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# Dialogic Discourse in Primary School Classrooms: A Deductive Analysis of Teacher Talk

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the types of discourses employed by teachers from different subject areas in a primary school. Designed as a case study within the qualitative research paradigm, the study was conducted with ten teachers working at a public primary school in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey. Of these participants, eight were classroom teachers, one was an English teacher, and one was a psychological counselor. The teachers' classroom dialogues were video-recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed deductively. The teachers' discourses were analyzed using the coding framework of authoritative and dialogic discourses defined by Saglam and Kanadli. The code definitions provided in their framework guided the identification and categorization of discourse types within the classroom interactions. The results showed that classroom dialogues were mostly characterized by authoritative talk. In other words, teachers displayed a statistically significant tendency to use authoritative discourse more often than dialogic discourse. Further to that teachers' classroom discourse patterns show relative consistency across different subjects, teaching experience, and interaction durations, indicating an overall tendency toward authoritative communication. Based on these findings, the study offers practical implications for improving classroom interaction patterns and provides recommendations for researchers and policymakers aiming to promote more dialogic and student-centered practices in primary education.

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## Introduction

Instructional discourse encompasses all forms of language activities that teachers engage in within the classroom, addressing students' multiple senses and playing a crucial role in teaching science as a form of evidence (Kuhn, 2010). It is essential for teachers to diversify the patterns and types of communication they use during instruction. Observations of classroom talk indicate that teachers typically employ one of several instructional discourse types; authoritative, a combination of authoritative and dialogic, or fully dialogic discourse (Reznitskaya, 2012).

Authoritative discourse refers to the reporting and presentation of specific knowledge that is considered to be correct or accepted as true (Mortimer & Scott, 2003). In authoritative, or monologic, discourse, only a single voice is heard one that represents the elite or dominant perspective. This form of language is regarded as highly formal and unquestionable, while conflicting voices are either ignored or suppressed (Karaaslan & Sağlam, 2020). Monologic teaching remains prevalent in many parts of the world today (Molinari & Mameli, 2010). This traditional approach conceptualizes learning as a one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, positioning learners as passive recipients of information. Unfortunately, such a model tends to diminish the quality of education. Although teacher-student interaction occurs in these classrooms, it typically involves sharing, agreeing upon, and repeating scientific facts or definitions, often alienating those unfamiliar with technical language. Consequently, the discourse quality in monologic settings remains low. In these classrooms, only a single voice, the authoritative voice of science, is heard, while students' personal views are largely silenced. In contrast, dialogic discourse is a process of bringing together and collaborating across different ideas (Bakhtin, 1981). In dialogic discourse, at least two distinct voices are heard each representing an individual's unique perspective. These voices cannot be replaced; they remain open to discussion and accessible to others (Karaaslan & Sağlam, 2020). Instruction in which dialogic discourse predominates is referred to as dialogic teaching. Dialogic teaching is a learning approach that harnesses the power of discussion to encourage students to think, understand, and learn (Alexander, 2008). Building on this perspective, dialogic teaching embraces multiple voices, fostering an environment that encourages and values diverse viewpoints without judgment. This form of high-quality classroom talk between teachers and students has been recognized as essential for meaningful learning (Mercer, Hennessy, & Warwick, 2019).

Dialogic interactions enhance students' cognitive development and thought processes. As Vygotsky (1929) argued, children learn through guided interaction with adults, not only by imitating their actions but also their modes of thinking. According to his later works (1978, 1981), meaning originates in social relationships and becomes internalized as part of one's individual cognition. What begins as speech directed toward others gradually transforms into inner speech, which mediates thought (Vygotsky, 1930). In other words, the dialogues once emerged on social plane re-emerges on psychological plane in the mind of the individual, mediating their thought process. Thus, language initially shaped by social interaction evolves into an internal dialogue that structures and guides thinking. Classroom dialogue, therefore, plays a vital role in cultivating students' reasoning. Encouraging students to share and critique ideas, engage in discussions, justify their reasoning, listen to others, and explore alternative solutions are central principles of dialogic learning (Dawes, Mercer, & Wegerif, 2000). These processes significantly contribute to students' intellectual growth.

