

Web 2.0 Technologies and Parent Involvement of ELL Students: An Ecological Perspective

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Abstract This study explores how ELL students' parents participated in a blog-mediated English language arts curriculum in a second grade classroom at a U.S. urban school, and how they supported their children's learning of school-based writing. Adopting ecological perspectives on technological affordances, this study views digital literacy as discursive practices that are shaped by one's social, cultural, and political access, as well as material access. The findings indicate that parents used blogging to support their children's academic and social goals, bringing expanded audiences and meaningful purposes to school writing. However, their linguistic and cultural capital related to Web 2.0 technologies generated different levels of participation and affordances. The study contends that parental involvement through Web 2.0 technologies needs to be critically examined, in consideration of discursive factors operating in the contexts in which those technologies are used.

Keywords Parent involvement · Web 2.0 technologies · English language learners · Ecological perspective

Introduction

Many research studies have reported benefits of parent involvement in children's academic achievement. The benefits relate to not only academic achievement but also socio-emotional competence (Hill and Taylor 2004; Lawson 2003; Marshall 2006; Sobel and Kugler 2007). However, it has been reported that the parents of

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immigrant students such as English language learners (ELLs) are less likely to participate in children's schooling than native-born parents due to a range of barriers to participating in American schooling. The most commonly reported barriers to ELL student's parent involvement include lack of formal education, low English language proficiency, lack of knowledge of the mainstream U.S. culture and school systems, and time constraints due to work and family responsibilities (Carreon et al. 2005; Haymann and Earle 2000; Kao 2004; Pena 2000; Peterson and Ladky 2007; Ramirez 2003; Schaller and Rocha 2007; Turney and Kao 2009).

Concerning this challenge to parent involvement, there have been efforts among teacher educators and community organizers to promote the involvement of parents of language minority students in children's schooling, from conceptual understanding to activist movements (Auerbach 2002; Darder 1991; Hoover-Dempsey and Whitaker 2010; Lareau 1994, 2001; Walker et al. 2005). For example, drawing on a psychological perspective, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) have provided a multifaceted understanding of parents' motivations for participating in children's schooling, and a complex viewpoint of cultural contexts for equitable partnership development among parents, communities, and schools. This kind of conceptual understanding has been simultaneously turned into collective action for promoting and supporting immigrant parent involvement in children's schooling. In one instance, Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) formed community initiatives for supporting Latino parents' school participation. The range of activities included parent–teacher dialogue, family learning of math and science, multicultural and bilingual heritages, and family health and nutrition. The activities allowed language minority parents to develop social and cultural capital for participating in their children's schooling, while addressing “a variety of factors involving issues of pedagogy, socioeconomic status, power, and ideology” (p. 67). In a similar vein, promoting parent's direct involvement in children's work in school subject areas from early years of children's schooling, Stylianides and Stylianides (2011) have shown that more interactions between parents and children in math and science work resulted in higher academic achievement. For the benefits of parent and child collaborations in learning content areas, teachers seek more opportunities for parents to engage directly in children's school learning process, beyond supporting homework. To this end, studies have shown that Web 2.0 technologies could provide parents with access to their children's work and promote parent involvement, in that the technologies enable exchanges of ideas beyond the confined time and space of a classroom (Fleming 2012; Gebhard et al. 2011; Myers 2010; Shin 2014).

In this paper, we introduce how a second-grade teacher in a U.S. urban elementary school supported the parents of ELLs to participate in their children's schooling by drawing on blogging. Specifically, we aim to explore how the parents utilize the affordances of blogging to support children's school learning in English language arts classes. The study is guided by the following questions:

In what ways do parents participate in their children's blog-mediated writing curriculum?

How does parents' participation shape children's learning of school-based writing?

Theoretical Framework

Digital Literacy as Discursive Practice

The theoretical construct that guides the present study is digital literacy that entails the social practice and functional skills related to making meanings within digital environments. Grounded in the concept of multiliteracies (New London Group 1996), its meaning making process is “mediated by texts that are produced, received, distributed, exchanged, etc., via digital codification” (Lankshear and Knobel 2008, p. 5). The tools for producing digital texts involve video games, blogs, wikis, text messengers, social networking websites, discussion forums, Internet memes, movie makers, and more. They provide more meaning-making resources that allow a wide variety of textual practices, including finding information and designing images, texts, sounds, and others. According to Rhodes and Robnolt (2009, pp. 156–157), digital literacy could include a spectrum of literacies—information literacy for the skills and functions to find and process information that is required for various tasks; media literacy for the ability to create multimedia texts by synthesizing and making meanings with available modes (e.g., words, images, sounds, videos) of various digital mediums; and visual literacy for the ability to understand and use pictorial and graphic images for communication goals. Given specific uses of multiple available modes of digital technologies in various sociocultural contexts, digital literacy cannot be thought of as a monolithic practice.

