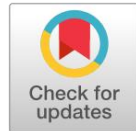


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Provoking Active Learning among Student Teachers in Distance Education through a Dialogical Online Tutorial Approach

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ABSTRACT

Background. Distance education environments often face challenges in fostering active learning because online interactions can easily become teacher-centered, leading students to act as passive recipients of information. A dialogical learning approach is considered a potential strategy to promote participation and reduce passive learning patterns in online tutorials.

Purpose. This study aims to analyze the use of a dialogical approach in provoking active learning among student teachers participating in online tutorials at Universitas Terbuka (UT).

Method. This research employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of a dialogue-based learning approach in an online tutorial. The participants consisted of nine student teachers enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program, all of whom were practicing kindergarten teachers, along with one online tutor facilitating the tutorial. Data were collected through observations of online tutorial interactions and participants' reflections on their learning experiences.

Results. The findings indicate that the dialogical approach successfully encouraged student teachers to become more active learners during the online tutorials. Through structured dialogue, participants were able to exchange ideas, share professional experiences, and collaboratively construct knowledge. The dialogical interaction also reduced the tendency toward the banking concept of education by fostering reciprocal communication between tutor and students.

Conclusion. The implementation of a dialogical learning approach in distance education can enhance student participation and support meaningful learning experiences. This approach provides an effective strategy for promoting active engagement among student teachers in online learning environments.

KEYWORDS

Active Learning, Banking Concept of Education, Dialogue, Distance Education, Online Tutorial

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the concept of distance learning (DL) is strongly associated with Universitas Terbuka (UT), the only public university that implements a national DL system. Since its establishment, UT has been mandated by the Indonesian government to expand access to higher education for citizens across the archipelago and abroad (Darojat, 2018). Considering Indonesia's vast geographical conditions and the limited capacity to every region,

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DL has become an established conventional universities in strategic solution for improving equity and accessibility in higher education (Baggaley & Belawati, 2009). Through its DL system, UT enables learners from diverse locations and backgrounds to pursue higher education without being physically present on campus.

DL also plays an important role in supporting national educational policies, particularly in improving teacher qualifications. The Indonesian government requires teachers to obtain at least an undergraduate degree, and UT provides an accessible pathway for in-service teachers to meet this requirement (Luschei et al., 2008). In general, DL is defined as a form of teaching and planned learning in which instruction occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technological media and specific institutional organization (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Because teachers and students are physically separated, communication becomes a crucial component in the DL environment.

One important theoretical concept in DL is Moore's theory of transactional distance. Moore (2007) argues that the psychological and communication distance between instructors and learners can be reduced through effective dialogue and structured learning interactions. Dialogue enables interaction between instructors and students as well as among students themselves, which helps foster deeper engagement with the learning content. Without such interaction, students may experience feelings of isolation that often characterize DL environments.

The importance of dialogue in education has also been emphasized in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. Freire (2000) argues that meaningful education requires dialogue between teachers and learners. Through dialogue, learners are encouraged to question, reflect, and construct knowledge collaboratively. Freire contrasts dialogical education with what he calls the "banking concept of education," where teachers simply deposit information into passive students. In this model, students are positioned as recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in the learning process.

In the context of DL, dialogue becomes even more important because learning interactions are mediated by technological platforms rather than direct physical communication. According to Holmberg (1995), dialogue in DL can occur through various forms of communication, including written interactions, mediated communication, and tutorial discussions. Similarly, Garrison and Archer (2007) argue that effective DL environments should create communities of inquiry where learners engage in meaningful dialogue to construct knowledge collaboratively.

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly influenced DL practices. Technological advancement has enabled DL institutions to implement online learning environments that support both synchronous and asynchronous interaction (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). In Indonesia, UT has adopted online tutorials as one of its academic support services. These tutorials allow students to interact with tutors and peers through online discussion forums and learning activities (Pribadi, 2014).

Online tutorials for Early Childhood Education (ECE) student teachers at UT were introduced in the academic year 2007/2008. Initially, only a small number of students participated in the online learning environment, but participation gradually increased over time (Chandrawati, 2018). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many UT courses shifted from face-to-face tutorials to online tutorials, further increasing the importance of online learning interaction (Chandrawati et al., 2023).

