

FROM AUTHORITATIVE DISCOURSE TO DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION: THE SHIFT IN STUDENTS' LANGUAGE STYLE IN AN INTERCULTURAL AND DISCURSIVE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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Abstract: The research study focuses on how pedagogical and multicultural settings affect students' academic language patterns, specifically the shift from authoritative to dialogic discourse in Albanian language and literature courses and UK TESOL classrooms. The research examines differences in pedagogical traditions, attitudes toward authority, and cultural expectations to understand how they shape communication and writing practices. Two groups of students participated: fifty multilingual students from a UK TESOL program and fifty Albanian literature and language students from Aleksander Moisiu University in Durrës. The Language Style Observation and Self-Reflection Questionnaire (LSOSQ) was used to gather information. It included classroom observations, student surveys, and a written task. Discourse features were classified as either dialogic or authoritative, and inter-rater agreement was above 90%. The results showed that TESOL students often employed dialogic elements, including first-person pronouns, cultural references, and open-ended questions. By contrast, Albanian students tended to follow formal structures, adopt an authoritative style, and take part mainly in teacher-directed exchanges. Marked contrasts were found in the use of cultural references (84% versus 18%) and to the extent to which students followed formal structures (34% versus 85%). These results underline how strongly discourse and writing practices are shaped by culture and pedagogical traditions, as seen in the contrast between TESOL classrooms, which encourage personal voice and dialogic interaction, and Albanian literature settings, which emphasise formality, fidelity to texts, and authoritative instruction. In TESOL settings, teaching tends to foster inclusivity, student voice, and cross-cultural exchange, whereas Albanian classrooms place greater emphasis on discipline, adherence to texts, and structured forms of analysis. Even so, both contexts are beginning to converge through mixed pedagogical approaches that combine elements of authority with opportunities for student participation. This reflects broader educational transformations toward inclusivity, critical thinking, and shared responsibility for learning. The findings have practical implications for teacher training. Educators working in multilingual and multicultural contexts need to be equipped with strategies that allow them to integrate dialogic techniques while maintaining academic rigour. Similarly, in more traditional settings, there is value in introducing activities that allow students to contribute their own perspectives without undermining formal standards.

Keywords: dialogic discourse, authoritative discourse, pedagogy.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the globalised world of today, students from different language and cultural backgrounds often come together in the classroom. Students' development of self-esteem, sense of self, and involvement in the learning process are all impacted by the interactions between instructors and students in these environments (Alexander, 2008; Mercer & Howe, 2012). Two common approaches to classroom talk—authoritative and dialogic—shape these interactions in quite different ways. Authoritative communication emphasises control, strict adherence to the curriculum, and factual accuracy, often leaving little room for student input (Mortimer & Scott, 2003). Dialogic communication, on the other hand, encourages exchange, mutual respect, and the joint construction of meaning (Bakhtin, 1981; Wells, 1999). A stronger commitment to inclusivity, critical thinking, and shared responsibility for learning is shown in the shift from authoritative to dialogic techniques (Wegerif, 2011). This is particularly crucial in multicultural and multilingual environments, like TESOL classes in the UK, where students' language origins and life experiences are valued as educational assets (Cummins, 2000).

In contrast, traditional academic settings, such as Albanian language and literature courses, tend to place more emphasis on formal language use, analytical rigour, and adherence to established interpretations (Gee, 2005). Examining how these approaches function in different cultural and educational contexts helps explain how students develop their academic voice and capacity for critical engagement. This study compares UK TESOL classrooms with Albanian language and literature courses to explore how teaching styles, cultural expectations, and classroom practices influence students' ways of expressing themselves in both speech and writing.

2. DEFINING AUTHORITATIVE AND DIALOGIC DISCOURSE

In contemporary education, the way communication occurs in the classroom has a significant impact on how knowledge is constructed, relationships are formed, and student agency is developed. Two dominant styles of classroom discourse—authoritative and dialogic—shape these dynamics in markedly different ways (Alexander, 2008; Mercer & Howe, 2012). According to (Gee, 2005; Howe & Abedin, 2019) educational discourse extends beyond simply conveying information — it reflects deeper ideas about power, control, participation, and identity. Authoritative discourse is teacher-centered and information-driven. It is based on a hierarchical concept in which the teacher is seen as the supreme authority. This approach usually sticks closely to the curriculum, uses yes-or-no or fact-based questions, keeps student participation to a minimum, and emphasizes getting the right answer and maintaining discipline (Mortimer & Scott, 2003). For instance,

In the classroom: “I speak, you listen. Do not interrupt me.”

