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The crowd in the voice: An inquiry into the relationship between collaborative learning and composition theory

Claudia Ann Parnell

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THE CROWD IN THE VOICE: AN INQUIRY INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND COMPOSITION THEORY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Claudia Ann Parnell
September 1993
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ABSTRACT

For more than two decades, voice has gained significant recognition in the composition community. However, because of the complexities of voice, the question has evolved of whether voice is teachable in the classroom. Meanwhile, voice development is ignored in current writing instruction.

Writing today has indeed proven to be a social phenomenon. Writing instruction has gone through revolutionary as well as evolutionary changes that have transformed the mechanical silence of institutionalized learning into vocal communities of discovery. Language theorists such as Mikail Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky, who emphasize the interconnectedness between social and personal worlds, have changed how the field of composition regards writing. Currently, writing instructors are including various forms of collaborative learning theory in their curriculum. What becomes apparent with this inclusion is the development of writing voice as students become knowledgmakers within their own writing community.

This paper examines the dynamics of voice and how collaborative learning can help develop individual voice. It concludes with some applicable exercises that instructors can facilitate in their classrooms so students can appropriate ways of using language. When students learn how to use and master language, when they learn how to connect
thoughts and ideas to language, they are developing voice through the experience of thinking and speaking and writing.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the shaping and developing of this thesis, many people have lent me their skill and their support. I owe much gratitude to Milton Clark, who with a generous heart and considerable knowledge, taught me the unlimited uses of "esc," "ctrl," and "alt." I am also grateful to my reading committee Dian Pizure, Greg Gilbert, and Carol Haviland; they directed and advised me tirelessly through numerous drafts. I chose my readers well, and I was fortunate to find colleagues who have written together many times. Their reality became my boundary, my base, my representative example of how people working, talking, and writing together negotiating meaning, arrive at a clearer conclusion to their own perspective.

To Greg, most certainly, I give special thanks, who broke breakfast with me many cold, hungry mornings (actually he refused to work without food), who sat for hours at a time listening to my words, patiently, seriously; who played hard and relentlessly as devil’s advocate, challenging me and arguing with me until I understood clearly my own position.

Finally yet most significantly, I want to thank my family. Their quiet pride in my achievements motivated me to continue. Without their encouragement, I would certainly have given up a long time ago. I am most grateful to Stewart, my husband, who patiently accepted my extended
deadlines of "putting my life on hold," who gave me the space and quiet I needed to think and study and write, who tolerated admirably my unchecked moods—when I shifted unsteadily between lucid bursts of insight to gaping blanks of writer's block; he carried "the bat" for a long time. And although at times it seemed the sparkle in his eyes dulled a little, became worried, pensive, even distant, he never failed to give me space for another day. His customary farewells are forever etched in my memory: the sight of his tall frame standing in the doorway, a lazy smile on his face, drawling an often rueful "see you later" goodbye.

To my children, Sarah and Stewy, I am also grateful; they accepted my solitary life of thesis writing as routine. Often, when they found me sitting in front of the computer surrounded by stacks of books and piles of paper, eyes glued to the screen, they knew that they were on their own. Only now do I wonder where and how they spent their time. Only now does it seem unforgiveable that hours later I'd still be sitting in front of the computer, wearing the same robe, hair unbrushed, mind and eyes vague and wasted from writing. I'm sure that image is forever engraved in their minds.

Eight years ago I returned to school, and now, I am finally emerging from these "hallowed halls" with an M.A. in my hand and many echoing memories in my mind. I arrived on
the university doorsteps hungry for knowledge and that need has since then been satisfied and revived again and again. Now, I am ready for a change, I am ready to meet the next challenge—a full time teaching job would be first rate, but then, so would a trip to Tahiti.

Let me also add that this manuscript chronicles my own transformation and development as a writer. My actions were not intentional, yet now I think unavoidable. As I evolved so did my writing; as I gained authority over the language, my voice emerged from under layers of research to express "living language," language from my heart, reflecting the spirit within.
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CHAPTER I

THE DYNAMICS OF VOICE—AN INTRODUCTION

Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line read that I didn’t hear. As my eyes followed the sentence, a voice was saying it silently to me. It isn’t my mother’s voice, or the voice of any person I can identify, certainly not my own. It is human, but inward, and it is inwardly that I listen to it. . . . It is to me the voice of the story or the poem itself. The cadence, whatever it is that asks you to believe, the feeling that resides in the printed word, reaches me through the reader-voice. I have supposed, but never found out, that this is the case with all readers—to read as listeners—and with all writers, to write as listeners. When I write and the sound of it comes back to my ears, then I act to make my changes. I have always trusted this voice (Eudora Welty 11).

Voice, whether it’s Pavarotti blowing out the rafters in Kennedy Center, or Springstein groaning "Baby, we were born to run," whether it’s Alexander Graham Bell saying, "Watson, I need you!" or the faint, yet lingering whisper of my grandmother, dead these twenty years, whether it’s the voice of the novelist absorbed into the voice of the reader,
or the voice of the writer giving itself up to the invisible readers everywhere, voice is, at the very least, the bridge between the vast non-reflective realms of our unconscious minds and the immense dialogue that exists between the individual and the world. Voice, in its many guises (including Welty's reference) is a topic that has dominated research exploring the human psyche since the early part of this century. More specifically, Russian theorists, Lev Vygotsky and Mikail Bakhtin, emphasize the importance of voice in the development of self awareness. Their theories (independent of each other) focus on how individual identity emerges as a result of social interaction and the internalization of "outer word, inner speech" (qtd. in Emerson). Awareness, in this sense, is built by the self in the company of others. In other words, as we become more aware of others, an awareness of our inner selves develops. Additionally, Vygotsky and Bakhtin emphasize voice development as an integral component to language acquisition; language expresses voice just as voice expresses language. Both are dependent on one another.

Since Vygotsky's research on outer word/inner speech theory, theories of individual voice have gained significant recognition, especially in the fields of composition, psychology, and literature. Voice provides proof of our inner selves, our minds, our souls. Furthermore, language
and voice are aspects of the same phenomenon. Through language we communicate the emotional intensity of our thoughts. Through language we express our written and spoken voice. From these widely accepted theories linking language, self awareness, and voice, the argument in composition theory of whether written voice is teachable in the classroom has finally evolved. Certainly, critics don’t dispute the existence of voice, only whether or not it can be taught. On the other hand, if not taught, can voice be learned and developed? There is a difference as the following story will illustrate. A big burly friend of mine (who at the time had more ambition than brains) decided one day to move his washing machine down into the basement. As with any basement, there is no escalator, only steep, narrow stairs. Imagine the scenario. Before he was halfway down the stairs (grunting, sweating, scraping and cursing) the machine got the better of him and decided to descend without his help. Bruises and lacerations, dents and scratches were inflicted on both sides, but the machine was delivered to its ultimate destination. The moral: big man learned not to get in way of even bigger machine. He was not taught this logic from some higher god, rather he learned it through experience, and as a result, this knowledge has his individual stamp on it. Of course, he also developed more experience in how to handle major household appliances. In
fact, he discovered that one laceration is worth a thousand words of instruction. In the same sense, we recognize the difference between knowledge received and knowledge discovered, between knowledge recited and knowledge that is developed.

Likewise, written voice can be learned and developed, but a problem presents itself for instructors when we try to define voice in concrete terms—its characteristics elude us, and voice remains mysterious. Certainly in the past, many writers, as well as composition and language theorists, have tried to define voice. John Fowles suggests voice is "the creator behind what he creates" (225). Mikail Bakhtin defines voice as the "speaking personality, the speaking consciousness" (434). Peter Elbow refers to voice as the "juice" in writing, and Donald Murray evokes a poetical connection: "voice provides the music and grace and surprise that keeps the reader interested" (286, 225). But by far, the most provocative description of voice which emphasizes its elusive qualities can be found in Willa Cather's analysis of a 'first-rate writer': "It is just the thing in him which escapes analysis that makes him first-rate. One can catalogue all the qualities that he shares with other writers, but the thing that is his very own, his timbre, this cannot be defined or explained any more than the quality of a beautiful speaking voice can be" (739).
Anything dynamic has a tendency to escape definition; we can’t isolate its moving nature, especially the dynamics of voice. More specifically, as our internal character changes, grows older, matures, our voice changes too; its original essence remains the same, but we expose its stylistic qualities such as diction, tone, and allusions with more skill, intention, and experience. For example, Cather writes of Katherine Mansfield’s tragically short writing career, "She had lived through the first stage, had outgrown her young art, so that it seemed false to her in comparison with the new light that was breaking within. The 'new mechanism,' big enough to convey the new knowledge, she had not the bodily strength to set in motion" (740).

Cather’s reference to the word "mechanism" is taken from Mansfield’s last journal entries. A few weeks before she died she wrote, "The old mechanism isn’t mine any longer, and I can’t control the new" (740). Cather indicates that Mansfield’s words meant she no longer had the strength to write anymore, but she recognized a new stage in her development as a writer, a change in the "timbre" of her voice, a different depth to her writing (740). Timbre, in this sense, transcends individual qualities of voice and communicates to us a sense of the person behind the writing. Writing allows us to develop voice to new "timbres," and like an elderly person who gains wisdom through experience,
voice gains depth through the "mechanism" of the written word. By the same token, as we synthesize writing and thinking, our self constantly internalizes new knowledge. We can learn and develop, and in this sense, change the defining qualities of voice such as timbre, diction, and tone, but the initial voice is always there, "forever young."

