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The Role of Dialogical Learning in ELT Studies

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ABSTRACT

The favorable impact of dialogical teaching, can be seen in many fields of education. In this sense it has positive contribution to language studies as well as other disciplines. In language learning which includes reading, writing, speaking and listening, dialogic teaching is also used. Among these skills, speaking stands out as the most basic tool of communication and interaction between teacher-student and student-student in the classroom. Thus, speaking is viewed at the center of language learning. Both in the traditional approach that emphasizes teacher-student interaction to a large extent, and in current approaches that expand this interaction in the direction of student-student communication, the role of this skill cannot be ignored as speech is the most basic and functional means of communication, interaction and expression in classrooms. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the issues that online education creates for teachers and learners in terms of dialogic learning and to seek solutions to these problems. The results indicate that most of the participants showed evidence for positive views about dialogic learning and find it a beneficial way of learning. Therefore, it can be suggested that instructors should take dialogic learning into consideration as an effective tool in their classrooms.

Key Words: Dialogical teaching, dialogical learning, online education, speaking, communication, interaction, ELT.

İngilizce Öğretimi Çalışmalarında Diyalojik Öğrenmenin Rolü

ÖZET

Diyalojik öğretimin olumlu etkileri, eğitimin birçok alanında görülebilir. Bu anlamda diğer disiplinlere olduğu gibi dil çalışmalarına da olumlu katkıları vardır. Okuma, yazma, konuşma ve dinlemeyi içeren dil öğreniminde diyalojik öğretim de kullanılmaktadır. Bu beceriler arasında konuşma, sınıfta öğretmen-öğrenci ve öğrenci-öğrenci arasındaki iletişim ve etkileşimin en temel aracı olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu nedenle konuşma, dil öğreniminin merkezinde görülmektedir. Hem öğretmen-öğrenci etkileşimini büyük ölçüde vurgulayan geleneksel yaklaşımda hem de bu etkileşimi öğrenci-öğrenci iletişimi doğrultusunda genişleten güncel yaklaşımlarda konuşma en temel ve işlevsel araç olduğu için bu becerinin rolü göz ardı edilemez. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmanın amacı, çevrimiçi eğitimin diyalojik öğrenme açısından öğretmenler ve öğrenenler için yarattığı sorunları belirlemek ve bu sorunlara çözüm aramaktır. Sonuçlar, katılımcıların çoğunun diyalojik öğrenme hakkında olumlu görüşler gösterdiğini ve bunu faydalı bir öğrenme yolu bulduğunu göstermektedir. Bu nedenle öğretim elemanlarının sınıflarında etkili bir araç olarak diyalojik öğrenmeyi dikkate almaları önerilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Diyalojik öğretim, diyalojik öğrenme, çevrimiçi eğitim, konuşma, iletişim, etkileşim, İngilizce Öğretimi.

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1. Introduction

Dialogical learning provides a practical framework in which learning communities are developed. It encourages people's communication to learn through interaction with other people, which is the main educational resource. From a dialogic learning perspective, interaction with third parties is essential to establish a learning process or mechanism. During this dialogue process, we initially prepare a set of information from a social and intersubjective plane to assimilate it later as self or subjective knowledge. In addition, another feature of dialogue-based learning is that everyone involved is in an equal relationship. This shows that the contributions of each of the participants are important and are based on validity criteria, not strength. Initially, the idea of dialogue-based learning was developed on the basis of observations of how people can learn outside, not just inside schools or in any type of education center. It gives the possibility to freely receive large amounts of information and to participate in the learning in question. As a result of this fact, early learning communities began to evolve as they understand them today. It aims to give more importance to equal dialogue in which learning group and to change the teaching methods applied so far.

