

## **Exploring the Role of Dialogic Teaching in Improving Learners' Spoken English at Intermediate Level in District Bannu**

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### **Abstract**

*The study aims to explore the role of dialogic teaching, derived from Bakhtin's 'Dialogism', at an intermediate level in the English language teaching-learning process in District Bannu. An experimental research design was used in the study. Pre and post-tests were used for data collection. A 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Class of a public sector college was selected for the conduction of the experimental study. In this design, two groups namely, the control group and treatment group were administered pre and post-tests. Only the treatment group was given the treatment. The pre-test was designed to assess the oral proficiency of the treatment group. A paired sample t-test was used for the analysis of data. After the analyses of the data results were drawn. Data revealed that monologic teaching was prevalent in most of the classrooms, with no or very little space for the students to interact in the English language. Dialogic pedagogy proved very effective in finding out a solution to a real-world problem. Being dialogic, the pedagogy improved the oral proficiency of the students of the treatment group considerably.*

**Keywords:** Dialogic Teaching, Dialogism, Paired Sample t-test, Pre, and Post-test

### **Introduction**

Students find it difficult to express themselves in a second language. The same is the case with the students of District Bannu. It is observed that they cannot communicate in the English language effectively. They are faced with this problem when they pass matriculation and enter their college life. This problem can be attributed to many reasons, but one of the major reasons is the English language teaching-learning process. Traditional methods of teaching the language are mostly in vogue in the classrooms which are not contributing a great deal to improve students' oral communication. There is a dire need to introduce innovative techniques of teaching the language. Dialogic pedagogy may prove to be a better option for improving the oral communication of intermediate level students in L2.

### **Dialogic Teaching**

According to Hall et al., (2005) dialogism and other ideas were developed by Bakhtin in response to early Russian formalists. The term 'dialogism' was used by Bakhtin (1981, 1986) to explain the relationship between the utterances of the speaker with the utterances of other speakers with whom one enters the discussion. In Bakhtin's conceptualization of language, an important concept is that of an utterance. The utterance is the concrete response we give to the condition of the moment. As utterance is a two-sided act; it, on one hand, responds to what precedes and, on the other, it anticipates what is to come. Thus, while we speak, the utterance belongs to the context of use which was created during the speaking. The term 'speech genre', used by Bahtin, is all about the utterances. A speech genre is a typical form of utterance rather than a form of language. Genres, in this sense, corresponds to contacts between the meanings of words. Now of use of genres, they are infused with our voices. The term 'dialogic' was used by Bakhtin to capture the meaning-making process through utterance. As utterances occur in a specific context, they cannot be considered as an individual act.

An important factor in the idea of 'dialogue' is the desire to extract response. The respondent may be a one in the mind of the speaker. This concept of extracting response was called 'addressivity' by Bakhtin (1986). Utterances do not occur in a vacuum as they are always addressed to someone. In our day-to-day conversation, the respondent may be the person with whom we are in speaking, while in writing the respondent may be removed from us in time as well as in distance. According to Wertsch (1998), the concept of Bakhtin's addressivity is applicable in ESL writing. It has a very positive impact on the understanding of the process of writing. This fact is acknowledged by Hellen

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Fox, while she gives the example of her student in the writing class. The student recorded that, for the improvement in her writing she was indebted to her teacher (Fox, 1994). According to Braxley, Bakhtin frequently used such words as 'listener', 'speech', and 'speaker, but it did not mean that the term 'speech genre' was limited to speaking alone. Bakhtin made it clear that the term was equally applicable to reader, writer, writing, and written communication (1986). To check the influence of 'dialogue' on students' academic writing, the writer conducted research. It was a qualitative study, based on a qualitative interview from five female graduate students for whom English was their second language. The writer concluded that students thought the process of academic writing a great challenge and they met the challenge successfully by engaging in dialogue with their instructor, peers, and text. Becky, one of the five students, recorded that the written comments of the tutor on the assignment, like "What did you mean by this word?" and "what did you mean by this sentence?"; forced her to think about the structure of the sentences. She concluded that written dialogue with the tutor improved the structure of her English writing, not merely serving the purpose of proofreading. Sangthien, another student, recorded that dialogue with the writing instructor, who was extremely strict and more often would tell her "Show don't tell!", often struck in his mind whenever she sat to write in English. The recurring voice of the instructor, to show him the written document, made her a very good writer.

