

**A Systematic Review of Dialogic Talk in EFL
Classrooms: Implications for Chinese Middle
School Classrooms**

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Abstract

The systematic review examines the implementation and impact of dialogic talk in language classrooms. It explores various theoretical perspectives and empirical studies on dialogic talk, focusing on its role in fostering critical thinking, collaborative learning, and effective communication in language education. The thesis investigates how dialogic talk is utilized in language classrooms, its influence on students' language learning outcomes, and effective strategies for its implementation. Based on relevant empirical literature of previous studies, academic articles of high referential value were carefully selected and subjected to careful analysis. In this dissertation, 17 empirical studies about implementing dialogic talk are discussed. It was found that dialogic talk is applied differently in different education contexts and can influence students' language learning outcomes. Suggestions on applying dialogic talk in Chinese middle school English language classrooms are provided. This review offered cumulative evidence that could be used in current practices.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Personal motivation for the study

Since 2007, English instruction in China has undergone a new curriculum reform to address the issue of Mute English. Mute English, a term coined in the People's Republic of China, refers to the phenomenon where individuals struggle to speak English proficiently and have limited listening comprehension as a second language. Many recent graduates have expressed their inability to perform essential communicative functions, even after years of studying English, leading to the prevalence of "Mute English" (Feng, 2007). Chinese graduates need more English ability, hindering global career prospects, international collaborations, and access to information. It limits opportunities in a world where English is a crucial language for business, academia, and networking, affecting their competitiveness and ability to thrive in a globalised environment. This issue is often attributed to the traditional method of English language teaching, where English is taught solely as a subject (Wei, 2011). It usually makes Chinese students only absorb English knowledge theoretically and lack of chance using it practically.

As a Chinese student who has adeptly navigated the educational system in China with a focus on the English language, I possess a distinct and unparalleled first-hand comprehension of the obstacles that students confront when endeavouring to overcome the prevalent issue of "Mute English." Through my encounters with the hesitancy to engage in verbal English communication, I am profoundly motivated by a genuine aspiration to bridge the gap between language instruction and the practical development of communication skills.

Having been raised within an environment that places a significant emphasis on achieving proficiency in the English language, I have had the opportunity to witness the pervasive reliance on rote memorisation and written examinations as the dominant

means of evaluating linguistic competence. This particular experience has instigated a profound scepticism regarding the effectiveness of these conventional methodologies in facilitating genuine language communication. Accordingly, this personal journey propels my deep interest in exploring alternative approaches, explicitly focusing on utilising dialogic talk as a potential catalyst for transforming language learning experiences.

Furthermore, my extensive academic background in language studies equips me with the necessary theoretical framework to critically evaluate the existing body of literature on language acquisition and pedagogy. Drawing from my extensive experiences as both a learner and a student of linguistics, I am uniquely positioned to adeptly navigate the intersecting realms of theoretical insights and practical application within Chinese language education.

In this research endeavour, my objective is to leverage my academic background and draw from my lived experiences to effectively contextualise the prevalent issue of "Mute English" within China's broader cultural and educational landscape. By skillfully intertwining personal observations with scholarly investigation, my ultimate aspiration is to offer an understanding of the challenges that students encounter while simultaneously contributing to the ongoing discourse surrounding effective methodologies for language instruction in the Chinese context.

1.2 The 2007 curriculum reform and the possibilities dialogic talk offers

The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE) decided to implement transformative curriculum changes in 2007 to promote communicative competence and real-world language application. Before the 2007 curriculum reform in China, the English language curriculum followed a traditional approach, emphasising rote memorisation, grammar drills, and translation exercises. The primary goal was to

enhance students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, albeit with a predominant focus on written proficiency over oral communication. Textbooks formed the backbone of instruction, covering vocabulary, grammar, and reading passages, while teachers relied on these materials for structured classroom lessons, supplemented by workbooks and audiovisual aids. Teaching methods were largely teacher-centred, with instructors delivering lectures and drills to reinforce language concepts, while group activities and communicative tasks were less common. Assessment mainly consisted of written exams, quizzes, and occasional oral presentations, primarily evaluating students' knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension rather than their ability to communicate effectively in spoken English. Although the curriculum aimed to impart a solid foundation in English language skills, its shortcomings included a need for more emphasis on practical communication and interaction, prompting the need for reform to align with contemporary language teaching methodologies and global communication standards (Hu, 2002).

Compared to the old Chinese curriculum, the 2007 curriculum reform in China aimed to overhaul the traditional education system by prioritising holistic development, critical thinking, and practical skills over rote memorisation and exam-driven learning. Its purpose was multifaceted: to reduce the academic burden on students, promote quality education, integrate moral and civic values into the curriculum, and enhance teacher training. Changes included fewer subjects and textbooks, a decreased homework load, and a shift towards more interactive and student-centred teaching methods. Additionally, moral and civic education was integrated across all subjects, emphasising ethical values and social responsibility (MOE, 2007). While progress has been made in certain areas, such as increased emphasis on creativity and critical thinking, challenges remain in fully realising the reform's objectives. Implementation has varied across regions and institutions, with some areas needing help to implement the changes effectively due to entrenched cultural and institutional factors. Additionally, the pressure to perform well on standardised exams still persists, hindering the shift towards a more holistic approach to education (Braun, 2019). Despite these challenges,

the 2007 curriculum reform has laid the groundwork for ongoing efforts to improve the quality and relevance of education in China, highlighting the need for continued adaptation and refinement to meet the evolving needs of students and society. This is how dialogic talk as a teaching approach is introduced to the Chinese English classroom. It has gained popularity to fit the demands of the curriculum reform need. For example, applying dialogic talk in the language classroom has been proven effective in enhancing students' language and critical thinking skills.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Since the implementation of the curriculum reform in 2007, scholars have actively pursued appropriate pedagogical strategies for the instruction of the English language. The field of English as a foreign language (EFL) education in China has witnessed significant progress and transformations, reflecting the nation's growing emphasis on global communication and proficiency in the English language (Rao, 2013). Due to this emphasis, dialogic talk as a pedagogical approach has been employed in China over the past decade. Nevertheless, there is a need for more systematic reviews of the existing body of literature concerning dialogic talk in China (Ao & Huang, 2020; Chen et al., 2023; Tian et al., 2017). Despite the recognition of the significance of conversational communication in language acquisition in numerous studies, it is imperative to systematically comprehend the current state of dialogic talk in EFL classrooms in China. This understanding is vital in guiding educational practices, formulating policies, and directing future research. Through a systematic review, the present investigation aims to offer detailed insights, identify gaps in the literature, and propose recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of dialogic talk as a pedagogical tool for English instruction in China.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The thesis aims to investigate the empirical data about the utilisation of dialogic talk in language classrooms across various countries, as well as its influence on the language

acquisition results of students. The objective is to comprehend the circumstances, timing, and prerequisites under which dialogic talk can enhance language learning. Furthermore, the thesis will emphasise efficacious approaches and methodologies for implementing dialogic talk that can be applied in Chinese language classrooms at the middle school level.

1.5 Overview of the methods

This investigation employs a systematic review methodology to evaluate existing empirical investigations. The selection of a systematic review as the research approach for examining the implementation of dialogic talk in Chinese EFL classrooms offers numerous advantages. Firstly, it facilitates an examination of existing literature on dialogic talk from around the world, ensuring a thorough comprehension of the subject matter. By systematically searching for and combining relevant studies, biases are minimised, resulting in a more objective overview of the available evidence. Furthermore, the systematic review process enables the identification of gaps, discrepancies, and contradictions in the literature, guiding future research endeavours and ensuring that the study addresses pertinent unanswered questions regarding the implementation of dialogic talk in Chinese EFL classrooms. Moreover, the synthesis of findings from multiple studies allows for the recognition of patterns, trends, and optimal approaches, which can inform evidence-based practices for educators and policymakers (Wolgemuth et al., 2017).

The systematic review encompasses 19 articles from 12 different countries. The extensive geographical representation provides a range of perspectives and insights into the implementation of dialogic talk in Chinese EFL classrooms, enhancing the understanding of its global applicability. Additionally, including studies from diverse countries allows the review to identify cross-cultural variations and similarities in the effectiveness of dialogic talk strategies, informing culturally responsive teaching methods. Furthermore, including multiple articles permits an integration of findings,

enabling the identification of common themes, trends, and optimal approaches across various contexts.

1.6 Research questions

This research presents a systematic examination in order to investigate the effects of dialogic talk in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and its effect on students' educational achievements. Additionally, through analysis, this study will summarise the practical pedagogical approaches for EFL classrooms in China. This study will investigate the following questions:

How is dialogic talk used in language classrooms?

How does dialogic talk impact students' language learning outcomes?

What are some effective strategies and techniques for dialogic talk that can be practised in Chinese middle school language classrooms?

1.7 Significance of the study

This research aims to investigate the various ways in which educators incorporate dialogic talk into language classrooms. By examining the practical applications, methods, and scenarios surrounding its use, this study aims to understand how dialogic talk is employed. This exploration holds the potential to guide educators in adapting their instructional approaches to ensure the seamless integration of dialogic talk into language learning environments.

Robin Alexander's educational theory of dialogic talk presents a transformative approach to tackling the phenomenon of "Mute English", particularly salient in the context of Chinese individuals mastering the English language. This method underscores the significance of spoken language proficiency, an indispensable competency in the realm of global communication. At the heart of dialogic talk lies the concept of collective learning, where language development is perceived as a shared journey, transcending individualistic pursuits (Alexander, 2008). This collaborative

framework propels learners into active participation in group dialogues, fostering a supportive atmosphere where the exchange of ideas and joint learning flourish. For Chinese English learners, this translates into engaging in conversations that dismantle barriers of hesitation or apprehension tied to speaking a foreign tongue. Dialogic talk, by championing interactive and reciprocal learning, cultivates a learning milieu that is both stimulating and less daunting for English practice.

Another pivotal element of dialogic talk is the establishment of an encouraging and safe learning environment (Alexander, 2008). This aspect concentrates on creating a classroom setting where expressing thoughts and navigating errors are not only accepted but encouraged. Such a nurturing backdrop is vital for learners who might feel vulnerable about their language proficiency. In a space where linguistic experimentation is welcomed, learners are emboldened to venture into new linguistic territories, thus enhancing their fluency and self-assurance in English. Moreover, dialogic talk involves purposeful and meaningful interaction (Alexander, 2008). It transcends mere conversational exchange, aiming for substantial dialogues that resonate with the learners' personal experiences and aspirations. This alignment with the learners' interests and cultural backgrounds not only makes the learning process more absorbing but also more effective, sparking heightened engagement and motivation. In the case of Chinese residents learning English, this implies customizing dialogues to reflect their unique cultural perspectives and practical requirements, rendering the educational experience more pertinent and profound.

By weaving these principles together, dialogic talk effectively confronts the challenge of "Mute English". It engenders a lively, interactive learning sphere where speaking and listening are paramount, thereby significantly elevating the spoken English capabilities of learners. This approach equips them with the essential skills and confidence needed for proficient communication in an ever-more interconnected global landscape.

In addition, this research addresses the practical aspects of implementing dialogic talk

by identifying effective strategies and techniques. Specifically designed for Chinese middle school language classrooms, this exploration aims to provide educators with various evidence-based practices. This will foster a more contextually relevant and impactful integration of dialogic talk.

This study has broader implications for educational stakeholders, including researchers, curriculum developers, and policymakers. The anticipated findings could inform the design and refinement of language education practices. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective language education methodologies. It will influence pedagogical practices in Chinese middle schools and offer insights that may resonate globally. In doing so, it aspires to contribute to the continual improvement of language learning outcomes and the advancement of innovative instructional practices.

1.8 Scope and limitations of the study

Given the intricate and expansive nature of educational research about dialogic talk, this systematic review must be tailored to a specific research focus. The principal aim of this investigation is to furnish pragmatic pedagogical approaches within mainland China. It is worth noting that mainland China possesses distinct social systems and institutions compared to Western nations, as well as Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, which consequently engenders notable disparities in the instructional methods employed within language classrooms (Li et al., 2012). In order to attain an understanding of the breadth of dialogic talk and to provide practical teaching strategies, the systematic review encompasses literature sourced from numerous countries and regions.

Furthermore, by exclusively focusing on middle school settings, this dialogic talk research seeks to explore communication dynamics within this crucial developmental stage. As middle schoolers undergo significant cognitive and social changes, this study

aims to uncover the contribution of dialogic interactions to learning, socialisation, and cognitive growth (Juuti et al., 2020). By narrowing the research scope to this specific educational level, the study aims to provide targeted insights that can inform pedagogical practices, thus fostering a deeper understanding of the impact of dialogic talk on academic engagement and social development during the pivotal middle school years.

1.9 Overview of the study

The systematic review is partitioned into eight chapters categorised into three primary segments. The initial significant segment encompasses Chapter One through Chapter Five. The research inquiries are examined in the first four chapters, and the research significance of this systematic review is communicated within a framework based on the recent curriculum reformation in China and the evolution of dialogic talk. Chapter Five establishes and communicates the specific research methods employed and the sampling process in this systematic review. The second significant segment encompasses Chapter Six. Chapter Six discloses the research findings by addressing research questions one and two. Chapters Seven and Eight constitute the third significant segment, serving as the discussion and conclusion wherein research question three of this systematic review is addressed. This ultimate chapter provides an overview of the data analysis to formulate a final conclusion and address the research questions posed initially. Finally, both the potential contribution and limitations of this research are communicated.

1.10 Conclusion

This exhaustive systematic review offers an in-depth analysis of the role of dialogic talk in Chinese middle school English language education. It delves into the transformation of English teaching methods in China, particularly following the significant 2007 curriculum overhaul, illuminating how dialogic talk can effectively tackle the long-standing issue of "Mute English." The research highlights a crucial shift from

conventional, memorization-based teaching to more dynamic, communication-focused techniques that enhance real-world language capabilities.

The study's findings underscore the pivotal role of dialogic talk in elevating student engagement, advancing linguistic proficiency, and fostering critical thinking abilities. It meticulously outlines actionable strategies and methods for integrating dialogic talk, offering invaluable guidance for educators aiming to revolutionize English language pedagogy in Chinese middle schools. Beyond its immediate context, this research extends its impact to the global educational sphere, providing insights pertinent to language teaching professionals worldwide who confront similar educational hurdles. In essence, this systematic review champions the imperative for continuous innovation in language teaching approaches. It calls for an educational paradigm that prioritizes student involvement, meaningful dialogue, and cultural context in language acquisition. Such a paradigm is vital in preparing students with the linguistic skills needed to excel in a world that is ever more globally connected and culturally diverse.

Chapter 2 The EFL Language Learning Classroom Contexts in China

2.1 Background of English language learning in China

The process of learning the English language in China operates within a complex framework that is influenced by political, social, and economic factors. From a political standpoint, China has acknowledged the significance of English proficiency as a means to engage globally and foster economic growth. To this end, the government has implemented policies that aim to promote English education, recognising its importance in enhancing China's international competitiveness (Hu, 2005). Efforts such as the National English Proficiency Test (NEPT) and the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education demonstrate a concerted attempt to standardise English language learning nationwide. Furthermore, the Chinese government has invested in programs that facilitate language immersion by sending students abroad, acknowledging the value of cultural exchange in language acquisition (Jane, 2017).

In a social context, English proficiency is highly valued and often equated with socioeconomic progress. Parents aspire for their children to excel in English, as they perceive it to be a pathway to higher education opportunities in China and abroad (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2015). Consequently, students face immense pressure to perform well in English examinations, leading to a thriving industry of private tutoring services and English language learning materials.

From an economic perspective, English proficiency is increasingly recognised as essential for career advancement and global job prospects. China's integration into the global economy has heightened the demand for professionals proficient in English across various sectors such as business, technology, and tourism (Guo & Sun, 2014). Consequently, individuals with strong English skills often command higher salaries and

have access to a broader range of domestic and international job opportunities.

However, challenges persist within this landscape. Disparities in access to quality English education exist between urban and rural areas, as well as among different socioeconomic groups (Hannum et al., 2008). There are still students who still need to receive systematic English instruction. Additionally, the dominance of exam-focused learning methods can impede students' ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations (Duță, 2015). The development of students' oral proficiency is significantly hindered. There are still issues that require resolution.

2.2 English curriculum policy at Chinese middle schools

Examining the implementation and impact of English curriculum policy in Chinese middle schools yields valuable insights into educational strategies, language acquisition, and cultural exchange within the globalised education landscape. Two policy documents provided by the China Education Bureau serve as the basis for English language learning in Chinese middle schools: the Syllabus for Nine-year Compulsory Education in Full-time Junior High School English (2022) and the English Curriculum Standards (1992). These two policies influence dialogic talk, critical thinking, and language acquisition. The Syllabus for Nine-year Compulsory Education in Full-time Junior High School English (2022) encourages the promotion of interactive communication and student participation, which aligns with the application of dialogic talk in the classroom. This can be achieved through activities such as group discussions, debates, and collaborative projects, fostering students' oral expression. Furthermore, the syllabus may emphasise the development of speaking and listening skills through communicative language teaching methods, creating opportunities for authentic language use and meaningful exchanges. On the other hand, the English Curriculum Standards (1992) impact dialogic talk by prioritising teacher-led instruction over

student-centred dialogue. Emphasising traditional approaches like grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods may restrict opportunities for interactive communication. Dialogue may be limited to teacher-student interactions rather than encouraging peer-to-peer discourse. As a result, this could impede the development of communication skills and critical thinking through collaborative discussions. Consequently, the 1992 standards might unintentionally hinder the cultivation of dialogic talk within the English language classroom.

