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The Effectiveness of Dialogic Teaching Strategy in Developing EFL Critical Writing Performance of Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of dialogic teaching strategy in developing EFL critical writing performance of secondary school students. For this purpose, eighty students were randomly selected from Hamza Ben Abd Elmotalb Secondary school; in Giza governorate. They were classified into two groups: the experimental group (N=40) who studied the proposed program and the control group (N =40) who studied by the traditional way. The instruments of the study were designed by the researcher including a list of some critical writing checklist, a pre/post critical writing test to evaluate the students' development in some critical writing skills before and after implementing the proposed program, a scoring scale rubric, interview and satisfaction questionnaire to determine the students' views on the program. Then, the researcher designed the proposed program of the study. Students' mean scores on pre/post test were statistically analyzed using t-test, and the effect size was also specified. Based on the obtained results, it was found that Dialogic teaching strategy was effective in developing the required critical writing performance for 2nd secondary school students. A set of recommendations and suggestions for further studies were provided.

Key Words: *Dialogic Teaching Strategy - Critical Writing.*

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Chapter one

Background and Problem

Chapter One

Background and Problem

1.1. Introduction

In light of the critical need to prepare students for the complex demands of the 21st century skills, Dialogic teaching strategy can be one of the 21st teaching approaches. It emphasizes students' development of the metacognitive processes and provides quality talk opportunities. Through dialogic teaching when students actively participate in classroom dialogue in extended and varied ways, they will be able to practice new ways of using language as a pedagogical tool for constructing knowledge. The student-centered education puts students' needs and interests first, emphasizing their critical role in making judgments and solving problems. Students should be able to think critically, interpreting, analyzing and evaluating.

Empirical research projects have consistently shown that communication in ordinary lessons rarely deviates from a routine IRF script (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) – it takes place as a sequence consisting of teacher initiation, student response, and teacher follow up. The teacher initiations are numerous, and they are usually closed questions, i.e. there are given answers which are seen as correct and it is the students' task to find these answers. The teacher's questions are characterized by a low level of cognitive demand; typically, they require the students to show that they remember subject matter presented to them earlier. Student answers are short and simple (often one word) and they are usually listings of learned fact which correspond to the nature of the teacher's questions. The teacher's feedback is a mere statement of whether the student's answer was correct. Any developments of a student's answer or offers of new clues or impulse for further consideration are usually absent. Generally, it can be said that students rarely get the opportunity for a more complex statement resulting from

highly demanding thought processes during a class. A number of international research studies have presented findings of this kind (Nystrand, 1997; Alexander, 2001; Burns & Myhill, 2004; Parker & Hurry, 2007; Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010).

The concept of dialogic teaching stands in opposition to the above-mentioned empirical findings. In dialogic teaching, student activity is stimulated by communication and work with language; their thought processes are encouraged and their comprehension deepens (Alexander, 2006). The essence of this method is thus teacher-student communication in which higher cognitive processes are dominant on the students' part. For this kind of teaching, it is important that students are active, have significant autonomy, and can partly influence what happens in the classroom. The dialogic process is central to the development of thinking, the ability to learn and creativity because comprehension of a problem grows together with the realization of differences and variability.

Essentially, Educational Dialogues promoting understanding, productive interaction and providing feedback that stimulates further exploration. This is in line with Solomon (2007) dialogic instruction, based on dialogue that has the potential to increase student critical thinking meta-cognition, comprehension, and reasoning. Also, he argued that dialogic instruction is a style of teaching that is inherently rewarding for teachers, allowing them to witness the intellectual development of their students.

According to Park (2009), dialogic thinking contributes positively to students' learning outcomes. Research has shown that students learn more effectively and with a higher level of intellectual achievement when they are engaged in the dialogic activity (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Larson (2000) argued that discussion is a useful teaching technique for developing higher order thinking skills, skills that enable students to interpret, analyze, and manipulate information. In a monologic classroom, success is

measured by the amount of correct information that students recall (Allington, 2001; Nystrand et al., 1997).