### **Research Methodology**

#### ***Research Instrument***

Primary data was required for the study and it was obtained from Pre and post-tests. Help was taken in the preparation of the Pre-test from the instructions developed by Teresa Valais, and Dr. Fleurquin, Brown, H. Douglas (2001), and Brown, H. Douglas (2004).

#### ***Experimental Study***

The experimental study was carried out in a public sector college. A total of 62 inter-level students (12<sup>th</sup> grade) were selected and were divided into two equal groups. For the equal distribution of the students in each group, their division was made based on their pre-test. The test was compared with the help of an independent sample t-test. The suitability of 30 respondents for starting the basic statistical procedure is supported by Williams (1990) and Seaberg (1988). Control group and treatment group were the terms used for both the groups, respectively. The selection of the groups was made on a random basis. Keppel & Wickens (2003), think that equality between the groups is maintained due to the random selection of the groups. Rosenthal & Rosnow (1991) are of the view that normally two or more than two groups are tested in the experimental studies.

#### ***Research Design***

Experimental design, with pre-test-post-test Control Group, was selected for the stud. Pre and post-tests were administered to both the groups in this design, but only the treatment group was provided with the treatment.

#### ***Research Objectives***

One of the main objectives of the study was to check the role of dialogic teaching in improving students' oral proficiency in L2 at the Intermediate level in District Bannu.

#### ***Research Questions***

The study aimed at finding an answer to the following research question:

To what extent dialogic teaching proves effective in improving students' oral proficiency in L2 at the Intermediate level in District Bannu?

#### ***Null Hypothesis***

The study was based on the following Null hypothesis:

Dialogic teaching, based on Bakhtin's dialogism, does not improve English Language learners' efficiency to communicate effectively in L2 at the Intermediate level.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

#### ***Dialogic Sessions***

For bringing improvement in students' oral competence, dialogic sessions were conducted by the researcher. Various questions were selected from the text and were presented to the class. Students were advised to give their opinion about the questions. It is significant to notice that, in the textbook, exercises were very skilfully designed by the textbook board. Much is there in the exercises to actualize the dialogic pedagogy. The material in the exercises created a great facility for the researcher in teaching according to the spirit of dialogic pedagogy. When the researcher started his

experimental study, the students had already finished their first two units. The start was taken with the lesson *Lingkuan Gorge*, written by Tupeng-Cheng. The subtitle of the lesson was “A man should Never Leave His Post”. The dialogic discussion started from the very beginning when the sub-title came under discussion. Aamir started the discussion and he was joined by others. As it was the beginning of a new method, most of them were still showing hesitation in taking part in the discussion. It was very encouraging for the researcher that at least a few of them had taken started. The lesson started and in the lesson, the narrator of the story entered a gorge. Because of bad weather and snowfall, nothing was visible to him. Interestingly, the weather in Bannu was also very bad due to heavy fog. The connection in the lesson was made to the situation in Bannu. The researcher asked them about their feelings on a foggy day Azmat explained that he did not like the foggy weather as it was very troublesome when one travels by bike. Behlol suggested that instead of a motorbike, public transport should be preferred on such day. Azmat answered that public transport was a better option on such day but he avoided it because of the great distance of his village from the main road. In the absence of a bike, he would go on foot to the main road and would get late for college. Traveling on such days create a problem for all, remarked Sultan. Due to fog, many road accidents occur, added Zakir, and one must be cautious on foggy days. The session was concluded by the researcher on the advisory note to come out of houses a bit earlier to avoid trouble. The students were looking very excited as was visible from their facial expression and responses and this was encouraging. Uttering a few words in the English language was a new and refreshing experience for them. The story moves ahead and in the story, the narrator was in search of refuge from bad weather. Observing his condition, the researcher asked the students to narrate if any such incident happened to them. Amaad took start by narrating about one such incident. It was winter and he was going on his motorbike, in connection with a business, to the city from his village. The weather was bad and, very soon, it started to rain heavily. He was desperately needing a shelter from the heavy rain. In the distance, he saw a big tree and started running towards that. He took a sigh of relief when he reached under the tree. Shaheer pointed out that he should have taken precautionary measures before coming out of his home. Amaad explained that it started to rain unexpectedly. His answer was liked by Shaheer. Aamir liked the answer as well and told that such incidents remain in the memory. Tahir thought that one got experienced by facing such hardships. Naseer remarked that it was the reason that experienced people were given preference at crucial points. It was a fruitful discussion, engaging the students in dialogues with one another. Students’ excitement was at the peak as they openly disclosed their feelings about the interesting method of teaching, which was proving very helpful in increasing their confidence to talk in English with others.