Despite the availability of online tutorials, learning interactions in DL environments may still reflect traditional instructional practices. Observations of some tutorial sessions indicate that teaching practices sometimes resemble Freire's banking model of education, where tutors primarily deliver information and students passively receive it. In such situations, students may focus on memorizing learning materials rather than engaging in reflective dialogue and critical discussion.

Previous studies have examined the role of dialogue in DL environments. For example, Gorsky and Caspi (2005) conceptualized dialogue as a theoretical framework for understanding instructional interaction in DL systems. Empirical studies also indicate that dialogical interaction can enhance student participation and engagement in online learning environments (Caspi & Gorsky, 2006; Watts, 2010). However, studies exploring dialogical learning inspired by Freire's critical pedagogy within the Indonesian DL context remain limited.

Furthermore, although dialogue is frequently discussed as an important element in DL, there is still limited understanding of how dialogical interaction is implemented in online tutorials and how it influences student learning experiences. In particular, little research has examined how dialogue can help student teachers become active learners in DL settings. Therefore, this study investigates the implementation of a dialogical approach in online tutorials at UT and explores how such an approach can encourage student teachers to become more active learners.

This study addresses the following research questions: 1) Was a dialogue approach used in the online tutorials at UT?; 2) Was the banking concept of education applied in UT's online learning tutorials for Early Childhood Education student teachers?; 3) What did students learn from participating in online tutorials?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dialogue as a Way to Help Student Teachers Become Active Learners

Dialogue has long been recognized as a fundamental element in educational interaction. Freire (2000) conceptualizes dialogue as an encounter between individuals mediated by the world in order to understand and transform it. Through dialogue, learners engage in reflection and critical thinking, allowing them to actively participate in the learning process rather than simply receiving information.

In the field of distance learning, dialogue is also considered a key factor influencing the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. Moore (2007) explains that dialogue is an essential component of transactional distance theory because it reduces the psychological distance between instructors and learners. Similarly, Holmberg (1995) emphasizes the concept of "guided didactic conversation," suggesting that meaningful dialogue between teachers and learners can improve motivation and learning outcomes in DL environments.

Garrison and Archer (2007) further developed the idea of dialogue through the Community of Inquiry framework, which highlights the importance of social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence in online learning. Within this framework, dialogue allows students to collaboratively construct knowledge and develop deeper understanding through interaction with instructors and peers.

Empirical studies have supported the theoretical importance of dialogue in DL. For instance, Gorsky et al. (2004) found that dialogical interaction between students and instructors contributes to meaningful learning experiences in DL courses. Similarly, Caspi and Gorsky (2006) observed that students' participation in instructional dialogue significantly influences their engagement in online learning environments.

Dialogue also plays an important role in helping learners develop multiple perspectives and meaningful understanding of educational content. Lane (2018) argues that dialogue encourages inclusive communication and mutual respect among participants, which can lead to more ethical and collaborative learning processes. Through dialogical interaction, students are able to exchange ideas, reflect on their experiences, and construct new knowledge collaboratively.

The Need to Provoke Student Teachers to Become Active Learners through Dialogue in Distance Learning

One major challenge in education is the persistence of what Freire (2000) described as the banking model of education. In this model, teachers deposit knowledge into students, who are expected to passively receive and memorize information. Such an approach limits students' opportunities to critically reflect on knowledge and to actively engage in the learning process.

This issue can also appear in DL environments, particularly when instructional practices emphasize one-way information delivery. DL systems often rely on learning materials such as printed modules, video lectures, or digital resources that may encourage individual and passive learning if interaction is limited (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

However, DL does not necessarily prevent the development of dialogical learning environments. Garrison and Archer (2007) argue that meaningful dialogue can be facilitated through various forms of mediated communication, including online discussions, collaborative assignments, and group tutorials. Such interactions allow learners to participate actively in constructing knowledge rather than merely consuming information.

Research findings also indicate that dialogical interaction can enhance student engagement in online learning environments. For example, studies have shown that structured discussion activities and collaborative dialogue can improve student participation and learning motivation in online courses (Bento et al., 2005; Lee & Brett, 2015). These findings suggest that dialogue can be an effective pedagogical strategy for promoting active learning in DL.

For student teachers, dialogical learning is particularly important because it allows them to connect theoretical knowledge with their professional experiences. As practicing educators, student teachers bring valuable experiences to the learning process. Dialogue enables them to share these experiences, reflect on their practices, and collaboratively construct new understanding that can inform their professional development.