In the present study, classroom talk is conceptualized as dialogue between teachers and students. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogism, dialogue is understood as the interaction of multiple voices that engage intentionally and freely, thereby constructing meaning. This perspective emphasizes the importance of students' voices, where learners articulate their own understandings rather than merely reproduce textbook content. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF, 2019) reported that dialogic teaching fosters improvement in students' language, mathematics, and science performance, while also enhancing confidence and engagement. Saglam (2022) found that dialogic talk is easy for college students to understand, and Saglam et al. (2022) reported that it increases students' active participation. Turhan and Kilinc (2021) compared the concept teaching processes of two science teachers, one using monological and the other dialogic instruction and found that the teacher employing dialogic instruction was significantly more effective in promoting conceptual understanding. Similarly, Cankara and Yilmaz (2021) examined third-grade science classroom discourse and concluded that a more dialogic approach better supported students' higher-order thinking, questioning, and idea generation skills. Extending this perspective, Ramasamy and Zainal (2023) investigated dialogic discourse in English as a Second Language classrooms in Malaysia and demonstrated that teachers' use of dialogic strategies facilitated collaborative knowledge construction among students. Nevertheless, many teachers remain unaware of the significance of dialogic pedagogy and often lack the skills to design and facilitate effective whole-class dialogue (Lyle, 2008).

The current study aimed to examine the nature and extent of dialogic and authoritative discourse in primary school classrooms, exploring how teachers' talk patterns reflect their communication preferences across different subjects, teaching experiences, and interaction durations. Specifically, the study sought to determine whether teachers employ dialogic discourse to promote student participation and alternative viewpoints, or whether classroom interactions remain predominantly authoritative and teacher-centered. Considering the opportunities that different types of discourse provide for students to express their voices, participate in learning, and engage actively in classroom activities, the findings of this study will contribute to understanding the discourse language that primary school students in a Turkish public school are exposed to and to offering implications for educators and policymakers in this context.

## Theoretical Framework

### Dialogic and Authoritative Discourse

The concept of dialogic discourse was first articulated by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), a Russian linguist and philosopher. Bakhtin observed that, unlike in many other texts, Dostoyevsky's novels exhibit a multiplicity of voices, where the perspectives of the characters are heard independently of the author's voice, thereby revealing diverse worldviews throughout the narrative. He described this phenomenon as polyphony, considering it both distinctive and valuable. According to Bakhtin, texts contain two types of talk: authoritative and internally persuasive (dialogic). Authoritative talk is characterized by a single, fixed voice; its meaning is rigid, situated in a distant, static zone, and does not permit interaction with other voices. In contrast, internally persuasive or dialogic talk accommodates multiple voices, is flexible, allows inter-animation among voices, and facilitates the emergence of new meanings.

Building on Bakhtin's ideas, James V. Wertsch (1991) explored the relationship between mind, meaning, and

dialogue. He argued that meaning arises only when two or more voices interact, making meaning-making inherently dialogic. Wertsch conceptualized dialogic talk as a continuous chain of utterances in which each statement addresses preceding ones and anticipates potential responses. Understanding and meaningful communication, therefore, require this dialogic exchange, or addressivity according to Vygotsky. In this framework, each utterance is simultaneously a response and an invitation for counter-utterances, allowing voices to interact freely within the communicative space. Dialogicality, in Wertsch's view, involves the inter-animation of multiple voices, with utterances serving as the fundamental units through which meaning and cognitive development occur. By contrast, authoritative discourse primarily emphasizes the recall of established scientific facts (Lyle, 2008).

In classroom interactions, teachers typically employ two primary forms of discourse: authoritative and dialogic (Mortimer & Scott, 2003). Authoritative discourse is predominantly teacher-centered, positioning students as passive recipients of knowledge. In this milieu, only the teacher's authoritative voice is heard, and contributions are not open to negotiation or discussion (Bakhtin, 1981). Students' ideas are generally marginalized unless they reinforce the established scientific perspective (Mortimer, 2005). Contributions that align with the scientific viewpoint may be acknowledged, whereas those that do not are often disregarded (Scott et al., 2006). Authoritative discourse thus involves the teacher guiding, reorganizing, and presenting knowledge according to the scientific framework, while students are expected to follow instructions and accept the scientific perspective as presented (Scott et al., 2006).

### Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research question: To what extent do teachers employ dialogic discourse in primary school classroom interactions?