In email or messages: “Submit assignments by date X without excuses.”

Body Language: Loud or commanding tone, closed posture, avoidance of eye contact in a dismissive manner.

Impact: While it can maintain order and ensure clarity, this approach risks suppressing student voice, creativity, and critical thinking. The major goals are to keep the classroom in order and present the material effectively. Despite this method working effectively for imparting fundamental knowledge, it might limit deeper comprehension and suppress student voice (Freire, 1970). On the contrary, the foundation of dialogic discourse is the idea of interaction, reciprocity, and meaning co-construction (Wells, 1999; Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2021) For instance,

- *In the classroom:* “How did you understand this part? Is there another opinion?”

- *In email or messages:* “If you have difficulty with the submission, contact me so we can find a solution.”

Impact: Encourages inclusivity, critical thinking, and learner autonomy, leading to deeper and more meaningful engagement. This approach is often distinguished by its emphasis on correctness and discipline, rigorous curriculum conformity, closed-ended questions, and student interaction. The main objectives are to successfully communicate the topic and maintain classroom order. This approach may impede deeper comprehension and silence student voice, even though it is an excellent way to teach basic facts. Students are encouraged to examine ideas, reflect on the material, and participate in conversations when the teacher takes on a more facilitative role in a dialogic classroom. Open-ended enquiries, meaning negotiation, sharing, and scaffolding cognitive processes are all part of it (Alexander, 2006; Lyle, 2022). Students actively create their learning environment rather than passively receiving it. Dialogic communication was defined by Bakhtin (1981) as an environment in which various viewpoints and voices engage, test, and enhance one another. This implies that students' language preferences, cultural identities, and life experiences are accepted in the classroom. According to Cummins (2000), a TESOL teacher using dialogic approaches may encourage multilingual students to compare idioms across languages to validate their linguistic origins and enhance their conceptual comprehension.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SHIFT IN SHAPING TEACHER, STUDENTS RELATIONSHIP

The transition in communication style from authoritative to dialogic reflects a more profound change in teaching and thought that prioritizes a more democratic and student-centered approach (Wegerif, 2011). There is an apparent divide between the instructor and the students in a conventional, authoritative classroom. While students are supposed to sit back, obey, and repeat what they are instructed, the teacher is in charge and has the information. In dialogic classrooms, this relationship is redefined through mutual respect, shared authority, and intellectual collaboration. Students are invited to bring their perspectives into dialogue with course material, with each other, and with the teacher. This leads to a more equitable distribution of power and a dynamic environment for critical thinking in the classroom (Mercer, 2000; Mercer & Littleton, 2019; Kim & Wilkinson, 2023). This shift has a powerful effect in multicultural or multilingual settings, like TESOL classes, where the backgrounds of the students often diverge from the prevailing educational culture. Through dialogic activities, students may negotiate meaning in ways that affirm who they are and give them the confidence to find their own voice in the classroom. The transition from authoritative to dialogic discourse is a commitment to fairness, inclusivity, critical education, and technical issues. In the learning process, it places students as co-creators and acknowledges them as competent thinkers (Freire, 1970; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

4. HOW STUDENTS’S LANGUAGE TRANSFORM INTO CLASSROOM AND ACADEMIC WRITING

Students' communication style and tone have also changed. They are now actively participating in conversations rather than just nodding along with the instructor or responding with succinct, factual responses. They add their thoughts, reply to one another, and use language that demonstrates their logic and style of thinking. The concept of dialogic education, which prioritises conversational learning above just absorbing material, is reflected in this (Alexander, 2008). This change aligns with dialogic pedagogy, which prioritises interaction over transmission for

learning (Alexander, 2008; Scott, Mortimer, & Aguiar, 2021). In academic writing, students are moving away from formulaic structures toward more fluid, argument-driven narratives. Hedging words like "it could be argued" and "this may suggest" are being used more often by them to express complex opinions and show that they are cognizant of several points of view. Both rhetorical awareness and metacognitive abilities have improved as a result. For academic and professional communication, students also begin to modify their language and tone according to context, audience, and goal. Furthermore, that shift in language use reflects a larger cultural and educational movement, where students are considered co-constructors of meaning rather than merely consumers of knowledge.

5. DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN STUDENT'S LANGUAGE STYLE ACROSS UK TESOL AND ALBANIAN CLASROOMS

Different educational traditions, attitudes towards authority, and language ideologies all influence students' academic language patterns, which vary depending on the cultural and linguistic setting. In England, TESOL students often come from multilingual backgrounds and are instructed using a framework that encourages critical reflection, dialogic engagement, and content customisation (Boyd & Markarian, 2022). Their writing and speech may thus include first-person pronouns, interpretative expressions (such as "I believe," "in my view"), and cross-cultural analogies. These stylistic features are seen as indicators of independent thinking and communicative competence in a context that values a learner agency. In contrast, educational practices in Albania—particularly within the domain of Albanian language and literature tend to promote a more formal and impersonal academic voice. Student writings usually need to follow the standard Albanian language, correct terms, and accepted ways of interpreting literary works. Phrases like "The author uses allegory to critique societal norms". Demonstrate the importance of textual fidelity and analytical objectivity. Student writings usually need to follow the standard Albanian language, correct terms, and accepted ways of interpreting literary works. "The author uses allegory to critique societal norms" is an example of a phrase that highlights the significance of textual authenticity and independent analysis. Students may be less inclined to express their thoughts in such settings when teacher-directed classroom involvement predominates. Despite these stylistic differences, both contexts share core academic expectations. Students are taught to structure arguments logically, support claims with textual or theoretical evidence, and demonstrate disciplinary knowledge. Language and cultural barriers are significant issues for immigrant students in multicultural UK schools. According to Jani and Celaj (2024), who studied how young Albanian immigrants learn English in England, they found that vocabulary, grammar, and identity formation are the primary areas of difficulty. To facilitate language growth and integration, their research suggests bilingual programs and culturally sensitive instruction. Furthermore, hybrid techniques are being encouraged more by educational changes in Albania and the United Kingdom. Specifically for evaluation reasons, academic traditions and formal writing are explicitly taught in UK TESOL programs. Similarly, more student-centered and dialogic teaching approaches, such as interpretive essays, debate, and class discussions, are being included into Albanian classrooms, especially in urban and higher education settings. Global changes in education and evaluation have affected these convergent patterns, which imply that academic language styles are flexible rather than set. Understanding how academic standards and cultural expectations interact is essential for educators to develop inclusive and successful teaching strategies that help students navigate a variety of academic discourses.

6. HOW CULTURE IS REFLECTED IN THE WAY STUDENTS COMMUNICATE AND WRITE

In UK TESOL classrooms, which are often highly multicultural, students bring with them a wide range of linguistic and cultural perspectives. Learners from countries such as Italy, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Brazil, or China may engage in classroom discussions by drawing on their lived experiences. For example, a student could explain, "Weddings are celebrated over many days in my culture. It's comparable to what the book explains, establishing significant links between their personal history and the academic content. To demonstrate confidence in comparing systems and politely expressing dissent, another student may critically think and state, "I'm not sure I agree with this point because, in my country, education works differently. First-person narratives are often used by TESOL students in their writing, such as "As a speaker of Arabic and English, I found this article helped me reflect on how identity changes across languages," which displays both developing academic literacy and personal understanding. These dialogic patterns are encouraged in TESOL contexts, where learner voice, self-expression, and cultural exchange are key aspects of pedagogy. In contrast, Albanian students—particularly in more traditional educational settings—tend to adopt a formal and impersonal tone, shaped by an emphasis on correctness and textual fidelity. While students are discussing the material in class, they usually focus on analyzing it and say things like, "The author uses symbolism to highlight social change," without connecting the conversation to their own experiences. Furthermore, students often use formal academic terminology in their written assignments, such as "Literary critics suggest that this text reflects the political tensions of the period," expressing their ability to engage critically within established academic

standards. While both groups aim to demonstrate understanding and critical engagement, the cultural frameworks guiding their communication styles differ significantly dialogic and exploratory in TESOL settings, structured and authoritative in Albanian ones. Recognizing these differences allows educators to better support students in developing both local and global communicative competencies.

7. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN TRANSFORMING DISCOURSE

Teachers play a decisive role in shaping the classroom’s communicative environment, serving as both transmitters of knowledge and facilitators of dialogue. The way they organize activities, frame questions, and manage interaction influences not only the delivery of content but also the degree to which students feel confident to participate (Mercer & Howe, 2012). When teachers combine the clarity and structure of authoritative guidance with opportunities for open discussion, they create conditions in which students can question, interpret, and link learning to their own experiences (Alexander, 2022; Hennessy, Howe, Mercer, & Vrikki, 2021). This approach maintains academic precision while allowing space for exploration and the exchange of varied perspectives, moving students from passive listeners to active contributors (Wells, 1999).

8. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BOTH TESOL AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS CONTEXTS

In both TESOL and discourse analysis contexts, effective practice begins with creating a classroom where students’ voices, perspectives, and cultural identities are recognized and valued. Teachers can design prompts that draw on learners’ personal experiences, for example by asking TESOL students to compare idioms across languages or by encouraging discourse analysis students to offer cross-cultural readings of a text. Dialogic interaction should be at the heart of lessons, but moments of authoritative input remain important for explaining complex ideas and providing clear guidance before returning to discussion. Group activities such as role-plays, collaborative text analysis or shared annotations help students negotiate meaning and take joint responsibility for learning. Encouraging reflection on language use allows students to recognize how tone, register and structure change according to audience and context. Assessment should value both the effectiveness of communication and the originality of interpretation, as well as accuracy and fidelity to the text, so that different linguistic backgrounds are supported. By modelling inclusive language and helping students adjust their style for formal, informal and intercultural situations, teachers can strengthen learners’ confidence and their ability to communicate effectively in varied contexts.

9. METHODS AND RESULTS

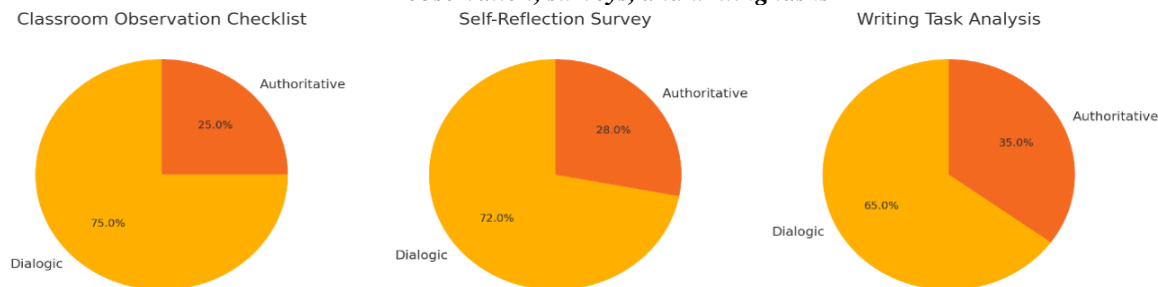
Participants

The research was conducted with two separate groups of students:

UK TESOL Group – 50 students aged between 15 and 30, enrolled in a private language school in the United Kingdom (Brighton). The group represented a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including Italian, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, and Portuguese. Albanian language and Literature Group – 50 students aged between 18 and 25, enrolled in a university (Aleksander Moisiu, Durres/Albania) literature and text analysis course in Albania. All participants were native speakers of Albanian.

Data was gathered using a Language Style Observation and Self-Reflection Questionnaire (LSOSQ), which combined three tools:

Graphic1: shows the distribution of dialogic and authoritative features across both groups, based on classroom observation, surveys, and writing tasks



Source: Authors’ research data (Jani & Celaj, 2024).

