

## Fostering Critical Writing through Dialogic Teaching: A Critical Thinking Practice among Teachers and Students

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### Abstract

Current trends in education reformed the classrooms as critical sites for promoting learners' social identity, cognitive development, and critical skills. From this perspective, the classroom turned out to be an arena to raise students' critical consciousness to be the agent of change. In such a context, this paper examined (a) the extent to which implementing the principles of dialogic teaching (DT) can increase critical thinking (CT) mode of students' writing, (b) the practicality of DT from EFL teachers' perspective. To this end, a qualitative method was adopted and the data were collected from students' dialogue journals (DJs) and teachers' perceptions on a CT questionnaire (CTQ). Notably, students were invited to write DJs to reflect on the class discussion. To quantify how DJs contribute to students' CT practice, Ada's (1988) four critical literacy (CL) modes in writing was employed. Analysis followed Heigham and Croker's (2009) guidelines for generating meaning from DJs. An iterative analysis led to the identification of codes from students' excerpts. Next, a nationwide study was conducted to distribute CTQ among 200 EFL teachers to navigate their priority over the principles of DT. The results indicated that students' descriptive and personal mode of writing decreased in the last temporal session and it changed to be critical and creative mode. Although teachers were supportive of the principles, they reported implementing DT may not be practiced in reality due to some boundaries. The findings suggest that language policymakers and materials developers should move along with the new critical-oriented, self-directed learning and dialogic notion of teaching.

**Keywords:** Critical Thinking, Dialogue Journal, Dialogic Teaching, Monologism, Writing Pedagogy

### 1. Introduction

The principal goal in education is to promote the academic success of students and prepare them to raise their CL. The goals are fulfilled only if teachers train students to become CTs and take charge of their learning (Milner, 2003). Most of the traditional approaches and methods in education acknowledge a set of pre-established patterns to transmit knowledge to the learners. These approaches consider learners as passive receivers of knowledge, and teachers as the authority in the classrooms who deposit knowledge in learners' mind (Hetherington & Wegerif, 2018). However, the current trend in English language teaching (ELT) deals with creating and developing critical skills, dialogic interaction, and reflective practices (e.g., inquiring, doing, imagining, and negating) at schools (Garcia, et al., 2020; Lan & Lam, 2020; Li, 2019).

This trend criticized the traditional approached in ELT due to its monologic and lecture-based instruction (Li, 2019). Zhang (2018) postulates that monologic instruction promotes passive talk and keep students reticent. L2 professional literature proposed three skills categories (i.e., technical, behavioral, creative) to promote learners' CT mode. These skills are to help students act in a questioning manner, construct their own understanding, and to be the agent of their learning process (LaGarde & Hudgins, 2018). Both teachers and learners have a bilateral role in which the learners are active, practice *exploratory talk*, *think reasonably*, organize their own learning practices, and teachers help learners voice their ideas, and share their authority with the students (Kissing-Styles,

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2003). Bakhtin (1981) believes that they learn together. Using Freire's (1970) own words "no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught, men teach each other, mediated by the teacher" (p.67). One of the recommendations evolved to incorporate talk effectively for students' learning process, and to involve teachers and students for transforming and constructing knowledge is DT (García-Carrión, López de Aguilera, Padrós, & Ramis-Salas, 2020). Alexander (2020) proposed interaction and dialogic nature of instruction to alleviate some cliché topics for discussion. Alexander maintained that DT shifts teacher–student question and answer format to a dialogic pattern with the aim to improve students' learning and understanding.

It has been argued that Asian learners are unwilling to write reflectively and to engage in problem-solving activities (Rear, 2017). Within the EFL context of Iran, it is assumed that teachers tend to use traditional approaches and students are not trained to be critical thinkers. Teachers do not provide students to voice their ideas in the classroom contexts due to a top-down policy and the authoritative system of education (Barjesteh, 2020; Michaels & O'Connor, 2012; Pishghadam, & Mirzaee, 2008). It seems that some impediments at micro and macro-level in the system of education of Iran are deterrent factors to foster higher-order thinking (Barjesteh, 2017). To address the gap, this study investigates the extent to which implementing the principles of DT can increase CT mode among EFL learners through dialogue journal writing (DJW). Notably, this study implements Alexander's (2020) framework of DT in an experimental classroom to provide a practical way with a hope to make changes in classroom discourse and to explore if DJW can provide students with critical awareness to transmit their knowledge, and to involve them in cooperative learning. To address the objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

**Research Question One:** To what extent does implementing the principles of dialogic teaching increase critical thinking mode in EFL learners' dialogue journal writing?

**Research Question Two:** What are EFL learners' attitudes toward the principles of dialogic teaching in an EFL classroom?

**Research Question Three:** What are the most and the least preferred frequent principles of dialogic teaching among EFL teachers?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Dialogic Teaching Approach: Theoretical Frameworks, Definitions, and Principles

Dialogic interaction has been rooted in democratic instruction. Different authorities in education (e.g., Bakhtin, Bruner, Dewey, Habermas, and Socrates) advocate dialogic pedagogy as a forum for the educators to promote learning in an interactive process (Kim & Wilkinson, 2018). DT is an approach to language teaching that maximizes the power of interaction to proceed to learners' thinking, voice, and problem-solving. It was originally coined by Alexander (2004) in his model of dialogic pedagogy. Alexander conceptualized dialogue as the cornerstone for teaching and learning. Alexander (2020) believes that DT employs the power of classroom discourse to promote learners' thinking. Alexander provides the justifications that classroom discourse can foster learners' social and linguistic development. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2020) believe that teacher-student communication is the bedrock of this approach in a way that cognitive processes are dominant on the student's part. They maintain that students should be engaged with high degrees of autonomy to promote the classroom interaction to some extent.

