

Chapter Three

Strategies for Using Sketching, Speaking, Movement, and Metaphor to Generate and Organize Text

As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, Composition could benefit from incorporating praxis that both recognizes and takes advantage of the different ways people come to know. Paulo Freire used his students' visual, tactile, and other literacies to help them develop language-based literacies. Some people do their best thinking without keyboards or pens. Even people who do think best using paper or screen can obtain intellectual insights by working outside familiar domains. This chapter suggests ways in which all writers who are in the early stages of a writing project can enhance their individual ways of knowing as they begin to generate, organize, and structure their ideas. It will suggest generating and organizing activities such as using "rhetorical proof cards," sketching-to-learn, oral peer response, metaphors, and oral journals that can both challenge and enhance conventional "writing process" strategies.

Many of us want our students to think more broadly, deeply, and critically as they generate a first draft or make the substantive changes an early draft often needs to become more sophisticated. The multi-sensory options in this chapter are designed to help *all* writers either generate ideas, or make "chain-saw" revisions (Elbow's phrase), the global reconceptualizations of a piece that can happen when people are able to obtain metacognitive distance—in other words, when writers can ponder the meaning of their meanings (to paraphrase Berthoff).

If learning to write, as Patricia Bizzell explains, “can be seen as a process of learning to think about one’s own thinking” (1984, 453), it suggests that *other* ways to represent thinking about one’s thinking could *also* be useful. Writing center work has already demonstrated the use of oral dialogue as a way for students to both articulate, analyze, and reshape their thinking. But drawing, graphing, and sculpting can also give people metacognitive distance on a project, as can physical movement. I propose that it is time for Composition as a field to re-think its dependence on writing as an inventing, shaping, and revising tool, and that we take more advantage of other ways of knowing students bring to our classes.

In order to do this more challenging re-thinking, writers need to mentally step outside their ideas, to view them in another dimension. All writers need ways to challenge their first thoughts. As Freire wrote in *Education for Critical Consciousness*, “challenge is basic to the constitution of knowledge” (125). Challenge can spark insights for students as they think through what they might want to add, delete, move, change, or completely trash. To figure out what to do next at this initial, crucial stage, all writers can benefit from strategies that take them beyond conventional drafting routines.

For some of us, the act of *writing* a first draft is itself a way of organizing it. As we write, we are not merely recording our thoughts: We are discovering our ideas and getting insights regarding how to restructure or what to add to reinforce our claims. Peter Elbow has long argued that freewriting, reading the resulting text, finding its “center of gravity,” and then beginning a new cycle of freewriting can work as an organizing and structuring tool. James Britton has shown how writing acts as a “shaping at the point of utterance,” a way to discover ideas as well as to express them. Therefore, some writers do not need any other organizing heuristic than the first draft itself.

For other writers, a formal outline structure, available in most handbooks, can either help them get organized or motivate them to re-organize. Often, however, even for those who use writing itself as a heuristic, attempting a written outline is at best a ceremonial exercise done to satisfy the teacher after the paper has already been written. At worst it is an arbitrary straightjacket that locks the writer into a structure conceived before he or she has had a chance to think through more creative, productive options.

The following card-moving approach, which I call “rhetorical proof cards,” can make organizing more useful to students with other-than-linguistic talents and more challenging to students who have become too comfortable with Roman-numeral-based outlines. It transforms what can be a lockstep, predictable structure into an unfamiliar, oral and kinesthetic group activity, which taps into different ways of knowing,

suggests counterarguments, and gives further insights even to those who normally work well with conventional written outlines. It works equally well with first-year students, graduate students, and groups of high school teachers. It can work in conjunction with freewriting or with other organizing strategies such as brainstorming and clustering.

I first used it with first-year college students doing lengthy persuasive research papers, who were frustrated with the chaotic state of their collected notes: facts, statistics, expert opinions, as well as their own ideas. How could they arrange all this in a convincing argument? Drawing on the work of Ann Berthoff, who sees chaos as “generative,” Cynthia Onore argues that the composing process, even learning itself, “is not possible without contraries, conflicts, and tensions” (1989, 240). At this point in their research project, these students had plenty of chaos. Forcing all their conflicting pieces of research into a conventional written outline too soon could make the complexities of the controversy appear to be more amenable to solution than they actually were. Written outlines, especially if attempted too soon, can truncate the fermenting action of not knowing how to organize an argument.

Keeping conflicts front and center for a while allows them to act as enzymes on thinking, stimulants to counter-intuitive thinking. Ideally, I wanted to find a way in which everybody could look at everyone else’s notes, move them around physically, and play with all the various arguments that might be constructed. However, the logistics of photocopying even one student’s full set of notes prevented me from trying this plan. Besides, the notes were handwritten, copious, and difficult to see all at once in a way that would facilitate discussion of concepts rather than details. There are computer programs in which students can write synchronistically on each others’ papers, but for this discussion I didn’t want people’s faces locked on computer screens. To look at a whole paper would involve too much text. I wanted us to simultaneously obtain a global view of the text and play with individual sections of it, to relate part to whole. I wanted us to be able to physically manipulate large ideas as we were discussing them.

I no longer have students do the kind of research paper that initiated these rhetorical proof cards, but I use them in a variety of projects that require students to gain metacognitive distance on ideas.

Rhetorical Proof Cards

In order to help all of us play with the same ideas, I decided to produce notes with which we could all experiment.¹ I made up a set of hypothetical notes on the topic of capital punishment: general reasons for and against the death penalty, with the kinds of quotations, facts, case

studies, and emotional news stories students would typically find if they were to research this topic in the library or on the Internet. (See Figure 3–1.)

The information in each box is put on a separate card, so that there are eighteen cards, each card with one of the above “notes.”² I make enough of these eighteen-card packs so that each group of students will have its own set of cards. With these “notes” now on cards, students can easily manipulate them and discuss how they might arrange a paper given this hypothetical research.

Each group gets a pack of these eighteen cards, which they can spread out on a desk, table, or section of the floor so that they can all examine them together. I put students in groups of three or four—large enough for a good discussion but small enough so that each student has a good view of the cards and they can all reach the card outline they’re putting together.

Here is the task: for the purpose of the exercise, the group must first decide whether the argument they construct with these notes will favor or oppose capital punishment. The one or two students who “go along” with the group’s majority opinion for the sake of the exercise obtain a useful view of their opponent’s main points. They also get insights on how they might order a counterargument. Once the group has decided on their hypothetical argument, they then arrange the cards in an outline order that makes sense. They may use the cards in any order, and they need not use every one. They are also told that there is no one right way to arrange the cards for either side of the argument, and of course, there is plenty of room for arguments along a continuum of extreme pro or con views of this issue.

After each group takes a few minutes to familiarize themselves with the cards, there begins much animated discussion about which ones to choose and where to place them. This exercise encourages students to consider radical organizational changes because it’s very easy to move a card from the beginning of the outline to the end or the middle. They can also explore these questions:

- What happens when you use this hypothetical evidence as a straightforward series of reasons supporting capital punishment (the risk convicted murderers may kill prison guards; the desire some victims’ families feel for retribution; popular appeals to justice, etc.)?
- How do the cards look as a linear list of reasons opposing capital punishment (the high cost of judicial appeals; the risk of executing innocent people; the lack of deterrent power, etc.)?
- How does either argument change when pro and con reasons are juxtaposed? (For example, the case of a released murderer killing

Figure 3-1

“Rhetorical Proof Cards” to move around as group constructs arguments, counterarguments, and discusses ethics of rhetoric

Should capital punishment be abolished?	An account of a typical day in prison—a description of weight room, cafeteria, library, classroom.
Statistics showing how many people were murdered by released convicted killers.	Studies detailing the high cost of keeping someone in prison for life.
Statistics on the increase in murders in parts of the U. S. in recent years.	Grisly newspaper account of a child murdered by a convicted murderer out on parole after serving 10 years.
Graphic description of a murder committed by the most recently executed convicted murderer in U. S.	Quote from a woman whose son was murdered by a man who may be released in 2005.
Case study of a man who was electrocuted by the state of Alabama in 1957. In 1964, another man confessed to the same crime the executed man was convicted of committing.	Statistics suggesting capital punishment is not a deterrent.
A quotation from a priest/ minister/rabbi opposing capital punishment.	A quotation from a member of a murder victim’s family saying that an execution will not bring the loved one back.
Studies showing that it costs more to execute a person than to keep him or her in prison for life.	Graphic description of death in a gas chamber.
A quotation from a member of a murder victim’s family saying how relieved he is now that his loved one’s murderer has been executed.	Facts showing that most countries have abolished capital punishment.
Statement by a Ph.D. philosopher opposing the death penalty.	Graphic description of an execution by electrocution.

again is immediately followed by facts showing capital punishment is not a deterrent.)

- How does the emphasis change if the order of those cards is reversed?
- What happens when you take an interesting case or shocking statistic and use it as an attention-getter in the opening paragraph?
- What happens when you use it to end the argument?

As rhetoricians are well aware, if readers can *feel* something, they may be more likely to change their minds. A successful argument can be built on logical reasoning as well as emotionally evocative examples. Structuring such an argument is best done with the collaborative insights of those good at abstract logic as well as those good at social empathy—those who know what is likely to capture readers' attention long enough to actually consider the argument and to move them emotionally in a way that will make them remember it. People with diverse voices and multiple insights will therefore greatly enrich a group discussion on effective rhetorical strategies.

The act of physically moving these cards around and a discussion of the effects of doing so makes the abstract job of organizing an effective argument into a visual, oral, and kinesthetic task to which students with a variety of talents can contribute. Students can be *told*, of course, about different ways to organize a paper. Moving these cards around, however, demonstrates to students the persuasive effects of adding, rearranging, or eliminating evidence. They can immediately see for themselves numerous rhetorical choices. Through sometimes heated group discussion, they discover how they might include a "fact" that works against their argument, and how they might counter it, or distract the reader by following it with a stronger or at least more startling piece of evidence.

In some groups, this exercise stimulates discussions of ethics. Should a fact or statistic supporting the opposite view be conveniently eliminated from an outline? After a discussion of possible rhetorical effects (i.e., Will informed readers think the writer is not aware of this counter argument and therefore is less credible?), the group can explore possible ethical issues involved in deliberately excluding crucial evidence. Is the ultimate goal of the argument to persuade readers to agree with the writer or to fully explore the controversy in a way that will enlighten both supporters and opponents? Do the ends of persuasion justify the means? These are complex questions that force students to grapple with infinite choices, making them think critically about the implications of placing, moving, eliminating, or including even one card.