Dialogical teaching requires a dialogue-based interaction. On the other hand, not all teaching that includes dialogue can be described as dialogic. In order to talk about dialogic teaching, teaching must also carry some basic principles. These principles are commonality, reciprocity, supportiveness, accumulation, and purposefulness (Alexander, 2008, 37-38). As to commonality collaboration is that teachers and students act together and share responsibilities in the learning process. Reciprocity is the expansion of the communication between teacher and student, which is limited in the classroom environment with authoritarian discourse, between students and students. For this, teachers and students need to listen to each other, share their opinions and consider alternative perspectives. Supportiveness means freely expressing ideas and helping the class reach a common understanding. For this, students should not be afraid of giving wrong answers. Accumulation covers updating, developing and reproducing meaning through meeting the principles of partnership, reciprocity and support. The teacher and students develop the subject by adding on each other's and other students' ideas in the classroom. In this process, the participants bring their ideas together in line with their thoughts and inquiries. Purposefulness, on the other hand, means that the teacher plans the classroom conversations according to the specific goals of the education. Alexander (2008) stated that speech that does not meet any of these five principles cannot be considered dialogic. According to dialogic teaching, if the teacher guides the effective use of dialogue in the classroom, it also enables students to reveal their cognitive processes and socialize through new ways of thinking (Reznitskaya et al., 2009). The "dialogue" expressed here is more than just saying what one thinks. Fisher (2007) states that dialogue is structured through the construction of one's ideas on the ideas of others. Each dialogue creates a new area of cognitive construction in the possibility of shared thoughts. The research findings of Sandora, Beck and McKeown (1999) also support this argument. The researchers compared the effects of two discussion strategies on students' understanding (comprehension) and interpretation of complex literary texts. As a result, they revealed that not every discussion and dialogue is effective in the interpretation process. Discussions should be meaning-oriented and collaborative in order to make sense. Reznitskaya (2012) listed the practices and basic verbal behaviors that characterize dialogue teaching based on the researches on dialogic teaching: According to the first of these, power relations in the classroom should be flexible. In addition, authority over the content and form of discourse should

be shared among group members. That is, students should be able to take on key responsibilities in the course of the discussion. These responsibilities include participating in managing the order of words, asking questions, evaluating each other's answers, initiating new issues and proposing procedural changes. Open-ended questions and different question types should be used to inspire new interpretation processes in dialogic teaching. Teachers should both encourage and push students to make an effort by giving meaningful and purposeful feedback. Participants in the dialogue should make high-level reflections. This is possible through the elaboration and justification of the explanation. Finally, discussions come to stage which are indispensable for dialogic teaching.

Literature Review

Successful realization of learning and teaching activities is associated with effective and efficient use of reading, listening, writing and speaking, which are defined as comprehension and expression skills. Among other language skills, speaking stands out as the most basic tool for teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom. Speaking is positioned at the center of education and training both in the traditional approach that emphasizes the teacher-student interaction to a large extent, and in the current approaches that expand this interaction in the direction of student-student communication. The most basic and functional means of communication, interaction and expression in classrooms is speaking. Considering in this context, it cannot be ignored that speaking has an important place in the construction of meaning in the education and training process.

Many studies conducted in recent years draw attention to the role of speech in constructing meaning. Mortimer and Scott (2003) state in their studies that speaking is at the center of the meaning-making process and thus learning. Dialogue, defined as a form of communication that promises inclusiveness and rationality, has long been seen by educators as a tool to help students become better thinkers (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013). As Slavin (2015) emphasized, professions that offer job guarantee disappeared and gave their places to professions that require effective use of mental skills. However, individual characteristics needed by new professions; working in cooperation, finding different solutions to problems and adapting to rapid changes. In this context, it is impossible not to justify the thought that sees dialogue as a tool for education.