Although voice escapes quantification because of its dynamic, changing nature, recently Joy S. Ritchie has defined voice as the development of self, a manifestation of self, in fact. More specifically, she claims that the writing workshop with its complex interactions creates a "polyphony" of voices which contributes to the formulation of a personal voice (169). Nancy Sommers also acknowledges the integral relationship between inner and outer voices: "Against all the voices I embody--the voices, heard, read, whispered to me off-stage--I must bring a voice of my own. I must enter the dialogue on my own authority, knowing that other voices have enabled mine, but no longer can I subordinate mine to theirs" (29). In other words, through interaction with others we develop a depth of our own. We give common knowledge individual shape, and, as a result, we become creators of knowledge rather than mere receptors of information. We internalize the voices around us and appropriate them into our own written voices. In fact,
outer voices are both our audience and our community; they are a conversation that we define through our writing.

Although this first chapter examines the importance of learning and developing voice, the development of voice and self are inextricably interlinked. Self is who we are, our uniqueness—more than a fingerprint but distinct like a fingerprint. Self is internal, but it evolves through inner and outer blending, or in Vygotsky’s terms, "outer word, inner speech." Inner speech is internalized social speech, and Vygotsky suggests "one makes a self through the words one has learned, fashions one’s own voice and inner speech by a selective appropriation of the voices of others" (qtd. in Emerson 255). In other words, the essence of our personal voices remains constant, but how it is used can be shaped according to audience, topic, and occasion. Voice externalizes the intensity of our thoughts and emotions through language. Voice provides a link between language and ideas. By developing voice, we develop self, and both are vital, even synonomous, with our intellectual development.

For Mary Field Belenky, self can only develop if reflection occurs. Without the passing back and forth of language, we could not have reflection; without reflection, we are isolated from the self (26). More specifically, as we share and exchange ideas, thoughts, and experiences, we
rethink how we see ourselves reflected in the responses of others, so ideally we become more aware of ourselves in the responses of others. On the other hand, without an awareness of our inner selves, "we depend on external authority for direction," and we remain passive receptors of knowledge instead of becoming active creators of knowledge (26). As a result, voice remains undeveloped and self awareness stagnates.

Is the learning and development of written voice something that should continue to be overlooked by the composition community because it's too complex to define? After all, learning is not merely recitation or memorization of facts. Ideally, learning involves our active engagement with thoughts and ideas and how we interpret the external world--reflection in fact. By the same token, Vygotsky categorizes intelligence as "social" and defines it as "a dialogue with one's own future and an address to the outside world. How a child seeks help, how he utilizes his environment, how he asks questions of others, all these constitute the child's zone of proximal development where all true learning occurs" (qtd. in Emerson 254). In other words, real learning, self awareness, intellectual development (all synonymous with one another) effectively occurs when we interact with the outside world. Real learning depends on the opportunity to interact with the
external world, how we execute that interaction, how we appropriate the social language, and how we negotiate meaning. Real learning occurs as we interpret and give individual shape to common knowledge. At the same time, as a result of our blending of inner and outer worlds (reflective and common knowledge), our inner selves can develop.

Certainly common knowledge exists where, as Ann Ruggles Gere suggests, "a 'knower' imparts wisdom to those less well informed," or what Bakhtin refers to as "authoritative discourse" (language that is "privileged," "taboo," that has "power over us"), but this knowledge only provides a background, a focus, a generality, even a starting point to awareness (73, 424). Individually, we need to comprehend and take ownership of the common knowledge we are given. Ownership of knowledge implies "I," as an individual, give shape to my knowledge, but I know the knowledge is shaped dialogically and collaboratively. From common knowledge, we imprint our individuality on the "givens" of the universe. In Belenky's words, "we use language to represent our experiences;" as we connect thought and language, we develop knowledge (15).

A simple illustration of how differently individuals interpret the external world is my experience of watching the movie, Fried Green Tomatoes, with my sister, and
reacting strongly to specific scenes. My sister laughed hysterically at the food fight scene; whereas, I thought it was only slightly amusing. (But then, to scrape together college tuition every semester, she worked in hot, steamy, greasy restaurants. I’m sure she fantasized about slinging food many times.) On the other hand, I became extremely agitated with the wife-beating scenes; my sister argued, "But they were well done." I thought they were too well done—too real (At one time, I lived in a thin-walled duplex, and my neighbors knocked each other around every night. I hated the sound of their punching, but I dreaded the eventual silence even more. Whenever I see bruises on a woman’s face, I remember the sound of the punching). The brutal scenes in the movie brought it all back, and I couldn’t concentrate on the following scenes because I was still thinking about the previous one. When the movie was over, I was thoroughly exhausted by the drama; however, my sister was energized. We saw the same thing differently.

Granted, as sisters we share a common background. Personality and experience influence the way we assimilate the external world. As social creatures, we receive common knowledge, but as individuals, we appropriate the knowledge differently—we add to it, make it our own, and in the process, retell it our own way. In this sense, knowledge and knowing are two different perspectives, two different
stages of awareness. For Bakhtin, retelling (rethinking not reciting) allows us to claim general knowledge for our own, and the language that we use to express and make sense of our thoughts creates a self and develops a voice. In such exercises as paraphrasing a poem, summarizing an article, or even relating material to a fellow student who missed class, the process of retelling (whether it’s written or spoken) allows us to come to an understanding of the common knowledge we receive. As we think and reflect and translate knowledge, we struggle with the boundaries between language and ideas. But in the struggle to connect ideas with language, we choose our own words. In fact, with any activity, whether it’s riding a bike, reading a book, planting a garden, watching a movie, or driving a car—we each interpret the activity individually; our individuality results from a blending of inner and outer worlds. Yes, we are taught, yet we interpret the teaching or the instruction differently. Likewise with writing, we choose the words that express the meaning for us.

For example, the process of writing involves more than the skill of copying letters. Letters are merely symbols after all. But individuals interpret the symbols and use the symbols of language to express themselves. As we connect language and ideas, our writing voices develop. Behind the symbols of language we use are our reflections of
thought. Behind the symbols of language we use are the emotions and thoughts that embrace the self. For instance, my daughter is learning German, and she is memorizing the usual numbers, days of the week, and greetings. For her, numbers and days of the week remain symbols she recites tonelessly, but words of greeting she has already taken as her own. She feels the words as she speaks them, and her voice, the timbre of her tone, already reflects her style, with her version of a German pronunciation, of course. In other words, language learning must become more than a rote exercise if voice is to develop.

When we speak, interaction or communication occurs primarily through language, though body language, facial expressions, inflection, tone, and pace all affect how meaning is received and interpreted, as well. When we write, once we understand that letters form words, words form sentences, sentences form paragraphs, and paragraphs form essays, we understand that language is the province of ideas. More importantly, our written voices develop as we discover the connections between language and ideas. As we internalize the language, the ideas we rethink, retell, and revise are stamped with our identities, with our personalities. Our words reflect the intensity of our emotions, and voice reveals the self emerging. As writers and speakers, the words we choose define who we are. As
human beings, we depend on the social aspects of our lives to help develop our inner selves.

To a certain degree, inner speech (a manifestation of our inner selves) reflects conscious thought, and when we write, we struggle, and at the same time, discover what we want to say. We use language to connect and define and develop our ideas. Our need to communicate, to speak or write our thoughts, is a human need and always a blending of inner and outer worlds. (Even personal journals allow us to try and make sense of our thoughts. When we say it on paper, we say it to ourselves.) In this sense, writing reflects a way of thinking; writing organizes our thinking; writing gives our ideas conscious meaning. Writing voice expresses the emotional force behind conscious thought—a social and personal force.

Conscious thought allows children access to reading and writing development. Vygotsky writes, "as a child’s development takes place through individuation in thinking so does it in writing" (235). The process of conscious thinking or "individuation" is a vehicle to developing writing voice. Furthermore, he suggests, "External society is the starting point of consciousness" and as we become aware of others, we become conscious of our inner selves through others (Vygotsky 252). Social interaction stimulates the process of choice and judgment and
transference. Our social nature allows us to listen and
speak and write, and, as a result, we internalize the words
and ideas of our community for ourselves. Since we are
conscious of thought after we have interacted with the
social world, we can say consciousness is social.
Additionally, Bakhtin writes, "I am conscious of myself and
become myself only while revealing myself for another,
through another and with the help of another . . .
Separation, dissociation and enclosure within the self is
the main reason for the loss of one's self" (qtd. in Emerson
257). In fact, if a blending doesn't occur between language
and consciousness, outer word and inner speech, Bakhtin sees
"a collapse into single consciousness--a state of "non-
existence" (qtd. in Emerson 260).
If we encourage students to interact, and thereby
nurture voice development, many will begin to open up
dialogues, both internal and external. As a result, they
will increase their interaction with the outer world, and
consequently, gain greater sensitivity to their inner
selves, their feelings. As such, this heightened awareness
manifests itself as self awareness. Inner and outer worlds
become integrated entities--connected and interdependent.
In other words, students will become more engaged in their
own discovery (knowing) process.
In contrast, we find instances of passive learning in many schools, especially in the primary grades. For example, in the fifth grade, I epitomized parochial correctness, in appearance as well as academic performance. To complement my rigid appearance of tightly-braided brown hair, starched navy uniform and skin-tight navy knee-highs (rubberbands around the legs worked the same way as men’s garters), I recited poetry, spelling and grammar with eerie precision. In fact, a profusion of freckles was the only indication of chaos in my appearance, though my academic performance remained exact. I appeared to others as the promising and dedicated English scholar because of my extraordinary recitation skills. In other words, I aced poetry, spelling, and grammar, so naturally, everyone thought I was an excellent English student. However, everyone failed to consider that my total exposure to English involved the memorization of poetry, spelling, and grammar rules.

