

A Dialogic Space in Online Learning

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Introduction



- What is often missing in online learning environments is dialogue - real-time conversation between two or more people where an exchange of ideas and opinions occurs.
- Heron et al., (2021) found that online space does not foster reciprocal, ongoing, deliberate live talk

Introduction, cont.

- Asynchronous discussion boards offer a place to exchange ideas, but it is not real-time, and often a student posts but does not look at other students' responses back to them – so “exchange” of ideas and generation of new ideas is lacking (Farooq & Benade, 2019).
- Team projects encourage some real-time discussion but usually end up with sections of a paper being assigned to each person in an initial meeting and no further discussion occurring.
- This presentation examines how we can create dialogic spaces in online learning environments that allows online classes to include the social and speaking elements of learning (Heron et al., 2021) .

Contents

- Defining Dialogic Space
- The Dialogic Model
- Factors that influence Dialogic Space
- Creating a Dialogic Space Online
- Ideas for Online Dialogic Classes
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What is a Dialogic Space?



Openness and a multiplicity of voices.
(Wegerif, 2016).



Learning from a living conversation between diverse voices.
(Buber, 1958)



The dialogue is more important than the ownership of ideas. Synthesis of ideas.
(Wegerif, 2016)



As students learn in this manner, a dialogic space is created.
(Wegerif, 2016)



“Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education” (Freire, 1993, p. 93).

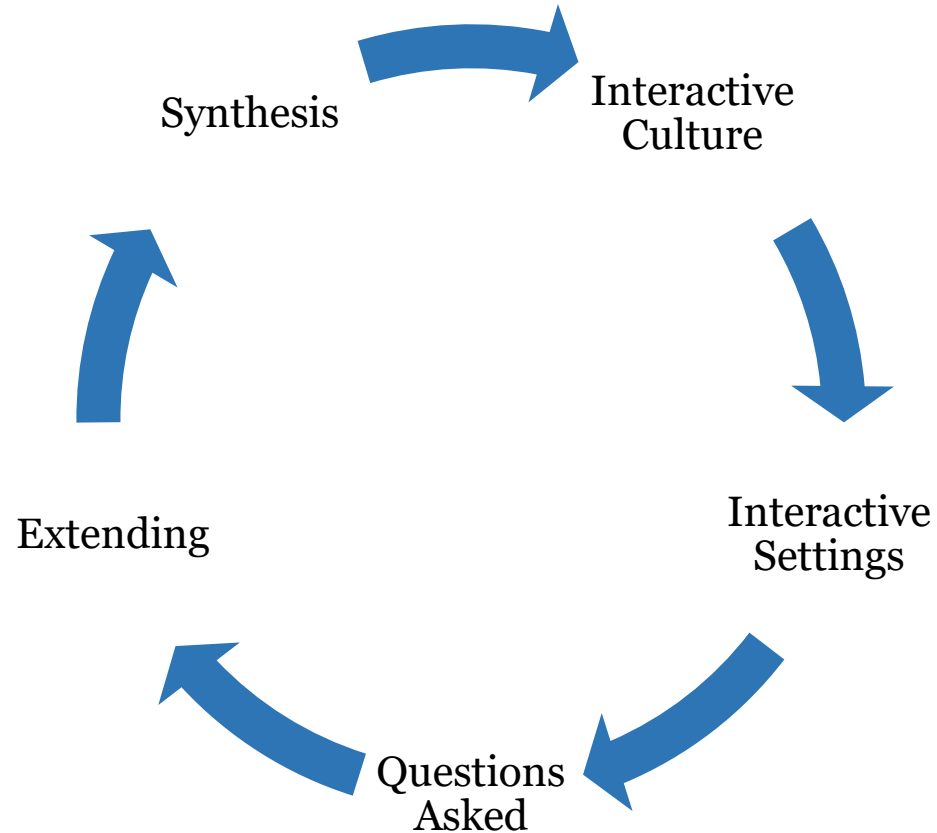
The Educational Goal of a Dialogic Space

The educational goal of a dialogic space is for students to participate in exploratory talk where students bring multiple opinions, information, and ideas and think out loud to create new combined meanings, understanding, and knowledge (Wegerif, 2006).

