

Dialogue journal in L2 classroom: A sociocultural perspective

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Abstract

This study investigated whether Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) could improve students' classroom participation and willingness to communicate through sustained written interaction with the teacher, drawing on a sociocultural perspective. The participants included 15 intermediate and upper-beginner EFL learners attending two private language institutes in Iran over a period of 2.5 months. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact, a triangulated approach to data collection was adopted, incorporating questionnaire data, a participation rubric, semi-structured interviews, and textual analysis of journal entries. The findings revealed statistically significant improvements in both classroom participation and willingness to communicate ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, the journals served not only as a means of linguistic practice but also as a space for meaningful interaction and individualized feedback from the teacher, effectively fostering learners' development throughout the process.

Keywords: sociocultural theory, willingness to communicate, participation, dialogue journal writing (DJW), second language acquisition, Vygotsky

Introduction

The process of acquiring English as a second language is intricate and influenced by various factors. Among these factors, enhancing learners' participation in classroom activities stands out as a significant contributor to target language acquisition. For Iranian learners, incorporating English into their daily lives outside the classroom is often challenging, and even within the classroom, active language use is lacking, contrary to its intended role as the primary space for language learning (Azizi, 2018). Many learners exhibit passivity and hesitate to engage in class activities independently, often requiring prompting from the teacher. This lack of active involvement transforms the class into a unidirectional learning experience, hindering the attainment of beneficial knowledge, despite the attractiveness of teaching materials and methods. Actively participating in class activities is crucial, allowing learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, understand their learning styles, and boost self-confidence as they witness their progress in mastering a new language. Consequently, effective language learning involves participating in various activities, both in physical classrooms and online, integrating the new language into daily life.

Communication

The significance of communication in learning a new language has long been highlighted. In this study, according to Wijaya and Rizkina (2015), Willingness to communicate (WTC) is the learner's tendency to actively engage in classroom communication with a number of differences it may have, such as learners' abilities and characteristics, topics, task types, classroom atmosphere, and cultural influences. The importance of communication in the target language, inside and outside the classroom, is indispensable. Language learners need to utilize opportunities to become effective communicators. Their unwillingness to communicate or shyness will result in less language production and ineffective communication (Riasati, 2012). In modern language learning and pedagogy, where the goal is to communicate effectively both inside and outside the classroom, willingness to communicate plays a crucial role in second language acquisition and communication (Alemi et al., 2013).

Participation

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.), *participation* is defined as "the act of taking part in an activity or event." In the context of language learning, participation involves active engagement in classroom activities like asking questions, joining discussions, and providing feedback (Zhou et al., 2021). According to Mackenzie (2014), active participation in class discussion is an excellent way to involve and engage students in the learning process. Active participation in class discussions empowers students to become active learners, taking ownership of their education and fostering deeper engagement (Mackenzie, 2014).

Self-Confidence

Those who have sufficient self-confidence and a positive self-image are more successful. Self-confident people dare to be adventurous, communicate in foreign languages and can achieve more. Those who lack confidence will miss the opportunity to practice their target language because they are afraid of losing face and making mistakes (Du, 2009). Enhancing self-confidence is essential for promoting effective participation and communication skills among L2 learners.

Lack of Communication and Participation in L2 Classroom: Possible Causes

In the realm of ESL literature, multiple discussions delve into the factors influencing or hindering the communication and participation of L2 learners in classroom settings.

Wijaya and Rizkina (2015) identified several key factors that hinder learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in language classrooms. First, fear of making mistakes and being negatively evaluated discourages learners from speaking. Second, language anxiety plays a critical role in preventing learners from participating in oral communication. Third, traditional teaching methods that lack interactive opportunities, especially those relying heavily on textbooks and passive learning, reduce learners' motivation to speak. Fourth, task difficulty can also lead to unwillingness to speak. Learners may avoid speaking tasks that exceed their language proficiency. Finally, the limited exposure to English outside the classroom, particularly in EFL contexts, makes it essential for learners to practice speaking in class. These factors collectively contribute to learners' reluctance to engage in classroom speaking activities.

Factors that significantly affect students' participation in EFL classes, according to Hamouda (2013), include speaking in front of the class, lack of motivation, being called on, class

arrangement, lack of confidence, self-esteem, classroom presentations, insufficient practice due to class size or time constraints, disinterest in English, low proficiency, poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary and grammar, lack of fluency, and limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

In general, studies that explore the lack of participation and unwillingness to communicate in L2, attribute it to the affective filter and psychological conditions such as lack of confidence and anxiety (Azizi, 2018; Krashen, 1982). According to Krashen, the factors inhibiting classroom activity or learning are directly related to psychological issues and the functioning of the learner's mind.

In contrast, Vygotsky (1978), a Russian psychologist and founder of sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000, p.1), argued that human development and learning arise from social and cultural interactions. He maintained that mental abilities are shaped by individuals' interactions with others and their cultural environment (Allman, 2020). Vygotsky believed that one of the key drivers of development is a dialectical process, in which seemingly opposing ideas or experiences come together to form more complex understandings. This dynamic takes place largely through social interaction, particularly with adults, more capable peers, or even peers of similar ability. It is especially noticeable during play, where such exchanges often occur naturally (Miller, 2002). The following discussion will focus on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and its relevance to second language learning.

Statement of the Problem

As previously outlined, one approach to addressing this issue is Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, along with various studies focusing on anxiety, self-confidence, and fear (Krashen, 1982). While these studies have provided valuable psychological insights and solutions, the problem persists. This research aims to offer a new perspective by applying a sociocultural approach, which suggests that language learning cannot occur without active participation in social activities conducted in the target language. It assumes that effective participation and communication in L2 classes are facilitated through social training.

Review of Literature

This section begins with an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins the study, followed by a review of dialogue journal writing. Together, these components provide the necessary context for understanding the study's foundations and significance.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT)

Sociocultural theory emphasizes the pivotal role of social interaction and culture in developing higher-order thinking skills, positing that human development and learning are rooted in social and cultural contexts. Based on Vygotsky et al.'s (1997, p.259) perspective, second language acquisition "must be studied in all its breadth and in all its depth as it affects the whole mental development of the child's personality taken as a whole". Although Vygotsky did not write extensively on second language acquisition per se, he laid the basis for a study on it through his analysis of the development of human mental systems through the development of the ability to communicate through language (Mahn & Fazalehaq, 2020). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is rooted more in society and culture than a person's psychological conditions to explore how social and cultural interactions shape L2 learners' mental abilities (Allman, 2020). According to

socioculturalists, environmental factors shape cognitive activities, asserting that all learning is context-bound and situated. Social interaction emerges as a crucial catalyst in the cognitive development process (Van_Patten & Benati, 2015).

