



Dialogic Pedagogy and EFL Learning: From Teacher Transmission to Collaborative Meaning-Making

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Abstract

English as a foreign language (EFL) education has often been organized around teacher explanation, display questions, correction, and student reproduction of forms. Dialogic pedagogy offers a different orientation in which learners and teachers use language to examine ideas, negotiate meanings, reason together, and revise understanding. This paper synthesizes sociocultural, dialogic, classroom-discourse, and second-language research to examine how this shift can support EFL learning without abandoning teacher expertise or curricular responsibility. The reviewed evidence indicates several potential mechanisms, including extended output, uptake and repair, collaborative reasoning, noticing, and affective engagement. However, causal evidence remains uneven. Controlled studies report gains in vocabulary, phonological awareness, and feedback-supported writing, whereas qualitative and correlational studies document productive classroom talk, willingness to communicate, and learner perceptions. The effects of dialogic pedagogy appear to depend on proficiency, task design, participation norms, assessment regimes, class size, teacher development, and digital access. Accordingly, dialogic EFL teaching is best understood not as unstructured conversation or simply maximizing student speech, but as the deliberate orchestration of scaffolding, interaction, and learning opportunities. Its effectiveness ultimately depends on aligning dialogic practices with instructional goals, learner needs, classroom conditions, and assessment practices.

Keywords: Dialogic Pedagogy; Collaborative Dialogue; Classroom Interaction; Exploratory Talk; Teacher Development.

1. Introduction

EFL refers to the learning and use of English in contexts where English is not the dominant language of everyday social life or the primary institutional language. EFL classrooms often provide a scarce setting for sustained English use. Language is both the object of instruction and the medium for content, identity, and social participation. This dual status makes classroom interaction central to what learners can notice, attempt, and ultimately control.

A conventional transmission model treats knowledge as a relatively finished object that moves from teacher to student. The teacher explains, asks questions with predetermined answers, evaluates responses, and manages the sequence of content. Such practices can efficiently introduce vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, disciplinary concepts, and examination procedures. They can also be necessary when learners lack the linguistic resources to participate independently. The problem is not teacher explanation as such. The problem arises when transmission becomes the dominant theory of learning and students are positioned mainly as recipients who reproduce forms rather than as participants who use language to develop understanding.

Dialogic pedagogy challenges that dominance by treating learning as mediated, responsive, and jointly constructed. It does not mean that every lesson must become an open discussion, that all student contributions are equally accurate, or that teachers should withdraw their authority. Productive dialogue is collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful (Alexander, 2018; García-Carrión et al., 2020). It requires deliberate design so that learners have reasons to explain, question, compare, justify, listen, and revise. The teacher remains

responsible for establishing the conditions in which such activity can occur and for connecting local contributions to disciplinary and linguistic knowledge.

This paper argues that the most defensible account of dialogic EFL pedagogy is a shift in the organization of authority and participation rather than a replacement of teaching by conversation. Teachers move from being the sole source and evaluator of meaning toward being designers, models, facilitators, language resources, and synthesizers. Learners gain more responsibility for initiating, responding, reasoning, and building on others' ideas. The resulting classroom is not less structured than a transmission classroom. It is structured around collaborative meaning-making.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the main theoretical and conceptual perspectives that underpin dialogic pedagogy in EFL learning. It focuses on learning as a socially mediated activity, meaning as a responsive process, the distinction between classroom talk and productive dialogue, and the application of these principles to EFL contexts. Together, these perspectives provide a foundation for understanding how dialogue can support language development, learner participation, and collaborative meaning-making.

2.1 Learning as mediated social activity

Sociocultural theory provides the principal theoretical foundation for understanding why dialogue might support learning. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) argued that higher psychological functions develop through socially mediated activity before becoming resources for individual thought. Language is not merely a vehicle for expressing knowledge that already exists inside the learner (Mrghem & Klella, 2026). It is a cultural tool through which learners coordinate attention, regulate activity, form concepts, and internalize ways of reasoning. In an EFL classroom, a learner's attempt to describe an image, negotiate a task, or explain a grammatical choice can therefore be both communication and cognitive development.

Wells (1999) extended this perspective through dialogic inquiry. Inquiry is dialogic when participants with different experiences work on a shared problem and use language and other semiotic resources to build and test understanding. Expertise is not symmetrical: teachers may know more about English, pedagogy, or subject matter, but that knowledge becomes productive when learners can question, apply, recontextualize, and appropriate it. This formulation avoids two opposing errors: treating learners as empty vessels and treating all teacher guidance as incompatible with collaboration.