More specifically, my experience of poetry merely involved memorizing endless stanzas of assigned poems from beginning to end. As a class, we never questioned, discussed, or conversed. Instead, the teacher ordered, and we recited. Our teacher never mentioned elements of poetry such as symbolism, theme, tone, and rhythm. In fact, the only time we heard the words of a poem aloud was when the
entire class (one-by-one) would recite verses to the teacher for a grade. To this day, I can still recite the first few lines of "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere," "The Owl and the Pussycat," and "The Charge of the Light Brigade." Yet, never once, did we discuss what the words might mean. We memorized poetry with the same mindless diligence that we memorized the catechism: "Who made you?" "God made you." "Who is God?" "God is the Supreme Being." "Thou shalt not steal." "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (I'm sure we didn't even know what "covet" meant). Spelling and grammar were taught the same way: "I" before "e" except after "c." Subject names the person, place, or thing." "Verb is the action." "Never begin a sentence with the pronoun you."

Although I admit my spelling retention has stayed with me through the years, grammar has disappeared in the same lost memory-file as poetry. However, in one respect, we did learn; we exercised our memorizing skills. But memorizing knowledge and knowing, as I mentioned earlier, are two different stages of learning--one remains external information, and the other leads to self awareness.

As composition instructors, we need to offer a middle ground to students, a blending of both worlds--internal and social. We should keep the individual in the equation: Inner + Outer = Self. Coles asks the question: "What is a
student's sense of the world and their place in it? Without speech, it remains uncertain and undefined" (qtd. in Harris 160). Without the connection between language and ideas, a writer's voice cannot develop, and by the same token, without reflection, we are isolated from the self (Belenky 26). In other words, language and self depend on one another just as voice depends on language. More specifically, Dona Hickey writes that as we discover voice, we also discover links between language and ideas. If language creates a self and language expresses voice, as writing instructors, we need to expose students to the diversity and dynamics of language. We should teach students to use language, and in the process create new uses and styles of language that reflects their inner selves.

Both Vygotsky and Bakhtin believe that human beings negotiate the meanings of words through interaction with others. For Bakhtin, ideas exist between social groups where speakers and listeners and writers and readers "constantly translate, exchange and negotiate meanings" interactively (qtd. in Gere 87). Voice emerges within the negotiation of meaning. If we experience knowledge for ourselves, change it in fact, knowledge continues to evolve and in Bakhtin's words, becomes "heteroglossia," a mixture of social and personal, inner and outer worlds (263). If classrooms work dialogically, to create and generate
knowledge, a discourse community of learners can emerge that would result in what Bakhtin refers to as "heteroglot opinion, language for the individual consciousness [which] lies on the borderline between one's self and the others . . . [where] the word in language is half someone else's" (qtd. in Gere 88). As a result of worlds blending, we create, develop, and learn, both individually and collectively.

Although Bakhtin suggests that the word is "half someone else's," language use defines us as individuals. We interpret and use language in the same way we experience the external world--individually and collectively. Remember how differently my sister and I responded to the wife-beating scenes in *Fried Green Tomatoes*? My sister's "well done" comment reflected admiration for the acting and directing of a dramatic scene. My "well done" reflected horror and even dread at a "very real" situation remembered. In this sense, word choice creates perspective, and voice reflects the intensity with which we perceive something. How we emphasize tone, description, rhythm, in other words, how we use words, represents our own interpretation which is molded from environment, observation, culture, and society.

We access this language that is dynamic, changing, and certainly dependent for meaning on the speaker or writer by making "the word[s]" our own (Bakhtin 293-94). Both
Vygotsky and Bakhtin define "the word" in similar terms. For Vygotsky, the "sense of a word is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole . . . Meaning is only one of the zones of sense . . . Meaning remains stable throughout the changes of sense" (qtd. in Emerson 245). Vygotsky's "sense" of inner speech reflects Bakhtin's use of the word "theme--the upper actual limit of linguistic significance. Meaning is the lower limit of linguistic significance. Meaning, in essence, means nothing; it only possesses potentiality--the possibility of having a meaning within a concrete theme" (qtd. in Emerson 248). Their definitions of "sense" and "theme" are interchangeable. In fact, within a dialogic situation, the speaker/writer's connotative or subjective use of the word defines the word, instead of the "stable" dictionary meaning.

Additionally, Bakhtin and Vygotsky share similar views regarding language as a tool for pedagogy. In other words, they agree that language is a tool for teaching knowledge; we learn language through language usage. However, Vygotsky insists that thought is not merely expressed in language; words aren't just a translation of thought. Instead, thought comes into existence through words; knowledge evolves through language use. Vygotsky writes, "the relation of thought to word is not a thing but a
process, a continual movement back and forth. Word meanings are dynamic not static . . . It [thought] doesn't merely find expression in speech, but its reality and form" (Thought and Language 217-19). In other words, thought undergoes many changes; like writing it evolves. Writing is thinking; it gives meaning to the predication or the feeling or the sense or the theme of thought. For Moffett, writing employs the process of revising inner speech (writing it down) which in effect develops our writing voices. During the process of writing, a transference of knowledge and ideas and discoveries takes place, and in that process of transference, we develop our own unique voice. Furthermore, Bakhtin suggests that this transference of knowledge isn't easy; appropriation is a struggle as writing is a struggle:

Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process . . . But intentional diversity of speech ("raznorecivost") which is present in every living dialect as a closed system, is transformed into diversity of language ("raznojazycie"); what results is not a single language but a dialogue of languages (294).

Bakhtin refers to this "dialogue of languages" as "heteroglossia"—a combination of the two, a fixed system
but changing its meaning with every speaker; in this way, the speaker (or writer) makes it his/her own (294).

In a general sense, the language appropriation process resembles the process of children learning to read words; the first words they comprehend, make their own, and remember are the words that represent solid and familiar pictures like sun and sky and tree and ball and cat. Colors are more difficult because they symbolize more than one object; blue can be many things not just sky or water or ball. Words like "the," "is," "could," "went," are extremely difficult words for children to appropriate because the concepts represented by these symbols are abstract, not concrete. Even though children use these words in conversation, in the beginning, they can only read them by filling gaps in sentences. The words children first remember are sense words, the Vygotskian 'sense' of the word. Everyone understands "ball" or "sun," but some see "ball" as blue or big, and some see "sun" as warm or round. 'Sense' of the word determines its meaning for the child—how he or she uses it while speaking or writing or reading. But the fixed word meaning is sun or ball. The common knowledge or fixed word is memorized, but the sense behind the word, the emotion that connects the word to a child's inner self, allows the user to become creator of knowledge rather than remain receiver of information.
This simple illustration represents both a child's beginning awareness of his/her inner self and the voice that develops from this awareness. Likewise, when instructors encourage this kind of inner and outer world synthesis, internal and external dialogue in fact, voice development is stimulated for students, and they can discover connections between language and ideas.

For Bakhtin, "words cannot be conceived apart from the voices who speak them; thus every word raises the question of authority . . . words come not out of dictionaries but out of concrete dialogic situations" (qtd. in Emerson 248). He synthesizes the two poles between language and consciousness and suggests they interact. Furthermore, he creates a model where every individual engages in two activities: external "relationships with other individuals in specific speech acts . . . internal relationships between the outer word and our own psyche" (qtd. in Emerson 248). But in order for this internalization to take place, this reflection of thought to occur, "language must pass back and forth" (Belenky 25).

When we are involved in a conversation or when we are listening to one, characteristics of the speaker(s) such as tone, body language, rhythm, express not only the voice of the speaker but also the Vygotskian "sense" of the words the speaker uses. For Coles,
The voice of the writer is always a weaving of other voices; the self is seen not as an isolated whole but as an amalgam of other selves, voices, and experiences. Always the need is for writers to define themselves as someone or something, to locate a sense of self in relation to some ongoing discourse . . . someone able to use the language of his system to grow as a person (qtd. in Harris 163).

Certainly, as readers, we hear a writer's voice when we read; it is the combination of the language the writer uses (generated by emotion and experience) and the experience and emotion we as readers bring from our own lives. Furthermore, if the writer has a strong voice, readers are more likely to become engaged in the reading; readers will hear the writer's voice, answer it, as well as argue and/or agree with it. Endless and recursive, the process is constant and dynamic, like a healthy eco-system in fact, balanced and integrally connected, embroiled in a complex exchange of energies. Likewise, the process of developing self neither begins nor ends, but constantly renews itself through the reflection of shared knowledge and experience. One movement blends into another turning constantly inside and out so origins and boundaries become impossible to separate--are impossible to separate from the beginning of
life. Victims or victors, we are the children of social and personal interaction.

