ABSTRACT

The thesis is an attempt to come up with a dialogic sociocultural approach based on the following dialogic criteria: intersubjectivity, situatedness, and responsivity. The approach is proposed for teaching academic writing for the Yemeni pre-service teacher-development context. The aim of the approach is to enable meaning/knowledge making that is culturally developmental and interculturally dialogic. The approach is conceptually and empirically argued for throughout the thesis. The researcher explains how this is done chapter wise below.

In chapter one, the researcher uses accounts from the Arabic-Islamic Golden age to illustrate the use of foreign languages for making new meanings/knowledge by Arabic scholars and how these criteria played a role in this process. Tentative working definitions have been given to cultural development and intercultural dialogue to connect the aims of the thesis and the account of the Arabic scholars' meaning/knowledge making for the purposes of development and dialogue. Cultural development, the researcher defines here in a broad sense to mean an individual development in terms of meaning and knowledge construction that has a larger influence on the broad culture beginning with the field to which the scholar belongs and (when possible) ending with his/her national culture. Intercultural dialogue, the researcher defines in terms of cross-cultural interaction between scholars (or to-be-scholars) within the particular cultures of two fields and/or two different social cultures. Using these definitions and relating it to the account above, the researcher argues that if the meaning/knowledge making process is dialogically intersubjective, responsive, and situated, the production of meaning/knowledge may be characterized by being culturally developmental and interculturally dialogic. Critiques of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and dialogic writing mainstream (as presented in Swales’ (1985) and Irene Ward’s (1997) practical and conceptual frameworks as the umbrella fields of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) have been provided. The dialogic sociocultural perspective is proposed to provide conceptual and practical alternative tools that fare well those provided for in the ESP and dialogic writing for meaning/knowledge construction that is developmental and dialogic. Then, the context and the need for the dialogic sociocultural approach for teaching academic writing for the pre-service teacher-development context in the researcher’s country are argued for. The chapter ends by expounding the significance of the study by the researcher.

Chapter two extends the critique that has begun in chapter one focusing on the EAP mainstream writing theory and pedagogy. It begins by discussing some inherited issues from the mother field ESP to EAP which are seen as detrimental to dialogue and development in the EAP
framework. These are seeing the major aim of the field as either enabling common core skills or subject specific skills, and the establishment of the field as mainly serving the native speakers' entrepreneurial and political purposes. These have been identified as affecting the whole theoretical and practical expertise of the field and thus negatively affecting its provision for dialogue and development of non-native learners of English. Then, the major school of writing theory and pedagogy (the Rhetoric School, the Composition or Process School, and the Genre School) are critiqued from the point of view of their provision for dialogue and development for non-native learners of academic writing. From the critique, it has been found that these different schools of EAP writing have to be seen as completing each other's mission of teaching academic writing; and as in need of a dialogic sociocultural framework to provide for the lack of the conceptual tools for seeing writing as a mediational tool for development and dialogue. Consequently, the main sociocultural concepts (mediation and internalization) have been argued for as having dialogic origins and explained in relation to the dialogic criteria. These together have been discussed as enabling dialogic and developmental meaning/knowledge making in an EFL teacher development context.

Chapter three is the final step in establishing the conceptual framework for the proposal. Some models and conceptual frameworks for teaching academic writing have been presented. The use of the criteria has been traced in these models and frameworks; and has been found as monologic. The origin and meaning of the criteria have been traced in the dialogic sociocultural approach of the researcher. Situatedness means situating self in and outside something. Intersubjectivity means a democratic way of interacting with the other and respecting the difference. Responsivity means forming an idea or opinion of one's own in relation to others' opinions. These criteria, defined so broadly, were intended by the researcher to serve as tentative criteria for teaching academic writing that the researcher believed may enable the emergence of culturally developmental and interculturally dialogic academic writing behavior. The researcher operationalized these criteria for academic writing classroom in terms of the nature of texts selected for reading, the nature of the tasks, and the nature of the teacher-student talk.