After the groups have negotiated the order of the cards, we take turns having a spokesperson from each group explain their outline,

their reasons for the placement they chose, and the most interesting problems or conflicts the group had to solve as they organized the cards. This large group discussion impresses on the entire class the many possible ways an argument could be constructed, even when groups might be arguing the same view.

The real value in this exercise comes in the small-group disagreements on what evidence they should include, change, move, foreground, bury, end with, or eliminate. Because it is an oral discussion, students who speak more eloquently than they write have a chance to contribute valuable insights. The confidence they gain from contributing to this sophisticated oral analysis of organizational, rhetorical strategies will affect how they approach their next individually written draft. If they can order ideas in a discussion, the idea of ordering them on paper seems less daunting.

Students already comfortable with formal written outlines may gain the most from this exercise. Conventionally good writers, some of whom may speak with less confidence than that with which they write, are challenged to articulate their ideas verbally. This is good for them. Even good writers, accustomed perhaps to succeeding in school without having to verbalize much, must learn to speak up and participate in a lively debate. More important, these small groups tap into everyone's brain power. In debating organizational strategies, students gain valuable perspectives they would have missed if everyone were silently working on individual formal written outlines, concentrating on whether to use a Roman numeral or capital letter. This exercise transforms the abstract task of "organization" into a visual, verbal, and physical give-and-take as students move ideas around like pieces in a puzzle. It is an intellectual task as well as a physical one, as students much reach across the table to add, rearrange, or move groups of cards.

This exercise challenges students to tap into a variety of thinking patterns. Linguistically talented writers accustomed to a safe but formulaic way of writing will gain insights on alternate ways of organizing and be encouraged to risk a more interesting structure. Those who excel at composing well-constructed sentences and paragraphs might benefit from a mathematically oriented person who can analyze complex concepts and manipulate logical patterns. Kinesthetic learners who move the cards around on the floor or desk can begin to think of written texts as less monolithic and more like a series of related, changeable sections that are physically malleable. Those who speak well but might not be meticulous editors and proofreaders—and therefore might think of themselves as "bad" writers—can excel in these discussions in a way that gives them confidence and motivation when they return to their own notes. Socially talented learners who are good at reading people can help the group consider possible emotional effects on readers of be-

ginning or ending an essay with the use of a particular fact, statistic, or case study. Everyone is included. Everyone is challenged.

After animated small-group and large-group discussion in which the instructor can direct these new insights back towards individual projects, students can return to their own research with a more sophisticated sense of organizational possibilities. As they bring their essays from early to developed drafts, they may be more likely to make structural revisions or complete start-overs. With the insights gained from this card exercise, students will now be more aware of how they can best take advantage of cut-and-paste word processing or hypertext technology to reconceptualize their own work.

This exercise not only allows those with a variety of talents to work in a domain that might be more amenable to their thinking patterns than is a text-based lesson on outlining. More importantly, it challenges those used to writing or organizing in predictably safe patterns to awaken some different brain cells and stretch their intellects by viewing textual possibilities through alternate perspectives. It teaches sophisticated concepts through a literally hands-on approach that challenges “at-risk” learners and academically talented students alike.

Sketching-to-Learn

The sketch was another way of looking at where I was in comparison with where I wanted to be in this paper.

—Melanie (in her metacognitive analysis of a writing project)

Another alternative to traditional ways of organizing a draft is to have writers sketch, draw, or graph the shape of their ideas, using no words or as few words as possible. In their presentation at the 1999 Writing Across the Curriculum Conference at Cornell University, as mentioned earlier, Pam Childers and Eric Hobson added a “ninth intelligence”—the visual—to Howard Gardner’s eight. They said using students’ ability to draw could be used more in writing classes. In their book, *ARTiculating: Teaching Writing in a Visual World*, Childers, Hobson, and Joan Mullin describe a number of concrete activities designed to incorporate visual learning with writing, to stimulate both invention and revision. In her essay, “Alternative Pedagogy: Visualizing Theories of Composition,” Joan A. Mullin shows how a class visit to an art museum and a discussion about its structure and function afterwards using “the language of architecture” can help students think metaphorically about the architecture and structure of their essays. The visit

and subsequent discussion regarding function and structure is a three-dimensional, visual and kinesthetic experience that can help writers think in a different perspective about the purpose and organization of their writing.

In the same text, Eric H. Hobson describes a teachers' workshop in which the participants must construct "a storyboard of at least six one-frame cartoons," representing how they arrived at the workshop. By then rearranging the frames, eliminating some, and adding more details in others, the participants use visual and kinesthetic inroads to both generate and reorganize their narratives. They may also be asked to "zoom" in on one section of one of the frames, where a detail is particularly important. They then re-sketch or add to that one area (144–46). All writers, whether or not they are visual learners, can then transfer to their writing or revising the concepts of reorganization, example, detail, transition, elaboration, etc.

I have been using sketching in my writing classes for a number of years now because of positive reactions to the following activity, for which I am indebted to Kathy Iannone, a student I had at Utica College of Syracuse University in an independent study course designed to prepare undergraduate English majors for student teaching. In the unit on organization she was teaching in my first-year writing class, she took advantage of her background in art to design the following non-linguistic exercise. I use a version of it regularly now in all my classes.

This activity works best when students already have initial concepts or even completed research, but may be frustrated in trying to organize their ideas or locate their main purpose. Sketching, drawing, or graphing developing ideas gives students who can visualize images an opportunity to use that talent productively. It forces those comfortable with words to see their text through a different perspective. For both experienced and novice writers, this unconventional mode can work with or against their customary thinking patterns, producing valuable insights regarding overall purpose, structure, use of evidence, etc.

Student Sketches

The first sample sketches are from two advanced exposition classes in which students are working on an involved seven-week, ten- to twelve-page project. In the written assignment that the sketches below represent, students are asked to locate a controversy in their area of interest, read letters to the editor representing the various sides, and then analyze the letters from a rhetorical perspective. To learn how to analyze texts in this way, we read a number of similar analyses, do some "live" analyzing in class, and discuss why such analysis is worthwhile.

I ask students to do this assignment for several reasons. By studying how rhetorical strategies work, students are less likely to be vulnerable to the power of discourse. They learn to read these letters and other texts with an alertness to how and why writers choose words, studies, experts' opinions, and other rhetorical proofs, as well as to how ethos is constructed. Being conscious of rhetorical strategies in others' writing theoretically makes students more conscious of them in their own. By studying all the sides in the controversy the letters represent, students learn that issues are more complex than they originally thought, and that "facts" can be picked and chosen and arguments constructed and reconstructed. Finally, I take them through these seven weeks of writing, responding, and revising, so that they will leave this class convinced that peer response is worthwhile and revising is necessary. The primary task in this project is to analyze the rhetorical strategies used in the different arguments. Students do not need to take a side themselves; their purpose is to convince readers that their rhetorical analysis is valid.

Students produced the sketches discussed below after they had received substantial responses to their drafts, from me and from other students, but before the final drafts were due. They were asked to sketch, graph, or draw the organization of their papers so far, and/or an alternate organization. They could also visually represent a problem they saw in their papers or noticed in the letters they were analyzing. They had about fifteen minutes of class time to do this.

In response to this prompt, Terri focused on problems she saw in her draft: that her analysis might be too repetitious and her ending too boring. She sketched a doctor with crash-cart paddles trying to revive a dying patient. She explained, "Reader interest then drops way down because can't think of how to conclude. Needs shock (jolt) like doctor gives patient when crashing." (See Figure 3-2.)

Another student used the exercise to represent something she noticed about the letters to the editor she was analyzing. Ali drew a Venn diagram³ illustrating what she calls "Patterns in Letters." (See Figure 3-3.)

Ali's Venn diagram illustrates how the "pro" letters overlap with the "con": "In every letter for the argument there is some part that states a con. For every con letter there is some part that states a pro issue." I do not know if being asked to represent the letter patterns triggered her seeing them, or if she saw them before and this was simply a way to represent what she had already discovered. However, doing this diagram and/or explaining it in class might have helped her articulate it more clearly in her paper. What's more, her sketch and explanation might trigger in other students insights into the letters they are analyzing.

Figure 3-2
Conclusion needs "crash cart"

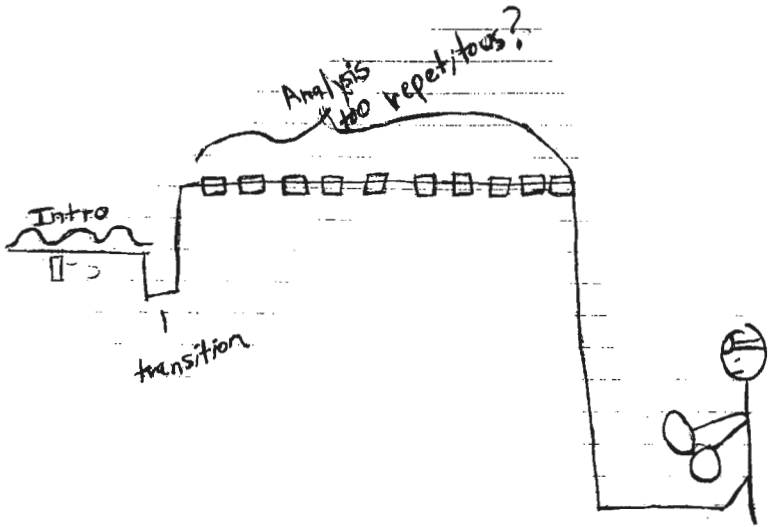
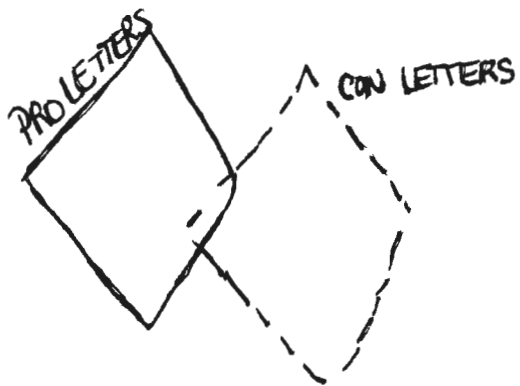


Figure 3-3
Ali's Venn diagram showing pro and con overlap in letters to the editor