Piagetian philosophy disagrees with this circular theory and instead argues that we start with the self and turn outward towards society. Conversely, Vygotskyan theory argues we are social creatures who eventually move inward bringing social influences with us. However, instead of being hedged into a chicken and egg debate, we can choose the middle ground—our sense of self is composed of a constant shifting and blending of personal and social forces. In this sense, voice has both social and personal aspects. Voice still retains its mysterious qualities, yet at the same time, we know it expresses personal emotion through social language. We appropriate language by listening, speaking, writing, thinking, and negotiating, thereby, transforming mere symbol into self. In other words, we can't just mimic the language of a given community; we could simply parrot the language and not really understand the meaning.

For example, at one time or another, as students, we have all been assigned research papers and experienced the agonizing process of translating academic discourse into our own words (or worlds for that matter). In order to appropriate the language of a discourse community, we have to understand it, otherwise, plagiarism, however
unintentional, permeates our writing and effectively smothers our writing voices. Rather than mimic academic discourse, we need to make the language work for us, to express us, so we not only understand authoritative knowledge, but we develop it for ourselves. As we proceed this way, eventually, we become creators of knowledge, developing our voices as we connect ideas to language.

In this respect, authoritative or common knowledge has a place in education just as traditional lectures do. Certainly, I don't mean to discredit authoritative knowledge. We need the background knowledge, the history, the guidelines, in order to form our own boundaries, beliefs, and ideas. But instructors need to allow students to become more actively engaged with knowledge, to think beyond what they're given and to recognize the potential for possibilities. Instructors need to recognize the individual's distinct potential for possibilities.

What, then, is the interrelationship between voice and speech development? Between self and society? For Vygotsky, "the internalization of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology" (Mind in Society 57). Speech develops our thought processes and allows us to pass knowledge back and forth and negotiate meaning. According to Vygotsky "without playing, conversing, and listening to
others and drawing out their own voice, people fail to develop a sense that they can talk and think things through" (qtd. in Belenky 33). If we are denied the chance to voice our experiences collectively through language ("sharing, expanding, and reflecting"), knowledge will remain authoritative and only something that comes from outside ourselves; knowledge will never become our own. As a result, we will only see ourselves through others' eyes and in the roles we perform, not through the development of our personal, internal selves.

Doris Lessing characterizes an isolated self in her short story "To Room Nineteen." The main character, Susan, is a woman who believes in "the system" too well. Her identity, personality, and self doesn't exist beyond the roles she is expected to perform: housewife, mother, employer. She thinks to herself, "there have been times I thought that nothing existed of me except the roles that went with being Mrs. Matthew Rawlings" (594). She accepts knowledge, accepts roles without question, without negotiation; she exists within her roles, and beyond them she isn't a person. She is what everyone expects her to be, she never questions her existence, she never reflects on her experiences, and she never shares her thoughts. She makes the mistake of living her life according to societal ideals, the voice of authority; she can't violate society's
expectations concerning the order of things. As a result, she stagnates in her roles. When her roles fall apart, as in life they often do, she disappears. There is no blending, just suppression of a potential self, an isolation from the self. She has no mind of her own, no perception of who she is away from the roles she performs. In fact, she is not a forty year old woman with needs and experiences and opinions, but a mother, wife, employer.

Similar to Lessing's characterization of Susan (the isolated self), Belenky writes of the silent knower: she can "find no vantage point outside of the self that enables [her] to look backward, bringing the whole self into view" (32). In other words, the "silent knower" is completely dependent on others for her identity. If she was asked "who are you?" she would not exist for herself, only as a reflection of the roles she performs.

Learning and developing voice helps shape our identity. Without our individual identities we would not exist as a human race. Consider when we view a field of daisies from a distance; they appear uniform: stems, leaves, flowers. Their colors (various shades of yellow, orange, red, white) all blend into one color—orange. But when we look closely at the daisies, they have unique shapes, colors, and sizes. Some stand tall, others curved, some are old, dried, withered; others are new, firm, bright. As humans, from a
distance, we might also appear uniform: head, body, appendages. But when we look closely at ourselves, our physical characteristics emerge more clearly such as: blue eyes, short legs, large hands, red hair, or black skin. As a society, we cling to our general knowledge of the world, but as individuals, we internalize knowledge and make it our own. We imprint knowledge with the self, and therefore, change it for ourselves.

With writing, we can memorize the symbols of language, we can learn the form of discourse, but beyond the symbol and form is our appropriation of that idea, or letter, or word. Furthermore, because writing involves "a deliberate structuring of the web of meaning," when we write, we imprint self on the symbol, and at the same time, self is created by the idea, or letter, or word. More to the point, Vygotsky asks the question: "How might man [or woman] be kept from closing in on his [her] self? . . . we learn, through the word, who we are not, who we might yet become" (qtd. in Emerson 260). For example, in Sophocles' tragic play, "Oedipus The King," Oedipus performs a role. He believes in his role to the exclusion of everything else and, in the process, forgets that he is human. In a different sense, he learns through the word who he is not.

Self represents our need to stand out, our identity, our voice. In some sense, self represents our immortality.
Self convinces us that we are real; we do exist in this world. Self verifies our need to be recognized beyond the social roles we perpetuate. As we have seen, in many expert views, self co-exists with speech development, and therefore, with intellectual development. Our cognitive abilities work together to shape each of us as individuals. Without self, we have no sense of identity; without voice, we get lost in the maelstorm of society, and we exist only for as long as our roles exist, like Susan, in "To Room Nineteen." There is no discovery; there is no reflection. We cannot create knowledge; we merely simulate a pre-fab model of knowledge; we replicate textbook models of knowledge constructed by authority for our prefabricated minds.

The development of written voice is vital to learning because we are social creatures, and without a voice, "without the dialogue with one's own future and an address to the outside world," we will never become creators of knowledge (qtd. in Emerson 254). If we are not "creators of knowledge," we will never develop our personal, internal selves; we will never develop our intellectual potential. However, if we encourage self awareness, if we encourage voice development, if we encourage inner and outer blending, then students will play a more active role in their own learning experience, will integrate their own voices with
the voices of others, and will make a place for themselves in the world.

While Chapter One explores the dynamic qualities of voice and how the development of voice parallels the development of our own persona in the world, Chapter Two will move the individual into the social realm, and examine collaborative pedagogies and why the social aspects of group learning help our voices to develop.
CHAPTER II

COLLABORATING INTO VOICE

If we accept the idea that language is socially constituted and that the 'sense' of words (as Vygotsky uses the term) emerges from the context from which they are used, then dialogue becomes more than a preliminary to writing; it is essential to the whole activity... The language writers use depends on their social participation, and peer response provides a specialized society for writers... As writers we exchange meanings not just helpful advice... creating meaning through dialogue (Gere 88-93).

Whether we are truckers in the local Teamsters or voters casting our ballots on election day, whether we are parents in the PTA or rebels surging with the crowd in a revolution, whether we are participants at an electronic townhouse meeting or fans applauding 'encore' at a rock and roll concert, we are social creatures, and in our social interactions, we create meaning and purpose that eclipse what we can do as individuals. We are swept up by the crowd, we contain the crowd, and in these interactions, we develop our sense of who we are against a back drop of voices that surround us. We collaborate to achieve a common goal, and through that process, we discover who we are, as individuals and as a community. Collaborative learning, a
developmental social process, can be an effective setting for learning and developing writing voice, whereby, as Gere suggests, writers sometimes create meaning through dialogue. This chapter examines various perspectives of collaborative theory and how application of such theory affects the development of voice, focusing especially on the distinction between the social and individual writer.

Collaborative learning, John Trimbur writes, can incite desire through commonwork to resolve, if only symbolically, the contradictions students face because of the prevailing conditions of production—the monopoly of expertise and the impulse to know, the separation of work and play, allegiance to peers and dependence on faculty esteem, the experience of cooperation and the competitiveness of a ranking reward system, the empowering sense of collectivity and the isolating personalization of an individual's fate (615).

Put simply, collaborative learning can make the student's struggle between the boundaries of "authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse" (outer word/inner speech) less of an isolated experience and more of an interactive communication. Furthermore, advocates of collaboration maintain that learning is a social process and "writing is collaboration" (Reither 855). However, a
difference lies in how and to what degree writing instructors apply collaborative learning theories. More specifically, James A. Reither and Douglas Vipond feel that writers can collaborate in a number of ways, two of which are workshopping—where colleagues or peers comment on drafts and discuss revision possibilities, and knowledgemaking—where writers collaborate with others more knowledgeable in a specific field or topic of study and "collectively" construct and reconstruct their own field of knowledge (855). Both forms of collaboration involve conversation about writing.