The interest of the students in the classroom activities was increasing day by day. The dialogic talk continued the next day as well. In the lesson, the narrator of the story was holding a newspaper in his hand which was noticed by the little boy in the story. As the boy was also very sick of the bad weather, he inquired from the narrator about the weather report. The narrator replied that he had no idea of the weather report. It was strange for the boy as he could not believe how a person holding a newspaper did not know about the weather report. The researcher asked whether they believed in the weather report or not. Hasib showed interest only in sports news in the newspaper. Liaqat had different views about reading a newspaper. He believed that the weather forecast was not trustworthy and more often misled people. Nisar replied that it was not wise to ignore the forecast every time. Amaad was in favor of believing in the weather forecast as, in modern times, keeping in view the advancement in science and technology, there was very little space for the wrong prediction. The researcher told them that they must develop reading habits whether they believed in the forecast or not. In the lesson, due to extreme cold and snow, the narrator's legs were numbed as he walked in the snow. The researcher asked whether they had had any experience of walking in the snow. The experience of snowfall was, interestingly, enjoyed by only one student in the class. It was exciting to walk in snowfall, according to him, though his legs and fingers were numbed at the end as he reached his room in the hotel. The researcher asked why only one boy visited the hilly area. Khurram explained that people in the district preferred to remain in the district most of their lives. Giving his example, he explained that even he had not gone out of his district. Sabir shared the same views and told that it was very strange about the people, but it was. True. Behlol showed great interest in snowfall and wished to enjoy it whenever he got the opportunity.

Dialogic sessions continued in this fashion for 45 days. In addition to the lessons, activities in the exercises were also utilized for this purpose.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

The following Null hypothesis formed the base of the study

$$H_0 = \mu_D = 0 \text{ OR both pre and post-tests have the same effect}$$

$$H_1 = \mu_D \neq 0 \text{ OR both pre and post-tests have a different effect.}$$

From GDC No. 2 for Boys, students of 12 grade were selected for testing of the hypothesis. The treatment group was taught for 45 days, following dialogic teaching, while the control group was taught through the traditional method. Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism was used for dialogic teaching. The procedure adopted was as under:

**Participants**

Before starting the experiment, students were divided into two equivalent groups. For both groups, English was their Second language.

**Data Collection**

To collect data from the respondents, a pre-test was used. Based on the results of the pre-test, two equal groups were formed. The selection was made through random selection. The treatment group and control group were the terms used for them. One group, the treatment group, was taught through dialogic teaching while the other through the traditional method. The treatment continued for forty-five days. The post-test was administered to both at the end of the specified time.

**Control Group**

The post-test was administered to the group and the difference between post and pre-test was compared for checking the improvement in their oral performance of the language. A paired t-test was used for the calculation of results.

Values of mean, standard deviation, and t were calculated through SPSS by comparing the students’ results of pre and post-tests.

**Calculation of the Results**

**Table No. 1**

		Paired Samples Statistics.			
		Mean.	N.	Std. Deviation.	Std. Error Mean.
Pair 1.	posorlcon	51.7419	31	9.20857	1.65391
	preorlcon	51.6774	31	9.02362	1.62069

**Table No. 2**

		Paired Samples Correlations.		
		N.	Correlation.	Sig.
Pair 1	posorlcon & preorlcon	31	.962	.000

**Table No. 3**

**Paired Samples Test.**

		Paired Differences.							
		Mean.	Std. Deviation.	Std. Error Mean.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference.		T.	Df.	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower.	Upper.			
Pair 1	posorlcon - preorlcon	.06452	2.52897	.45422	-.86312	.99215	.142	30	.888

**Treatment Group.**

The pre and post-tests of the treatment group were compared with the help of paired t-test to check the improvement in its oral communication.