One fundamental concept in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), describes the gap between learners' current abilities and their potential with guidance from a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). Collaboration is essential within the ZPD, where learners engage in tasks that they cannot yet complete independently but can accomplish with support from peers or teachers, fostering both learning and language development (Billings & Walqui, 2017).

Generally speaking, sociocultural theory asserts that developmental processes actually occur through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historical environments such as family life and peer group interaction and in institutional contexts such as school, organized sports activities, and workplaces (Thorne, 2007). Language acquisition, therefore, involves language use and participation in social activities such as having out-of-class conversations or talking to classmates and teachers, rather than so much focus on the process of learning new structures, sounds and formal instruction (Ozfidan et al., 2014).

Learning as a Social Process

One of the core concepts of sociocultural theory is the role of social interaction, which Vygotsky emphasized as having a significant impact on human cognitive development, particularly in the realm of higher-order thinking. According to SCT, individuals utilize existing cultural artifacts and create new ones to regulate their biological and behavioral activities. Development occurs through participation in culturally, linguistically, and historically formed environments such as family life, peer interactions, and institutional settings like schools, organized sports, and workplaces. While human neurobiology provides the necessary foundation for higher-order thinking, this theory contends that the most important aspects of cognitive development arise from interaction within these social and material context (Thorne, 2007). Teachers act as mediators in education, linking students to university or graduate programs, which is viewed as part of the social world of learning through the lens of social constructivism. In this role, any influential figure guiding the learning process becomes a mediator, with the insights and experiences they provide forming what is known as a mediated learning experience (MLE) (Malik et al., 2021).

Sociocultural Perspective toward Interaction

From this perspective, as learners participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalize the effects of working together, they acquire new strategies and knowledge about the world and culture. Vygotsky's theory directs us to scrutinize the historically formed cultural contexts in which children are situated, to interactions between children and those who are more competent in the skills, customs, and practices adored by the culture, and to what the children themselves (as well as those who are more competent) bring to bear during the interactions (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003). According to Ohta, Vygotsky's developmental law highlights how social interaction, including peripheral participation and peer collaboration, becomes internalized and fosters second language acquisition (Ohta, 2001).

Dialogue Journal Writing

The concept of Dialogue Journals (DJW) involves written dialogues or conversations that frequently occur between learners and their teachers or, occasionally, with other writing partners (Peyton, 2000). The topics for journal entries are determined through negotiations between learners and their teacher, based on purpose, interest, and curriculum. Learners can write on a variety of topics, ranging from personal experiences to reading responses (Rana, 2018). DJW in L2 classes offers several benefits, including a broad range of topics aligned with purposes, interests, and curricula; diverse genres from personal experiences to reading responses; a focus on free writing rather than strict adherence to form and correctness; reciprocal discourse involving two-way writing events; an ongoing conversational process; and informal dialogue that fosters personal growth opportunities.

Dialogue Journal: A Social Activity

The implementation of Dialogue Journals (DJ) aligns with Vygotsky's perspective, emphasizing the exchange of ideas through written communication as integral to learning (Garmon, 2001). Vygotsky's theory underscores language as a culturally created symbolic tool, essential for both mental and social development. In DJW, learners engage in dialogic interactions with teachers and themselves during various writing stages such as planning, drafting, and editing. This aligns with the theory of second language learning, emphasizing fluency and meaningful communication over rigid accuracy (Rana, 2018). Utilizing tools like DJs can effectively support students within their ZPDs, integrating social interaction with cognitive development in language education (Rana, 2018).

Numerous scholarly inquiries have delved into the effects of DJW on second language (L2) learners, particularly within the context of English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. In a study on audiotaped dialogue journals, Ho (2003, as cited in Rana, 2018) uncovered a unique dimension of student expression. Students engaging with this unconventional medium reportedly felt more liberated to articulate their thoughts, which, in turn, contributed to enhanced class performance and a more nuanced understanding of their learning goals, language proficiency, and learning styles.

Liao and Wong (2010) documented improvements in students' writing fluency and performance, as well as a reduction in writing anxiety. Additionally, they highlighted the positive attitudes fostered by DJW positioning it as a valuable tool for self-understanding and personal growth.

The impact of Electronic Dialogue Journal Writing (E-DJW) on high school students' writing development was explored by Riasati (2012). She found notable improvements in various facets of writing, particularly in content. The study underscored the positive learning environment created by E-DJW, contributing to overall learning and achievement. Rattanaintanin (2017) also delved into the impact of DJs on writing ability. The study's outcomes revealed significant differences in pre-and post-test scores, suggesting a positive influence on participants' overall writing performance. Additionally, participants reported positive attitudes, reduced apprehension, and an increased willingness to communicate in English after engaging with dialogue journals.

Finally, a more recent study investigated the impact of DJW on vocabulary, organization, and grammar. The study concluded that DJW emerged as an effective strategy for enhancing

writing skills. Moreover, students exposed to DJW exhibited positive attitudes toward writing, marking it as a valuable intervention for fostering language development (Alsmadi et al., 2020).

In synthesis, these studies collectively contribute to our understanding of the multifaceted impact of DJs on L2 learners in EFL settings, as evidenced by their effectiveness in enhancing language development, fostering self-expression, and cultivating positive attitudes towards language learning, particularly in the domain of writing skills. Building on these findings, the primary objective of incorporating DJW into L2 classrooms is not only to improve grammar and vocabulary but also to empower learners to write for communicative purposes and actively engage in social interactions, thereby fostering meaningful communication (Rana, 2018).

Our research aims to explore the sociocultural dimensions of participation, willingness and unwillingness to communicate in a foreign language (L2) setting. We employ DJW as a technique to enhance communication and engagement in both online and traditional classroom environments. Previous research on DJs has shown that using them can increase language learners' confidence in writing dialogues. According to Pyatt (2022), DJs have been shown to enhance students' self-confidence and self-efficacy, primarily by fostering a strong rapport with the instructor. In this study, we aim to examine whether this increased confidence in writing also leads to greater confidence in participating in English classroom activities. As mentioned earlier, one of the main reasons for learners' lack of participation and communication is low self-confidence. Therefore, this aspect was also explored in our research.

Based on the above discussion, the current study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. Does the class participation rate of L2 learners increase after practicing DJW?
2. To what extent does DJW enhance students' self-confidence in face-to-face English instruction?
3. To what extent does the practice of DJW affect students' willingness to communicate in the English classroom?

Method

The following section explains the research methodology and offers a detailed account of how the study was designed and conducted.