Engaged in the spectrum of digital literacy practices, one can respond to or appropriate and disseminate media contents while interacting with different audiences through the new tools in digital literacy practices as media consumers. Jenkins and his colleagues (Jenkins et al. 2006) explain that the interactivity mediated by new technologies creates participatory culture in “educational practices, creative processes, community life, and democratic citizenship” (p. 8). For example, a blog, a focus of the current study, is a website for sharing or discussing information. Studies have shown that blogging practices support learners' language development, identity expressions, intercultural communications, civic and political participations, and critical reflection (Boyd 2014; Garcia et al. 2013; Lee 2010; Kahne et al. 2012; Shin 2014; Stewart 2014). Specifically, as a social networking tool, blogs provide learners with greater opportunities for exchanging ideas for real world purposes and expanded audiences than traditional mediums of communication, which could allow them to engage with different ideas and cultures and develop a capacity to interact dynamically with members from other discourse communities or affinity groups. This kind of textual practice often promotes one's critical reflections on communications and language strategies in the blog-mediated social interactions. However, these positive reports should be critically examined considering that one's experiences with digital literacies are shaped “by their gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family values, and access

to and conceptions of the Internet and other digital technologies” (Dodge et al. 2011, p. 87).

To better understand the discursive nature of one’s experiences with digital tools and literacies (Shin and Cimasko 2008; Watkins 2011), the current study is based on an ecological perspective of language and literacy practice. Within this perspective, computer-mediated learning is a socially situated cultural practice dependent on contextual factors in learning environments (Johnson 2008; van Lier 2000, 2002; Warschauer 1999). When context makes a greater impact on language learning and teaching, computer-mediated literacy practice in an urban school needs to be understood in relation to social, cultural, political, and material contexts (Morrell 2008; Shin 2006; Warschauer and Matuchniak 2010). This view of context in language learning allows one to see how digital literacy practices are shaped by the dynamics between technological tools and cultural discourses about the tools within society. Examining individual affordances of digital practices necessitates avoiding a simple materialist view of computer-mediated language and literacy development as skill-oriented practices. In this, blogging practices of English language learners and their family members are discursive practices that are shaped by their social, cultural, and political capital as much as access to technological materials (Bourdieu 1991).

Digital Divide, Access, and Affordances

Considering the discursive nature of digital literacy, it is necessary to have a critical view of technology access and affordances, and to address the digital divide and participation gaps based on one’s race, gender, class, language, and disabilities (Jenkins et al. 2006). This kind of critical examination entails investigating divides in not only material possession but also social and cultural use, which are known respectively as first and second digital divides (Attewell 2001, 2003). Regarding ownership of computer-related devices in U.S., for example, as of April 2012, 88 % of American adults had a cell phone (46 % a smart phone), 61 % had a laptop, 58 % owned a desk top, 18 % had a tablet computer, and 18 % had an e-Book reader (Madden 2013). However, an earlier report (Zickhur and Smith 2012) shows that demographic groups such as elderly people, language minorities (i.e., speakers of Spanish as a dominant language), adults with less than high school education, and residents from households with yearly incomes of <\$30,000 tend to have the least access to the Internet. One noteworthy point of the report is that young adults, minorities, those with no college experience, and those with lower household income levels have more tendency to use their smart phones as a main source of Internet access than other groups, since they lack other computer devices. These studies collectively show that socioeconomic status has been a consistent and prevailing factor that shapes one’s possession of computer-related technologies. Although physical access is an important factor to understanding one’s digital practice, it is necessary to uncover ways in which one uses computer and Internet technologies in their lives to better grasp affordances of those technologies (Watkins 2009).

Stewart (2014) shows that digital literacy practices of young Latino adults are closely connected to entertainment purposes. Her study corroborates the previous

study's finding that low-income individuals are much more likely to perceive or use computer and Internet technologies primarily for entertainment purposes from childhood (Jackson et al. 2007). On the other hand, it has been reported that Whites are more likely to use Internet-related technologies for information on finance and health than Latinas(os) (Gallant et al. 2010; Rainie and Spooner 2001). This pattern closely relates to a lack of access to websites in languages other than English. Although "postaccess disparities" are being addressed (e.g., translating programs of Chrome and Google), the issues are still significant to many low-income and underserved Americans (Jung 2008, p. 323; Gallant et al. 2010). One review of 1000 top U.S.-based Web sites in 2000 shows that "only 2 % offer any content in a language other than English" (The Children's Partnership, 2003, p. 10). Even most popular Latina(o)-focused Web portals are "offering links to business, industry, and health information in English only while providing links to shopping Web sites in Spanish" (Gorski 2009, p. 359). Indeed, accessible high-quality Spanish content is limited, as shown in the findings of a study (Gallant, et al. 2010) that only 8.6 % of 121 hospitals in the top 50 U.S. counties with the largest percentage of Latinos, and the top 60 counties with largest Latino population, had links to free health information in Spanish on their websites (p. 566).