The framework for the English curriculum in full-time middle schools, as outlined in *The Syllabus for Nine-year Compulsory Education in Full-time Junior High School English (2022)*, encompasses five distinct components: teaching purposes, objectives and requirements, content, critical considerations in teaching, and evaluation. Each of these components provides concise guidance to assist educators in understanding the structure of the instructional process. Additionally, the syllabus establishes the minimum standards that students are expected to achieve. For instance, in the section on expression and communication, the syllabus mandates that middle school students should be able to utilise the language they have learned to engage in daily conversations on relevant topics. They should demonstrate correct pronunciation, intonation, word usage, and coherent expressions (MOE, 2022). Furthermore, additional oral requirements for middle school students enhance the implementation of dialogic talk.

The English Curriculum Standards (1992) comprise six sections, encompassing nature, philosophy, course objectives, course content, academic quality, and implementation of the English curriculum. This curriculum covers the nine-year compulsory education and is divided into three levels, with middle school education falling under level three. The syllabus provides detailed information on the expected achievements of level three students and offers guidance on effective English instruction. It also outlines the fundamental learning requirements for all students.

It is important to note notable differences between the teaching syllabus and the

curriculum standards. The syllabus emphasises acquiring knowledge and skills that align with teaching objectives. At the same time, the standards focus on three-dimensional goals: knowledge and skills, processes and methods, and emotional attitudes and values. Regarding teaching methods, the syllabus prioritises desired outcomes, whereas the standards prioritise the learning process itself. Additionally, the syllabus emphasises the systematicity of the subject, while the standards prioritise the foundational knowledge necessary for lifelong development. Evaluation methods also differ, with the syllabus emphasising summative assessment and screening while the standards highlight process evaluation and educational development. Dialogic talk is relevant to these policies as it facilitates communication and understanding among teachers, students, and stakeholders, thereby promoting alignment with the objectives, methods, and evaluation criteria outlined in both the syllabus and the standards.

2.3 The foreign language classroom context in Chinese middle school

In the realm of English language instruction, the Chinese setting presents distinctive challenges and opportunities. As per the MOE, an overwhelming majority of Chinese middle schools, amounting to over 95%, are public institutions (MOE, 2023). Consequently, this study will primarily concentrate on public middle schools rather than private ones, thereby ensuring a scope for the findings. Upon scrutinising the characteristics of EFL classrooms in Chinese public schools, it becomes evident that the amalgamation of elements such as a teacher-centred approach, large class sizes, varying levels of linguistic proficiency, an exam-oriented educational system, and a cultural inclination towards respecting authority shapes the landscape of English language acquisition in China (Zhang & Liu, 2014).

2.4 Teacher-Centered Classrooms

One noteworthy characteristic of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in

China is the prevailing teacher-centred methodology. Throughout history, the educational system in China has been heavily influenced by the principles of Confucianism, which emphasise respect for authority and assign great significance to the teacher's role as the central figure in the learning process (Bahtilla & Xu, 2021). This is evident in English classrooms nationwide, where instruction primarily revolves around the teacher as the primary disseminator of knowledge and authoritative source (Du, 2020). Within Chinese EFL classrooms, this challenges the implementation of dialogic talk. Given the emphasis on authority dynamics and a teacher-centric structure, opportunities for genuine dialogue among students may be constrained.

2.5 Large Class Sizes

The Chinese EFL classrooms possess a notable characteristic, which is the substantial size of student cohorts. Due to the vast population of over 1.4 billion, China faces the challenge of accommodating many learners within its educational system. As a result, English classrooms in China are marked by significant class sizes that often exceed 50 students per class (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998). Many students in these classes may limit opportunities for meaningful dialogue and interaction. In such circumstances, individual students may need help actively participating and engaging in discussions, thereby hindering the cultivation of collaborative learning environments. Moreover, teachers may need help managing and facilitating dialogue among many students, thus impeding the development of critical thinking skills and inhibiting the exchange of diverse perspectives within the classroom.

2.6 Language Proficiency Level

The variability in the proficiency levels among Chinese students learning English as a foreign language presents an additional layer of complexity for educators. Despite the introduction of English instruction at the primary school level, there is significant variation in language teaching methods across different regions (Qiang, 2002). Urban students may have greater access to abundant educational resources and highly skilled

teachers, while their rural counterparts may experience limited exposure to the English language (Yao, 2022). Urban students, who can access more resources and be taught by highly skilled teachers, are more likely to engage in meaningful conversations that promote language development. Conversely, rural students with limited English exposure may need help actively participating. In order to address this diversity, educators must adapt their strategies for dialogue by utilising scaffolding techniques to support rural students while also providing opportunities for urban students to expand their linguistic abilities through more profound discourse.

2.7 Exam-Focused Education System

The Chinese educational system places considerable significance on assessments, which is also evident in the field of English language learning (Qian & Cumming, 2017). An illustration of this is the gaokao, the national university entrance examination, which plays a vital role in shaping a student's academic trajectory. As a result, English language instruction often focuses on preparing students for standardised evaluations. Given the gaokao's paramount importance in determining students' academic futures, English instruction prioritises teaching methods geared towards exams rather than promoting interactive dialogue. This approach frequently leads to a diminished emphasis on fostering open-ended discussions and critical thinking skills, as educators may feel obligated to prioritise content directly relevant to standardised tests.

2.8 Cultural Respect for Authority

The principles of Confucianism are deeply rooted in the Chinese cultural topography, which emphasises respect for figures of authority, including educators. This cultural attribute profoundly influences the dynamics within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, creating an environment where students may hesitate to openly question or challenge their instructors (Zhong, 2012). The reluctance of students to openly question or challenge their instructors can impede the development of dynamic discourse and critical thinking. The traditional hierarchical structure may discourage

students from engaging in active discussions, limiting the exploration of diverse perspectives and ideas.

In summary, comprehending the distinctive attributes of EFL classrooms in China necessitates an exploration of the intricate interplay between a pedagogical approach centred around the teacher, substantial class sizes, varied levels of language proficiency, an education system focused on examinations and a cultural veneration of authority.

2.9 Empirical studies and research gaps on dialogic talk in Chinese EFL classroom

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in integrating dialogic talk in Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms due to its potential to enrich language acquisition experiences. Due to various factors, Chinese scholars have exhibited a more extraordinary fascination towards language acquisition experiences. Firstly, given China's significant role in the global economy, there is a growing awareness of the importance of English proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills. A deeper understanding of the language acquisition process can assist educators and policymakers in devising more effective language teaching methodologies that cater to the demands of a globalised world (Nykyoprets, 2023). Furthermore, the surge in Chinese students studying abroad has sparked interest in comprehending their language learning experiences and identifying strategies to support their linguistic development. Despite the traditional focus on rote learning in Chinese classrooms, there is an increasing recognition of the significance of communication skills, mainly English proficiency, in the global arena. This segment offers an overview of significant empirical investigations exploring the application of dialogic talk in China, focusing on two crucial aspects:

- teaching strategies
- learning outcomes.

2.10 Teaching strategies

Among the studies done about dialogic talk in Chinese EFL classrooms, the studies focus on generating the recommended teaching strategies for applying dialogic talk in EFL classrooms, such as creating a supportive learning environment, using open-ended questions, and providing wait time. (Cui & Teo, 2023; Jing & Jing, 2018; Kang & Han, 2019; Li, 2011; Qian & Cumming, 2017; Qiang, 2002; Xu, 2012; Yang, 2010; Yao, 2022; Yu & Zeng, 2011; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009a; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009b; Zhong, 2012). However, there still needs to be more gaps between the empirical research and our research context. The empirical research will be introduced in the following paragraphs, and the research gap will be identified.

Creating a supportive learning environment has been empirically substantiated as an efficacious strategy for implementing dialogic talk in Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (Jing & Jing, 2018; Kang & Han, 2019; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009). The research conducted by the scholars collectively posited that cultivating a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere holds paramount importance, as it engenders a conducive space wherein students feel at ease expressing their thoughts and opinions, thereby promoting mutual respect amongst peers and between students and teachers. For instance, the scholarly article by Kang and Han (2019) delves into the execution of a dialogic classroom teaching reform initiative within a Chinese high school to augment teaching efficacy and student outcomes. This reform accentuates the creation of a compassionate and supportive classroom milieu that imbues students with the confidence to articulate their ideas and participate in diverse activities. It also encourages educators to consider cognitive, operational, and socio-emotional objectives when designing lesson plans while concurrently championing dialogic teaching and collaborative learning. The findings of this study reveal encouraging outcomes, as students readily embraced various forms of dialogue and developed self-assurance through the cultivation of trusting relationships. Moreover, the study posits that adopting the dialogic model can yield favourable implications for classroom

dynamics, student engagement, and critical thinking skills (Kang & Han, 2019).

Another recommended approach is the utilisation of open-ended inquiries. Numerous investigations regard open-ended inquiries as efficacious (Cui & Teo, 2023; Xu, 2012; Yang, 2010). Xu (2012) accentuates the significance of employing open-ended questions to facilitate substantial, coherent, and high-quality classroom interaction in her examination. It proposes that referential inquiries about the academic task or "authentic questions" and inquiries that introduce issues for negotiation are more likely to elicit substantial student contributions and encourage a variety of perspectives. Moreover, the article mentions that a prolonged wait time and allowing time for preparation and rehearsal before completing a task can lead to lengthier, more intricate learner responses. This approach has been found to be effective in mitigating student anxiety and reticence, particularly when confronted with demanding, open questions (Xu, 2012). Furthermore, the article by Cui and Teo (2023) discusses the effectiveness of open-ended questions in eliciting students' critical thinking. It observes that open-ended questions possess the potential to stimulate critical thinking. The study underscores that open-ended questions, such as exploratory questions, invite students to express their opinions, suggestions, ideas, and hypotheses, thereby enabling them to manifest their thinking without concern about whether their response is correct or anticipated by the instructor. This approach creates an opportunity for critical thinking and allows students to concentrate on reasoning rather than knowledge (Cui & Teo, 2023).

There are several recommended strategies for implementing dialogic conversation in Chinese EFL classrooms. One such technique involves allowing for sufficient wait time, highlighting the significance of active listening skills. Wait time is the pause after a teacher's question or student's response, enhancing thinking, participation, and learning quality in class (An & Childs, 2023). It is essential to instruct students to listen attentively to their peers and the teacher (Li, 2011). Additionally, incorporating peer discussions can facilitate collaborative learning through pairs or small groups (Zeng &

Takatsuka, 2009). Moreover, connecting these discussions with real-life scenarios and current events is beneficial to imbue the language with greater meaning and relevance for students (Yu & Zeng, 2011). It is essential to instruct students to listen attentively to their peers and the teacher (Li, 2011). Additionally, incorporating peer discussions can facilitate collaborative learning through pairs or small groups (Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009). Moreover, connecting these discussions with real-life scenarios and current events is beneficial to imbue the language with greater meaning and relevance for students (Yu & Zeng, 2011).

2.11 Learning outcomes

Applying dialogic talk in the Chinese EFL classroom was proven to benefit students' learning outcomes in mainly three aspects: speaking, listening and reading (Chen, 2010; Ge, 2020; Li, G., 2004; Li & Renandya, 2012; Wang & Fan, 2015; Zhang, H., 2017; Zhang, P., 2012). In the following paragraphs, the review will introduce empirical research that proves the effectiveness of dialogic talk on students' learning outcomes.

It is widely acknowledged that proficiency in speaking can be enhanced through various studies. Although English instructors in China frequently need help speaking among their students, including limited exposure, exam-oriented learning, large class sizes, and fear of making mistakes, numerous studies have been conducted to address these problems. For instance, Zhang (2017) argued in his article that classroom activities involving dialogic talk improve speaking ability. Collaborative learning, which encourages increased interaction, negotiation, and sharing, has been shown to enhance English oral performance among learners. Additionally, communicative activities such as discussions, problem-solving, and role-playing have been found to promote the development of students' English-speaking proficiency. Furthermore, interactive techniques in English language learning have been recognised as influential in acquiring speaking skills. These activities enhance speaking proficiency and allow

learners to engage in meaningful interactions, thereby improving their overall speaking abilities (Zhang, 2017). Furthermore, Ge (2020) discovered that incorporating group work activities in oral English classes is recommended for Chinese EFL teachers and is advantageous for students' oral proficiency (Ge, 2020).

The implementation of dialogic talk in the classroom can enhance reading proficiency. In China, difficulties in reading English arise from limited vocabulary, weak phonics skills, cultural disparities, and insufficient exposure to authentic materials. Factors such as inadequate comprehension strategies, lack of practice, low motivation, exam-oriented education, and potential learning disabilities also contribute to these challenges (Li, 2004). Numerous studies have aimed to address this predicament. Chen's research (2010) suggests that using multimodal resources, such as dialogue balloons, jointly constructed texts, and discussions, can facilitate dialogic engagement with readers and enhance their comprehension and interpretation of the text. By creating a dialogic space that encourages readers to interact with the text and construct their meanings actively, these resources can potentially improve students' reading ability (Chen, 2010). Consequently, this can lead to a deeper understanding of the language and culture being taught, resulting in enhanced reading proficiency. Furthermore, Zhang's research (2012) discovered that teachers could employ various interactive patterns, including using interactive language techniques such as repetition, alternative questions, and tag questions, to promote comprehension and elicit student responses, thereby enhancing overall comprehension (Zhang, 2012). In essence, the interactive patterns of dialogic talk in the EFL reading class contribute to improved reading proficiency by facilitating comprehension, promoting understanding, and encouraging active student participation.

Implementing dialogic talk in the Chinese EFL classroom leads to developing listening competency as a learning outcome. The study conducted by Chinese EFL teachers identified several sources of listening difficulties, which primarily revolved around language-related variables such as speed, vocabulary load, complex grammatical

structures, phonetic variations, and missing subsequent information. Other factors that contributed to these difficulties included speaker accent, background noise, new words, and the challenge of catching details (Wang & Fan, 2015). In order to address these issues, Li and Renandya (2012) researched to explore strategies to improve students' listening competency in the Chinese EFL classroom. Their findings revealed that engaging in dialogic talk facilitates active listening among students, encouraging them to respond thoughtfully and to build upon each other's ideas. Such interactive discussions enhance students' listening skills and allow them to practice comprehension and interpretation of spoken language. Furthermore, dialogic talk fosters the development of critical thinking skills, which are crucial for effective listening (Li & Renandya, 2012).

2.12 Research gaps

After the introduction of empirical research on dialogic talk, there are two potential gaps in research regarding dialogic talk in Chinese middle school English classrooms:

While existing studies highlight the effectiveness of dialogic talk strategies, there needs to be more in understanding the extent to which teachers in Chinese middle school English classrooms receive adequate training in implementing these strategies. Further research could examine the sufficiency of teacher training programs in preparing educators to establish supportive learning environments, employ open-ended questions, and allow for adequate wait time. Additionally, it is necessary to investigate how teachers perceive and apply dialogic talk techniques in their instructional practices, considering factors such as cultural norms, curriculum constraints, and teacher beliefs.

Another research gap exists in examining students' perspectives and experiences within the context of dialogic talk in middle school English classrooms. While studies have emphasised the benefits of dialogic talk for student learning outcomes, there needs to

be more understanding of how students perceive their roles in dialogic interactions, their preferences for specific discourse patterns, and the factors that influence their active participation. Investigating student attitudes towards dialogic talk, their perceived levels of engagement, and the challenges they face in dialogic exchanges can provide valuable insights for refining pedagogical approaches and fostering more inclusive and effective classroom environments.

2.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, the landscape of English language learning in Chinese middle schools is intricately influenced by a myriad of factors encompassing political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions. The Chinese government's recognition of the utmost importance of English proficiency for global engagement and economic advancement has spurred concerted endeavours aimed at fostering English education. Nonetheless, this endeavour is confronted with challenges such as inequities in accessing quality education, an excessively exam-oriented approach to learning, and a cultural veneration for authority that persists within this framework.

Analysing English curriculum policies reveals a notable tension between promoting dialogic talk and perpetuating traditional teacher-centred methodologies. While recent syllabi highlight the significance of interactive communication and student engagement, adherence to older standards may impede dialogic exchanges by prioritising teacher-led instruction. Moreover, the distinctive characteristics of Chinese EFL classrooms, characterised by large class sizes, varying levels of language proficiency, and an education system centred around examinations, must be revised to implement dialogic talk effectively.

Empirical research underscores the advantages of employing strategies that facilitate dialogic exchanges in Chinese EFL classrooms, particularly in fostering supportive learning environments, employing open-ended questions, and enhancing student

learning outcomes in speaking, listening, and reading. Nonetheless, there still needs to be more in our understanding of the extent to which teachers are trained in implementing these strategies and the perspectives and experiences of students about dialogic talk.