Alexander (2008, 37) mentions that there are seven reasons for placing speech at the center of strong education. These are justifications concerning psychological, political, social and cultural fields, as well as neuroscience, educational science and communication. Among these, the rationale of education science draws attention in terms of learning and teaching. The author expresses this rationale as follows: process and process-product-oriented studies show that a cognitively enriched speech attracts the attention of students, increases their motivation and the time to engage with the goal and produces measurable learning outcomes. In the light of this information, dialogic teaching, which puts speech at the center and is one of the current approaches, comes to the fore. Dialogical Teaching is a pedagogical approach that uses the power of speaking to encourage students to think, understand and learn (Alexander, 2008). Conversations in dialogic teaching contribute to students 'and teachers' learning by weaving the language like a web (Haworth, 1999, 115). Fisher (2011) stated that the concept of dialogic teaching is based on a long tradition of theoretical and empirical research on the role of speech in learning and teaching and provides effective perspectives on the role of dialogue in learning. Basically, dialogic teaching is based on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist approach and Bakhtin's (1981) philosophical approach in terms of its theoretical origins. Vygotsky stated that all high-level mental functions specific to the human species are primarily formed through cooperative activities and

then transform into internal mental processes. In his words, the social dimension of the mind is primary in time and reality; the individual dimension is derived and secondary (Berk and Winsler, 1995, 20). Bakhtin (1981), on the other hand, briefly states that reality does not exist or is not born in the individual's mind; He stated that it was born from people searching for truth in cooperation in the process of dialogic interaction.

On the other hand, dialogic teaching or dialogic conversations reflect social constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). These theories view students as active meaning makers who can reach higher levels of cognitive development through their interactions with the environment. Language is seen as a primary tool that shapes new ways of thinking and knowing, rather than just a tool for the exchange of ideas (Boyd & Markarian, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). In a dialogical discussion, participants collectively examine and formulate the views of others in detail, form new meanings and defend them (Reznitskaya, 2012). The nature of the language in classrooms must change in order for students to become individuals who reach, evaluate, use and re-sense the information, and furthermore produce information, beyond being individuals who remember the information presented and repeat it when requested.

Asking questions only by the teacher in the classroom and preventing it when they want to take initiative rather than being encouraged can negatively affect the development of students' responsibility and risk-taking skills. On the other hand, the type and level of questions asked in the classroom are closely related to other dimensions of dialogic teaching. In classrooms where open-ended questions that do not require high-level thinking are predominant, the only message students will receive from the teacher is the idea that answers based on known facts are important. In this case, the students will try to remember the information contained in various sources within the limited range of answers the teacher wants to hear. Students are not expected to interpret, analyze or think critically. This situation is directly related to the explanation dimension, which is another indicator of dialogic teaching. Theorists and researchers who emphasize the role of language in the development of high-level thinking argue that classroom communication should have a more dialogic structure (Reznitskaya, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). On the other hand, another message that children will receive is about what kind of questions are important. When students who are constantly confronted with low-level, closed-ended, or open-ended questions are required to ask a question for any text, they usually ask 5N1K-type questions whose answers are in the text (Akyol, Yıldırım, Ateş, & Çetinkaya, 2013; Ateş, et al, 2016) has been observed. Interestingly, it was determined that the teachers of these students asked questions at similar levels. Researchers who pointed out that teacher speeches in the classroom are dominant over student speeches (Cazden 2001; Nystrand et al., 2003; Wells, 1999) stated that teachers who transfer knowledge with a monological approach initiated the process with the question in a way to ensure the continuity of this process, and students' answers. They state that they listened and then evaluated them.

It is observed that monologic conversations usually result in lengthy explanations made by teachers. Unlike monological approaches such as narration that 'only the teacher knows and reveals the truth' (Bakhtin, 1981), in a dialogic debate truth 'is born among people who seek it in cooperation' (Bakhtin, 1981). In addition to theoretical and experimental studies linking dialogic teaching with important learning outcomes in the international arena (Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Reznitskaya et al., 2009; Burbules, 1993; Wells, 1999).