Context

The study was conducted over a period of 2.5 months, involving two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes at two private language institutes in Shiraz, Iran. These classes took place across 16 sessions, held twice a week, each lasting 90 minutes. The study employed a quasi-experimental design involving two experimental groups. Both groups took part in the dialogue journal writing intervention as part of their coursework. Notably, no control group was included in the study. This decision was due to practical constraints within the educational context, which made it unfeasible to withhold the intervention from a separate group of students. As a result, the research focused solely on exploring the effects of the intervention on the experimental groups through both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Participants

The sample consisted of 15 L2 learners, all of whom were native Persian speakers. The participants consisted of eight intermediate and seven upper-beginner English language learners. They had been studying English for over two years at private institutes. Their ages ranged from 12 to 34 years. The upper-beginner group consisted of learners aged between 12 and 16 years, while the intermediate group ranged from 18 to 34 years old. According to the classification standards used in Iranian language institutes, individuals aged 18 and above are categorized as adults. Despite differences in age and initial language proficiency, both groups followed the same curriculum, teaching method, and schedule within the private language institutes where the study was conducted. The same instructor taught all classes over the 2.5-month period, ensuring consistency across instructional contexts. In light of the shared learning environment and instructional conditions, data were analyzed as a single cohort.

Settings

In the context of Iranian EFL classrooms, particularly in private language institutes, instruction is often teacher-centered, with an emphasis on grammar, accuracy, and test preparation. Teacher-student interactions are typically limited to structured classroom discourse, with few opportunities for students to express personal thoughts or engage in extended dialogue. As a result, learners may have limited chances to develop communicative competence or to build meaningful connections with their teacher through authentic interaction. This context made Dialogue Journal Writing a particularly relevant intervention, as it created space for more personalized, reflective, and sustained written communication between learners and the teacher.

Researcher/Instructor Roles

The course instructor was also one of the researchers and served as the corresponding author of the study. At the time of the study, the researcher was enrolled in an MA program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), with several years of experience teaching English at various language institutes. In her dual role as both teacher and researcher, she was responsible for delivering the instructional content and writing weekly journal entries in response to each student. This arrangement allowed for a close observation of learners' engagement and language development, while also facilitating consistent data collection throughout the intervention.

Moreover, given the natural classroom setting, controlling all external variables was challenging; however, several measures were taken to minimize their influence. The course content, teaching methods, instructor, and schedule remained consistent for all participants, who belonged to a similar cultural and geographic background. Participants' attendance was monitored to include only those with regular presence, ensuring comparable exposure to the language program. Moreover, participation was entirely voluntary, supporting authentic engagement without external pressure.

Data Collection

The data collection methods applied in this study are presented below. These methods were selected to ensure a comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences, attitudes, and progress throughout the intervention. To strengthen the credibility of the analysis, the collected data were shared with co-researchers from the beginning to the end of the study. This process was

implemented to ensure consistency, transparency, and analytical reliability throughout the research.

Questionnaires

Three sets of pre- and post-questionnaires were administered to assess various dimensions of learners' experiences and attitudes. All three questionnaires employed in this study were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Persian translations of all items were provided to ensure clarity and accessibility for the participants. Questionnaires 2 and 3 had already been validated and piloted in previous studies, and their reliability was well-established. Specifically, Rattanaintanin (2017) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 for Questionnaire 2, indicating acceptable reliability. In the current investigation, Questionnaire 3 demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, thereby confirming its reliability within this sample. Therefore, no additional piloting was conducted for those instruments. Likewise, Madeng and Palanukulwong (2019) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 for Questionnaire 3, reflecting excellent internal consistency. This finding was further reinforced by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.96 calculated in the present study. Therefore, no additional piloting was conducted for those instruments. Instead, the original sources have been cited in the reference section. However, Questionnaire 1 was piloted with a group of 20 L2 learners who were not part of the main study. The results of the pilot indicated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, demonstrating high internal consistency. The questionnaires included:

1. Self-Confidence in English: Adapted from Finch (2004), this questionnaire evaluated learners' self-confidence in their English language abilities. The full version of the questionnaire is available in Appendix A.
2. L2 Learners' Willingness to Communicate: Developed by Rattanaintanin (2017), this questionnaire measured learners' willingness to communicate in English. The instrument was originally developed and validated in prior research, and the original source is cited in the reference section
3. L2 Learners' Attitude Toward English Writing: Adapted from Madeng and Palanukulwong (2019), this questionnaire assessed learners' attitudes toward writing in English. It was originally developed and validated in previous research, and the source is cited in the reference section.

These questionnaires were administered both before and after the implementation of the Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) treatment to evaluate any changes in the learners' self-confidence, attitudes, and willingness to communicate.

Classroom observations

To assess changes in learners' participation and communication rates, selected class sessions were recorded before and after the implementation of DJW. To minimize disruption and ensure natural classroom behavior, the recording device was discreetly placed out of students' direct line of sight. This helped maintain a typical classroom environment, allowing both the teacher and learners to proceed with the session as usual. All recordings were conducted with prior informed consent from participants.

A holistic grading rubric, adapted from Mackenzie (2014), was employed to evaluate qualitative data gathered from video-recorded classroom sessions. The rubric encompassed multiple dimensions of classroom engagement, including attendance in conversation sessions,

asking questions and answering during discussions, peer interaction, and other relevant activities. It was completed while reviewing the video recordings at the end of the course. To ensure consistency and enhance the validity of the evaluation, the rubric was reviewed and confirmed by the researcher and collaborating colleagues. Video recordings were made of the first two and the final two sessions of each class, providing a comprehensive basis for assessing changes in student engagement over time. The rubric is available in Appendix B.

Follow-up Interviews

In addition to the pre-, post-questionnaires, and recorded classroom sessions, follow-up interviews were conducted to further investigate the impact of Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) on participants. These interviews aimed to explore how DJW facilitated participants' expression, bridged gaps between students and the teacher, and enhanced class participation and communication. The course instructor, who was also responsible for collecting the data, facilitated all interviews. To ensure a comfortable and stress-free experience for the participants, the interviews were conducted via WhatsApp voice messages after the course had ended and final grades had been announced. Sample questions asked during the interviews included: whether they enjoyed the process of writing the journals and if they would like to continue this practice in the future; whether the journal writing influenced their relationship with the teacher, and if so, in what way. Additional questions focused on the impact of the writing activities on their willingness to communicate in English during class discussions, their overall participation in classroom activities, as well as their impact on their confidence in speaking English.

Weekly Journal Entries

Participants were asked to write weekly journal entries over a period of seven weeks, allowing for topic flexibility with no restrictions imposed. They had the option to use traditional paper-and-pencil methods or electronic messaging applications, with WhatsApp being the most commonly used platform for communication with their teacher.

The content analysis of these DJs focused on several aspects, including the length of entries, the formality of language, coherence, and flow of ideas, total word count, number of entries, use of shared media (e.g., images, audio), and the variety of topics discussed. This comprehensive analysis aimed to evaluate the impact of DJW on the participants' written communication skills.