Theoretically, the notion of DT has its roots in the *Socratic method of teaching*. Michaels and O'Connor (2012) posit that dialogue is an important factor in constructing social identities. They underpinned that the dialogic discourse can foster students' cognitive development. Michaels, O'Connor, and Resnick (2008) posit that "dialogue and discussion have long been linked to theories of democratic education. From Socrates to Dewey and Habermas, the educative dialogue has represented a forum for learners to develop understanding by listening, reflecting, proposing and incorporating alternative views" (p. 296.) Learning through dialogue has been inspired by *Vygotsky's*

*sociocultural theory* of learning and *Bakhtin's dialogism theory*, both highlighting the “social foundations of learning, the role of language in cognitive development and identity formation, and the link between individual and social” (Xu, 2012, p. 111). In dialogic pedagogy, meaning is constructed through teachers' and students' interaction in a dynamic nature. This helps learners develop a higher level of understanding, autonomous learning, and cognitive process that promote class discussions (Kim & Wilkinson. 2018). The class discussions can motivate interaction or a term conceived by Bakhtin (1981) as a “responsive understanding” (p. 279). Bakhtin postulated a theory of language (i.e., *dialogism theory*) that the social nature of a language is the focal point. Bakhtin highlighted the pivotal role of utterance in *dialogism theory*. He maintains that context can formulate meaning and meaning only happens inside a dialogue. Bakhtin distinguished two types of discourses, namely *authoritative discourse (AD)* and *internally persuasive discourse (IPD)*. AD is a monologic discourse which is the feature of traditional writing and thought. It is a single thought discourse monopolized by a dominant person (i.e., teacher). However, IPD is a dialogic discourse of one's personal beliefs and the opinion that formulate one's stories about the world (Bakhtin, 1981). Michaels and O'Connor (2012) conceptualize IPD as the voices without authority, characterized by dialogues of interaction, intellectual openness, and thought.

A framework of DT comprises different conceptual tools namely, *indicators, principles, and methods*. Hennessy, Rojas-Drummond, Higham, Marquez, Maine, Ríos (2016) listed five key indicators to explain expressions of DT: (1) the expression of students' thoughts with reasoning, (2) a teacher's open question of high cognitive demand, (3) uptake, (4) the occurrence of student questions, and (5) open discussion. Likewise, Alexander (2017) identifies several key features of DT. Alexander proposes a DT framework that teachers should follow in DT. The framework comprised five repertoires. Alexander suggests that the classroom discourse must be (1) *collective* (i.e., all learners should engage the class discussion) (2) *reciprocal* (i.e., both teachers and students should attend each other and share opinions and thoughts ) (3) *supportive* (i.e., participants should feel free to express their opinions without the fear of giving a wrong answer or being sneered) (4) *cumulative* (i.e., classroom discourse is the gradual accumulation of knowledge in a stepwise process ), (5) *purposeful* (i.e., interaction should be goal-oriented toward the educational objective). Besides, Hetherington and Wegerif (2018) suggest that effective DT should encompass four strands: High degree of interaction in dialogue, voice learners' ideas, motivate questioning of ideas, and organize group work.

## 2.2. Critical Writing

The notion of CT were hot topics among the Greek philosophers, the Renaissance intellectuals, and the researchers of the 19th and 20th centuries. CT draws Hegel's work and Kant's critical ideology (LaGarde & Hudgins, 2018). Chance (1986) defines CT as the skill to evaluate facts, analyze arguments, propose ideas, organize opinions, support ideas, draw inferences, make decisions, and solve problems. In CT, *literacy* found to be the talents that creates in the improvement of voice and concerns to the well-being of oneself and society. Practitioners associate CT, critical writing, and critical dialogue. In this regard, teachers play an important role in fostering learners' CT mode. Kumaravadivelu (2003) distinguished a paradigm shift in teachers' role from *passive technicians to reflective practitioners*. Kumaravadivelu proposed the ideal of L2 teachers as “transformative intellectuals” that reflects the *parameter of possibility* in post-method pedagogy (p. 8). Ghahremani and Mirhosseini, (2005) posit that writing may not cause to social transformation directly. They maintain that writing is a step towards empowerment and transformation which breaks the *culture of silence* among students.

Generally, models of writing instruction may be classified into process and product-oriented approach. The former focuses on the process of writing comprising planning, drafting, revising, responding, evaluating, and post writing. The latter deals with grammatical accuracy and the writing process itself (Holmes, 2001). What lacks in both approaches to writing, pedagogy is to consider writing as a means of education that goes beyond writing proficiency. In response, Kubota (2004) proposed “*critical multiculturalism*” as an alternative to the traditional approaches. It aims to raise

learners' critical awareness to be the agent of change. Morrel (2003) postulates that some basic principles of CT may be incorporated into critical writing classes. Morrel recommends some issues (e.g., highlighting learners' first language, domestic culture, and problem-posing instruction, or students' real-life concerns) for writing pedagogy. Likewise, Akbari (2008) suggested that students' writing can take a critical step by taking into account different factors such as cultural, social, and ideological affairs. Practitioners (Atkinson, 2003; Bailey, 1990; Crème; 2008; LaGarde & Hudgins, 2018) viewed writing from critical aspect (i.e., *post-process*). They consider writing from a comprehensive standpoint than a mere instrumental function. To them, writing can be an act of exploring social issues, a place for 'risk-free experimentation and a tool for taking action to improve living conditions. Hall (2018) contemplated writing as a CL practice with the characteristics that are commonly known as *DJW*. Clarke (2019) capitalizes critical dialogue to self-directed, self-disciplined, and self-monitored thinking.