## Method

A total of 10 teachers working in primary schools volunteered and were selected for the present study. Participants were recruited from a public primary school located in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkiye. The study group comprised teachers (8 female, 2 male) from different subject areas, including eight classroom teachers, one English language teacher, and one psychological counseling and guidance teacher. All participants were employed at the same school situated in the city center, where the student population was predominantly composed of Turkish students. To examine the nature of classroom interactions, video recordings of teachers' lessons were collected as the primary data source. Before the recordings, each teacher completed a demographic information form that included gender, age, teaching experience, subject area, school location, and class demographics. The recordings were conducted in the teachers' own classrooms and captured only episodes of active teacher–student interactions. To protect participant confidentiality, each teacher was identified by a code. All recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcriptions were analyzed to identify discourse patterns within classroom dialogues. Details regarding lesson topics, years of experience, subject areas, grade levels, and interaction durations are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Lesson Topics, Years of Experience, Subject Area, Grade Levels, and Duration of Interaction

| Teacher | Lesson Topic | Years of Experience | Subject | Grade Level | Interaction Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | Responsibility | 0-5 | Life Studies | Grade 3 | 28 min 26 sec |
| T2 | Being Organized | 0-5 | Life Studies | Grade 3 | 34 min 17 sec |
| T3 | Responsibility | 0-5 | Social Studies | Grade 4 | 30 min |
| T4 (male) | Peer Bullying | 6-10 | Guidance | Grade 4 | 9 min 58 sec |
| T5 | Greeting | 0-5 | English | Grade 3 | 15 min 30 sec |
| T6 | Force | 6-10 | Science | Grade 4 | 16 min 52 sec |
| T7 | Distinguishing Properties of Matter | 6-10 | Science | Grade 4 | 23 min 3 sec |
| T8 | Measuring Liquids | 11-15 | Mathematics | Grade 2 | 23 min 21 sec |
| T9 | Division | 16-20 | Mathematics | Grade 3 | 10 min 40 sec |
| T10 (male) | Life Cycle of a Plant | 16-20 | Science | Grade 3 | 24 min 1 sec |

A deductive approach was employed in the data analysis (Patton, 2002, pp. 453–454), guided by the theoretical frameworks proposed by Saglam and Kanadli (2019). Using the operational definitions presented in Table 2, the video transcripts were categorized and coded accordingly. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, two additional coders independently coded randomly selected transcripts using the same framework. The inter-rater reliability was calculated as 89 %, indicating a high level of agreement among coders (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 2. Operational Definitions of the Codes for Authoritative and Dialogic Discourse adapted from the Study by Saglam & Kanadli (2019)

| Categories and Codes | Code definitions |
|---|---|
| **1. Authoritative Discourse Codes** | |
| 1.1. Scientific view | Situations where the teacher asks for the scientific point of view. |
| 1.2. Judgement | Statements in which the teacher judge students' responses by comparing them with scientific explanations. |
| **2. Dialogic Discourse Codes** | |
| 2.1. Student view | Situations where the teacher asks for the students' personal opinions based on a specific context. |
| 2.2. Neutrality | Statements in which the teacher does not judge students' responses |

In the analysis of classroom interactions, the codes for authoritative and dialogic discourse distinguishes between different ways the teacher engages with students' ideas. Situations in which the teacher directs students to provide a scientifically accurate explanation are categorized under the Scientific View code. These instances emphasize

the canonical knowledge and guide students toward understanding the concept in line with established scientific principles. In contrast, moments in which the teacher elicits students' own ideas, perspectives, or reasoning within a particular context are coded as Student View, highlighting opportunities for students to contribute personal or context-based knowledge. When the teacher responds to students without evaluating their contributions as right or wrong, such interactions are assigned the Neutrality code, reflecting a dialogic stance that supports exploration and discussion. Conversely, statements in which the teacher explicitly judges the correctness of students' responses, confirming accurate ideas or correcting misconceptions, are coded as Judgement, representing an authoritative approach that directs the lesson toward scientifically accepted understanding. Below is an example of a dialogue illustrating authoritative discourse.

The following excerpt is from a lesson conducted by Teacher 6 (*T6*), in which she introduces the concept of force.

