



## **Promoting Dialogic Talk in a Speaking Classroom: Rethinking Bakhtinian Pedagogy**

**Fatemeh Niknezhad Naeijabad <sup>1</sup>, Mohammad Reza Khodareza <sup>2\*</sup>,  
Davood Mashhadi Heidar <sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> Department of English, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University,  
Tonekabon, Iran*

\*Corresponding author: m.khodareza@toniau.ac.ir

(Received: 2020/6/18; Accepted: 2020/10/26)

Online publication: 2020/10/27

### **Abstract**

This study sought to promote EFL learners' speaking ability drawing on Bakhtin's notion of dialogic discourse pattern (DDP) and to explore their perceptions towards implementing dialogic teaching (DT) in a speaking classroom. To this end, from the population of students in different language institutes, 47 students were selected based on a purposive sampling method. The data were collected at two step-wise processes adopting a mixed-method approach. First, the researcher directed two EFL teachers to apply the DDP principles in a dialogic (DG) and non-dialogic group (NDG). The intervention lasted for 12 weeks. Then, a posttest of speaking was conducted to track the possible improvement. The findings attested that the dialogic talk could promote EFL learners' speaking ability. Next, DG group was required to complete a written discourse completion task to determine the extent to which incorporating DT could promote learners' speaking ability. To analyze the data, Thomas's (2006) inductive approach was adopted comprising the dominant themes. The results revealed different themes and sub-themes such as developing self-directed learning skills, disseminating critical literacy practice, fostering language learning, promoting motivation and affective factors, to name but a few. The findings propose some implications for classroom management, materials preparation, and language policy program.

**Keywords:** dialogic teaching, dialogic discourse pattern, EFL students, learners' perceptions, speaking skill

## Introduction

The significance of the necessity to learn how to speak a second language (L2) is transparent and the notion of globalization attaches to this importance. Learning English seems to be essential in different system of education. Recently, an enlarging interest for effective teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) has been observed in Iranian society (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). However, EFL system in Iranian public schools pinpoints on learning and memorizing rules. This system prefers ready-made approaches to education and neglect, interaction, dialogue, negotiation, and partnership. Such a system is rather radical by means of employing prescribed sets of rules, strategies and contexts which will create *dominant epistemology* or what Freire called *ready-to wear approach* (Liyange & Canagarajah, 2019). It is self explanatory that such a system cannot promote learners' oral abilities and even learners fail to remember the grammatical rules after a while. EFL learners want to communicate in English for different purposes. Thus, the ability to speak critically and train students to read between the lines seems to be the basic goal of each educational setting (Barjasteh, 2017). With the advent of the concept of dialogism, negotiation, and the pivotal role of English in the world, the application of a dialogic model in teaching English language seems to be inevitable. *Dialogic teaching* (DT) attempts to provide opportunities for L2 learners to be able to challenge, think, take risks, and make a change both in the classroom and in the society (Wegerif, 2019). The approach adopted in DT originated in teacher and student communication, in which, the models of cognitive processes are influential on the students' side. Students in *dialogic discourse pattern* (DDP) are involved with high levels of autonomy and empowered to regulate the development of the classroom negotiation to a certain degree (Alexander, 2018). L2 professional literature criticizes the practicality of DT, because teachers found it troublesome to implement in their classroom (Reznitskaya & Gregory 2013). This arduous task is a widely discussed gap between theoretical and practical underpinnings in teaching (Mercer & Howe, 2012). To fill the gap, the researchers conducted a thorough study on the related literature with a hope to find a practical study concerning the role of DDP in fostering students' speaking skill. Some

studies on *theoretical aspects* (i.e., Bakhtin, 1986; Degener, 2001; Freire, 2004; Graves, 2013) and few on *practical aspects* (Alexander, 2018; Anderson, 2017; Barjesteh & Niknezhad, 2020; Kiramba & Harris, 2019). Sedova (2017) inspired the researchers to implement the *Bakhtinian pedagogy* in their communicative classroom. The deficiency of speaking proficiency among Iranian students who graduate from high schools motivated the researchers to implement Bakhtin's notion of DT and the corresponding principles in communicative classrooms. In Iran, EFL learners have few chances to speak outside the classroom. More specifically, they do not interact with native speakers. In fact, speaking English is bound to class hours where the number of students and shortage of time do not allow teachers to listen and respond to students individually. These limitations demand incorporating techniques and procedures which can foster learners' oral ability. One way to overcome such a problem seems to be incorporating the principles of DT in the classrooms.