Therefore, incorporating dialogical approaches in DL environments may help reduce the limitations of monological instruction and encourage student teachers to become active learners. By facilitating meaningful interaction between tutors and students, dialogue can support more participatory, reflective, and collaborative learning processes in DL settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was conducted at Universitas Terbuka (UT), which implements a distance learning (DL) system. The study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore how a dialogical approach was implemented in an online tutorial and how it influenced student teachers' learning participation. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because dialogue represents an interactive educational process that requires in-depth exploration of participants' interactions and experiences within a specific learning context. Through this design, the researchers were able to examine how dialogue occurred in the online tutorial and how it contributed to the development of active learning among student teachers.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of eight student teachers enrolled in the Early Childhood Education study program at Universitas Terbuka who were living in Jakarta and one online tutor from UT's regional center in Surabaya. All participants were involved in an online tutorial for the Guidance and Counselling course. The student teachers were practicing kindergarten teachers who participated in the online learning activities as part of their academic program.

Before conducting the study, the researchers informed the participants about the purpose of the research and obtained their consent to use their responses and interactions as research data. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the confidentiality of the participants' identities was maintained throughout the research process.

Data Collection

Data were collected through two primary sources: online tutorial transcripts and open-ended interviews with participants. The transcripts of the online tutorial discussions were used to examine the interactions between the tutor and student teachers as well as among the student teachers themselves. These interactions provided evidence of how dialogue occurred during the learning process. In addition, open-ended interviews were conducted to explore participants' reflections on their learning experiences during the online tutorial. The interviews allowed the researchers to gain deeper insights into how the dialogical interaction influenced students' engagement, participation, and understanding of the learning materials.

Analytical Framework: Dialogue Criteria

To analyze the dialogical interaction in the online tutorial, the researchers used a set of dialogue criteria developed based on literature related to dialogical learning and distance learning pedagogy. These criteria served as an analytical framework to identify whether dialogical interaction occurred during the learning process and whether such interaction encouraged student teachers to become active learners. The dialogue criteria include several dimensions of dialogical interaction, such as respect, supportive learning environment, understanding participants' contexts, praxis, collaboration, empathy, role exchange between teachers and students, and active engagement in the learning process. The dialogue criteria used in this study are presented.

Table 1. Dialogue Criteria Table

Criteria	Manifestation by students	Manifestation by tutors	Code
Show respect	Introduce themselves	Introduce themselves	1a
	Greet others	Greet students and create opportunities for students to greet each other	1b
		Use polite language and/or other student's names	Use polite language and/or student's names
	Acknowledge other students' ideas	Acknowledge students' ideas	1d
	Express appreciation for and trust in the other person	Express appreciation for and trust in the other person	1e
	Express appreciation and/or agreement with ideas; if there is disagreement, acknowledge differing ideas and perspectives	Express appreciation and/or agreement; if there is disagreement, show respect for differing ideas and perspectives	1f
Create and maintain a safe environment for self and students	Provide encouraging comments to one another	Provide encouraging comments to students	2a
	Create and maintain guidelines for dialogue	Create and maintain guidelines for dialogue	2b
	Validate other students' comments and/or provide a supportive critical response	Validate students' comments and/or provide a supportive critical response	2c
Assess needs and context	Express their needs and contexts and acknowledge those of others	Determine and acknowledge students' holistic needs and	3

Exercise praxis: action with reflection	Discuss cases and situations that occur in the classroom and refer to related educational theory and ideas	Discuss cases and situations that occur in the classroom and refer to the related educational theory and ideas	4
Collaborate with peers	Demonstrate collaboration to explore or develop ideas	Encourage students to demonstrate collaboration to explore or develop ideas	5
Demonstrate empathy	Express understanding of and appreciation toward others' ideas, perspectives, or situations	Express understanding of and appreciation toward others' ideas, perspectives, or situations	6
Exchange teacher–student roles	Teach their peers and tutor	Acknowledge learning from the students	7
Engage in the learning process	Demonstrate critical thinking about the content	Provide an open discussion topic and encourage critical thinking	8a
	Ask questions for consideration by others	Allow other students to respond to questions or redirect them	8b
	Summarize, synthesize, and/or offer conclusions at the end of discussions	Let students summarize or synthesize discussion results	8c
	Openness to new ideas and new ways of thinking (Freire, 2000)	Allow exploration of new ideas or approaches	8d