**Calculation of the Results**

**Table No. 4**

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean.	N.	Std. Deviation.	Std. Error Mean.
Pair 1.	posorltrt	68.5806	31	11.03562	1.98206
	preorltrt	51.7419	31	8.92923	1.60374

**Table No. 5**

		Paired Samples Correlations.		
		N.	Correlation.	Sig.
Pair 1.	posorltrt & preorltrt	31	.870	.000

**Table No. 6**

		Paired Samples Test.							
		Paired Differences.							
		Mean.	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference.		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1.	posorltrt - preorltrt	16.83871	5.47781	.98384	14.82943	18.84799	17.115	30	.000

**Discussion**

In table No. 1, the number of participants is represented by 'N'. The average score of the control group students, in their protest, was 51.6. In the same way, 51.7 were their average score in the pre-test. It indicates that no progress was recorded, so far as their average score was concerned. In the table No. 2, .962 was the value of their correlation. The correlating range is 0-1. The value of correlation indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between post-test and pre-test results of the control group students. It exhibits that the brighter students remained bright and the weaker students remained weak. In Table No. 3, .06452 is the mean value of the difference between the post-test and pre-test. It shows that no progress was indicated by the control group students. The value of 't' in the table is not significant. The value is the proof that no significant change, in the oral performance of the control group occurred.

In the same manner, the value of 't' was calculated for checking the progress in treatment group oral performance. The number of participants is represented by 'N'. The average score of the control group students, in their pre-test, was 51.7. In the same way, 68.5 was their average score in the post-test. It indicates that progress was recorded, so far as their average score was concerned. In the table No. 5, .870 was the value of their correlation. The correlating range is 0-1. The value of correlation indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between post-test and pre-test results of the treatment group students. In Table No. 6, 16.83871 is the mean value of the difference between the post-test and pre-test. It shows that progress was indicated by the treatment group students. The value of 't' in the table is significant. So, the null hypothesis, which indicated that the pre and post-tests had the same effect, is rejected and  $H_1$  was accepted, which indicated that pre and post-tests had different effects.

For checking the difference between the performances of Treatment and control groups, their post-tests were also compared through independent sample t-test. The following results were drawn:

**Table No. 7**

**Group Statistics.**

	Group.	N.	Mean.	Std. Deviation.	Std. Error Mean.
Post Oral.	Control.	31	51.74	9.209	1.654
	Treatment.	31	68.58	11.036	1.982

**Table No. 8**

**Independent Samples Test.**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances.		t-test for Equality of Means.		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference.	
		F	Sig.	t	df				Lower	Upper
Post Oral.	Equal variances assumed	.443	.508	-6.523	60	.000	-16.839	2.581	-22.002	-11.675
	Equal variances not assumed.			-6.523	58.136	.000	-16.839	2.581	-22.006	-11.672

The above table tells that when the post-test of both the groups were compared, a significant difference was shown by them.

**Conclusion**

Results indicate that improvement in the oral performance of learners is possible if they are provided with opportunities to practice the language. In applying the dialogic pedagogy nothing extra was done

by the researcher; rather the available resources were used for bringing improvement in the oral performance of the students. Such a situation was created by the researcher where the learners entered healthy dialogue. The dialogues not only produced confidence among the students to speak the language, but also enabled them to clarify their minds. The results indicate that dialogic pedagogy can prove very effective if it is adopted by college-level teachers, who are teaching with traditional methods. The only thing the teachers are supposed to do is to understand the very spirit of the method. 'Meaning-making' process is very easy and fruitful. The only thing it requires is the sincerity on the part of the teachers. 'Meaning-making', a Bakhtinian concept, was considered by the researcher for clarifying the minds of the students as well as for improving their oral proficiency of English Language.

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