Dialogue includes seeking information from and with others (Bakhtin, 1999). Bakhtin maintains that "truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual; it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (p. 110). Freire (2004) asserts that dialogue is the occasion available to people to initiate thinking of others and thereby not dwindle in isolation. Skidmore and Murakami (2016) describe DT as internally influential discourse with which the students seek the reality. It is evident that the notion of dialogue and interaction is the corner stone in Bakhtinian pedagogy. As Wegerif (2019) points out dialogic pedagogy is defined by numerous scholars, practitioners and policy-makers to show learning processes in which teacher and learners critically probe the topic of study, declare and listen to several voices and ideas, and build respectful and practical classroom relations. McLaren (2005) postulates that such an instruction can motivate learners to think about the way they are being taught, and how they fit into a broader social and cultural context. In future, this will help them think about the sort of community they live and ponder more than just bodies in the classroom.

Bakhtin (1981) classified discourse as *authoritative* and *internally persuasive*. Bakhtin posited that authoritative discourse is a *monologic* and persuasive discourse is a *dialogic* talk. In monologism, one transcendental

perspective merge all the fields, consequently combines all the signifying practices, ideologies, values and desires that are deemed significant. However, the internally persuasive dialogue can open to engagements with other perspective and a sphere for the learners' cognitive development (Teo, 2019). Accordingly, in an authoritative *monologic* classroom, a teacher as the ultimate authority uses factual and evaluative questions with predetermined answers and calls on students to "respond". In contrast, in a *dialogic* student-centered classroom the questions are authentic and productive. They have multiple answers as opposed to factual and "test" questions (Barjesteh & Niknezhad, 2020).

Bakhtin (1986) maintained that the use of language paves the ground for a dialogue accompanied with a speech plan calling forth an anticipated response from the addressee. Various constructs (e.g., *language, culture, context, and experience*) are the pivotal themes in Bakhtin's theory of language. The corresponding themes draw up people understanding of the words utilized in a dialogue. Dialogue has long been favored as an efficient mode in classroom discourse to promote interaction. DT is defined by numerous scholars, practitioners and policy-makers to show learning processes, in which teachers and learners investigate the topic of study critically, listen to several voices and ideas, and build respectful relationships. To McLaren (2005), DT is a method of contemplating, arguing, and changing the relationship among classroom teaching, knowledge production, classroom management, and the social and material interplay of the wider community. Degener (2001) asserts that in a dialogic context, teachers should listen to the students to find out their problems which are significant in the society. He adds that teachers should promote students' consciousness of such problems from a social viewpoint by asking questions and finding the techniques to take political actions in order to solve them. Pennycook (1990) used the term the "*liberal Ostrichism*" to indicate such problem and to consider the EFL as political. Thus, an authentic dialogue needs an association between educator and educated where one knowing subject is face to face with other knowing subjects (Roberts, 1998 cited in Degener 2001).

Speaking is considered as a demanding task among L2 learners. What makes speaking difficult is the arduous task of meaning making through different verbal and non-verbal symbols, in numerous situations (Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). It is found at the cornerstone teaching and learning. This process demands learners to contemplate the justification for negotiation depending on the sociocultural situation in which the speaking act materializes (Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan & Soler, 2006). In addition, it necessitates a dynamic interplay between the interlocutors that leads the interchange of developing and processing spoken discourse under time boundary. Speaking a foreign language demands more than semantic and structural knowledge on learners' side. Notably, students should have the contextual knowledge and interpersonal skill. An efficient interaction necessitates learners to be proficient in language use in order to employ the rules in social interactions. New trends in English language teaching shed lights on teaching and learning speaking skill. An overview of this skill reveals that it has unified within the three approaches to language learning, that is, *environmentalist*, *Innatist* and *interactionist*. From an *environmental* view, speaking is conceptualized as replicating, copying and retaining the input that interactors were exposed to. For *innatist*, language ability was internalized regulations which could be changed into new structures by incorporating various cognitive strategies. Accordingly, the role of speakers altered from receiving and copying the input, to contemplating effectively how to generate language. Accordingly, speaking a language was a de-contextualized process comprising the mental change of such an internalized system of rules.