Elements of a Dialogic Space

- DeTemple (2020) provides a blueprint for a dialogic space in a face-to-face classroom. The elements include:
 - **Clear purpose** for the dialogue (e.g., What does it mean to be an American?) – a topic that will generate differences in ideas and opinions. How – (interpret, imagine, debate)
 - **Safe space** for opposing ideas
 - **Rules of the Game**
 - Remain open to ideas
 - Do not criticize
 - Listen – Listen actively
 - Create class values and participation behavior
 - **Space/time for reflection** to break cycle of reactive response
 - **Students take the lead** in guiding discussion – faculty gently guides

Anderson's (2020) Repertoire Framework



Anderson's (2020) Framework

- **Interactive Culture**
 - Communication rules – how do we behave (listen, make eye contact, do not interrupt)
 - Deliberative rules – how do we discuss (present evidence, challenge but willing to change our position)
 - Epistemic rules – what do we discuss (topic, scope of topic)

Anderson's (2020) Framework

- **Interactive Settings** (Anderson, 2020)
 - Whole class
 - Smaller group (teacher-led)
 - Smaller group (student-led)
 - Individual (student-teacher)
 - Individual (student pairs)

Physical layout limited in online classrooms – options are for whole class and breakout rooms

Anderson's (2020) Framework

- **The Questions Asked**
 - Open-ended – will generate different responses from different people – can be controversial
 - Should all college students be required to perform public service activities?
 - Is facial recognition technology ethical?
 - What is the purpose of college education?
 - Should we have a borderless world?
 - Does social media destroy or foster creative thinking?

Anderson's (2020) Framework

- **Extending the Discussion**
 - Deepen understanding by asking students to
 - Rephrase for clarity
 - Repeat with a different example
 - Provide evidence to support their assertion
 - Challenge what they say with other evidence
 - Ask how the issue looks from a different perspective

Anderson's (2020) Framework

- **Synthesize ideas**
 - Ask students to generate new or expanded solutions by bringing together everyone's different ideas?

Online Dialogic Space



When Wegerif (2011) spoke of a dialogic space, he was not referring only to physical space but also applied it to communication technology.



For Wegerif (2011), a dialogic space embodied the social, verbal activity of acting and thinking together, however that might occur.



Education (in-class or online) needs to offer spaces for verbal dialogue.

Factors of an Online Dialogic Space (Heron et al., 2020)

Supportive

(students ensure they feel safe to express their ideas)

Purposeful

(discussion has a specific question to answer)

Collective

(whole class participation – faculty led)

Reciprocal

(active listening while sharing ideas in small groups)

Cumulative

(Full group discussion of how ideas can coalesce)

Deliberative

(a conscious attempt to synthesize ideas in discussion)

Creating a Dialogic Space Online

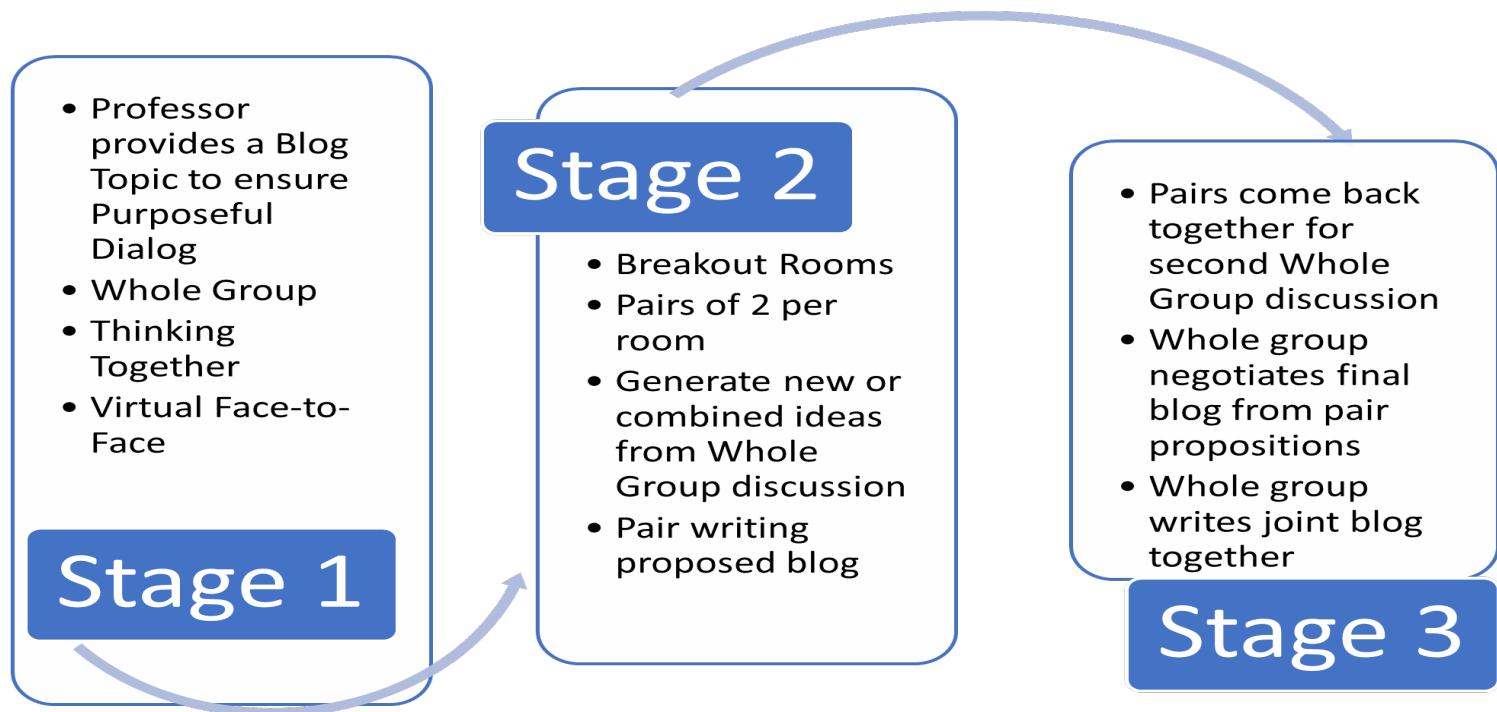
- Because a dialogic space is a way to communicate that fosters collaborative problem solving and an openness to other's ideas, it is important to give online students this experience.
- A Dialogic Space is synchronous and not all online educational platforms offer a synchronous capability, however, there are external tools available (such as Zoom, Google Meet, Teams) that provide a virtual synchronous space.
- Let's examine how one of these spaces might be used to include DeTemple's elements and Heron et al's dimensions.