### 2.3. Dialogue Journal Writing

DJs are a teacher-developed practice and a written interaction with the aim to interact and to exchange ideas and reflections (Peyton, & Staton, 1993). Originally, it was practiced as an *ethnographic study* in the 1980s with the work of a teacher in Los Angeles, *Leslee Reed*. Researchers (Barjesteh, 2017, Clarke, 2019; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005) employed DJ as a means to foster writing development, promote L2 learning, use authentic communication, and develop the teacher-student interaction. DJs are written conversation which opens up opportunities to employ various language functions in a natural setting (Atwell, 2014). Unlike academic writing, DJs are dialogic in a collaborative learning environment. Peyton (1990) defines DJ as "a type of written interaction between teachers and students that focuses on meaning rather than form and is a means of developing students' linguistic competence, their understanding of course content, and their ability to communicate in written English" (p. ix). Similarly, Davis (2013) describes DJ as "a supervision tool which has the potential to transform learning within field and employment settings. DJs enhance reflective practice, CT, and integration of faith in practice" (p. 3). Bailey (1990) defines journal writing as "a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal" (p. 215). Hall (2018) considered DJ as a kind of 'interactive writing' that helps learners to write as a CL practice with the features written conversation and interactive writing. Clarke (2019) posits that DJs are similar to spoken language. Clarke maintains that DJs help the use of various language functions, whereas academic writings are limited to a narrower range. Shuy (1988) believes that DJs open doors for "the necessary conditions which are true for the development of any language skill, oral or written" (p. 87). Different researchers (Alexander, 2018; Atwell, 2014; Hetherington & Wegerif, 2018) advocate incorporating DJ for their value in fostering learners' CT ability. They suggested that DJ help students practice self-directed learning, self-reflective awareness, personal empowerment, and a personal voice.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

Two groups of participants (i.e., EFL students and teachers) comprised the subject pool of the study. To address the first and second research questions, convenience and random sampling procedures were adopted for the sample selection. Following Glaser and Strauss's (1967) guidelines for data saturation in a qualitative study, a total of 57 EFL students were randomly selected out of all available students. They were all intermediate adult male ( $N=21$ ) and female ( $N=35$ ) language learners with the age range of 16 to 31. They were selected from two branches of Iran language institute (ILI), Amol and Babol, Iran.

To fulfil the last objective, a nationwide study was conducted to navigate teachers' attitudes toward the practicality of DT. A total of 200 (96 males, 104 females) EFL teachers were selected with the hope to voluntarily fill out a copy of DT questionnaire. They were all members of the Teaching English Language and Literature Society of Iran (TELLSI) who hold a master's degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Their age ranged from 23 to 40. To ward off educational and

experiential boundaries, the researchers kept out some TELSI members. It aimed to have homogeneous respondents with the same degree and teaching experience. The researchers excluded novice and experienced members since they believed that their response might affect generalizability of the current study. Accordingly, all the respondents with BA and Ph.D. degrees and the teachers above 20 and below 5 years of experience were excluded from the sample. Concerning sampling procedure, availability and random sampling were adopted. To meet magnitude requirements, data collection made a crossover into different cities.

### 3.2. *Instruments*

To quantify students' DJ, Ada's (1988) CT model was utilized to measure students' CT element in their writing. The model comprised four modes of writing: (a) descriptive, (b) personal-interpretive, (c) critical, and (d) creative. The first mode encompasses a factual perspective in which surface-level explanations of facts are the main focus. The second mode necessitates students to associate facts and surface-level information to their experiences. It goes beyond analyzing the received information in view of learners' experiences and emotions which is part of true learning. Critical mode emerges out of involvement in an abstract process of critical analysis. It comprises description, personal interpretation, reasoning and analysis of the issues that are being written about. Eventually, the creative mode encompasses all previous modes. However, this mode is a step forward toward the previous modes and provides suggestions for change. It demands the ability to give suggestions, solve problems, and transform what it deals with.

### 3.3. *Procedure*

The preliminary focus of this study was to probe the contribution of DT in an EFL classroom. To undertake the study, the principles of DT were practiced through the guidelines proposed in an L2 professional literature in three ELT classrooms hereafter, dialogic teaching group (DTG). To identify the principles, the L2 professional literature was extensively searched. Different practitioners (i.e., Alexander, 2020; Clarke, 2019; Hennessy et al., 2016; Hetherington, & Wegerif, 2018; Michaels et al., 2008) proposed some preconditions for a dialogic classroom. Following the instructions and requirements proposed in the literature, the main principles were formed and utilized with no modifications to their content. More precisely, the guidelines comprised 24 principles of DT encompassed various issues like CT activities, negotiating, questioning, giving feedback, turn-taking management, and teaching process. Notably, The principles comprised different repertoires such as give room to your students' questions, encourage students to explore, analyze, discuss, and argue, help students to think about what they hear, respect other's view, encourage transactional, expository, interrogatory, exploratory, expressive, evaluative talk, use uptake in your class, have a top-notch evaluation for the students' replies to your questions, pose questions with high cognitive level, use authentic and referential questions, propose content feedback, provide your students with the wait-time, develop a student-initiated talk, promote discussion and dialogue, discuss topics and subtopics with your students and sometimes allow your students select the topics, teach collectively, supportively, cumulatively, purposefully, and reciprocally, follow up your students' contributions, manage the follow-up move (i.e., F-move), let your students self-select themselves, be a smart turn manager, and facilitate the class activities.