Moving forward, it is imperative to address these research gaps to enhance English language education in Chinese middle schools. Teacher training programs should strongly emphasise equipping educators with the necessary skills to facilitate dialogic exchanges effectively, taking into account cultural norms and curriculum constraints. Additionally, gaining an understanding of students' attitudes and experiences with dialogic talk can inform the development of more inclusive and engaging classroom environments. By bridging these gaps, Chinese middle schools can better equip students to navigate a globalised world and communicate proficiently in English.

Chapter 3 Theoretical review

3.1 Introduction

Theoretical frameworks that serve as the foundation for educational practices play a pivotal role in shaping both teaching methodologies and learning outcomes. In the context of classroom discourse and instructional strategies, the concept of dialogic talk emerges as a central pedagogical approach deeply rooted in various philosophical and psychological theories. This chapter delves into the theoretical underpinnings of dialogic talk, exploring the contributions made by influential thinkers who have greatly impacted educational discourse, particularly in China. Ranging from ancient philosophers like Confucius and Mozi to contemporary scholars such as Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Robin Alexander, this chapter examines how their theories have influenced the understanding and implementation of dialogic talk within educational settings. By integrating insights from diverse perspectives, this chapter aims to clarify the significance of dialogic talk in fostering critical thinking, collaborative learning, and meaningful communication among students, ultimately enhancing the overall educational experience.

3.2 Famous Theorists who influenced talk in China

3.2.1 Confucius

Confucius, also recognized as Kong zi, was a Chinese philosopher and educator who resided during the Spring and Autumn period of Chinese history, approximately 551-479 BCE. He is extensively regarded as one of the most influential figures in Chinese history and philosophy. The teachings of Confucius placed great emphasis on personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice, and sincerity. His philosophical system, commonly referred to as Confucianism, has exerted a profound impact on Chinese culture and has also influenced other East Asian societies.

His ideas on ethics, education, and governance continue to be scrutinized and venerated in contemporary times.

The teachings of Confucius exert an indelible influence on the evolution of classroom discourse through his stress on dialogic communication and the cultivation of meaningful conversation. One of the central principles of Confucianism is the significance of interpersonal relationships and ethical conduct, which are nurtured through dialogue and interaction (Wei & Li, 2013). Confucius firmly believed in the potency of conversation as a vehicle for personal and societal transformation. His theory of dialogic talk can be observed in the notion of "junzi" or the "gentleman" – an individual who seeks self-improvement through thoughtful dialogue and respectful engagement with others. Confucius advocated for the notion of "rectification of names," which posits that in order to establish harmony and order within society, individuals must communicate clearly and accurately, ensuring that their words align with their intentions (Wei & Li, 2013). This concept underscores the importance of effective communication in facilitating comprehension and fostering mutual respect. Moreover, Confucius's emphasis on the teacher-student relationship as a model for virtuous behavior underscores the significance of dialogue and exchange within the educational context (Wei & Li, 2013). In summary, Confucius's philosophy underscores the importance of dialogic talk in fostering ethical conduct, social harmony, and personal growth within the classroom milieu.

3.2.2 Mozi

Mozi, a Chinese philosopher of the Warring States era, established Mohism, which advocates for universal love and impartiality. Mohism's stress on inclusive care and practical ethics lays the foundation for its potential influence on the development of classroom discourse, particularly in relation to dialogic talk. One of the fundamental principles within Mohism that pertains to dialogic talk is its concept of "jian'ai" or "inclusive care." This principle emphasizes the importance of considering the

perspectives and needs of all individuals, fostering an environment of empathy, respect, and open dialogue (Back, 2019). In an educational setting, this philosophy can translate into promoting attentive listening, valuing diverse viewpoints, and encouraging collaborative discussion among students. By prioritizing inclusive care, educators can cultivate a classroom culture that values dialogue, where students feel empowered to share their thoughts, engage in meaningful exchanges, and construct knowledge collectively (Mercer et al., 1996). Dialogic talk, characterized by its reciprocal and exploratory nature, closely aligns with Mohist ideals of mutual understanding and cooperative problem-solving. Through dialogic interactions, students not only deepen their understanding of academic content but also develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and social awareness, reflecting the enduring impact of Mohism on fostering constructive communication and learning environments within educational settings.

3.3 The concept of dialogic talk and the importance of talk

The concept of dialogic talk, also called dialogic teaching, pertains to uninterrupted communication between educators and learners rather than exclusively relying on teacher-centred presentations. Through engaging in dialogue, teachers can elicit their students' intuitive perspectives, actively engage with their evolving thoughts, and aid them in resolving misunderstandings (Hennessy et al., 2011). The application of dialogic talk within the curriculum can facilitate various language skills, such as active listening and thoughtful responses, which are characterized by their collaborative and cooperative nature. The objective is to foster mutual comprehension and constructive dialogue through discussion (Boyd & Markarian, 2015). Conversely, the traditional didactic classroom is centred around the teacher, who assumes the central role of disseminating knowledge, presenting information, and directing the learning process. Students often adopt a passive role, receiving information and instructions from the teacher, which can lead to issues such as students losing focus and needing more

engagement (Hermsen et al., 2019; Smerdon et al., 1999). One theorist who has dramatically impacted the emergence of dialogic talk is Lev Vygotsky. He is a seminal figure in the field of developmental psychology who left an enduring legacy with his pioneering theories on cognitive development. Among his varied and diverse contributions, his understanding of the central importance of social interaction and language in influencing the cognitive development of individuals, particularly young children, is the most significant contribution. In the following paragraphs, several famous theories of Vygotsky will be discussed with dialogic talk.

The sociocultural theory from Vygotsky emphasizes the role of social and cultural factors in shaping cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) considered that children learn through interactions with others in their social and cultural environment. Dialogic Talk is based on the idea that students learn best through meaningful conversations with their peers and teachers (Alexander, 2008). The approach emphasizes the importance of creating a collaborative and supportive learning environment in which students are encouraged to think deeply, question assumptions, and engage in meaningful conversations. This is consistent with the sociocultural theory of development, which views learning as a social and collaborative process that is shaped by cultural and historical context.

The second theory is the Zone of Proximal Development. It refers to the gap between a learner's current level of understanding and their potential level of understanding with guidance and support (Vygotsky, 1998b, p. 202). In Dialogic Talk, the ZPD can be effectively addressed through interactions that challenge and extend participants' thinking. Dialogic exchanges provide opportunities for scaffolding, where participants can support each other's learning by providing feedback, asking probing questions, and offering alternative viewpoints. This scaffolding helps learners move toward their potential level of understanding within the dialogue.

Social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) is the third theory which is closely connected

with dialogic talk through their shared emphasis on active learning, social interaction, and the construction of knowledge. Constructivism posits that learners actively construct knowledge by engaging with their environment and interacting with others. Similarly, dialogic talk provides a space for learners to actively engage in meaningful conversations, exchange ideas, and co-construct knowledge through collaborative dialogue. Both approaches highlight the importance of dialogue, reflection, and interaction in the process of constructing meaning and understanding. Dialogic talk can facilitate the implementation of constructivist principles by providing opportunities for learners to actively participate in constructing knowledge through dialogue and social interaction.

In conclusion, the notion of dialogic talk embodies a transformative approach to education that stands in stark contrast to conventional didactic instructional methods. By drawing inspiration from the theories of Lev Vygotsky, dialogic talk places paramount importance on the role of social interaction, collaborative learning, and the construction of knowledge. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underscores the notion that learning is intrinsically tied to the social and cultural context in which it takes place, aligning closely with the principles of dialogic instruction. Additionally, the Zone of Proximal Development, a fundamental aspect of Vygotsky's work, finds practical application within dialogic talk by providing opportunities for learners to bridge the gap between their current understanding and their potential with guidance.

Moreover, the synergy between social constructivism and dialogic talk is evident in their shared emphasis on active, participatory learning experiences. Both approaches highlight the critical role of dialogue, reflection, and collaborative interaction in the co-creation of knowledge. Essentially, dialogic talk shows a pedagogical paradigm that fosters critical thinking, deep engagement, and meaningful conversations, thereby cultivating a more dynamic and enriching educational environment. Embracing dialogic talk as a teaching methodology can pave the way for empowered learners who are not passive recipients of information but active contributors to the construction of

their own knowledge.

3.4 Two famous Theorists who influenced dialogic talk

3.4.1 Mikhail Bakhtin

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a prominent philosopher hailing from Russia, specifically known for his influential contributions to linguistics, literary theory, and cultural studies. Bakhtin's work has profoundly impacted the comprehension of language, communication, and literature. His theories have played a significant role in shaping the development of the concept of dialogic talk. The ensuing paragraphs will present crucial theories elucidated by Mikhail Bakhtin concerning dialogic talk.

Dialogism from Mikhail Bakhtin emphasises the importance of social interaction and multiple voices in shaping meaning. Bakhtin also suggests the social nature of language and the idea that all discourse is inherently dialogic. Authentic dialogue facilitates the co-construction of knowledge and the development of shared meaning (Bakhtin, 1981). Consequently, dialogic talk absorbs the understanding and encourages students to engage in collaborative dialogue focused on building on each other's ideas and developing a shared understanding of the topic. This emphasis on collaboration and multiple perspectives is consistent with Bakhtin's ideas about dialogism.

Another theory known as Polyphony posits that every instance of communication encompasses numerous distinct voices that collectively contribute to the overall significance of the written or spoken text (Bakhtin, 1981). Correspondingly, dialogic talk underscores the significance of diverse viewpoints and a variety of voices in fostering a profound and meaningful exchange of ideas within the educational setting. By encouraging students to express their own perspectives and attentively consider the viewpoints of others, Dialogic Talk facilitates the development of a more nuanced and intricate comprehension of the subject matter under discussion, thereby enhancing

students' capacity for high-level comprehension.

Bakhtin's exploration of Carnival and Carnavalesque theory delves into literature and culture. This theory elucidates the characteristics of the carnivalesque, which is defined by a temporary suspension of social norms and hierarchies. This suspension allows for the emergence of subversive and playful expressions (Bakhtin, 1981). In the context of dialogic talk, the carnivalesque fosters open and creative communication by momentarily challenging established power dynamics and encouraging the emergence of diverse voices. For instance, the traditional teacher-centred classroom can transform into a space where students are empowered to express themselves and acquire knowledge.

In brief, the theories put forth by Bakhtin have had a significant impact on how we comprehend dialogic talk, as they underscore its inherently multi-perspectival and dynamic character. With the help of Bakhtin's concepts, dialogic talk promotes the acknowledgement of diverse voices, the coexistence of multiple perspectives, and the crucial nature of ethical communication practices. This particular viewpoint enhances the comprehension of the functioning of language and dialogue in various contexts, ranging from everyday conversations to academic discourse and beyond.

3.4.2 Robin Alexander

Robin Alexander is a highly esteemed researcher and scholar in the field of education, renowned for his noteworthy contributions, particularly in the realm of dialogic talk. As a British educator and academic, Alexander has played a pivotal role in advancing the comprehension and significance of dialogic teaching and learning within educational institutions. Central to Alexander's theory is the notion of "dialogic teaching" and the crucial role that dialogic talk plays in the educational context. The subsequent paragraphs will introduce critical components of his theory and shed light on his influence on dialogic talk.

The first theory is oracy. Alexander's research highlights the significance of oracy, which pertains to the advancement of verbal communication abilities. He asserts that effective communication is crucial not only for academic achievement but also for the cultivation of critical thinking, social skills, and emotional development. The implementation of dialogic talk in the educational setting aids students in becoming more eloquent, expressive, and self-assured communicators (Alexander, 2006). Oracy is a fundamental framework for dialogic talk as it underscores the importance of nurturing students' speaking and listening skills, building confidence, and facilitating effective communication. Both oracy and dialogic talk prioritize interactive and meaningful communication in the classroom, ultimately enriching students' learning experiences and their capacity to engage in thoughtful discourse.

Another theory put forth by Alexander is the five principles that underpin dialogic teaching. These principles encompass the collective, reciprocal, cumulative, sustained, and purposeful dimensions. The collective principle encourages group discussions and the shared exploration of ideas. The reciprocal principle fosters conversations in which students respond to one another's contributions. The cumulative principle builds upon prior knowledge and discussions to deepen understanding. The sustained principle engages in extended dialogues over time to facilitate in-depth exploration of topics. Lastly, the purposeful principle ensures that dialogue serves a clear educational objective and is not merely idle conversation (Alexander, 2006). These five dimensions of dialogic talk influentially shape dialogic talk by providing a structured framework that guides educators and students in crafting more meaningful and effective dialogues. These dimensions foster inclusive, interactive, and goal-oriented conversations that enhance students' learning, critical thinking, and communication skills when integrated into classroom practices.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter's in-depth examination of dialogic talk's theoretical underpinnings reveals

the significant influence exerted by a spectrum of philosophers and educators, spanning from ancient luminaries to modern thinkers. Pioneers like Confucius and Mozi laid the groundwork for dialogic talk, championing values such as ethical behavior, reciprocal respect, and empathy. These foundational tenets have undergone sophisticated refinement at the hands of contemporary scholars, including Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Robin Alexander, each adding distinctive insights to the dialogic talk paradigm.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, especially his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, underscores the pivotal role of social interaction in cognitive growth, thereby reinforcing dialogic talk's relevance in educational realms. Bakhtin's theories on dialogism and polyphony highlight the value of incorporating diverse voices and viewpoints in educational discourse, echoing the fundamental tenets of dialogic talk. In contrast, Alexander's emphasis on oracy and his quintet of principles for dialogic teaching offer a tangible blueprint for dialogic talk's effective implementation in classroom settings.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives affirm that dialogic talk transcends a mere instructional tactic, emerging as a potent pedagogical methodology that nurtures critical thought, deepens comprehension, and cultivates active, cooperative learning. Adopting dialogic talk enables educators to forge learning environments that are more dynamic, inclusive, and engaging, transforming students from passive knowledge receivers into active participants in their educational odyssey. This revolutionary educational approach, deeply rooted in a diverse theoretical legacy, is poised to significantly alter the paradigms of teaching and learning within contemporary educational landscapes.

Chapter 4 Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

This systematic literature review delves into the significance and influence of dialogic talk within the realm of second language acquisition (SLA), with a particular emphasis on Quality Talk and exploratory dialogue. It encompasses an exploration of theories from diverse SLA viewpoints, underscoring their linkage to dialogic conversation. A distinction is drawn between conventional language teaching methodologies and the advantages of dialogic talk, highlighting its importance in enhancing learners' proficiency in a second language. This concluding section will amalgamate the principal discoveries, deliberating on their ramifications for language pedagogy and proposing avenues for subsequent research.

4.2 Research about the talk models under dialogic talk

Dialogic teaching emphasizes interactive communication between teachers and students, focusing on exploring ideas, questioning, reasoning, and collaboratively building understanding, rather than merely transmitting information. Within this context, Quality Talk, a model of dialogic conversation, facilitates various types of classroom discussions where students engage in meaningful, thoughtful exchanges (Murphy et al., 2018). These discussions often involve higher-order thinking skills like analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, encouraging students to listen actively, engage respectfully with ideas, pose challenging questions, and provide evidence for their viewpoints.

In language education, Quality Talk has been shown to enhance critical thinking and student engagement significantly (Davies et al., 2017; Murphy et al., 2018). By participating in meaningful dialogues, students are prompted to analyze, evaluate, and

synthesize information, leading to more thoughtful responses and the development of critical thinking skills. Such active engagement in dialogue encourages students to challenge assumptions, substantiate their opinions, and consider alternative perspectives, thus nurturing their ability to think critically and independently.

Moreover, Quality Talk increases students' participation in the language learning process. It allows them to engage in discussions actively, express their ideas, and interact with peers, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment (Davies & Meissel, 2016). This enhanced involvement leads to more meaningful learning experiences and fosters a classroom atmosphere of collaboration and mutual support, contributing to a positive learning environment.

Additionally, Quality Talk aids in deepening learners' understanding of language concepts and content. Through these discussions, students actively construct meaning and make connections between new and prior knowledge (Davies & Esling, 2020), improving comprehension and correcting misconceptions. Engaging with peers and educators in discussions allows students to explore complex topics from various angles, leading to a grasp of the subject matter beyond simple memorization or surface-level understanding.

Exploratory talk, another model of dialogic conversation, involves students in critical and constructive discussions aimed at consensus-building and problem-solving (Barnes, 2008). This method encourages sharing information and ideas, fostering an environment where students feel confident in expressing their thoughts while valuing and integrating their peers' perspectives. Through such collaborative knowledge construction, students explore new ideas and possibilities.

Research into exploratory talk in language classrooms highlights its effectiveness in facilitating language acquisition and fostering cognitive development. It has been shown to enhance language learning by providing students with opportunities to

practice language in authentic settings, thereby improving fluency, accuracy, and confidence (Knight & Mercer, 2015; Mercer & Dawes, 2008; Sutherland, 2010). Moreover, exploratory talk supports critical thinking, enabling students to analyze information critically and make informed decisions (Liang & Fung, 2020). This not only aids in language proficiency but also develops cognitive skills applicable in various contexts.

