

## Chapter 2

# The Dialogic Nature of Meaning Making within a Hybrid Learning Space: Individual, Community, and Knowledge- Building Pedagogical Tools

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The chapter presents a reflective case study of a specific instance of hybrid teaching with preservice teachers in a graduate course on the languages and literacies of bilingual elementary children. The intensive summer course occurred across eight weeks, with four on-campus meetings and the remainder of the course occurring online. The authors address three specific pedagogical tools meant to scaffold dialogic meaning making through instructor-mediated learning and student individualization. The chapter is framed within a social constructivist stance that examines the nature of dialogic meaning making and hybrid teaching. The chapter includes detailed examples of three pedagogical tools: discussion boards as community-building spaces, dialogue journals as individualization spaces, and content application as approximation spaces for knowledge building. Interdisciplinary examples for teaching linguistically diverse children relate to mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. In addition, the authors discuss implications and directions for research.*

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## INTRODUCTION

*Preparing to teach a hybrid course, an instructor pre-surveys her teacher education students: Please identify one or two instructional methods that have supported your learning in your previous hybrid or online learning.*

*Instead of naming positive instructional methods, the resounding answer from students: Not discussion boards!*

*The instructor began to ask a new question: How do I design a hybrid space that fosters dialogic meaning making through online tools and that remains responsive to student needs?*

Hybrid instructional models—whether blended or flipped—are a widely adopted form of instruction in teacher education programs. Yet as noted in the above vignette, there is a need to develop effective pedagogy for these web-enhanced courses. The effectiveness of any hybrid instruction presumes the meaningful engagement of students through tools (Vygotsky, 1978) in ways that foster critical thinking and social construction of knowledge (Morrison, Watson, & Morrison, 2012).

This chapter addresses the dialogic meaning making within a graduate hybrid learning space, with specific attention to individual, community, and knowledge-building experiences in an elementary initial licensure program. As members of a hybrid community of learners, individuals bring varied background knowledge, learning styles, and long-term goals as future elementary teachers. Within this chapter, hybrid learning spaces refers to learning-focused and learner-focused interactions through both online and on-campus venues. Both of these venues involve multimodal meaning making and various forms of representing knowledge with the intent of a more fluid exchange of ideas that develop professional knowledge at the individual and collective levels.

This case study (Merriam, 1998) explores a specific instance of hybrid teaching with pre-service teachers, focused on the languages and literacies of linguistically diverse elementary children. The intensive summer course occurred across eight weeks, with four on-campus meetings and the remainder of the course occurring online. The course instructor sought to foster learning from a social constructivist stance that created meaningful spaces for professional dialogue around pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986; 1987) for preservice elementary teachers, who were expanding their understandings of effective instruction for linguistically diverse K-6 children learning English as an additional language (sometimes referred to as English Language Learners or ELLs). Within this course, graduate students represented a continuum of experiences, including some students who were beginning the initial licensure program and others who were nearing student teaching.

Specifically, this chapter addresses the dialogic (Bakhtin, 1992; Burbules, Purdie, & Boulton-Lewis, 1993) integration of pedagogical tools, such as discussion boards and journals, and the ways in which an instructor mediates student learning through specific instructional choices and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) that build pedagogical content knowledge. Interdisciplinary examples for teaching linguistically diverse children relate to mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. Instructional design choices shared within this chapter are counter balanced by the critical insight of one graduate student, Patrick, who completed a reflective protocol for examining his experiences around specific content and instructional tools within the focus hybrid course. Finally, implications, recommendations, and areas for future research are offered.

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