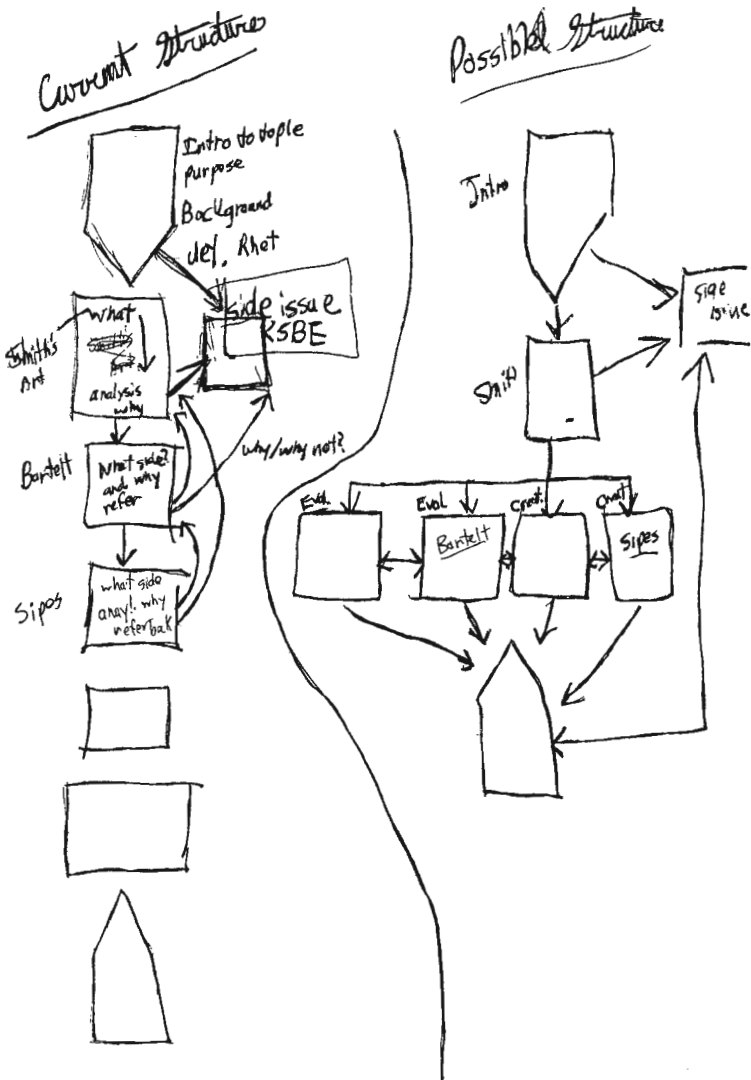
PATTERNS IN LETTERS



Another student, Jay, sketched his draft's "Current Structure" on the left side of his page and an alternate "Possible Structure" on the right side. (See Figure 3-4.) Jay did not have time to explain the new framework, but he described the original: "In the current structure each article refers back to others before it in a sequential order. This

Figure 3-4

The current structure of Jay's draft and a possible revised structure



structure is based on chronology of publication of the letters. It gives a ‘real time’ sense of analysis.” As we can see in his “Possible Structure,” however, the four boxes in a horizontal line show that the analyses of the letters will no longer appear in simple time order, like floats in a parade. Instead, he will intermix them and relate them to a conclusion, represented by a box with a point targeted back to the now-blended analysis. They will also be related to a “side issue” near the beginning.

Jay put a version of these sketches up on the white board, explaining that he was going to change the whole structure. Slightly horrified, one student said, “But won’t you have to cut and paste huge chunks and move things around?” Jay answered yes, but didn’t seem perturbed by this. I added, “That’s the whole point. You do need to consider some rearrangement of your different analyses in your paper.”

Ultimately, Jay did not use the new structure represented here but continued to play with different possibilities. What is valuable about these sketches, though, is that they provide a thumbnail way to conceptualize and discuss important aspects of a work-in-progress without having to read through six to ten pages of text to discern an overview. They also inspire others to make big structural changes by providing a kind of satellite picture of draft geography, enabling students and responders to discuss global issues rather than the spelling of a street sign.

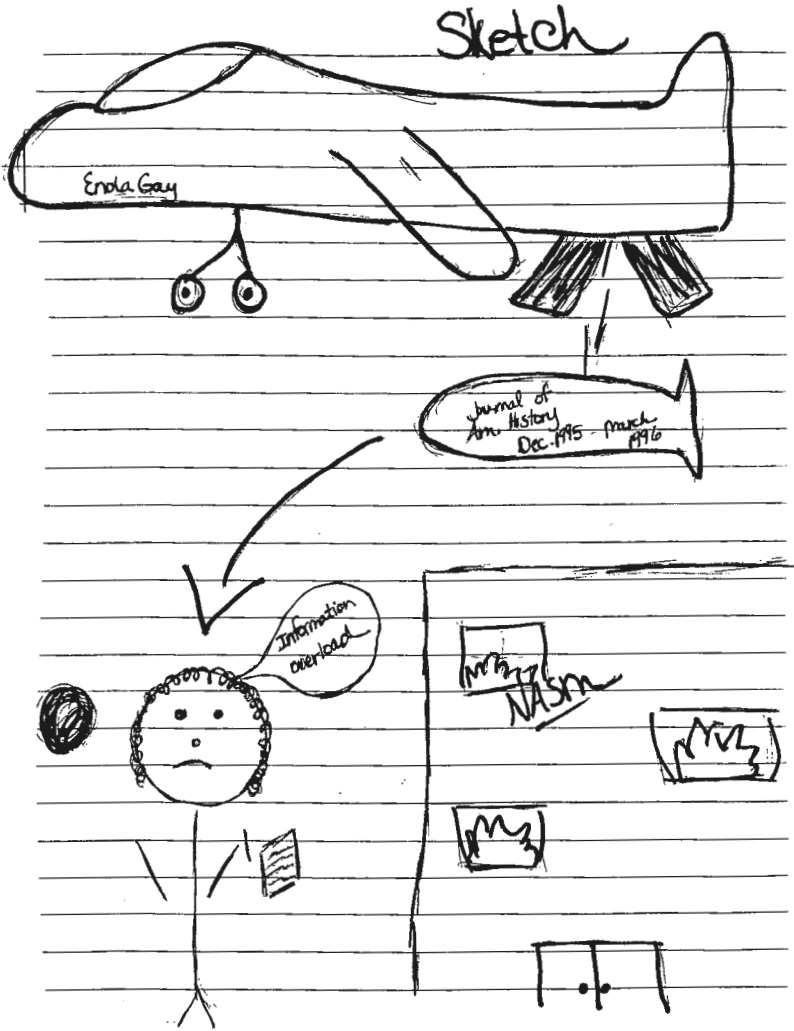
Several students used the sketches to discover or represent global problems they encountered in their projects. Natalie’s rhetorical analysis involved the controversial Enola Gay exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum (NASM). In her sketch, our eyes are drawn to a stick figure in the lower left, the writer, who has a sad face and a bubble caption, “Information overload.” (See Figure 3–5.)

In her words:

My sketch is the “Enola Gay” (the airplane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima), dropping the “Journal of American History” issues from Dec. 1995 and March 1996. The “Enola Gay” is dropping the *AH* [*Journal of American History*] bomb symbolically on the National Air and Space Museum (NASM). There is fire in the windows of the museum, showing that the “Enola Gay” exhibit was “bombed” or crushed (cancelled). The “Enola Gay” is also dropping the “AH” on me. I am struggling & frustrated because the “bomb” has so much information my brain is on information overload and I have a tremendous amount of information to plow through.

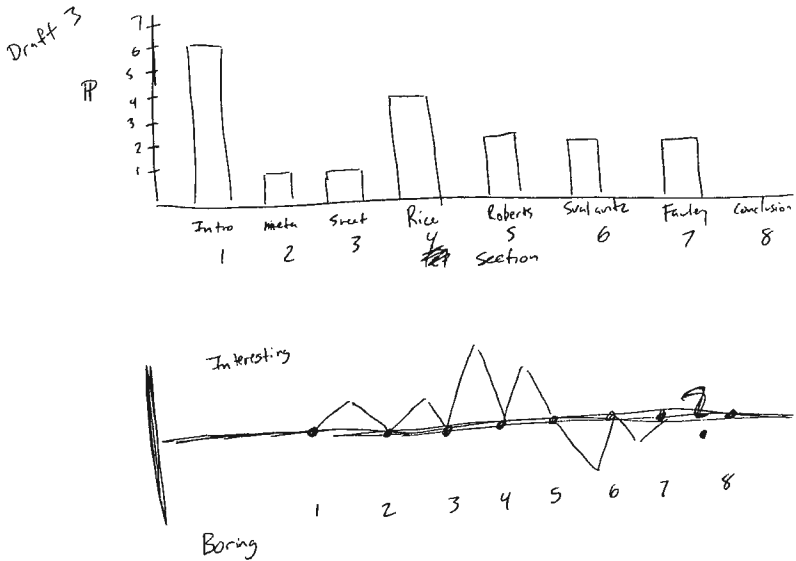
I cannot say if doing this sketch helped Natalie with her subsequent drafts, but the depiction of the writer’s dismay regarding having too much information may have helped her focus on a problem to solve in her draft. In a metaphor she wrote describing the process, she again brings up the idea of excess:

Figure 3-5
 Natalie's "information bomb" overloading her brain



Writing a rhetorical analysis is like weeding a garden. All things can grow in a garden, but only the important vegetables can stay because they bring life to the garden. They are what a person will eat. A person will not eat weeds, they do not taste good. They tend to kill the vegetables in the garden. A garden can get overgrown with weeds so much that the vegetables can not be seen anymore.

Figure 3-6
Matt's graph of predicted readers' interest



Natalie uses the “weeding” or “plowing through” metaphor again in the metacognitive analysis she did when the paper was completed. First she notes, “This project was, by far, the most complex piece of writing that I have done at the university.” In addition to “weeding out” the overload of information she referred to in her sketch and in her metaphor, she also had to sort through comments from her classmates: “The peer responses helped me and I weeded out some of the advice because of the fact that not everyone will agree with everything that has to change in the paper.”

Matt Vaughn came right out and said that sketching his draft helped him make decisions about revising. (See Figure 3-6.)