Although many proponents of collaboration apply these two forms of learning in their writing classes, Anne Ruggles Gere implies a difference in collaborative learning theories; she emphasizes group writing in the classroom over individual authorship. Gere suggests that writing instruction still focuses too often on what she refers to as Cartesian/Piagetian epistemology; the individual is emphasized, the lone writer, thinker. In other words, even though she maintains that collaboration is considered acceptable in composition classes for certain exercises (such as brainstorming or invention), when actual writing occurs, the degree to which we apply collaborative teaching theories becomes divided: group writer versus individual writer. For Gere, Piaget's conclusions concerning early
language development—that children develop inwardly and then communicate their internal thoughts to society—promote the concept of individual writer and thinker (56). Gere contends that writing is a dialogical rather than an individual process.

To further contrast the Cartesian/Piagetian epistemology of individual authorship, Gere emphasizes the social aspects of writing and claims that Vygotsky’s research on speech development and the emergence of egocentric speech, "when the child transfers social collaborative forms of behavior to the sphere of inner-personal functions," should qualify as a more realistic model for writing curriculum (quoted in Gere 81). Gere believes Vygotsky’s developmental process doesn’t isolate individual and social language. Instead, inner and outer worlds remain interlocked because individual language reflects internalized social language.

Collaboration works the same way. Reither writes, "academic writing, reading, and inquiry are collaborative, social acts, social processes, which not only result in, but also—and this is crucial—result from, social product: writing processes and writing products are both elements of the same social process" (145). However, the individual doesn’t lose his/her soul or individuality to the social group, but rather blends his/her individuation or inner
language with the group, wherein the "soul" of the individual goes through another transformation, another level of development. As each of us becomes aware of others, our own self awareness develops. We move, create, build, and evolve with language. Everything is part of the social in one way or another. From the social, we develop our own internal thoughts: thoughts that emerge as a result of social interaction. For example, when students read and respond in their journals to homework assignments, ideally they come to class with some kind of interpretation of the reading. As a group, they work collaboratively to summarize, define, and negotiate meaning of material, material they will later, individually, internalize and develop through writing assignments. Collaboration encourages an outer word/inner speech synthesis where students learn to use language to create meaning. Collaboration allows us to be more than what we are as individuals, and it allows us to formulate and develop individual voice in the company of other voices.

Gere argues against the exclusivity of individual authorship and places partial blame for this phenomenon on our persistent belief in the hierarchical view of learning where a "special class of 'knower' was responsible for conveying knowledge to us . . . fixed knowledge [that derives] from the view that knowledge resided in certain
sources" (69). That is, we consider the universe and everything in it as having only one "fixed" meaning; the view shifts its focus, but knowledge always remains in the hands of the few. For example, when the Bible was considered the primary source of scientific knowledge, "the priests who studied scripture identified and disseminated knowledge" (Gere 70). When scientific theory started to emerge with scientists such as Descartes and Newton, we began to believe in the independent existence of time and space, subjective mind and objective matter. We could observe the universe, but we weren't an interactive part of it. This subjective/objective dichotomy was universal knowledge and the only truth. Traditionally, our classrooms reflect this view of "fixed" knowledge where teacher-centered classrooms are emphasized, or as Harvey Wiener writes, where teaching "isolates learners instead of drawing them together" (238). Hence, our schools perpetrate the hierarchical system of dispensing knowledge—the classroom teacher is superior knowledge bearer and the student is pliable sponge.

Andrea Lunsford, in her article "Intellectual Property, Concepts of Selfhood, and The Teaching of Writing," also acknowledges the need to question and change current pedagogy in composition. She feels that writing and the field of composition "must evoke a scene not of radical
individualism, not of assimilation, but of construction and transformation" (67). In fact, she argues against individual authorship and "constructing writing as a way to finding unique selves and voices" (67). Although her article emphasizes that "much of the writing students do is collaborative," Lunsford also concedes that eventually, students "articulate their own positions" (71). So Gere and Lunsford suggest that all classroom writing should be collaborative, but, as Lunsford says, we will always arrive at our "own positions." This then is the theory and practice of inner and outer blending—we create knowledge and develop our writing voices in collaboration, but, as stated before, we are not lost within these group voices, but rather, we accumulate the knowledge of those around us, and we grow as individual thinkers whether the result is an individual or group-authored project.

Composition theorists such as Janet Emig and James Moffett also encourage collaboration as a means of learning, but according to Gere, they ultimately practice Piagetian epistemology—the aloneness of the writer. They agree that talking is a valuable and necessary form of prewriting, and students in their classes experience collaboration, but eventually, the writer has to separate himself/herself from the social aspect of learning and write alone. For example, Gere acknowledges that Moffett encourages a collaborative
experience of learning, but he finally "shakes off the social embrace and creates individualized authorship" (Gere 76). And, so, Gere believes that he does not practice true collaborative learning and indeed, shortchanges its significant influences for writing.

More specifically, Gere disagrees with Emig's research regarding the composing process of twelth grade students; Emig's study focuses on writing that the students did alone and not on the collaborative comments regarding their work. Furthermore, Gere feels that Emig's research ignores student comments and she fails to evaluate those comments in her conclusions. Gere concludes that Emig's research emphasizes that composing done alone is the most important. Gere thinks otherwise and suggests that writing groups are beneficial because their conversation "blurs the distinction between writer and audience, incorporating the otherness of the audience into their own writing" (85). As a result, writer and audience become part of the same community and "they learn to speak the same vernacular . . . [maintaining] a Vygotskian dialogue throughout the process of writing" (Gere 85).

Kenneth Bruffee also advocates the social aspects of writing, a social constructionist view of collaboration "to teach students how knowledge is generated and arrived at
through the conversation of communities" (221). In addition, Bruffee writes:

if we regard conversation as the key to writing considered as a social collaborative act then students must learn to converse about writing in a profitable way with people who are more or less their equals with regard to learning to write. Students engage in conversation about writing every step of the way: finding a topic; deciding what they want to say about that topic; developing material to defend or explain what they say; reading, describing, and evaluating what they have written; and rewriting (218).

In other words, by conversing, students are doing what Moffett also encourages: conversing inwardly and outwardly about writing, and revising inner speech through writing. This then is what Vygotsky describes as "living written language" and the process of writing helps students appropriate a way of using the language and conversation within a discourse community (Mind In Society 106). As students appropriate the language, as they revise their inner speech, their inner selves, in part, reflect the collective consciousness of the group. As they integrate the group voices, they also struggle to define their own individual voices.
For Bruffee, there is no universal method of learning, nor is language just a medium to acquire knowledge. Memorizing text is not necessarily understanding text. Remember the eerie precision of the fifth grade scholar in Chapter One? She memorized words, but did she know their meaning? According to Bruffee’s social constructionist’s theory, language becomes an expression of who we are, not just a reiteration of borrowed ideas. Collaborative learning encourages students to participate in a communal creation of knowledge.

Bruffee believes that within this community of writers, say a composition class, students should converse and discuss the properties of writing. Writers internalize this conversation (such as summarizing or paraphrasing a poem), and make it their own, and just as someone who learns a new trade copies, models, and practices a new skill, so does the writer. But remember, when unskilled apprentices learn a new skill from the instructor, they attempt to internalize his/her method ideally; however, they do not duplicate it exactly. Instead, as they evolve artistically, they individually interweave their own personalities into their work, imprint it with their own uniqueness. Bakhtin suggests that each of us struggles between these boundaries of "authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse" and eventually a transference is made, an
appropriation (424). But environment, culture, observation and experience shape our individual perspectives, so each of us appropriates knowledge in different ways. Remember the two different responses to the movie, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, in Chapter One. Two sisters emphasized different things in the movie, in part, because of their experiences.

The same holds true for writing—students converse and internalize the voices of the community of which they are members; students even model the discourse they are writing in, but they bring their own background, their own observations, their own experiences, and their own techniques to their writing. And "their own" reflects the individual voices that develop as each student attempts to appropriate knowledge. However, as individual voices meld with others, "sharing, expanding, reflecting," they transform individual language again and again because language is dynamic and changes with every speaker—"the word is always part someone else's." Although students appropriate the voices around them (the heteroglossia of voices), their audience in fact, they don't lose their individual personalities but integrate them with the environment, culture, and observations that have shaped them, and as Lunsford suggests, they arrive at their "own positions."
Gere, Lunsford, as well as Moffett, Bruffee, and Emig advocate collaborative learning, claim conversation is internalized, and writing is a reconversing or revising of inner speech. However, they disagree about where the boundaries of collaboration should begin and end. That is, application in the classroom falls at different points on a continuum ranging from group writing on one end to individual authorship on the other. Gere suggests that "Vygotsky's perspective of language learning, the 'dialectic' between the individual and society, has much more congruence with the activities of writing groups than does Piaget's dichotomy" (85). In Piagetian terms, "writing groups provide a means to an end of individual performance in writing, but they are finally peripheral because the essence of writing lies in the individual effort of opening the mind's locked lid" (Gere 85). For Vygotsky, "the source of language lies outside the individual . . . the dialectic between the individual and society puts peer response at the center of writing because it makes language integral to thinking and knowing" (quoted in Gere 85). Writing groups make or create their own knowledge through language as they talk about writing "every step of the way," and as a result, they learn the language of a writing community by appropriating the spoken and written discourse for themselves (Bruffee 218).
Similar to Gere's dialogic process of writing, Bruffee also suggests writing and talking go together,

If thought is internalized public and social talk then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is social conversation then writing is internal conversation reexternalized. Writing is at once both two steps away from conversation and a return to conversation (241).

