

Investigating the Dialogic Interactions Between Multilingual Students and a Writing Instructor in Higher Education



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INTRODUCTION

- **Dialogic Interactions:** The dynamic interactions between students and teachers that emphasize a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship (Bakhtin, 1986).
- **Research Question:** How do students influence instructors' pedagogies and teaching practices in academic settings?

METHODS

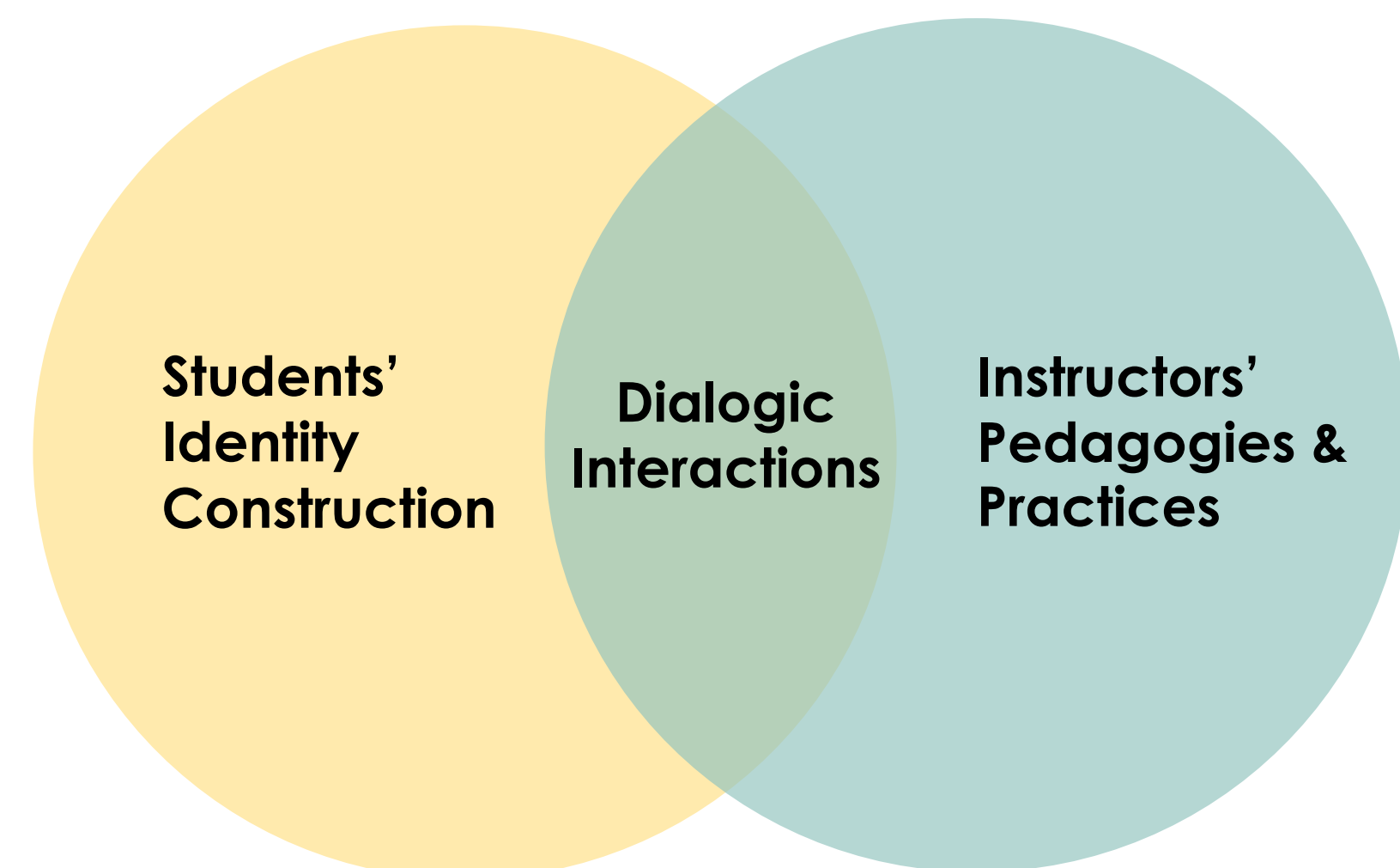


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

- Drawing on a larger study conducted by Harris (2018), this qualitative case-study focuses on one writing instructor and his two undergraduate students.
- **Context:** English Second Language (ESL) 115 at UIUC, Fall 2017
- **Data:** 1) Pre- and post- lesson observation interview with the instructor.
2) Two reflective interviews between researcher and each student respectively.
- **Analysis:** Loose transcription (Prior, 2010) and Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis (Hennessy et al., 2016)