Treatment

The intervention was initiated during the second session, following the completion of questionnaires by L2 learners. At this stage, the necessary information regarding DJs and instructions on how to compose them were provided. Over the course of seven weeks, students were encouraged to write journal entries with no topic restrictions. The emphasis was on allowing learners to freely express their thoughts and ideas without concern for grammar or vocabulary. Learners were given the opportunity to pose questions about DJW and seek additional details. They were allowed to use various mediums, such as pen and paper, WhatsApp Messenger, or email, for their DJ submissions.

To ensure active participation, learners were prompted to write at least one journal entry per week. After the initial DJW submissions, some participants remained unfamiliar with the DJW process. To address this, necessary explanations were provided within their journals.

Following feedback from the teacher on their initial journal entries, participants gained clarity on how to structure and compose their DJ entries. By the end of the two sessions dedicated to journal writing, all participants had a comprehensive understanding and continued their engagement.

Based on a review of previous studies on DJW, it was anticipated that explicit correction of grammar mistakes or spelling errors should be avoided; instead, the teacher subtly incorporated the correct forms when addressing mistaken grammar or vocabulary, maintaining an implicit approach. In addition, responding to students' journals would require a considerable amount of time. Therefore, from the outset, it was planned that the teacher would allocate adequate time to provide meaningful and individualized feedback throughout the process.

On average, a period of 30 minutes to one hour per day was dedicated to responding to learners' journal entries. The integration of WhatsApp as the primary medium for interaction facilitated greater flexibility and continuity in communication, as it removed the constraints of classroom-based submission. This format enabled learners to express themselves beyond scheduled instructional time, fostering more spontaneous and sustained engagement. Consistent with pedagogical best practices, the teacher ensured that responses were timely, relevant, and tailored to the content and tone of each entry, thereby maintaining the dialogic nature of the activity and supporting learners' ongoing participation.

Data Analysis

To examine L2 learners' participation levels and to compare the results of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires along with the participation rubric, a paired-sample *t*-test was carried out using SPSS. The analysis included a detailed review of each item across the instruments to capture any significant changes. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts and DJ entries to explore patterns in learners' engagement and perceptions.

To assess the participation levels of L2 learners and identify potential differences between pre- and post-questionnaire results, as well as the outcomes from the participation rubric, a paired sample *t*-test was conducted using SPSS. This analysis involved a comprehensive examination of data from both the questionnaires and the class participation rubric, evaluating each question individually. Additionally, qualitative content analysis was used to analyze data collected from interviews and journals.

Normality Assumption Check

Prior to conducting the paired-sample *t*-test, the assumption of normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test in SPSS. The results showed that the data were normally distributed ($p > .05$), confirming that the normality assumption for the 15 participants was met. As shown in Table 1, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk tests indicate that the data for each questionnaire were normally distributed.

Table 1

Results of the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality for Each Questionnaire in Pre-Test and Post-Test Phases

Tests of Normality		
Questionnaire	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.	
	Pre-test*	Post-test*
Self-assessment: confidence	.74	.12
Willingness to communicate in English	.98	.50
Attitude toward English writing	.71	.67

Note. $p > .05$ indicates that the assumption of normality is met (i.e., the data do not significantly deviate from a normal distribution).

Results Triangulation

To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, we employed data triangulation by integrating and comparing information collected through the questionnaires, participation rubric, DJ entries, and interviews. This approach enabled us to cross-check the data and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approvals and permissions were obtained for various components of this study, as outlined below.

Collaboration and Institutional Approval

This study was conducted in collaboration with two language institutes in Shiraz, Iran. Prior to the commencement of the study, permission was obtained from the directors of both institutes for all stages of the research process. The managers were fully informed about the procedures involved, including classroom recordings, the administration of questionnaires, and interviews. Their approval and cooperation were ensured throughout the data collection phase.

Confidentiality and Anonymity of Participants

To protect the privacy of participants, all names and identifiable information that appeared in the DJ entries were carefully removed or blocked out, so they are no longer readable. This included the names of students and the teacher. The same procedure was applied consistently across all data sources used in the study. Moreover, considering the participants under the age of 18, informed consent was obtained from both the learners and their parents.

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

At the beginning of the course, the research process was thoroughly explained to all language learners, ensuring they were fully informed. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no

pressure or obligation was imposed. Additionally, informed consent was obtained from the participants at the conclusion of the study, specifically for the use and dissemination of dialogue transcripts and any shared media. Participants understood the purpose and scope of the research and willingly agreed to have their data included and made accessible.

Controlling for Bias in Qualitative Data Collection

To mitigate potential biases in data collection, particularly in interviews and observations, the study employed several strategies. Participants' real names were replaced with nicknames throughout the analysis process to prevent researchers from being influenced by preconceived notions or stereotypes. Furthermore, interview protocols were standardized to ensure consistency in questioning across participants, and researchers carefully analyzed interview transcripts and observation data to identify and account for potential biases in their interpretations. While acknowledging the inherent potential for bias in qualitative research, these measures aimed to promote objectivity and enhance the reliability of the findings.

Findings

This section is organized into four main parts, each addressing different aspects of the impact of DJW on English language learners. The first part examines how DJW influences learners' self-confidence in English, their attitude toward English writing, and their willingness to communicate. The second part focuses on the effect of DJW on promoting class participation among L2 learners. The final two parts present findings from interviews and weekly dialogue journal entries, respectively.

Confidence, Willingness, and Attitude

Tables 2 and 3 present the descriptive statistics obtained from the three questionnaires and the results of paired-sample *t*-tests for three variables: self-confidence in English, willingness to communicate in English, and attitude toward English writing.

Table 2

Questionnaires: Descriptive Data

	Mean		SD	
	Pre- test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-
Questionnaire test				
Self-assessment: Confidence	77.60	84.73	9.74	10.27
Willingness to communicate in English	58.07	61.93	7.73	7.16
Attitude toward English writing	119.33	124.13	15.98	16.40

The results of the study, obtained through paired samples *t*-test, showed that the program significantly boosted participants' confidence in their abilities. A paired samples *t*-test revealed a substantial increase in confidence scores from a pre-program mean of 77.60 ($SD = 9.74$) to a post-program mean of 84.73 ($SD = 10.27$), $t = 5.91$, $p < .001$.

Participants showed a significant increase in their openness to using English for communication after the program. A paired sample *t*-test demonstrated a meaningful shift, with

the mean score rising from 58.07 ($SD = 7.73$) pre-program to 61.93($SD = 7.16$) post-program; $t = 4.51, p < .001$.

The third paired samples t -test showed that the Participants developed a more favorable view of English writing, pre-program ($M = 119.33, SD = 15.98$) to post-program ($M = 124.13, SD = 16.40$; $t = 3.86, p > .001$). As shown, the interventions led to statistically significant improvements across all three variables: self-confidence in English, willingness to communicate in English, and attitude toward English writing. Participants exhibited increased confidence, a greater willingness to engage in English communication, and a more positive attitude toward English writing. These findings indicate that the intervention had a meaningful impact on these language-related aspects, and the observed changes are unlikely to be due to random chance, as evidenced by the significance of the p -values. In relation to RQ2, the results showed that students experienced a notable increase in their self-confidence when participating in English classes.