An Online Dialogic Class Example

- Assume the use of Zoom and its features.
- Audio and video are turned on for the closest simulation to face-to-face – and obviously students have immediate access to Internet search.
- Rules to create a safe space for students to express ideas are generated by the class. (Game Rules /Safe Space). Use whiteboard idea generation as well as verbal discussion.
- An open-ended question or problem is posed to the students: “What is the role of social media in modern communication?” (Clear Purpose)
- Full class discussion on the topic - verbal.
- Breakouts into small groups (using Zoom breakout rooms)
- In small groups students reflect on the full group discussion, synthesize ideas, generate new ideas that emerge from the synthesized ideas(Reflection)
 - Instructions to students: reflect on the ideas from our group discussion. Do not accept some ideas and reject others. Synthesize the ideas to generate a bigger idea or a new idea.
- Return to full group and each small group presents their reflective thoughts and synthesized ideas.
- Full class discussion on the optimal positive uses for social media in modern communication.

Example – Create a Blog Project

- This blog project could be adapted to an online classroom using Zoom, Google Meet, or Teams. Professor would provide a Blog topic to ensure a Purposeful Dialogue. As in our first example, full group discussion is followed by small group discussion and work, followed by return to the larger group for final writing.



Evaluate Your Dialogic Online Class Plan

- Some questions to ask about whether the Dialogic Online class is capturing the spirit of a Dialogic Space.
 - Did teaching require students to think.
 - Were students thinking together (interthinking) to solve a problem or formulate an idea?
 - Did reflective time result in larger ideas or new ideas?
 - Did students participate in creating the ground rules?
 - Was mutual respect for all viewpoints observed?
 - If not, how was it handled and what would be done differently next time? (Palmgren-Neuvonen et al., 2021).

What is the Social Impact of Dialogic Learning?



- Improved academic achievement while, at the same time, improving prosocial values.
- Competition replaced with mutual support.
- Promotes social inclusion.
- Fosters collective thinking for problem solving.
- Empowers students to lead their own education (Garcia-Carrion et al., 2020)

Challenges to Dialogic Learning



Traditional college culture of the lecturing professor inhibits introduction of dialogic spaces and learning.



Faculty are unprepared and not trained to participate in dialogic learning.



Course designers are not trained in creating effective dialogic spaces and dialogic learning activities.



Students who are used to traditional teaching methods are intimidated if asked to speak freely or express their ideas.



It is unclear how to assess dialogic learning.

Solutions and Future Research

Determine criteria that measure dialogic learning.



Use dialogic learning in teacher training.



Involve teachers, students, curriculum designers when implementing dialogic learning.



Use community-based projects as the basis for dialogic learning activities to directly show the social impact.



There is a need for empirical studies to show effect of dialogic learning in learning outcomes and social growth.

Conclusion



Buber's (1958) and Wegerif's (2016) idea of learning that occurs through living verbal conversations with diverse voices has been lost in online education.

With audio-video conference tools becoming readily available for real-time synchronous interaction in online classrooms, Dialogic Spaces become a possibility for online education.

Dialogic learning not only improves learning outcomes, but also fosters prosocial behaviors.

Questions?



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