



Dialog and Teenagers' Second Language Speaking Fluency: Critical Pedagogy Contribution to Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the role of dialogue as a central principle of Critical Pedagogy and to examine its contribution to adolescents' fluency in learning English as a Foreign Language. Drawing on Freire's dialogic educational concept and Second Language Acquisition theory, this study explores how dialogic interaction supports the development of students' speaking skills. The study employed a qualitative case study design involving one English teacher and three eleventh-grade students at a high school in Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that dialogue is implemented through several activities such as open-ended questions, prompts, group discussions, classroom interaction routines, and student involvement in learning decision-making. These dialogic practices create a democratic and supportive learning environment, encouraging students to be more active in expressing their opinions. Furthermore, dialogue contributes positively to students' fluency through increased self-confidence, decreased speaking anxiety, the emergence of more spontaneous language production, and the negotiation of meaning during interactions. The research findings also indicate that dialogic activities support the second language acquisition process by providing comprehensible input, meaningful output, and meaningful social interactions. This study concludes that dialogue not only functions as a pedagogical strategy but also as an effective mechanism for improving speaking fluency and supporting second language acquisition in adolescent EFL learners.*

Keywords: *Critical Pedagogy; Dialogue; EFL Learners; Second Language Acquisition; Speaking Fluency.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English speaking ability is one of the main indicators of success in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Among several speaking skills, speaking fluency is a crucial component because it reflects students' ability to express ideas spontaneously, sustainably, and communicatively. According to Richards (2006), who stated that effective language learning must provide students with opportunities to use language in real-life contexts relevant to their lives. However, numerous studies show that many EFL students still struggle to achieve fluency due to limited practice opportunities, low self-confidence, and high levels of language anxiety.

In the Indonesian context, English language learning often focuses on grammar mastery and academic achievement. This condition results in students relying more on receiving information than on using language as a means of communication. Ultimately, many students have few opportunities to develop authentic speaking skills. Recent research suggests that a lack of meaningful interaction is one of the causes of EFL students' low speaking performance.

From a Second Language Acquisition perspective, language is acquired through interactions that enable students to receive input, produce output, and negotiate meaning. Long (1996), through the Interaction Hypothesis, explains that interaction serves as the primary

means of second language acquisition because it allows learners to obtain feedback and modify language. Furthermore, Swain (1985) asserts that active language production helps learners recognize their limitations, thus encouraging the development of language competence.

One relevant approach to enhancing interaction in language learning is critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, introduced by Paulo Freire, emphasizes dialogue, reflection, and active student participation in the learning process. Freire (2020) criticized the traditional educational model, which positions students as passive recipients of knowledge, often referred to as the banking model of education, and proposed a dialogical approach that provides opportunities for students to construct knowledge through social interaction.

Dialogue is one of the principles of critical pedagogy that is easiest to implement in the classroom. Through dialogue, students are given the opportunity to express opinions, question ideas, and construct knowledge together. Various studies have shown that a dialogic approach can increase student participation, learning engagement, and communication skills in English language learning. Research on dialogic teaching indicates that dialogic interactions have a positive impact on the development of EFL students' speaking skills.

Furthermore, research on social dialogue and social justice issues in EFL classrooms indicates that dialogue-based learning can improve both speaking skills and students' critical awareness of social realities.

However, research specifically examining the contribution of dialogue as a principle of critical pedagogy to adolescents' speaking fluency in the Indonesian EFL context is still relatively limited. Most studies focus on speaking instruction methods or teachers' perceptions of critical pedagogy. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of dialogue in critical pedagogy-based EFL learning and its contribution to the development of students' speaking fluency during the second language acquisition process.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an educational approach that aims to develop students' critical awareness of social reality through dialogue, reflection, and action. According to Freire (2020), education should not be a one-way process of knowledge transfer, but rather a collaborative activity that allows students and teachers to build shared understanding.

Shor (1992) explains that critical pedagogy encourages the creation of a democratic and participatory learning environment. In the context of English language learning, critical pedagogy enables students to use language as a tool to express their experiences, identities, and

perspectives on various social issues. Recent research shows that implementing critical pedagogy in EFL classrooms helps increase student engagement, discussion participation, and the courage to express opinions.

In the context of learning English as a foreign language, critical pedagogy is seen as an approach that connects language learning to students' real-life experiences. Crookes (2013) states that critical pedagogy provides opportunities for students to use the target language to discuss social issues relevant to their lives. Thus, language is learned not only as a set of linguistic rules but also as a tool for communication and social reflection.

