





# The Impact of the Application of Dialogic Teaching Rules on the Iranian High School ESL Learners' Speaking Ability

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## ABSTRACT

Developing ESL learners' speaking skills who study in Iranian senior high schools poses significant challenges due to the domination of traditional grammar-focused methods. This study investigates the effect of dialogic teaching rules, based on Alexander's (2017) model, on the speaking skills of Iranian high school ESL learners. In a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, 43 Iranian twelfth-grade students were assigned to an experimental group (n=22) taught with dialogic rules and a control group (n=21) taught conventionally using Vision 2 and Vision 3 materials. Speaking fluency, accuracy, cohesion/coherence, and interactive skills were assessed (scored out of 25). Repeated measures ANOVA showed significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking performance as a whole ( $F(1, 41) = 14.50, p < .001$ ) compared to the control group, with significant improvements in fluency and interactive skills. According to Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, Communicative Language Teaching, Constructivism, and Bakhtin's Dialogism, these findings demonstrate that dialogic teaching enhances communicative competence. These results suggest that implementing dialogic teaching strategies can transform ESL classrooms by improving dynamic, learner-centered contexts in which oral interaction is prioritized.

**KEYWORDS:** dialogic teaching, speaking ability, ESL learners, Iranian high school, communicative competence, Alexander's model

## 1. Introduction

Regarded as one of the main key components of language learning, speaking is an ability that needs to be developed for ESL/EFL learners to create effective communication in various situations and contexts. Lazarton (2001) believes that oral communication is equal to knowing the whole language since speaking is the fundamental means of communication. Richards (2008) notes that mastering speaking skills is a priority for many learners, often serving as a measure of their confidence in language use. Speaking skills have always been considered a difficult skill out of the four major skills (Citra & Zaninil, 2021). They state that the importance of learning speaking skills has been the main concern of many researchers.

Despite its importance in language learning, speaking has been a challenging skill for learners to acquire. Different speaking characteristics, such as stress, rhythm, intonation, colloquial language, and reduced forms, as Brown (2001) states, could foster the difficulty of acquiring such a skill. Moreover, detrimental emotions like anxiety and fear experienced by learners during oral talks can also deteriorate the situation (Ansari, 2012). Apart from that, Yaqubi and Rashidi (2019) argue that speaking ability depends not only on linguistic elements like grammar and vocabulary but also on affective and pragmatic factors. Accuracy and fluency are other matters that may cause difficulty in speaking. As Thornbury (2007) states, since speaking occurs spontaneously in reality, an overlap occurs between planning and production. If planning is emphasized, production may be negatively affected, resulting in a loss of fluency. On the other hand, if a learner puts his/her focus on production, accuracy might suffer. Therefore, there needs to be a balance and a degree of automaticity between accuracy and fluency. Other factors that make

speaking skills a demanding one are what Shumin (1997) mentions as socially appropriate. He highlights the complexity of speaking in a second language, emphasizing that speaking skill is not just about linguistic accuracy, but also it is about using language that is socially appropriate. Thornbury (2007) also referred to these factors and further stated that monitoring oral communications in a second language requires sufficient knowledge of register, discourse, culture, genre, and speech acts.

In educational settings, teachers should apply activities and bear some features in mind that result in successful speaking skill acquisition. Derakhshan (2015) stated that for a successful practice in speaking, teachers should pay attention to learners' requirements and interests. They should apply activities in the classroom that stimulate learners to share their thoughts spontaneously and with confidence. Another feature of successful speaking practice is what Brown (2001) mentioned as even participation. He further adds that in a classroom context, all learners should get an equal chance to speak and explain themselves. Teachers should distribute contributions evenly, encourage less active learners to engage more in the activities, and ensure that all learners are involved equally.

