

**Assessing the Efficacy of the Dialectic Method
in Promoting Advanced L1 and L2 English
Conversational Skills:
A Systematic Review Protocol**



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Abstract

This systematic review examines the use of the dialectic method (a mutually respectful philosophical dialogue where interlocutors contrast a thesis with its antithesis to arrive at a synthesis)¹ in terms of advanced first language (L1) and second language (L2) oral proficiency contexts. The focus of the dialectic method is on the pursuit of truth through the oral comparison of opposing views. Thus, the method lies at the intersection between cognition, speech, and reasoning. In fact, the ancient philosopher Plato credited dialectic as supreme among the academic disciplines (Plato, 1892a). I argue that since the method involves philosophical reasoning tasks at the highest levels of language, it should plausibly be seen also as a method for developing language abilities either in L1 or L2 contexts. This systematic review was conducted to define the dialectic method and explore the ways that it has been used to assist advanced L1 and L2 English speakers to even higher levels of proficiency. The findings presented in this dissertation are the product of a systematic review protocol approved by the International Database of Education Systematic Reviews (IDESR). A total of 53 databases were searched across fields such as education, linguistics, sociolinguistics, philosophy, theology, psychology, multidisciplinary, general academic, and grey Literature. A total of 1,482 records were retrieved; 353 duplicates were removed; and 1,129 titles and abstracts were reviewed for applicability. Of those 55 were sought for full-text screening, 53 were eliminated, and two reports were included in the qualitative synthesis. None met the criteria for quantitative synthesis. The qualitative findings provide useful insights into potential benefits of dialectic method interventions, which cannot be confirmed due to the lack of empirical evidence, yet provide the impetus for further research.

¹ Mascolo et al., 2025; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1892c; Michelet; 1871.

Acknowledgements

Studying at the University of Oxford as a postgraduate student has indeed been the privilege of a lifetime. As an American, I have been drawn to the ancient universities of the British Isles due to their impressive legacies which include centuries of academic excellence. Prior to studying at Oxford, I attained a Master of Letters (M.Litt.) degree from the University of St Andrews in Scotland, focusing on Analytic and Exegetical Theology. In studying at two ancient British universities I feel deeply humbled to tap into the ancient ethos that these great universities were built upon. Both universities have profound theological foundations grounded in an ancient ethos of humility, diligence, and a relentless pursuit of truth that transcends the mere acquisition of intellectual knowledge but could also be thought of as a spiritual practice. Central to this ethos are notions of virtue and merit.

The pursuit of wisdom, knowledge, truth, and beauty is a labour of ancient philosophers and theologians alike. The ancient motto of Oxford is *Dominus Illuminatio Mea*, a Latin phrase taken from Psalm 27:1 which means “The Lord is my light.” This notion evokes a higher sense of noble purpose to academic pursuits and a virtue ethic which walks in light and truth in the pursuit of excellence and noble service. In gratitude and humility before God, I dedicate this work to the Lord Jesus Christ and in honour of St. Frideswide the patron saint of Oxford whose legacy is enshrined at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Next, I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Faidra Faitaki. Faidra has inspired and guided me during my academic endeavours at Oxford. I have been truly fortunate to have benefitted from her mentorship in developing this dissertation throughout the academic year.

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List of Abbreviations

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CF	Corrective Feedback
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
IDESR	International Database of Education Systematic Reviews
JBI	Joanna Briggs Institute
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
WTC	Willingness to Communicate
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The dialectic method has ancient roots in ancient Greece. It is exemplified by the Platonic, Socratic and Aristotelian dialogues of ancient Athenian philosophers (Plato, 1892a). It involves two or more interlocutors and opposing arguments in the pursuit of an objective truth (Ryle, 1965, Michelet, 1871, Plato, 1892b, 1894). The dialectic method arguably stimulates higher level mental activity, reasoning, and articulate speech through continuous opposing statements that flow together in a single narrative, aimed at discerning the true nature of the object of inquiry (Plato, 1894; Kim & Park, 2025; Shin, 2024). For instance, if an argument is allowed to stand alone without opposition, then there is no impetus for further refinement. However, through the introduction of a counterargument each side must continually assert and defend its position based on logic, reason, and factual evidence. Thus, the interlocutors should not be seen as opponents but as companions.