Bruffee's words reflect the recursive process of spoken and written discourse working within a social framework. Students converse, they internalize conversation as thought, and then by writing, they "re-immers conversation in its extensive social medium" (Bruffee 241). Similar to Bakhtin's "retelling" theory, when students talk and write about a topic, words change from speaker to speaker and audience to audience. As students pass knowledge back and forth to each other within the group, their thoughts and ideas consistently go through little evolving stages of social and internal movement, as inner and outer worlds blend. Thought and meaning merge just as speaking and writing blend—we engage language to create meaning. Furthermore, the language used in writing is the language of the writing community and a re-emergence of the conversations we partake in through collaboration. As such,
students engage in a dialogic learning process, they connect language to ideas, and they develop individual voices that synthesize the language of inner and outer worlds.

For Gere, because writing groups discuss and negotiate writing problems, "participants develop metalanguage . . . language about language [which] contributes significantly to . . . metacognition (the ability to monitor one's own thinking)" or what Moffett believes is essential to the process of revising inner speech—controlling inner speech or being conscious of it (94-95). Furthermore, "current discussions of human intelligence argue that metacognition constitutes a major factor in mental ability because people who are aware of how they think perform better than those who are not" (Gere 94-95). When students collaborate about "how transitions will be affected, how an idea will be developed, how introductions and conclusions will be handled, or how they will convey an idea, they use language to talk about language" (Gere 95). As they become conscious of their inner speech, they become more aware of how they construct their writing, and for Vygotsky, this conscious awareness of an operation "leads to its mastery" (quoted in Gere 95). Thus for Gere, writing groups are essential because learning to write means "learning to use the language of a given community, and [they] provide a forum in which individuals can practice and internalize this language
... [they] foster language about language" (Gere 96). As students learn how to use language to talk about language, they expand their knowledge, and they further develop their individual voices as they combine social conversation and internal thought.

When students discuss writing, they expand their awareness of topics and their awareness of writing issues. They each choose their own answers as a result of their own perspectives. Similarly, collaboration gives students the opportunity to see varying sides and stages and directions that they can take their writing. As a result of these possibilities, students learn to make judgments and decisions about their writing, and at the same time, their thinking. Collaboration enhances the writing process and the process of thinking. Through collaboration, inner speech has a chance to be translated into effective language not only through writing but oral expression as well. If students are allowed to work through and discuss their writing topics and questions about writing within their classroom community, they will get a chance to engage their inner speech or thoughts in active thinking processes.

In fact, when students discuss their own thoughts, as well as the thoughts of students around them, they will become more knowledgeable about writing. As students become more knowledgeable, integrating voices, developing audience
awareness, and strengthening critical thinking skills, they
gain confidence in their ability to function well in their
writing community, and through this gain in self confidence,
their individual voices become stronger. That is, the more
students talk about their writing, the more ideas they have
to think about, internalize, and apply to their writing. As
their pool of knowledge widens and expands, (through
speaking and writing) their voices become more developed and
more expressive.

For example, if I am teaching a topic I am not very
comfortable with, confident about, or prepared enough for,
my speaking voice, when I am lecturing or giving directions,
sounds weak, unenthusiastic, false. As an instructor, in
order for me to help my students learn, I need to understand
for myself what I am talking about, so I can more
effectively facilitate discussion for my students. In other
words, I need to practice as well as implement collaborative
learning theory. Collaboration allows us to consider the
possibilities (of our chaotic thoughts), get feedback,
discuss weaknesses and strengths in any subject matter.
Vygotsky suggests that "a new way of seeing things opens up
new possibilities for handling them" (Thought and Language
169). Collaboration offers us the opportunity to see things
through a dioptic scope—a multi-prism lens—and like the
dragon fly, we can see multiple images.
Composition theorists such as Emig, Moffett, Bruffee, as well as Gere and Lunsford, advocate the need for collaborative learning techniques in writing curriculum. That is, writing groups provide a community in which individuals can practice and internalize language, "creating meaning through dialogue" (Gere 93). Moreover, self awareness and writing voice develop from social as well as personal spheres of thinking, and eventually, writers separate themselves from the writing group and write alone to integrate the voices, to struggle between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse, and to develop voice. This means that the individual writer participates in the process of revising his/her inner speech, and writing alone reflects the process/product of the social learning process, whereby, the writer's voice develops connecting language and ideas.

But finally, the effects of collaboration, conversing and reconversing, remain an on-going process. Writers do interact with others, and at some point, they also write alone; they discuss their revisions and revise again, so writing is both social and individual. As students reconverse, they come closer to the development of their own writing voices. Students internalize the conversation of the group; they make judgments about language, together and
alone, as they choose what and what not to use. Martin Buber's words clarify this statement nicely:

The I, [not an alienated or isolated individual] which has stood together with others in actuality, and never totally separate from them even when alone, goes on conversing inwardly, infinitely. The inventing self is socially constituted and what is invented is judged according to its social contexts . . . Individual and social realms are co-existing and mutually defining (quoted in LeFevre 139).

Additionally, Karen LeFevre writes, "We will more fully comprehend the process of creating new ideas when we think of it as an act that is social even as it is individual, with the other always implicated in the inventions of the I" (140). So overall, collaborative learning groups generally do just what Gere proposes: create knowledge and talk about writing while merging many different perspectives and variations on a similar theme.

More importantly, the "I" that Buber claims "has stood together with others" does have a voice of its own. Voice first develops as a result of social interaction--sharing, expanding, reflecting--but from there it evolves and blends and strengthens because we learn how to use language to talk about language. Within each of us is the self, primarily
expressed through language, and the identity we have developed as a result of culture, environment, observations, and experience. Furthermore, as we develop our writing voices, we discover connections between language and ideas; we learn to make judgments about ourselves and our writing.

This chapter on collaboration represents an active example of participation and application of Bakhtin’s language theory: appropriation and transference of knowledge. I have shown how these concepts are underscored by the practices of collaboration advocates, Gere, Lunsford, Bruffee, Moffett and Emig, who read Vygotsky and appropriate his language development theories in their own way, and thus verify, by their example, Bakhtin’s belief that "the word in language is half someone else’s." In Chapter Three, I will demonstrate how collaborative learning can contribute to the development of a dynamic personal voice.
Despite my parents' and teachers' attempts to keep home and school discrete, the internal conflict between the two discourses continued whenever I read or wrote. Although I tried to suppress the voice of one discourse in the name of the other, having to speak aloud in the voice I had silenced each time I crossed the boundary kept both voices active in my mind. To identify with the voice of home or school, I had to negotiate through the conflicting voices of both by restating, taking back, qualifying my thoughts. But I could not use the interaction comfortably and constructively. Both my parents and my teachers had implied that my job was to prevent that interaction. My sense of having failed silenced me (Min-zhan Lu 446).

Min-zhan Lu's words effectively portray the silence that results from the dominant/passive roles of teacher/student in our traditional classrooms. In fact, this silence is typical for many who are not encouraged to voice their thoughts and contribute to knowledge. Chapter Two establishes language as integral to thinking and knowing, and emphasizes that writers create language as part of their dialogue with others. This chapter examines how
voice dynamics, self awareness, and theories of collaboration can be applied to the composition classroom.

According to Paulo Freire, traditional classrooms reflect the system of banking: The teacher’s role is "to ‘fill’ the students by making deposits of information which the teacher considers to constitute true knowledge . . . ." The student’s job is merely to "store the deposits" (quoted in Belenky 214). This rigid scenario of "deposit" and "record" fosters silence in our institutions of learning, a silence that both men and women share within a hierarchical setting. This system of banking promotes an artificial exchange of knowledge between teachers and students, and so, inhibits the sharing of individual ideas and thoughts. Faced with this debilitating imbalance of power, our responsibility as educators is to facilitate social interaction. More to the point, students should be encouraged to overcome their own self-imposed silence, learned within the institution and know they can explore ideas in an environment that encourages interaction, individual learning styles, and critical thinking--more succinctly: the development of a personal voice.

The alternative is a silence in education that is indeed as Adrienne Rich writes "oppressive":

Where language and naming are power,
silence is oppression, is violence
(quoted in Belenky 24).

We are a social breed, and, as such, interaction—listening/speaking, reading/writing—is integral to our process of intellectual development. Collaboration offers students a unique opportunity to enjoy the collective conversation of the group. Furthermore, Richard Gebhardt remarks,

students gain insights into their own writing as they comment on the work of others . . . And transference of skill from reading others' writing to critically viewing one's own depends on the kind of feedback a student receives when offering comments during collaborative workshops (70).

Collaborative learning can be and should be much more than a peer editing exercise implemented at the end of the writing process. Students should work together from the beginning of an assignment to "generate material, crystallize a thesis, develop a sense of audience and voice, and organize a draft," and even collaborate on a title (Gebhardt 72).