Table 3
The Result of the Paired Sample T-test for Questionnaires

Paired Samples Test								
Questionnaire	Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Self-assessment: Confidence	7.13	4.67	1.20	4.54	9.72	5.91	14	.000*
Willingness to communicate in English	3.86	3.31	.85	2.03	5.70	4.51	14	.000*
Attitude toward English writing	4.80	4.81	1.24	2.13	7.46	3.86	14	.002*

Note. * $p < .05$ indicates a statistically significant difference.

Regarding RQ3, the findings suggest that DJW positively influenced students' willingness to communicate in English. Participants reported feeling more at ease initiating conversations and interacting in English during class sessions. Furthermore, students also demonstrated a more positive attitude toward English writing, indicating that the regular practice of writing through DJW helped foster a greater sense of comfort and motivation when composing in English.

Class participation

As mentioned, we used a holistic grading rubric, adapted from Mackenzie (2014), with nine items ranging from always, sometimes, and never (see Appendix B), to evaluate qualitative data from recorded class sessions. This rubric for class participation was applied before and after DJW, capturing the first two and last sessions of each class. The descriptive data obtained from the participation rubric and the result of the paired sample t -test for this rubric are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4*Participation Rubric: Descriptive Data*

	Participation Rubric	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	21.60	23.20
SD	2.22	1.93

Table 5*The Results of Paired Sample T-Test for Participation Rubric*

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences							
		Std.	Std.	95% Confidence		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
	Mean	Deviation	Error Mean	Interval of the	Mean Difference			(2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Participation rubric	1.60	1.05	.272	1.01	2.18	5.87	14	.000*

Note. $p < .05$ indicates a statistically significant difference.

A paired samples t-test showed that the participation rate increased from pre-program ($M = 21.60$, $SD = 2.22$) to post-program ($M = 23.20$, $SD = 1.93$; $t = 5.87$, $p < .001$). In response to Research Question 1, the analysis revealed a statistically significant increase in class participation scores following the implementation of DJW. The results indicated an average improvement of approximately 1.6 points between the pre-test and post-test, with a standard deviation of 1.05. Of course, some participants had larger changes, while others had smaller ones.

The 95% confidence interval of the difference, ranging from 1.0 to 2.2, suggests that the intervention had a positive impact. The intervention, therefore, led to a significant improvement in class participation scores, i.e., by the end of the intervention, the learners participated more in class discussions and communications than they did before the application of the DJW. The positive mean difference, narrow confidence interval, and low p-value all support this conclusion.

Interview Results

The insightful interviews with the L2 learners revealed a significant shift in their attitudes and engagement within the classroom. A large majority of learners (80%) reported a more positive attitude toward participation, while 20% remained neutral. This finding directly supports Research Question 1 — “Does the class participation rate of L2 learners increase after practicing DJW?” The fact that 12 out of 15 learners explicitly mentioned increased enthusiasm and ease in participating in class sessions and activities illustrates a clear positive shift in their classroom engagement. Their improved comfort in using English also aligns with increased self-confidence and willingness to communicate in English, reinforcing the findings related to RQ2 and RQ3 as well.

The interviews provided qualitative insights into the learners' experiences and perceptions of DJW, complementing the quantitative data collected through other methods. The impact of DJW on learners' attitudes and participation is summarized in Table 6. The learners' reflections further confirmed the positive influence of DJW on their classroom participation, as well as their increased willingness to communicate and write in English. These personal accounts reinforced the statistical improvements by offering insight into learners' evolving attitudes and engagement following the intervention.

Table 6

Interview Results and the Perceived Impact of DJW Based on Learners' Interview Responses

Name	Perceived Impact of DJW on Class Participation
Learner 1	"It was always difficult for me when I wanted to ask a question as if others didn't have any questions and I was the only one, who had questions, but after writing the DJs, my work became a little easier, I was much better, and I could express my opinion more easily. Every time I wrote a DJ, I really liked that you answered me and I wanted to talk to you more in English."
Learner 2	"DJW was a very good challenge for me as if it was telling me that you know how to do this, so go for it and don't say that I don't know. I used to come to the language class to pass the time and for being with my friend, but this semester I liked coming to the class myself, and it gave me a very good feeling to express my opinion in class or ask a question or present something in front of the class because nothing scares me from speaking. It was a very good experience for me; it made me learn more about English conversation. I like to continue dialogue journaling, about different topics in English in the next semesters even if we won't be asked to do so."
Learner 3	"When I wrote DJs in English, I had a very good feeling, like a desire and passion for writing in English, it was a very good feeling for me when I wrote about every topic I wanted, and the teacher answered me and it increased my interest in my English class."
Learner 4	"The more I progressed in writing the dialogue, the more peaceful my mind became and the easier my work became, which made it easier to write, after writing DJs, I could say something or ask you a question in class more."
Learner 5	"DJW helped me to write more in English, as you know I am not good enough to write in English and I use google translate but DJW helped me to try more to write in English. Some dialogues made me love myself more and motivated me to be active in English more."

Weekly Dialogue Journal Entries

Throughout the study, 127 DJs were collected from the learners. Notably, the responses in the learners' journals were not limited to single statements. The teacher employed a friendly and engaging approach, asking follow-up questions, expressing interest in the journal entries, and sharing common experiences. Learners covered a diverse range of topics, including their favorite books, food, sports, actors, movies, singers, jobs, daily routines, family members, houses, classmates, friends, trips, and more.

The journey through the weekly DJs was equally fascinating. During the first two weeks, learners used the traditional pen-and-paper method, as illustrated in Figure 1. Their entries were similar to textbook content, featuring general ideas and descriptive opinions on various topics; many learners also used this early opportunity to introduce themselves. By the third week, a shift occurred as students began to embrace technology. They transitioned to using WhatsApp Messenger (Figure 2) for their dialogues, facilitating more dynamic and interactive communication.