1.2 Defining the Dialectic Method

The dialectic method may often be conflated with debate. However, critical distinctions must be made between dialectic and debate. While there might be overlapping elements in terms of opposing arguments, there are, nonetheless, critical differences as pertaining to second language (L2) pedagogy. For instance, debate is a competition between two opponents with opposing arguments; it is rule-based and typically defined by a clear winner and loser (Wu, 2023b; Wang et al., 2017; Schrott & Lanoue, 2008). By contrast, the dialectic method is defined by the pursuit of truth, is not governed by strict competition rules, and the outcome is not necessarily defined by a binary winner and loser (Popa, 2016; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1894). Rather, dialectic is defined by respectful discourse characterised by the establishment or refutation of propositions in the formation of a synthesis of both aspects of argument and counterargument combine to form a more comprehensive ontological view of the topic being addressed (Ryle, 1965; Mascolo et al., 2025). Hence, the focus of dialectic is on *winning* (mutual) the highest possible argument rather than an emphasis on the *winner* (individual) of an argument. However, it is important to discern between dialectic processes characterised by social interaction in a Vygotskian sense where any educational activity involves social interaction and dialectical processes between a teacher and student (Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980), versus conversations which have a strict dialectical method focus in the Platonic and Hegelian senses (Plato, 1894; Michelet, 1871). For example, in the

Platonic sense, dialectics seek to uncover mind-independent truths such as the *Allegory of the Cave* uncovers objective reality of the sunlight world previously unknown to the subterranean cave dwellers (Plato, 1894), or in the further refined Hegelian sense where focused interlocution with clearly defined thesis and antithesis form a synthesis characterised by attainment of new awareness and knowledge (Michelet, 1871; Ellis, 2001). Moreover, while the dialectic method may have some similarity to debate in that both explore both sides of a proposition, the dialectic method is focused on the attainment of knowledge and allows for a synthesis of proposition and opposition, which is distinctly different from traditional debate models with a clear winner and loser or winner-take-all model seen with debates with binary outcomes such as the Oxford Union Society (Mascolo et al., 2025; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1892c; Michelet; 1871; Wu, 2023b; The Oxford Union Society, n.d.).

1.3 Rationale and Objectives

If indeed, the dialectic method relates to the highest state of human reasoning and argumentation as established in foundational texts, then it can be inferred to have potentially substantial effects on both first language (L1) and second language (L2) speech advancement (Rost, 2024; Plato, 1894, Michelet, 1871). Hence, this dissertation investigates the efficacy of the dialectic method as an intervention for further advancing English oral proficiency and conversational skills in both L1 and L2 speakers with already advanced competence. Employing a systematic review protocol, it surveys current literature, distils relevant findings, and assesses method's impact on advanced L1 and L2 English oral proficiency. The systematic review was guided by the following research question:

RQ1: What is the current state of research on the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners?

The focus on oral proficiency and conversational skills was motivated by the fact that it is an important modality in terms of L1 and L2 assessment. For example, the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is administered in a wide range of academic, governmental, and professional purposes (Isbell & Winke, 2019; Swender, 2003). Moreover, oral assessments may take on a much greater role in academic assessments and professional evaluation contexts given the prevalent use of AI ghost-writing and the added impetus for safeguarding academic integrity (Pae & O'Brien, 2018; Karatay & Xu, 2025). Oral thesis defences, for instance, are a time-honoured practice as a candidate must defend their work in real-time in a pressure-tested interlocutory environment, so there will likely be increased professional and academic need

for in person oral proficiency (Chen et al., 2024; Sawalmeh & Dey, 2023). Therefore, this dissertation examines the dialectic method as a potential pedagogical tool for promoting the advancement of English L1 and L2 oral proficiency.