Dialogue as a Principle of Critical Pedagogy

Dialogue is the most important principle in critical pedagogy. Freire (2020) stated that dialogue enables teachers and students to construct knowledge together through a process of reflection and communication. Dialogue serves not only as a communication tool but also as a means of developing critical awareness. In English language learning, dialogue is realized through group discussions, open-ended questions, critical reflection, and problem-posing activities. Research on dialogic teaching shows that dialogic activities increase student participation and create greater opportunities to use the target language.

Alexander (2020) explains that dialogic teaching enables students to construct understanding through collaborative exploration of ideas. In English language learning, dialogic teaching encourages students to develop critical thinking skills while enhancing their communicative competence. Thus, dialogue can be viewed as a bridge connecting critical pedagogy with second language acquisition because it provides a space for students to interact, negotiate meaning, and actively construct knowledge.

Speaking Fluency

Speaking fluency is a key component of communicative competence in second language learning. According to Nation and Newton (2020), fluency refers to the ability to use language fluently, quickly, and effectively without excessive pauses. Thornbury (2005) defines speaking fluency as the ability to produce continuous speech with minimal interruptions in the communication process.

Various studies have shown that speaking fluency is influenced by several factors, including vocabulary mastery and grammar, motivation, self-confidence, and opportunities for communication practice (Richards, 2006; Derakhshan et al., 2016). In addition to linguistic factors, affective factors also influence fluency development. Krashen (1982), through the Affective Filter Hypothesis, explains that anxiety and low self-confidence can hinder the

language acquisition process. Conversely, a supportive learning environment will help students use the target language more actively.

Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition is the process of acquiring a second language through social interaction, learning experiences, and the use of the target language in meaningful contexts. According to Ellis (2015), SLA is a field of study that seeks to understand how individuals learn a second language and the factors that influence this process. One of the most influential theories in SLA is the Input Hypothesis, developed by Krashen (1982). This theory explains that language is acquired when learners receive comprehensible input, that is, language input that is slightly above their level of ability.

However, Long (1996) argues that input alone is not sufficient for acquiring a target language. Through the Interaction Hypothesis, he asserts that interaction allows learners to negotiate meaning, which helps them understand the language more fully. Interaction provides opportunities for learners to ask for clarification, confirm understanding, and correct errors during communication.

Swain (1985) complements these two theories with the Output Hypothesis. He argues that language production is a crucial component of second language acquisition because it allows learners to recognize their limitations and develop a more complex language system.

In addition, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory places social interaction as a primary factor in language development. Through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky explains that learning occurs when students receive support from more competent individuals, such as teachers or peers.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of dialogue as a critical pedagogical principle in EFL learning and its contribution to students' speaking fluency. The research was conducted at a high school in Subang Regency. Participants consisted of one English teacher and three eleventh-grade students, selected based on the teacher's recommendation, with students representing different levels of English proficiency: high, medium, and low.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted over three sessions to identify dialogic activities that emerged during the learning process. Interviews were conducted with the teacher and students to obtain information about their experiences with dialogue-based learning.

Data analysis used the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussions in this study are categorized into two main themes, namely: 1) dialogue in EFL classes based on critical pedagogy, and 2) the contribution of dialogue to students' speaking fluency in second language acquisition.

Implementasi Dialog dalam Pembelajaran EFL

Observational data results indicate that dialogue is the easiest principle to apply in EFL classes. This was clearly seen throughout the three meetings, where dialogue not only served as a means of communication but also as an effective teaching strategy to foster active student participation, reduce anxiety, and encourage student engagement in the learning process. This finding aligns with previous research that suggests dialogue is a relatively easy principle to apply in language learning because it supports communicative competence and enhances students' critical awareness Yulianto et al (2026). Furthermore, observational data also showed that the seven dialogue activities were implemented thoroughly in the three observed meetings.

Tabel 1. Dialog-based EFL Classroom Practices.

Activities	Dialog in CP Principles
Allowing students to ignore grammar temporarily	Dialog
Reassuring students about making mistakes	
Reassuring students about making mistakes	Dialog
Asking open-ended questions	Dialog/ Problem-posing
Asking probing questions	Dialog/ Problem-posing
Integrating questioning in classroom routines	Dialog
Engaging passive students directly	Dialog
Involving students in choosing activities	Dialog

Based on the table above, the learning activities consistently reflect the application of the dialogue principle in critical pedagogy. These activities not only emphasize verbal interaction but also create an open and participatory communication space. The use of open-ended questions encourages students' in-depth thinking, while student involvement in selecting activities demonstrates a shift toward more student-centered learning. Furthermore, strategies such as reassuring students about errors and reducing the focus on grammar help create a safer

learning environment. Further evidence of dialogue can be seen in the observation transcripts from the first meeting, August 27, 2025.

