The Lighting of a Fire: The Value of Dialogic in the Teaching and Learning of Literature for EF/SL Learners at the University-level in UAE

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Nayyer Iqbal Ali Chandella
Signed:
Dedication

‘To my brother, Zahid; for his care, understanding and support...with love and gratitude.’
Acknowledgements

Praise and gratitude be to Allah the beneficent, the merciful.

Research for me is a travelled path lined with lamp posts, shedding light and showing the way. There are many people I can think of, for being those ‘lamp posts’ of light for me. I thank them all (My teachers and family).

This research would not have been possible without the generosity and support of my family, my parents (though not in this world now) who nurtured me with loving care and infused in me the love for learning and humanity.

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ABSTRACT

Dialogic pedagogy involves students as critical inquirers, who can analyze their perspectives and attitudes. Dialogic creates liminal space (Buber, 1965) where conversation generates knowledge and personal relations. I intend to explore these ‘dialogic spaces’ where a group of 20 students and their teacher engage in dialogue around literary texts in an advanced English composition and literature major class of female students of one university in United Arab Emirates (UAE). My study takes further, growing interest in the value of dialogical process in second language learning. It describes the ways in which learners engaged in dialogical process begin to challenge perspectives and power relations. Because of the positive response that followed the sessions (conducted for the pilot study), I wanted to explore the process in relation to gender and culture. My dissertation research takes further the questions raised in the assignment study. I want to consider the conditions that will allow perspectives to remain in dialogue. My research explores how dialogic literacy practices function in relation to particular cultural and ideological discourses (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1996; Luke, 1991).

The data include: class observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews (of students and the teacher) and writing assignments. The study employs an exploratory research design to discover and understand perspectives of the people involved (Merriam, 1998). I therefore emphasize that the analyses of the data are offered as partial and unfinished interpretations based on a specific theoretical framework. Although the research findings cannot be generalized across all female students in the UAE, they provide some insight into the learning experiences and preferences of Emirati women.

Knowledge is finding light in darkness and staying warm in the cold. This is the knowledge our students must acquire. Not facts and theories, but a deep knowing (O’Reilley, 1998). Thus it seems appropriate to me to call this study, ‘the lighting of a fire’ (W.B.Yeats).
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page 1  
Dedication 2  
Acknowledgement 3  
Abstract 4  
Table of contents 5  
List of Appendices 9  
List of figure 9  
List of tables 10  
List of acronyms 10  

CHAPTER-1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY 11  
1. INTRODUCTION 11  
1.1 My research motivation : evolving concepts of learning 12  
1.2 Background of the Problem 13  
1.2.1 How and why my research question evolved 14  
1.2.2 Theoretical context 14  
1.2.3 Research problem 15  
1.2.4 Research design 15  
1.3 Significance of the research study 16  
1.4 Road map of my dissertation journey 17  
1.5 Closing Thoughts for chapter one 18  

CHAPTER-2: THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY 20  
2. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT 20  
2.1 Locational Context 21  
2.1.1 Religious and cultural values: a peep into the past 21  
2.1.2 The cultural comfort zone 23  
2.1.3 Women in focus 24  
2.2 Development of UAE education system 25  
2.3 EF/SL teaching in the UAE 26  
2.4 The Research Study Focus in Context 28  
2.5 Summary of the chapter 28  