The inequality in access to computer and Internet technologies also persists in K-12 schools. Schools serving students of colors or low SES students have lower access to computers and the Internet than schools with White students or low-poverty schools, even though schools have been minimizing the digital divide (Gibbs et al. 2009, p. 15). For example, in 2008, average U.S. public schools possessed 189 instructional computers and 98 % of those computers had Internet access, while there were 3 students per computer with Internet access (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2012). However, schools with <35 % of students who received free or reduced-price lunch had 209 computers and 99 % of them had Internet access, whereas schools with more than 75 % of students who received free or reduced-price lunch had 170 computers and 97 % of them Internet access. The ratio of students to instructional computers with Internet access was 3.1 in low-poverty schools but 2.9 in high-poverty schools (NCES 2012). Furthermore, technologies are used for rote learning, record-keeping, and administrative tasks in high-poverty schools, while they are used for high-order thinking, creating instructional materials, and strengthening instructional practices in wealthier ones (Becker 2000; Judge et al. 2004, 2006; Gibbs et al. 2009; Reich et al. 2012). This divide in usage between schools serving high-income families and schools serving less advantaged students shows the persistence of the second digital divide (Attewell 2001, 2003). Thus, critically examining digital practices from ecological perspectives involves challenging the sanguine notion that computers will solve issues of unequal access to knowledge and information, and can create educational opportunities in the society. This kind of critical and ecological view rejects reductionist views of digital literacy practice and its context. When it comes to gauging potentials for social, educational, and economic benefits that one can gain from use of computer and Internet technologies, the concept of "access" is complex. Bridging the gaps between digital haves and have-nots includes expanding

social, cultural, and political access to effective use of technologies beyond providing physical access (Jenkins et al. 2006; Watkins 2011).

Method

Context

We conducted this study in collaboration with a second grade class at Fuentes School (All names in this paper are pseudonyms.), an urban elementary school in western Massachusetts, USA. Fuentes School, located in an economically distressed urban rust belt area, served predominantly Latino and African American students from low-income family backgrounds. About 76 % of the students were Latino and 21 % were African American. 90 % of the students received free lunch, which is an indicator of student SES status. This school was designated an underperforming school due to low test scores on the state-mandated standardized test. This school did not meet adequate yearly progress in the previous year when the study was conducted. The second-grade class in which we carried out the study had 19 students, including 4 ESL students and 4 repeating students. Most students were predominantly Puerto Rican and spoke with their family members in their home language, Spanish, but used English as a school language.

The school did not have a computer class or computer lab; each classroom had two outdated Mac G3 desktop computers. The individual efforts of teachers determined whether students had opportunities to learn about computers and Internet-related technologies. The classroom teacher, Wendy Seger, who is interested in instructional technologies, borrowed four laptops for the school year from a teacher education program, Access to Critical Contents and English Language Acquisition (ACCELA), in which she was studying for her master's degree (Gebhard et al. 2010; Gebahrd and Willett 2008; Nieto and Bode 2008; Willet et al. 2007). When she conducted a survey at the beginning of the school year, 6 students reported that they had computers outside of school, including relatives' houses and parents' workplaces. The teacher strove to tackle the accessibility issue and make computers available for the students. To increase physical access to computers and the Internet, the teacher made weekly visits to a local library next to the school every Friday morning, and held English language arts (ELA) class sessions there, with the intension of encouraging the students to use the library facilities with family members over the weekend. In addition, the teacher provided workshops on computers and blogs for parents and students to participate in blogging without barriers to digital communication.

Participants

In this study, we investigated three focal students'—Diany, Jose, and Maria—and their parents' participation in the class blog-mediated writing projects. The reason we selected these three students and their parents is that the students belonged to the same ELA reading group assigned for ELLs. All the students were from Spanish-

dominant bilingual family backgrounds and were learning English mostly in school. All the parents spoke English as a second language, even though there was a difference across their English proficiencies; Maria's mother had a better command of English than the other two students' mothers. They had limited skills with computer technologies, but could type and use Web browsers (e.g., Internet Explorer). The ELA group that all three children belonged to was the lowest reading group in the class, and Maria was repeating the second grade due to her low reading scores. None of the children had experience using Internet-related technologies and blogging, and the students and their family members learned how to use Internet-related technologies and blogging in workshops that the classroom teacher held in the classroom and the local library. In terms of access to computers, only Jose's family had a computer at the beginning of the school year, but Maria's and Diany's families obtained computers for their children later. Wendy Seger, the second author, had more than 20 years of teaching experience and was well regarded as a veteran teacher in the school. Dong-shin Shin, the first author, was a project assistant in the ACCELA program and helped Mrs. Seger to design and implement a blog-mediated curriculum in the classroom and the local library. The first author also supported the teacher in documenting and analyzing changes in students' literacy practices.

Blog-Mediated Curriculum

The classroom teacher created a class blog, called *Seger kids*, using a web browser-based blog service, with easy-to-use templates and design choices (i.e., Typepad). The blog site had a password protection function to prevent any possible issues related to identity theft and to protect student privacy. The login information was shared among the class members including students, teachers, parents, and those with whom the class members had trusting relationships. The blog-mediated writing involved a recursive process that included drafting in Word, exchanging feedback comments in the blog, revising drafts by drawing on comments, and publishing revised drafts in the blog. The teacher managed the blog by posting students' drafts on the blog for students' feedback and publication activities. Figure 1 presents the class blog in which the students and their parents interacted online.