Although there are strong views on the effectiveness of dialogic teaching theoretically and empirically, another point that draws attention in the literature is that such learning occurs rarely in classrooms and is difficult to realize (Nystrand et al., 2003; Reznitskaya, 2012; Smith, et al, 2004). In a

study conducted in the United States, 200 classes were examined in depth and it was stated that the discussions that could be described as open-ended were very few and that the discussions in the classroom were generally in the form of "question-answer discussion", which is generally described as a version of the narration (Nystrand et al., 2003, p. 178). A number of reasons such as theory-based education, devotion to tradition, and crowded classes, which are far from practice, emerge as obstacles to the application of dialogic teaching in classrooms. They report that authentic teacher questions, uptake, and student questions function as dialogic bids with student questions showing an especially large effect.

Although it has various theoretical foundations such as constructivist approach and cooperative learning, Alexander (2008) points out that the use of dialogic teaching is not always defensible and for all purposes. In this case, as in other pedagogical approaches, the question arises of what can be done to make a dialogic discussion, provided that it is not dogmatic. The first thing to do to make, develop, or facilitate a dialogic discussion is to determine whether he is in a classroom (Sandora, Beck, & McKeown, 1999). In this regard, there are many explanations about what dialogic teaching is, and examples of verbal behaviors and practices defined, especially in the international literature (Alexander, 2008; Boyd & Markarian, 2011; Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Nystrand et al., 2003). While Mercer (2000) discusses classroom conversations in three categories as exploratory, cumulative and argumentative, he describes exploratory speech as dialogic. While cumulative speech basically emphasizes acceptance and argumentative speech, opposition, the reasoning process in exploratory speech is overt and includes questioning of thoughts, justification of claims, offering alternatives, and dealing with persuasion and criticism. Boyd and Markarian (2011), in their studies, include the views of Freire (2000), who defines dialogic teaching as "liberating teaching", on how the teacher will act in the classroom for such a teaching. Accordingly, the teacher attaches importance to conversation rather than being didactic. While students are speaking, they listen attentively, asking them to speak more about their question rather than answering them at the end of their first sentence, and encourages other students to do the same. Even in cases where students want to learn their own answer, it emphasizes the opinions of other students and points out the importance of student expressions and delays their answer as much as possible. In this process, he always includes humor in his classroom.

After examining the language practices of teachers, it is recommended that they expand this repertoire and develop flexible and strategically appropriate speech styles for different pedagogical purposes (Reznitskaya, 2012). It is widely reported that dialogic teaching increases the language development of students or the acquisitions they gain from any discipline and improves their high-level thinking skills (Akoğlu, et al, 2014; Howe & Abedin, 2013; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Morgan and Meier, 2008; Opel, Ameera and Aboud, 2009; Rodrigez, 2013; Şimşek and Işikoğlu, 2015; Zevenbergen and Whitehurst, 2003). All of these point out that dialogic conversations/readings have an important place in the classroom.

The ultimate purpose of this study is to determine the problems that online education creates for teachers and learners in terms of dialogic learning and to seek solutions to these problems. For this purpose, the following research questions have been formulated.

1. What are the views of the participants about dialogic learning?
2. How do the participants describe dialogic learning?

Method

The current study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative method principles.

Participants

This study was conducted during the fall semester of the academic year 2021/2022 at different public universities in Turkey. It adopted a quantitative design seeking to gather information about classroom talk adopting dialogic teaching and students' reaction towards it. The study was conducted with 84 ELT students, 58 of whom were female (69%) and the rest 26 were male students (31%), enrolled in an ELT program. The participants of the study range in age from 17 (N=36; 42,9%) to 21-and-over (N=48;57,1%).

Instrument

The original questionnaire by Zayed (2016) was introduced to some jurors to check its validity. It consists of 20 statements for which the participants are asked whether they strongly agree (5) or strongly disagree (1), one of which is an open-ended question (Item 20) for gathering information about students' reaction to the whole process of participating in dialogic learning. The intrareliability of the original version was measured using the coefficient of Cronbach Alpha for internal consistency and it was found 0.663 that indicates an average level. However, in our study the reliability level was found 0.848, which indicates a high level.

Results

The researchers aim to examine the views of the participants about dialogic learning and see how the participants describe dialogic learning.