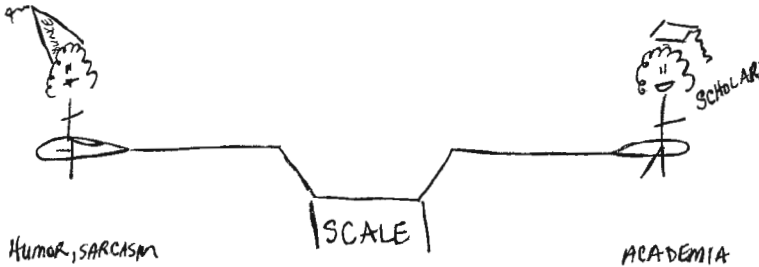
Here is Matt’s explanation of the graphs:

Sketch 1 at the top of the page represents the number of paragraphs allotted in the text for each section. By this sketch, I could see that the introduction and the Rice letter were both heavy, and that the meta-analysis and coverage of the Sweet letter were light. I have since attempted to fix this problem in the final draft.

Sketch 2 at the bottom of the page rates the relative interest I thought a reader would have in the various sections of the draft. Interesting sections have peaks at the top, and boring sections make valleys in a

Figure 3-7

Katie trying to balance casual and academic discourse



modified line graph. I found the Fawley and Szalavitz sections a little boring and tried to fix them. Additionally, I added a conclusion, noted as absent by the question mark.

In his metacognitive analysis, Matt explains that the “largest change” he made in his subsequent draft was to delete almost completely the section on Szalavitz, which his graph helped him realize was “boring.” He also reread her letter, found “more interesting (and more subtle) strategies,” and analyzed those instead. He says that section of his paper is “much stronger now.” He explains how the sketch helped him:

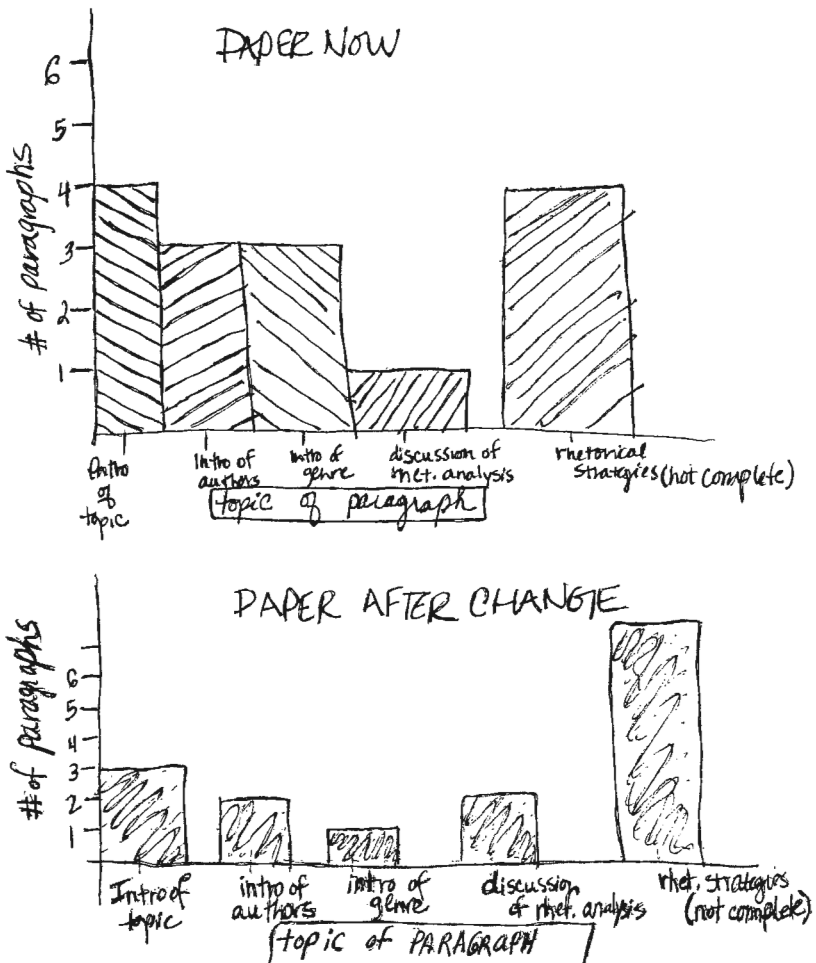
I did learn an interesting tidbit from sketching out the draft how I thought it would be visually represented. Though my graph form is highly unoriginal, it pointed out to me more clearly what parts were too thick and too thin. In a related graph, I could easily see what parts I personally found boring and those that kept my attention. If I could bore myself in places, I was fairly certain I’d lose the reader.

Katie’s sketch addresses the problem of balancing everyday language and academic language. Interestingly, in Matt’s metacognitive analysis, he named Katie’s essay as the one whose “tone and language” caught his attention immediately. (See Figure 3-7.)

Katie’s sketch shows a scale balancing “casual discourse,” such as humor and sarcasm, and academic discourse. The humor/sarcasm side shows a female stick figure wearing a dunce cap. The academic side shows a female “scholar” wearing a mortarboard.

Sketching helped these students isolate global problems before they became bogged down in editing. It helped provide a quick but distanced analysis of major issues to be solved during the final weeks of the project.

Figure 3-8
Elizabeth's graph of present and future structures
of her rhetorical analysis



I also experimented with sketching in an upper level, rhetorical theory class. Here students were also doing rhetorical analysis, but they were analyzing much longer and more complex essays than were my advanced exposition students. In the above illustration, Elizabeth graphs her paper's present organization as well as its projected organization after major changes she is making. When she did this, she was about midpoint in that (ten- to twelve-page) rhetorical analysis project. (See Figure 3-8.)

Here is her explanation:

At this point in the project, I was having a lot of trouble with the introduction of the topic, the authors, and the terminology. I already had five pages, and I had not even started the actual analysis itself.

I knew that there was a lot I needed to cut from the introduction, and even more I needed to do with the rhetorical analysis.

I decided to make a bar graph. Both graphs had “Number of Paragraphs” on the vertical axis and “Topic of Paragraph” on the horizontal axis. The first graph was titled “Paper Now,” and the second, “Paper After Change.” The bars within the graph represent how many paragraphs were written for each part of the draft.

In the first graph, the tallest bars are over the introduction sections. In the second graph, the tallest bar is over the rhetorical analysis section of the draft.

By counting the paragraphs devoted to different sections of her current draft and then graphing them, Elizabeth was able to get a visualization of how “top-heavy” her introduction was as well as how she needed to streamline her opening pages so that she could foreground *analysis* in what she knew should take up the bulk of the paper. I cannot say, of course, that having Elizabeth do this exercise gave her an insight about revision that a class discussion or teacher commentary might not have given her. I can say that it took only about ten minutes of class time, and that her model might be used in the future to help students rethink their own focus in their drafts.

Sometimes graphing one’s progress in organizing can lead to insights regarding the direction of the paper. Having students put their sketches on a white board or on an overhead and then have them explain them to the class can help everyone rethink the organization or frame of their own work. When students talk through their sketch, they often pinpoint a problem, even if they don’t instantly solve it. Also, after doing a visual representation of their ideas, some students invent original metaphors to use in a subsequent draft, as we will see. Thinking and working with ideas in words and images, and then explaining them orally, increases opportunities for insight. Sketching, graphing, or drawing a concept, or representing part of it as a metaphor, can challenge everyone in a class. Just the attempt is worthwhile. For some visual learners or language-learning disabled students, generating and/or representing ideas imagistically may allow them to work in a format more appropriate to their intellectual process, their way of knowing. It may do for them what freewriting does for people who prefer to play with ideas in words and sentences. For those people who do think in words—being asked to sketch a draft may prod brain cells not used to carrying their weight. The resulting neuron stretch may contribute insights writers may not have discovered through a conventional written outline—a tool which for them may have become too easy.

Metaphors

Sketches tap into different areas of the brain, as do metaphors. Sometimes when students do sketches, it generates metaphors they use in revisions. For example, in the same advanced exposition class mentioned earlier, students in the first few weeks of the semester were doing a short (three- to four-page) essay on academic discourse. They had a number of options: responding to readings by Gerald Graff, Mike Rose, Robin Tolmach Lakoff, and June Jordan from the *Living Languages* collection of essays; writing about their own adventures with academic discourse, with brief references to the texts we read in class; analyzing writings from different textbooks they were using in other courses; some combination of those, or an idea of their choosing, provided it had something to do with academic discourse and the power-related issues we were discussing in class.

About halfway through the project, I asked the students to draw, sketch, freewrite, or make a simile or metaphor describing academic discourse. To write the metaphor, they were to finish a sentence that begins, "Academic discourse is like . . ." and then explain the sentence. Everyone did a sketch. No one freewrote. Some came up with a metaphor after they had done a sketch. The point was to approach their work so far from a different angle, to conceive it holistically, but sideways or upside down, or through a different medium.

Students' Sketches Generating Metaphors

Melissa did an interesting sketch as a way to rethink her first draft: a letter aimed at incoming first-year students, discussing the language(s) used in college. Such a letter might be included in a packet of materials given out at orientation. In her sketch, there is a student driving a car that just had a recent gasoline fill-up. (See Figure 3–9.)

The fuel is represented by alphabet letters; the metaphor is that academic language powers a student's success in college. She had a student driving a car, with the fuel being the language used in college. Above the sketch she explains it:

It seems as if we are striving to reach a common goal, and we are powered by the academic language in our discourse to be the fuel that drives us to the top.

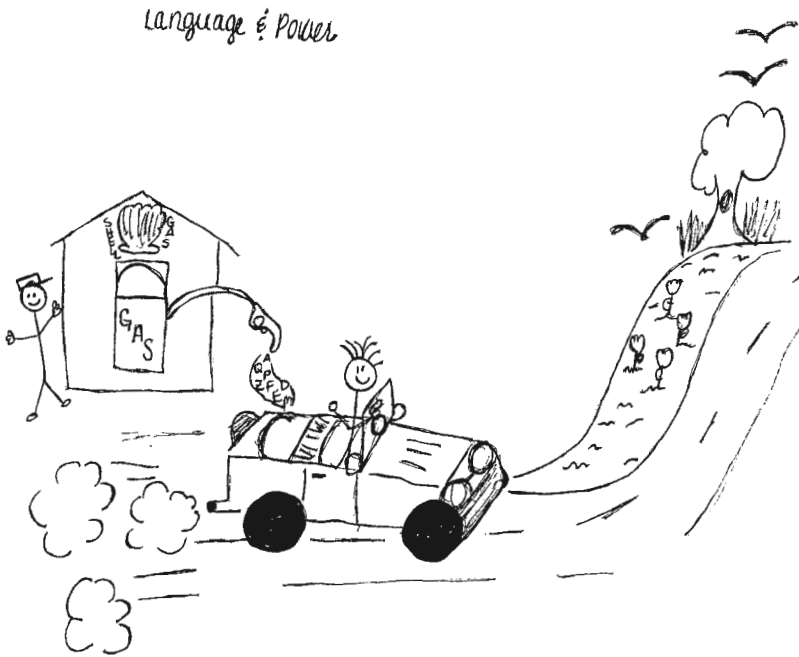
Language and the development of our language in academia hurdles us over the top barrier that might stand in the way of achieving membership status in our career or work field.