The blog-mediated writing became a regular part of ELA lesson throughout the school year, and the second grade students did blogging on a daily basis to publish their work and give feedback on each other's writing. The students were required to learn a range of writing such as friendly letters, recounts, reports, explanations, and argumentative writing according to the school curriculum. In teaching these school-mandated writing genres, the teacher aimed to provide meaningful purposes and authentic audiences to students' writing by drawing on a blog (Feez 1998; Schleppegrell 2004). To this end, she invited parents to scaffold their children's writing in the classroom and on the class blog in a language that felt more comfortable to them, so that they could help the children to brainstorm writing genre texts and to guide their children's writing on the blog following face-to-face class interactions. Parents continued to participate in children's writing throughout the school year after the teacher introduced the class blog and its login information to



Fig. 1 Class blog

the parents at an open house at the beginning of the school year. Parents started to write comments on their children’s friendly letter, and then scaffolded children on how to write recounts about “unforgettable memories” by co-authoring the genre texts. All three students’ families participated in choosing topics and composing and publishing recounts on the blog throughout the unit, while making comments on posted genre texts. Following the recount unit, the students wrote reports on skunks and then persuasive letters for argument to Bill Gates to obtain computers for the school.

Data Collection and Analysis

We used an ethnographic approach to data collection and data analysis in this yearlong case study. As active participants, we collected multiple domains of data over the course of an academic year to make a thick description of participants’ blogging practices and to understand their experiences from participant perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Dyson 1993). Data collection includes students’ and parents’ written texts, blog postings, field notes about videotaped classroom interactions, and instructional materials. Children’s and parents’ written texts and blog postings were our primary sources for examining parent participation, while field notes, interview data, and instructional materials furnished supplementary data for contextual information about parent participation. Drawing on a case study model that involves an investigation of each case as its own unit and a cross-examination of the data within the case and across the cases (Merriam 2009), we

conducted a textual analysis of focal children's and their parents' blog posts and comments with a backdrop of the face-to-face classroom interactions. Employing a constant comparative analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1998), we analyzed the collected data. First, in the open coding stage, we identified emerging themes such as types of parents' blogging comments, children's reactions to parent blogging, forms of parent support for children, and parent roles in supporting children's blogging across domains. Based on axial and selective coding, we then developed sub-themes, including relationship between different forms of support and parent social, cultural capital, constructed relationships between parents and children, and impacts of parent blogging on children's academic and social goal achievement.

Findings

Patterns of Parent Participation in Blogging

The parents and family members of all three focal students participated in various class activities and events of the blog-mediated writing as teachers, coauthors, and audiences. As other studies have reported about the dominance of women's involvement in children's schooling (Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis 2012; Lareau 1994), all the focal students' mothers made direct and active participations in children's schooling and blog-mediated writing practices, even though fathers participated in class events such as the open house, Thanksgiving party, and publishing party throughout the school year. A data analysis shows that the three students' mothers used blogging to support their children's academic and social goals. Their blogging comments are varied: compliments and encouragement for their children's writing, checks on audience responses, advice on friendship, communication with the teacher, and opinions about school. In the following section, we will explain how each of the focal students' mothers supported their children's academic and social goals in blog-mediated writing, while simultaneously illuminating the affordances that they construed from using Web 2.0 tools.

Maria's Mother

Maria's mother utilized blogging actively in various ways to support Maria's writing as a coauthor, audience, teacher, and parent. Her most common use of blogging was to compliment her daughter's writing, in order to encourage Maria to get engaged in school writing and academic work. The following comments—first two comments from a recount writing unit and the others from an expository writing—show how she supported Maria's academic confidence:

Hi Maria it is mom. ... Keep up the good work. Mommoy loves you a lot. ... I enjoyed going to your classroom and reading about your first birthday. ... Once again I am very proud of you, keep up the good work.
Love your mom

Posted by: Mom | November 7

I am very proud of your work with your 1st Birthday story. I have printed it out and hung it up on the wall at work. Everybody in my job has read it and say it is very nice and interesting. I hope you keep up the good work and keep making mommy happy. I love you very much.

Talk to you soon.

Posted by: Mom | December 20

Maria,

You are the most smartest and most caring person I know. You have a good heart and that is very good. I like what you wrote about Kathleen. When I read it I got teary eyed because I never heard or read anything like this, were you express yourself like that. I hope you guys stay friend forever because is really sound like you guys will.