The researchers used this dialogue criteria table to analyze the learning process in the online tutorial. When approximately 80% of the dialogue criteria appeared during the learning interaction, it indicated that dialogical learning occurred and that the student teachers were actively engaged in the learning process.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, the data obtained from online tutorial transcripts and interview results were analyzed using the dialogue criteria framework. The analysis followed an inductive process in which themes and patterns were identified from the collected data. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (1996), inductive analysis involves inferring themes and patterns through careful examination of qualitative data.

During the analysis process, the researchers examined the written interactions in the online tutorial discussions and categorized them according to the dialogue criteria presented in Table 1. The interview data were also analyzed to identify participants' perceptions of their learning experiences and their level of engagement during the online tutorial.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the researchers discussed the analysis results collaboratively and confirmed the interpretations with the participants. If additional clarification was needed, follow-up interviews were conducted until the research questions were adequately addressed. The observation results from the online discussions were then grouped and interpreted based on the quality and quantity of the dialogical interactions that occurred during the tutorial sessions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study based on the research questions. The results are derived from the analysis of online tutorial transcripts and interview data with student teachers and the online tutor. The analysis focuses on the implementation of the dialogical approach in the online tutorial and its influence on student teachers' active learning within the distance learning (DL) environment.

Was a dialogue approach being used in the online tutorials at UT?

The first research question examined whether a dialogue approach was implemented in the online tutorials at Universitas Terbuka. The analysis of the tutorial transcripts from three weeks of online discussion activities in the Guidance and Counselling course is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Transcript Analysis for Three Weeks online tutorial for the UT's ECE's Guidance and Counselling Course

Code	Criteria	No. of times		% of total		% combined
		students	tutor	students	tutor	
1	Show respect	25	27	8.2	26.5	14.7
2	Create and maintain a safe environment for self and students	11	19	3.6	18.6	7.4
3	Assess needs and context	23	1	7.5	1.0	5.9
4	Exercise praxis: action with reflection	35	3	11.4	4.9	9.3
5	Collaborate with peers	83	27	27.1	26.5	26.9
6	Demonstrate empathy	8	1	4.6	1.0	4.2
7	Exchange teacher-student roles	21	3	6.9	4.9	5.9
8	Engage in the learning process	100	21	34.7	20.6	29.7
Total		306	102	100	100	100

The results in Table 2 show that dialogical interaction occurred consistently throughout the three weeks of online tutorials. A total of 306 interactions were generated by students and 102 interactions were contributed by the tutor. The most dominant dialogue criterion was engage in the learning process (29.7%), followed by collaborate with peers (26.9%) and show respect (14.7%).

The high frequency of student engagement indicates that the online tutorial environment encouraged active participation among student teachers. Students actively asked questions, responded to their peers' comments, and shared classroom experiences related to early childhood education practices. These interactions demonstrate that learning occurred through dialogue rather than through one-way information transmission. This finding supports Freire's (2000) concept of dialogical education, which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when teachers and students engage in mutual communication and collaborative knowledge construction. In such environments, students are encouraged to question ideas, reflect on experiences, and contribute to the learning process.

The findings also align with Moore's theory of transactional distance, which suggests that dialogue is an essential component in reducing the psychological distance between instructors and learners in distance learning environments (Moore, 2007). The structured online tutorial discussions allowed participants to interact with both the tutor and their peers, thereby fostering meaningful communication and engagement.

Was the banking concept of education for the Early Childhood Education student teachers being applied in UT's online learning tutorials?

The second research question examined whether the banking concept of education was applied in the online tutorials. The analysis indicates that the banking model of education was not evident in the learning interactions observed in this study.

Student teachers actively participated in the learning process by reading the learning materials, asking questions, responding to peers' ideas, and sharing their professional experiences as kindergarten teachers. The tutor also facilitated discussion by encouraging students to reflect on real classroom situations and relate them to theoretical concepts.

These findings indicate that the learning process in the online tutorial was dialogical and participatory rather than teacher-centered. In Freire's (2000) perspective, dialogical education promotes cooperation, mutual respect, and shared knowledge construction between teachers and learners. The interaction patterns observed in the online tutorial demonstrate that both the tutor and the students contributed to the learning process.