2.2 Meaning as responsive and situated

Bakhtin's (1987) account of language adds a second foundation. Utterances respond to earlier voices and anticipate future responses; meanings are consequently produced between voices and within social situations rather than delivered as isolated, finished objects. In classroom terms, a learner's answer is not only an assessment item. It can become a resource that another learner qualifies, challenges, illustrates, or reformulates. A teacher's follow-up can preserve an unresolved difference, connect several contributions, or make an emerging concept more precise.

Bakhtinian dialogism should not be reduced to a classroom technique. It is a theory of language and meaning, and its application to pedagogy is mediated by later educational scholarship. Its significance for EFL is nevertheless clear (Klella, 2024). Learners need opportunities to experience English as a language for responding to people and ideas, not only as a set of forms to be reproduced. This does not eliminate accuracy. Rather, accuracy becomes part of a wider activity in which learners make meanings that matter within the task and receive responses that help them revise those meanings.

2.3 From classroom talk to productive dialogue

Dialogue is not synonymous with talk. A classroom can contain extensive student speech while remaining pedagogically monologic. Students may take turns giving short answers, repeat

phrases, or divide a worksheet without examining one another's ideas. Conversely, a brief exchange can be dialogically productive if it involves uptake, reasoning, and a meaningful change in understanding. Alexander's (2018) formulation described productive dialogue as collective, because learners address a shared question; reciprocal, because participants listen and respond; supportive, because they can express provisional ideas without humiliation; cumulative, because contributions connect; and purposeful, because talk advances learning. Mercer (2013) described exploratory talk as a form of "interthinking." Participants offer reasons, challenge proposals, consider alternatives, and work toward accountable decisions. This distinguishes productive talk from competitive debate and unstructured sociability. Exploratory talk may include hesitation, repair, partial formulations, and disagreement (Klella, 2026). Its value lies in making reasoning public and available for joint examination. Mercer, Dawes, and Kleine Staarman (2009) indicated why teacher support matters: learners need norms and prompts that make explanations and reasons more normal than unsupported assertions.

The distinction can be expressed as a continuum. At one end, the teacher controls the topic, turn allocation, acceptable answers, and evaluation, while student contributions function mainly as evidence of recall. At the other, learners initiate questions, connect contributions, justify interpretations, and revise claims within a shared inquiry. Most effective EFL lessons need movement across this continuum (Ayad et al., 2026). Explicit teaching may establish vocabulary or a conceptual resource; dialogic tasks then allow learners to use it; a teacher-led synthesis can consolidate and extend what the class has developed. Dialogic pedagogy concerns the relationships among these phases, not the permanent rejection of any one of them.

2.4 Dialogic Pedagogy in EFL Learning

EFL learning presents a distinctive case because language is simultaneously medium, content, and social resource. When learners collaborate to solve an information gap or interpret a text, they must retrieve words, test formulations, ask for clarification, and adapt their language to an interlocutor. When the teacher follows up on an answer instead of immediately evaluating it, the learner has an opportunity to expand, qualify, or repair the response. These processes can connect communicative purpose with linguistic development (Hmouma, 2025).

The strongest formulation is therefore not that dialogue automatically improves proficiency. It is that well-designed dialogue creates recurrent opportunities for processes that support learning: extended output, negotiation of meaning, attention to form, retrieval, elaboration, uptake, and recontextualization. The language learners use may be incomplete, and the dialogue may include the first language (L1). What matters is whether the interaction supports movement toward the learning objective and whether the teacher helps learners connect communicative activity with more precise English resources.

This orientation also changes the meaning of teacher authority. Authority is not abolished when learners' ideas become visible. Teachers retain responsibility for selecting texts and tasks, sequencing difficulty, modeling language, safeguarding inclusion, addressing misconceptions, and deciding when a form or interpretation requires explicit clarification. The change is that authority is exercised through orchestration rather than unilateral control (Klella & Al Garaghool, 2026). The teacher distributes opportunities to think and speak, establishes norms for challenge, and synthesizes contributions into knowledge that learners can carry forward.