Love you,

Your Mom

Posted by: Mom | March 02

dear mommy,

Mommy i did post my letter it.yes i have 1 comment it is so fun to have a mom like you.

love,

Maria

Posted by: maria | April 09

After Maria selected her first birthday as a topic for a recount about memorable life experiences, her mother helped to brainstorm recount writing and make a class presentation about her family party with photos and writing samples. Maria then wrote a draft of her recount, drawing on the teacher's and her mother's scaffolding. When her draft was posted on the class blog, Maria's mother wrote a comment on the posted recount to share her positive experience in the class presentation, pride in Maria, and wishes for Maria's continuous good schoolwork, as seen in the first comment. Maria showed excitement about receiving a comment from her mother and proudly shared the comment with her teachers and peers. When Maria's revision was posted on the blog, her mother wrote another compliment, the second comment above. She reported to Maria and her classmates that she had shared Maria's recount with her colleagues in her workplace and they had praised Maria's recount. The third comment was what Maria's mother wrote after she read Maria's explanation about her best friend Kathleen. The comment showed how much she was impressed to know how powerfully Maria wrote about who Kathleen was and how a good friend Maria was to Kathleen. As such, Maria's mother used blogging to help Maria to be recognized as a good writer and to build confidence in her writing. Her mother's comment led Maria to become more active in school writing by checking comments and reporting progresses of her writing to her mother, as seen in the last comment that Maria wrote to her mother.

Another pattern in the way Maria's mother used blogging is associated with showing audience awareness to her daughter. Throughout the school year, she requested prompt responses from Maria and aroused her interest in her peers' responses, as seen in the following comments:

I have been waiting for your response. I been looking everyday, but I do not see any response.

Well I hope you write back to me.

Love Mom

Posted by: Mom | November 15

Hi! Maria is mom again. I was expecting your response, I was happy when I saw it and read it. ... How did the other kids like your 1st birthday story? I hope that they enjoyed it because I did.

Posted by: Mom | November 08

Hi, Baby

What are you doing today, You have not wrote back yet. That okay, I am Just writing to see what is new for story writing. I hope you write back soon.

Love you,

Mom

Posted by: Mom | April 04

When Maria's mother posted comments on Maria's recount, Maria did not respond to her right away. Her mother wrote comments pointing out that Maria did not write back to her and that she was waiting for a response, following an expected norm of relatively quick exchanges of messages in this new medium of communication, as seen in the first comment above. While requesting a response from Maria, she also showed interest in her daughter's classmate responses to Maria's recount, upon moving from their face-to-face class presentation to the online space of the class blog site with a larger audience. She stated her hope for continuous positive appreciation from Maria's peers concerning her contribution to Maria's recount, as seen in the second comment, which showed an intensified interpersonal function in blogging for Maria. Later in the middle of the school year, she became concerned with the frequency with which Maria posted new writing on the blog, beyond receiving prompt responses, as seen in the third comment. During this time, Maria was composing a report on skunks after learning a new genre, reports on animals. It took a longer time for Maria to write a report since she needed to do research on skunks and write a non-narrative text based on what she had researched. Her mother, who had been enjoying Maria's blog postings, expressed wonders about the delayed posting. She was teaching Maria the importance of frequent posting by stating her wish that Maria would post a new writing on the class blog soon, along with a comment that it was okay for Maria not to write a prompt response back to her. Through these teacher and reader roles, Maria's mother not only expanded audiences to her daughter's writing, but also allowed Maria to increase her awareness of audience.

Beyond scaffolding Maria's school writing, her mother used blogging as a tool to communicate with the teachers or to express her opinions about education. She wrote comments concerning preparations for class events (e.g., a class Thanksgiving party, a publishing party) and Maria's birthday party. The following comments illustrate this use of blogging:

You have a birthday coming soon, ask Ms. Seger that if on your birthday which lands on a Wednesday if I can bring you a cake so the kids can sing you Happy Birthday?

Posted by: Mom | November 8

Maria,

This is a great letter and I hope that you get the computers that you guys want. I think it is a great idea how the Mrs. Seger is educating the students. We need more teachers like her.

Love your mom.

Posted by: Mom | June 06

In the first comment above, Maria's mother wrote her daughter a comment asking if she could take a cake to the class for Maria's birthday. Considering that all the students and parents were informed that the teacher read posts on the class blog, it is clear that she was indirectly asking the question to the teacher. In addition, Maria's mother used the blog space to express her opinions on the teacher's curriculum, as seen in the second comment above. At the end of the school year, after reading Maria's persuasive letter to Bill Gates to obtain computers for the school, she expressed her opinion on Mrs. Seger's approach to teaching students, as seen in the second comment (e.g., "I think it is a great idea how the Mrs. Seger is education [educating] students."). As such, she utilized the blog to support Maria in building her academic confidence and to express a caring parental voice regarding her daughter's schooling.

Jose's Mother

Jose's mother participated in the blog-mediated writing curriculum as a co-author, reader, and parent. At the beginning of the school year, when Jose wrote a recount, Jose and his mother had different opinions on a topic for his recount. Jose wanted to write a "cool" story that had the most currency among boys in his peer world, whereas his mother wanted to write a "memorable" story that could earn the most responses from his classmates. Jose intended to write a recount about trips to Six Flags that his classmates boasted to each other, but his mother guided him into writing recounts about nicknames that family members used for Jose from his babyhood. Without reaching an agreement, they did a class presentation on his babyhood nicknames with pictures of him. In informal interviews with Jose and his mother after their presentation, Jose expressed his "embarrassed" feeling to the teachers even after receiving his mother's comforting comment, "It's okay to show who you are," and Jose insisted on writing a new recount on his family trip to Six

Flags. While participating in the recount writing as a coauthor, Jose's mother expressed an interest in achieving different social goals through blogging.