To provide a better picture of the principles in the DTG, each class was initiated by a topic pertinent to the content of texts in the class discussion or the latest reading texts of different subjects. Besides, the students were allowed to choose their favorite topics. The teachers helped students to express themselves freely. When they could openly express their opinions on a topic, the teachers left the space in an attempt and let them have collaborative dialogue in a critical atmosphere. In this step, the teacher turned out to be a mediator. At the end of each session, students were invited to write a DJ to reflect on how teaching process could help them achieve creative mode. They were asked to reflect on the course content, to take critical reflection on their writing and to connect their writings to their real-life concern. Notably, this study incorporated a reflective inquiry and critical intervention whereby each student narrated his/her personal experience and the critical incident in their language

learning. Since they had no previous experience in writing a DJ, some guidelines were provided on how to write a DJ. Notably, each student was expected to write at least nine assignments. They were collected at the end of each session, and they were kept in a portfolio. This comprised a cumulative collection of students' DJs in a traditional writing folder during a period of ten sessions. A bulk of 570 journal entries were expected to be collected during the study. Eighty-two journals were not qualified for the analysis due to incomplete writing, fail to present the assignment, resort to plagiarism in writing, or unwilling to participate. Thus, a total of 488 journals were qualified for the analysis. This contribution was examined via Ada's (1988) model of CT to quantify students' writing. To pursue how DJW contributes to students' CL practice, two colleagues holding Ph.D. in TEFL helped the researchers. Particularly, they helped the researchers in terms of measuring students' CT modes of writing and classifying each journal in four determined modes (i.e., descriptive, personal-interpretive, critical, and creative).

To cross-validate the findings of content analysis, the principles of DT were put into a five-Likert scale format. DTQ distributed among the targeted subject. The questionnaire sent online via email to 50 of the respondents who were absent less than 3 weeks during the course. Since the respondents were the researchers' students, they were assured that the reply does not affect the final evaluation of the course. Some ethical considerations (i.e., confidentiality and anonymity) were observed to increase the credibility of the data. Notably, attempts were made to help students feel comfortable in providing an answer. Since it is difficult to conduct an anonymous questionnaire through the mail, the researchers requested a classmate to collect the data. This assured that the researchers do not follow-up on non-responders. The questionnaires were collected over seven weeks after distribution. Baruch and Holtom (2009) suggested a valid response rate of 52.7% for the questionnaires in social science. Following their guidelines, a total of 40 questionnaires meet a valid response rate for the analysis.

Finally, to navigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the principles of DT, a nationwide study was conducted. Notably, the DTQs were distributed via online to different TELSI members. They were requested to score the principles from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to prioritize their satisfaction from the most to the least frequent principles. The aim was to prioritize from the most frequent items to the least frequent ones. They were asked to answer based on the practicality of the principles as far as their experience in language teaching was concerned. Actually, they were provided with the list of items and asked to score each item from number 1 (Never true for me) to number 5 (Always true for me). 200 TELSI members with an MA degree fill out the questionnaire. The initial analysis followed Baruch and Holtom's guidelines for the credibility of the response rate for the questionnaire. Following their analysis, 180 questionnaires were qualified for the analysis.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

A qualitative research method was adopted to explore the extent to which implementing the principles of DT could promote CT mode in EFL learners' writing. Following Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen's (2013) guidelines for qualitative research approaches, an ethnography design best suited the objective of the present research in a small case to explore subjects' perspective in a naturally occurring behavior, to realize the common beliefs, values, opinions, and perceptions of a specific group of people and to shift from description to explanation and theory generation. Heigham and Croker (2009) proposed different data collection methods for qualitative analysis, such as observation, interviews, open-response questionnaire items, verbal reports, diaries, and discourse analysis, to name but a few. Regarding the primary focus of this study, students were invited to write DJs as a data collection method to reflect on the class discussion. To analyze the data, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed. Notably, this study utilized a phenomenological procedure for the analysis to uncover students' holistic view in their DJs. A bottom-up approach in IPA was adopted by the analysis procedure offered by Heigham and Croker. The data were coded into reductionist themes from students' direct quotations. To guarantee the validity of the collected data, the emergent quotations were cross-checked with the students and two experienced colleagues holding Ph.D. in TEFL. To screen how DJW contributes to students' CL practice, Ada's CT model in writing was

employed. To analyze the second phase, the frequency and descriptive statistics were run. Chi-Square Goodness of fit test was conducted to specify if the attitudes expressed by the participants have not been random, and the differences between the distributions of choices are significantly meaningful. In addition, the frequency of the use for the DT principle was presented schematically and analyzed as follows.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Analysis of the First Research Question

In order to probe to what extent implementing the principles of DT increase CT mode in EFL learners' DJW, the journal entries were read meticulously for the content analysis so as to find the main themes in their DJW. In so doing, the researchers labeled each journal entry with a letter, namely D, PI, CT, and C representing descriptive, personal-interpretive, critical, and creative mode, respectively. Following Ada' CT guideline, two colleagues helped the researchers to label each DJ with the intention to ensure the credibility of the data. Three temporal sequences were specified for the analysis to track the possible changes in students' written conversation at four modes, descriptive, personal-interpretive, critical, and creative as informed by Ada's critical modes. The sequences categorized in three weeks. To be able to divide this period into equal temporal sequences, the researcher divided the weeks into three sequences of 3 sessions as first, second, and third three weeks. The proportion of descriptive, personal interpretive, critical, and creative entries was considered as an indicator of the characteristics of students' writing in each of the temporal sequences and also as an illustration of changes in the quality of the entries from the beginning to the end of the program. Table 1 represents an increase in the number of critical and creative modes and a decrease in the numbers of descriptive and personal-interpretive entries as the students pursued their DJWs.