Dialogic teaching, as conceptualized by Alexander (2017), offers a promising approach by promoting classroom talk to enhance engagement and learning. It is defined as any use of talk that comprises types of discussion to promote learners' learning and engagement processes (Resnick, 2018). Dialogic teaching, according to Alexander (2004), requires teachers to have a set of teaching methods and designs for fostering interaction and engaging in speaking. It also requires them to use various types of organizing interaction, such as teacher-classroom, learner-oriented small groups, and pair work. This concept, unlike traditional methods, emphasizes collective, reciprocal, and supportive interactions that encourage learners to state their ideas in collaboration with their peers (Alexander, 2017). Despite dialogic teaching's potential, it has remained an underexplored field in Iranian high-school contexts, where, according to Ghorbani (2011), oral skills are often neglected.

This study aims to address this research gap by studying the effects of dialogic teaching rules, derived from Alexander's (2017) model, on Iranian ESL senior high-school students. By examining various aspects of speaking skills such as fluency, accuracy, cohesion/coherence, and interactive skills, this study aims to find empirical evidence for improving communicative competence in the Iranian high-school context. There have been studies investigating the role of dialogic teaching on learners' participation and learning. However, there has been a lack of investigation in the context of Iranian high schools where communication in the target language is a matter of triviality (Ghorbani, 2011).

The use of a second language in the form of speaking can create anxiety and inhibition. According to Abdul Rahman and Maarof (2018), the feeling of embarrassment, fear, and anxiety can negatively affect learners' ability and intention to communicate well in pair and group work. This challenge is even worse in school contexts. There are different reasons why students are not able to communicate well in the English language after many years of education in school and college. For instance, Clifford (1987) states that teacher-student relations and emphasis on the structure of the second language are two main reasons that prohibit learners from communication practice. This study explores dialogic teaching as a potential solution to these issues. It aims to enhance speaking skills through the principles of dialogic teaching.

### 1.1. Objective and Significance of the Study

The primary objectives of the present study concentrate on understanding the impact of dialogic teaching rules on the speaking abilities of Iranian high-school students. It aims to find out how their speaking fluency, speaking accuracy, cohesion, coherence, and interactive skills change once they are exposed to dialogic teaching rules.

This study offers significant educational value for several reasons. First, since speaking skills are crucial for language learners, the present study aims to identify the effectiveness of teaching speaking. Second, since improving Iranian high-school students' speaking skills is a matter of concern, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights for teachers and educators to choose good strategies to foster communication among students. Third, the outcomes of this study can help educational policymakers incorporate good interactive and communicative teaching approaches into their educational curriculum. Finally, this study will enrich the body of literature about dialogism and fill the gap by providing empirical evidence on the effects of dialogic teaching rules on speaking abilities.

The current study will seek to find answers to the following questions:

(1) Is there a significant difference between learners who were taught considering dialogic teaching rules and learners who will be taught conventionally using Vision 3 teacher's book?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Oral Communication in the Iranian Context

Undoubtedly, effective oral communication in the target language is of great significance and the means of generating such communication is through speaking. Liubashenko and Kornieva (2019) define speaking as an ability upon which learners will be judged in various real-life contexts. Despite its significance, speaking skills are what the educational system in Iran fails to enable students with effective communication in the English language is the missing link in this system. The Iranian educational system often fails to equip students with proficient English-speaking skills, prioritizing grammar and translation instead (Dahmardeh, 2009; Ghorbani, 2011).

Studies have investigated the effects of various speaking tasks on Iranian learners' oral skills. Hajhosseiny (2012) conducted a research study investigating the effects of interaction strategies on the speaking skills of Iranian intermediate English learners. They concluded that the use of interaction strategies gives learners a great deal of awareness towards their development of speaking skills, which helps them perceive the spoken language and utilize it properly. In another study, Mohammadi and Ahmadi (2021) found that high school learners prefer to do tasks that foster their aural understanding and oral production in the classroom. Yaqubi and Rashidi (2019) conducted a research study about the effects of role-play techniques on learners' speaking development. He concluded that the use of role-play techniques derived from Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) positively affects learners' oral ability. All these studies signify how interested ESL learners are in the use of language communicatively. Soureshjani & Riahipour (2012) conducted a study that included 215 ESL learners and instructors in the Iranian school context. The research findings demonstrated that both learners and instructors had different reasons why speaking skills don't develop in the school context. Learners believed that the lack of appropriate equipment, classroom facilities, and the instruction of English instructors were among the reasons. On the other hand, instructors believed that the classroom atmosphere and the amount of time dedicated to speaking practices were among the factors negatively affecting speaking skills.