Tabel 2. Excerpt of Classroom Interaction on Students' Understanding of Cyberbullying.

Teacher	Pay attention. I was going around to the groups earlier, and it turns out there was some miscommunication
Students 1	Yes, miss.
Teacher	You're misunderstanding bullying and cyberbullying. So, what is cyberbullying? Remember? We explained it before. It's bullying, but what kind of bullying is it?
Students 2	Bullying on social media.
Teacher	for example, I called Fauzan names like this, would that be cyberbullying?
Students 1	No
Teachers	No. Even though it's bullying, it's verbal bullying.
Teachers	So, what's an example of cyberbullying?
Students 2	mocking on social media.

The observation transcript data above demonstrate an active two-way interaction between the teacher and students during the learning process. The teacher not only delivered the material but also asked questions, provided clarification, and responded to students' answers to clarify their understanding. Meanwhile, students participated by answering questions and responding to the teacher's directions. This interaction pattern reflects a dialogic practice that allows for the negotiation of meaning, as seen when the teacher helped students differentiate between bullying and cyberbullying through a series of questions and concrete examples. These observational findings were further reinforced by interview data, which showed that dialogue also occurred in interactions between students and was actively facilitated by the teacher. This is evident in the following statement from a student interviewed on September 20, 2025.

Tabel 3. Representative Student Quote on Dialogic Classroom Interaction.

"When we go around to other groups to ask for opinions, and those who are quiet explain ours to them. So, we exchange ideas." (Student quote about dialogic interaction in class)

The quote demonstrates that students engage in a direct exchange of ideas through collaborative activities, allowing dialogue not only between teachers and students but also between students. Furthermore, the teacher's role in encouraging participation is also evident, as expressed in the following quote.

Tabel 4. Representative Student Quote on Teacher's Encouragement for Participatio.

"If someone is silent, Miss immediately asks, 'Do you understand?' So, everyone has to join in the conversation" (Student's excerpt about teacher's encouragement for participation)

This indicates that the teacher acts as a facilitator, ensuring the involvement of all students in the dialogue process. Thus, both observation and interview data consistently show that dialogue in EFL classrooms is implemented in an active, participatory, and student-oriented manner, which are key characteristics of critical pedagogy.

The Contribution of Dialogue to Students' Speaking Fluency In Second Language Acquisition

In addition to functioning as a teaching strategy, dialogue also significantly contributes to students' speaking fluency in second language acquisition. Observations show that students become more confident in speaking, more spontaneous in responding, and more active in expressing their opinions during the learning process. This indicates that dialogue-based interactions create a space for real-time language production that supports the development of speaking fluency. These findings are evident in the observation transcript from the third meeting on September 10, 2025, related to the video production assignment.

Tabel 5. Excerpt of Teacher–Student Interaction During Project Guidance.

Student	"Is this too long, Miss?"
Teacher	"Yes, I'm afraid it's too long, so I'll just cut it back to the important parts."
Student	"Okay, thank you, Miss. The important thing is that it's finished by tomorrow, right?"
Teacher	"Yes, now for the recording."
Student	"Miss, if this isn't finished now, how about we continue it at home, Miss?"
Teacher	"No, you have to wear your uniform."
Student	"But this has to be in the school yard, Miss (background video)."
Teacher	"Yes, it has to be on school grounds."
Student	: "Yes, it has to be on school grounds."

The transcripts show that students engaged in spontaneous English production within the context of completing tasks. The interactions involved questions, clarifications, and negotiation of rules without long pauses or planning complex language structures. This demonstrates real-time speech production, an important indicator of fluency. Furthermore, the conversations reflected the negotiation of meaning, where students and teachers mutually adjusted their understanding through repeated interactions. This aligns with the Interaction Hypothesis proposed by Long (1996), which states that second language acquisition occurs effectively through interactions involving clarification and negotiation of meaning.