The distinction is particularly important in examination-oriented contexts. Teachers may need to cover a prescribed textbook, prepare students for common listening or speaking tests, and provide explicit correction. Dialogic practice can be integrated with those obligations. A reading lesson can begin with teacher modeling and vocabulary instruction, continue with paired interpretation and evidence-based comparison, and conclude with explicit language work. A speaking lesson can require a jointly produced answer and then assess each learner's

individual explanation (Hmouma et al., 2026). Dialogue is not an alternative curriculum. It is a way of organizing how curricular knowledge is encountered and used.

3. Mechanisms and Classroom Practices

Building on the theoretical foundations of dialogic pedagogy, this section examines how dialogic principles can be translated into practical EFL classroom practices. It focuses on task design, questioning and wait time, scaffolding, corrective feedback, and translanguaging as key mechanisms for creating meaningful interaction and collaborative learning. These practices can help teachers create opportunities for learners to participate, negotiate meaning, develop ideas, and use language purposefully while maintaining appropriate instructional guidance.

3.1 Designing tasks for interdependence

Dialogic interaction is more likely when tasks create a genuine need to exchange information or perspectives. Simply placing students in groups does not guarantee collaboration. A productive task gives participants a shared goal, differentiated information or roles, and an outcome that requires attention to one another's contributions. Useful formats include information gaps, jigsaw reading, reciprocal teaching, peer editing, role-play, group problem-solving, and the production of a shared presentation or decision.

Jocuns (2021) illustrated this principle in a Thai university listening-speaking class. Students first responded to accessible personal questions, then analyzed advertisements through questions about audience, gender representation, and cultural meanings, and finally designed and performed their own advertisement. The teacher circulated, joined groups selectively, supplied vocabulary when requested, and delayed broad correction until a whole-class review. Classroom excerpts showed students asking for clarification, repairing vocabulary collaboratively, and using Thai when necessary to sustain meaning (Karrar et al., 2026). The qualitative, context-bound study demonstrates how task sequences can create reasons for English use without teacher withdrawal.

Task type also shapes the form of dialogue. In Turkish university EFL speaking tasks, convergent tasks generated more turns, words, and collaborative behaviors, whereas divergent tasks elicited longer mean utterances and more extended viewpoint development (Aksoy-Pekacar, 2023, 2024). Teachers should not search for one ideal task. Convergent tasks are useful when learners must coordinate toward a common solution. Divergent tasks are useful when the objective is to develop explanation, comparison, and perspective. A course can sequence both, followed by a report or reflection that makes the learning visible.

3.2 Questioning, uptake, and wait time

Questions are dialogic when they open a learning space rather than merely test whether students can guess the teacher's answer. Authentic questions include "What makes you think that?", "Who might see this differently?", "What evidence supports that interpretation?", and "How does your partner's idea change yours?" The wording alone is insufficient. A teacher can ask an open question and then close the exchange with immediate evaluation. Uptake is the decisive move: the teacher probes, paraphrases, requests evidence, invites a connection, or returns the question to the group.

Wait time is a small but consequential condition. In an EMI science corpus, longer pauses after teacher questions were associated with longer and more linguistically complex student responses, more student talk, and more student questions (An & Childs, 2023). The evidence is correlational and comes from science taught through English rather than from a conventional EFL course. Ingram and Elliott (2015) likewise caution that a three-second rule should not be applied mechanically. A pause may benefit some learners more than others. Teachers should combine silent thinking, pair rehearsal, nominated and volunteer responses, and post-response wait time. This gives less confident learners a route into public participation without making silence a problem in itself.

3.3 Scaffolding language and reasoning

Scaffolding should be temporary, graduated, and interactional. Before a task, teachers can activate relevant experience, preview a small number of high-value words, analyze a model, and clarify the outcome. During the task, sentence stems can make reasoning available: “I agree with because,” “Could you clarify?”, “Another possibility is,” and “The evidence suggests,” Role cards can distribute responsibilities among facilitator, evidence finder, language supporter, and reporter. The teacher should monitor whether supports enable participation or simply prescribe the language learners must repeat.

A task-based cycle offers a practical structure: orient and prepare; provide individual think time and pair rehearsal; conduct an information-gap or problem-solving task; repeat or report to a new audience; and hold a dialogic debrief with delayed language focus (Jackson, 2022). Delayed feedback preserves the flow of meaning-making while giving the teacher material for collective noticing. Calvert and Sheen (2015) emphasized that teachers should investigate whether learners understand and can complete the task, then revise instructions and materials. Dialogic pedagogy consequently includes teacher inquiry into task accessibility rather than fidelity to a fixed recipe.