The views of the participants about dialogic learning

In order to see the views of the participants about dialogic learning they have been administered the dialogic learning questionnaire by Zayed (2016) that includes the principles, practices and benefits. A careful analysis of Table 1 clearly indicates that the participants have favorable attitudes towards dialogic learning (M=3,84).

The participants have reported that they strive to reach common understanding and agreed conclusions (M=4,42), become happy to listen to and listened by others (M=4,36), think dialogic learning is vital for their development as a learner and for their professional development (M=4,26), can improve their learning and talk about what they have learnt (M=4,25), respect minority viewpoints (M=4,23), feel confident when they can find things out for myself (M=4,17), feel that this approach leads to a different level of understanding (M=4,13), build on my own and each other's viewpoint (M=4,11). Most strikingly, they also thing that dialogic learning would not waste class time (M=1,95).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the views of the participants about dialogic learning

| | N | Min. | Max. | Mean | SD. |
|---|----|------|------|--------|---------|
| Q1 Dialogic learning is problematic. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,3214 | 1,13180 |
| Q2 Dialogic learning would waste class time. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 1,9524 | 1,00486 |
| Q3 I feel confident talking in pairs rather than in front of the class. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,7619 | 1,13667 |
| Q4 I feel confident when I can find things out for myself. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,1786 | ,88032 |
| Q5 I enjoy answering difficult questions. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,6310 | 1,16970 |
| Q6 I enjoy the new challenges I am being given. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,7143 | 1,11476 |
| Q7 I am happy to listen to others. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,3690 | ,86121 |

| | | | | | |
|--|----|------|------|-------------|---------|
| Q8 I ask my friend when I need help in class or with homework. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,0595 | 1,11237 |
| Q9 I ask my instructor when I need help in class or with homework. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,9762 | 1,12984 |
| Q10 Dialogue challenges each other to clarify, or restate opinions. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,7500 | 1,02822 |
| Q11 I can improve my learning and talk about what I have learnt. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,2500 | ,94263 |
| Q12 I feel that this approach leads to a different level of understanding. | 84 | 2,00 | 5,00 | 4,1310 | ,84710 |
| Q13 I have to work in a different way to engage in dialogue. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,5119 | 1,01191 |
| Q14 I encourage each other to participate and share ideas. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,9524 | 1,10753 |
| Q15 I build on my own and each other's viewpoint. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,1190 | ,96199 |
| Q16 I strive to reach common understanding and agreed conclusions. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,4286 | ,81086 |
| Q17 I respect minority viewpoints. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,2381 | 1,07119 |
| Q18 I think dialogic learning is vital for my development as a learner. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,2619 | 1,01932 |
| Q19 I think dialogic learning is vital for my professional development. | 84 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,2619 | 1,01932 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 84 | | | | |
| TOTAL | | | | 3.84 | |

How the participants describe dialogic learning

As to the second research question the researchers aim at investigating how they describe dialogic learning on their own. For this purpose, the participants are asked to describe their beliefs about the issue. They have provided very useful descriptions. Here, we will try to present its advantages and disadvantages from the students' answers.

Advantages

They think that dialogic learning is better than other ways of learning because it makes the students interact more, and the students can learn better if they communicate with others. They believe that dialogic learning method is a good way of becoming successful. This method of study can be beneficial to students. They report that having a dialogue can make the student feel more comfortable among friends when they speak.

More importantly they think that it is useful for English learners and teachers because it will affect the way of their speaking and listening skills in a positive way. It provides respect for every speech and details, and listening is the most prominent issue in the communication process.

This new way of work requires the learners to engage in pair works and to work collaboratively.

Small group work is effective and efficient instead of all class work. It can make students more social and confident in communicating with others in this type of work and they think dialogical learning is very vital in the aspect of learning a foreign language.

The way listeners participate can be more enjoyable if the conversation skill of the teacher is enough and through that it will be a better way to learn.