Table 1: Frequency of Occurrence for the Temporal Sequences and the Modes

Sequence/Mode	Descriptive	Personal	Critical	Creative	1
1 <sup>st</sup> three weeks	25 10.64%	17 7.23%	1 .43%	5 2.13%	48
2 <sup>nd</sup> three weeks	24 10.21%	19 8.09%	7 2.98%	15 6.38%	65
3 <sup>rd</sup> three weeks	14 5.96%	10 4.26%	17 7.23%	19 8.09%	60
Total	63	46	25	39	173

As indicated in Table 1, students' descriptive and personal writing decreased in the last temporal session and tend to be more critical and creative. For the better schematic presentation, the detail is presented in Figure 1 indicating the mean data and percentage during the temporal sequence from the first three weeks to the third three weeks.

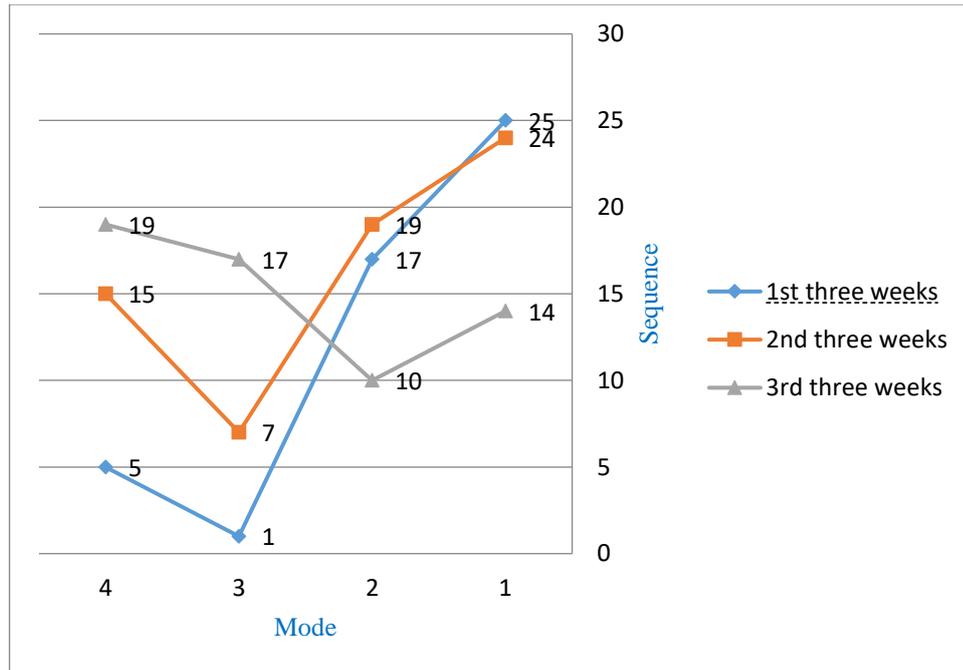


Figure 1: Schematic Representation of the Temporal Sequences and the Modes

Figure 1 manifests that during the first and the second three-weeks 49.13% of the students' journal entries were either in the form of descriptive or personal mode. However, students' writing mode changed in the last three sessions. Notably, there was an increase in the number of critical and creative modes in students' DJW towards their attitudes of the speaking classroom. More explicitly, of all journal entries, 20.80% were either in the form of critical or creative mode. All in all, some of the students' writing (9.82%) devoted to the critical mode, and 10.98% of their DJs followed the creative mode.

The following illustrations are samples of students' DJs. They represent students' perceptions about class practices based on the underpinning of DT. The participants were already assured of the confidentiality of the data collection. To protect the privacy, each student is labeled as *S* representing the student along with a number:

**S1:** *I thought the class was useless at first because there was no textbook to follow, but I learned how to comment because the topics were of my interest. It gave me confidence and encouraged me to search for the topic and discuss [it] in the class.*

**S2:** *The class was [a] good chance for us to talk about everything which was closely related to our daily activities. Now, I see I have a list of vocabulary I search myself. The class was a good chance to discuss everything.*

**S3:** *The teacher allowed me to speak in Persian when I did not know. This was a competition for my classmates to say what I could not say. This helped me to solve the problems.*

**S4:** *We learned to criticize the problems we had in our daily life. Sometimes, we forgot that we were in a speaking classroom because we did not think when we spoke. The focus was toward the problem. In the end, I surprised I could speak freely.*

**S5:** *I was happy when I saw my topic was selected for several times. It gave me more energy to speak about that for the next session.*

**S6:** *I think this is the best way that we know the problem of the poor, social, political and cultural issues. I think the original books are not useful for Iranian culture.*

**S7:** *Thank you that you taught us how to look at English class. It was a free podium to talk [about]. Here we learned to critique everything and not to accept the idea easily.*

**S8:** *Your class was more than an English teaching class. I think you mixed literature, ethics, culture, politics, and sociology in the class. We feel free.*

The excerpts illustrated above indicate an improvement of students' writing from personal to critical mode. However, DJW of three students remained at the personal mode. The following excerpts indicate their perceptions regarding the course procedure and the principles of DT in the speaking classroom:

**S9:** *I do not understand why you invite us to reflect on the topics. Please assign us some homework like in our high school or in a private institute.*

**S10:** *why do not you teach the speaking textbooks in the market? Do you think they are useless....?*

**S11:** *we come here to learn English, and to speak the Foreign Language. Why should you pose a problem and invite us to solve it?*

#### 4.2. Analysis of the Second Research Question

The second research question sought to explore students' attitudes toward the principles of DT. To assure the content validity of the proposed principles, five experts holding a Ph.D. degree in TEFL were asked to read the principles to determine the validity. All the vague points were revised or removed and the final principles were developed. Using the average approach, Table 2 shows the content validity index (CVI) for the instruments based on the experts' opinions.