Dialogic teaching, which centres around interactive exchanges between instructors and students, prioritizes exploring ideas, fostering questioning and reasoning, and building collaborative comprehension, moving beyond simple knowledge transmission. The Quality Talk approach catalyzes diverse classroom dialogues in this framework, where students participate in profound, reflective conversations (Murphy et al., 2018). These dialogues typically engage students in advanced cognitive processes such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. They encourage active listening, respectful engagement with differing viewpoints, formulation of challenging queries, and substantiation of their own perspectives.

In language education, implementing Quality Talk has markedly improved critical thinking and student involvement (Davies et al., 2017; Murphy et al., 2018). Engaging in substantial dialogues prompts students to dissect, appraise, and integrate information, fostering more nuanced responses and cultivating critical thinking abilities. This active dialogue participation drives students to question preconceptions, back their viewpoints with evidence, and entertain alternate views, thus enhancing their capacity for critical and independent thought.

Furthermore, Quality Talk augments student participation in language learning. It provides them with a platform for active discussion involvement, articulation of ideas, and peer interaction, thereby promoting a sense of ownership and empowerment (Davies & Meissel, 2016). This heightened engagement enriches learning experiences and cultivates a classroom culture of collaboration and mutual support, contributing

positively to the educational milieu.

Additionally, Quality Talk plays a vital role in deepening students' comprehension of language concepts and content. Through these discussions, students construct meanings and connect new information with existing knowledge (Davies & Esling, 2020), enhancing understanding and rectifying misconceptions. Participating in discussions with peers and educators on complex topics allows students to view these subjects from diverse perspectives, resulting in a more thorough understanding that surpasses rote learning or superficial comprehension.

Exploratory talk, another dialogic conversation approach, engages students in critical and constructive discourse to reach a consensus and solve problems (Barnes, 2008). This technique promotes information and idea sharing, creating an environment where students confidently express their thoughts and values and incorporate their peers' insights. Through such collaborative intellectual exploration, students investigate new concepts and possibilities.

Research into exploratory talk in language education underscores its effectiveness in advancing language acquisition and cognitive development. It enhances language learning by offering authentic practice opportunities, thus improving fluency, accuracy, and confidence (Knight & Mercer, 2015; Mercer & Dawes, 2008; Sutherland, 2010). Additionally, exploratory talk bolsters critical thinking, enabling students to scrutinize information and make informed choices (Liang & Fung, 2020). This not only aids language proficiency but also develops cognitive skills relevant in various scenarios.

4.3 Theories around SLA and the importance of talk

Exploring Second Language Acquisition (SLA), a complex and diverse field, involves integrating various theories and methods to understand how individuals master

languages beyond their native tongue. As Ellis (2005) points out, these frameworks illuminate the cognitive, social, and neurological processes underpinning language learning. From a behaviorist standpoint, as advocated by B.F. Skinner, language acquisition is seen as a process of stimulus-response-reinforcement, where language exposure prompts responses that are reinforced through feedback (Graham, 2000). However, this approach has been criticized for oversimplifying language learning and overlooking cognitive aspects.

On the other hand, the cognitive theory, advanced by thinkers like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, links language with cognitive development, viewing language acquisition as an active endeavour of building linguistic knowledge through cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and problem-solving (Barrouillet, 2015). This perspective acknowledges the role of cognitive engagement in internalizing linguistic structures and principles (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015), underscoring the importance of learners' cognitive abilities and developmental stages in effective language teaching.

Moreover, Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar Theory posits the existence of a universal grammatical framework across all human languages, arguing that language learning involves discovering and integrating this intrinsic grammar (Cook, 1985). This theory has significantly influenced language teaching by suggesting that learners actively construct linguistic knowledge, rather than passively absorbing language input.

Interactionist viewpoints, such as Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, highlight the essential role of social interaction in language acquisition. Krashen posits that language learning is enhanced through exposure to comprehensible input, or language slightly more advanced than the learner's current level but still understandable in context (Krashen, 1992). Vygotsky emphasizes the impact of social interaction and cultural contexts on language development (Lantolf, 2000). Both theories advocate the significance of engaging in

meaningful communication with more proficient speakers, emphasizing the importance of such interactions for effective language learning.

The vital role of discourse in second language (L2) acquisition is paramount. Engaging in conversation provides learners with opportunities to practice and refine their language skills, especially in pronunciation, fluency, and intonation, as Fisher and colleagues (2008) emphasize. Interactive dialogue offers immediate feedback, enabling learners to identify and correct errors, and to focus on areas needing improvement. Additionally, conversations introduce new vocabulary in context, aiding in vocabulary retention and enhancing understanding of linguistic structures and norms (Goh, 2007). Thus, conversational practice not only aids in retention but also enriches understanding of linguistic frameworks and conventions, significantly enhancing language acquisition and communicative proficiency.

For language teaching to be truly effective, it must emphasize real oral communication to support language development (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009). The critical importance of authentic discourse in honing oral communication skills is clear, providing guidance, feedback, and ample practice opportunities. Classroom activities such as discussions, role-playing, and collaborative tasks are crucial for students to engage in genuine language use and interaction. By creating a supportive and interactive environment, educators can help learners develop confidence and proficiency in oral communication, laying a solid foundation for successful language acquisition and practical real-world communication.

4.4 How talk was taught in the traditional language classroom without dialogic talk

In the context of Chinese language education, traditional teaching practices are predominantly anchored in a "chalk and talk" paradigm. This approach is predominantly instructor-led, placing the teacher at the centre of the educational

process, where they direct classroom activities and maintain strict discipline (Xinmin & Adamson, 2003). Such a system, mirroring conventional pedagogical frameworks, establishes the teacher as the primary authority on knowledge, granting them complete control over the educational atmosphere, teaching techniques, and curriculum content (Latif Zaki Sedhom & Wilson, 2022).

This conventional educational model relies heavily on direct teaching, where the instructor presents information that students are expected to internalize through rote learning and repetition. This leaves minimal scope for interactive dialogue or developing critical thinking skills (Felder & Brent, 1996). The focus is on creating a highly structured and organized classroom setting where information predominantly flows in one direction, from teacher to student. Interestingly, this method has been acknowledged for its role in China's impressive performance in international educational assessments, underscoring its efficacy in achieving specific academic objectives (Meng et al., 2016). A key characteristic of such environments is the lack of dialogic engagement. Dialogic education is noticeably absent, characterized by open-ended questioning, feedback that expands on student responses, and interactive discourse that stimulates thinking and expression. This is mainly due to the emphasis on a disciplined, teacher-dominated environment that prioritizes content delivery over exploratory or inquisitive learning (van Huizen et al., 2005).

Despite its merits in specific domains, this traditional approach has faced criticism for its restrictive nature, particularly in limiting student participation and hindering the development of critical thinking abilities. Though beneficial for certain learning aspects, the heavy reliance on memorization and repetition does not create a conducive environment for students to engage in questioning, discussion, or free exploration of ideas (Dahlin & Watkins, 2000).

More recently, there has been a shift towards incorporating contemporary teaching methodologies that promote interaction, critical thinking, and a student-centric learning

environment. These methods are designed to enhance the traditional strengths of discipline and memorization with skills increasingly regarded as vital in the 21st century, such as creativity, problem-solving, and advanced communication abilities (Haryani et al., 2021).

4.5 Why dialogic talk could be relevant and helpful to the development of students second language ability?

The discussion above highlights several renowned Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, all of which are intricately linked to dialogic talk. This form of talk, characterized by its focus on meaningful, interactive conversations, is incredibly significant in enhancing students' second language (L2) abilities. It draws upon diverse and profound theoretical perspectives within SLA. These theories shed light on different facets of language learning, collectively emphasizing the crucial roles of interaction, cognitive involvement, and contextual language exposure.

Behaviorism mainly through B.F. Skinner's lens views dialogic talk as an effective medium for the essential stimulus-response-reinforcement cycles. L2 learners are exposed to various linguistic stimuli via conversation in such interactive exchanges. Their language usage acts as responses, which are then strengthened through feedback from more adept speakers. This feedback might manifest as direct corrections or, more subtly, through the natural progression of the conversation. Despite criticisms of behaviourism for its oversimplified approach to language acquisition, its focus on reinforcement and repetitive practice is undeniably advantageous in dialogic contexts, where continuous exposure and practice are natural components.

From a cognitive standpoint, as conceptualized by Piaget and Vygotsky, there is a clear link between cognitive development and language learning. Dialogic talk aligns with this perspective by offering a scenario where learners actively build their linguistic

comprehension. Conversations require cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and problem-solving. For example, learners need to remember vocabulary and grammatical structures, concentrate on the conversation's flow, and tackle communicative challenges spontaneously. Such active linguistic engagement promotes deeper cognitive processing, which is essential for effective language acquisition.

Chomsky's Universal Grammar Theory, advocating for an innate grammatical framework within the human mind, also supports dialogic talk in L2 learning. Participating in dialogues allows learners to experience and internalize universal grammar elements. Interactions enable learners to experiment with and refine their hypotheses regarding the grammatical structure of the second language, leading to a more profound comprehension and integration of linguistic concepts.

The interactionist viewpoints, particularly those proposed by Krashen and Vygotsky, especially support dialogic talk. Krashen's Input Hypothesis underscores the importance of comprehensible input, readily provided through dialogic talk. In such conversations, learners encounter language slightly beyond their current proficiency level, yet made understandable through contextual cues and conversational support. This level of exposure is pivotal for language acquisition as it pushes and broadens the learner's existing linguistic skills.

Finally, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory accentuates the importance of social interaction in language development. He posits that language learning is deeply rooted in social contexts and cultural exchanges. Dialogic talk offers a fertile sociocultural setting where learners utilize language as a communicative and social tool. This interaction goes beyond mere language practice; it involves using language to engage in cultural and social customs. Such involvement enables learners to assimilate the linguistic and cultural nuances of the second language, fostering a language development process.

4.6 Implications of the use of dialogic talk

The concept of dialogic talk emerges with significant implications after discussing the prevalent theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and the Chinese context of English language teaching in classrooms. In the setting of Chinese students mastering English, dialogic talk profoundly influences language acquisition and cognitive development. This form of talk, particularly in an environment where students are typically exposed to a teacher-centric, traditional mode of education, presents a complex and impactful dimension in shaping their English learning journey.

Initially, dialogic talk introduces a notable divergence from the conventional Chinese educational paradigm, focusing on interactive exchanges and joint knowledge development. Traditional Chinese education often casts students more passive, emphasizing rote learning and teacher-driven instruction (Minhas et al., 2012). In contrast, dialogic talk promotes active involvement, critical analysis, and the practice of open-ended questioning, thereby creating a new educational dynamic. This transition from a passive to an active learning stance is vital for language acquisition, facilitating the application of English in relevant and contextual ways, extending beyond basic vocabulary and grammar.

Furthermore, implementing dialogic talk in English education for Chinese students cultivates a more equitable and democratic classroom atmosphere. This method motivates students to express their opinions, pose questions, and participate in discourse. This is especially empowering for Chinese learners, as it challenges the customary classroom norm of quiet respect for authority figures. As students grow more confident in expressing themselves, their English proficiency will likely improve.

Additionally, dialogic talk is in harmony with the cultivation of advanced cognitive skills, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These abilities are essential for mastering a second language, as they allow learners to consider language usage and its

context critically. For Chinese students whose academic experiences have emphasized memorization and repetition, dialogic talk offers a chance to develop these critical cognitive skills. Engaging in discussions, debates, and problem-solving exercises in English pushes them towards deeper cognitive engagement, thereby enhancing language learning efficacy.

An essential facet of dialogic talk is its focus on peer interaction and collective learning. This approach can be particularly advantageous for Chinese students, who might be more used to solitary learning styles. Through dialogic talk, students practice interacting, collaborating, and determining meanings collectively in English. This not only aids language acquisition but also fosters social abilities and cultural understanding, which are vital elements of language education.

Additionally, dialogic talk addresses potential hurdles Chinese students encounter in language learning, such as limited opportunities for practising spoken English and a tendency to prioritize grammatical precision over communicative ability. The dialogic talk offers a venue for practising spoken English in a more natural, unstructured environment by fostering spontaneous, interactive dialogues. This assists students in enhancing their fluency and communicative skills, moving past the limitations of textbook-focused learning.

4.7 Conclusion

In summary, this literature review highlights the revolutionary role of dialogic talk in the realm of second language learning, exemplified through methodologies like Quality Talk and exploratory talk. These approaches create a rich environment that stimulates active participation in critical thinking, problem-solving, and substantial conversation, thereby significantly advancing linguistic abilities and cognitive growth. Quality Talk and exploratory talk revolutionize language teaching by encouraging interactive and cooperative learning, presenting a more vibrant and efficacious educational strategy.

Incorporating dialogic talk into second language acquisition (SLA) theories underscores its congruence with diverse educational paradigms, from behaviourism to interactionism. This congruence emphasizes the crucial role of conversational engagement and interaction in enhancing language capabilities and cognitive skills. For Chinese learners, who are often more accustomed to traditional, teacher-led pedagogies, embracing dialogic talk marks a transformative transition towards a learning environment that is more inclusive, participatory, and centred around the student. This paradigm shift fosters the practical use of language skills and the cultivation of advanced thinking and communicative aptitude.

Thus, dialogic talk emerges as an essential component in contemporary language education, carving a path for more engaged, contemplative, and comprehensive learning experiences. Its significance in today's interconnected and communication-driven world is undeniable. As educators and students increasingly adopt these dialogic frameworks, we edge closer to the ideal of language education - developing proficient, confident, and critically-minded language practitioners

Chapter 5 Methodology

In the present investigation, a meticulous systematic review process is employed to thoroughly examine scholarly works concerning dialogic talk in language education settings. Adhering to a stringent set of guidelines, this method involves an exhaustive and impartial identification, evaluation, and integration of pertinent studies, offering a well-rounded and unbiased examination of the subject matter. Particularly apt for the field of educational research, which is characterized by diverse pedagogical approaches and learning outcomes, this methodology employs precise inclusion and exclusion criteria. These criteria are designed to selectively focus on empirical research directly related to dialogic talk, thereby ensuring both the relevance and the high quality of the literature reviewed. Ultimately, this approach facilitates a comprehensive and neutral analysis of the existing body of research, yielding significant contributions to our understanding of the topic.

5.1 Systematic review

The study adopted the systematic review as the research method to analyse the literature related to the application of dialogic talk in the language classroom. Systematic review is defined as a comprehensive and rigorous research method used to synthesize and analyse existing evidence on a specific research question or topic. It follows a predefined protocol and employs a systematic approach to locate, evaluate, and summarize relevant studies in a transparent and unbiased manner (Clarke, 2011). By employing broad search strategies, predefined search strings, and uniform inclusion and exclusion criteria, systematic reviews effectively force researchers to search for studies beyond their own subject areas and networks (Mallett et al., 2012). The primary objective of a systematic review is to provide a reliable and unbiased summary of the available evidence, enabling researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to make informed decisions and draw evidence-based conclusions.

A subtle distinction exists between systematic review and literature review. The primary objective of a literature review is to furnish an overview of the current literature on a particular subject and to determine the present knowledge on a research topic (Knopf, 2006). On the other hand, a systematic review is a summary of the existing evidence that addresses a specific query, comprising an unbiased search of the pertinent literature, explicit criteria for evaluating studies, and a structured presentation of outcomes (Bigby, 2014). In essence, a literature review presents a review of the available research on a specific subject, whereas a systematic review adheres to a rigorous methodology to detect, evaluate, and combine relevant studies to answer a specific research query.

5.2 Why systematic review is adopted in this thesis

Utilising a methodical analysis in my research provides two crucial benefits. Firstly, it ensures a thorough and impartial synthesis of the existing evidence pertaining to the research topic. By adhering to a stringent methodology, systematic reviews decrease potential bias and thoroughly examine pertinent studies (Kitchenham, 2004). This results in the ability to make well-informed conclusions and decisions based on a more extensive range of evidence. Secondly, a systematic review aids in saving time and effort by avoiding the repetition of prior research endeavours (Kitchenham, 2004). Instead of commencing from scratch, one can build on the discoveries of previous studies, highlighting gaps and areas that warrant further investigation. This approach elevates the efficiency and efficacy of one's research while contributing to the progression of knowledge within their field.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that conducting a systematic review has limitations. It must be noted that this approach requires a significant investment of resources. The rigorous nature of the review process demands a considerable amount of time and effort (Mallett et al., 2012). For instance, the initial stage of searching and

screening relevant articles can yield a vast number of results, which then need to be reviewed in detail. In addition, data extraction and synthesis from selected studies involve the analysis of numerous variables and outcomes. Finally, the results must be analysed and interpreted in order to draw meaningful conclusions. This entire process can take several months to complete due to its time-consuming nature.

To sum up, a well-executed systematic review precludes duplication of literature searches, leads the reader to high-quality literature, and presents a formal amalgamation of research findings for educational research. Although resource-intensive, the study limits the range specifically to dialogic talk. It has a well-designed framework and procedure which can support an investigation into the empirical research of dialogic talk and can help categorise the review of second-hand data into manageable procedures. Systematic reviews are beneficial to this kind of research.