As Jose's mother became more active in blogging and learned about his interest in it, she started to pay attention to Jose's textual identities and the interpersonal relationships that he wanted to construct among his peers in the blog-mediated writing curriculum. She started to make complimentary feedback on his writing as a parent reader, as seen in the following comments:

hi jose sorry I now is the first time but I tried my best but our computer did not let me send you noting I want you to know that I'M VERY HAPPY WHITH YOUR WRITTING.and everything you do is very importan to me love mom.

Posted by: Mom | March 15

HI JOSE IT WAS NICE OF YOU TO RESPOND BACK TO ME JOSE I LOVE THE STORY YOU SHOW US AT HOME ABOUT YOUR ANIMAL I THINK IT WAS COOL.KEEP THE GOOD WORK LOVE MOM

Posted by: Mom | April 12

Keep the good work. I like your story very much.

For sisters and brothers

Posted by: Mom | April 12

As noted in the first and second comments, Jose's mother became a strong supporter. To support Jose's writing, his mother intended to post comments on Jose's recount; however, due to a compatibility issue of their home computer, she could not comment on Jose's postings. When the class worked on expository writing, Jose's mother was able to make a comment showing her appreciation and care toward his writing (see the first comment). After this comment, she continued to post her appreciation of Jose's writing as his advocate. Reading his report and the feedback postings he exchanged with teachers and friends in the report unit, his mother wrote about her pleasure in reading Jose's blogging, along with an encouraging comment to continuously do well in schoolwork (See the second comment). Unlike her insistence on a different idea for Jose's recount at the beginning of the school year, these two comments show that she acknowledged his interests and goals in blogging. Furthermore, the second comment shows that she typed her comment entirely in capital letters to please Jose, who wanted to use capital letters to differentiate his blog postings from those of his peers. To magnify compliments on Jose's work and to promote family solidarity, his mother also wrote an encouraging comment to Jose on behalf of his sisters and brothers who read Jose's class blog together, as seen in the last comment.

Following Jose's mother, his siblings posted their own comments to compliment Jose's report about skunks. Their comments echoed what Jose's mother wrote to him, as seen below:

hi jose keep the good work. love your big sister mariana.

Posted by: sister | April 12

hi jose i like your story very much

Posted by: juan | April 12,

The first comment is from Jose's eldest sister, and following his mother's lead, she also encouraged him to continue writing well, referring to herself as Jose's "big sister." Appropriating his mother's words, Jose's elder brother Juan, who was a fourth grader in Fuentes School, also praised Jose's writing (see the second comment). As Jose's mother wished, all his siblings made an effort to promote Jose's academic position in family collaboration.

Throughout the school year, Jose's mother participated in blogging actively and became an impressed audience member at the end of the school year, as seen below:

jose i read your persuasive letter and i love it i was very impressed you wrote a very convincing letter good luck. love mom

Posted by: Mom | June 19, at 09:02 AM

The comment above is from the persuasive letter-writing unit in which the class wrote letters to Bill Gates to obtain computers for his class and school. Jose wrote his letter about class blogging activities, focusing on his family members' participations in his writing, and ended the letter with his hope to continue blogging in the following year. Jose actively provided feedback on his peers' letters with a keen understanding of the purpose and audience for the letters, which allowed him to receive peer comment such as, "We will get a computer because of you" and the teacher's acknowledgement of his academic writing proficiency. After reading Jose's letters and feedback exchanges, she expressed her impressed feeling about Jose's work with more elaborate statements beyond general compliments, using terms such as "persuasive letter" and "convincing" that Jose had been learning in the unit. Jose's mother appreciated his work as an impressed parent and came to know his academic strength.

Diany's Mother

Diany's mother participated in the blog-mediated writing in indirect ways outside the class blog site, as a supporter for Diany's interests. At the beginning of the school year, as a coauthor, she helped Diany to brainstorm recounts about their family trip to Puerto Rico through a class presentation about the trip, while supporting Diany to recall her memories. Her participation in blogging mostly focused on providing supportive environments for her daughter to blog in and out of school, such as purchasing a computer and Internet service for her daughter as a Christmas gift, and supervising Diany's Internet activity at home to prevent access to any inappropriate websites for children based on the guidelines that teachers provided. While actively supporting her daughter's blog-mediated writing, she posted few comments on Diany's writing.

Beyond being a site for sharing school writing, the class blog gradually became a space for students to build and maintain friendships. Diany often wrote positive comments to her best friends, in addition to posting comments that could promote

her social position among friends. Supporting Diany’s interest in social goals in and out of school, her mother made direct comments on Diany’s blog postings to provide advice about friendship among classmates. The following excerpt highlights this point:

Mi nina Diany, Lei tu carta que escribistes a tu amiga. Estoy orgullosa de ti, por reconocer tu error, es bueno pedir perdon a un amigo(a) cuando nos equivocamo. yo tambien hubiera hecho lo mismo que tu hicistes. Eres buena amiga y buena hija te quiere, mucho mami.