> **Teacher:** These things you mentioned — changing direction, returning to its original shape, pulling the cap — yes, look now. I'm turning on the light. What did I do to the button?
>
> **Students:** You pushed it.
>
> **Teacher:** Yes, I pushed it. All these actions are connected to a single main concept. Let's see what happens when a goalkeeper saves the ball. (She plays a video.) What did the goalkeeper do to the ball?
>
> **Students:** He intervened.
>
> **Teacher:** He intervened, yes. What happened to the ball?
>
> **Students:** It changed direction.
>
> **Teacher:** Correct. So, when a moving object changes direction, or when we pull, push, or stretch an object, what concept are we observing?
>
> **Students:** Force.
>
> **Teacher:** Exactly. The scientific explanation is that *force* is the effect that sets a stationary object in motion, slows down or stops a moving object, and changes its direction. Now, let's write this definition in our notebooks.

In this excerpt, the teacher's discourse displays a strong authoritative orientation, as she consistently guides students toward the scientifically correct explanation and evaluates their ideas based on accuracy. From the beginning of the dialogue, the teacher's questions aim to elicit responses that align with the scientific point of view rather than to explore diverse student opinions. For example, when she asks, *"What did I do to the button?"* and confirms with *"Yes, I pushed it,"* she directs students to recognize the underlying physical action that corresponds to the scientific concept of force. This statement demonstrates the Scientific View code, as the teacher interprets an everyday event through the lens of scientific reasoning. Similarly, when she asserts, *"All these actions are connected to a single main concept,"* she synthesizes students' responses such as pulling, pushing, or changing direction into a coherent scientific framework. This utterance exemplifies Scientific View, because it reflects the teacher's intent to establish scientifically correct understanding rather than inviting multiple perspectives. Her next question, *"So, when a moving object changes direction, or when we pull, push, or stretch an object, what concept are we observing?"* also serves as an authoritative move. She is not opening the floor to different viewpoints but guiding students to reach the correct scientific term. The teacher's concluding statement, *"The scientific explanation is that force is the effect that sets a stationary object in motion, slows down or stops*

*a moving object, and changes its direction,"* is a clear instance of Scientific View, since it provides the accepted scientific definition. Through this, the teacher finalizes the explanation and closes the space for alternative interpretations. In contrast, brief evaluative responses such as *"Correct, exactly"* and *"Yes, that's right"* represent the Judgement code, as they show the teacher's evaluation of students' ideas in terms of correctness or incorrectness. Rather than encouraging further discussion or reflection on alternative ideas, these utterances confirm the scientific accuracy of student contributions and reinforce the authoritative tone of the discourse. Overall, several instances of Scientific View and two instances of Judgement were identified in this excerpt. The dialogue therefore illustrates a typical authoritative discourse pattern, where the teacher seeks to lead students toward the scientifically correct explanation and evaluates their ideas accordingly. Although students participate actively, their contributions are filtered through the teacher's scientific lens, leaving limited opportunity for the emergence of dialogic discourse, which would have involved presenting and discussing different student viewpoints without judgment. Below is an example of a dialogue illustrating dialogic discourse.

The following excerpt is from a lesson conducted by Teacher 10 (*T10*), in which he explores the life cycle of plants. In the dialogue, individual students were denoted by an italicized capital *S.*

**Teacher:** Just from this title, what comes to mind? Let's think about it. The Life Cycle of Plants. Do plants spin around among themselves?

**Students:** No.

**Teacher:** What does "the life cycle of plants" mean?

**S2:** The life of plants.

**Teacher:** The life of plants. Good, that makes sense. Anyone else?

**S3:** The living of plants.

**Teacher:** The living of plants. Anything else?

**S4:** The growing of plants.

**Teacher:** Yes, excellent.

**S5:** The maturing of plants.

**Teacher:** Yes. Anything else?

**S6:** The germination of plants.

**Teacher:** Good.

**S7:** The sprouting of plants.

**Teacher:** The sprouting.

**S8:** The fruiting of plants.

**Teacher:** The fruiting of plants, meaning maturing, right?

**S9:** The growth times of plants.

**Teacher:** Now, plants, like humans, are born, start to grow, then age. And after a while, what happens to them?

**Students:** Die.

**Teacher:** They die, right? So how are plants born, have you ever thought about it? For example, how were the trees in our schoolyard born? How did they come into the world? I'm curious. We studied this last year. Remember we put beans in cotton inside small cups? Try to recall from last year.