This research method can provide useful evaluation and information to support the improvement of dialogic talk use in the language classroom. As I mentioned before, the purpose of the study is to investigate the application of dialogic talk in language learning classrooms. It makes the study to be educational research. Since the context of educational research is very complex and has many variables, it makes systematic reviews valuable because it affords the reader the opportunity to form their own assessments regarding the veracity and importance of the evidence and the calibre of the review methods themselves. The comprehensive nature of the search encompassing all studies, not just those that are most frequently accessed or widely known, allows for expedient evaluation by an educator or educational researcher on the topic at hand, the reliability of the research conclusions, and the cumulative impact of the research (Bearman et al., 2012). More empirical studies about dialogic talk will be included in the study, which can generate a more comprehensive finding about dialogic talk.

5.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

An overview of the literature search and selection process—based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (Moher et al., 2010) —is presented in Fig. 1. The two search databases contributed to 279 results in total. To select appropriate studies, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used. Studies were included if they (a) were conducted in language learning classrooms (i.e., TESOL and second language acquisition), (b) they investigated dialogic talk in other subjects other than language learning, and (c) were empirical research (i.e., quantitative and/or qualitative research). Articles were excluded if they (a) reported quantitative data without a methods section describing how the study was carried out, (b) investigated dialogic talk in first language acquisition, or (c) were written with a methodological purpose.

To refine the selection process, several exclusion criteria were applied. Studies that reported quantitative data without a methods section were excluded to prioritize studies with sufficient information on research design and methodology. Furthermore, studies investigating dialogic talk in subjects other than language learning or in first language acquisition were excluded to maintain the focus on the targeted research area. Lastly, articles written with a methodological purpose were excluded, prioritizing studies that directly explored the effects and implementation of dialogic talk in language learning classrooms.

Through the implementation of these criteria, the literature search and selection process ensured the inclusion of relevant, empirical studies that directly addressed the research question within the context of language learning. This rigorous approach aimed to produce a high-quality body of literature for subsequent analysis.

The screening of articles took place in several stages. First, I read the articles' abstracts and titles to classify the articles as relevant or irrelevant based on the inclusion and

exclusion criteria. Relevant articles were marked and put aside for further screening. 14 results from Scopus and 8 results from Web of Sciences were identified as relevant. Full-text articles were then retrieved, and I further inspected the articles using the same inclusion criteria, resulting in 13 relevant articles from in Scopus and six from Web of Science. Of the relevant 19 articles from Scopus and Web of Science, five were identified as duplicates. 14 studies were left for final examination as part of the thesis.

5.4 Eligibility criteria

This part is dedicated to meticulously outlining the selection criteria for studies focusing on dialogic talk within language classroom environments. Its core objective is to ensure the incorporation of relevant, high-quality research, thereby clarifying the selection methodology for the review. Implementing these criteria is pivotal for enhancing the thoroughness and credibility of the review. The initial article selection required adherence to three key criteria: the subject of the research, the research design and methodology, and the population and the setting of the articles.

Studies eligible for inclusion will primarily explore the use of dialogic talk in the context of language classroom settings. Such research encompasses examinations of its implementation, effects, perceptions, and pedagogical approaches related to dialogic talk. These studies are expected to provide insights into various facilitation techniques, their impact on educational outcomes, and the challenges and benefits of employing dialogic talk in the field of language education. It is crucial that these studies specifically target these key areas to ensure relevance and focus.

The review will incorporate a diverse array of research methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches, to foster a holistic understanding. Emphasis will be placed on studies underpinned by solid empirical evidence, such as those employing systematic observation or validated assessment tools.

Research methodologies like experimental studies, observational research, case studies, ethnographies, and action research, all with clearly defined methodological structures, will be considered. Nonetheless, priority will be given to studies providing in-depth qualitative or quantitative data specifically on dialogic talk.

These studies will span a variety of language learning contexts, ranging from elementary to adult education and covering different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Both second language and foreign language learning environments will be included, offering a view of dialogic talk across various educational scenarios.

By setting and applying these rigorous selection criteria, the review aspires to deliver an exhaustive understanding of the application and influence of dialogic talk in language classrooms, particularly focusing on Chinese middle schools. The transparent enforcement of these criteria will bolster the reliability and validity of the review's outcomes, offering valuable insights into effective dialogic talk strategies and techniques in language education.

5.5 Selecting the databases

A systematic literature review search about Dialogic Talk and its effects on language learning was conducted using the Scopus and Web of Science on June 15, 2023. The reasons for choosing these two databases are because Scopus and Web of Science are well-regarded academic databases that offer broad coverage of scholarly literature, encompassing journals, conference proceedings, books, and patents. These databases are equipped with peer-reviewed content, citation analysis functionalities, research metrics, and advanced search features that furnish researchers with valuable tools. They facilitate the tracking of citations, measurement of impact, and identification of influential authors and journals. Furthermore, the integration with other research tools and institutional subscriptions augments their value. Given their global perspective and comprehensive coverage, these databases are indispensable resources for researchers

seeking reliable and high-quality information across various disciplines.

5.6 Search terms

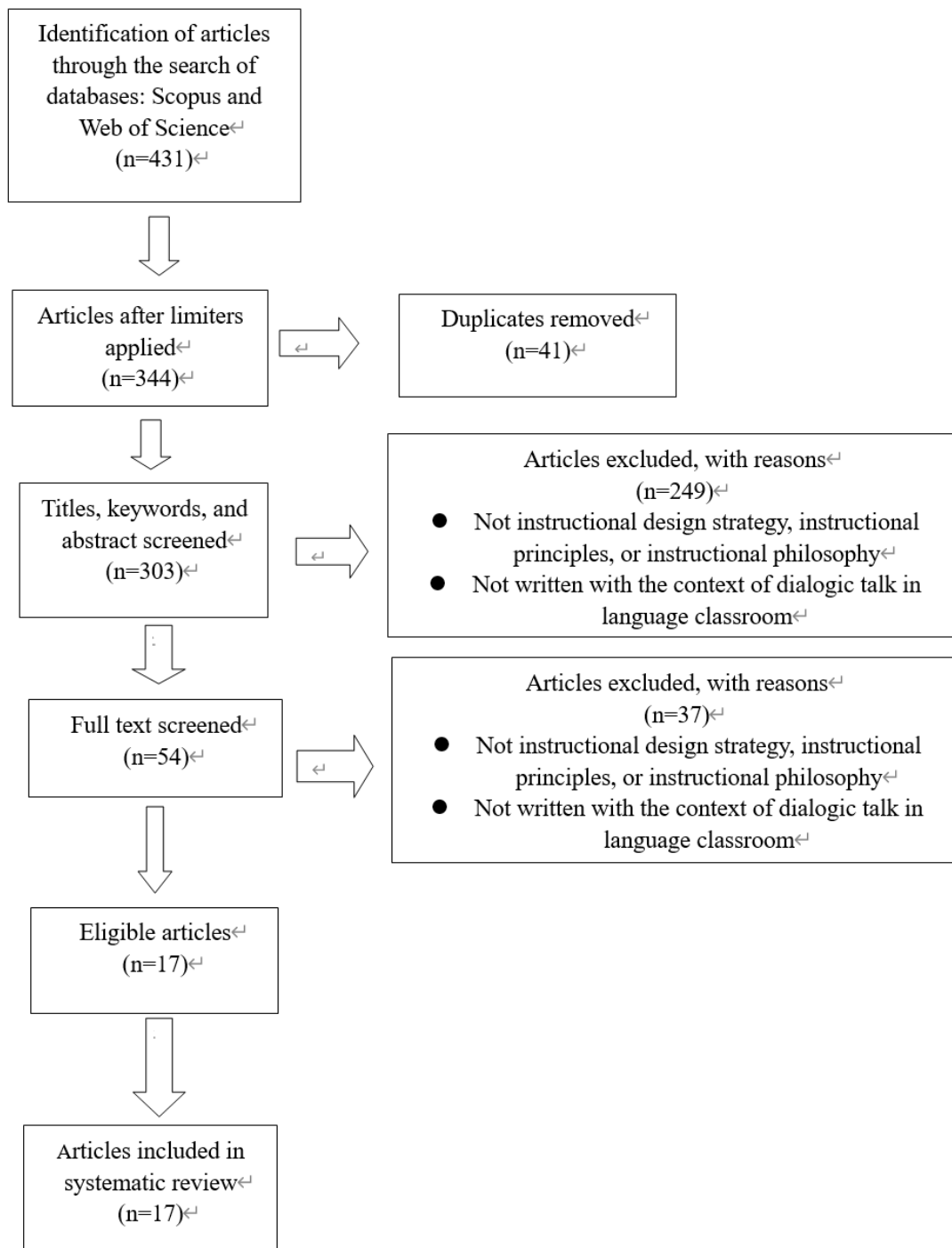
Guided by our research objectives and with the librarian's support in defining the search terms, we developed and conducted the search using the following Boolean search string:

“Language Learning”) AND (“Dialogic Talk” OR “Dialogic Teaching” OR “Classroom Discussion” OR “Exploratory Talk” OR “Quality Talk”

5.7 Filtering the studies

In this phase, two main steps were conducted. I first screened titles, abstracts and keywords and then filtered full-text articles. I used the inclusion and exclusion criteria to independently screen the articles during each round. I compared the results and resolve any discrepancies, ambiguities, or disagreements through discussion until consensus was reached. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *A PRISMA flowchart illustrating the screening process. Adapted from Moher et al. (2009)*



Chapter 6 Findings

6.1 Introduction

In the following paragraphs, the chapter will analyse the main findings uncovered in the systematic review. As previously mentioned, this systematic review is designed to explore the effects of dialogic talk on students' linguistic skills as they acquire a second language. Additionally, it proposes effective pedagogical strategies that can be implemented in Chinese middle school classrooms to harness the potential of dialogic talk and enhance students' competency in their second language. Since the introduction of the concept of dialogic talk, researchers have been extensively interested in examining its interdependent relationship with the process of second language acquisition (Liu, 2019). Despite studies attempting to investigate the influence of dialogic talk on second language learning, a definitive pattern that elucidates the precise way dialogic talk impacts students' second language capacity has yet to be discovered. As a result, this chapter will strive to clarify the following two questions through a systematic review:

1. How is dialogic talk used in language classrooms?
2. How does dialogic talk impact students' second language learning outcomes?

This chapter offers a detailed summary of the research findings. The process begins with an exhaustive examination of the included studies. The importance of dissecting each study individually prior to consolidating the overall evidence guarantees a deep comprehension of each study's methodology, facilitating an evaluation of the findings' validity and dependability (Tranfield et al., 2003). Such an assessment is pivotal, as the integrity of the evidence base hinges on the solidity of its constituent studies. Moreover, this analysis assists in uncovering discrepancies or variances in the results among different studies (Jacob & Brinkerhoff, 1997). Recognising these differences is critical in crafting a nuanced summary that truly captures the breadth of the research area. Early analysis also plays a vital role in identifying potential biases or gaps in the research,

ensuring that the concluding summary is both balanced and all-encompassing. This, in turn, steers future research trajectories and shapes best practice guidelines. The chapter then progresses to present a synthesised report of the studies, meticulously outlining the findings relevant to each research question.

6.2 Analysis of included studies

Table 2 presents the key characteristics of each included study, such as location of study, type of studies, school level, publication year and sample size.

Table 2 *Demographic profile of included studies*

Study characteristics [□]	Number of studies (%) [□]
Publication year [↵]	↵
● 2015 [↵]	2 (11.76%) [↵]
● 2016 [↵]	3 (17.64%) [↵]
● 2018 [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● 2017 [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● 2019 [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● 2020 [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● 2021 [↵]	3 (16.66%) [↵]
● 2022 [↵]	2 (11.11%) [↵]
● 2023 [↵]	3 (16.66%) [↵]
Location of study [↵]	↵
● US [↵]	3 (17.64%) [↵]
● China [↵]	4 (23.52%) [↵]
● Sudan [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● UAE [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Saudi Arabia [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Portugal [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Japan [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Singapore [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Netherlands [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Australia [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Thailand [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
● Worldwide [↵]	1 (5.89%) [↵]
Type of studies [↵]	↵
● Qualitative [↵]	10 (58.82%) [↵]
● Mixed method [↵]	7 (41.18%) [↵]
School level [↵]	↵
● Elementary school [↵]	6 (35.29%) [↵]
● Middle school [↵]	3 (17.64%) [↵]
● University [↵]	8 (47.05%) [↵]
Sample size [↵]	↵
● Under 50 [↵]	8 (47.05%) [↵]
● Over 50 [↵]	9 (52.95%) [↵]

Location of study

The systematic review on dialogic talk in language classrooms, encompassing studies from various countries with a notable concentration in the United States and China, presents an intriguing global perspective on educational research. This distribution of studies, while seemingly skewed towards these two countries, is influenced by multiple factors rooted in the respective nations' socio-economic, cultural, and academic landscapes.

To begin with, the United States and China have considerable resources allocated to

educational research and development (Wang, 2019). These nations recognise the value of educational innovation and invest heavily in this area, providing funding and support for extensive research. In the United States, the diversity of its population and the multitude of educational challenges and opportunities that arise from this diversity make it a fertile ground for educational research (Futrell et al., 2003). The American education system's emphasis on inclusivity, multiculturalism, and language acquisition reflects a societal need to understand and improve language education, particularly in a dialogic context. Similarly, in China, with its vast population and the increasing importance of English as a global language, there is a strong impetus to research effective language teaching methodologies (Hu, 2002). The Chinese government's focus on internationalising its education system and improving English proficiency among its citizens has spurred a significant number of studies in this field.

These countries also host a large number of prestigious academic and research institutions with dedicated faculties for education and language studies (Wang et al., 2013). These institutions are not only well-funded but also well-equipped with the necessary infrastructure to conduct high-quality research. The presence of these institutions creates an environment that nurtures and encourages scholarly inquiry, attracting researchers from around the world. Furthermore, the academic culture in these countries, especially in the United States, places a high value on the publication and dissemination of research findings, further incentivising researchers to conduct their studies in these settings.

The concentration of research should consider the global impact of both the United States and China (Huang et al., 2012). Due to its dominant position in the English language, the United States naturally becomes a focal point for language education studies. The significance and influence of American research in this field are particularly relevant due to the role of English as a lingua franca in global communication and commerce. Conversely, China's increasing global economic and political status has become a key player in education (Beeson & Li, 2016). The Chinese

approach to language education, specifically English as a second language, is of great interest to educators and researchers worldwide, given its potential implications for global educational practices and policies.

In contrast, the presence of studies in countries such as Sudan, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Japan, Singapore, Netherlands, Australia, and Thailand, and on a worldwide scale, though fewer in number, is equally significant. These studies offer insights into how dialogic talk in language classrooms is conceptualised and implemented across different cultural and educational contexts. Each of these countries has its unique educational landscape, influenced by local cultural norms, teaching traditions, and language policies. For instance, in Japan and Singapore, where there is a strong emphasis on learning English as a second language, the approaches to dialogic talk may differ significantly from those in the Netherlands or Australia, where English might be taught more as a foreign language. The inclusion of these diverse contexts in systematic review enriches the understanding of dialogic talk, highlighting both the universal aspects of language learning and the specific nuances that arise from cultural and educational differences.

6.3 School level

The examination of scholarly work on interactive discourse in language learning environments at various educational tiers – elementary, secondary, and tertiary – while deliberately omitting the high school level calls for detailed scrutiny. This trend could be shaped by several elements, including teaching priorities at each level, learners' developmental phases, research accessibility, and perhaps unacknowledged biases or missed research opportunities.

The concentration of research in elementary education (6 studies) is likely linked to this stage's pivotal role in language learning and development. This phase is crucial for

language acquisition as children are in the nascent phase of their cognitive and linguistic growth (Fillmore, 1991). Investigations in these contexts generally aim to discern how interactive discourse aids language learning, given the high receptivity of young learners to linguistic inputs and interactions. Research in elementary classrooms may focus on how such interactions bolster basic literacy, vocabulary expansion, and understanding of elementary linguistic constructs (Bignell, 2012).

In the context of secondary education, where just three studies are centred, research interest is subdued due to the transitory nature of this educational phase. Secondary school students are often amid considerable cognitive, emotional, and social transitions, complicating the examination of interactive discourse (Espelage et al., 2014). Scholars need help distinguishing the impact of interactive discourse from other developmental elements affecting language acquisition at this stage. Moreover, as curricula in secondary schools begin to diversify, language education might hold a different prominence than elementary education, leading to a reduced focus on studying interactive discourse in these environments.

At the university level, the marked rise in research (8 studies) can be associated with this stage's more advanced and specialised aspects of language learning. University students engage in intricate and abstract communication, aiming their language learning towards specific academic or professional objectives (Iksan et al., 2012). Studying interactive discourse in university settings might aim to understand its role in fostering higher-level thinking, critical evaluation, and the evolution of discipline-specific language. Additionally, universities often provide more accessible research environments, offering a more regulated setting for studies and a student body capable of providing informed consent and feedback (McGuire et al., 2011).

The absence of studies in high school contexts is a noteworthy gap. This lack might stem from various factors. High school curricula are frequently centred on standardised tests and exam preparation, potentially limiting the implementation and investigation

of interactive discourse (Sedova et al., 2016). Moreover, the adolescent phase presents unique challenges, such as heightened self-awareness and peer pressure, which could influence student engagement in interactive activities (Somerville et al., 2013).