	Gender	Ethnic Background	Field of Study
Student A	Male	Taiwanese	Computer Science
Student B	Male	Malaysian	Biochemistry
Instructor (Teaching Assistant)	Male	Canadian	Teaching English as a Second Language

Figure 2: Demographic Information of Students and Instructor

RESULTS

Student's Identity Construction

- **Result 1-Identity Perception**
Linguistic background and previous educational experiences shape students' identities as writers and their attitudes about being placed in an ESL class.
Student A: "Initially, I didn't really like this course because I've been in the States for a couple years. But after taking this course, I think that this is the first time I experienced writing in APA styles."
Student B: "In my country, we have three races. So, I can speak English. So, it might seem like I know a lot of English, but I know very little on writing. I will still take ESL class, I mean, it is still a second language."
- **Result 2-Role of Student**
Student A believes he has the power in influencing the instructor's teaching pedagogies and practices and is aware that the instructor really values their feedback.
Student A: "I think we really have the impacts on the instructor's teaching method...As the generation is changing, the instructor will adapt to how the generation is changing."
"If we have like strong words against [the instructor], [He] is not really shy of showing [the comments] to the class...because I think he's a graduate student here at ESL."
- **Result 3-Learning Experience**
Students have very positive learning experiences and acknowledge the instructor's teaching practices.
Student A: "And for all of our major assignments, we have the chance to write a second essay after [it's] graded, [and he] really gives a lot of practice opportunities in classes."
Student B: "He uses fiction character, like DC comic once, to kind of shows like what he wants us to do. Using simple manner to connect us to the bigger picture. It's quite fun to do."

Dialogic Interactions

- **Result 1-Dialogic Learning**
Instructor: (addressing the whole class about their papers' topics) "I've learned about a whole bunch of different problems that I haven't thought about in details. So, I get to learn from you guys' work. That's something I really appreciated."
Acknowledges the students' work and reflects on his learning outcome.
- **Result 2-Positive Interactional Dynamic**
Instructor (dressed as Totoro): "Anyone wants to share me their summary...anyone wants to volunteer? Okay, I am picking on [Student A's name]. (Funny Laugh) You're not in [a Halloween] costume, so you get picked on."
Student A: [He goes on to share his summary.]
Invites students to share their ideas with the whole class.
- **Result 3-Teacher Authority**
Instructor: "Yeah! That sounds great. He summarized the importance, specifically the quality you need...(talking to the whole class)"
Acknowledges the student's contribution.
Instructor: (discussing resources for research purpose and looking at Student C's computer): "So, first of all, is there anywhere they're asking for donations for money?"
Asks a question and invites elaboration.
Student C: "No. (scrolling through the webpage) Nooo."
Instructor: "Charities in general rely on donations. (slowly stands up)."
Student C: "Oh, so this is not a charity."
Instructor: "No, it's not a charity."
Student C: "So what is this?"
Gives out the information.
Instructor: "It's like just an information website."
Explicitly gives out the answer rather than continually inviting ideas.
Student C: "Ok."

Instructor's Pedagogies and Practices

- **Result 1-Identity Perception**
The instructor is aware of the negative label and stigma associated with ESL classes. This belief might be grounded in his identity as an international graduate student.
Instructor: "But the whole label of ESL [here] got a negative bias... but that's the only label that exists."
When I came to U of I, they try to make me write the English Placement Test because I am an international student here."
- **Result 2-Role of Teacher**
The instructor attempts to mediate the power dynamic in the classroom, but he still expresses teacher centric pedagogy.
Instructor: "I think most students are more familiar with the high-power system...absorb as much information as possible. Realistically, you need to be an active sponge. Teacher is going to squeeze things out of you...and reabsorb things back."
- **Result 3-Teaching Philosophy**
The instructor understands his obligation and responsibility as an ESL writing instructor and attempts to tailor his teaching practices to best accommodate the students' needs.
Instructor: "Because this is an ESL environment, you are the only source [for] the students to get some of those oral practice."
"I try to incorporate aspects of culture into my classes where I can...try to incorporate things like famous events, popular events...I think for international students especially, they might need a little more motivation to participate in events like this."
And as teacher, I also think it lowers the power distance in my classroom."



CONCLUSION

- The students perceive the instructor's teaching philosophies and practices as mediating their attitudes about the class and their learning experiences.
- The instructor attempts to create a positive classroom environment that encourages constructive and meaningful dialogue. However, he reinforces his authority as the teacher during conversations with a student.
- The instructor's instructional goals go beyond just helping students acquire knowledge of academic writings. He perceives that including popular U.S. cultures to help students to acclimate into the university life.

Students play a crucial role in impacting the instructor's teaching pedagogies and practices. However, the effects are only acknowledged to a limited extent because of the complexity of the roles of students and teacher.

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