Further advancing the related studies, Abbasi (2025) examined how three types of task manipulation (oral reproduction, role-play, and group discussion) affect the fluency and accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' speech. Sixty learners were divided into three groups, each receiving one type of task over ten sessions. Results showed all tasks improved performance, but the group discussion group achieved the highest gains in fluency and accuracy. The findings support using targeted tasks in EFL contexts to enhance speaking skills. Dabiri and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2019) investigated the impact of pre-speaking activities on the oral performance of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. In their quasi-experimental design, 100 female learners aged 15–20 were divided into experimental and control groups. Post-test results indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in speaking assessments, suggesting that pre-speaking activities effectively enhance learners' oral performance. The study concluded that incorporating pre-speaking tasks fosters learner engagement, builds confidence, and improves speaking skills in EFL contexts.

The problem of being able to communicate in the English language remains strong among Iranian ESL learners even after years of study in school and college. Soghady (2022) state that one reason that students are unable to communicate well is because of formal teaching, where grammar and translation are of utmost importance. A study by Afshar and Asakereh (2016) examined the speaking skill challenges faced by Iranian EFL freshmen and seniors. The research involved 238 students (138 freshmen and 100 seniors) and 30 instructors across four Iranian universities. Findings indicated that difficulties, such as fear of making mistakes, limited opportunities for speaking practice, and insufficient teaching facilities, were among the challenges students faced. Notably, there were no significant differences between freshmen and seniors in their perceptions of these challenges, suggesting that speaking skill issues persist throughout their academic journey. Therefore, there should be various types of practices and activities that cause positive changes in the communicative competence of Iranian ESL learners.

## 2.2. The Concept of Dialogic Teaching

Classroom discourse can be monologic (teacher-controlled) or dialogic (student-responsive). This specific discourse is often divided into two main types: 'monologic' and 'dialogic'. In the monologic type, the discourse pattern is often shaped, controlled, and performed by the teacher. On the other hand, the dialogic discourse pattern, as Bakhtin (1981) explains, is an instruction that gives students opportunities to respond, strengthen, and promote their various voices, values, and insights. One of the leading authors of dialogic teaching is Robin Alexander. He defines dialogic teaching as figuring out what learners have in mind, engaging with their ideas, and helping them to speak through creative tasks and activities (2008, p.62).

Dialogic teaching is distinct from traditional interactive regulations of teaching. It should not be perceived as casual conversations that occur in classrooms; rather, it refers to an interactive type of teaching throughout the whole curriculum. It is rooted in psychological and neurological aspects of learners' cognition, and it advocates discussion and dialogue (Alexander, 2017). According to Alexander (2017), discussion and dialogue cause significant effects on children's cognitive potential. They are forms of talk that stimulate children's thinking (Alexander, 2008). He further explains that discussion and dialogue give learners huge agency in structuring their knowledge and perception. They allow learners to progress in their thoughts and ideas about a specific topic.

Alexander (2017), brought up five basic principles of dialogic teaching as follows:

1. Collective: tasks are learned by teachers and learners together in groups rather than in isolation.
2. Reciprocal: Ideas, viewpoints, and perspectives are shared among teachers and learners, and they listen to each other.
3. Supportive: learners feel free to articulate their ideas, without any fear of shyness or embarrassment over incorrect responses. They help each other reach common ground.
4. Cumulative: teachers and learners create coherent lines of reflection and inquiry by building on their ideas.
5. Purposeful: dialogic teaching is facilitated with particular educational goals.

Alexander believed that the collaborative culture of the learners is rooted in the first three principles, which enhance the use of talk in learning. The last two principles, on the other hand, focus on the content of the talk.



## 2.3. Other Concepts of Dialogic Teaching

There have been a number of research studies conducted by contemporary authors focusing on dialogic teaching. In this section, some of these studies are discussed briefly.