Chapter four is to be considered the first part of the empirical part of the study. It provides the rationale of the empirical study, the context, and the empirical research questions. It gives a detailed explanation of the aims of text selection, task design, and talk. It also gives an idea of the nature of the analysis that takes place in the following chapter as well as the limitation of the empirical study.
Chapter five is the second part of the empirical study. It presents the analysis of the students’ responses to the questionnaire and the tasks. The questionnaire has been used for evaluating students’ perception of the previous writing courses taught to them in their undergraduate level. It has been found that the writing courses taught to the students monologically and mechanically approached the criteria for meaning/knowledge making. The second part of the analysis has been for interpreting the use of the criteria dialogically and their impact on cultural development and intercultural dialogue along with that of the audience. This has been an analysis of the students’ responses after intervening for enabling dialogic use of the criteria. The intervention done by the researcher has been in terms of selecting texts, designing tasks, and talking to students while drafting their responses to the texts. It has been found from the analysis that students’ use of the criteria dialogically improved gradually from responding to the first task to the third task. There has been considerable evidence of the correlation between the increase of the dialogicality of the criteria and improvement in meaning/knowledge making that is culturally developmental and interculturally dialogic in students’ written discourse. Thus, it has been approved that the proposed dialogic sociocultural approach based on the criteria is valid for teaching academic writing for meaning/knowledge making that is developmental and dialogic.

Chapter six concludes the whole thesis. It provides a summary for the conceptual and the empirical parts of the study. The major findings of the empirical study enlisted in the chapter are as follows:

- The initial responses of the students given before the researcher’s intervention in terms of dialogue reflected poor dialogicality in the use of the three criteria. For example, in terms of responsivity, they did not tend to substantiate their ideas in relation to the other(s)’s idea(s). In addition, there was no evident scope for cultural development and intercultural dialogue. For example, there was no tendency to substantiate a cultural belief from another culture’s perspective (thus, using ideas from other cultures to broaden one’s frame of cultural understanding); neither was there a sign of adopting a culturally different perspective to extend a cultural framework; nor was there a new understanding of one/both the cultural perspectives as a result of both coming into contact with one another. See the findings from the analysis of the first draft of the first task.

- The students’ responses began reflecting gradual dialogicality in the use of the criteria from the second draft through the third task after the researcher’s intervention. The
meaning of dialogic criteria identified in chapter 3 served as the frame of reference for evaluating the dialogicality of the use of the criteria. For example, if a student exhibited an ability to use a theorist's idea from a different field (philosophy in the case of the present study) to support an argument in his/her own field (ELE), he/she then used the dialogic criterion *situatedness* effectively. This is because the student has reflected an awareness existing within and outside the field simultaneously. This awareness resulted in the development of the culture of the field in terms of mind action; i.e., the student was able to negotiate a new idea into the field dialogically. Abdullah's case in the second draft is a clear example of this.

- There was substantial evidence that whenever there was a growth in the use of the criteria dialogically, there was promising evidence in terms of the potential for cultural development and intercultural dialogue. For example, when a student shows a democratic interaction as he/she attempts presenting her/his ideas in relation to the theorists' (thus, exhibiting dialogic intersubjectivity), there was an evidence of a broadening of this student's cultural perspective. Asma'a's case in the second draft of the first task is an example of this.
- The repeated use of the criteria dialogically resulted in continuous occurrence of cultural development and intercultural dialogic meaning/knowledge making in their written academic discourse. It has also been seen that the students reflected both dialogicality and enhanced dialogicality when they address their writing to non-local audience.
- Dialogicality may be achieved at both/across the broad and the narrow cultural level and thus the cultural development and intercultural dialogue can be achieved at both levels.

On the basis of the above conceptual framework as well as the findings from the empirical study, it has been confirmed that the proposed dialogic sociocultural approach is valid for teaching academic writing for the specific purpose of cultural development and intercultural dialogue with the three dialogic sociocultural criteria as catalysts. The chapter ends up by suggesting some areas for further research.