1.4 Dissertation Outline

This dissertation, a systematic review follows a published protocol titled *Assessing the Efficacy of the Dialectic Method in Promoting Advanced L1 and L2 English Conversational Skills: A Systematic Review Protocol*, published on the International Database of Education Systematic Reviews (**IDESR**) (Griswold & Faitaki, 2025). It is referred to throughout this dissertation as the **IDESR protocol**. See **Appendix A**.

This dissertation follows the following outline. This chapter identifies the impetus and research topic. The second chapter contains a literature review and identifies research gaps. The third chapter illustrates research design and methods. Results are presented in the fourth chapter, followed by a discussion of results in the fifth chapter. The sixth chapter concludes the study and articulates insights, limitations, and the impetus for further research. Appendices are listed after references.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Research Gaps

2.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to illuminate key concepts and highlight relevant scholarly work to date regarding the dissertation's research question: **RQ1:** What is the current state of research on the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners? Accordingly, the foundations of the dialectic method are discussed, so that the reader can fully ascertain what the term means and how it may be best applied to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) oral proficiency contexts

Given the limited number of studies specifically examining the use of the dialectic method in L1 or L2 oral proficiency, this literature review separates the discussion in two parts: one focusing on the dialectic method, and the other on oral proficiency assessments. This dual-track approach helps identify gaps in existing research.

2.2 The Dialectic Method: Foundations and Definition Refinement for SLA Purposes

It is essential to clearly define what the dialectic method entails and how it ought to be understood in the context of SLA research, as it may be interpreted in different ways across academic fields. For example, in the field of psychotherapy, Overholser and Beale (2023) argue that Socratic questioning can be a useful beneficial tool for therapists to understand their client's perspectives without personal bias. However, they stress that therapists must be well-versed in the *Platonic dialogues*² to appropriately apply *Socratic dialogue*,³ in a therapeutic context, and emphasise the need for more *qualitative research*⁴ on the topic. Therefore, when defining the dialectic method for oral language proficiency purposes this literature review surveys relevant literature from the foundational Platonic dialogues onward to fully elucidate how the term might be applied to SLA research or possibly discover ways that the term might be used in applied linguistics contexts with added precision.

² Philosophical works by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (Gill & Pellegrin, 2012).

³ A philosophical method of questioning and answering (Vittorio et al., 2022).

⁴ The study of phenomena with an emphasis on non-numeric data (Ouzzani et al., 2016).

2.3 Platonic Dialogues and Dialectic

Philosophical dialogues are a type of sophisticated conversation involving intellectually rigorous back-and-forth of ideas; and are particularly well-suited for exploring controversial topics (Covington, 2024). Philosophical dialogues reach evaluative ontological and teleological conclusions from diverse philosophical viewpoints and therefore differ from ordinary conversations by methods and intellectual (Covington, 2024). Dialogue and dialectic are varieties of philosophical discourse but differ in important ways: Socratic questioning appears to be more exploratory and open-ended, involving a question-and-answer format; in contrast, dialectic is more conclusive, characterised by intellectually rigorous methodological exploration of opposing viewpoints among interlocutors (Plato, 1892b; Plato, 1894; Ryle, 1965).

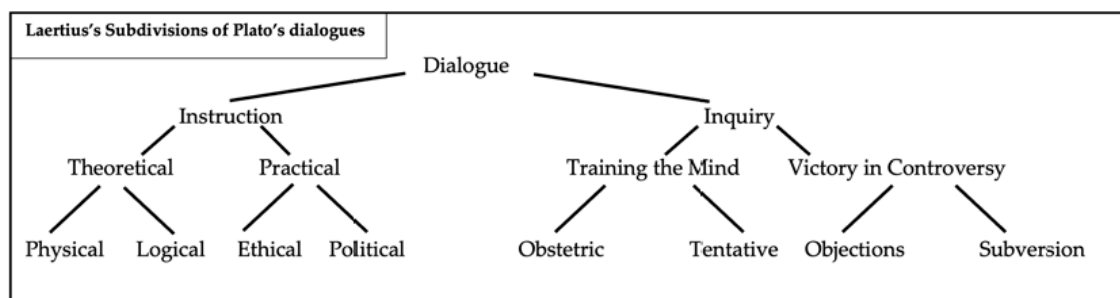
Dialogue and dialectic are both varieties of conversation, but dialogue inherently contains interruptions, or pauses, while dialectic represents a continuous flow of monological argumentation (Nikulin, 2020). Therefore, dialogue might be more staggered reflecting greater dissonance between interlocutors in contrast to dialectic interlocution characteristically smoother interlocution by participants who perform complementary rather than combative interaction. Dialogue and dialectic can both address complex topics, and the subtle distinction between dialogue and dialectic may not always be obvious to readers of the Platonic texts. **Figure 1** illustrates the dynamic and multifaceted nature of Platonic dialogue, which includes polemical staccato-like rhythm including competitive combative and subversive elements that are ostensibly absent from dialectic (Nikulin, 2020; Covington, 2024).