### 2.3.1. Freire's Dialogic Teaching

Paulo Freire was the first author who coined the term dialogic teaching. He regarded dialogue as a way of learning and knowing. He believed that dialogue is a means of social transformation between teacher and learner, and it would raise awareness about societal relations on a large scale (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.13).

In comparison with Alexander's concept of dialogic teaching (2017), Freire's views have some common ground with Alexander's. Considering dialogue as an epistemological position (Freire & Macedo, 1995), it holds similarities with Alexander's principles of collective, reciprocal, and supportive. This epistemic position is attainable when teacher-students discuss the task together (collective principle), and share their ideas (reciprocal principle), without being afraid of making mistakes (supportive principle).

### 2.3.2. Dialogically Organized Instruction by Nystrand (1997)

Nystrand (1997) claimed that how language is treated within the context of teaching is more important than the form of utterance in language learning. That is, the teachers' roles in shaping a dialogic environment in the classroom is more essential. Therefore, he proposed the term 'dialogically organized instruction'. According to this concept, the questions and responses that teachers provide for their students demonstrate the roles that teachers play and the way they communicate with students. Through this, students' utterances get meaning, and a social organization is created between teachers and learners, which helps learners shape their learning and understanding.

To form a good learning and understanding environment, Nystrand (1997) proposes that the questions provided by teachers should have some specific features. These are authenticity, uptake, and the ability to promote high-level thinking. These questions will help learners gain more control over the construction of the responses they are going to provide, and ensure that learners' thinking is pivotal.

## 2.4. Recent Empirical Research Studies

Many research studies have investigated the effect of dialogic teaching on various settings, skills, and learners. Among those, several studies reflect that dialogic teaching prompts critical thinking (Hajhosseini, 2012; Niknezhad et al., 2020). According to Sedlacek and Sedova (2017), dialogic teaching enhances learners' talk and reasoning. Liubashenko and Kornieva (2019), state that dialogic teaching boosts students' communicative competence, and Davies (2017) showed that dialogic teaching improves questioning abilities among learners. Davies (2017) demonstrated that the quality of questions posed by students in small-group dialogic discussions improves. Their analysis of audio and video recordings, along with interviews, revealed that teachers viewed these dialogues as useful for enhancing students' deeper thinking. Ramasamy and Zainal (2023) demonstrated that dialogic teaching in Malaysian secondary ESL classrooms increased student engagement and communicative confidence. Similarly, Sedlacek and Sedova (2017) examined the impact of a teacher development program on dialogic teaching practices. Eight teachers were video recorded before and after the program to observe changes in classroom discourse. The findings revealed that teachers' use of dialogic methods increased students' participation and enhanced the quality of student discussions in terms of reasoning, dialogue, and critical thinking.

Not only has dialogic teaching been shown as a successful approach to enhancing speaking ability, but it has also shown promising results in learners' writing abilities in various contexts. In a study conducted by Barjasteh and Niknezhad (2020), they found that since dialogic teaching has a positive impact on students' intellectual abilities, their writing turned to a more critical and creative type rather than descriptive and personal.

Researchers have shown interest in learners' productive skills and their receptive skills, known as listening and reading. Dialogic teaching, particularly, has been shown to enhance listening skills through interactive meaning-making (Huang, 2020; Ozcelik et al., 2020), listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness (Bozorgian & Alamdari, 2018), and cooperative production in conversations (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2020). Despite the common understanding of listening as a passive activity, Edwards-Groves and Davidson (2020) explored active listening within a dialogic context. Using a detailed Conversation Analysis (CA) approach, Kemmis et al. (2014) examined data from Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) projects that involved 12 teachers who applied dialogic teaching strategies. They transcribed and analyzed video recordings to identify interactional features in whole-class discussions where students engaged in active listening. The study found that various responsive practices in dialogic discussions strengthened active listening.

The positive effects observed with listening can also be extended to reading skills. However, existing studies on the influence of dialogic teaching on students' reading skill development mainly focus on young children. A study by Suryati and Saukah (2017) examined the impact of dialogic reading strategies on the reading comprehension skills of forty primary school EFL students in Indonesia. The results showed that dialogic teaching created a more dynamic and engaging learning process,

which enhanced students' reading comprehension abilities. Therefore, dialogic reading strategies were a promising and effective approach for improving reading comprehension skills.