The way of interaction is rather different in this regard. Thanks to this new way of teaching method, the students will be given a better environment for their education with the help of interaction rather than monologic teaching. The more interactive an environment is, the more the learning process

will take place. It's not a traditional approach and it is student-centered. Moreover, it points out the importance of interaction, peer learning and social learning.

As students, they report that they generally hesitate to speak English, regardless of their department; they avoid speaking activities and presentations. They feel insecure, but they think this is wrong and they should focus on the conversation. The teachers never made us talk since primary school, they told the meanings of the words and taught grammar rules. That's why they like this type of learning. It is challenging, but it is the right way of learning a language, they believe.

It can improve one's ability to speak without losing confidence. In addition, telling yourself what you are learning allows you to be aware of what you are learning and can be a more permanent learning method than others.

What they have learned so far, dialogic education highly demands critical thinking and thinkers, and requires a positive atmosphere in a classroom. They believe collaboration and cooperation are the key concepts. Therefore, it can be said that it is a very important approach in terms of students not only speaking skills through dialogical learning, but also synthesizing what they have learned through discussion.

Practice is much more important than the other elements of learning. Therefore, this way of learning is better than other methods to improve their second language, and change their minds by exchanging ideas.

It is far from old, traditional, boring class activities and it enables students to be more into lesson. When students take control of the lesson with the guide of their teacher, they get the chance to discover topics by themselves which is more effective. As a result, it improves students' interests and takes their attention in language learning.

It engages the individuals to think more deeply, analyze, create, listen to others and build on others' opinions. It also gives autonomy to the learners as opposed to traditional teaching and learning styles which are teacher centered. Lastly, it gives an opportunity for learners to develop their mental capacity, creativity, critical thinking skills through constructive, deep, meaningful dialogues.

Thanks to the dialogic learning, the information flows smoothly between the teacher and the students without offending anyone, giving enough and accurate amount of feedback to the students and receiving enough information to see the students' levels, which helps to shape not only the current course of the lesson but also the upcoming lessons.

It challenges them to think differently and help them discover a new perspective, understand personal issues, people's ideas and discuss together and make emphasis on collaborating solidarity.

They think learning through interpersonal communication, interaction, group interaction and discussions is a new era of learning. Highlighting discourse and importance of discourse analysis and how to use the language is very important.

Dialogue is one of the social things that is crucially used and in education. Especially prospective English teachers who are exposed to this new way of work will be positively affected and effect their future students.

As a language learner, they think practice is more important than the theoretical part of learning. Dialogic learning provides us sharing our own ideas and seeing different point of views to improve themselves. That's why what they believe is, this new way of work is more beneficial for learners.

Disadvantage

There were two opposing views about dialogic learning. One of the participants does not think that there is any difference. The other finds it difficult to participate. S/he thinks talking to each other at the same time is not a great way of learning especially if they want to improve their listening skills. S/he prefers listening more and talking less in the class because when everyone talks to each other at the

same time it gets loud and s/he cannot focus on listening to his/her partner. S/he can't think properly when there is a lot of noise.

Conclusion

The ultimate purpose of the current study was to determine the problems that online education creates for teachers and learners in terms of dialogic learning and to seek solutions to these problems. For this purpose, 84 ELT students took part in the study and provided data about their views on dialogic learning and how they describe dialogic learning. The findings of this study indicates that most of the participants showed evidence for positive views about dialogic learning and find it a beneficial way of learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that the participants have favorable attitudes towards dialogic learning. They believe that dialogic teaching can improve their learning and is vital for their professional development. It provides interaction with others more by communicating and negotiating ideas on issues they discuss. Solely, they feel more comfortable and among others and become motivated. It increases their self-esteem. They strongly point out the importance of interaction, peer and social learning. Learning through interpersonal communication, interaction, and discussion once again highlights the importance of social discourse: how to use the language. Therefore, it can be suggested that instructors should take dialogic learning into consideration as an effective tool for interactive discourse in their classrooms.

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