In 1980's by introducing Communicative Competence there was a great emphasize on producing oral language. From an interactionist perspective, language teaching highlights the necessity to make learners ready to challenge the functions of speaking and to conduct different speech acts appropriately, as well as to face real-life situations. In such a construct, speaking is assumed to be a cornerstone to make the acquisition of communicative competence possible. Currently, speaking is conceptualized as a social and interactive process that necessitates various functions. Given such a complex interactive process in which speakers need to employ various social, cultural, cognitive, affective and interactional aspects among

others, the task of oral instruction has been considered as a cumbersome task (Dehqan & Niknezhad, 2017). Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the practical implications of Bakhtin's notion of discourse in developing EFL learners' speaking skill. By and large, this study is an attempt to provide a practical way to make changes in classroom discourse with a hope to be applied in an EFL speaking classroom. Specifically, the current research intends to implement the principles of DDP to probe if incorporating Bakhtin's DDP in a classroom develops EFL learners' speaking ability. Moreover, this study navigates EFL learners' perceptions about implementing the rules of DDP in their speaking classroom. Thus, the following research questions were formulated:

**RQ1:** Does incorporating Bakhtin's principle of DDP improve EFL learners' speaking ability?

**RQ2:** What are EFL learners' attitudes towards implementing the rules of DDP in their speaking classroom?

## Method

### Participants

A total of 47 EFL students comprised the subject pool of the present study. They were selected out of 74 EFL students in different English language classrooms. They were recruited from two branches of ILI English language institute. All were selected from two branches of ILI in Amol and Babol, in the North of Iran. To comply with the objectives, purposive and availability sampling procedures were adopted for sample selection. They were all adult male ( $N = 26$ ) and female ( $N = 21$ ) language learners who had minimum of 3 years language learning experiences. They had been formally exposed to English during their school years and had successfully passed similar instruction at the same institutes. Their age ranged from 17 to 38. They were placed at the intermediate level as far as the ILI classification was concerned.

### Instruments

#### *Preliminary English Test (PET)*

A piloted PET was conducted to the EFL students to determine the targeted participants' level of English language proficiency. The exam

focuses on Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which indicates the intermediate level of English proficiency. A PET test examines four skills and two components (i.e., grammar and vocabulary). The allocated time is 1 hour and 30 minutes for reading and writing, 35 minutes for listening, and 10-12 minutes for speaking. The reading section includes 35 items in five parts, the listening section consists of 25 items in four parts, the writing section includes three parts, and the speaking section is composed of four parts. The listening and reading comprehension include questions of different formats, namely multiple-choice, completion, and true/false items. The reliability of the test scores obtained from the PET test was estimated by Kuder-Richardson 21 formula. The test enjoyed reliability with the alpha coefficient of .84. This index is an acceptable range for Cronbach alpha test of reliability in educational research (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

***Placement Conversation rating form (PCRf)***

This study aimed to incorporate Bakhtin's principle of DDP in EFL classrooms to examine its effect on the speaking skill of the target groups. To this end, Hansen and Zukowski's (2008) placement conversation seemed to be appropriate due to its feasibility and accessibility for evaluating the speaking skill. The PCRf comprised 18 tasks at six levels ranging from elementary to intermediate. It is a fifteen-minute face to face interaction. During the interaction, the examinees are free to perform any particular functions to show their speaking ability. Two raters were requested to indicate their observations with a check mark in each category ranging from level 1 up to 3. The raters begin by asking the examinees to introduce themselves with a hope to shed light on the initial speaking impressions. This will aid the raters to select an appropriate task at a judged level. Accordingly, the raters will evaluate the examinees' performance with the help of PCRf. In case of problem in providing an answer for a task, that activity is established students' speaking level. To make a safe judgment and to minimize the induced bias an inter-rater reliability correlation coefficients was conducted. This was informed by (Aday & Cornelius 2006) to indicate the level of agreement between the interviewers. An estimate of inter-rater reliability was determined using inter-rater reliability correlation coefficients. The examinees' performance in PCRf enjoyed reliability with

the alpha coefficient of .91. To Aday and Cornelius (2006), a correlation of the answers between raters of .80 or higher is desirable.

### ***Written Discourse Completion Task***

To tap the EFL learners' attitudes towards implementing the rules of DDP in a language classroom, a written discourse completion task (WDCT) was employed. The students were requested to write about their class procedure, the course content, the teacher role, as well as their role. They were directed to write how this class was different from their previous experience. More specifically, the WDCT was to explore the extent to which the DDP principles motivated them to speak in the classroom. In fact, it was used as a written interview in which the targeted groups were required to write their opinion about the class. Notably, they were required to write freely about class with a hope to determine if this class helps students develop a personal voice.