Furthermore, students demonstrated the ability to maintain a continuous flow of conversation through relevant and coherent responses. This indicates that dialogue serves not only as an instructional medium but also as a means of communication practice, enabling students to produce language more naturally in meaningful contexts. These observational findings were reinforced by interviews, which showed that students felt more comfortable and confident speaking when engaged in dialogic activities. One student stated: Because we can

express our opinions. we learn speaking from the Asking and Giving Opinions material. I think it sharpens our English speaking skills”

This statement demonstrates that dialogic activities provide opportunities for students to actively produce language through the exchange of ideas. In this context, students not only passively understand language but also use it as a real communication tool, which contributes to improved fluency. Furthermore, students reported that discussion activities and games helped improve their speaking readiness: ”These games make us more ready to speak when the material starts”

This suggests that warm-up activities function as an affective filter reduction mechanism, as proposed by Krashen (1982). With reduced anxiety, students are better prepared to participate in oral communication. Furthermore, from the perspective of the Output Hypothesis, Swain (1985) asserted that language production (output) is a crucial factor in the development of second language competence. In this context, dialogue provides students with opportunities to repeatedly produce output, thus supporting automaticity in speaking.

Thus, the findings of this study indicate that dialogue serves not only as a learning strategy but also as a crucial mechanism in the development of speaking fluency. Through social interaction, negotiation of meaning, and spontaneous language production, students gain authentic communication experiences that directly contribute to second language acquisition.

Discussion

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that dialogue in critical pedagogy-based EFL learning has two main, interrelated and mutually reinforcing roles in the language learning process. First, dialogue functions as a pedagogical strategy that creates a participatory, democratic, and student-centered learning environment. In this context, the learning process is no longer dominated by the teacher as the sole source of knowledge, but rather occurs through two-way interaction that enables students to actively engage in the knowledge construction process. The teacher acts as a facilitator, encouraging openness, courageous expression, and the involvement of all students through open-ended questions, group discussions, and collaborative activities. This reflects the main principles of critical pedagogy, which emphasize equality in the educational process and the importance of dialogue for developing students' critical awareness (Freire, 2020; Shor, 1992).

Second, dialogue also serves as a crucial tool in developing students' speaking fluency in second language acquisition. Through spontaneous interaction, students have the opportunity to produce language directly in meaningful contexts. This process involves activities such as negotiating meaning, clarifying messages, and responding quickly to the

interlocutor's utterances, all of which contribute to improved speaking fluency. In addition, student involvement in dialogue allows for repeated language practice (repeated output), which, according to Swain (1985), is crucial for strengthening language competence. Social interactions in the classroom also support the natural process of language acquisition, as explained in the Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1996), where language learning develops through a communication process involving feedback and adjustment of meaning. Thus, dialogue functions not only as a teaching method but also as a cognitive and social mechanism that significantly supports the process of second language acquisition, particularly in continuously improving students' speaking fluency.

5. CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that dialogue in critical pedagogy-based EFL learning plays a dominant role as a pedagogical principle that is both easy to implement and effective in fostering participatory learning. This is reflected in the consistent application of seven forms of dialogue activities across three sessions, such as the use of open-ended questions, probing questions, student involvement in activity selection, and teacher strategies for responding supportively to student errors. These practices demonstrate that dialogue functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a learning mechanism that encourages active student engagement and creates a more democratic and student-centered classroom. Thus, dialogue within the framework of critical pedagogy contributes to shifting learning patterns from teacher-centered to more dialogic and collaborative.

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that dialogue contributes significantly to the development of students' speaking fluency in second language acquisition. Observational data shows that students become more confident in speaking, more spontaneous in their responses, and more active in maintaining the flow of conversation when engaged in dialogue-based learning activities. This is evident in the natural interactions that occur through questions, clarification, and negotiation of meaning without long pauses. This situation demonstrates real-time speech production and the negotiation of meaning, which support the development of fluency. Furthermore, interview results confirmed that activities such as discussions, games, and opinion-based assignments helped students feel more confident and prepared to speak in English. This also indicates a decrease in the affective filter, which supports students' confidence in communicating.

Thus, it can be concluded that dialogue not only functions as a learning strategy in EFL classes but also as a crucial mechanism in second language acquisition, particularly in developing students' speaking fluency. The integration of dialogue in critical pedagogy-based learning enables more meaningful learning because it combines aspects of social interaction, spontaneous language production, and student cognitive engagement. Therefore, the consistent implementation of dialogue in English learning is recommended for continued development, as it has been proven to improve the quality of classroom interactions while supporting the development of students' speaking skills more effectively and sustainably.

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