5
CHAPTER-3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 An historical story: how my work fits into this story

3.1.1 Dialogic researching practice

3.1.2 Questions that haven’t been addressed before

3.2 My concerns: definition of constructs

3.2.1 Social references and issues of power

3.2.2 Culture and context

3.2.3 Gendered perspective

3.2.4 Concern about silence

3.3 The conceptual frame work

3.3.1 Theoretical Perspective

3.3.2 Critical social theory

3.3.3 Relation of Constructivism and socio-cultural Theory with Dialogic.

3.4 Dialogic Format: philosophies and practices

3.4.1 Lamps of knowledge: old and new

3.4.2 The T/S model

3.4.3 From T/S to dialogue

3.4.4 Dialogic discourse

3.4.5 Dialectic or dialogic

3.4.6 Socratic ideals and Maieutike

3.5 Theoretical precedents: Critical dialogic theorists

3.5.1 Critical pedagogy

3.5.2 Critical pedagogy (CP) in EF/SL

3.5.3 The possibilities dialogic offers.

3.5.3.1 Construction of new perspectives: The agentive turn

3.5.3.2 How dialogue leads to transformation?

3.5.3.3 Agents of Change: some possibilities

3.5.4 Dialogic pedagogy and the Risks involved

3.6 Thoughts about the review process

3.7. My odyssey begins...

CHAPTER-4: Methodology
4. INTRODUCTION
4.1 The research paradigm
  4.1.1 The feminist tilt
4.2 Rationale for Choice of Approach
  4.2.1 Research Design
4.3 The Research Site
4.4 The researcher, students and the teacher
  4.4.1 The Teacher: a critical pedagogue
  4.4.2 The Students
  4.4.3 The Researcher
4.5 Data Collection
  4.5.1 Observations
  4.5.2 Field notes and analytic memos.
  4.5.3 Conversational interviews
  4.5.4 Students’ written response
  4.5.5 Value of Multiple Data Sources
4.6 Data Analysis
  4.6.1 Transcripts
  4.6.2 Selecting Dialogic Turn Counting
  4.6.3 Data Reduction: coding
  4.6.4 Discourse analysis.
  4.6.5 Thematic Analysis
4.7 Credibility and trustworthiness
  4.7.1 Triangulation of the Data
  4.7.2 Limitations
  4.7.3 Ethical Considerations
4.8 Some concluding thoughts

CHAPTER-5: ANALYSES, AND DISCUSSION
5. INTRODUCTION
5.1 Hearing Their Voices… My sojourn in the dialogic space
  5.1.1 Descriptions of the dialogic sessions
  5.1.2 The bamboo blind
  5.1.3. Odeipus the Rex
  5.1.4 The ministers’ black veil
5.2. Analysis and Discussion of Data in response to Research Question 1

5.2.1 Farhan, students and power dynamics

5.2.2 Overcoming Resistance and Barriers

5.2.3 Alien cultural references

5.2.4. Intercultural sensitivity

5.2.5. Silence and dominance.

5.2.6 The solution: establishing Safe Space

5.2.7 Recognition and Agency: Farhan relegating his powers

5.2.8 Farhan's interactional strategy: interaction and analysis

5.2.9 Orchestrating dialogue

5.3 Research Question 2:

Influence of dialogic Process on Thinking and perspectives

5.3.1 Dialogic Process Influence upon thinking

5.3.2 Using and giving space

5.3.3 Engaged discussions that challenged previous perspectives

5.3.4 Farhan’s perspective on ‘perspectives’

5.3.5 Understanding difference

5.3.6 Modern Socrates!

5.3.7 Making connection.

5.4 Research Question 3; dialogic as a learning strategy

5.4.1 Open and Closed Patterns of interaction

5.4.2 Dialogic and High-level Thinking about Text

5.4.3 Reasoning transferred from Discussions in Writing Tasks

5.4.4 Role of Questions

5.4.5 Dialogic’s Transformative Perspective

5.4.6 Social Critic and Conscientization

5.5 Would dialogue be in any sense possible?

5.6 Closing thoughts

CHAPTER-6: DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS OF MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

6. INTRODUCTION

6.1 My Study and New Understandings
6.2 Summary of the Key Findings

6.2.1 Participant Perceptions about Influence of the dialogic on Thinking about Text

6.2.2 Evidence that Students Applied Higher-Level Thinking

6.2.2.1 Evidence of higher level thinking through Students’ Writing.

6.2.3 Dialogic: a learning strategy

6.2.4 Minimum Intervention by Farhan

6.2.5 Tensions in implementing critical dialogic with adolescent girls

6.2.6 Absence of dialogic moments.

6.3 Implications for teaching and practice

6.3.1 Implications for Further Research

6.4 Contributions of the Study

6.5 My journey towards tomorrow

Bibliography

Appendices

Table-4.7: Discourse Features

Table-5.2: Farhan’s teaching strategies

Initial interview question for student /teachers

My reflection log; 1

Transcript conventions

Consent Form

Certificate of ethical research approval

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Graphic description of dissertation chapters

Figure 3.1: Resistance & barriers to critical dialogic

Figure 4.1: Framework for Analyzing the Discourse of Discussions

Figure 5.1: Farhan’s ‘dialogic space

Figure 5.2: Dialogic strategies

Figure 5.3: Indicators of high-level thinking

Figure 5.4: Excerpt from Discussion Showing High-level Thinking

Figure 5.5: Excerpt from compositions showing developed reasoning
List of Tables

Table-4.1: Focal Students 71
Table-4.2: Data Tools 72
Table-4.5: Dialogic/non dialogic traits in sessions 77
Table-4.6: Turn counts 79
Table-4.7: Detailed dimensions of discourse features (Appendix). 183
Table-5.1: Attributes found in dialogic sessions 88
Table-5.2: Students’ Views of Dialogue 118
Table-5.2a: Farhan’s Teaching Strategies (appendix) 184
Table-5.3: Attitudes towards cultural specific gender roles & bias 120
Table-5.4: Exploratory Talk Turns 127

List of Acronyms

UAE: United Arab Emirates
T/S: Teacher/Student
EF/SL: English as a secondary or foreign
SLA: Second language acquisition
IRE: Initiation response evaluation
IRF: Initiation, Response and Follow-up
FN: Field notes
MOEY: The Ministry of Education and Youth
ZPD: Zones of proximal development
CELA: Center for English Learning and Achievement
CP: Critical pedagogy