Underneath the sketch, she raises a question for herself and makes revising plans:

Why is this so important? Now I want to add a paragraph on why academic language is so important to students and how it will help them

Figure 3-9

Melissa's sketch that generated a metaphor



achieve status in their future career goals. Somewhere after the professor paragraph.

She later added that metaphor to her final draft, near the end of her letter to incoming students:

Language is the power that will take you to the next level in your academic life. It will allow you to become a member of the distinguished group of English majors or an elite group of biochemical engineers. It seems as if each student is striving to reach a common goal, and the academic language powers us in our discourse to achieve that goal. The language becomes the fuel that drives us to the top. Language and its development in academia hurdles us over the top barrier that might stand in the way of achieving status in our future career.

It is not my purpose here to do an in-depth “before and after” analysis of Melissa’s early drafts and the one she ultimately handed in for a grade. I can say, however, that the car-with-language-as-fuel metaphor did not appear in either of her early drafts of this project, written five days earlier than the final version, and before we did the sketching activity in class. Her third and final version is longer than the

earlier drafts and has a completely revamped opening and closing section—with many paragraphs inserted and others changed.

In the new version, Melissa also added a new paragraph to her introduction, structuring it around another new analogy: “Language and communication is what defines a culture. If we think of a major as a culture, we can say that the language used in that discourse identifies that major from another major.” Later in that paragraph, she continues the analogy, weaving it into the last sentence of the paragraph: “As in any culture, it is the common language that ties people together, just as it can place a barrier between an outsider that does not understand the language being spoken.” Interestingly, the language-as-culture analogy was not part of the language-as-fuel sketch and metaphor she did in class. It may be, however, that doing the sketch and visualizing the car metaphor stimulated her thinking in ways that helped her to think analogously, to “see” other connections.

In fact, in the metacognitive statement she handed in with her final draft, Melissa credits class activities with helping her reconceive her work: “After taking into consideration all of the activities we did in class, I took the new ideas I came up with and applied them to my paper.” She uses yet another metaphor in her explanation: “After doing the activities in class, I saw this paper in a much different light. It was almost as if each activity was a door, and behind that door stood more insight on how to further develop my paper.”

In the same class, for the same assignment (on academic discourse), another student used her in-class sketch, and the metaphor it triggered, to revise her essay. Terri sketched a simple cartoon, stick figures of a giant professor and a tiny student. The caption reads “Academic Language and Power (from the student’s point of view).” The sketch shows the student getting relatively larger as she or he learns academic discourse (see Figure 3–10).

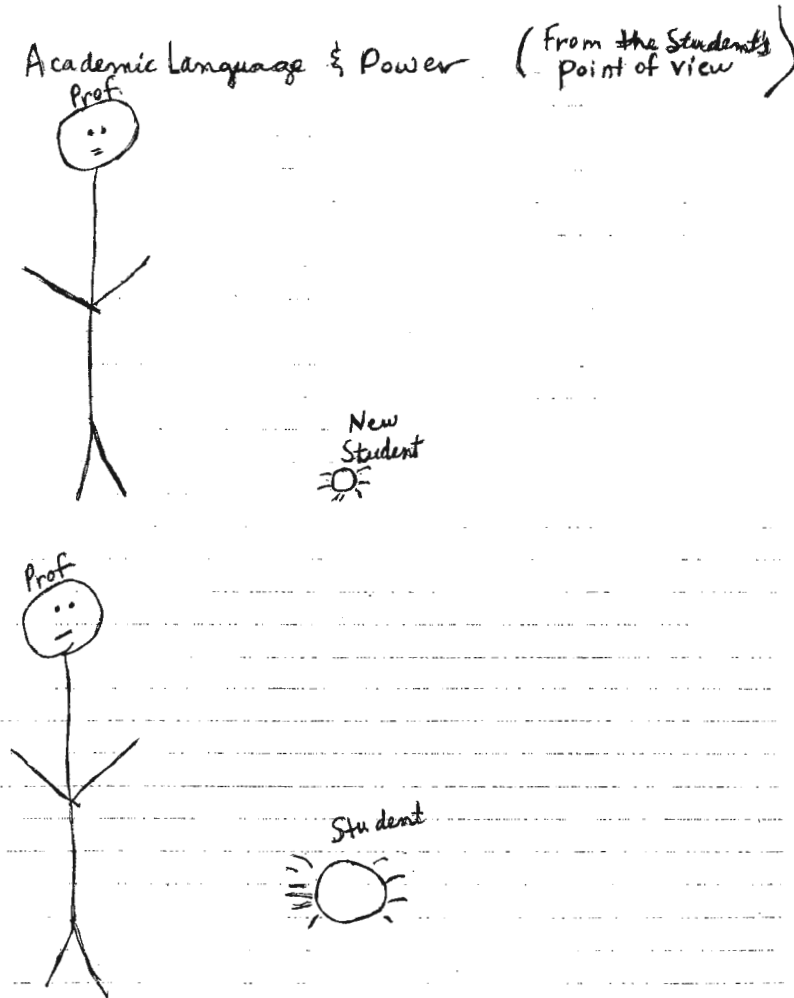
In her note to herself after doing the sketch, Terri wrote:

Ideas to Use in Paper

Explain the changes in feelings of students as they start achieving or even mastering the academic discourse that originally alienated them. Make this more visual in minds instead of implying it. Tell how learning academic discourse empowers students.

In her final draft, which was a letter to a neighbor back home who was going to college next year, she added this simile, which did not appear in her earlier draft: “Until you start to learn the discourse, you can feel very small and powerless in class, like a tiny bug listening to a powerful giant (the professor) speak.” She returns to the image in one of her final paragraphs: “As you put extra effort into learning the dis-

Figure 3-10
Terri's sketch that generated a metaphor



course that surrounds you in college, you will begin to feel empowered. After a time you may even laugh at yourself as you remember that tiny bug feeling you once had while in the face of the 'giant' professors." Terri clearly is able to use the stick-people cartoon she sketched in a few minutes and turn it into a metaphor that helps fulfill her instruction to herself to make what academic discourse does to people "more visual in minds instead of implying it."

The metaphors these sketches can generate help students gain metacognitive distance on their projects. Metaphors can help students recast an argument, and/or they can be added to a revision to enhance an explanation, as we have seen in Melissa's and Terri's essays.

The Power of Metaphor Underused

George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's work on the importance of metaphor is well known. In their 1980 text, *Metaphors We Live By*, they say that metaphors involve thought and action as well as language: "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (3). Others have pointed out the importance of metaphor. Elearnor Kutz and Hephzibah Roskelly point out that metaphor "is so ubiquitous in the language and in thinking that most people don't recognize it as a strategy that allows them to name and control reality" (230). Michael Bruner and Max Oelschlaeger credit Richard Rorty in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* for arguing that metaphor is vital to moral and intellectual growth (216).

Sharon Crowley and Deborah Hawhee point out that most grammar handbooks are not as a rule concerned with "extraordinary uses of language" such as metaphors or other figures of speech (229). However, they cite Quintilian's view that figures of speech can make language more clear than it might be without them (229). They remind us that figurative speech serves a powerful rhetorical function and that conventional textbook writing pedagogies do not foreground it enough (232, 263). S. Michael Halloran and Annette Norris Bradford also critique conventional pedagogies in rhetoric and technical writing that discourage the use of metaphor. They argue that "a judicious use of figures—both schemes and tropes—is warranted in scientific and technical writing" (180). The gap these scholars point to might be partially addressed by having students sketch in the way described.

I frequently use metaphor to help students gain insights regarding rhetorical analysis. As mentioned earlier, students in my advanced exposition class were analyzing the rhetoric used in letter-to-the-editor exchanges regarding a controversy of their choosing (i.e., the moratorium on the Illinois death penalty as discussed in *The Chicago Tribune* letters to the editor; the Amadou Diallo shooting in New York City and the op/ed pages of *The New York Times*; the "grammar" debate in opinion pieces and letters in *English Journal*).

As students entered the final phase of these projects, however, there were still many who were not taking enough advantage of interesting rhetorical strategies they found and/or were belaboring the obvious. For example, they were simply repeating what a sentence said rather than how it worked rhetorically, or they were simply supporting or ar-

guing with a claim the author made, or with the reasons, rather than examining how the claim and support for it work in the particular rhetorical context. For this project, they were to look more closely at things such as word choice, syntax, placement, connotation, etc., and discuss a writer's rhetorical choices. Sometimes a section of their drafts would do that, but there was a lot of unconvincing summarizing and paraphrasing instead of insightful analysis. At this point, they needed a strategy for helping them decide what to elaborate on and what to delete.

During previous class discussions, I had discussed a microscope analogy:

In this rhetorical analysis, think of the reader as someone looking through your microscope. You, the writer/and rhetorical analyst, are standing next to him or her, explaining what the reader sees under your slide. You point things out. You explain how they work. With that metaphor in mind, read through your draft and ask yourself this: If there are things the reader could see without the help of your lens and your explanation, don't spend much time and space explaining them. But if the reader would not be aware of these strategies except for your putting them under the lens and explaining them, then by all means elaborate on those strategies. Take some time to point them out and show how they work. Don't belabor the obvious. Do belabor the not-obvious.

I thought of another metaphor: "Writing a rhetorical analysis is like analyzing a basketball game." Someone who had never been to a basketball game would notice players running up and down the court and occasionally throwing the ball in the net. A coach or experienced player would see complex plays and moves leading up to the shot. Sitting next to the novice, the coach or experienced player could explain things, helping the novice "see" strategies in the game that had been invisible before, except to a trained eye. To extend the metaphor: If there are moves in the game (text) that any observer would notice, don't spend time on it. If there are moves in the game (text) that the average reader needs explicated, that's where you want to elaborate.