## 2.5. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory supports dialogic teaching by emphasizing social interaction in the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, within the zone of proximal development, students can learn better using social communication with more knowledgeable people. Dialogic teaching is in line with this theory in that it creates an environment where students engage in meaningful dialogue, receive scaffolding from teachers and peers to perform speaking tasks they might not perform independently. This is where students' abilities in interactive language use are improved.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach also supports the idea of using interaction in language learning. CLT emphasizes the use of language in real-life communicative contexts. Rote learning is not of priority in this context. The CLT principles can also be seen in Dialogic teaching rules. Dialogic rules create an environment where students use language to express their thoughts and emotions and discuss them in classes. When the language is used practically in the classes, students' participation in dynamic language use is strengthened, and they develop their interactive skills.

The Constructivist Theory is the third theory that the dialogic teaching rules take advantage of. According to this theory, knowledge construction is improved when interaction and dialogue are actively followed in the class. Students are regarded as active participants in their learning, and they construct knowledge through experiences and interactions. These principles can also be seen in dialogism, where active participation is fostered. This active involvement in the learning process enhances speaking skills and builds up critical thinking and a deep understanding of the language.

Finally, Bakhtin's (1981) Theory of Dialogism is a theory that prioritizes dialogue for the enhancement of speaking ability. This theory states that dialogue is constructed through language and meaning. Dialogic teaching is in line with this theory in that it encourages several perspectives and collaborative meaning-making. In a dialogic context, students experience new insights. Expressing thoughts will lead to in-depth understanding and better use of language.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

The participants were 43 twelfth-grade high school students (aged 17-18) in Ardabil, Iran, enrolled in summer extracurricular English classes from June to August 2024. They were assigned to an experimental group ( $n=22$ ; 12 females, 10 males) and a control group ( $n=21$ ; 11 females, 10 males) based on prior Vision 2 proficiency scores (Vision 2 final exam, scored converted into a 100-point scale for analysis), ensuring homogeneity (experimental group:  $M = 82.5$ ,  $SD = 4.2$ ; control group:  $M = 81.9$ ,  $SD = 4.5$ ;  $t(41) = 0.47$ ,  $p = .64$ ). The experimental group had 22 students (12 females, 10 male), and the control group had 21 (11 females, 10 male). A power analysis ( $\alpha = .05$ , power = .80, effect size = .50) indicated a minimum sample of 34, suggesting the study was adequately powered despite its modest sample size.

### 3.2. Design of the Study

Both experimental and control groups took part in a language-learning program that took three months. Once the program had been completed, the participants' ability to pronounce words correctly was tested, and their scores were used as the research data. The participants of this study had already been divided into two homogeneous classes before conducting the research based on their overall performance. This means that the researcher would have had no control over the selection of students in each class. Therefore, the most appropriate design for this study would be quasi-experimental research. A pretest-posttest design was implemented to assess the groups' performance. The intervention sessions took three months, with both groups having two 90-minute classes twice a week.

### 3.3. Procedure

In this cross-sectional study that took 12 weeks during the summer of 2024, the participants received educational content from their eleventh and twelfth-grade English courses known as Vision 2 and Vision 3. In week 1, both groups completed a speaking pretest to establish baseline performance. The students' scores were calculated out of 25. This score is the combination of four speaking sub-divisions: fluency (speed, pausing; 7 points), accuracy (grammar, pronunciation; 7 points), cohesion/coherence (linking ideas; 6 points), and interactive skills (turn-taking, responsiveness; 5 points). Inter-rater reliability was high (Cohen's  $\kappa = .87$ ) due to the evaluation of two raters. The control group followed conventional Vision 3 activities (e.g., reading aloud, grammar exercises, and teacher-centered Questions and answers), while the experimental group engaged in dialogic tasks based on Alexander's (2017) five principles: collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful. These tasks included group discussions in which students debated topics like cultural events to make sure reciprocal idea-sharing occurred. Pair work and Whole-class dialogues were other tasks in which students simulated real-life scenarios such as job interviews and discussed ideas to build cumulative understanding. The teacher in the experimental group implemented dialogic teaching through activities such

as open-ended questioning, creating a safe environment for free expression, and collaborative listening. Each session began with activities like a warm-up to reduce anxiety among students. 60 minutes of each session were dedicated to dialogic tasks.