Dialogue can refer to a great number of situations, and is not necessarily adversarial by design (Tuler, 2000). Such non-adversarial examples come from a theological or doctrinal perspective (Finch & Huntly, 2023). However, the core ideas, such as fostering respectful and constructive conversations that welcome diverse viewpoints, are applicable across academic disciplines (Fouché et al., 1996). However, there may be elements of friction in dialogues. For instance, dialogue in a forthright and intellectually honest context is characterised by a willingness to call out hypocrisy, falsehoods and bias, which can in turn promote critical self-evaluation and humility (Andrae, 2024). Therefore, finding conversational partners who have different political and religious views can enable comparing and contrasting subjective views and serve as a beneficial remedy to biases and limited perspectives (Andrae, 2024).

Overall, dialectic appears to be more respectful to the participants than dialogue in that a true dialectic should not offend on personal grounds (Dafermos, 2018). For example, the demeanour of a dialectician is distinguished from the demeanour of a disputer (Plato, 1892c). The dialectician is inherently non-adversarial and respectfully points out logical errors in the opposing interlocutor tactfully and only in relation to the arguments themselves, and not to be taken personally (Plato, 1892c). In this way, the adversary will come to understand his own fallacies and blame their own limited perception while admiring the dialectician; combat arguing is self-defeating and leads to animosity (Plato, 1892c). **Figure 1** depicts the multifaceted aspects of Plato's dialogues which include controversial aspects and even exchanges that could be construed as combative, elements of which are categorically absent from dialectical discourse (Covington, 2024, p. 5; Laertius, 1925).

Figure 1

Laertius's Subdivisions of Plato's Dialogues



Note. Reproduced from Covington (2024, p. 5), who adapted it from Diogenes Laertius (1925).

2.3.1 Platonic Dialectic

The dialectic method has its roots in Platonic dialogues. Plato (1892a, 1894) placed it not only above other philosophical approaches, but also above all the arts and sciences. The Platonic dialectic is foundational to all subsequent iterations of dialectics e.g., Hegelian (Michelet, 1871; Ellis, 2001). The term *dialectic* is attributed to Plato, deriving it from the Greek verb *διαλέσθαι* (*thee-ah-LEHG-sthai*), which denotes a method of discussion involving questions and answers (Ryle, 1965). The dialectic method was employed by Plato and Aristotle as a pedagogical and philosophical methodology grounded in ontology, refining theories, rebutting fallacies, and valuing intellectual honesty over rhetorical trickery (Ryle, 1965). The emphasis of Platonic dialectic seems to be more on the quality of the process

itself and the end product, whether knowledge or wisdom, rather than on personal victories or status ascribed to individuals.

The dialectic method reflects the scientific ethos of pursuing *truth* but is philosophically articulated as seeking illumination of understanding (Popa, 2016; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1892b, 1894). This is captured in Plato's metaphor of the cave, where a person has been in a cave their entire lives begins to see the sunlight for the first time; this prompts them to resolve the mental contradiction between the darkness of the subterranean world where they dwelled and the sunlight world they see for the first time (Plato, 1894). Similarly, the dialectic method allows the philosopher to attain an intellectual refinement towards "absolute truth" (Plato, 1894, p. 418) or perceive a mind-independent reality, unobstructed by bias and subjective limitations. If indeed, as Plato argued, the dialectic method is a superior discipline which sharpens the mind as described in foundational texts, then the applied linguist could infer that the method might also improve language skills, whether in an L1 or L2 context. Exploring contrasting paradigms and resolving contradictions would seem to have benefits in increasing oral language proficiency.