### **Procedure**

The primary focus of this study was to implement the principles of DDP in a language classroom to probe the contribution of DT on EFL learners' speaking skill. To establish a dialogic classroom and the corresponding principles, the researchers directed two teachers to an experimental group, (i.e., DG), and a control group, (i.e., NDG), to apply the DDP principles in the DG group. Notably, the principles were practiced through the guidelines proposed in L2 professional literature. The guidelines comprised 21 principles of DDP, encompassing the main issues of dialogic driven pedagogy like critical thinking (CT), negotiating, questioning, giving feedback, turn-taking management, and teaching process. To undertake the study, a pretest and posttest of speaking was administered before and after the intervention. A case process was treated to track the possible improvement of EFL learners' speaking ability after accomplishing the corresponding principles in the classroom. The case study process was designed to establish a dialogic classroom and to coach the teaching process based on DDP principle. This process entailed observing, audio-taping, transcribing the classroom interaction, and collecting students' assignments, that is, *dialogue journal writing* (hereafter DJW), for a thirteen-week period to gauge how the intervention was effective. To provide a better picture of

the DG, the class was initiated by a topic pertinent to the students' social, political, and cultural concerns as well as the content of texts in their class discussion or the latest reading texts of different subjects such as friendship, sport, honesty, famous authors and actors, to name but a few. Overall, the topics in DG group were negotiated with the students, or they were permitted to choose the topics of discussion. The teacher indirectly gave the clue and provided the students with opportunities to express themselves in a safe atmosphere. The DG class was compared with the one without the application of the dialogic principles, NDG. Finally, another speaking test was administered to determine if dialogic teachers can foster EFL students' speaking ability. To track the participant attitudes towards implementing the principles of DDP, they were asked to write a WDCT.

### **Design**

The research method employed to accommodate this study was based on the tenets of mixed method orientation. To comply with the objectives, Bakhtin's principle of DDP was utilized as the independent variable, and EFL learners' speaking ability and their perceptions towards practicality DDP principles were considered as the dependent variables. The data were collect at two different qualitative and quantitative phases. In the quantitative phase, the data were collected by administering pretest and posttest of speaking. Precisely, an independent Samples t-test and descriptive statistics were run. In the qualitative phase, the data were collected by focusing on students' holistic view in their WDCT. Considering the key elements of an exploratory research design as indicated by Heigham and Croker (2009) which explore a topic by collecting qualitative data to determine the main themes and possibly generate, a theory followed by the collection and analysis of the quantitative data, this research is classified as exploratory research design. At this phase a content analysis was conducted. Roberts (1998) classified content analysis as *thematic*, *semantic*, and *network*. Following this qualitative classification, thematic analysis was conducted to extract the major themes in the students' writing.

## Results

### Analysis of the First Research Question

This study examined any possible differences between the performance of DG and NDG groups at the pretest and posttest of speaking. It was aimed to determine if there was statistical evidence to support the application of DDP in the DG group. To this end, an Independent-Samples t-test and descriptive statistics were employed. Table 1 indicates the analysis of the pretest result.

Table 1  
*Independent-Samples t-Test for Non/Dialogic Groups at Pretest*

Group	Leven's Test For Equality of Variances	N	M	SD	t	df	sig	Mean Difference
	F							
DG	2.210	24	15.1	.899	1.20	45	.234	.342
NDG		23	14.7	1.04				

As distinctly revealed in Table 1, the mean scores for DG and NDG groups were 15.12 and 14.78 respectively and no meaningful significant difference was observed between the groups ( $p = 0.234 > 0.05$ ). The results indicate that assumption of the equal variance has not been violated,  $F (2.210)$ ,  $p = .144 > 0.05$ . This means that both groups were at the same level of speaking performance prior to the intervention.

After the pretest of speaking, DG group was directed to apply the principles of DDP during two sessions in a week. This process entailed observing, audio-taping, transcribing the classroom interaction, and collecting students' assignments for a period of thirteen-week. At the end of the intervention, a posttest of speaking was administered to track the performance of the both groups. Table 2 indicates the results of the Independent Samples t-Test for the DG and NDG groups in the posttest.

Table 2  
*Independent-Samples t-Test for Non/Dialogic Groups at Posttest*

Group	Leven's Test For Equality of Variances F	Sig.	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig	Mean Difference
DG	1.88	.177	24	16.45	.899	2.881	45	.006	1.37
NDG			23	15.08	1.04				

As presented in Table 2, the observed  $t$  value ( $t = 2.88$ ) is significant at  $p < .006$ . To put differently, there was a significant difference between the DG and NDG groups. Accordingly, there are sufficient grounds to reject the related null hypothesis and to interpret that implementing the principles of DDP can pave the way for promoting EFL learners' speaking ability. Following the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988), the most commonly used effect size statistics is eta squared. For the current study the effect size was calculated to be .958. As informed by Cohen, the magnitude of difference in the means at the posttest of speaking was large effect. In other words, 95% of the variance in the principles of DDP is explained by speaking ability.

### **Analysis of the Second Research Question**

To answer the second research question which addressed what are EFL learners' attitudes towards implementing the rules of DDP in their speaking classroom?' the DG group was asked to complete a WDCT. They were invited to answer anonymously to the question on the extent to which the DT employed in their class provides them a chance to speak. The qualitative analysis of WDCT data resulted in three main reductionist themes with their relevant sub-themes. These themes can be classified under the category of the students' overarching attitudes towards implementing the rules of DDP in their speaking classroom with different sub-dimensions. Table 3 outlines the main categories, sub-themes, and the excerpts.