Figure 1

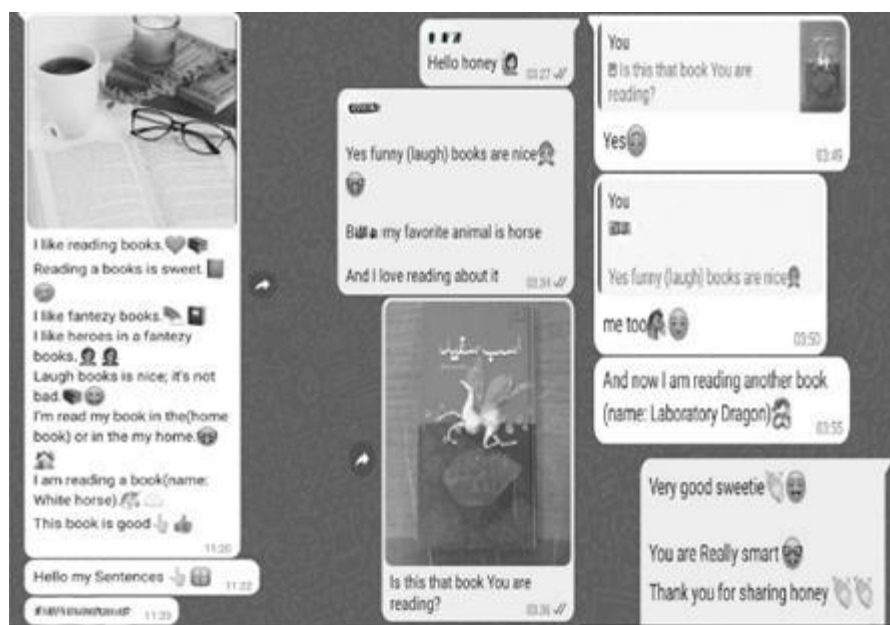
Examples of DJWs During the First Two Weeks of the Study Using Pen and Paper (Names Blocked Out)



Figure 2

The Start of DJWs through WhatsApp in More Dynamic and Interactive Communication

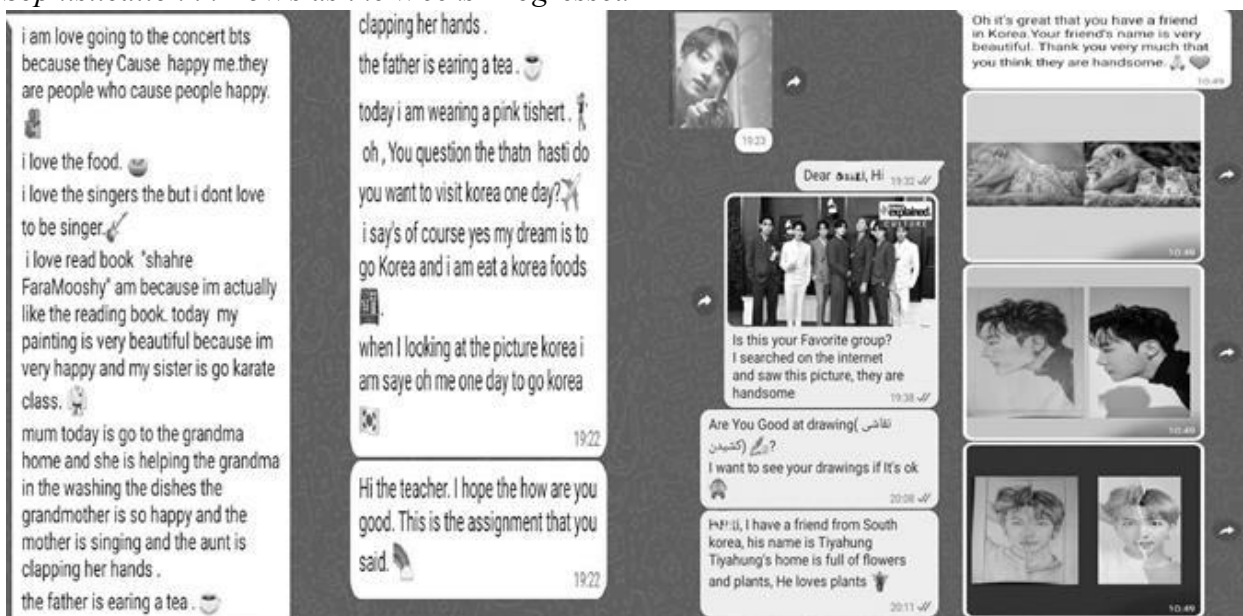


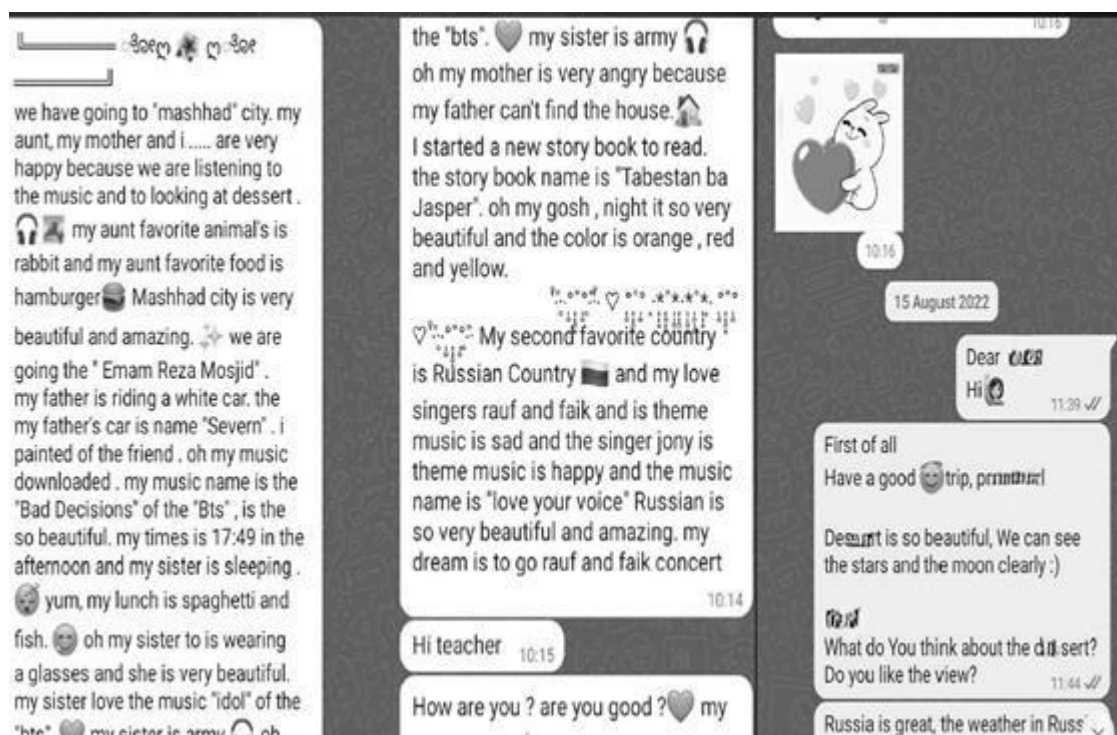


Content-wise, the dialogue entries evolved beyond mere text. Learners began incorporating media related to their memories, friendships, and daily life experiences. Initially, sentences were brief and concise, but as the weeks progressed, they became more sophisticated, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Sophistication in DJWs as the Weeks Progressed





Emotionally, the DJ process fostered a friendly rapport between learners and their teacher. They felt comfortable sharing detailed daily diaries in this supportive environment. English, as their L2 and our medium of communication, ceased to be a mere classroom subject; it became an integral part of their lives. As shown in Figure 4, the conversation shifted from a formal mode to a sincere, two-way exchange. Therefore, the learners embraced English as a language of expression and connection.