Then we took a few minutes for students to come up with their own analogy. I said to begin with this phrase: "Writing a rhetorical analysis is like _____ ing . . .," and to insert a verb in the blank. Then explain the analogy and how it might work to sort and select sections of their drafts to delete or elaborate on. After I gave them a few minutes to come up with these similes, people read or talked about them orally. Here is what some people wrote (or said):

Writing a rhetorical analysis is like

. . . a florist selecting roses for bouquets and arrangements. Someone who doesn't know what they should be looking for might miss certain

details. For instance, are their seeples tipped up or down? Are they tight or blown? Are they holding color or are they brown in spots? Are the stems cut at an angle? All of these questions address how long the roses will last in a fresh bouquet or arrangement. —Diana

. . . sorting through Halloween candy in your pumpkin. You must sort it thoroughly, separate it into groups . . . some pieces don't belong . . . some are similar, some you've never seen before and have to examine closely (look at the words, the ingredients, etc.), and look it over twice before you decide whether you want it or not. Once you've got it all sorted and organized, you're ready to peel apart the wrapper and the stuff you're going to throw away. —Deb

. . . scuba diving in the ocean; you have to have an experienced diving instructor in order to get the most out of your trip. —Michelle

. . . watching a Spike Lee movie. —Anita

. . . writing your own wedding vows. —Dorene

. . . investigating the motive in a murder mystery. —Cathy

. . . looking for change in a couch. —Matt

It was fun listening to the creative analogies people came up with. More important, it gave writers struggling with a difficult assignment a way to think about it in a different, yet also familiar, way. Although metaphors involve written language, when students elaborate on them, we could all imagine the sounds, smells, or physical activity the metaphor described. Metaphors stimulate alternate ways of thinking because as Lakoff and Johnson point out, "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (5).

Using metaphors, and the multiple channels they approximate, promotes a classroom synergy that is more than the sum of its parts. Everyone benefits from the active brainwork of everyone else. With its frequent and unusual perspective shifts, this metaphoric thinking challenges many intelligences.

Oral Outlining or Previewing

In the same way a graphic or metaphoric representation of an idea might help students think in different ways about a writing project, an oral preview or outline can trigger useful insights. Asking students to verbalize their plans for, or problems with, an upcoming writing project can also work like jumper cables to the imagination, especially as students hear others work through their writing problems orally. In-

class oral previewing or problem solving can take from twenty minutes to an hour of class time, but is well worth the investment. If time allows, and the class is not too large, students might sit in a large circle and take one or two minutes each to address questions raised by the teacher. It gets everyone to contribute in relative safety—no one need stand in front of the class, “oral report” fashion. They may stay in their desks, and they need not prepare anything more than an early draft or informal outline.

As students talk and listen, they begin to generate ideas and to identify problems and strengths in their work so far. As they and others weave in references to class readings or discussions, students begin to see connections between old and new knowledge. Talking about their project can convince them they *do* have something important to say, and it can help them begin to say it. In addition, as teachers hear these early ideas, they can quickly determine which students are well on their way to a substantive first draft, and which students are yet not focused enough. Getting students to talk about their projects, therefore, helps writers see where they want to go and simultaneously helps teachers see which students need the most help in getting there. When students hear that their classmates have important stories to tell, or arguments to make, they are also more likely to trust them later when they respond to written drafts. As Marie Ponsot and Rosemary Deen point out, when students listen to each other read from or talk about their individual handling of a class project, they “have a personal basis for being more concerned listeners, colleagues really, engaged with similar experiences in similar enterprises with no loss of individual difference” (1982, 17). If class time is at a premium, the teacher could divide students into small groups or pairs. Students would address the same questions orally, but it might take only three to ten minutes of class time. The teacher could circulate, hearing as many dialogues as possible.

Oral previewing or problem raising can help spark ideas. If, for example, one student hears another talking about a particularly memorable visit with a grandparent, he or she might remember a parallel incident with a favorite aunt or younger cousin. If one student hears another relate the excitement of a tournament basketball game, he or she might remember getting that last important spare in a highest-score bowling game. Hearing someone else talk about particular sights or sounds from a vivid incident might remind students to add such sensory details to their own narratives, or examples to their arguments. Such expansions are the “collocations” that Witte and Faigley have shown are present in high-rated essays in the research they summarized (1981, 193).

This kind of verbalizing is relevant to something Lester Faigley argues in *Fragments of Rationality*. His view, which I partly accept, is that

Composition has not embraced postmodern notions of multiple selves. He sees Composition foregrounding the modern (as opposed to post-modern) notion of an individual “self,” and perhaps he would say that this exercise plays to such notions of individuality. While it’s true that this verbalizing foregrounds individual reports, it also recognizes that these are people whose subject positions create different degrees of confidence, fear, and familiarity with academic conventions of analysis and argument. The voicing of these fears seems to calm those most worried about “not doing it right,” at the same time the variety of projects discussed demonstrates that there is no one “right” way. The vocabulary of analysis used in these talks reassures writers that others are in the same relative boat: riding the ups and downs of this project, searching for a compass. It also provides a guiding buoy to those drifting into shallow inlets of summary, when they should be exploring the open ocean of analysis.

Oral outlining or previewing can also take place outside of class. Students might meet in groups with questions to address, or take part in organized telephone interviews with their peers regarding their projects. Having the teacher present in a class discussion helps foreground threads that will help the largest number of people, but the point is to take more advantage of verbalizing, with or without the teacher.

Most important, oral previewing or problem-solving privileges *student* voice, an element Robert Parker has argued is essential to students’ intellectual development. In his critique of how the London-based language program got turned into writing across the curriculum programs in this country, Parker wrote, “Here people have been quite exclusively concerned with writing: other uses of language have been totally neglected” (1985, 174). What’s more, Parker says, by not taking more advantage of the role Vygotsky says speech plays in language development, schools are limiting students’ intellectual growth: “When opportunities for dialogue are limited by the structure and content of classroom language, then, it would seem, the growth of the mind is curtailed” (1982, 12).

Oral Journals

Because I’ve seen the value of talk in writing and revising, I now also use some form of oral journals or reading logs in all my classes. I usually have students respond to readings, class discussions, or assignment progress by having them do a variety of in-class and out-of-class activities. For example, in addition to having them keep some kind of writ-

ten reading log or journal, or e-mailed response, I also have them keep an oral journal or do an oral response.⁴ Office voice mail is the most practical option because students can call at any time, without disturbing anyone, and the instructor can access it at any time. On a rotating basis, groups of students call my voice mail and respond to a problem I've given them. I might ask questions about a difficult reading, for example, or for an update on a writing project. To prevent the tape from filling up, the students can be asked to call at different times, or the teacher can listen to the messages at regular intervals, taking notes and deleting the messages regularly. Students do not hear each other with the voice-mail option, but the teacher can take notes on the gist of the messages and relate selected comments the next day.

With voice mail, instructors can listen closely to each student, playing the message again if necessary, or saving it to respond to later. Hearing students' voices through a receiver, instead of from across a classroom, allows the teacher to hear nuances of meaning in word selection, pauses, and tone. It gives teachers a better sense of who is confidently moving ahead on the project, and who is frustrated, confused, or completely stalled. And students can speak uninterrupted on tape, editing it or starting over if they want to. In addition, voice mail automatically limits long-winded speakers (though I tell them they can call back and continue their message if they are initially cut off), while students who are very nervous formulating thoughts instantly can, if they so desire, delete their first message and try again for a more eloquent one.

If voice mail is not available, instructors might rig up an answering machine at a school phone, or they might use a home answering machine. This latter option might take some planning so that family members aren't disturbed by students calling at all hours of the day and night. Students could be given special times to call, and/or the volume on the phone and on the machine could be turned down at certain times. Whether this oral shaping of ideas takes place in class, in small groups or pairs in or out of class, or on a voice mail or answering machine system, the questions students address should help them formulate ideas related to the task at hand.

Teachers can design questions best suited to the particular project. If they have had past students complete a similar project, they can generate questions that will help writers better understand the assignment or prevent them from making the mistakes their predecessors made, such as not having an identifiable argument or not providing enough support. Having students formulate oral answers to specially designed questions forces them to actively focus on and generate ideas. Talking gets students engaged in the intellectual task in a way that hearing the teacher describe the assignment does not.

The theoretical base for this oral responding is the same one underlying freewriting, clustering, brainstorming, etc. It provides an opportunity for playing with ideas, using language—this time oral language—as an intellectual tool. For students whose primary way of knowing is speaking, oral outlining or previewing can make the difference between getting good ideas or being further frustrated by the slowness of written language. For students whose primary way of knowing is writing, oral outlining or previewing can challenge them to use less familiar paths to explore their memory. From a pragmatic standpoint, it saves time for students and teachers, it lightens the book bag load for both, and it saves paper.

For many of us writing teachers, the act of writing can trigger thoughts or connections we didn't have, or didn't know we had, before we started our written journal entry. This shaping-at-the-point-of-utterance triggering can also happen in oral journals, though it is more likely to happen if students do it off the cuff, without preparing a written script.

Oral Journal Example

Occasionally, I hear these connections happening in students' oral journals. One student in my rhetorical theory class, Derek, started his voice-mail response in a fairly conventional way, responding to a question I had asked this group to address regarding how what we were reading in our rhetorical theory class might connect with what they were doing in another class or in another aspect of their lives. He began by talking about another rhetoric class he was taking and also rhetoric's connection to technical writing, in which he had decided to specialize. Something in that context triggered something we had been discussing in class, invented or situated ethos, and its relation to his authority as a student to speak. Then he said, "Actually—something that just came to mind—" and proceeded to talk about how he was helping his brother write a letter to a professor requesting a grade change, or at least, that the professor agree to reconsider the grade on some assignments that fed into the final grade. Derek spoke at length about such issues as rhetorical situation, ethos, pathos, and other persuasive strategies he was discussing with his brother. Derek saw clear links between the rhetorical analyses we were doing in class and the rhetorical situations he was dealing with in "real life." He said this connection was "kinda cool."

Derek's voice-mail response is interesting in two ways. First, it demonstrates how talking, like writing, is a way of making knowledge. Like written language, spoken language can stimulate connections that the user did not have, at least consciously, at the beginning of the en-

try. We can hear that happening when the speaker says, “Actually, something that just came to mind.” Second, Derek’s response demonstrates the importance of “real life” tasks. What helped Derek relate one course to another, to see the relevance of what he was doing in his various classes, was when he faced the real-life task of helping his brother compose a letter that had important consequences regarding his brother’s academic average.