Table 3  
*Students' Perception of Implementing Dialogic Teaching*

No.	Students' Excerpts	Main Categories	Sub-themes
1	Reading several times, Revising the assignments, Asking classmates	Developing Self-directed learning skills	Self-reflection Self-awareness
2	Being familiar with the hidden value	Developing critical literacy practice	Critical stand point
3	Relating the course content to the real life concerns	Fostering language learning	Learner autonomy
4	Correcting the peer mistakes	Fostering motivation in the classroom	Cooperation and Collaboration Self-actualization
5	Learning in an stress-free situation	Promoting affective factors	Self-confidence Anxiety

Table 3 outlines a sketchy overview of the excerpts extracted from the students' WDCT. After coding the WDCT, the researchers double-checked the data against the main tenets of a DT. The color code instances were classified in the following main categories and the corresponding sub-themes:

***Developing Self-Directed Learning Skills: Self-Reflection, and Self-Awareness***

Self-Directed Learning Skills aim to aid students to learn without being directed by teachers. It comprised a four-step process: (a) assessing readiness to learn, (b) setting learning goal; (c) involving the learning process, and (d) evaluating learning. Accordingly, students' role are to self-assess their learning process, monitor their learning process, be self-motivated, re-examine and change objectives as needed during learning (Graves, 2013). Students' awareness of their learning habits can help them find their strength and weakness. Different students on their journal entries indicated how reflective tasks such as DJW could improve their learning process. They also underscored the advantages of incorporating DJW in

their classroom. Almost 75% of the students had the same idea about including dialogue journal as an assignment in their speaking classroom. They concurred that it provided a chance for them to reflect on their learning process and to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. These sub-themes were represented in students' DJ extracts below:

- **S14:** *when you ask us to write DJ, I read it several times, revised myself, and ask my classmate to read over my problems.*
- **S12:** *Sometimes, I found my mistake in writing. It forced my[me] indirectly to read my grammar book again.*
- **S10:** *I became familiar with my hidden belief. It helped me learn about values.*

Some course members also considered DJW as a place for reflection.

- **S8:** *I learnt how to think about different topics. It was a chance for me to speak through reflection without fear.*

It seems that activities for written reflection can be an effective learning tool for gaining reflective experiences. Lew and Schmidt (2011) view self-reflection as a process which the students undertake to think on their previous learning experiences and the learning strategies they employed.

#### ***Developing Critical Literacy Practice: Critical stand point***

Following Bakhtin's conceptualization of DDP, knowledge of subject matter and language proficiency are not the final objective. Students should go beyond the course content and language skills within competency-based programs (Pennycook, 1990). This implies that semantic knowledge and communicative competence do not suffice (Kabilan, 2000). Bakhtin based the theoretical foundation of his study on negotiation and dialogue. To Freire (1970), "dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world in order to name the world" (p. 69). He postulated that negotiation and dialogue call for CT. Freire posits that dialogue is the cornerstone for communication, interaction and education. The proponents of critical language pedagogy (Alexander, 2018; Kiramba & Harris, 2019; McLaren, 2019) posited that students should have a chance to both use language communicatively and to think about what to communicate. The following excerpts directly quoted from the students' DJW clearly illustrate this point:

**S3:** *I like your class because writing forced me to think... I think this way is good for my future... .*

*S17: This class was interesting because you ask students to find the answer the problems and the mistake... This made me power*

*S14: Thank you for you because you engage us by writing and speaking*

*S10: The writing and speaking activities were similar. We should think what to write and what to speak and how to correct... like a short research... .*

### ***Fostering Language learning: Learners Autonomy***

Some studies (e.g., Barjesteh, 2019; Barjesteh & Niknezhad, 2020; Wegerif, 2019; Nguyen & Walkinshaw, 2018) illustrated the advantages of reflective journal writing by bridging the gap between theoretical issues and helping the learners independently restructuring the learning process. In the present study, the course members reiterated that writing dialogue journal helped learners to be an independent learner. Almost 80% of the students remarked that their self-evaluation, self-reflection, autonomy development was due to writing a reflective journal. Put differently, DJW help learners build metacognitive awareness. What follows illustrates the students' perceptions regarding this sub-theme:

- *S15: I find it useful because I connect the content of the course to my real life problem. I feel I can learn how to write.*
- *S16: This class was new to me because I think I am doing a research for a short writing. I have learnt to think about my writing.*
- *S 13: Now, I am careful about my writing because I am the only one responsible.*
- *S: 18: This class helped me to find my problems in writing. It also helped me that my writing is important. Thank you...*