**S10:** By people planting seeds.

**Teacher:** What if people don't plant them? How are plants born then?

**S8:** Teacher, for example, a plant's seed falls, and it grows that way.

**Teacher:** A plant's seed… If we plant a random seed in the yard, will pine trees grow like the ones in the yard?

**Students:** No.

**Teacher:** Think about it. If we take a seed from foods we eat at home or from stored legumes in the pantry and plant it in the garden, will we get pine trees like the ones in the yard?

**Students:** No.

**Teacher:** Why not? You said if we plant a seed, it grows.

**S11:** Because it could be a different plant's seed.

**Teacher:** A different plant's seed, like what? Maybe beans, right?

**S11:** Yes.

**Teacher:** A pine tree won't grow from a bean seed. Where does a pine tree come from? From the pine trees in the yard?

**S6:** From the seeds inside the pine tree.

In this excerpt, the teacher's discourse is predominantly dialogic, as students' ideas are actively elicited, acknowledged, and explored without immediate judgment of correctness. From the beginning, the teacher asks open-ended questions such as, *"Just from this title, what comes to mind?"* and *"What does 'the life cycle of plants' mean?"* These questions invite multiple student perspectives and allow for different interpretations, reflecting the Student View code. Students respond with a variety of ideas, including *"The living of plants," "The growing of plants,"* and *"The maturing of plants."* Even though these responses are not fully correct or related to the question directly, he affirms each response, *"Good, that makes sense," "Yes, excellent"*, without evaluating them as right or wrong, which aligns with the Neutrality code. Throughout the lesson, the teacher continues to encourage students to contribute examples from their own observations and prior experiences, such as S10: *"By people planting seeds,"* S8: *"A plant's seed falls, and it grows that way,"* and S12: *"A seed"* in response to fruit content. Each time, the teacher expands on students' ideas by asking follow-up questions like, *"If we plant a random seed in the yard, will pine trees grow like the ones in the yard?"* or *"What else does the seed need?"* These prompts encourage reasoning and elaboration without providing an immediate "correct" answer, maintaining the dialogic nature of the exchange. Even when guiding toward scientific terminology, such as explaining photosynthesis, the teacher first allows students to propose ideas: *"Who remembers? How do plants feed themselves?"* and *"They combine the water from soil, sunlight from the Sun, and air from the atmosphere to make their own food."* Only after students struggle to recall the term does the teacher introduce the label *"photosynthesis"*, demonstrating that the dialogue prioritizes student thinking and exploration before scientific codification. Overall, the excerpt shows numerous instances of Student View and Neutrality, with the teacher facilitating a space in which multiple student ideas emerge, are discussed, and are expanded upon, but not judged. The students' contributions drive the lesson, and the teacher's role is to scaffold understanding rather than evaluate correctness. This classroom interaction exemplifies dialogic discourse, where the focus is on sharing perspectives, exploring concepts collaboratively, and supporting students' reasoning processes without imposing immediate judgment.

## Results

Based on the operational definitions displayed in Table 2, the teachers' classroom talks were deductively analyzed. Table 3 displays the codes of the teacher discourses emerged in the classrooms.

Table 3. Analysis of Classroom Discourses

| Categories/codes | T1 | T2 | T3 | T4 | T5 | T6 | T7 | T8 | T9 | T10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Authoritative Discourse Codes (Frequency)** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Scientific view | 45 | 65 | 87 | 22 | 30 | 69 | 94 | 70 | 38 | 51 |
| Judgment | 19 | 22 | 49 | 4 | 8 | 45 | 20 | 25 | 4 | 3 |
| **Dialogic Discourse Codes (Frequency)** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student view | 0 | 14 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 20 |
| Neutrality | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 9 |

The analysis of classroom discourses across ten teachers revealed that authoritative discourse was the predominant mode of interaction. The Scientific View code, reflecting instances where teachers directed students toward scientifically accepted explanations, appeared most frequently across all teachers, with counts ranging from 22 (T4) to 94 (T7). The Judgement code, indicating when teachers explicitly evaluated students' responses as correct or incorrect, also occurred regularly, though at lower frequencies, ranging from 3 (T10) to 49 (T3). In contrast, dialogic discourse was notably less frequent. The Student View code, representing opportunities for students to share their own ideas, appeared sporadically across teachers, with counts as low as 0 (T1) and as high as 20 (T10). The Neutrality code, reflecting teacher responses that neither judged nor corrected students, was rare overall, appearing in only a few cases, such as T7 (14) and T10 (9). Overall, the data indicate a strong emphasis on authoritative discourse, with limited but variable instances of dialogic engagement in classroom interactions.