Moving-to-Learn

Dancing is drawing the world.

—Paulo Freire⁵

Using kinesthetics to generate, organize, and develop ideas is underused in most English and writing classes. For some students, those with the kind of kinesthetic intelligence Howard Gardner describes, using movement as a way of knowing can help their writing by allowing them to use areas of intellectual strength to develop insights regarding textual organization and structure. And as with other approaches described in this book, using a non-linguistic pathway can challenge linguistically talented students by asking them to explore unfamiliar intellectual territory.

Thinking/Walking Through a Draft

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Karen Klein and Linda Hecker use kinesthetics to help students generate and organize their ideas through walking. In an approach Klein and Hecker devised called “walking the structure,” students start in one section of a room and begin moving through it in ways that best represent the direction of their ideas: going forward to represent supportive information, standing still to represent getting stuck, or moving sideways to represent a different line of thought. They walk with another person, who jots down or records the walker’s spoken ideas and physical directions. Typically, graphic symbols are used to represent physical directions taken (90–91). As Linda Hecker explains in a 1997 *English Journal* article, “movement can be used to facilitate learning instead of wasting everybody’s energy by fighting against it” (47).

The point is to stimulate thinking in ways that are familiar for all students some of the time and unfamiliar for all students some of the time. Kinesthetic conceptualization will be comfortable for some and uncomfortable for others, in the same way writing is comfortable for

some and uncomfortable for others. Working in a number of intellectual environments will provide the confidence writers need to move forward on a project, as well as the challenge needed to make it their best effort.

Tinkertoys

Linda Hecker at Landmark College has also written about using Tinkertoys. After reading about how Hecker used them, my colleague at Illinois State University, Anne Colloton, had an interesting experience using them in an undergraduate writing class. After her 15 students had completed and brought to class a first draft, she dumped several boxes of Tinkertoys on a big table in her computer-lab classroom. She explained that students were to use the toys to construct a model of their current draft. Students laughed at the prospect. No one made a move. Finally one student, a computer science major, went to the table and began working with the Tinkertoys. Other students looked on, curiously, and some began moving toward the table. Anne sensed that students felt awkward and silly with her watching them, so she left the room to let them work. Besides, since she was also doing the assignments in that class, she wanted to go into the hall to try the “walking the draft” exercise, described above, on her own draft, which she told me was very helpful. She read her paper out loud while she was walking, stimulating further ideas.

When she returned to the room, all fifteen students had models constructed and were explaining them to each other. Like Melissa and Terri, whose sketches sparked metaphors they later used in their revised papers, one of Anne’s students, an art major, had a spindle in the center. He used the word “rotational” to describe his model. He later added that word to his revised paper in a description of an important concept. I have not yet used Tinkertoys in my classes, but Anne’s experience convinces me that I should. In our discussion of how people work differently, Anne pointed out to me that in the film *A Few Good Men*, Tom Cruise walks around with a baseball bat, walking and talking and banging the bat. That’s how that character gets ideas (Colloton 2000).

Peer Responding

Peer responding is well known in Composition Studies, though most people have mixed reactions to how well it “works.” I discuss it here because of its multisensory nature, involving as it does reading, talking, writing, pointing, and sometimes cutting, pasting, and other structural movements. Although peer response is an inexact, sometimes frustrat-

ing process, if everyone takes it seriously, it can give insights to both writer and responder. In their metacognitive analyses of their projects, students often refer to the responding that they did and the responses they received. Some say that the peer responding was disappointing because people just said, "It was good," with no elaboration or productive critique. I think there will always be some students who do not take responding seriously.

Oral Peer Responses

Marie Ponsot and Rosemary Deen have suggested that listeners try to make their responses not "evaluations," but rather more neutral "observations." For example, a listener might observe: "The middle part is mostly dialogue." Another example of an observation they give is, "She says she is writing about *envy*. But I notice that the man who envied came up in only one sentence. All the rest was about the injured man" (1982, 59).

Dene Thomas and Gordon Thomas also recommend the use of declarative statements as useful responses to works in progress. Drawing on the work of psychologist Carl Rogers, they also recommend observation-like responses. Using what they call "Rogerian reflections," they encourage responders to begin sentences with the following phrases:

What I hear you saying is . . .

It seems like . . .

It seems to me that . . .

So . . .

It sounds to me like you are trying to . . . (121)

In fact, their research on response and revision showed that "when a student gets nothing but questions, his or her answers get shorter, rather than longer" (120). This piece of information forced me to rethink the "facilitative questions" I had been routinely posing to students for years. Using Rogers' use of repetition as a model, Thomas and Thomas encourage responders to "reflect" what the writer seems to be saying, or to begin a conversation about the writing with a response such as, "Tell us what you're trying to do at this point, what you're writing about right now, in terms of writing" (120).

Writing center tutoring supports a similar approach. When writers produce an incomprehensible paragraph or sentence, being told the section is "awkward" is rightly seen as a negative response, and a useless one. Rather than rethink and rephrase the troublesome part, frustrated writers are just as likely to cross it out. Instead, listeners can draw

on Elbow's concept of "movies of the mind" to explain how they heard the sentence. They can tell the story of how they read the piece, even to explain sentence-level problems: "I followed what you were saying up until that first comma, and then I got lost. Say in different words, out loud, what you meant by that last clause." If the listener can get the writer to articulate an idea that somehow became mangled in the written draft, the new sentence, shaped at the point of oral utterance, will almost always be more coherent and may even be written down for the revised version. Robert Parker and Vera Goodkin explain the role language, even, perhaps especially, informal language, plays in knowledge construction:

Putting things in our own words, even in our most everyday, colloquial words, does not debase knowledge and thus is not something to be barely tolerated for "weaker" students, but a necessary step for each of us in the construction of knowledge. (3)

Peer interviewers can be taught how to make useful observations and statements, or, if they are particularly insecure about their roles as responders, they can also be given some basic, generic questions. When listening to a draft read aloud, students sometimes find they can concentrate better on listening if they do not have to generate questions. Therefore, sometimes writers, listeners, and teachers find it useful to have a list of questions already prepared that are appropriate for that stage of the particular writing project. The instructor and the students might together construct a list of questions designed to help novice responders get the conversation off the ground. Some questions can be fairly generic, useful for drafts of a number of assignments.

Generic questions for listeners to early drafts:

- As the writer was reading the draft, what part(s), if any, caught your attention? That is, what section(s) did you find yourself listening closely to? (If you found yourself dozing off in sections, the writer needs to know that, too.)
- What part(s) did you want to know more about? What else did you want to know?

Other questions may be more tailored to the specific task. For example, if the assignment is to write an argument or persuasive piece, the listener can help the writer determine if the text is clearly in that genre. If the writer is supposed to be simply summarizing or paraphrasing a reading, the listener can help pinpoint areas where the writer has crossed from summarizing into critique, for good or for ill. If the piece is supposed to be an analysis, a listener can help point out sections that are merely summary, a common problem in student writing from first-year through graduate school. Sometimes writers are the best genera-

tors of questions for their listeners and can simply be asked to generate questions to address in the interview:

- I used what I think is a great anecdote in the beginning of this piece, but I'm not sure readers will see the connection between the anecdote and the argument that follows. Do you see the connection? What is it? Should I leave it implied or spell it out?
- The sequence of this narrative is very clear to me. Could you follow the events, or do I need more transitions?
- The description of the lead dancer is very important to my review of the ballet. Could you picture her in detail? Do I need more description?
- How would you best characterize what you just listened to: (a) a list of facts; (b) an argument; (c) a narrative; (d) other? Explain.

Questions should be tailored to fit the project, and the responses to them may be jotted down or discussed orally. To keep the interview moving along, the questions could be written on a white board, overhead, computer screen, or scrap paper so the listener can refer to them later in the discussion. The point of this is to get writers talking at length about their ideas to help them use speech generatively. Listeners should use, adapt, or invent whatever questions they can in order to make that happen. It helps if students understand Britton's theory of writing, so that they understand the purpose of their questions.

Written Peer Responses

It is important that students receive a wide variety of written responses to their work-in-progress, as well as hear a discussion of it. Therefore, in my writing classes, when we are about midpoint in a major (ten- to twelve-page) project that takes about seven weeks to complete, I use the following cycle of response. Prior to a class meeting, several students will have e-mailed to me, and to everyone else in the class, a draft. On our own time outside of class, we all respond to that draft in a memo of about 250 words, which can also be forwarded to the entire class. Then during class time, we go around the room, with each responder reading or summarizing his or her memo. That way, everyone gets to hear a cross-section of response, and the writer also has a copy of all comments. Since the outside reading and responding to each draft takes at least a half hour, and since the class discussion of each draft takes time, I try to keep the responses limited to about three drafts per class meeting. Determining which writers send drafts on which days is decided by lottery. Then I put the schedule on a chart that's distributed several weeks in advance of the first due date. In a class of eighteen that meets

twice a week, it takes about three weeks to complete this response cycle. Some students end up sending very early drafts, and some end up sending drafts when the project is almost due. Nevertheless, this draft-response cycle is well worth the time. For the most part, students seem to find giving and receiving responses useful.

By reading my classmates' papers, I was more capable of seeing what I needed to work on as well. I found that many of the things I pointed out to them were also missing in my drafts. . . . To read, analyze, and critique others' drafts, it helped me practice what we were supposed to be doing in the project.—Melanie

I found out some things also from responding to others' drafts that I tried to apply to my paper. I found that some papers were like mine and others had good ways of analyzing that I felt would be good in my paper (but I did not copy anybody). Overall, I felt that this paper was a good experience for me to realize that it is not always about analyzing what a person says, but how they say it.—Natalie

Unlike any previous assignments, the assigned peer responses were tremendously helpful. Not only did my classmates' comments assist me in the construction of my paper; the responses that I gave to others turned me into being a better observer of rhetorical strategy.—Michelle

Terri said that the peer responses to her paper were not very helpful, first because few people responded and second because her draft was due early in the cycle and she had only a few pages written. However, what she did find helpful "were the many comments I was able to read on other people's drafts sent e-mail. Reading comments made to others made me think about if I had some of the same problems in my paper."