Ultimately, language serves not only human communicative objectives but basic human needs for interaction and fellowship. Gellrich (1994) contends that Plato's dialectic, which is oriented toward unity rather than division, is a sort of captivating magic involving the art of persuasion and containing an element of *eros* or erotic communion between speaker and audience or between interlocutors as division is broken down and a type of unity is achieved. From this angle, the dialectic method contains humanising elements which transcend the pursuit of factual knowledge by crossing over into interpersonal dimensions. Its impact on language learning is likely multifaceted but could arguably serve as the impetus for making connections with others across a wide spectrum by seeking out diverse interactions and authentic experiences across languages and cultures.

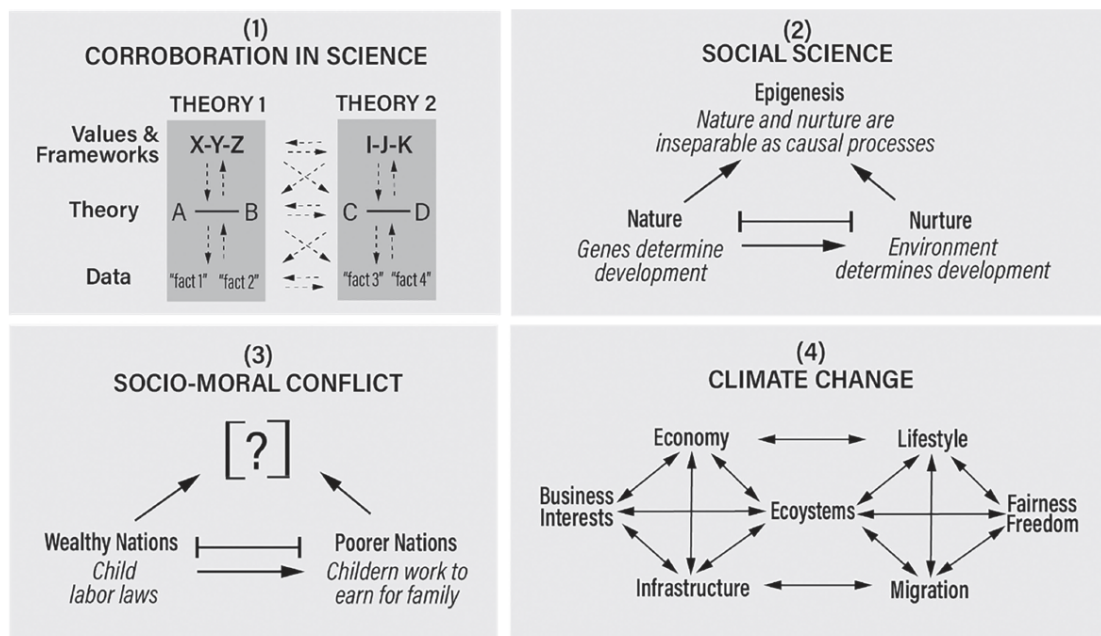
2.3.2 Dialectical Thinking

In order for theories to be compared dialectically they must establish a shared vernacular as a framework for understanding as well as for the scientific synthesis of opposites to occur (Mascolo et al., 2025). For example, the dialectical integration of opposites allows scholars to move beyond superficially false dichotomies, such as *nature vs. nurture*, which promotes an either-or paradigm (Mascolo et al., 2025). Thus, true dialectical thinking promotes an integrated picture from two angles, somewhat like the brain processing visual information from two eyes where incoming information is complementary. However, a dialectic inherently seems to integrate opposing views which are more pronounced and seem to have inherent contradictions. **Figure 2** may appear complicated, but it can be simplified by focusing on the fact that each quadrant depicts opposing concepts which in combination create dichotomous contradictions that need to be reconciled, e.g., nature vs. nurture (Mascolo et al., 2025, p. 17). If this model of dialectical thinking is applied to L1 or L2 oral conversations, then thought and speech are combined in ways that likely provide the impetus for language advancement which stems from resolving structural contradictions.