3.4 Corrective feedback as dialogue

Corrective feedback can support dialogue when it makes language form available for joint attention and repair. Lyster, Saito, and Sato (2013) distinguished recasts, prompts, explicit correction, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, and elicitation. Their review indicates that effects depend on the target form, learner age, instructional setting, opportunities for uptake, and whether feedback consolidates or initiates knowledge. A recast may preserve conversational flow but go unnoticed; a prompt may generate deeper retrieval but interrupt fluency. No feedback type is universally optimal.

Learner and teacher beliefs also shape the social conditions of feedback. In four Vietnamese public high schools, students generally welcomed correction of all error types and preferred teacher correction, while teachers were more selective and expressed reservations about peer correction (Ha & Nguyen, 2021). This finding concerns beliefs and participation conditions rather than posttest gains. It nevertheless warns against assuming that peer correction is automatically empowering or that teacher correction is automatically oppressive. Peer feedback requires training, clear criteria, and a classroom culture in which revision is normal. Teacher feedback should be selective, comprehensible, and connected to opportunities for learners to try again.

3.5 Translanguaging and participation

Planned translanguaging can support thinking and inclusion while maintaining an explicit English-facing purpose. Learners may use bilingual dictionaries, parallel texts, multilingual brainstorming, or L1 explanations of difficult concepts during planning. They can then produce an English presentation, report, or reflection when that is the objective. Jocuns (2021) showed how Thai resources helped learners sustain humor, repair meaning, and preserve their voices when English resources were insufficient. Prilutskaya’s (2021) review of 233 empirical studies identifies diverse pedagogical translanguaging practices but also substantial heterogeneity and limits in the review’s language and search boundaries. The evidence supports design possibilities, not the claim that more L1 use automatically improves English proficiency.

4. Empirical Evidence

This section reviews empirical evidence concerning the implementation and effects of dialogic pedagogy in EFL and related educational contexts. It focuses on how classroom interaction, task design, teacher practices, learner participation, and collaborative dialogue have been

examined in previous research, highlighting both the potential contributions and the contextual limitations of dialogic approaches.

4.1 Direct and adjacent intervention evidence

The clearest EFL-relevant controlled evidence comes from a Hong Kong study of 72 Cantonese-speaking first graders. Across 12 weeks of daily English lessons, dialogic teaching produced larger gains than control instruction in expressive vocabulary for textbook items among both lower- and higher-vocabulary groups; phonological-awareness gains were larger for the higher-vocabulary group (Chow et al., 2023). The pattern supports a plausible pathway from prompting, expanding, evaluating, and repeating learner responses to early lexical and phonological development. It also indicates that prior language resources may moderate outcomes. The study used a small, selected sample, school-based assignment, unequal original condition sizes, and narrow outcomes. It should therefore be treated as promising evidence for a bounded intervention, not proof of broad EFL proficiency gains.

A South Korean university case study examined small-group talk in an EFL course redesigned around dialogic principles. Wotring, Chen, and Fraser (2024) found that productive talk involved argumentation, justification, follow-up, clarification, and peer response connected to course purposes. This evidence is important because it separates the quality of student talk from its quantity (Klella & Mrghem, 2024). It is not, however, a controlled proficiency evaluation. It shows that learners can develop broader repertoires of interactional moves under dialogic conditions, not that the course caused durable gains in standardized achievement.

Liu et al. (2025) surveyed 623 undergraduates at three Chinese universities. Structural-equation modeling found positive associations between perceived classroom interaction and willingness to communicate, with speaking self-efficacy and foreign-language enjoyment functioning as individual and sequential mediators. The model is consistent with a cycle in which interaction builds confidence and enjoyment, which support further communication. Because the data were cross-sectional and questionnaire-based, the result does not establish that dialogic teaching caused higher willingness to communicate or proficiency. It does, however, identify affective and motivational mechanisms worth testing in longitudinal research.

Feedback research provides related evidence for how dialogue can support form. Lyster and Saito's (2010) meta-analysis and Lyster et al.'s (2013) review indicate that oral feedback can produce learning, but effects vary by feedback type, target, learner, and setting. For writing, Lv, Ren, and Xie's (2021) meta-analysis of 17 online ESL/EFL studies involving 1,568 learners found a positive overall effect on writing quality (Hedges' $g = 0.753$). The pooled estimate was largest for teacher feedback ($g = 2.248$), followed by peer feedback ($g = 0.777$) and automated feedback ($g = 0.696$), with educational level and task genre moderating effects. These findings support feedback-rich instruction, but online feedback is broader than dialogic pedagogy and the included studies varied in design, context, and outcome measure.