Composition instructors can provide a range of opportunities for students to listen and converse and write about what they hear. We can maximize the variety of subjects that could be incorporated into our writing programs, where students are given the opportunity to think
things out, to recognize problems, to discover solutions, and consider differing perspectives. For example, a friend of mine uses Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem "Jabberwocky" as an exercise in her composition class to show students the importance of word choice, word order, and rhythm, among other things. I have modified her exercise and use it in my literature and composition classes.

In groups, students are asked to summarize and translate the poem, line-by-line, word-by-word. Their first reaction is usually, "But we can't read this; it's in a foreign language!" Yet it's amazing how many different interpretations result from this assignment. Usually, students interpret the poem as some kind of quest or initiation rite that a child has to go through, and the Jabberwock is the monster or beast he/she has to kill. But when they try to translate it line by line, the interpretations become more specific and diverse. They range from dreams of adventure and childhood nightmares to shaman/warrior rites of passage and knight/king quests of honor. One particular group even went so far as to identify the poem as symbolic of a writer experiencing writer's block, and the agonizing struggle he/she goes through before being able to write again. From this exercise, students begin to understand the patterns words can have. Without knowing what the words in the poem mean, students are able
to recognize nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and, as a result, they are able to effectively and creatively discover meanings for the words in the poem.

While the use of poetry in a composition classroom isn’t a new idea, it seems that we periodically have to reassure the composition world that poetry is acceptable as a learning tool for writing. These kinds of exercises give students the chance to understand what language represents in writing as well as speaking: the means to explore ideas, generate knowledge, and discover the self. They offer students the opportunity to struggle with their own voices. As writers, students can listen for their voices, actively participate in their own voice development, and eventually hear their voices when they write. Like Welty, only when writers hear their voices can they make changes. Only then are writers actively engaged in thinking out ideas. As the last chapter asserts, students must learn to reflect on their ideas and words if they are to grow as self-aware writers.

Coles suggests that finding one’s own voice as a writer can only occur through "placing oneself within the discourse of others" (quoted in Harris 162) which verifies Bakhtin’s belief that "the word in language is always half someone else’s." Furthermore, Harvey Kail acknowledges that,
collaborative learning . . . disrupts the traditional relationships between student writers and their primary audience, their teachers . . . [and instead] can be an inquiry into the writings of the people who compose it . . . reader and writer are joined in a dialogue that both centers on and gives rise to the writings of the class. Instead of 'how to' knowledge being passed on down the teacher student hierarchy, it seems to be backing up, moving around through a system shaped like an errant plumbing job . . . I had become part of a maze of influences and a tangle of conversations about writing in which I was only one of the major speakers and listeners (596-97).

Since collaboration allows writers to pursue the possibilities of the creative self, why not implement assignments that encourage both social interaction and voice development. For example, if writing instructors teach satire and point of view assignments in a collaborative atmosphere, they will encourage students to appropriate various ways of using language. These assignments emphasize purposeful word choice, and students can see, first-hand, how language connects ideas and influences and shapes the communication or presentation of them. Through collaboration, as awareness of other voices develops,
eventually individual student writers will become more aware of their own voices.

Assigning essays that incorporate elements of satire pushes students to discuss writing more openly because many of them believe they have never been exposed to satire. After a few sessions of discussing various types of satirical works, Thurber, Swift, and Vonnegut, along with such popular television sitcoms as, "The Simpsons," "Married With Children," and "Dinosaurs," students realize just how common satire is in their lives. How many times do we see students impersonating Bart Simpson or Al Bundy in clothing, attitude, or mannerisms? Or, how many times do we see people we know in the behavior of Bart or Al? Students imitate their actions, understand their character, and even project other scenarios of how the character would react. In other words, similar to Stanislavsky's "method acting" techniques, where acting has to appear to grow out of inner life, students synthesize with the character. More importantly, actors and writers have a context for what they do. An actor becomes the character he/she portrays on stage, just as a writer assumes the persona he/she projects on paper. Writers also develop other personas and perspectives by choosing words that would identify the character's tone or attitude.
For example, as a group, students may be given a specific proposal form to model (a short form of "A Modest Proposal"), but the subject matter is entirely their own choice. Ideally, in the group, each and every line is discussed and written collaboratively, so they learn how important word choice is especially to emphasize a consistent ironic tone. As a result of a project like this, writing voices develop because writers appropriate satirical language, they appropriate group voices, and they personalize knowledge: retell, reconverse, and rewrite. At first, group members work closely negotiating meaning on one project. In fact, they form a writing community where, as Bruffee suggests, they "converse about writing . . . with people who are more or less their equals with regard to learning to write" (218). As members of this community, they are more confident about discussing their own half-formed creations of satire because they have learned to ask questions and admit doubts. Students become familiar with each other, they work comfortably together, and they lose their fear of experimenting with words. From success with group proposals, students can gain confidence to attempt their own proposals.

During this project, instructors can observe an interweaving of thinking, speaking, listening, and writing; they can see and hear voices developing. And a primary goal
in writing should be to develop a confident oral voice through collaborative exercises in order to shape/strengthen the writing voice as well. In other words, if students constantly exchange and expand their ideas through language, they get a chance to blend the language into their own work. When writers internalize these group conversations, they can make the words their own, and reconverse in writing.

Student writers do more than just become the group. The group voice materializes within each member of the group, and although individuals are influenced by the group and appropriate its ideas, these ideas are personalized by each one of them. As students sift through words, ideas, and topics, they are constantly making judgments, discarding and retaining information about writing in general and their own writing in particular. Slowly then, but certainly, individual voice develops from this inner and outer blending. Voice intertwines with the development and use of speech and language. And so, when students are required to familiarize themselves with satirical language and to invent their own satirical proposals, they develop a new depth to their writing, because they are learning to appropriate a new language.

Another group exercise students can participate in during class is writing a scene together that focuses on a particular perspective. This exercise isn’t new but rather
an adaptation from one of John Gardner's fiction writing exercises. Instructors assign two extreme scenarios such as, a woman who has just lost her child, and a woman in love. Students are asked to describe how "the woman" perceives her surroundings (such as looking at a lake). Students invent many dramatic variations on the woman/child theme: the woman murdering her own child, aborting a fetus, losing a child to an incurable disease, or even drowning in that particular lake.

Additionally, students will create a different view of the lake from the perspective of a woman in love, but on the whole, the woman in love theme doesn't generate as much imagination. It seems that ghoulish, dark, negative emotions are more interesting for students to write about than mushy, sappy love, but they understand how perspective changes when the character's circumstance changes, and as a result, they understand the importance of word choice. When students work together, struggling to assemble the character and perspective of a make-believe person, they prepare themselves for writing their own character sketches (which is a requirement in my class). Students gain authority in their voices because they are in charge of creating the character, and in this sense, they are creating the language.
This assignment gives the students a chance to experiment and have fun with point of view, audience, perspective and word choice. Depending on what kind of dramatic situation they choose to invent, the personalities of the group decide the tone. Students especially see how one word can change the tone of an entire paragraph. They can be dramatic and dark or mushy and sappy (if the class happens to be populated with eighteen-year-olds, the melodrama tends to thicken like the air over L.A. during rush hour). At the same time, students are working together talking and learning about writing.

For example, one particular group of students decided to create the perspective of a woman horrified and even haunted by the fact that she aborted her baby. All the students in this group were opposed to abortion, so the horror of the act was easier for them to create. The woman saw images of floating fetuses almost fully developed in the water; she heard faint cries of a baby in pain; the water was dark, torrid, full of evil, and monsters, and slime. The writing reflected not only their abhorrence of abortion, but also the woman’s guilt, despair, and loneliness concerning her sinful act. The woman’s thoughts were dark, heavy, morose, and the students chose words that created the hidden feelings and emotions the character was experiencing. However, when the group characterized a woman in love, her
thoughts were light, dreamy, soothing. She saw visions of her hopeful future reflected in the water; she witnessed nature as a brilliant display of miracles, colors, magic.

These two sketches dramatize for the students how different words can enhance opposite perspectives. Furthermore, this exercise helps students develop their writing voices because they raise questions, discuss comments, negotiate meaning, and at the same time, they establish their own criteria for this assignment. Or as Coles suggests, they "use language in a way that begins to constitute a self . . . Writers start with a language common to us all and try to claim some part of it as their own . . . [and they] appropriate a way of using language" (quoted in Harris 162). Students become critics and professionals not only within their own group but for the whole class. By working collaboratively on their own scenes, they are learning and developing a connection between language and ideas. They are discovering the strength and authority of their own voices. Students internalize the collaborative material and they implement this criteria into their own perspective of the assignment. Also, students are more attuned to the language they have been conversing in as a group, and they use this language to create their own sketch—a blending of themselves and society. Usually students have not previously experienced this particular
assignment, so they are all on the same level, uncertain of the outcome, struggling in the same way, but at the same time, creating something unique.

These kinds of collaborative assignments allow students to experiment with their writing, with their ideas, and with their doubts. As a result of these experiments, they utilize the language, they learn self awareness, and they develop writing voice. When students work on the point of view sketch for instance, they develop a personality and a voice for the character because they must get inside the head of the character. In order to visualize a particular perspective, they must not only create atmosphere and background for the character, but they must also feel the emotions that the character experiences while viewing a particular scene. When students experiment with different perspectives, they become conscious of their own dynamic perspectives. Later, as they work on their own sketches, they can use the same techniques; they listen to other voices that speak in class; they implement their own authority into the assignment.