Figure 2

Dialectical Thinking: The Power of Dialectical Thinking for Solving Intractable Problems

Dialectical Thinking



Note. Extracted from (Mascolo et al., 2025, p. 17).

Various SLA models articulate a process of advancement. For instance, Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis describes $i + 1$ where i represents a learner's current interlanguage level and $+ 1$ is the comprehensible language one level higher but still comprehensible and able to be acquired (Krashen, 1982), and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) when applied to L2 learning describes what a learner can do on their own versus what they can do with the assistance of a teacher; tasks that cannot be performed, even with assistance, are considered beyond a learner's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1980). If these SLA theories are applied to the dialectic method, they might show how the dialectic method as a *task-based activity* provides a framework for consistently moving participants to higher levels of advancement through intellectually rigorous philosophical dialectical conversations that are both socially mediated and gradually increasing in difficulty (Xu & Fan, 2024; Jackson, 2022; Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Skehan, 2003; Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980; Krashen, 1982). However, due to the required foundation needed it is likely that dialectic method conversations require a significant baseline proficiency which is why the method is likely most suitable as an intervention for advanced speakers who aspire to even higher levels of oral proficiency advancement.

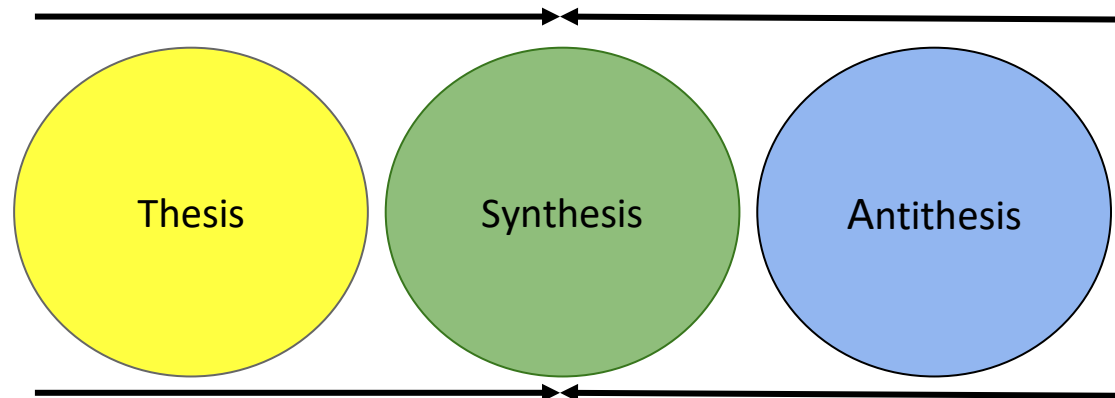
Dialectical thinking appears to be evoked by polarising issues to include those of a political, social and economic nature (Mascolo et al., 2025). Philosophical and theological issues, such as the theism versus atheism debate seem to be particularly well-suited for dialectical thinking because they contain clear opposing and address fundamental ontologies of existence (Oxford Union, 2025, "This House Regrets the Death of God"). The dialectic method can also be a technique for improving oral argumentation proficiency at high levels of proficiency (Bachman, 2024; Nikulin, 2010). Dialectical thinking may play a critical role in language proficiency advancement to the extent that it stimulates metacognition, acting as a potential catalyst for critical interrogation of one's own thoughts which arguably leads to improved speech (Panggabean & Triassanti, 2020; Shin, 2024). The dialectic method can illuminate complex issues and depolarise contentious political and social debates; likewise, dialectical thinking can act as both an elixir for understanding irony and remedy to counter dogmatism (Mascolo et al. (2025).

