

***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’Reilly, 1998). Thus it seems appropriate to me to call this study, ‘the lighting of a fire’ (W.B.Yeats).

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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