ryan discussed with Kim, Hannah, and Caitlin how they could support sociocultural approaches to teaching writing with the tools that are available to them within their particular schools.

In order to consider the relationship between our shared experiences with dialogic writing in the course and our separate attempts to teach from a sociocultural perspective, we draw on an auto-ethnographic framework to consider two research questions. We state these research questions in the ways with which we interacted with them as researchers of our own experiences:

1. In what ways did the open arrangement of the graduate course using Google Drive, in which your writing, your peers' writing, and instructor/peer feedback were accessible, shape how you wrote and learned within the context of the course?
2. How has the experience of writing in the open arrangement of the graduate course using Google Drive shaped how you are supporting your own middle/high school students' writing and learning?

To address these two questions, we first provide an explanation of the sociocultural theoretical

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