### ***Fostering Motivation in the classroom: Cooperation, Collaboration, and Self-actualization***

There was a consensus among the students in DG group that DJW helped them work in groups. Majority of the class members concurred that writing DJ provided them with opportunity to evaluate their classmate assignments, to learn from their writings, and to develop their innate capacity. They wrote that DJW motivated them to find that that there was no competition in writing. Developing learners' inner capacity and helping them achieve their full potential is called *self-actualization* in psychology, a term coined by Maslow (1981) in the *theory of hierarchy of needs*. Developing learning

self-actualization can be an instance for motivating students to learn. Most of the students referred to this reality in their DJ:

- **S2:** *I was happy when my friends correct my mistakes. At first, it was not becoming for me. But when I saw you were happy when you see my friends correct my mistake I was encourage writing more.*
- **S3:** *I think it is good that we were in groups. I am happy that my activity is part of my exam. It is not stressful to learn English in your class. Within this group, I found new friends who can help improve my English.*
- **S5:** *I like your class because I think you are our friends. Thank you for your teaching. It helps our learning.*

**Promoting Affective Factors: Self-confidence, Anxiety**

Of all participants, 87% had the similar idea that writing DJ helped them to practice writing in a risk-free situation. Majority of the participants called the assignment as a written conversation because they were asked to reflect on the course content. This paves the ground for the shy students who were reticent during the class discussion. Hall (2018) called DJ as an interactive writing which authorizes the participants to take part in written communication and conversation. The following excerpts demonstrate the students' perceptions of the sub-themes:

- **S9:** *Many thanks for this assignment. I was shy when you assigned us a topic to speak. Writing helped me to depend on myself. It gave me a second chance to practice. I spoke about what I never had such an opportunity to explain my view.*
- **S11:** *....In your class I learned to speak and write without being worry about my mistake. I practiced my speaking through writing dialogue journal. This gave me a power and confidence to speak in the class...*
- **S19:** *At first I thought I should speak by heart... This is stressful fro me in the class because I may forget some parts. Thank you for your assignment because you allow us to read when we forget... I found this class as a risk-free with little stress...*

## Discussion

The first research question aimed to examine if employing Bakhtin's principle of DDP can promote EFL learners' speaking ability. To this end, the students in both experimental and control groups were administered the speaking pretest and posttest. The analysis of the pretest results attested that both groups were similar in their speaking performance at the onset of the study. After the application of the DDP principle in the experimental group, a posttest of speaking was conducted to both groups track the possible change in the students' performance. The analysis of the posttest result revealed that there was a meaningful difference between the DG and NDG groups. Thus, the finding can be interpreted as implementing the rules of DDP can foster EFL learners' speaking ability. The findings are in line with different studies (Bansal, 2018; Barjesteh & Niknezhad, 2020; Hall, 2018; Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Toe, 2019) conducted in ESL context who confirmed the positive correlation between DDP and the improvement of students' learning. The findings, thus, illustrated empirical ways to alter classroom discourse. The findings echo the theoretical framework of the current study postulated by Bakhtin (1981) who claimed that DT can motivate students to voice their ideas and provide sufficient space for students' response. (Barjesteh & Niknezhad, 2020) posit that DT can pave the ground for learners' social, cognitive, and critical skill. They conclude that implementing the principles of DT can promote learners CT mode and help them to voice their ideas. Likewise, different studies Kiramba and Harris (2019) and Sedova (2017) conducted in the field of discourse support the idea that learning is related to the quality of discourse. The findings also echo Wegerif (2019) who postulated that dialogic education provides the chance for the learners to take part in communicative activities. Wegerif maintained that DT is important for language development since it helps to foster interaction and dialogicality through turn-taking management. Similarly, Barjesteh (2019) advocates the functional efficacy of transformative pedagogy in that it can change the role of learners, teachers, and instruction. Barjesteh postulate that dialogic mode of teaching can change the role of a teacher from an instructor to a reflective practitioner. In addition, it changes the students from a passive receiver of knowledge to an

active agent of his/her learner. Education from this perspective is a sphere for identity reflection and a means for social control.

The findings of the present study support the scholars' claim that contextualizing language teaching can help students in an EFL/ESL classroom. This finding was in line with the studies (Anderson, 2017; Dehqan & Niknezhad, 2017; Niknezhad et al., 2019) who claimed that applying the principles of DDP could foster students' language awareness. Conventional language classroom in Iran deals with the neutral topics such as transportation, health care, dream, marriage and etc. These topics do not address the underlying societal issue. In the EFL context of Iran, teachers and students are forced by a top down policy to teach what have been predetermined without considering their needs and interest. This top down policy does not invoke students' critical reflection. However, drawing on the theoretical underpinning of DT (Alexander, 2018; Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002; Mercer & Howe, 2012; Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013) students' problematic concern via dialogical interaction should be the cornerstone for teaching by taking into account of students' needs and concern.