Table 2: Content Validity Index for the Principles of Dialogic Teaching

Item content validity index				SVI	IRA	CS
Comprehensiveness	Relevance	Clarity	wording			
.91	.85	.84	.87	.86.7	.89	.91

Scale validity index, Inter-rater agreement, Comprehensiveness score

To answer the research question, a descriptive statistic was run to determine the frequencies of the collected data. Besides, Chi-Square goodness of fit test was conducted on the categorized DT scores to uncover whether the attitudes expressed by the students were random or not. To analyze the data, the ordinal data of the questionnaire were changed into the interval data by assigning values. More specifically, the choices were first given value from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Then, the scores obtained by the students in the DTQ were divided into two main categories, namely *positive and negative*. Scores ranged from 24-120 (24 to 47= strongly disagree; 48 to 71= disagree; 72 to 95= fairly agree; 96 to 115= agree; 116-120= strongly agree). To dichotomize positive and negative attitudes, the scores from 24-71 fell into the negative attitude, and those from 72-120 fell into the positive category. Table 3 indicates the frequencies of the respondents' range of scores for each scale in the questionnaire.

Table 3: Frequency of the range of scores for each scale in the Questionnaire

Range of scores	Scale	Attitude	Frequency	Percent
24-47	Strongly disagree	Negative	0	0
48-71	Disagree	Negative	3	7.5
72-95	Fairly agree	Positive	10	25
96-115	Agree	Positive	27	67.5
116-120	Strongly agree	Positive	0	0
Total			40	100

Table 3 indicates that 37 respondents (92.5 %) fell into a positive category and 3 respondents (7.5 %) fell into a negative category. To describe the participants' categorized scores, the frequency and descriptive statistics were run. Table 4 shows the students' view on the DT principles as far as the frequencies of the scales are concerned.

Table 4: Frequency of Students Attitudes toward the principles of Dialogic Teaching

Scale		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
DT Principles	Strongly agree	263	27.4	27.4
	Agree	374	39.0	39.0
	Fairly Agree	191	19.9	19.9
	Disagree	95	9.9	9.9
	Strongly disagree	37	3.9	3.9
	Total	960	100.0	100.0

Table 4 indicates that the students' attitudes toward the principles of DT fall into the first category, namely positive. More precisely, the majority of the responses on the scales (86.3 %) fall into the positive category while only small proportion of them falls into the negative category. In other words, EFL students indicate satisfaction about incorporating the principles of DT in their classrooms. To verify the findings, a Chi-square goodness of fit test was run on the categorized test scores.

Table 5: Observed and Expected Frequencies of Students' attitudes toward Dialogic Teaching

Scores	Frequency		
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Disagree	3	13.3	-10.3
Agree	27	13.3	-3.3
Fairly agree	10	13.3	13.7
Total	40		

Table 5 indicates the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies agree, i.e., ( $N = 27$ ), disagree ( $N = 3$ ), and fairly agree ( $N = 10$ ). A Chi-square test was run for the attitudes of students as far as positive and negative categories are concerned. The results are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6: Chi-Square Goodness of fit Test for Students' Attitude Based on Categories

Statistic	Score
Chi-Square	22.850 <sup>a</sup>
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5.

The minimum expected cell frequency is 13.3.

A Chi-square value of 22.850 was obtained which is highly significant, for the value of  $p$  was found to be .000, [ $\chi^2 (2, N = 40) = 22.850, p < .000$ ]. The findings indicate that the positive scores gained by the learners were significantly higher than the negative scores. Thus, the attitudes expressed by the students have not been random, and the differences between the distributions of choices are significantly meaningful.

#### 4.3. Analysis of the Third Research Question

To probe the ELT community attitudes toward the practicality of the principles of DT, the principles were administered to different TELLSI members. To analyze the data only respondents ( $N = 200$ ) with MA degree were included. Figure 2 shows the schematic representation of the survey.

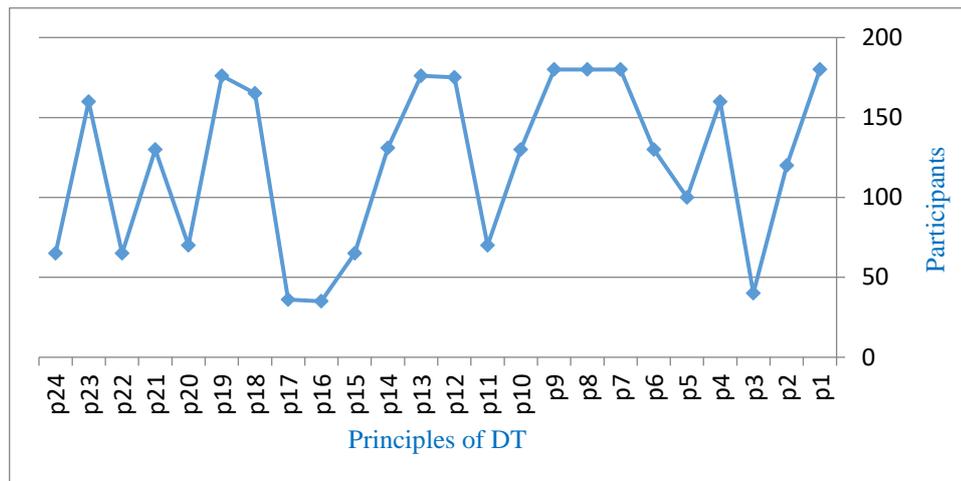


Figure 2: Frequency of use for the Dialogic Teaching Principle

Figure 2 indicates that 8 principles (p19, p9, p8, p7, p13, p12, p1, and p18) were the most frequent principles. The first rank among the most frequent items goes to principle 19 and principles, 7, 8, and 9. Most of teachers were supportive of the principles of DT. They maintained that implementing the principles may challenge students' assumptions concerning a course. Moreover, they found that an in-depth analysis of a discussed topic useful. Teachers hold this idea that dialogic interaction can pave the ground for learners' CL. Similarly, the majority of the respondents concurred that DJW could influence learners' intellectual ability. Teachers' answers on principles 7 and 8 indicated that DJ can provide an enriched language-learning context for their students by drawing explicit linkage between theory and practice (p 7 and p 8).