Evidence from L2 French offers a useful but indirect comparison. Ammar and Hassan (2018) compared traditional dictation with dialogue-driven "zero-error dictation" among 79 Grade 5–6 learners across five sessions. The experimental group outperformed the comparison group on accurate use of targeted morphological features, with effects differing by structure and proficiency. The study supports the idea that guided collaborative talk can make form–meaning relationships and metalinguistic reasoning available for learning. Transfer to EFL English remains an inference because the target language was French.

4.2 Reviews and broader classroom evidence

Reviews converge on potential but caution against simple causal narratives. Howe and Abedin (2013), reviewing 225 classroom-dialogue studies across four decades, found that research had documented how dialogue was organized more convincingly than which arrangements were causally most beneficial. Laird-Gentle et al. (2023), reviewing 61 school-based studies published from 2014 to 2020, identified a growing field but continuing concentration in

particular subjects and regions, with limited quantitative-only research and gaps in early years, non-science contexts, and qualitative work. García-Carrión et al. (2020) similarly reported potential benefits for attainment and social cohesion while noting that monologic routines remain common and that implementation depends on sustained teacher support.

Coding research makes the construct more visible. Hennessy et al. (2016) developed a cross-context scheme for analyzing classroom dialogue, and Vrikki et al. (2019) developed the teacher scheme for educational dialogue analysis (T-SEDA). These approaches code invitations, explanations, reasoning, challenge, connections, and synthesis rather than simply counting student turns. They support a central methodological point: dialogue is a pattern of relationships among contributions. A class in which every student speaks once may be less dialogic than a class in which a smaller number of carefully supported contributions are taken up and extended.

The evidence base is therefore convergent at the level of mechanisms and more divergent at the level of broad outcomes. Studies repeatedly identify opportunities for extended output, uptake, reasoning, repair, and affective engagement. Narrow interventions show gains in selected vocabulary, phonological awareness, morphology, or writing quality. Qualitative studies document productive talk and learner perceptions. Correlational models link interaction with willingness to communicate. Yet broad, durable improvements in general proficiency are less consistently established. The appropriate conclusion is conditional efficacy: structured dialogue can create better learning conditions and may improve particular outcomes when its design, scaffolding, and assessment are aligned.

4.3 Challenges and Contextual Constraints

Dialogic pedagogy is a family of approaches rather than a single intervention. Different traditions disagree about the role of consensus, the balance between teacher authority and student agency, the status of open-ended inquiry, and how dialogue should be measured. EFL studies also vary in whether “dialogic” refers to a teaching philosophy, an observable discourse pattern, a task arrangement, or an intervention (Asterhan et al., 2020). This construct heterogeneity limits cross-study comparison.

Power and participation require explicit treatment. In an Indonesian university EFL case, teachers used reward, expert, legitimate, referent, and, when necessary, coercive power to elicit speech (Bahar et al., 2022). The study does not establish how common these practices are, but it shows that dialogue does not remove institutional authority. The relevant question is how authority is used. It can silence, or it can invite, protect, coordinate, and hold learners accountable. Shea (2019) likewise found that dialogic teaching could elicit quality talk while reticent students and whole-class organization remained difficult.

Silence should not be treated as a simple measure of disengagement. Vietnamese students described silence as thinking time and as protection from embarrassment (Nguyen, 2024). Bruneian university students reported reluctance to interrupt lecturers, fear of incorrect answers or peer judgment, uncertainty about turn-taking, and a preference to wait for others; chat provided an alternative participation channel (Ho et al., 2023). An equitable EFL classroom therefore expands communicative options through think time, pair rehearsal, written or chat contributions, multilingual resources, and carefully scaffolded turns. The aim is not to maximize public English speech at every moment.

Proficiency asymmetries create another constraint. The Hong Kong intervention’s differential phonological-awareness effects suggest that learners with stronger prior vocabulary may be better positioned to benefit from some dialogic tasks (Chow et al., 2023). This does not justify reducing opportunities for less-proficient learners. It justifies differentiated scaffolding, shorter rehearsal cycles, visual resources, strategic grouping, and explicit language support. Without such support, fluent students may dominate while less-proficient learners perform peripheral roles.