Classroom Observation Checklist (Dialogic: 75% | Authoritative: 25%)

Observations were conducted over multiple sessions for each group, focusing on identifying and quantifying the presence of both dialogic and authoritative discourse markers. Dialogic features—open-ended questioning, references to personal or cultural experiences, and peer-to-peer interaction—accounted for most observed behaviours, especially in TESOL classrooms where collaborative discussion dominated. Each instance was recorded in real-time and tallied, revealing that TESOL environments fostered dialogic exchanges three times more often than authoritative ones.

Self-Reflection Survey (Dialogic: 72% | Authoritative: 28%)

A 15-item questionnaire were given to students to self-assess their use of personal voice, cultural references, and critical commentary. Results showed a strong preference for dialogic practices, though authoritative tendencies remained among students from more formal educational backgrounds.

Writing Task Analysis (Dialogic: 65% | Authoritative: 35%)

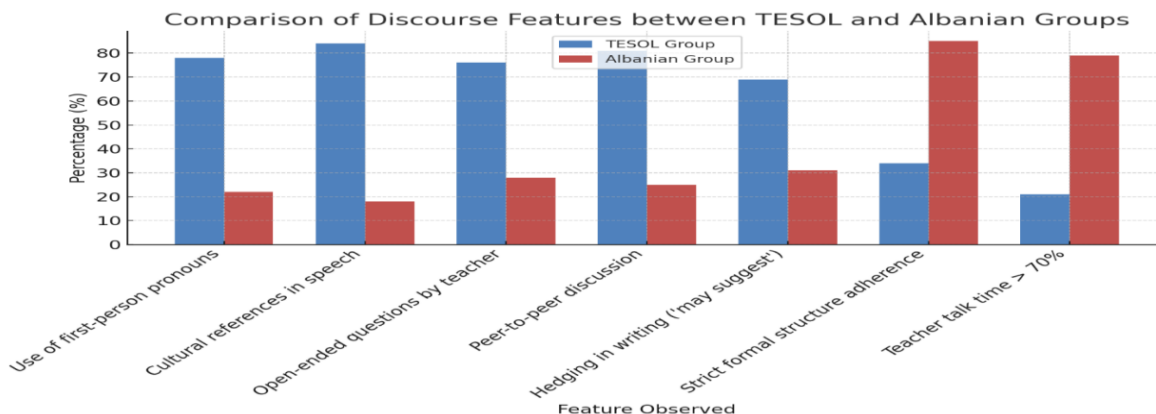
All the students completed a timed academic paragraph in response to the same prompt, ensuring comparability between groups. TESOL students writing exhibits dialogic features, such as first-person pronouns and cross-cultural examples, while authoritative features, such as strict formal structure and impersonal tone, are more prevalent in Albanian literature students' work. These findings highlight the influence of cultural and pedagogical traditions on academic voice.

Data Analysis

Observation and survey data were converted into percentages. Writing samples were coded to identify dialogic and authoritative features, and the results were compared between the two groups. Inter-rater reliability for the writing analysis exceeded 90%.

Result

Graphic 2: illustrates the comparative use of dialogic and authoritative discourse between TESOL and Albanian student groups



Source: Authors' research data (Jani & Celaj, 2024).

TESOL students scored consistently higher in **dialogic indicators** such as first-person pronouns, cultural references, open-ended questioning, and peer-to-peer discussion. In contrast, the Albanian group scored much higher in **authoritative indicators**—notably strict formal structure adherence and teacher talk time over 70%. The gap is particularly pronounced in cultural references (84% vs. 18%) and formal structure adherence (34% vs. 85%), underlining the influence of differing pedagogical traditions on classroom interaction and language style.

10. CONCLUSION

The comparison of Albanian literature and TESOL courses in the UK shows how strongly cultural settings and educational traditions influence students' academic language use. Formal structure, literary faithfulness, and authoritative instruction are prioritised in Albanian literature settings, while TESOL contexts encourage learner agency, personal voice, and intercultural interaction. These differences are not fixed; both contexts show signs of convergence through blended pedagogies that balance structure with student-centred engagement. The shift from authoritative to dialogic discourse is more than a change in teaching style—it represents a broader transformation towards inclusivity, critical thinking, and shared responsibility for learning. By recognizing the value of both formal

rigor and dialogic openness, educators can design strategies that equip students to navigate diverse academic discourses with confidence, cultural sensitivity, and communicative competence in an increasingly interconnected world.

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