Lin and Palmer (2016) also explain that Freire's dialogical approach is based on cooperation, mutual trust, and shared understanding rather than hierarchical authority. Through dialogue, participants are encouraged to exchange perspectives and collectively construct knowledge. The results of this study indicate that such dialogical interaction occurred in the online tutorial environment.

What students learned from participating in online tutorial?

The third research question explored what student teachers learned from participating in the online tutorial. The interview results indicate that both student teachers and the tutor gained new knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes toward dialogical learning.

Student teachers reported that the dialogical interaction helped them understand practical issues related to early childhood education. They also indicated that the online tutorial helped them develop technological skills, improve their writing ability, and engage in meaningful discussions with peers from different regions of Indonesia.

One student teacher explained:

"With the direct dialogue between the tutors and learners, all the problems related to the learning materials can be solved through discussion and agreement between the tutor and the students." (Student Teacher 1 – ST1)

Another participant described how the online tutorial improved her digital literacy skills:

"At first, I did not know anything about UT's online tutorial or how to use a computer. After participating in the online tutorial, I learned how to use a computer, how to participate in discussions, and how to compose responses in the online forum. This experience made me proud to be a UT student." (Student Teacher 3 – ST3)

A third participant emphasized the value of peer interaction in the online tutorial:

"By participating in the online tutorial, I could interact with other kindergarten teachers from different islands in Indonesia. I learned how to read the course material, answer questions about our work as teachers, and give comments on other teachers' experiences." (Student Teacher 5 – ST5)

These findings suggest that the online tutorial not only supported academic learning but also facilitated professional learning among student teachers. Participants were able to exchange experiences, reflect on classroom practices, and learn from each other's perspectives.

The findings are consistent with Caspi and Gorsky's (2006) argument that dialogue plays a central role in learning processes within distance education environments. Through dialogical

interaction, students engage in both interpersonal and intrapersonal learning processes that contribute to deeper understanding.

Similarly, Lee and Brett (2015) found that online discussions enable teachers to interact with peers and exchange professional experiences without leaving their workplaces. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for in-service teachers who must balance professional responsibilities with academic study. Previous research also suggests that online tutorials can enhance student engagement and motivation. Chandrawati (2018) found that participation in online tutorials helped UT students develop a better understanding of course materials and become more active learners.

Overall, the findings indicate that the dialogical structure of the online tutorial encouraged students to participate actively in the learning process. The discussion topics provided by the tutor stimulated interaction among students, allowing them to share experiences and collaboratively construct knowledge. This interaction reflects Moore's concept of dialogue as a key component in reducing transactional distance in distance learning environments (Moore, 2007).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that a dialogical approach has been implemented in the online tutorials of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) study program at Universitas Terbuka (UT). The findings indicate that the use of dialogue in online tutorials contributes to reducing the banking concept of education by encouraging student teachers to participate actively in the learning process. Both the student teachers and the tutor perceived that the dialogical approach provided meaningful learning experiences and helped them develop useful knowledge and skills in online learning environments. These findings highlight that dialogue can function as a crucial element in distance learning, particularly in contexts where physical separation exists between instructors and students. By facilitating two-way communication and collaborative knowledge construction, dialogue enables both teachers and students to share roles as learners and contributors to knowledge. Therefore, instructors in distance learning environments should intentionally design learning activities that promote dialogical interaction to encourage active participation among students. Furthermore, the implementation of dialogue-based online tutorials at UT demonstrates the potential of online learning to support students in developing digital competencies and collaborative learning skills needed to adapt to the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized an AI-assisted language tool (ChatGPT) to support the improvement of English grammar, sentence structure, and overall clarity of the manuscript. The tool was used solely for language refinement and readability enhancement. All outputs generated by the tool were carefully reviewed, revised, and validated by the author(s). The author(s) assume full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the final content presented in this article.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Research design; Data collection; Data analysis; Writing – original draft preparation.

Author 2: Methodology development; Data validation; Writing – review and editing.

Author 3: Supervision; Project administration; Final manuscript review and approval.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author(s) declare that there are no financial, professional, or personal relationships that could be perceived as influencing the results or interpretation of this study.

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