2.4 Hegelian Dialectic

Hegelian dialectic shares several attributes with Platonic dialectic, from which it derives its important philosophical foundations. Hegelian dialectic is similar to Platonic dialectic, yet the former's ontological framework stresses an infinite, dynamic push-pull interplay between thesis and antithesis (Michelet, 1871; Plato, 1894). Hegelian dialectic is ostensibly better at discerning truth by placing greater emphasis on the tension between opposites (Michelet, 1871). However, since the Hegelian dialectic clearly articulates thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, it might be easier for a layperson to comprehend the dialectic method concept than would be discernible by only reading the Platonic dialogues. **Figure 3** is a visual depiction inspired by Michelet's (1871) description of Hegelian dialectical method with three clearly defined elements i.e., thesis (a proposition, notion, or idea), antithesis (the opposite proposition, notion, or idea), and synthesis (a combination of the two). This shows that the dialectic method produces an outcome that blends opposing theses into a greater ontological picture of the topic of discussion.

Figure 3

Hegelian Dialectic



Note. A visual illustration of the Hegelian dialectical model created by the author, inspired by Michelet's (1871) textual description.

A unique feature of Hegelian dialectic is that it illustrates a solution to false dichotomies (amalgamation over exclusion) and by its very design promotes reaching a common ground and the merging of ideas between interlocutors. Ellis (2001) describes Hegelian dialectic in terms of binary movements where two opposing views mutually come towards each other. One of the potential risks with this model of dialectic, however, is the implication that both thesis and antithesis carry equal weight, and the synthesis will always be an equal 50/50 mixture and indicates the need for objectivity on both sides to reach syntheses that are more precarious.