Material conditions also matter. A case study of an Indonesian teacher in a class of more than 30 students documented difficulties with individual feedback, equal participation, monitoring, discipline, and attention (Hadi, 2015). The single-teacher design cannot establish a universal class-size threshold. It does show why group work is not an automatic solution. Teachers still need time, space, resources, and feasible ways to notice who is participating and what they are learning.

Assessment regimes can narrow the space for inquiry, but test preparation and dialogue are not necessarily incompatible. Segal, Snell, and Lefstein (2017) described how standardized testing can impede dialogic pedagogy while showing that teachers may adopt an “ironic” stance and combine test preparation with dialogic ideals. A Thai EFL course similarly had to negotiate open activities with textbook coverage and common listening and speaking examinations (Jocuns, 2021). Dialogue can rehearse the explanations and interactional control that assessments require, while direct instruction remains available where efficient.

Online and hybrid classrooms intensify participation inequality. Camera-off interaction removes gaze, gesture, and backchannel cues, while students may hesitate to interrupt or judge when a turn is available (Ho et al., 2023). Online dialogue therefore depends on infrastructure, platform design, privacy, family support, and teacher workload. Chat, collaborative documents, asynchronous voice, and structured breakout tasks can expand participation, but they do not remove these conditions.

Finally, more talk is not automatically better learning. Sedova et al. (2019) found positive associations between classroom talk, reasoning, and achievement among Czech ninth-graders, but the correlational design cannot establish direction of causality and the population was not EFL. Higher-achieving students may talk more, and productive dialogue may be an outcome as well as a cause of learning. EFL claims should specify whether they concern interactional change, language, reasoning, willingness to communicate, or durable proficiency.

4.4 Assessment and Teacher Development

Assessment should reflect the multidimensional nature of dialogue. A frequency count of student words may reward fluent domination and miss listening, uptake, repair, and reasoning. A stronger design triangulates four levels: interactional evidence, such as who initiates and whose ideas are taken up; discourse evidence, such as explanation, challenge, elaboration, and synthesis; linguistic outcomes, such as complexity, accuracy, vocabulary, intelligibility, or pragmatic control; and participatory outcomes, such as agency, inclusion, willingness to communicate, and equitable access (Hennessy et al., 2020; Vrikki et al., 2019). Simulated-live coding can be practical for teachers, whereas audio or transcript follow-up can clarify ambiguous episodes. In EFL, such schemes should be adapted or supplemented to record L1/L2 distribution, translation practices, wait time, corrective-feedback type, uptake, and opportunities for extended English turns.

In 65 video-recorded lessons in Norwegian lower-secondary classrooms, Vattøy and Gamlem (2020) found high organization but relatively low instructional support, with extended feedback dialogue and support for learner self-regulation posing challenges. Teacher development is most promising when it is sustained, cyclical, and practice-embedded. Alexander’s (2018) intervention combined induction, training, planning, target-setting, mentoring, classroom implementation, and video or audio analysis. The independent evaluation found small effects in English, mathematics, and science (Jay et al., 2017). These results support sustained professional learning, not short workshops or lists of questioning techniques.

For EFL teacher education, workshops should model the dialogue they promote. Teachers can bring short recordings from their own lessons, analyze one episode collaboratively, set one or two observable targets, test a task, and revisit the evidence. Targets might include allowing post-question wait time, asking one follow-up that requests evidence, distributing uptake across

learners, or using delayed correction after a fluency task. Student perspectives should be included, especially those of quieter learners and students who use multilingual resources. This cycle makes teacher learning itself a process of collaborative meaning-making.

5. Implications

For classroom practice, the evidence supports purposeful task design rather than indiscriminate discussion. Teachers should identify the reasoning or language outcome, create interdependence, prepare essential resources, provide rehearsal, and plan how contributions will be connected in plenary. They should monitor both participation and language development. A group product should be paired with an individual explanation or exit ticket so that collaboration does not obscure individual learning.

For curriculum and assessment, dialogic work should be treated as compatible with explicit instruction. Curricula can identify where learners need to retrieve and practice forms, where they need to reason with content, and where they need to reflect on language. Assessment can combine individual accuracy and intelligibility with interactional criteria such as asking for clarification, responding to evidence, taking up a peer's idea, and revising a position. Such criteria should be transparent and should not reward accent conformity or verbal speed as proxies for learning.