Posted by: Mom | November 08

(Translation: My girl, Diany, I read the letter that you wrote to your friend. I am proud of you for recognizing your mistake. It is good to ask a friend to forgive us when we do something wrong. I would have done the same thing you did. You are a good friend and a good daughter. With much love, Mommy.)

The above comment is what Diany’s mother wrote after reading Diany’s letter to her best friend Maria. Diany posted an apology to Maria for not sharing a red vest with her in a gym class, in order to protect her friendship with Maria from any confrontations. Due to her limited English proficiency, her mother complimented Diany’s reflective behaviors in Spanish, acknowledging Diany’s apology for a mistake that she had made with her friend. Her Spanish comment received attention from the students and allowed Diany to have increased popularity among the classmates. They complimented Diany and her mother writing in Spanish, and wished to learn Spanish with her as seen in a comment from her classmate Kate “I know only a little bit of Spanish. I want to speak Spanish with you some day.” Her peers’ statements led Diany to have pride in using the Spanish language and to do a class presentation in Spanish about a trip to Puerto Rico with her mother in the following recount unit.

Influence on Children’s Learning of School Writing

Three salient points underscore the impact that parental participation through blogging made on the context of their children’s learning school writing. First, its impact relates to the increased social aspects of learning for the children—Maria, Jose, and Diany. That is, parents’ blogging brought expanded audiences to children’s school writing. The expanded audiences led their children to have heightened awareness of audience responses to their writing and intensified interest in achieving social goals through writing. All three children stated in interviews with us that receiving comments from the audiences was “fun” and made them feel like a “star.” They showed a strong interest in obtaining comments from their audiences, including peers, teachers, and parents. To achieve this goal, they not only tried to write enticing stories but also used semiotic resources such as bigger font sizes and capital letters to make their texts stand out. In this, parents’ blogging helped the children to expand their available semiotic repertoires for writing to meet augmented interpersonal functions of language use.

Next, parent support in this blog-mediated curriculum influenced validation of students' funds of knowledge. All three children's family members were engaged in blogging, drawing on their home language and life experiences without time and space constraints. Parents integrated children's schoolwork into home activities and encouraged other siblings to provide support for the focal children's school writing, as seen in the comments made by Jose's mother. This expansion of school curriculum into family activities allowed the students to use cultural backgrounds in school writing more often and to appreciate their backgrounds. For example, Diany's mother made a presentation in Spanish on a family trip to Puerto Rico to support Diany brainstorming her recount, accompanying Diany's interpretation of her presentation in English. Following their presentation, her classmates wrote about their own relatives in and trips to Puerto Rico (e.g., grandparents, aunt, hot weather, swimming in the lake) in their comments on Diany's recounts. They also expressed their desire to learn and speak Spanish fluently. After that, whenever her family had any events relating to Puerto Rico, Diany proudly shared the events with her classmates and teachers (e.g., trip to Puerto Rico during the spring break, learning about coqui). Hence, parent participation in blogging encouraged their children to give positive attention to their home language and to use family cultural backgrounds in schoolwork.

Lastly, parents supported their children in having increased motivation for writing and enhanced confidence in schooling. The children reported that receiving comments from family members was the "best" experience that they had with blogging. For instance, the compliments from Maria's mother and her coworkers provided more motivations for Maria to prove her growing academic confidence and to be invested in her writing, as seen in an excerpt of Maria's comment to her mother from a report unit, "THIS WEEK WE AER WRITEING ABOUT SKUNKS I AM GOING TO FINISH IT THIS WEEK THAT YOU CAN RAED IT TO YOUR FRIENDS." Similarly, the support that Jose's mother provided through compliments on his writing allowed him to gain motivation for writing and self-esteem in and out of the class. In the persuasive letter-writing unit, Jose stated one of the reasons that he wanted to continue blogging is to write with family members, as seen in an excerpt from his persuasive letter "We did family writing. And my mom and brothers wrote to me." In addition, Jose's mother extended his blogging to his siblings and provided them an opportunity to see how confident a student Jose was in the class. It was something they were less likely to see in light of what his mother stated in a class presentation and an interview about Jose as the youngest of six children at home, who received help from his siblings. Exchanging blog comments in Spanish, Diany's mother allowed Diany to show her bilingual capability to the class members. Her comment in Spanish helped Diany to gain recognition and popularity among peers, enough to make her feel like a Puerto Rican singer—in her own words, "J. Lo". Diany came to have more enhanced motivation for school writing and finished the task that the teacher had posted for the next day, in advance at home.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer three critical discussion points about how Web 2.0 tools are used for parental involvement in their children's schoolwork. First, parental involvement is a social construction that needs to be critically contested through the lenses of race, class, culture, and gender (Auerbach 2002; Bronfenbrenner 1986; Lee and Bowen 2006; McNeal 1999). The current study of parental involvement through Web 2.0 technologies also demonstrates the importance of these social discourses. That is, parents' use of blogging was closely intertwined with their knowledge of social media and language backgrounds. Maria's mother could more actively participate in the blog-mediated curriculum than Jose's and Diany's mothers, who were active volunteers in various other school activities. She belonged to a younger generation that is more exposed to digital technologies than Jose's and Diany's mothers, and demonstrated more knowledge about how to use blogs for various purposes in everyday lives (e.g., commenting on Maria's writing, communicating with a teacher, sharing Maria's work with coworkers). Unlike Maria's mother, Jose's mother needed to learn about the nature of blogging, and posted her comments on the class blog more actively after she gained knowledge about how to use social media over the course of the school year.