The next two principles among the frequent ones are principles 13 and 12. Teachers postulated that students become *self-directed through contextualization*. They were supportive of the selection of the course contents via negotiation. Similarly, principles 1 and 13 were the last frequent items respectively. Besides, Figure 2 indicates that interaction between teacher and learners can motivate students to reflect on their learning by linking their knowledge to their real-life situations in a dialogical method. Moreover, teachers reported factors such as learners' needs and critical reflection in a classroom can raise learners' motivation toward learning. On the other hand, some principles (p16, p17, and p3) were the least frequent. Teachers believed that the course procedure did not help them develop critical awareness in the system of education of Iran. In is interesting to mention that most of them expressed satisfaction regarding students' social development. They maintained that students prefer to be silent on some topics such as political and economic issues.

## 5. Discussion

The main concern of the present was to explore to what extent applying the principles of DT can increase CT mode. The findings attested that DJW can pave the ground for creative mode. The direct quotation of students' writing depicted that there was a transitive shift in the number of descriptive or personal modes in their writings. Notably, students' writing mode turned from descriptive and personal mode to critical and creative mode in the last temporal sessions. The findings attested that there was an increase in the number of critical and creative writing mode. This outcome supports Schmidt's (2001) incidental learning and Deykeyser (2003) implicit learning at the theoretical ground. Applying the principles of DT in the EFL classroom can be pedagogically useful since they changed students' attitudes from a personal to reflective mode. This would help students develop their critical consciousness or what Freire (1970) called *conscientization*.

The findings also provided evidence that DJW could successfully contribute to the establishment of the DT. It provided learners a stress-free situation to practice speaking through written communication. The findings attested that DJ could promote learners' CT mode by

transferring learners from a functional view of writing to a critical perspective. The findings enriched the previous studies in L2 professional literature. DJW explored other dimensions of EFL learners' perceptions towards implementing the rules of DT in their classrooms such as developing self-directed learning skills, CL, language learning, motivation, and affective factors. The results are in line with Marefat (2002) who found that incorporating diary in the EFL classroom helped students become aware of their language learning. Marefat came up with the conclusion that written informal conversation in diaries is too important to ignore. Through journals, students have opportunities to use language for communicating with their teachers. She concluded that as the study progressed, students' attitudes changed to be interactive. The finding echoes Moon (2003) who believes that learning from DJ can accentuate favorable conditions for learning. Students wrote that writing reflective journals encourage reflection and deep learning. This reflects Moon who posits that DJs can develop a personal understanding of the materials by providing linkage with what is already known among learners. Ghahremani-Ghajar and Mirhosseini (2005) also found that writing DJ can be a CL practice among EFL learners in a productive way. Similarly, they found that DJW can help learners voice their ideas.

Some of the participants wrote about their personal feeling and proposed some hints on how to incorporate DJs in their other courses. This idea echoes Crème's (2008) notion of a *hybrid genre*. Crème argued that DT "can be seen as a *hybrid genre* of writing positioned between life narrative and the university essay" (p. 49). He maintained that learners' DJs can also be considered as *transitional writing*, formally and functionally. DJs offer *transitional learning sphere* that leads to creative activity, foster autonomy, and motivate students to take charge of their learning (Bailey, 1990; Marefat, 2002). In this regard, Barnett (2005, as cited in Larrotta, 2008) nominates a journal writing a '*critical space*'. Like the findings of the current study, Barnett postulates that DJ helps learners explore ideas and expand their CT ability. The finding also is in congruence with Bhushan's (2014) study who indicated that dialogue can develop students' critical awareness. Bhushan maintained that DJW can foster the learners' CT ability. They conclude that DJW is often used as a powerful means for increasing reflection in the classroom.

Many students wrote that writing journals provide them with an opportunity to cooperate with their peers and improve their knowledge. This result is in congruence with Garcia et al. (2020) who posited that DJ provides students with a safe space by helping them improve inquiry, creativity, and knowledge which have been obviated due to the cooperation with others. Accordingly, providing students with a safe space in order to help them take risk and engage them in the writing process seems to be satisfactory among practitioners. Writing a DJ may provide learners with a chance to decrease the L2 writing apprehension. In addition, students wrote that DJs helped them speak in a written mode. They believed that it is a written communication which helped to interact and speak in a safe mode. This follows Larrotta (2008) who posited that DJW is a step beyond journal writing. It is viewed as "an informal written conversation between the students and the teacher" (p. 21). Similarly, Staton (1991) confirmed that DJ contains three equally significant elements of "(a) the written communication itself, (b) the dialogic conversation, and (c) the responsive relationship" (p. xvii).

Following the theoretical underpinnings of DT, the findings are in line with some theories (e.g., Vygotsky's (1978) *sociocultural theory*, Halliday and Hassan's (1989) *learning as a social process*, and Swain's (1995) *comprehensive output hypothesis*). DJW serves as a social and cognitive activity whereby language learning is conciliated by language use. The results are in line with Garcia et al. (2020) in that they considered the efficacy of dialogue as an effective instructional practice to transform the socio-cultural context. Students' excerpts indicate that the course procedure helped them express their ideas freely and practice their general English in a real context. Likewise, Barjesteh (2020) views DJs as an activity where students can practice their topic of interest without the fear of evaluation. Comparably, many practitioners (LaGard & Hudgins, 2018; Lan & Lam, 2020; Lin, 2019) stipulate that such an approach to writing provide learners with a chance to willingly open their mind through real written dialogue. They posit that such an approach encourages students to unconsciously examine and acquire the correct use of grammar, diction, and spelling of words, as well as foster their writing fluency.