In the final week, both groups completed a posttest speaking exam, the questions of which were identical to the pretest. Data were collected after each exam and analyzed to compare the differences between the groups' performance.

### 3.4. Instruments

The data required for analysis to provide an answer to the research question were acquired from speaking exams that both experimental and control groups' participants took. First, both groups went through a pre-test to examine their speaking ability before conducting the treatment. In the next step, the control group received traditional speaking tasks and methods, while the experimental group was taught the speaking ability using the dialogic teaching rules. Finally, the post-test was carried out to assess both groups' progress.

As stated earlier, the dialogic teaching rules to which the experimental group will be exposed will be derived from Alexander's (2017) five basic principles of dialogic teaching. These rules are as follows:

- (1) Teachers should contribute to task completion along with learners. This will make students not feel alone. (Collective)
- (2) Teachers and learners should share their ideas and listen carefully to each other. (Reciprocity)
- (3) Teachers should create an atmosphere inside their classroom that gives room to students to express their ideas freely without fear of shame. They should help students reach a common understanding. (Supportive)
- (4) Teachers should build a link between learners' ideas and make a coherent chain of their thoughts. (Purposeful)

### 3.5. Data Analysis

To analyze the data for providing an answer to the research question, first, the descriptive statistics were calculated. once the normality and the homogeneity of the two groups were ensured, a repeated measures ANOVA would be used to compare the means of the two groups. Finally, a post-hoc analysis was conducted on the experimental group's scores for each sub-skill to identify improvements in each of them.

## 4. Results

As stated above, both experimental and control groups took a pre-test and a post-test to determine the significance of the differences after they underwent treatments. The control group received a traditional method of teaching speaking treatment. On the other hand, the experimental group received a teaching treatment based on the dialogic teaching rules. Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of the scores gained from both groups

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of the Mean Scores Within the Control Group and the Experimental Group Before and After the Treatment

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Pretest-control	21	15.00	24.00	19.0000	.55205	2.52982
Posttest-control	21	13.00	25.00	19.2857	.71761	3.28851
Pretest-experimental	22	15.00	25.00	19.3636	.69177	3.24471
Posttest-experimental	22	19.00	25.00	22.5000	.45939	2.15473

Normality (Shapiro-Wilk,  $p > .05$ ) and homogeneity of variance (Levene's test,  $p > .05$ ) were confirmed. A repeated measures ANOVA assessed time (pre vs. post) and group (experimental vs. control) effects.

In this study, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences and their significance between mean scores. Tables 2 and 3 represent the differences between the experimental and control groups' outcomes over time.

**Table 2.** Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	34509.887	1	34509.887	2622.923	.000	.985
Groups	68.771	1	68.771	5.227	.057	.114
Error	539.438	41	13.157			

**Table 3.** Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	62.911	1	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
	Greenhouse-Geisser	62.911	1.000	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
	Huynh-Feldt	62.911	1.000	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
	Lower-bound	62.911	1.000	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
time * Groups	Sphericity Assumed	43.655	1	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
	Greenhouse-Geisser	43.655	1.000	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
	Huynh-Feldt	43.655	1.000	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
	Lower-bound	43.655	1.000	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	123.438	41	3.011			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	123.438	41.000	3.011			
	Huynh-Feldt	123.438	41.000	3.011			
	Lower-bound	123.438	41.000	3.011			

According to Table 2, there was no significant main effect of groups,  $F(1, 41) = 5.23$ ,  $p = .057$ , meaning no overall difference existed between groups. According to Table 3, there was a significant main effect of time,  $F(1, 41) = 20.90$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating overall speaking ability improved from pre- to post-test. The significant interaction effect (time \* groups),  $F(1, 41) = 14.50$ ,  $p < .001$ , showed the experimental group improved more than the control group.