Additionally, English proficiency made an impact on parent participation in blogging. The English proficiency of Diany's mother was more limited compared to those of Maria's and Jose's mothers, which led her to post fewer comments than the other mothers, even though her comments in Spanish were highly appreciated by the teachers and students. Diany wrote a comment in English for her mother when she wanted to post a comment to someone other than Diany (e.g., teachers). In light of this, parent participation through blogging is shaped by the linguistic capital that parents have in relation to English. The work of Clark (2005) on uses of technologies in an underserved community supports this view of the constraints that Latinas have in using digital technologies effectively (p. 440). However, this study suggests a need to address different linguistic capital regarding English, even among Latinas. This variability is also true in assessing the cultural capital of Latinas involving Web 2.0 technologies. Thus, to avoid an essentialized view of affordances in using technologies, it is critical to investigate how language, gender, age, and class collectively construct one's gains from discursive digital practices while interacting with each other.

Next, parent involvement takes a range of forms, from "moral supporters" to "struggling advocates," since parents have different views, resources, and expertise regarding support for children (Lawson 2003). In this blog-mediated writing, their participation also took various forms, from purchasing computers to writing comments on the blog. Maria's mother wrote comments following her class presentation to support Maria brainstorming a recount of the first birthday party. She became an advocate for Maria by bringing in a larger audience for her writing tasks and complimenting her writing. Unlike Maria's mother, Diany's mother took a different direction in helping her daughter. For example, she purchased a computer for Diany as a Christmas gift and supported Diany in blogging at home. Diany

posted comments on classmates' writing and completed schoolwork at home, and studied other subjects by visiting learning websites (e.g., Funbrain). On the other hand, Jose's mother, after learning about blogging from teachers, led his sisters and brothers to support Jose's writing on the class blog. In this vein, parent involvement through Web 2.0 technologies is multifaceted and difficult to pin down. It is because parents have access to student work beyond the confined time and space of the classroom, and parent participation often occurs out of teacher's sight (Turney and Kao 2009).

In this blog-mediated writing curriculum, the roles of parents and children were blurred, as both took multiple roles beyond those of typical parents and children. Specifically, the children often took on a teaching role and taught their parents and other family members how to use a blog. For instance, Diany helped her mother not only how to post comments on the blog, but also how to search for information on the Internet. Through parent involvement in Web 2.0 technologies, children became technology brokers for their families' use of new digital tools, just as they become language brokers for their families' lives in English (Dorner et al. 2007; García et al. 2011). This kind of fluidity of roles in teaching and learning could lead children to have different relationships with their parents and new identities as sons and daughters.

Conclusion

This study provides implications for researchers and practitioners regarding use of Web 2.0 tools for parental involvement. For future research, it is worthwhile to examine if parent participation generates secondary benefits for other children in the family. In the present study, focal students' parents read their children's blog posts with other children. As demonstrated in the participation of Jose's family, ubiquitous access to the class blog free of time and space constrains allowed others in his family to read Jose's writing and his classmates' writings, and to exchange feedback. Other siblings' learning experiences through second-hand blogging could be worth investigating. In this study, the students mainly used words with few images due to the technical skills of young children. However, it would be useful to study multimodal blogs that include more images, videos, and graphics. This kind of study will complement studies of children's digital literacies, while providing educators with information about digital literacies in which ELLs and their family members are engaged for communication outside of school (Dodge et al. 2011; Ortiz et al. 2011).

In teaching through Web 2.0 tools in U.S. urban schools, it is necessary for teachers to provide not only computers but also cultural practices of using Web 2.0 tools. Many ELL students and their families who are from low SES backgrounds have limited access to valuable digital practices of Web 2.0 technologies in and out of school, not to mention physical access. Their best uses, if any, often do not fully utilize the potential of Web 2.0 tools. This kind of inequality in using Internet-related technologies, the second digital divide of usage, is a critical issue for teachers to address (Attewell 2001; Watkins 2009, 2011; Reich et al. 2012;

Warschauer and Matuchniak 2010). Teachers who educate students from low-income and underserved families need to provide opportunities for students and their parents to make use of new computer and Internet technologies for twenty-first century skills, communication, and knowledge development. In addition, effective uses of the new tools call for teacher efforts in designing and maintaining face-to-face class activities that could be subsequently carried onto online space leveraging other virtual activities, and in encouraging students and families to use their funds of knowledge in school learning. This kind of pedagogical practice is necessitated as a prerequisite for promoting active parent involvement for academic achievement of language minority students.

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