For each teacher, the frequencies of the Scientific View and Judgement codes were combined to calculate the total instances of authoritative discourse, reflecting interactions in which the teacher directed students toward scientifically accepted explanations or evaluated their responses as correct or incorrect. Similarly, the frequencies of Student View and Neutrality codes were summed to determine the total instances of dialogic discourse, representing occasions when students' ideas were elicited and considered without judgment. Based on these totals, the percentage of authoritative and dialogic discourse was calculated for each teacher by dividing the total instances of each discourse type by the sum of all coded instances for that teacher and multiplying by 100. For example, Teacher 3 (T3) had 87 instances of Scientific View and 49 instances of Judgement, giving a total of 136 instances of authoritative discourse. In contrast, T3 had 3 instances of Student View and 0 of Neutrality, resulting in 3 instances of dialogic discourse. The percentages were then calculated by dividing each total by the sum of all coded instances for that teacher and multiplying by 100. For T3, this resulted in approximately 98 % authoritative discourse and 2 % dialogic discourse. This method was applied for all teachers to quantify the relative prevalence of authoritative and dialogic interactions in their classroom practices. Table 4 displays percentages of authoritative and dialogic discourses emerged from these classroom practices.

Table 4. The Distribution of Teacher's Authoritative and Dialogic Discourse Percentages

| Teacher | Authoritative Discourse (%) | Dialogic Discourse (%) |
|---|---|---|
| T1 | 94 | 6 |
| T2 | 85 | 15 |
| T3 | 98 | 2 |
| T4 | 96 | 4 |
| T5 | 93 | 7 |
| T6 | 99 | 1 |
| T7 | 88 | 12 |
| T8 | 93 | 7 |
| T9 | 91 | 9 |
| T10 | 65 | 35 |

The overall distribution of discourse types across teachers revealed that authoritative discourse predominated in nearly all classrooms. Percentages of authoritative discourse ranged from 65% to 99%, while dialogic discourse occurred much less frequently, ranging from 1% to 35%. Teachers T3 (98%), T6 (99%), and T4 (96%) demonstrated the highest proportions of authoritative discourse, indicating a strong tendency to guide classroom talk toward scientifically accepted explanations and evaluative judgments. In contrast, T10 (35%) exhibited the greatest proportion of dialogic discourse, suggesting a relatively more open environment for multiple student perspectives. Overall, the results show that authoritative patterns overwhelmingly dominated classroom interactions, with dialogic engagement remaining limited across most teachers. To better illustrate the comparative frequencies, the table was transformed into a graphical representation below.