Furthermore, Larson (2000) stated that students can explain their ideas and thoughts; rather than merely recount or recite memorized facts and details. When discussing, learners are not submissive recipients of the information transmitted from their teachers. Wegerif (2015) argued that the monological model of reason differs from the dialogical model of reason in that it is attributable to a single person and a dialogue is necessarily a creative act. Khew's (2014,p.17) work highlighted the fact that the dominant monologic classroom discourse, characterized by the lack of extended discussion and the co-construction of knowledge between teacher and students, may not be sufficient to produce the active contributor capable of creative and critical thinking, effective communication and teamwork desired for the 21st century workforce. Also, Matusov (2009) asserted that no instructional method could be fully monologic because there are always multiple perspectives in the classrooms. In monologic instruction, students become passive memorizers, the more information that they can commit to short-term memory, the more likely they are to score highly in their class, leaving no time for students to interpret and to construct new knowledge together.

According to Richmond, Lane, and McCroskey (2006), passive students become active learners when communication improves between teachers and students, along with students' affective and cognitive learning and levels of critical thinking. Park (2009) declared that dialogic thinking (i.e., dialogism) contributes to students' learning outcomes. Burns (2009) added that giving students a resonant voice promotes their development as successful writers and thinkers. Through social interaction, students integrate cognitive and behavioral techniques that cultivate a wider skill set that is transferable to other unrelated problem-solving situations.

In addition, Mekeachie (2011, p.1) posited a useful classroom discussion that consists of students comments separated by frequent probes and clarifications by the teacher that facilitate involvement and development of thinking by the whole group. The discussion approaches are effective in developing students' thinking skills and higher-level learning such as analysis, application, synthesis, and evaluation.

Frijters, Ten Dam, and Rijlaarsdam (2008) declared that instructional designs geared toward critical thinking stress the importance of interactions between students. Piaget (1928) noted social exchange of ideas is a principal method of encouraging what has since been labeled critical thinking. Moreover, Bowick (2010) students learn best when their thinking involves an extended exchange of points of view or frames of reference and that critical thinking and dialogue are inherently interrelated.

Some researchers like Angeli& Valanides (2009), and Boulter (2010), applied the methods from Socratic dialogue or philosophical dialogue, based on the critical approach. Slavien (2006), in his views regarding the effectiveness of the dialogue based on methods in emotional dimension, concluded that increasing the respect for the opposite view and accepting the views of others is the precious result of taking part in the dialogue and this would prepare student to have an effective participation in social commitments and the democratic process.

A number of researchers have examined dialogic instruction from various perspectives. Severiens, ten Dam, and Blom (2006) surveyed students about their social and their learning experiences during their time in school and concluded that the quality of student-student and student-teacher interactions is critical to obtaining good results. Wattiaux and Crump (2006) found that undergraduates perceive higher

learning better from the student-centered discussion than from topic-centered discussion.

In addition, Murphy et al. (2009) proposed that discussion approaches affect large increases in the “amount of student talk and teacher talk, as well as substantial improvements in text comprehension (p. 740). Varela (2009) found higher student cognitive outcomes on specific material covered in the class taught with the dialogic approach than taught with the passive teaching approach.

In addition, Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, and Salomon (2003) studied adult students and identified a positive relationship between supportive dialogic faculty interactions in academic and social environments, and students’ subsequent success. Dorestanni (2005) studied the dialogic instructional approach versus the traditional lecture method and found positive results for active learning. Thomas (2009) noted that teachers should provide the context in the classroom in which students can engage in dialogue among themselves and other discourse communities.

Nystrand and Gamoran (2003) argued that a safe learning environment produces an effective class, meaning that more students finish assignments, participate in dialogue, and achieve greater success. McIntyre, Blancher, and Baker (2006) examined the ways in which teachers promote student discussion and concluded that a positive classroom environment is an essential component in students’ learning. Feito (2004) declared that a classroom’s social environment not only facilitates good learning but also creates it.

Furthermore, Dialogical assessment aids in improving student learning when it provides clear standards for learning and is used to modify lessons to meet individual