Figure 4

English Became an Integral Part of Learners' Lives in a Two-Way Exchange



The growth and evolution of learners' dialogue journal entries are evident when comparing early entries with those from the mid- and final phases of the treatment. Initially, learners used traditional pen-and-paper methods, resulting in entries that were textbook-like, focusing on general ideas and opinions. By the first or second week, a shift to digital platform (WhatsApp) facilitated more dynamic communication. Sentences evolved from being short and concise to more coherent and structured. Learners began sharing deeply personal experiences, creating a more engaging and friendly environment. English became an integral part of their lives, leading to genuine, two-way conversations with the instructor that continued for several months after the classes ended.

The analysis of weekly DJ entries complements and reinforces the findings related to all three-research questions. The gradual evolution from brief, formal responses to rich, personal narratives—particularly after the transition to WhatsApp—demonstrates increased learner participation (RQ1), greater self-confidence in using English (RQ2), and a heightened willingness to communicate in authentic classroom interactions (RQ3). The journals revealed how learners began to view English not just as an academic subject but also as a tool for meaningful expression and connection, thereby supporting the quantitative results with strong qualitative evidence.

Discussion

In this research, we aimed to delve deeper into the sociocultural dimensions of class participation and unwillingness to communicate in a foreign language (L2) setting. The findings of the study provide valuable insights into the potential of DJW as a social activity for enhancing L2 communication and fostering a more collaborative learning environment. To ensure a more comprehensive understanding, we triangulated the data by drawing on multiple sources of evidence, including rubric scores, questionnaire responses, and interview insights.

Results from Data Triangulation

To ensure the validity and depth of the findings, this section aims to triangulate the results derived from multiple sources—namely, questionnaires, interviews, and samples of dialogue journal entries.

Class Participation and Communication in English

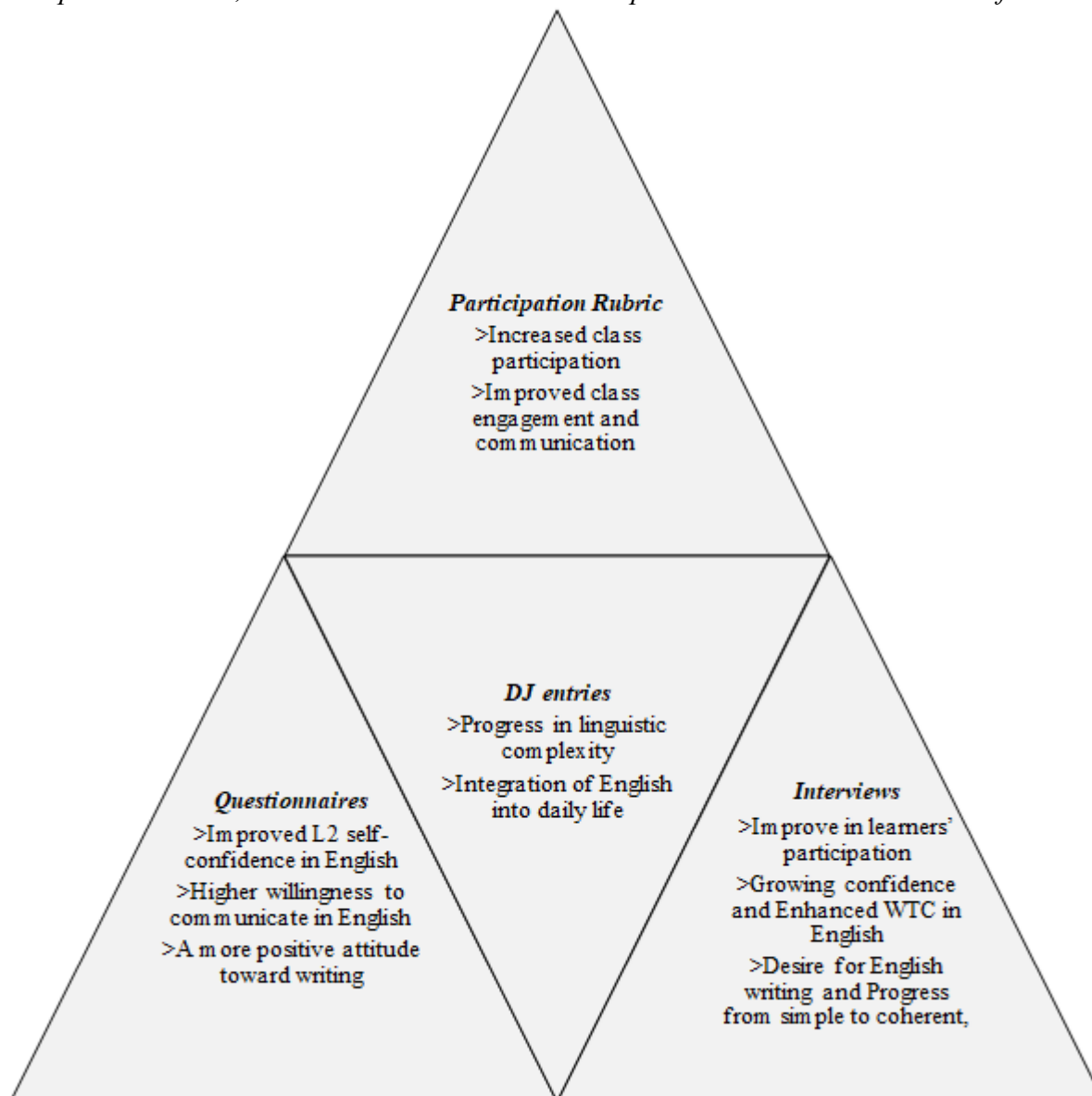
As evidenced by the rubric scores, there was a statistically significant increase in students' participation in classroom activities by the end of the course. Through writing dialogues, learners practiced language use in a meaningful context, transforming from passive listeners to active contributors in their DJs. They felt more motivated to engage in class discussions due to the ease of social communication gained from DJWs. Also, the questionnaire results revealed that after the DJW intervention, students reported increased self-confidence, greater willingness to communicate in English, and a more positive attitude toward English writing.

The findings were further supported by the qualitative data collected through interviews and textual/communicative data from weekly DJWs. The results indicated a significant positive shift in learners' attitudes toward increasing their participation in English after engaging in Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW). Qualitative data from interviews supported these findings. Additionally, analysis of weekly dialogue journals demonstrated an evolution from simple, textbook-like entries to richer, more expressive, and personalized communication. This shift reflected not only linguistic development but also a stronger emotional connection to English as a

means of authentic interaction. The Figure 5 illustrates a synthesized summary of the triangulated findings.