Paired t-tests were conducted as post-hoc analysis on the experimental group's scores for each sub-skill. Table 4 represents the results as follows.

**Table 4.** Paired Sample T-Test

Sub-Skill	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	t(21)	p	Cohen's d
Fluency (7 points)	5.10 (0.90)	6.20 (0.70)	4.12	<.001	0.88
Accuracy (7 points)	5.30 (0.85)	5.70 (0.80)	1.92	.07	0.41
Cohesion/Coherence (6 points)	4.60 (0.75)	5.00 (0.65)	2.01	.06	0.43
Interactive Skills (5 points)	4.00 (0.70)	4.60 (0.60)	3.89	.001	0.76

The experimental group showed significant gains in fluency ( $p < .001$ ) and interactive skills ( $p = .001$ ), with large effect sizes ( $d = 0.88$  and  $0.76$ , respectively). Improvements in accuracy ( $p = .07$ ) and cohesion/coherence ( $p = .06$ ) were not significant, though small-to-medium effect sizes ( $d = 0.41$  and  $0.43$ ) suggest modest gains.

## 5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the impact of dialogic teaching rules, based on Alexander's (2017) model, on the speaking abilities of Iranian senior high-school ESL learners. These abilities focused on fluency, accuracy, cohesion, coherence, and interactive skills. This study was conducted in a context where traditional teaching styles were dominant, seeking responses to address the gap in communicative competence among Iranian senior high-school students through dialogic teaching as an alternative to traditional teaching methods. The findings of the present study provide evidence of dialogic teaching efficacy. However, it highlights challenges that require critical insights for ESL instruction and future research.

The results of the study indicate a positive impact of dialogic teaching rules on students' speaking ability, particularly in fluency ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.88$ ) and interactive skills ( $p = .001$ ,  $d = 0.76$ ). The experimental group's post-test mean (22.50) was higher than the control group's (19.29) with significant fluency ( $p < .001$ ) and interactive capacity ( $p = .001$ ) improvements according to Table 4. These findings align with Alexander's (2008) claim that dialogic teaching enhances exploratory and expressive speech through collective and reciprocal interactions. In this study, since open-ended questioning and a non-judgmental atmosphere, which are referred to in Alexander's (2017) supportive principle, were emphasized, the speaking anxiety was reduced, which enabled students to prioritize fluency and interaction. The Sociocultural Theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) provides the theoretical insight for these results, as dialogic tasks created a zone of proximal development where teacher and peer scaffolding gave room to students to express their ideas freely and confidently. Similarly, the concept of dialogism proposed by Bakhtin (1981) emphasizes the importance of collaborative meaning-making, which enables students to engage in group discussions dynamically. Recent studies that corroborate with the findings of the current study include Chow (2021), who found that dialogic teaching improved oral proficiency among young Chinese ESL learners, while Ramasamy and Zainal (2023) reported enhanced engagement in Malaysian ESL classrooms. Abbasi (2025) further examined how three types of task manipulation (oral reproduction, role-play, and group discussion) affect the fluency and accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' speech. The findings of Sedlacek and Sedova's (2017) study also revealed that teachers' use of dialogic methods increased students'



attendance and enhanced the quality of student discussions in terms of reasoning, dialogue, and critical thinking.

Despite the positive changes mentioned above, non-significant improvements in cohesion/coherence ( $p = .06$ ,  $d = 0.43$ ) and accuracy ( $p = .07$ ,  $d = 0.41$ ) revealed some limitations. The three-month intervention may have been too short to develop these complex linguistic skills, which require extensive practice and explicit instruction (Mercer & Howe, 2012). Thornbury (2007) notes that spontaneous dialogue often prioritizes fluency over precision, a trade-off evident in this study's design. Furthermore, Richards (2008) states that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which underpins dialogic teaching, prioritizes meaning over form, which potentially gives less importance to accuracy unless it is explicitly addressed. A research study conducted by Mohammadi and Ahmadi (2021) suggests that targeted feedback is a prerequisite for dialogic teaching to address grammatical accuracy, which did not make a significant difference in this study. Such results may also have cultural reasons. Iranian classroom culture, which prefers teacher-centered teaching, may have restricted students' room for fully embracing dialogic activities with open-ended co-working (Yaqubi & Rashidi, 2019). Additionally, affective factors like fear of mistakes, as highlighted by Soghady (2022), may have defeated accuracy development even if a favorable environment due to dialogic teaching was established.