6.4 Type of studies

In the realm of research concerning dialogic interactions, ten studies have embraced qualitative methods, while seven have opted for mixed-method approaches. This trend underscores a predominant reliance on qualitative techniques in such investigations. Several reasons illuminate why this preference prevails.

Firstly, dialogic talk inherently requires extensive data accumulation, a task for which qualitative methods are notably suited. In studying dialogic interactions, it is crucial to capture not just the spoken words but also the manner of their delivery. This includes considering tone, body language, and even the subtleties of pauses and interruptions. Such detailed data collection enables a deeper exploration of the factors driving conversations, including the underlying emotions, motivations, and social dynamics at play (Esposito et al., 2019). Qualitative methods facilitate a thorough understanding of these dialogic nuances, revealing hidden meanings, power structures, and the complex interplay of different voices within the conversations. Consequently, these methods yield findings that are both insightful and contextually rich.

Secondly, qualitative research is instrumental in offering a holistic understanding of dialogic talk's context. The setting in which dialogic interactions occur influences their nature. Qualitative research is adept at examining the varied contexts that mould these dialogues. By immersing in these settings, researchers gain an enriched comprehension of the dialogic talk's complexities, unearthing insights that might be overlooked by more quantitative or structured research methodologies (Roland & Wicks, 2009).

Thirdly, dialogic talk typically encompasses a range of voices and perspectives, making qualitative methods particularly apt for exploring participant interpretations and meanings. This approach recognises that dialogic interactions are not just about verbal exchanges but also about the socio-cultural context in which they transpire. Participants bring their unique backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences into conversations, influencing their interpretations and reactions (Linell, 1998). Qualitative research delves into these varied interpretations, uncovering hidden insights, discerning patterns, and deciphering the motivations behind specific communicative dynamics. This leads to a deeper understanding of dialogic talk across different settings.

Acknowledging the limited use of quantitative methods in studying dialogic talk is also important. One reason for this may lie in the inherent challenges posed by dialogic interactions' complex, multifaceted nature. These interactions involve dynamic exchanges where meaning is collaboratively constructed through various linguistic, social, and contextual cues. Quantitative approaches, with their focus on numerical data and statistical analysis, often need help to capture this complexity effectively (Maddox, 1990). Furthermore, the unpredictability and spontaneity of dialogic talk clash with the controlled environments and clear operational definitions preferred in quantitative research (Scully, 2014). The contextual factors influencing dialogic interactions present significant hurdles in achieving the precision and control required for quantitative analysis.

Lastly, ethical considerations may also deter using quantitative methods in this field. Researchers employing quantitative techniques aim to collect structured data that is amenable to statistical analysis. This might involve recording dialogues and transcribing them for quantitative evaluation, often without fully addressing ethical concerns (Singh & Singh, 2015). Such practices risk infringing on participant privacy and confidentiality. Participants might feel uncomfortable or vulnerable knowing their conversations are being recorded and quantified, which can erode trust and complicate obtaining informed consent (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). Balancing research objectives

with the need to respect participant privacy and dignity remains a challenging task, further impeding the application of quantitative methods in dialogic talk studies.

6.5 Publication year

Examining the dispersion and frequency of research papers on dialogic talk in language classrooms from 2015 to 2023 necessitates a multifaceted approach. From 2015 to 2016, a burgeoning interest in dialogic talk in language education has been witnessed. This interest upsurge could be attributed to novel pedagogical theories that underscored interactive and communicative approaches to language acquisition. It is plausible that these years witnessed seminal works that laid the groundwork for subsequent research, thereby emphasising the significance of dialogic talk. The pattern of research output during these nascent stages often reflects the endeavours of an emerging field to establish its pertinence and theoretical underpinnings.

From 2017 to 2020, the consistent presence of at least one paper annually suggests a steady, albeit specialised, fascination with the topic. This phase frequently characterises a period of consolidation in academic research, wherein initial findings are scrutinised, refined, and contested. It is probable that during these years, researchers were engrossed in deepening their comprehension of dialogic talk, exploring its applicability in diverse language learning contexts, and investigating methodological approaches.

The heightened attention observed in 2021-2023 could be ascribed to various factors. Advancements in digital technologies for analysing classroom interactions, coupled with the rise of online language learning platforms, may have furnished new tools and contexts for the study of dialogic talk. Additionally, the global shift toward more interactive and student-centred learning might have fueled further research. Furthermore, the academic realm often experiences cycles influenced by influential studies, funding availability, and academic conferences, which could elucidate the

renewed interest witnessed during these years.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which commenced in late 2019, undoubtedly profoundly influenced educational practices worldwide. The abrupt transition to online and hybrid learning environments necessitated a reevaluation of pedagogical strategies, including the employment of dialogic talk. This shift could clarify the surge in research interest observed from 2021 onwards as educators and researchers grappled with adapting dialogic practices to these novel learning environments.

6.6 Sample size

Regarding the composition of participant groups in the reviewed studies, a bifurcation emerges based on the quantity of participants involved. Specifically, eight investigations incorporated fewer than 50 individuals, the smallest group comprising six students. In contrast, nine studies engaged over 50 participants, with the largest encompassing approximately 300 individuals. This delineation at the 50-participant mark is significant as it categorises research with fewer than 50 participants as small-scale, typically involving just one or two classes. Such limited participant numbers are particularly suited for exploratory research on nascent and niche topics like dialogic talk, enabling thorough, in-depth analysis, as noted by Etz and Arroyo (2015). In this context, studies exceeding the threshold of 50 participants exhibit more recent publication dates, indicating an expansion in the scope of dialogic talk research after its initial explorations through pilot studies.

It is crucial to highlight the equitable distribution of studies across both small and large sample sizes in this research area. This balance can be ascribed to the unique requirements and focuses of the research questions posed. Smaller sample sizes are often necessitated when the research is centred around specific, specialised populations or unique scenarios, as outlined by Pathak (2012). For instance, initial studies with

fewer participants are vital to lay the foundational understanding in the emerging field of dialogic talk. These exploratory studies are instrumental in elucidating the core concepts and dynamics of dialogic talk in specific contexts or among particular groups, thereby setting the stage for more extensive subsequent research.

Conversely, studies with larger participant pools are indispensable for their contribution to enhanced statistical robustness. This increased statistical power enables researchers to detect and quantify subtler effects, as Meyvis and Van Osselaer (2018) suggest. Such capability is crucial for delving deeper into the complexities of dialogic talk, uncovering nuances that might be overlooked in smaller-scale studies. In sum, the varied sample sizes in dialogic talk research mirror the field's complexity, with both small and large samples playing crucial, complementary roles in broadening our understanding of this evolving area. Hence, future research endeavours in the dialogic talk will increasingly involve larger sample sizes.

6.7 Overview of the empirical studies

For a summary of all the empirical studies collected and discussed in this thesis, please refer to Table 3.

Table 3 Overview of the included studies

Study	Country	Setting	Number of participants	Key findings
Boyd, 2015	US	Elementary school	7	Teacher questioning style alone doesn't dictate student responses or learning outcomes; effective teaching involves actively listening and engaging with students' ideas and reasoning.

Chow et al., 2021	Hong Kong	Elementary school	72	Dialogic teaching effectively enhances English language skills in young ESL learners of varying vocabulary levels, promoting both linguistic and metalinguistic development through interactive and creative classroom activities.
Wei et al., 2020	China	Middle school	82	QT approach in Chinese English classes enhanced student interaction and understanding through bilingual discussions, integrating pre/post activities, and employing peer leaders in large, student-centered groups aligned with the curriculum.
Yang & Wang, 2022	China	Secondary school	160	The study reveals that in many Asian EFL classrooms, including China, a monologic teaching style prevails, with teachers focusing on knowledge transmission rather than encouraging interactive, dialogic teaching methods.
Van der Wilt et al., 2022	Netherland	Elementary school	17 teachers and 311 children	The intervention improved children's oral communicative competence but had no significant impact on their receptive vocabulary, theory of mind, or social acceptance.

				It specifically enhanced dialogic classroom talk abilities.
Klingelhofer & Schleppegrell, 2016	US	Elementary school	14	Exploring feelings, using textual language, and employing metalanguage enhance pupils' interpretative skills in English, aiding in making inferences and refining story understanding, even for less vocal learners.
Fairee, 2021	Thailand	University	21	In EFL classrooms, open-ended, collaborative activities foster a community of learners, enhance knowledge exchange, support peer scaffolding, reduce stress, and encourage authentic language production, creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment.
Jones & Chen, 2016	Austrillia	Elementary school	11 teachers and 'approximately 150 students	The study highlights how dialogic teaching and tailored games in classrooms enhance student engagement, improve understanding of language, and boost confidence and fluency in literacy and numeracy skills.
Lee, 2016	Singapore	Middle school	39	Before the intervention, the teaching primarily involved lectures and IRE sequences testing recall. Post-

				intervention, exploratory talk increased by 8.02%, enhancing student engagement, critical thinking, and dialogicity in teacher-student interactions.
Shea, 2019	Japan	University	22	The study highlights how teacher strategies like accountable talk, participation solicitation, and idea expansion affect student engagement, with missteps in interruptions, recasts, and over-explanation limiting effective classroom dialogue.
Boblett, 2018	US	University	20	The study highlights effective classroom interaction through teacher strategies and a five-stage talk sequence, emphasizing nonverbal cues, student engagement, and thoughtful exploration of ideas to enhance understanding.
Nelson & Chen, 2023	Portugal	Elementary school	24	The model encouraged critical examination and multiple perspectives in students, shifting from consensus to individual reasoning and deeper problem-solving. They connected discussions to writing independent narratives using codification themes.

Ahmad Musa, 2023	Saudi Arabia	University	30	The study found that dialogic teaching, combining traditional methods with structured dialogue, enhances oral competence and willingness to communicate by fostering collaborative, comfortable learning environments and real-world resource integration.
Engin & Donanci, 2015	UAE	University	234 students and 13 teachers	iPads in classrooms facilitate individual, collaborative work, and discussions. However, technical issues, lengthy instructions, and dominance of individual work can limit dialogue and student interaction.
Yang & Brindley, 2023	China	University	11	Lecturers use display/convergent questions to build dialogic momentum, then employ patient, explorative questioning, persistently encouraging student participation, leading to more natural, reciprocal dialogic exchanges without excessive prompting.
Heron et al., 2021	Worldwide	University	52	Online classes can enhance dialogic learning by establishing supportive dynamics, using technology for interactive talk, blending

				speaking with writing, decentralizing teacher control, and building individual confidence through structured tasks.
Elhassan & Adam, 2017	Sudan	University	140	Research shows dialogue and questioning skills are key in dialogic teaching, enhancing learners' speaking and thinking. Debate, involving questioning and argumentation, is effective when basic vocabulary and techniques are taught.

6.8 How is dialogic talk used in language classrooms?

The primary objective of this systematic review is to delve into the intricate and multifaceted use of dialogic talk within the context of language classrooms for second-language learners. The implementation of dialogic talk in language instruction is of utmost significance as it plays a pivotal role in shaping the process of language acquisition and fostering practical communication skills among students. To address this fundamental question, a meticulous and rigorous critical analysis of the essential characteristics inherent in the existing literature has been conducted with great care and thoughtfully integrated into this review.

This systematic review presents a meticulously designed framework; this approach is crucial in enhancing the credibility and thoroughness of the findings. By incorporating studies from diverse regions and linguistic backgrounds, we gain an understanding of how dialogic talk is employed in various educational settings. The inclusion of the sources not only contributes to the generalizability of the findings but also allows for a nuanced exploration of the potential variations in the application of dialogic talk

strategies.

The examination of empirical research data and insights derived from interviews reveals that the utilisation of dialogic talk in language classrooms differs primarily along three significant dimensions: age range, educational system, and culture. These three dimensions collectively form the intricate tapestry of factors that influence the integration of dialogic talk into second-language instruction. Understanding these variations is vital in tailoring teaching methods and approaches to suit the specific needs and characteristics of learners in different contexts.

6.9 Dialogic talk can be used to facilitate second language acquisition in different education levels

Education perpetually evolves, adapting to student needs, societal shifts, and new technologies. In educational contexts, strategies like dialogic talk are crucial for promoting learning and interactive engagement. This section explores the use of dialogic talk across educational stages, from primary to higher education, underscoring the unique methods and benefits in each setting.

Studies underscores the diverse applications of dialogic talk in classrooms, enhancing second language learning (Boyd, 2015; Fairee, 2021; Jones & Chen, 2016; Shea, 2019; Wei et al., 2020; Yang & Wang, 2022). This analysis reveals that educators can employ dialogic talk in varied ways to support second language acquisition at different educational levels. For example, Yang & Wang (2022) investigate teacher dialogue in English classes in Chinese secondary schools, noting variations in questioning styles and follow-up techniques across schools and grades. Particularly in School A, Year 11, a more dialogic approach is evident. These observations have significant implications for enhancing student engagement and critical thinking in English language education (Yang & Wang, 2022).

6.9.1 Elementary level

In elementary schools, the employment of dialogic talk is principally designed to establish a foundational basis for young learners in mastering a secondary language, as indicated by Vrikki and colleagues in 2019. Given the typically limited language learning capabilities of these students, tailored strategies are imperative for nurturing their language growth. Teachers utilise dialogic talk to promote what is known as Student Critical Turn (SCT), actively engaging pupils in classroom conversations. SCT, as defined by Boyd in 2015, represents linguistically expansive, socially interactive, and structurally consistent segments of student dialogue.

Furthermore, the integration of educational games plays a crucial role in captivating students, thereby strengthening their understanding of language concepts while simultaneously enhancing their proficiency and self-assurance. Research has shown that the influence of teacher communication on pupil learning transcends the mere content of their utterances. As Boyd emphasised in 2015, the manner in which teachers employ various questioning techniques to direct and mould learning is of paramount importance, particularly for elementary schoolers with restricted language learning capacities. The focus of the study was on English Language Learners (ELL) in grades four and five within a specialised classroom setting. Their limited ability to grasp complex texts necessitated the adoption of dialogic talk methods by the teacher to stimulate student involvement, reasoning, and cooperative learning. The research aimed to explore how diverse questioning styles affected student discourse and learning outcomes. The teacher strategically employed an assortment of open and closed questions, contingent on prior student contributions, to steer discussions. Findings indicated that distinct questioning styles resulted in various forms of student dialogue, positively influencing both understanding and engagement levels (Boyd, 2015). Therefore, the deployment of dialogic talk methods seeks not only to enrich classroom dialogue but also to cultivate more frequent SCT occurrences in teaching sessions, with the potential to enhance student language abilities.

Moreover, existing empirical studies suggest that educational games provide invaluable opportunities for primary school learners to develop both competency and confidence. By repeatedly engaging with relevant concepts and associated metalanguage, these games promote involvement in language learning. Learners gain the opportunity to identify and manipulate clause elements while being repeatedly exposed to and applying the relevant metalanguage (Jones & Chen, 2016). Blending dialogic talk with these games proves highly beneficial to augment this learning process. Dialogic talk, characterised by open-ended discussions and interactive exchanges, encourages students to express their thoughts, reason, and contemplate their learning collaboratively. When amalgamated with educational games, it fosters deeper comprehension and more substantial learning experiences. For example, following a language-focused game, teachers might initiate dialogic talk sessions in which students deliberate over their tactics, obstacles, and realisations. This method does more than consolidate learned concepts; it also cultivates critical thinking and communicative abilities.

6.9.2 Middle level

In middle schools, the approach to dialogic talk undergoes a significant transformation, shifting its focus towards broadening and intensifying discussions, rather than merely concentrating on language learning, as highlighted by Higham et al. (2014). This phase distinctly separates expanding and deepening discussions from language acquisition, although both are interlinked and serve unique roles in language development. Language acquisition is fundamentally about learning a language, especially for young children, and covers aspects like vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. It represents the initial stage where the fundamental elements of a language are assimilated. In contrast, expanding and deepening discussions involve enhancing and diversifying the use of language. This encompasses delving into complex subjects, using sophisticated vocabulary, and participating in intricate dialogues, focusing on refining and

sophisticating language usage, usually following the primary language acquisition stage. While language acquisition forms the basis for effective communication, expanding and deepening discussions improve and broaden the scope of communication.

The study by Wei et al. (2020) in the context of middle school education illustrates that implementing dialogic talk in middle school classrooms includes selecting texts and discussion topics from existing resources to enrich conversations. Teachers aim to increase the range and depth of classroom discussions by carefully choosing materials. Another notable change in middle schools is the use of genuine questions to spark student involvement, moving away from rigid, correct-answer-focused queries. Middle school students are encouraged to critically engage, participate actively in discussions, and contribute to their learning journey. Yang and Wang's (2022) research on dialogic talk in middle school language classrooms found that teachers frequently used authentic questions to boost student engagement, not just to obtain right or wrong answers. In summary, the application of dialogic talk in middle schools differs significantly from that in primary schools. While primary education focuses on establishing language foundations and engaging students through structured questions, middle school education emphasises enhancing language skills and critical thinking through in-depth discussions and the use of authentic questions. This shift towards more nuanced language usage and critical thinking represents a key evolution in the progression from primary to middle school educational settings.