Figure 5

Triangulation of Data Sources in the Study. The Integration of Questionnaire Data, Interviews, Participation Rubrics, and DJ Entries Provided a Comprehensive and Validated Set of Findings



Implications

Considering that some learners exhibit low levels of activity, participation and oral communication in English in second language classrooms has consistently posed a challenge; DJW when implemented as a meaningful and social activity using modern communication tools, positively affected learners' communication and class participation. These challenges are particularly evident in Iran where learners have limited exposure to immersive English-speaking environments outside the classroom, a situation that is similarly reported in other EFL contexts where students encounter restricted opportunities for authentic English communication beyond the

school setting. In the Turkish context, societal factors have been identified as significant contributors to students' difficulties in speaking English. According to Kara et al. (2017), most Turkish students report that their environments, whether at home, at school, or in daily life, fail to provide sufficient language input to support the development of their speaking skills. Similarly, Algerian learners often face challenges in practicing English outside the classroom due to limited opportunities in everyday life (Azizi, 2018). Likewise, Zrekat and Al-Sohbani (2022), emphasizes that external factors, particularly the scarcity of opportunities to use English both inside and outside the classroom, contribute to the low English proficiency levels observed among Arab EFL university learners.

Unlike some prior research that approached psychological perspectives, this study adopted a sociocultural viewpoint to investigate how written dialogue could foster participation in such settings. The compelling results, gathered through a triangulation of instruments including questionnaires, rubrics, interviews, and journal analysis, offered a cohesive and mutually reinforcing picture of DJW's positive impact. These findings not only validate the sociocultural underpinnings of learner development but also highlight DJW's potential as a pedagogical tool to enhance classroom dynamics and promote active language use. This suggests a strong case for further research and broader application in similar educational contexts.

However, controlling all external variables was challenging, the combination of these controlled factors alongside qualitative interviews allowed for a more focused interpretation of the impact of journal writing on learners' willingness to communicate. While it is acknowledged that some external influences cannot be completely ruled out, the evidence suggests a meaningful contribution of the journal entries to the observed outcomes.

Conclusions

Based on the research into the socio-cultural aspects of DJW, several conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Enhanced Participation and Communication:** DJW as a social activity significantly contributes to increased participation and communication among language learners. It also boosts their self-confidence in using English.
2. **Multifaceted Assessment Tools:** The study employed three complementary tools—video rubrics, questionnaires, and interviews—to provide a comprehensive assessment of DJW's impact. These tools collectively enriched the findings, offering a nuanced understanding of DJW's effects. In addition, the content of the dialogues produced by the learners was also analyzed, further contributing to the depth and validity of the evaluation.
3. **Cultural and Sociocultural Influence:** The study underscores the role of culture and society in shaping cognitive and social development, aligning with Vygotsky's theory. According to Vygotsky, language development is crucial for both mental and social growth. DJW facilitates intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, demonstrating its role in enhancing social interactions.
4. **Contextual Relevance:** In the Iranian educational context, where respectful and friendly interactions with teachers are less common, DJW introduces a novel approach. It fosters a supportive and communicative environment, bridging gaps in traditional pedagogical practices.

Limitations of the Study

Results demonstrate a significant positive effect of DJW on learner confidence, participation, and communication skills. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study, including the small sample size and specific context. A thorough understanding of these limitations helps to clarify the scope and generalizability of the findings, paving the way for future research to address these aspects.

Absence of a Control Group

One limitation of this study is the absence of a control group that did not engage in DJW. As a result, it is possible that improvements in students' participation or willingness to communicate (WTC) may be influenced not only by the journal writing activities but also by their participation in the overall 2.5-month language course. Future research could address this by including a control group to isolate the specific impact of journal writing more clearly.

Instructional Demands and Teacher Workload

One notable limitation of this study is the need for a longer time frame to conduct such research, especially when working with a larger number of participants. Extended periods allow for deeper engagement, more consistent interaction, and richer data collection, all of which are essential for capturing the full impact of DJW.

Another important consideration was the amount of time and effort required to respond to the learners' DJ entries. Since the responses needed to be personalized and relevant to each learner's language level and the content they shared, the time spent on feedback varied significantly. Some students engaged consistently and in depth, while others wrote less frequently, specially, at the beginning of the course. Given that some journal conversations extended over several days, with learners continuously engaging in discussions around a single topic and sharing various related media (such as videos, articles, and images), maintaining a consistent presence and providing timely, relevant, and engaging responses was essential. This process was inherently time-consuming and demanded sustained attention from the teacher throughout the journaling period. This variation highlights the need for personalized support based on learners' individual progress and needs.

Areas for Future Research

To further explore the potential of DJW and address the limitations of this study, research with larger, more diverse samples is needed to validate the finding that DJW significantly enhanced learner participation and explore the applicability of DJW across different L2 learning environments. Understanding how DJW impacts learners in various contexts and with different learning styles could have significant implications for developing more effective and inclusive L2 teaching practices. Given the advancement of educational technologies, integrating digital DJs is highly encouraged, as it fosters more interactive, accessible, and meaningful language practice in modern classrooms. Future research could also examine the influence of various implementation strategies, such as teacher-guided prompts, peer feedback sessions, or technology-assisted journaling, and the long-term impact of DJW on L2 learner development, potentially through longitudinal studies that track learner progress over time.

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Appendix A*Questionnaire 1: Self-assessment: Confidence*

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I have the ability to learn English.					
2. If I do my best, I will achieve my best.					
3. I will improve if I continue to study.					
4. I like to speak English in class.					
5. Trying to speak English is more important than accuracy.					
6. I like to study with my group members in class.					
7. My contribution is as important as anyone else's.					
8. I participate even if I am embarrassed or nervous.					
9. I ask the teacher for help when needed.					
10. I participate in all activities in class					
11. If I do not understand, I say so.					
12. I do my best, whatever the situation.					
13. I keep trying to learn, even if I am nervous.					
14. It is ok to make mistakes when trying a new language.					
15. I do not worry about what other students think of my English.					
16. I do not worry about what the teacher thinks of my English.					
17. I believe in myself.					
18. I trust my feelings and emotions.					
19. I think about my learning (e.g. How I am doing).					
20. I am a good language learner.					

Appendix B*Participation Rubric**Participation rubric, adapted from (Mackenzie*

Item	Always	Often	Never
Learner attended all or almost of the classes			
Learner came to class prepared			
Learner did his/her best to speak only English in class			
Learner reminded and encourage his/her group members to speak in English			
Learner followed instructions			
Learner asks questions when he/she didn't understand			
Learner volunteered to answer questions teacher asked the whole class			
When classmate was talking in class, learner looked at and listened to them			
Learner did his/ her homework and reviewed class/lessons			