One critique leveled at the DT concerns its practicality. Notably, Reznitskaya and Gregory (2013) postulated that DT is a concept that is elaborated at the theoretical aspect. They maintained that teachers found it difficult to implement a dialogic method in the classroom due to the difficulty of putting it into practice. Likewise, Mercer and Howe (2012) claimed critical language pedagogy as a branch of DT is more a theory and it is not applicable at the classroom level and finally fails in practice. L2 Professional development programs propose some ways to fill the gap. Since some successful studies have been implemented to offer ways to overcome this gap, the current study was conducted to determine the practicality of the DT via the principles of DT suggested in the L2 professional literature. Berson, et al. (2015) identify the basic mechanism that causes DT to be effective at the practical level. Sedova (2017) also conducted a program for teacher at Czech lower secondary school. The findings cause change in the teachers' teaching practice as well as the classroom interaction. The findings of the present study attested that DT can be implemented in the EFL classroom. Informed by the guidelines for the principles of DDP, EFL teachers can find it easy to put DT into practice.

The findings of the current study indicated that implementing the principles of DDP changed the nature of teacher and students' interaction. More precisely, teacher and students' discourse turned to be dialogic than monologic as informed by Bakhtin's conceptualization of discourse. In addition, the teacher use of the principles of DDP could successfully contribute to the improving students speaking skill. As for the qualitative result, the students were supportive towards the principles of DDP. In fact, they mostly agreed that DT can promote self-directed learning skill, critical literacy practice, language learning, motivation in the classroom and affective factor.

A straightforward conclusion for the current study is that the principles of DDP are applicable in EFL classrooms. Put it differently, the establishment of DT could effectively promote EFL learners' speaking ability. What is evident from the findings of the study is that EFL teachers should be trained in order to change authoritative nature, teacher-oriented instruction, and monologic discourse into a dialogic, facilitative and student-centered instruction. To do this, some essential requirements should be met to establish a DT. To establish dialogic discourse EFL teachers should be educated to follow up on their students' contributions, use authentic questions, use uptake, have a reflective evaluation for the students' replies, pose questions that demand reflection with longer answers, develop student-initiated talk, and teach collectively, supportively, cumulatively, purposefully, and reciprocally.

**Declaration of interest:** none

### References

- Aday, L. A., & Cornelius, L. J. (2006). *Designing and conducting health surveys: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Alexander, R. (2018). Developing dialogic teaching: Genesis, process, trial. *Research Papers in Education*, 33(5), 561-598.
- Anderson, K. T. (2017). Leveraging Researcher Reflexivity to Consider a Classroom Event over Time: Reflexive Discourse Analysis of 'What Counts'. *Classroom Discourse*, 8(1), 36-54.
- Bakhtin, M. (1999). The Bildungsroman and its significance in the history of realism (Toward a historical typology of the novel). In M. Holquist

- (Ed.), *Speech genres and other late essays* (pp. 10-59). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M M Bakhtin* (M. Holquist, ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). The problem of speech genres (V. McGee, Trans.). In C. Emerson, & M. Holquist (Eds.), *Speech genres and other late essays* (pp. 60-102). Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press.
- Bansal, G. (2018). Teacher discursive moves: Conceptualising a schema of dialogic discourse in science classrooms. *International Journal of Science Education*, 40(15), 1891-1912.
- Barjasteh, H. (2017). Navigating the Hindrances Arising at Macro and Micro-level from Practicality of Transformative Pedagogy. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, 10(20), 29-49.
- Barjesteh, H. (2019). Dynamicity of Transformative L2 Materials Preparation Model in EFL Classroom: Place of Critical Language Pedagogy in Teacher Education. *Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, 38(2), 47-79.
- Barjesteh, H., & Niknezhad, F. (2020). Fostering critical writing through dialogic teaching: A critical thinking practice among teachers and students. *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9(2), 91-117.
- Berson, E. Borko, H., Million, S., Khachatryan, E., & Glennon, K. (2015). Practice what you teach: A video-based practicum model of professional development for elementary science teachers. *Orbis scholae*, 9(2), 35-53.
- Billings, L., & Fitzgerald, J. (2002). Dialogic discussion and the Paideia seminar. *American Educational Research Journal*, 39(4), 907-941.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Degener, S. C. (2001). Making sense of critical pedagogy in adult literacy education. *Annual review of adult learning and literacy*, 2(1), 26-62.
- Dehqan, M., & Niknezhad, F. (2017). Incorporating problem-posing instruction in an EFL speaking classroom: The case of fluency and accuracy in Challenges. In S. M. R. Amirian, & G. Zareian (Eds.), *Foreign Language Teaching in Iran* (pp. 33-53). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (MB Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (2004). *Pedagogy of Indignation*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