There are inevitably problems with this cycle of responding to drafts: hitches with e-mail accounts, a few students who don't fully participate, some people getting responses too early or too late to help them much. However, the overall effect of having everyone in the class respond in-depth to other people doing a similar project, and having them read or hear dozens of responses to their own or others' work, has a cumulative effect of making people very open to changing or even reconceiving their project. If nothing else, it makes them see that they're not the only ones struggling with this assignment, and by responding to others, they see they really do know what they're doing and can make insightful, analytic comments. As Freire and others have shown us, confidence and security have much to do with writing. Here we see how peer responses helped Leah overcome her insecurity about this project:

When it came time to write my draft, I was able to come up with things to say but that's where my insecurity came. Because of being unsure if I was doing what needed to be accomplished in this paper, I only analyzed one letter. After getting comments I felt a little bit better but just let my paper sit for a while without looking at it. Now after giving more comments to classmates and reading more papers I will be able to continue to finish my paper.—Leah

Peer responding makes students more alert readers and more productively critical of their own work. They become more confident, even as they are challenged, because they see that others are struggling with problems similar to theirs. They are also able to see an angle of analysis someone else used: focusing on a writer's metaphors, for example, or on use of passive voice, or pathetic appeals or citations from respected journals. This opens more angles of analysis in their own project. They stop talking about whether they'll "have enough information," a worry they hyperventilate about when they first begin this project, and they begin to plan what sections of their analysis they'll need to cut.

This transformation takes time, and it doesn't happen for everyone at the same moment. We work on this project for approximately seven weeks, during which time students search for letters to analyze, and read rhetorical analyses by published rhetoricians and by past students in the class. They begin their drafts and they respond to four or five drafts per week. We give our responses orally in class, and writers get a copy either via e-mail or by printout. The process is not a painless one. People become frustrated, overwhelmed, confused, and panicky before they begin to make some claims about the texts they are analyzing.

How is this kind of responding multisensory? First, the responses are heard by everyone. We go around the room and responders read or talk from their written response to the writer. The writer also gets the written response via e-mail. Each person both gives and receives responses, so they write, read, speak, and listen many times throughout the cycle. When they hear praise or questions about someone else's draft, they consider how those comments might apply to their project. Even though all these responses are also written, it is worth the class time to discuss them because hearing the responses reinforces the overall emphasis on what people are doing well, and what most people need to work on further. Having this conversation every day also reinforces students' authority as insightful readers who can also use that authority as readers and writers of their own text. So while this oral give-and-take is not multisensory in the same way working with Tinkertoys is, it provides multiple-perspective experiences for students, giving them a different lens through which to view their own draft when they return to it.

Spatial Insights

This responding cycle also causes spatial changes in students' drafts. When they send their e-mailed drafts to the entire class, the text is interrupted in different ways. For example, I often respond to e-mailed drafts by hitting "Reply." When I see a section I want to respond to, I hit the return key, scroll down the draft, and insert my comments after a particular word or sentence or section of analysis. I usually use a different font or at least skip spaces, so my comments are easier to read. Then I electronically copy my comments to the whole class, as do the peer responders.

Other responders sometimes model this responding format, the result being that the writer gets five or six e-mailed responses with his or her text broken up in different ways, with blocks of inserted questions, suggestions, or advice to move or delete. It becomes more difficult to think of the draft as an untouchable monolith and easier to think of it as chunks that can be expanded, moved, or jettisoned. Many people say at the end of this project that they have never before done as much deep revising as they did on this paper. Robert said, "Personally, I got a lot of good feedback that caused me to cut and paste my paper to bits." In addition, the substantial responding they do to the drafts of others working on a project similar to theirs gives them a valuable reader-identified perspective when they come back to their own drafts. As Richard Beach points out, this kind of responding helps writers "adopt a reader's perspective, necessary for distancing themselves from their text" (1989, 139).

At what point in the cycle of getting and receiving responses this change happens would be difficult to pinpoint, and what exactly changes would be difficult to quantify. It's more a gradual change in perspective that allows writers to see their texts as readers might. They become more alert to what might confuse those who do not have access to what is inside a writer's head. When writers realize their peers are confused by sections of their papers, they revise to make their drafts more reader-friendly.

Social Intelligence

Finally, this cycle of responding, whether oral or written, taps into a student's social intelligence. Effective responders need both insight and tact, a delicate balance of straightforwardness and compassion, praise and productive critique. What's more, responders must figure out which of their classmates need different proportions of each. Who does well with this social savvy is sometimes surprising. As the weeks go by, students begin to look to certain people for additional feedback, those

who rightly see this as a compliment. These responders are invariably generous with their comments, which are by now voluntary, and their extra concentration on other people's drafts is usually rewarded when they revise their own drafts, because they have seen such a variety of approaches.

Peer Interviewing Strategies

In the organizational stages of writing, the peer interview, with writers speaking and listening, provides an oral give-and-take that can spark insights, connections, and examples that writers might not generate on their own, working with the written draft alone. Peer interviewing is not a new idea. It has long been a part of conventional process pedagogy and writing-center peer-tutoring strategies. However, it can take practice before students get good at it. They begin with the expectation that the best revising advice comes from the teacher. Natalie said, "I weighed the teacher response more heavily and tried to make the most changes from what advice I got [from her]." And of course, since teachers are the ones who usually grade the papers, the student is sensible to seek his or her input. But because of this, students may be predisposed to think peer input is useless.

Writing centers have long used successfully the practice of having tutors listen to a draft read aloud by the writer. There is, however, a "teacher/student" paradigm that exists even in "peer tutoring" situations that writing centers cannot help but create: the tutor represents authority. Peer interviewing in a class between paired classmates, however, virtually eliminates that hierarchical situation. In a classroom, where in a few moments the writer will become the listener and vice versa, students are truly peers. This peer dynamic allows the text and its revision possibilities to be foregrounded, not the power difference between two people. Peer interviewing, besides reinforcing the writer's role as *writer* (as opposed to *student*), promotes the writer's speaking skills as well as the partner's listening skills. Writing, speaking, and listening are all taken seriously, with both partners pooling all their talents and skills to the mutual benefit of both.

Here are some ways peer interviewing can work. On a preassigned day, writers bring in a draft or even a preliminary outline or sketch of their project idea. In a computer lab, they might simply call it up on a screen. In pairs, they take turns reading their drafts, out loud, to their partner. The partners are given instructions to listen carefully to the draft, and to ask to hear it read more than once if necessary. By listening to, rather than reading, the text, peer responders are forced to concentrate on the *ideas* in the draft, rather than on surface issues of punctuation and spelling. The listeners are told to ask questions about the

piece they just heard, especially open-ended questions “to get the writer talking.”

To model this process, I sometimes ask for one “brave soul” to read his or her draft out loud to the class, while I listen closely, sometimes asking for a second reading, and then posing some open-ended questions. There is no need to prepare questions ahead of time. I want to convince students that the questions will spring to mind naturally after having heard the draft, and they always do.

- You said you were scared on your first day at the university. What was it like when you went to your first class?
- What one thing scared you the most?
- You said you now feel more comfortable here. Tell me more about that one moment that was a turning point in your attitude toward this school.

Open-ended questions or directions like these will get writers talking their way through ideas still inchoate in their drafts. Listeners do not need formal training in composition theory to pay close attention to the draft being read to them. If they are initially given some basic questions to pose, both reader and listener can worry less about “criticism” and use their energies to focus on ideas. Listeners are not to “correct” or “praise,” but simply to ask questions. I tell listeners to act like good talk show hosts, questioning their guests about subjects that come up, asking for more details, responding to strong opinions, etc.

I then instruct writers and/or listeners to jot down ideas that came up in this discussion that a writer might want to explore further in a subsequent draft. The listener’s point-of-entry will tell writers much about the most compelling part of their draft. They can immediately see the effect of their writing on another human being, a person whose job is not to “correct” the draft, but to engage the ideas in it.

These peer interviews are also an effective way to pull novice writers out of the praise/correction model in which their own writing experience may have been steeped. In other words, when students are asked to respond to a piece of writing, they often think their job is to “fix” it. If told to respond, not correct, they may automatically think they are instead only to “praise” what they read, or troll for spelling errors. This approve/disapprove binary is partly due to our culture’s knee-jerk urge to binarize everything. However, it intimidates both reader and responder, interfering with the concentration needed to use the time productively, to help the writer discover meaning through speaking.

How does reading out loud to a peer group for their oral responses relate to the power issues raised earlier? How does it fit into the consensus/discensus issues debated by Rorty, Bruffee, Myers, and Trimbur

and discussed in the Introduction? It provides another example of contraries. It's true that consensus in the groups may play a part in reinstating the status quo, Rorty's abnormal discourse notwithstanding. Students must conform to academic conventions whether this is pointed out to them by their teachers or their peers. However, when peer response works well, several things happen.

First of all, because more students tend to participate in this process than they might in a conventional class with the teacher lecturing or leading the discussion, students get to see different people contributing, and different intellectual strengths at work. It is often surprising in these oral exercises to see who does and does not have impressive insight on a draft, who can articulate an insight, who can do so both candidly and kindly, with some well-placed humor. It changes the dynamic of the class by tapping into different talent veins. This kind of oral peer review may be critiqued by those who say it doesn't really challenge hegemonic economic systems. But on a local level, it challenges the commonplace that teachers hold all the knowledge about revising a text, and it challenges classroom assumptions about which students are "smart." This classroom activity does not change the world. But it chips away damaging pieces of it.

The oral, graphic, and kinesthetic approaches in this chapter to generating and organizing ideas provide the kind of intellectual play Vygotsky argued was crucial to higher-level learning. The next chapter suggests ways these approaches can help students revise and edit later-stage drafts.

Notes

1. One of the manuscript reviewers called a version of this activity "mystery pot," a term I had not heard before. He or she did not give a reference, so I was unable to determine if that activity is similar to the one I describe here.

2. One easy way to make these cards is to type them up in a format similar to Figure 3-1, using a word processor. Then have the resulting printed sheet(s) photocopied onto paperboard, which can then be cut into "cards" and rubber banded together for as many groups as needed.

3. I am grateful to Abigail Waldron for making me more sensitive to the role Venn diagrams can play in conceptualization. I met her on a CCCC 2000 panel, where we were both presenters.

4. For a fuller explanation of oral journal use, see my "Oral Journals: Voice Mail and Tape Recorders as Inclusive and Challenging Forums," *The Journal Book for Teachers of At-Risk College Writers*. eds. Susan Gardner and Toby Fulwiler, 116-28. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1999.

5. *Convergence* 6 (1) (1973): 81.