The findings also support the second classification of Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical concept in learning (i.e., persuasive discourse). To Bakhtin, it is a dialogic discourse that takes into accounts of numerous perspectives, a term coined by (Scott, et al., 2006) as *double-voiced* or *multi-voiced*. Similarly, Niknezhad, Khodareza and Mashhadi Heidar (2019) believed that DT can foster critical reflection and motivate transformative mode in a classroom. Students wrote that DJ and class discussion involved them in collaborative dialogue and empower them to be reflective learners. This finding supports Barjesteh (2017) who claimed that the current trend in ELT should focus on dialogic driven pedagogy. He postulated that the class environment should prepare students to be the agent of their society and teachers should not only transmit knowledge. This perspective causes a dialogic and a critical-oriented shift. Barjesteh (2020) advises teachers to promote students' reflection. Barjesteh believes that reflection leads students to greater self-awareness which essentially influence the development of social work. To help learners become CTs, a teacher's role should change from a transmitter to a reflective practitioner, a student should be an active agent of his/her learning, and a classroom should be a place for identity endeavor.

From a critical standpoint, the term authority acknowledges a joint power between teachers and students. Many teachers acknowledged that DJW helped learners act in a questioning manner to construct their understanding of the course content. This idea is in congruence with the upholders of dialogic pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Hetherington & Wegerif, 2018; Kim & Wilkinson, 2018) who believe that knowledge is no more realized as passive information. In fact, it is gradually constructed in interaction through a dynamic nature (Mortimer & Scott, 2003). The idea echoes Bakhtin's (1981) conceptualization dialogism in that it encourages learners' voices, values, and perspectives. Bakhtin postulates that knowledge is not in an individual mind, but it is built by engaging participants in a critical interaction. From a Bakhtinian perspective, an interaction is dialogic when both teachers and students have the authority and the autonomy to voice their ideas. Following Bakhtin's conceptualization, the course procedure in the current study helped the students interact through written communication.

The secondary focus of this study was to navigate EFL teachers' attitudes toward the practicality of DT in Iran. Many teachers were supportive of the practicality of DT. They found that reflective journal can provide an in-depth analysis of the course content. Many of them concurred that DJ could foster their CT mode, *self-directed learning*, and *cooperative learning*. However, they reported that there are some boundaries. They believed that teachers and students seem to be silent on different topics, or they may be reluctant in some activities due to the top-down policy of the educational system of Iran. This finding supports the study conducted by Sadeghi and Ketabi (2009). They concluded that most teachers were not interested in political issues in Iran because it was considered as something taboo that may endanger teachers' situations. Likewise, a similar political concern has been reported by the EFL teachers of this study. This finding indicates some hindrances of moving from theory to practice for the practicality of the principles of DT in a different aspect. Thus, different societies with different cultures are not able to apply the main tenet of DT in the same manner. This finding supports some authors (Atkinson, 2003; Shin & Crookes, 2005) who pinpointed the social and democratic aspects of CT. Thus, the principles may not be applicable to non-western students. Teachers' attitudes toward the practicality of DT are in line with Pishghadam and Mirzaee (2008). They have criticized implementing postmodernism at different educational levels due to the centralized system of education. They reported the top-down policy as the main boundaries for the practicality of the post-modernism. Likewise, Aliakbari and Allahmoradi (2012) dialogic pedagogy cannot be applied in Iran due to the conservative forces dominated among the teachers. Like the findings reported in the current study, they found that teachers are not inclined to take a risk in order to be the agent of a social change. A similar study conducted by Barjesteh (2017) supported EFL teachers' perceptions of the practicality of DT. Barjesteh reported that critical language pedagogy is hard to be operationalized due to micro and macro hindrances (i.e., centralized planning system, national, willpower, curriculum and syllabus, and system of evaluation). The results of the current study indicated that both teachers and students underpinned the principles of DT. They argued that dialogue was an important technique for promoting classroom discourse. It is a sphere for interaction

and joint activity between teachers and students. This shows that dialogue is different from a conversation and a classroom talk. Accordingly, it follows Shuy (1988) who posits that DJ opens doors for various language functions that are different from academic writing. Besides, the findings echo Alexander's (2020) justification for the importance of incorporating dialogue in the classroom. Alexander maintained that having a dialogic classroom demands careful planning and mutual relationship.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications**

Given the dialogic nature of the study, the establishment of DT had a promising effect in providing learners with opportunities to foster reflective teaching, to participate in class activities and to train them to be CTs. The findings of the study provided evidence that DJW could successfully contribute to the establishment of DT. Many students reported that incorporating DJ foster their intellectual ability. They reported that the course procedure had a promising effect in a different situation. Notably, it provided them a stress-free situation to practice speaking through written communication. It could promote learners' CL by transferring learners from a functional to a critical perspective. The findings also improve the literature in that it explored other dimensions of EFL learners' perceptions towards implementing the rules of DT in their classrooms such as developing self-directed learning skills, CL, language learning, motivation, and affective factors. Accordingly, syllabus designers, course developers, and materials designers may utilize the implication of the findings of the current research to design tasks, activities, and exercises which encourage teaching and learning dialogically in order to develop negotiation and reflective teaching. To establish a dialogic classroom, EFL teachers should be educated to follow up on their students' contributions, be a wise turn manager, negotiate topics and subtopics of discussion with students and connect the course content to students' real-life concerns and interests outside the classroom.

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