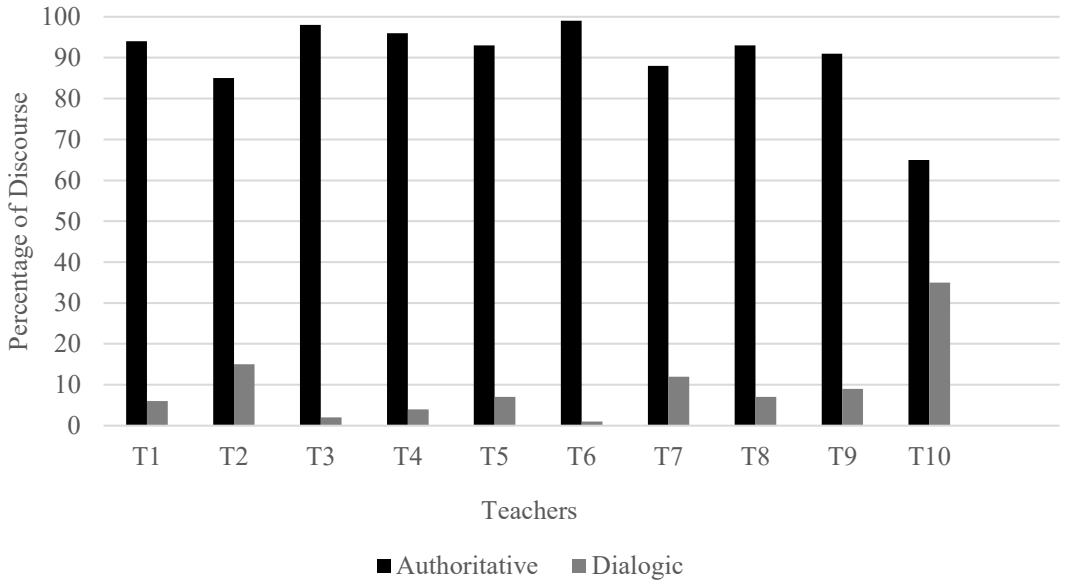


Figure 1. Distribution of Teachers' Authoritative and Dialogic Discourse Percentages

The analysis of classroom interactions revealed that dialogic discourse was employed minimally by primary school teachers. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of dialogic discourse varied significantly among teachers, ranging from a low of 1% (T6) to a high of 35% (T10). Overall, the majority of classroom talk was dominated by authoritative discourse, with dialogic elements present only occasionally. For instance, teachers T1, T3, and T6 demonstrated minimal use of dialogic discourse, at 6%, 2%, and 1% respectively, indicating a strong reliance on authoritative approaches such as requesting scientific explanations and judging student responses. In contrast, T10, a science teacher in Grade 3, exhibited the highest level of dialogic discourse (35%), suggesting a greater openness to eliciting student views and maintaining neutrality in responses. Other teachers, including T2, T5, and T7, showed modest engagement in dialogic practices, ranging from 7% to 15%, primarily through asking for students' personal perspectives and avoiding immediate judgment. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was conducted to compare the percentages of authoritative and dialogic discourse across teachers. The test indicated a statistically significant difference between the percentages of authoritative and dialogic discourse across teachers, $W=0$, $z=2.803$, $p<0.01$, indicating that teachers used authoritative discourse significantly more frequently than dialogic discourse. The analysis revealed a statistically significant dominance of authoritative discourse in teacher–student interactions. These findings indicate that while dialogic discourse is present in primary classrooms, it remains limited and unevenly distributed. That is, teachers seldom encouraged alternative viewpoints or maintained neutrality; instead, they frequently emphasized the scientific perspective or adopted a judgmental stance.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that teachers tended to display similar patterns of both authoritative and dialogic discourse regardless of subject area, teaching experience, or interaction duration. For example, although interaction durations ranged widely from shorter sessions, like T4's 9-minute guidance lesson to longer ones such as T2's 34-minute life studies lesson, these differences did not correspond to significant variations in dialogic talk. Similarly, distinctions in subject matter (e.g., Life Studies, Science, Mathematics, English, and Social Studies) did not yield systematic changes in discourse style; both science and non-science lessons were predominantly characterized by authoritative discourse. Moreover, teaching experience, which varied from novice (0–5 years) to highly experienced (16–20 years), did not appear to influence the degree of dialogic engagement. Taken together, these findings suggest that teachers' classroom discourse patterns remain relatively consistent across subjects, years of experience, and interaction durations, reflecting a general preference for authoritative communication.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings of this study underscore the predominance of authoritative discourse in primary school classrooms, with teachers primarily guiding students toward scientifically accepted explanations and evaluating their responses for correctness. Across the ten observed teachers, authoritative talk accounted for the majority of classroom interactions, ranging from 65% to 99%, while dialogic discourse was limited, occurring between 1% and 35%. This pattern indicates that even when students participate actively, their contributions are filtered through the teacher's perspective, restricting opportunities for multiple viewpoints and critical thinking. These results are consistent with previous research: for instance, Karaaslan and Saglam (2020) found that 99% of dialogues in chemistry classrooms were authoritarian, and Saglam et al. (2015) reported that among 17 primary school teachers, seven did not use dialogic talk at all, seven used it minimally (0–30%), two employed it at a low

to moderate level (31–50%), and only one teacher used it extensively, exceeding 90%. Ates et al. (2016) explored classroom discourse in terms of dialogic instruction to understand teachers' language use and ways to improve teaching processes. In the study conducted with four primary school teachers, dialogues in Turkish and social studies classes were analyzed. The findings revealed that the teachers' discourse was predominantly monological, particularly regarding authority, questioning, feedback, and collaboration. Similarly, Otten et al. (2015) compared monologic and dialogic discourse in mathematics classrooms and found that dialogic moments, particularly in reasoning, proof, and generalization processes, were relatively rare. Together, these studies highlight the persistent dominance of teacher-centered communication in various classroom contexts.