6.9.3 Higher education level

Higher education presents a different landscape for dialogic talk. In this setting, students have already developed substantial language skills, and the focus shifts to advanced learning and peer-to-peer interactions (Latypova, 2016). Dialogic talk in higher education entails active involvement in discussions and collaborative group activities. Students express that they derive benefits from exchanging knowledge and

attaining a deeper understanding through peer interactions. This approach not only advances their academic comprehension but also aids in the development of advanced language skills. Within higher education, the utilisation of dialogic talk extends to addressing the challenges of student participation, public speaking, and hesitancy. Educators employ strategies such as nomination, providing ample time for reflection, and even incorporating humour to overcome reluctance and encourage active participation. It is crucial to foster an environment where students feel at ease expressing themselves and where unrelated deviations or interruptions are minimised to promote fruitful discussion.

An empirical investigation conducted by Fairee (2021) elucidated several recommended methodologies for utilising dialogic talk in the realm of higher education. The findings revealed that by actively involving students in discussions and collaborative group activities, students expressed that they could exchange knowledge and acquire a deeper understanding of their peers (Fairee, 2021). Different from the primary and middle school level, students in higher education will be involved in the discussion and group work led by one of them instead of the teachers. This approach lets teachers give more authority to students so that students can gain big autonomy, which can affect not only students' language ability but also their leadership (Lin & Luk, 2005). Additionally, the empirical research conducted by Shea in 2019 proposed that the act of encouraging student participation requires careful attention to the hesitation experienced by almost all students when speaking in public. Various strategies, such as nomination, allowing sufficient time for thought, and incorporating humour, were employed to overcome reticence and foster active involvement. Furthermore, teachers must be mindful of the tendency to interrupt unnecessarily or engage in unrelated digressions, as these two discourse behaviours restrict student participation. Although the intention behind these behaviours is to establish a shared understanding, the actual result is a limitation on student discourse. Often, these missteps are associated with an attempt to maintain a pace that sustains student attention, but they also stem from an endeavour to establish rapport with students (Shea, 2019). Compared to the other two

school levels, in higher education, where students possess advanced language skills, dialogic talk takes on a different dimension. Here, the focus shifts towards facilitating peer-to-peer interactions and fostering advanced learning. Students engage in discussions and collaborative group activities, exchanging knowledge to deepen their understanding. Unlike in primary and middle school levels, where teachers typically lead discussions, in higher education, students often take the lead in facilitating group work. This approach grants students autonomy and develops leadership skills alongside language proficiency. Teachers employ strategies such as nomination, reflection time, and humour to overcome reticence and encourage active participation, nurturing an environment conducive to fruitful dialogue and academic growth.

While the fundamental principles of dialogic talk remain consistent across educational levels, distinctions arise due to the developmental stages and objectives of each setting. In primary schools, the focus is on establishing foundational language skills and promoting engagement; middle schools prioritise critical thinking and discussion, and higher education emphasises advanced learning and peer interaction. These distinctions in approach reflect the evolving needs and capabilities of students as they progress through different educational levels.

6.10 How does dialogic talk impact students' language learning outcomes?

In the realm of education, the impact of classroom dialogue on student language learning outcomes is pivotal. The collective findings of this systematic review indicate that dialogic interaction in language education significantly influences various linguistic skills (Ahmad Musa, 2023; Chow et al., 2021; Elhassan & Adam, 2017; Van der Wilt et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2020). Language acquisition, in this context, extends beyond mere oral proficiency enhancement to include advancements in auditory and vocabulary skills. This section aims to shed light on the nuanced effects of dialogic

exchanges on student language learning outcomes, recognising their critical role in shaping not only speaking abilities but also listening and literary skills essential for holistic language development.

Speaking

Research has demonstrated that dialogic talk, a key component of language instruction, plays a crucial role in fostering oral competence in language learning. This assertion is backed by various studies utilising both qualitative and mixed-method approaches, which highlight the effectiveness of dialogic talk in boosting students' oral skills (Ahmad Musa, 2023; Elhassan & Adam, 2017; Heron et al., 2021; Van der Wilt et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2020).

Elhassan and Adam (2017) embarked on a qualitative study to examine the impact of dialogic pedagogy on oral proficiency. Their study encompassed 60 students from different universities and colleges in Sudan, focusing on those trained in debate. The methodology included detailed questionnaires, interviews with 40 educators, and observation checklists used during debates. The results highlighted that dialogic teaching significantly improves oral communication skills. It was also found that such an approach boosts analytical thinking and speaking abilities by promoting skills in argumentation, questioning, and debate (Elhassan & Adam, 2017).

Similarly, Wei et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study on the role of Quality Talk (QT), a subset of dialogic talk, in enhancing language skills. They applied a discourse-intensive teaching method in an eighth-grade English class in China. The findings indicated that integrating QT in Mandarin and English discussions bolstered students' oral proficiency as well as their confidence and interest in engaging with English texts. Notably, low-proficiency students showed greater willingness to express their views in small groups following Mandarin QT discussions about English texts. Additionally, the use of student discussion leaders and the incorporation of native and target languages

in discussions were pivotal in facilitating meaningful interactions in both languages (Wei et al., 2020). Hence, dialogic talk, especially through QT, positively impacts oral proficiency by enhancing confidence, interest, and interaction in both languages.

The most recent study in this review, conducted by Ahmad Musa (2023), investigated the use of dialogic instruction to improve communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The study involved thirty female EFL students in an English language and translation context. Over ten cycles of dialogic teaching, discussions were held on topics such as technology, health, and environmental conservation. Methods such as oral assessments, questionnaires on communication willingness, and observation forms were used. The results showed that dialogic talk significantly enhances speaking proficiency, particularly in aspects of fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and content. Regular opportunities for dialogic interaction were crucial in increasing motivation, engagement, and language production in speaking classes (Ahmad Musa, 2023). In summary, these studies underscore the importance of dialogic talk in advancing students' speaking proficiency and communicative skills.

Van der Wilt's (2022) research, utilising a mixed-method approach to explore the effect of dialogic talk on young children's language skills in early childhood education, yielded positive outcomes. Conducted in primary schools across the Netherlands, the study involved 17 teachers and 308 children, who were divided into an intervention group and a control group. Teachers in the intervention group underwent professional development and coaching in dialogic talk, in contrast to the control group, which relied solely on a teacher manual for guiding classroom conversations. Notably, the intervention group employed a significantly larger array of dialogic talk techniques than their counterparts in the control group. After an 8-week period, children's oral competencies were assessed, revealing that dialogic talk in the classroom had a beneficial effect on their speaking abilities, particularly in oral communicative competence. Quantitative analysis of the data indicated that the 8-week dialogic talk

intervention markedly improved the children's oral communicative skills. This improvement was measured using a standardised test of oral communicative competence, administered before and after the intervention. The intervention group's average scores rose from an initial 13.54 to 16.32 post-intervention, while the control group experienced a more modest increase, from 13.83 to 15.38 (Van der Wilt, 2022). Multilevel analysis further confirmed the intervention's significant positive impact on the children's oral communicative abilities. Specifically, children participating in the intervention demonstrated a greater enhancement in their oral competence scores compared to those who did not.

In conclusion, Van der Wilt's (2022) findings underscore the efficacy of dialogic classroom talk in fostering oral communicative competence among children. By engaging in collaborative dialogues and actively using language within a dialogic classroom setting, children not only enhance their language skills but also become more adept communicators.

6.10.1 Listening

The study by Chow et al. (2021) has shown that dialogic teaching techniques in educational environments can significantly improve students' listening skills. This mixed-method research was conducted in a Chinese educational context, focusing on the impact of dialogic teaching on the English language acquisition of first graders. The research included ten teachers and 160 students from five classes across two schools. For 12 weeks, the experimental group was exposed to dialogic teaching, whereas the control group continued with traditional English language teaching methods. Assessments before and after the intervention evaluated the students' abilities in English receptive and expressive vocabulary, textbook vocabulary, and phonological awareness. ANOVA tests were utilised to analyse the data, comparing the differences over time between the two groups. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, effect sizes were interpreted, with η^2 values of .01, .06, and .14 representing small, medium, and large

effects, respectively. The analysis revealed that students with higher vocabulary proficiency who received the dialogic teaching showed more pronounced improvements in English phonological awareness than their counterparts who did not. However, no notable differences were observed in phonological awareness among students with lower vocabulary skills, regardless of the teaching method. Specifically, in the high vocabulary group, a significant improvement over time was noted in phonological awareness, $F(1, 38) = 5.82, p < .05, \eta^2 = .13$, though the method of instruction did not show a significant main effect, $F(1, 38) = .11, p > .05, \eta^2 = .003$. An interaction effect between the teaching method and time was significant in the high vocabulary group, suggesting considerable development in phonological awareness for students receiving dialogic teaching, $F(1, 38) = 5.31, p < .05, \eta^2 = .12$. This effect was between medium and large. In contrast, no significant effects were found for the low vocabulary group regarding time, teaching method, or interaction. Cheung (2007) notes that phonological awareness is vital in understanding and manipulating the sounds in words and sentences, which is a key component of listening skills. The results of this study suggest that dialogic teaching in classrooms can boost phonological awareness in students, thereby enhancing their listening capabilities. However, the lack of significant effects in students with low vocabulary highlights the need for further research and consideration of individual learner differences.

6.10.2 Vocabulary

Dialogic talk in the classroom has been shown to enhance various language learning outcomes, including vocabulary acquisition significantly. According to the study by Chow et al. (2021), this approach is compared with traditional didactic teaching to understand its impact on the development of students' expressive vocabulary. The research reveals that both low and high-vocabulary groups experience a substantial improvement in their expressive vocabulary, as evidenced by textbook materials. The low vocabulary group shows a remarkable effect ($F(1, 30) = 83.45, p < .001, \eta^2 = .73$), while the high vocabulary group demonstrates an even more pronounced effect ($F(1,$

38) = 145.59, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .79$). Despite these findings, no significant main effect is observed for the teaching condition in either group. Interestingly, an interaction effect between the condition and time is noted for both groups, indicating that those who received dialogic instruction showed greater improvement in expressive vocabulary compared to those who did not.

Moreover, significant advancements are seen in both groups over time regarding receptive vocabulary, as assessed by textbook materials, and expressive vocabulary, with the exception of the high vocabulary group's receptive vocabulary. These improvements are consistent across both the intervention and control groups, as no significant interaction or main effect for the condition is detected. This suggests that dialogic teaching is equally effective as traditional methods in enhancing children's vocabulary skills, as shown by the control group that followed the conventional English curriculum (Chow et al., 2021).

In summary, dialogic talk positively influences various aspects of language learning, including speaking proficiency, oral communicative competence, listening skills, and vocabulary. The effectiveness of this approach is supported by research from Ahmad Musa (2023), Elhassan and Adam (2017), Wei et al. (2020), and Van der Wilt (2022), highlighting its benefits in language education. Dialogic instruction not only bolsters students' oral skills through the promotion of analytical thinking, argumentation, and debate, but it also aids in developing listening skills, as shown by enhanced phonological awareness (Chow et al., 2021). Additionally, its impact on vocabulary acquisition, both expressive and receptive, is significant. These findings emphasise the importance of incorporating dialogic communication strategies in language teaching, underscoring its role in producing well-rounded language learners with improved speaking, listening, and vocabulary skills.

6.11 Conclusion

In sum, the findings shed light on the complex and influential role of dialogic talk within language classrooms, especially pertinent in the realm of second language acquisition. It spans a range of educational settings, from elementary schools to tertiary institutions, underscoring its dynamic nature and profound efficacy in enriching the language acquisition process. This review meticulously addresses two pivotal research queries, offering in-depth insights into both the application and the ramifications of dialogic talk.

The analysis first reveals the diverse application of dialogic talk across different educational stages, customized to meet the distinct needs and developmental phases of learners. At the primary level, dialogic talk is geared towards establishing fundamental language abilities, employing interactive methodologies such as educational games and the Student Critical Turn (SCT) method. As students progress to middle school, the focus shifts towards cultivating analytical and critical thinking skills, whereas in higher education, the emphasis is on enhancing peer interactions and specialized language application. These findings underscore the flexible nature of dialogic talk, demonstrating its adaptability across various educational contexts and learner requirements.

Moreover, the impact of dialogic talk on students' language learning is significant and multifaceted. The collective evidence from the reviewed studies suggests a substantial enhancement in speaking and oral communication skills, listening capabilities, and vocabulary development. This improvement transcends individual language aspects, presenting an advancement in linguistic abilities. This wide-reaching effect emphasizes the effectiveness of dialogic talk in promoting an all-encompassing language proficiency, solidifying its value in language education.

This chapter significantly contributes to the academic conversation on language

education, offering a detailed perspective on the role of dialogic talk in second language learning. By synthesizing findings from varied educational contexts, it presents a rich and diverse evidence base, advocating for the widespread adoption of dialogic teaching strategies in language learning environments worldwide. Future research is encouraged to delve deeper into the potential of dialogic talk across different linguistic and cultural landscapes, thereby enhancing our comprehension of its influence on language acquisition.

Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The introduction of dialogic talk in China's English classes marked a substantial departure from traditional teacher-centric approaches and promoted more interactive dialogues and collaborative knowledge construction (Chow, 2021). Despite the curricular advancements, there are persistent challenges, notably in adapting dialogic methods to the unique characteristics of Chinese EFL classrooms, which are often large in size, diverse in language proficiency, and exam-oriented. Moreover, there is limited clarity on the effectiveness of teacher training in dialogic methods and understanding of students' perceptions and engagement in these interactive educational practices. This thesis explored the application and impact of dialogic talk in language classrooms globally to understand its potential to enhance language learning and identity. Drawing on the findings, this chapter proposes well-suited strategies for middle school English language classes in China. The research question it seeks to answer is:

1. How is dialogic talk used in language classrooms?
2. How does dialogic talk impact students' language outcomes?
3. What are some effective strategies and techniques for dialogic talk that can be practised in Chinese middle school language classrooms?

To do so, this chapter first discusses the principal findings of the first and second research questions.

1. How is dialogic talk used in language classrooms?
2. How does dialogic talk impact students' language outcomes?

Then, it examines the implications of the findings and proposes strategies tailored explicitly for Chinese middle language classrooms, thereby addressing the third research question.

7.2 Summary of Key Findings

The research conclusively demonstrates that dialogic talk, a pivotal aspect of linguistic pedagogy, plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of language learning. Its impact is particularly pronounced in enhancing linguistic abilities such as spoken fluency, listening skills, and vocabulary expansion (Ahmad Musa, 2023; BOBLETT, 2018; Boyd, 2015; Chow et al., 2021; Elhassan & Adam, 2017; Engin & Donanci, 2015; Fairee & Jones & Chen, 2016a; Jones & Chen, 2016b; Klingelhofer & Schleppegrell, 2016; Lee, 2016; Nelson & Chen, 2023; Shea, 2019; van der Wilt et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2020; Yang & Wang, 2022; Yang & Brindley, 2023). Interactive classroom dialogues transcend traditional language instruction, promoting language development that encapsulates speaking, listening, and literary competencies.

In the realm of language education, the foremost aim of dialogic talk is to aid in acquiring a second language. This review reveals the meticulous implementation of dialogic talk across various educational stages, tailored to align with learners' developmental needs and goals (Boyd, 2015). For example, in elementary education, dialogic talk focuses on building foundational language abilities, employing strategies like Student Critical Turn (SCT) and educational games to captivate young minds and cultivate their confidence and linguistic mastery. In secondary and higher education, the emphasis shifts towards nurturing critical thinking, peer collaboration, and advanced intellectual growth (Silva et al., 2016). In these settings, dialogic talk involves learners in debates and group collaborations, which not only improve their English proficiency but also enhance their leadership capabilities.

7.3 Implications for teaching practices in Chinese middle schools

The findings reveal implications for teaching practices in Chinese middle schools, especially the benefits of dialogic talk for language acquisition and cognitive

development. In Chinese middle schools, integrating dialogic talk as a pedagogical approach marks a transformative departure from existing educational frameworks, exerting a profound impact on linguistic mastery and cognitive growth, especially in English language education (He, 2016). Dialogic teaching contrasts with the typical Chinese educational approach prioritising passive assimilation through memorisation and instructor-driven lessons (Bell, 2020).

Characterised by its focus on interactive discourse and collaborative knowledge construction, dialogic talk fosters an environment of active engagement, critical thinking, and the practice of open-ended inquiry among learners (Gillies, 2019). This shift towards a functional learning paradigm is pivotal for efficacious language acquisition, empowering students to apply English in more complex scenarios beyond the rudimentary vocabulary and grammatical structures. Through participation in dialogic talk, students co-create knowledge, thereby gaining a more profound and functional grasp of English (Song & Song, 2018).

Furthermore, this approach engenders a more balanced and participatory classroom environment. It encourages students to articulate their viewpoints, pose inquiries, and engage vigorously in discussions (Gillies, 2016). This is particularly transformative in the Chinese educational milieu, where traditional norms have typically underscored deference to authority (Zhai, 2017). As Chinese students gain confidence in their expressive abilities, their English proficiency is likely to see substantial improvement, helping them surmount common obstacles in language learning, such as the scarcity of opportunities for practising conversational English and a predisposition to favour grammatical precision over communicative competence.