- Graves, N. (2013). *Learner managed learning: Practice, theory and policy*. Leeds: Routledge.
- Hall, J. K. (2018). From L2 interactional competence to L2 interactional repertoires: Reconceptualising the objects of L2 learning. *Classroom Discourse*, 9(1), 25-39.
- Hansen, C., & Zukowski, J. (2008). *Placement and evaluation package: Interchange, passages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heigham, J., & Croker, R. (2009). *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Kabilan, M. K. (2000). Creative and critical thinking in language classrooms. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(6), 1-3.
- Kiramba, L. K., & Harris, V. J. (2019). Navigating authoritative discourses in a multilingual classroom: Conversations with policy and practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, 53(2), 456-481.
- Lew, M. D., & Schmidt, H. G. (2011). Self-reflection and academic performance: is there a relationship? *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 16(4), 529-545.
- Liyanage, I., & Canagarajah, S. (2019). Shame in English language teaching: Desirable pedagogical possibilities for Kiribati in neoliberal times. *Tesol Quarterly*, 53(2), 430-455.
- Martínez-Flor, A., Usó-Juan, E., & Soler, E. A. (2006). Towards acquiring communicative competence through speaking. *Current trends in the development and teaching of the four language skills* (pp. 139-159). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter
- Maslow, A. H. (1981). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper and Row.
- McLaren, P. (2005). *Capitalists and conquerors: A critical pedagogy against empire*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- McLaren, P. (2019). The future of critical pedagogy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52(12), 1243-1248.
- Mercer, N., & Howe, C. (2012). Explaining the dialogic processes of teaching and learning: The value and potential of sociocultural theory. *Learning, culture and social interaction*, 1(1), 12-21.
- Murcia, M. C., & Olshtain, E. (2000). *Discourse and context in language teachin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nassaji, H. & Wells, C. (2000). What's the use of triadic dialogue?: An investigation of teacher-student interaction. *Applied linguistics*, 21(3), 376-406.

- Nguyen, X. N. C. M., & Walkinshaw, I. (2018). Autonomy in teaching practice: Insights from Vietnamese English language teachers trained in Inner-Circle countries. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 69, 21-32.
- Niknezhad Naeijabad, F., Khodareza, M., & Mashhadi Heidar, D. (2019). Appraising Discourse Content of EFL Classrooms through the Lens of Bakhtin's Dialogic Discourse Pattern. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies*, 6(1), 78-51.
- Pennycook, A. (1990). Critical pedagogy and second language education. *System*, 18(3), 303-314.
- Razmjoo, S. A., & Riazi, A. M. (2006). Do high schools or private institutes practice communicative language teaching? A case study of Shiraz teachers. In High Schools and Institutes. *The Reading Matrix*, 6 (3), 340-363.
- Reznitskaya, A., & Gregory, M. (2013). Student thought and classroom language: Examining the mechanisms of change in dialogic teaching. *Educational Psychologist*, 48(2), 114-133.
- Roberts, P. (1998). Freire, P.(1998) Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach, Boulder, Westview Press, 100 pp., ISBN 0 8133 2304-5. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 23(1), 40-55
- Sedova, K. (2017). A case study of a transition to dialogic teaching as a process of gradual change. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 67, 278-290.
- Skidmore, D., & Murakami, K. (2016). *Dialogic pedagogy: The importance of dialogue in teaching and learning*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Teo, P. (2019). Teaching for the 21st century: A case for dialogic pedagogy." *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 21, 170-178.
- Wegerif, R. (2019). *Dialogic education in Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

### **Biodata**

**Fatemeh Niknezhad Naeijabad** is a Ph.D. student in TEFL. She has been teaching the English language in different language schools. Her research interests lie in the field of critical language pedagogy, thinking skills in language learning, and Critical Language testing.

**MohammadReza Khodareza** is an assistant professor of English language at Tonekabon branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran. His current research projects are deterrents to second language learning, Culture and language acquisition psychology, Cognition, Technology and language, EFL and Age factor.

**Davood Mashhadi Heidar** is an assistant professor of English language at Tonekabon branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran. He serves as the head of the English Language department, an editor and a reviewer for various journals and conferences. His research interests lie in the field of Dynamic assessment, and corrective feedback.