Likewise, when students create a satirical personna, they find out about themselves; they question "authoritative knowledge," they discuss personal experience, and they negotiate meaning. In other words, they participate in a "Vygotskian" synthesis, blending outer word/inner speech.
By giving students the freedom to compose something completely unorthodox (by their standards), they are not pressured by constrictive conventions such as the five-paragraph essay. Instead, students learn that language is the means by which they communicate and create meaning. They become more fully conscious of the meaning of words and how meaning changes. As a result, students become the arbitrators of meaning for themselves. Consciousness of an operation is an important development in intellect, and as Vygotsky writes, "a new way of seeing things opens up new possibilities for handling them. A chessplayer's moves are determined by what he sees on a board; when his perception of the game changes, his strategy will also change. Becoming conscious of our operations . . . leads to their mastery" (169-171). When students change their perception, they change their awareness. When students are encouraged to speak and write in different perspectives, a new consciousness develops, and they gain awareness of their voices.

It has been suggested that voice in conversation is different from voice in writing (Williams 42). Granted, both voices can produce the same emotional response, but the voice itself and the outward manifestation of it is different. For example, if we transcribe conversation, does the transcription reflect the voice we look for in writing?
Certainly, written words aren't just transcribed speech. If they were, a transcription of a conversation would clearly reflect the voice we look for in writing. But transcription is dead conversation. All the nuances and accents and tone and body language disappear when the words are reduced to symbols on the page. What do we do differently when we write? How do writers create unique voices in written language? Vygotsky suggests, we think in a different mode. The struggle to internalize conversation enables us to write about ideas we have previously talked about, and at the same time, we discover a connection between language and ideas. Whereas, speaking is more spontaneous, we use our body to help translate our meaning to the external world, writing is more focused, a deliberate translation of thoughts into language. Not just memorization (recitation), not just transcription, but a purposeful thinking, a "deliberate structuring of the web of meaning" that is necessary for our intellectual development, that is necessary for our development as writers and thinkers (Vygotsky 182). Gere further notes, "writing and speaking meld together to rid us of that otherness" (85). When we converse with our audience, instead of just thinking alone, the separation between audience and writer diminishes and a blending occurs between inner and outer worlds.
Similarly, when we read good writing, we feel the author is speaking to us, just as when we write, we are speaking to others. As writers, we are also speaking to ourselves but in Vygotsky’s written mode of thinking, not oral. For example, when we watch television, we get used to seeing images move on the screen, so our creative minds don’t struggle to form impressions or pictures. But if we listen to an old radio program (an old mystery story), our minds work in a different way to conjure up characters and scenery and atmosphere. Our minds struggle to visualize, to give shape to character, to fit voices with forms and faces. Likewise, we struggle to discover our thoughts as we translate them into speech or writing. Writing connects language to our ideas, thoughts, and images. Our thoughts and personalities struggle with language to shape and express our ideas. In other words, we struggle to appropriate the language that will reflect our inner selves.

Truman Capote writes,

Excitement, a variety of creative coma—overcame me. Walking home, I lost my way and moved in circles round the woods, for my mind was reeling with the whole book. Usually when a story comes to me, it arrives, or seems to, ’in toto:’ A long sustained streak of lightning that darkens the tangible, so-called real world, and leaves
illuminated only this suddenly seen pseudo-imaginary landscape, a terrain alive with figures, voices, rooms, atmospheres, weather. And all of it, at birth, is like an angry, wrathful tiger cub; one must soothe and tame it (7).

This struggle to soothe and tame our ideas, whether we're writing a story or listening to a radio show, creates a vehicle for our individuation, or as Bakhtin writes "our human coming-to-consciousness" (424). Moreover, the writer's voice, through language, externalizes and verifies the existence of the inner self. Coles writes,

the voice of a writer is always a weaving of other voices; the self is seen not as an isolated whole but as an amalgam of other selves, voices, experiences . . . a network, woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages . . . which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony . . . a fluid melding of voices and languages (quoted in Harris 161).

Tension, struggle—both reflect the appropriation that writers must make in order to develop voice, in order to make the language their own, and in order to develop a more reflective and aware self. Without this struggle, knowledge is more apt to remain static or at a "fixed" level and the
dynamic weaving of inner and outer worlds (crucial to our identity) unravels or fails to begin at all.

The struggle for voice in writing comes at the point in our development when we truly take a step forward, and we discover that voice connects us to our writing. And even though writing may (or may not) be a chore for us, still that connection has been made, a connection similar to when we finally ride a two-wheeler bicycle for the first time by ourselves (we may have an audience, a guiding hand, or even a heckler in the crowd--usually an older sibling, but essentially we have to make the transition alone). While the audience and the guides and the providers of the bike may have helped us reach that point of transition, the moment belongs to the rider. We feel that balance for the first time, we hold it, we keep it straight, and just at the point where our balance and our movement connect, where our feet and legs turn the pedals, and our hands and arms steer the bike, and we balance the bike on its wheels all in unison (although somewhat shakily), that instant connection of mastery and adrenalin is the point we don't forget; it is the climax of our struggle. Granted, our skill becomes more practiced and polished the more we ride, but we don't forget that connection.

Whenever we attempt to appropriate any new skill, we struggle for mastery. When we learn a new dance step, for
instance, we struggle with the steps because they are separate from our body rhythm. But as we become more confident, more practiced, the steps meld with the music of the dance and the rhythm of our bodies. The steps are no longer separate but a dance, and trying to separate the steps becomes an impossible task because steps, rhythm, music become all of one movement—the dance. Mind and body—physical and mental, we make the dance our own. As dancers, we go through the same struggle of "taming the chaos" every time we learn a new routine. In this sense, rhythm is to dancing what voice is to writing. Mind and body, physical and mental, our connection with our voice echoes the balance and movement act—that struggle and point of climax where we meet and blend with inner and outer worlds. Thought and personality become a shape, a conscious thought, a conscious self. We still struggle each time we write, but we know the struggle is necessary in order to tame the chaos of our thoughts. Until we experience struggle, we cannot make the connection, we cannot express voice. And just as a dancer knows that the struggle defines the dance, a writer knows that the struggle defines the voice.

If we agree with Moffett that in order to revise inner speech we need to converse with ourselves and with the community around us, students should be given the
opportunity to converse, to create, and to generate ideas in the composition classroom. Traditionally, we might just rely on lecture, but by using interactive activities such as the above-mentioned satire and point of view assignments and collaborating on issues in content specific areas, we create an environment that maximizes opportunities for learning. Students are encouraged to think and question rather than accept and recite; they are actively engaged in the learning process.

For example, are most people really actively engaged watching the television? Certainly, many people stare at or are drawn to the screen because they don’t have to think; they can give their brain a rest (graduate students are prime candidates). The television does all the work for them, and one show runs into the other after a while. Likewise with a constant curriculum of lectures. Too easily, lectures can become droning voices that as Friere suggests, "deposit" information. Contrary to traditional teaching methods, at some point, students need to talk: "sharing, expanding, and reflecting on each other’s experiences. Such interchanges lead to ways of knowing" and "knowing" develops voice (Belenky 26). Otherwise, the possibility of engaging students’ attention drops away considerably. Instead, consider this: forming groups, assigning projects (with a few specific directions), and as
students attempt to address the project, wait for the questions to explode. Gradually, the assignment is actively explored through the real questions the students ask as they try to work together.

Although the dynamics of voice elude definition in teaching theory, we can learn through experience (just as the bruised and lacerated washing machine mover from Chapter One learned) and develop the essential qualities of voice. As I mentioned earlier, a difference exists between knowledge recited and knowledge that is developed. Collaborative writing groups allow students to see possibilities in their writing they didn’t see by themselves. If someone questions a writer’s word choice, the writer as well as the group gets a chance to discuss and negotiate meaning. As early as 1831, Mary Shelley, in her introduction to Frankenstein, acknowledged the importance of collaboration as integral to writing:

Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the material must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself ... Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a
subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it (9-10).

Fraught with distractions and deviations, writing (especially drafts) reflects the thinking process as we struggle to tame the chaos. Words that define the writer's thoughts and emotions will identify the writer. But until ideas are discussed, how can students work out what it is they are trying to say, see, and prove? Furthermore, if as Coles suggests, "the voice of the writer is always a weaving of other voices" and if finding one's own voice as a writer can only occur through "placing oneself within the discourse . . . of others," then our writing voices can certainly be developed through collaborative writing assignments (quoted in Harris 161). Listening to the sounds of students struggling together, questioning and negotiating meaning, is a much richer, warmer experience than that of silently groping in the dark, alone.

I began this exploration of voice with Eudora Welty's words, I will close with them as well to remind us of the interrelationship between our inner and outer worlds, our voices and our writing:

. . . the outside world is the vital component of my inner life. My work, in the terms in which I see it, is as dearly matched to the world as its secret sharer. My imagination takes its strength
and guides its direction from what I see and hear and learn and feel and remember of my living world. But I was to learn slowly that both these worlds, outer and inner, were different from what they seemed to me in the beginning (76).