Additionally, dialogic talk is congruent with advancing higher-order cognitive abilities, encompassing analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These faculties are indispensable for mastering a second language, as they facilitate a nuanced understanding of language application and its context (Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013). For Chinese students,

traditionally accustomed to rote learning, dialogic talk offers a valuable opportunity to cultivate these essential cognitive skills. Engaging in English discussions, debates, and problem-solving activities deepens mental involvement and significantly bolsters language learning efficiency (Garrett et al., 1996). A crucial element of dialogic talk is its emphasis on peer-to-peer interaction and collective learning, which is particularly advantageous for students using individualistic study methods (Gillies, 2023). Through this approach, learners collaboratively engage in discussions, cooperation, and joint interpretation of English.

7.4 Effective Strategies for applying Dialogic Talk in Chinese middle schools

7.4.1 Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

Establishing an enriching educational atmosphere is essential for the effective integration of dialogic teaching in Chinese middle schools' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, as highlighted in Wang & Liu's 2012 study. Supported by numerous empirical investigations, this approach significantly improves both teaching and learning outcomes (Cadiz-Gabejan, 2021; Liu & Zhao, 2010; Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013; Teo, 2016).

At the heart of this approach lies creating a nurturing and inclusive classroom environment (Raguindin et al., 2021). Such a setting fosters a feeling of safety and comfort among students, which is vital for encouraging mutual respect, both among students and between students and teachers. This respect serves as a driving force for active engagement in learning and dialogic activities. Liu and Zhao's 2010 study on dialogic teaching reforms in a Chinese high school is a prime illustration of this. Their research highlighted the critical need for a caring and supportive classroom atmosphere encouraging students to express their views and partake in various activities. Therefore, teachers must consider their students' emotional and social aspects, along with the

cognitive and functional dimensions of their lesson plans. By focusing on these facets, educators can develop holistic, learner-centred teaching strategies (Liu & Zhao, 2010). The study also emphasised the significance of dialogic teaching, which is characterised by open-ended questions, discussion, and collaborative learning. Such a combination cultivates an energetic classroom environment where students transform from passive learners to active participants in their educational journey.

A key outcome of this environment is the enhancement of student confidence and self-assurance. Participation in diverse dialogues and the formation of trustful relationships with peers and teachers boost students' self-confidence, a crucial element in language learning (Cadiz-Gabejan, 2021). This increase in confidence facilitates oral practice and improves communication skills. Furthermore, adopting a dialogic approach positively influences classroom dynamics, student involvement, and the development of critical thinking abilities. Active engagement in dialogic activities encourages students to think deeply, consider various perspectives, and refine their critical thinking skills, enhancing their linguistic capabilities and preparing them for future academic and professional challenges.

In the context of an exam-focused educational system, fostering an inclusive classroom culture in Chinese EFL settings involves specific strategies. Creating supportive learning environments is pivotal, enabling students to express their ideas comfortably and cultivating mutual respect (Patrick et al., 2007). This approach is augmented by using open-ended questions to enrich classroom interactions and embrace diverse viewpoints. Such questions stimulate critical thinking and alleviate student anxiety. Additionally, implementing dialogic conversation techniques, like providing adequate response time and practising active listening, improves the quality of learning (Racionero & Valls, 2007). Incorporating peer discussions and real-world connections also makes learning more relevant (Porter et al., 2011). Collectively, these methods create an inclusive atmosphere conducive to language development and exam preparation.

An approach to teacher professional development is necessary to successfully incorporate dialogic talk strategies in Chinese middle schools' EFL classrooms to create a supportive learning environment (Davies et al., 2017). This training should focus on fostering supportive learning environments and using dialogic techniques, such as open-ended questioning and allowing sufficient time for student responses. Considering the cultural and curricular constraints of an exam-oriented educational system is imperative. PD programs should also address how teachers understand and implement these techniques, considering their beliefs and the existing educational context (Maass, 2011). Such an approach ensures that dialogic teaching methods align with exam objectives, thereby enhancing students' comprehension and critical thinking skills, crucial for classroom success and standardised testing.

7.4.2 Incorporation of Educational Games

Integrating educational games with dialogic talk into Chinese middle school language education represents a groundbreaking and multifaceted strategy for language acquisition (Poole et al., 2019). This pioneering approach combines the immersive and interactive nature of educational games with dialogic talk's reflective and communicative aspects, resulting in a rich and multi-layered educational experience.

In this paradigm, educational games emerge as powerful tools that captivate middle school students' interest in language learning. These games, diverging from conventional rote memorisation methods, offer an engaging and dynamic environment tailored to strengthen crucial linguistic components like vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. They transform the learning process into an enjoyable and memorable journey. By incorporating gaming elements, classrooms become lively and engaging, fostering a positive attitude towards language learning (Vandercruyssen et al., 2013).

The amalgamation of educational games and dialogic talk brings numerous benefits. It

enhances comprehension and critical thinking, as students actively engage with and critically evaluate the information presented in games (Gillies, 2016). Combining enjoyable gaming experiences with the nurturing aspect of dialogic talk increases students' willingness to participate and express themselves. This approach also advances communicative skills (Kuznetsova et al., 2023), as discussing game experiences allows students to practice various linguistic skills in a real-world-like context. Furthermore, this strategy encourages cooperative learning, teaching students the value of teamwork and the appreciation of different perspectives (Gillies, 2016). This approach's adaptability is also noteworthy. Games and dialogic activities can be tailored to match students' proficiency and cognitive levels, ensuring they are fully engaged and appropriately challenged. This method effectively links academic concepts with real-world scenarios, making the learning experience more relevant and meaningful.

In China's often large, linguistically diverse, and exam-focused classrooms, combining educational games with dialogic talk offers a revolutionary way to learn languages. For primary school learners, these games provide crucial opportunities to develop both language skills and confidence (Wang et al., 2011). They facilitate engagement with key concepts and metalanguage in an interactive setting. When merged with dialogic talk, which includes open-ended discussions and interactive exchanges, this approach solidifies learned concepts while fostering critical thinking and communicative skills. Post-game dialogues allow students to reflect on their strategies, challenges, and insights, deepening their understanding and enhancing their learning experience.

In middle schools, dialogic talk focuses on broadening and deepening discussions, shifting from essential language acquisition to enhancing and diversifying language use (Juuti et al., 2020). This involves exploring complex topics and engaging in detailed dialogues with advanced vocabulary. This method splits language learning into two interconnected phases: initial language fundamentals acquisition and the subsequent expansion and intensification of discussions. The latter is essential for refining language

use and broadening communication skills.

Traditionally, a teacher-centred approach has dominated Chinese language education, with the teacher as the primary knowledge source. Educational games and dialogic talk represent a departure from this norm, offering a more interactive, student-centric learning environment (Prensky, 2003). This change is critical for addressing the challenges of diverse proficiency levels, large class sizes, and a focus on exam-oriented learning. By incorporating educational games and dialogic talk, teachers can create dynamic, inclusive, and engaging learning experiences that meet various student needs while aligning with curricular goals.

Integrating educational gaming with dialogic talk in Chinese middle school language pedagogy requires targeted teacher professional development (PD) and adaptive instructional strategies, considering the unique challenges of large, diverse, and exam-oriented classrooms. Teacher PD should focus on managing large class sizes and facilitating inclusive dialogic interactions, enabling every student to participate actively, regardless of their proficiency level.

Additionally, students' variability in English language proficiency necessitates differentiated instruction (Tukhtabaeva, 2021). PD should emphasise scaffolding techniques to support lower-proficiency students while challenging higher-proficiency learners. This approach is vital for bridging the educational resource gap and varying levels of English exposure among students.

Finally, the exam-focused Chinese educational system often favours traditional teaching methods over interactive, student-led dialogues (Zhang & Liu, 2014). Teachers need training in balancing curriculum demands with innovative teaching methods that promote critical thinking and language skills. This balance is crucial for preparing students for standardised tests while fostering their overall linguistic and cognitive development.

7.4.3 Broadening and Intensifying Discussions in Middle Schools

In the context of Chinese middle schools, the progression from primary to secondary education marks a pivotal shift in dialogic talk within language classrooms. This transition is not merely a continuation but a significant leap, evolving from the foundational focus on essential linguistic components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation towards a more sophisticated approach that accentuates the enrichment and diversification of language proficiency (Chambers, 2014). At this juncture, dialogic talk in middle school transcends simple language acquisition. It becomes an expansive and explorative process, fostering a more inclusive and profound scope of dialogue. This advancement is imperative, as it mirrors middle school students' cognitive and linguistic maturation from elementary language acquisition to an intricate and complex language application. Characterised by engaging students in elaborate conversations, tackling multifaceted topics, and integrating advanced vocabulary, this stage aims to hone linguistic skills and cultivate a refined and nuanced language application vital for effective and expansive communication (Todhunter, 2007).

A vital facet of this dialogic evolution in middle schools is the judicious selection of texts and discussion themes from many resources to enrich dialogues. As Wei et al.'s 2020 study highlighted, this strategy broadens and deepens classroom discussions. Educators are encouraged to select instructive, intellectually stimulating, and provocative materials, fostering richer and more consequential dialogues among students (Wei et al., 2020). Another discernible shift in the middle school dialogic approach is adopting genuine, open-ended questions to foster student engagement, moving away from the restrictive, right-answer-focused queries prevalent in primary education. This change is fundamental, as it promotes critical thinking and active participation in discussions, thereby augmenting the students' educational experience. Yang and Wang's 2022 research underscores the effectiveness of this method, noting

that teachers' use of authentic questions significantly elevates student involvement. These inquiries aim not just to ascertain correct responses but to incite reflection, embrace diverse perspectives, and foster a more profound comprehension (Yang & Wang, 2022).

There is a pressing need to revolutionise traditional pedagogical models in English language education within Chinese middle schools. This entails a shift towards dialogic talk, emphasising interactive and cooperative learning over conventional memorisation methods and teacher-centric instruction. This method proves particularly beneficial in large, heterogeneous classrooms by promoting student engagement in complex topics through advanced vocabulary and detailed dialogues (Wood & Taylor, 2007). This approach transcends essential language acquisition, aiming instead to refine and elevate the students' linguistic capabilities. Despite its merits, the transition faces significant hurdles, including deep-rooted cultural and institutional barriers and the omnipresent pressure of standardised testing, such as the gaokao.

In addressing these challenges, a key focus must be teachers' professional development (PD), tailored to the unique demands of large classes, diverse levels of language proficiency, and an examination-driven education system. High-quality PD programs should prioritise training educators to foster dialogic interactions while being mindful of cultural and curricular limitations (Hofmann et al., 2021). An essential aspect of this is bridging the language proficiency gap between students from urban and rural areas. This necessitates employing differentiated teaching strategies, such as scaffolding for learners with lower proficiency and presenting more complex challenges to advanced students. Given the predominance of exam-oriented education in China, teachers must strike a delicate balance, integrating open-ended discussions within a framework that still aligns with examination requirements. By adopting these approaches, the quality of English language education in Chinese middle schools can be significantly enhanced, leading to a more inclusive and dynamic classroom experience.

7.5 Contributions to knowledge and practice

This research holds significant importance amidst the ongoing educational transformation in China, focusing on enhancing English communicative competence. It delves into integrating dialogic talk in teaching methodologies, a pivotal factor in augmenting second language acquisition. This approach not only cultivates improved communication skills among students but also instils a profound comprehension of the language. Its utility extends beyond the realms of Chinese educators and curriculum planners, offering valuable insights to global language teaching professionals and scholars in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories. This study illuminates effective practices while pinpointing areas ripe for future exploration by conducting a meticulous, systematic review of pertinent literature.

Furthermore, the essence of this study is captured in its methodological framework, which involves an analysis of 19 scholarly articles spanning 12 diverse nations. This international lens is crucial for understanding the multifaceted applications of dialogic talk in varied cultural and pedagogical settings, thereby enhancing its universal applicability. The research particularly accentuates the role of dialogic talk in fostering critical thinking, student engagement, and a nuanced grasp of linguistic concepts, crucial for second language mastery.

7.6 Limitations and Future Directions

The scope of this thesis is notably constrained by its exclusion of studies that delve into dialogic talk in disciplines beyond language learning and first language acquisition. This approach neglects valuable perspectives on applying dialogic talk and its extensive educational ramifications across various academic fields. For example, dialogic talk can be crucial for developing scientific literacy and critical thinking in science education. Engaging in dialogue helps students understand complex scientific concepts,

promotes collaborative learning, and encourages questioning and reasoning skills. In social studies, dialogic talk facilitates understanding historical perspectives, cultural differences, and social issues, enabling students to engage in meaningful discussions about societal changes and global events.

The exclusion of Chinese literature in the review, focusing exclusively on English publications, presents a gap in the exploration of dialogic talk, particularly its relevance and application in Chinese education. This gap in research potentially needs more attention paid to critical insights and practices that are uniquely pertinent to Chinese students and educators. These unique perspectives and methods, originating from the Chinese educational milieu, might offer invaluable contributions to the understanding of dialogic talk. However, they still need to be recognised in the corpus of English-language literature.

While I acknowledge the limitation, this research's restriction to English-language sources was a deliberate choice, shaped by methodological constraints, notably the bounds of time. The study was conducted with a rigorous and systematic review process, adhering strictly to comprehensive guidelines to guarantee a thorough and impartial review of pertinent studies. However, this meticulous approach necessitated the establishment of strict criteria for inclusion and exclusion, which, in turn, confined the research's scope to a manageable size within the allotted time. As a result, this review may only partially represent the extensive range of international research on dialogic talk, especially noteworthy contributions from non-English sources such as Chinese literature. This limitation highlights the critical need for future research to embrace a broader spectrum of linguistic and cultural perspectives, aiming to achieve a more holistic understanding of dialogic talk and its varied applications across diverse educational environments.

In light of the shortcomings highlighted in current scholarly discussions, it is imperative for future research endeavours to rigorously investigate the effectiveness of teacher training programs in preparing educators to implement dialogic talk strategies in middle

school English education. This exploration should include a thorough assessment of whether these training initiatives adequately cover critical facets of dialogic talks, such as fostering an engaging atmosphere, probing questions that invite expansive answers, and allowing sufficient time for thoughtful responses. Furthermore, it is crucial to delve into how cultural norms, curricular constraints, and the personal convictions of educators influence the application of these dialogic techniques in the classroom setting (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013). The interplay of these elements profoundly affects how dialogic talk is practised. For instance, cultural norms and individual beliefs can mould a teacher's perception of and receptiveness to student engagement and open discussion. Similarly, the confines of the existing educational syllabus can limit how seamlessly dialogic approaches are integrated (Racionero & Padrós, 2010). Gaining insight into these factors is essential for creating comprehensive teacher training programs, addressing not only the skill set needed for dialogic talk but also overcoming hurdles that may hinder its successful implementation.

Investigating the nuances of middle schoolers' attitudes and experiences with dialogic talk in English classrooms presents a largely untapped research opportunity. Future inquiries should delve into how these students perceive their roles in dialogic interactions, their preferences for different types of discourse, and what motivates their active participation. In language education, integrating students' insights into dialogic discussions is essential for refining teaching methodologies. This approach ensures that educational content is relevant and engaging, and addresses students' varied learning styles. Gathering students' feedback plays a pivotal role in enhancing teaching techniques, as it promotes student empowerment and self-assurance and aligns dialogic talk with the cultural and situational subtleties vital in language acquisition. This alignment significantly improves communication abilities and critical thinking skills. A student-centred approach in the dialogic talk is vital to achieving more effective outcomes in language education. By exploring these facets, we can gain valuable insights into optimising dialogic talk, thereby enhancing student involvement and educational achievements, and laying the groundwork for more comprehensive and

effective teaching strategies.

7.7 Conclusion

This study sheds new light on the crucial influence of dialogic interaction in language education within the context of Chinese middle schools. It delves deeply into how dialogic interaction transcends the bounds of a mere pedagogical technique, emerging as a revolutionary force that redefines the educational sphere. This approach catalyses a vibrant, interactive atmosphere which profoundly boosts language mastery. It goes beyond mere linguistic proficiency, enriching critical thinking and communicative abilities.

Notably, this research aligns dialogic interaction with contemporary educational theories, such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and constructivist methodologies. These theories highlight the vital role of social engagement and cooperative learning in cognitive growth. Dialogic interaction, in harmony with these theories, enables learners to forge knowledge and insights collaboratively through purposeful dialogues and peer interactions. Its implementation in Chinese middle schools propels students to immerse themselves actively in their learning journey, leading to a more engaging and democratic educational environment.

Furthermore, the study unveils the effectiveness of dialogic interaction in addressing the distinct challenges of Chinese EFL classrooms, such as large class sizes, diverse language skill levels, and an exam-focused education system. Through dialogic interaction, educators can cultivate nurturing learning atmospheres that promote open-ended questioning and significant dialogues, boosting student participation and enhancing language learning results. This research bears significant implications for crucial educational figures, including curriculum designers, teachers, and policymakers. Shaping pedagogical methods and influencing educational reforms opens avenues for

a more sophisticated and impactful approach to language education in China. The integration of dialogic interaction in Chinese middle schools is essential in preparing students with vital communication skills for a globally connected world.

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