On the contrary, Critics of dialogic teaching raise noticeable concerns about the implementation of dialogic teaching. Meyer (2010) states that in a dialogic environment, opportunities to speak are not equally shared among students, which results in marginalization of quieter peers. Some may dominate the conversations; others may be given less time to practice speaking. This problem was mitigated in the study conducted by Sedlacek and Sedova (2017) through structured tasks such as pair work and teacher intervention. However, Smith et al. (2006) found that dialogic teaching may not be effective in classrooms that are too crowded. This challenge can be seen in many Iranian schools where teachers struggle to provide an equitable opportunity for learners to participate. Haez and Delfani (2022) suggest that asynchronous Dynamic Assessment could address this issue as it may offer more effective support for developing speaking skills in over-crowded EFL classes. Bozorgian and Alamdari (2021) also propose the implementation of audio-recorded dialogic tasks to allow the teachers to review and provide feedback.

The findings of this study emphasize the role of dialogic teaching to transform ESL instruction by creating environments that are learner-friendly and dynamic. Future research is required to explore approaches combining dialogic tasks with explicit grammar instruction to improve accuracy and cohesion, as suggested by Bozorgian and Alamdari (2021).

## 6. Conclusion

This study identifies the learning strengths of dialogic teaching guidelines to enhance Iranian high school ESL students' speaking skills. Facilitating fluency and interactive competence, dialogic teaching promotes successful oral interaction, satisfying communicative competence goals. Even in small-sized classrooms, it offers a valuable alternative to typical practices. The findings of this study offer significant pedagogical implications for Iranian ESL teachers who wish to apply dialogic teaching to enhance students' speaking skills. It demonstrates Alexander's (2017) whole-class discussion and idea exchange principles. It creates a dynamic, interactive classroom atmosphere where students gain confidence in spontaneous communication through tasks like formal debates or peer storytelling in a supportive setting that reframes errors as learning opportunities. To address areas that made less progress, such as precision and cohesion/coherence, teachers can integrate brief, targeted feedback sessions to deal with grammatical or structural weaknesses without compromising interaction, prioritizing fluency and engagement over strict correctness to align with communicative objectives. This makes this approach viable for high school contexts despite time constraints or traditional grammar-oriented curricula. Furthermore, overcoming cultural barriers is critical, requiring teachers to foster a classroom culture that normalizes mistakes as part of learning, consistent with Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism emphasizing collective meaning-making, through confidence-building warm-up activities like storytelling or low-stakes discussions and explicit explanations of dialogic interaction benefits to shift students' attitudes toward oral tasks. Beyond the classroom, these findings advocate for curriculum and policy reforms, which urge policymakers to integrate dialogic teaching into Iran's national ESL curriculum to prioritize communicative competence over rote learning, adopting hybrid approaches that combine dialogic tasks with explicit grammar instruction, as suggested by Bozorgian and Alamdari (2021), to address all speaking sub-skills, while leveraging technology, such as online platforms explored by Haez and Delfani (2022), to extend dialogic interaction beyond class time for asynchronous practice and feedback. This would reinforce the need for a classroom culture that embraces errors as learning opportunities to transform language education. Practical strategies for teachers include incorporating systematic group discussions, role-play, and reflective feedback sessions to ensure student engagement and offset linguistic deficits. For example, teachers can include initiations like "Describe a cultural event" to start group discussion or assign students for role-play simulating actual situations.

Limitations are the small sample size ( $N=43$ ), quasi-experimental nature, and short intervention duration, which might affect generalizability. Future studies need to investigate larger, randomized samples, longer interventions, and hybrid designs that combine dialogic and explicit instruction to maximize all speaking sub-skills.

## 7. References

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