For equity, participation must be designed rather than merely encouraged. Teachers should use pair preparation, rotating roles, multiple response modes, accessible texts, and carefully calibrated grouping. They should recognize that silence can be strategic, that L1 resources can support conceptual access, and that public English may carry social risk. Inclusion does not mean lowering intellectual demand. It means providing routes through which more learners can meet that demand.

For teacher education and policy, sustained inquiry is preferable to isolated training. Schools and universities need time for collaborative planning, access to recordings or observation, and assessment systems that recognize reasoning and language use rather than only recall. Policy should avoid turning "dialogic teaching" into a compliance slogan. Its implementation requires attention to class size, teacher workload, examination requirements, technological resources, and local communicative norms.

For research, future studies should test mechanisms and moderators rather than merely compare "dialogic" and "traditional" classes. Researchers should specify the language of interaction, translation practices, proficiency distribution, class size, teacher preparation, task type, and assessment regime. Adequately powered longitudinal and mixed-method studies should measure interactional change alongside delayed outcomes in vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, pronunciation, pragmatics, reasoning, and willingness to communicate. Designs should include quieter learners, peer interaction, online participation, student voice, and implementation after external coaching ends.

6. Limitations of the Literature

The literature has several limitations that constrain the strength of the conclusions. First, the construct is heterogeneous. Dialogic pedagogy can refer to a sociocultural theory, an interactional pattern, a questioning repertoire, a task design, or a whole-school program. Studies that share the label may therefore implement different practices and pursue different outcomes.

Second, direct EFL evidence remains smaller and more localized than the broader classroom-dialogue literature. Some of the most controlled evidence concerns young Hong Kong ESL learners, while other evidence comes from university classrooms in China, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, or Indonesia. Adjacent evidence from L2 French, EMI science, primary science, and general language-arts classrooms helps clarify mechanisms, but it cannot be presented as direct evidence for all EFL contexts.

Third, methodological strength is uneven. Qualitative studies provide detailed accounts of talk, power, learner experience, and feasibility but do not establish broad causal effects. Survey and structural-equation studies identify associations and plausible mediators but are vulnerable to self-report and cross-sectional bias. Quasi-experiments offer stronger outcome evidence but may involve selected groups, unequal assignment, short interventions, and narrow measures. Reviews improve scope while inheriting the inconsistent definitions and reporting practices of the included studies.

Fourth, proximal outcomes are more common than durable proficiency outcomes. The literature more often measures vocabulary items, phonological awareness, writing quality, talk moves, willingness to communicate, enjoyment, or learner beliefs than broad standardized achievement or delayed transfer. A productive discussion is not itself evidence that learning will persist. Research should connect observed interaction with later independent performance. Finally, participation measures may encode a narrow view of engagement. Public verbal participation is visible, but thinking time, writing, chat, listening, multilingual planning, and delayed revision may also be important. Future research should treat equity as a design and measurement issue rather than assume that more English words spoken in public represent better learning.

7. Conclusion

Dialogic pedagogy offers a principled way to move EFL classrooms from teacher transmission toward collaborative meaning-making. Its theoretical rationale comes from the social mediation of learning, the responsive nature of language, and the role of exploratory talk in collective reasoning. Its practical value lies in creating opportunities for learners to use English to explain, question, repair, compare, and revise. Evidence supports plausible mechanisms and selected gains, especially in bounded outcomes such as vocabulary, phonological awareness, writing quality, productive talk, and willingness to communicate.

The evidence does not justify the claim that dialogue is automatically superior to teacher explanation or that more student talk necessarily produces more learning. Productive dialogue is designed, scaffolded, inclusive, and purposeful. Teachers retain pedagogical authority and responsibility. They select goals, model resources, structure tasks, distribute participation, provide feedback, address misconceptions, and synthesize emerging understanding. The shift is from sole transmission toward orchestration.

A defensible EFL position is consequently conditional. Dialogic pedagogy is most promising when tasks create interdependence, questions invite reasoning, follow-up makes contributions cumulative, feedback supports uptake and repair, multilingual resources are used strategically, and assessment values both individual learning and collaborative participation. Its success depends on proficiency, class size, teacher preparation, institutional assessment, technology, and local norms. Treating these conditions as central rather than incidental will allow future research and practice to move beyond the slogan of “more talk” toward a more precise account of how language learners learn together.

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