Interestingly, in the present study, the teacher (T10) who demonstrated the highest tendency (%35) to use dialogic discourse employed it primarily at the beginning of the lesson, during the stage where students were encouraged to generate ideas based on the topic title. However, as the lesson progressed, the same teacher shifted toward authoritative discourse while explaining the content. This finding aligns with Scott et al. (2006), who noted that dialogic and authoritative approaches often occur in sequence, with dialogic exchanges typically followed by more authoritative instruction. Similarly, Lehesvuori et al. (2011) emphasized that dialogic discourse in many classrooms is often limited to collecting students' initial ideas rather than being sustained throughout the lesson. There is a need for further research to understand how teachers use different types of discourse across various stages of a lesson, such as the introduction, concept development, and conclusion phases. Examining the dynamics of when and how dialogic or authoritative discourse occurs can provide deeper insights into the instructional decisions teachers make in real time.

Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers' tendencies in dialogic discourse did not differ noticeably across subject area, interaction duration, or teaching experience. Both science and non-science lessons were dominated by authoritative talk, and teachers with different years of experience displayed similar patterns. The limited use of dialogic discourse, even when present, often appeared in isolated instances, reflecting a general trend rather than consistent practice. Collectively, these findings suggest that the challenge is systemic, extending beyond individual teachers or subjects. The study's results underscore the need for structured professional development and targeted interventions to cultivate dialogic pedagogy in primary classrooms. Encouraging teachers to elicit student perspectives, maintain neutrality, and facilitate discussion of alternative viewpoints can foster more inclusive, intellectually engaging learning environments. Dialogic discourse has been shown to enhance reasoning, critical thinking, and collaborative skills while increasing students' confidence in expressing ideas (Mercer, Hennessy, & Warwick, 2019; Vygotsky, 1930).

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study, while providing valuable insights into the nature of classroom discourse in primary education, has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single public primary school in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkiye with a relatively small sample of ten teachers. Therefore, we are aware that the findings may not be generalized to other regions or educational settings with different cultural, institutional, or curricular characteristics. Second, the data were derived from video-recorded classroom

sessions that capture a limited time frame; thus, the observed discourse patterns may not fully represent teachers' broader instructional practices over time. Future research could address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse group of teachers across various regions, grade levels, and school types. Longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into how teachers' discourse patterns evolve over time. Additionally, future research should focus on practical strategies and systemic programs that support teachers in integrating dialogic discourse consistently into classroom practice. By promoting the regular use of dialogic approaches, primary education can move toward learning environments where students' voices are central, multiple perspectives are valued, and cognitive development is supported through meaningful social interaction.

In line with Turkey's recent education policies emphasizing student-centered and inquiry-based learning, further studies could explore how dialogic pedagogy can be systematically integrated into teacher education programs and in-service professional development initiatives led by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Moreover, research could investigate how curriculum frameworks, assessment practices, and classroom management traditions influence teachers' willingness and ability to engage in dialogic teaching. Designing and evaluating pilot interventions or professional learning communities that support teachers in developing dialogic skills could provide practical pathways for policy and practice. Such initiatives would align with Turkish Ministry of National Education's broader goals of fostering critical thinking, creative thinking, entrepreneurship, and communication skills among students, thereby promoting a more dialogic and participatory classroom culture within Turkish primary education system.

## Declarations

**Ethics Statement:** Ethical approval for this study was obtained from *Kilis 7 Aralık University* (Decision No. E-53470, dated June 13, 2024). All participants were informed of the purpose and scope of the study, and their voluntary participation was ensured. Written informed consent was obtained from the participating teachers and the school administration prior to data collection. In addition, permission for data collection was granted by the *Provincial Directorate of National Education*. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

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**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

**Data Availability:** The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the third author upon reasonable request.

**Note:** This paper is based on Irem Sultan Erdogan master's thesis.

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