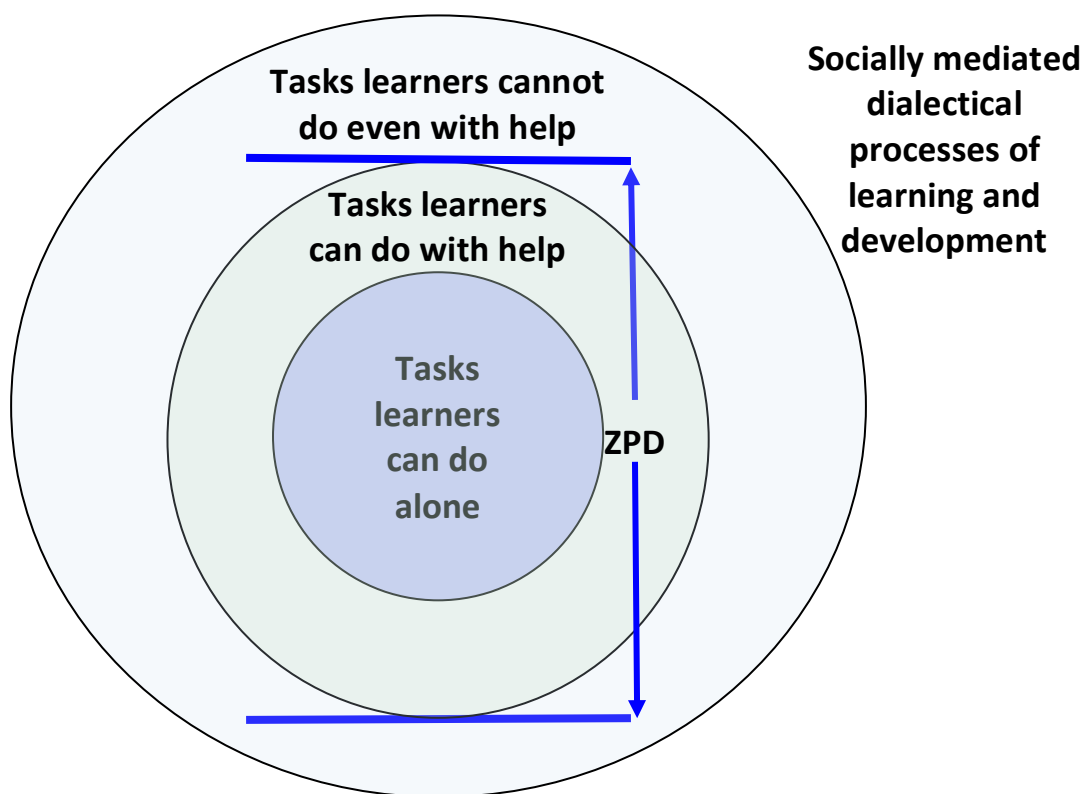
2.5 Vygotskian Dialectic

Dialectic Theory also inspired Vygotsky who was influenced by Marxism, which viewed history as shaped class struggles and clashes between opposing social, political and economic forces (Kaplan, 2010). Marxists' dialectical notions were grounded in Hegelian dialectics (Marcuse, 2013). According to Lantolf and Poehner (2023), the Marxist dialectical model which articulates social, political, and economic divisions in the material world influenced Vygotsky's sociocultural and psychological frameworks, which highlights contradictions between opposing forces as inherent but also as the catalyst for transformation. True dialectics require opposition, and the synergy that occurs when elements are combined. Vygotsky referred to the unity of hydrogen and oxygen which forms water, which in turn can extinguish fire (Lantolf & Poehner, 2023; Vygotsky, 1987). Dialectic in L2 classrooms ought to produce similar synergies, by combining opposites and resolving

contradictions to form something new. However, it is important to view Vygotsky's dialectical concepts through a nuanced perspective and a separation between social dialectical processes where any social exchange between people can be seen as inherently dialectical exchange between interlocutor A and interlocutor B. **Figure 4** illustrates Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept in the greater context of socially mediated dialectical processes of learning and development between teacher and learner, and depicts an extended range of abilities in social contexts rather than autonomous contexts (Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980).

Figure 4

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Socially Mediated Dialectical Processes



Note. Author-created diagram illustrating Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development interpreted in terms of socially mediated, dialectical processes of learning and development (adapted from Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980).

Vygotskian dialectical processes seem to define the educational environment as a whole and could be applied to any educational task (Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980). While this aspect of Vygotsky's work provides a useful layer of nuance to this research by illustrating socially mediated dialectical processes, the actual research question is more narrowly

defined, and, as stated in the abstract (p. 1) “dialectic method” this study specifically refers to “a mutually respectful philosophical dialogue where interlocutors contrast a thesis with its antithesis to arrive at a synthesis” (Mascolo et al., 2025; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1892c; Michelet; 1871). Hence, the dialectical method as an intervention must be deliberately structured and maintain a focus on teleological outcome, as seen in Platonic dialogues and Hegelian dialectics. This makes it distinct from general educational and learning tasks, including those typically associated with L2 learning.

2.6 Sociocultural Dialectics in L2 English Learning

L1 and L2 classrooms are naturally an environment that is a microcosm of greater sociocultural forces and societal contexts beyond the classroom (Pham & Nguyen, 2024; Kayyali, 2025). Sociocultural forces may include socioeconomic, class, cultural, religious and ethnic factors which may create impetuses for both engagement and division among peoples (Lantolf & Poehner, 2023; Pham et al., 2022). Dialectically opposing forces are implicit to the classroom context, even when overlooked by teachers and not deliberately woven into curricula or course content. During classroom discourse, students frequently must activate mutual schemas (interpretive modelling) when two parties are interacting (Rawlings & Childress, 2021). Thus, dialectical processes between classroom interlocutors are likely to occur implicitly in contexts characterised by efforts in addressing opposing ideas and resolving contradictions and promote mutual understanding (Rost, 2024; Putnam et al., 2016). In these contexts, intensive effort must be dedicated to active listening by both parties to ensure balanced and mutually enriching interaction (Rost, 2024). In terms of the promotion of oral fluency, task-based activities between partners involving L1 or L2 conversations can promote oral fluency while dialectically promoting mutual understanding by examining tensions, addressing paradoxes, and resolving contradictions (Skehan, 2003; Putnam et al., 2016). In fact, the dialectic method can be viewed as an L2 interactive oral conversational task-based activity characterised by interlocutors grappling with real-world topics of varying levels of difficulty in dynamic social, interactional, interpersonal skills, and intercultural contexts (Qiu, 2024; Williams, 2024).

An example of this process is offered by Kim and Park (2025), who describe the dilemma of cognitive dissonance experienced by a group of North Korean refugees learning English as a Second Language (ESL) at a community college in the United States through the dialectical lens of Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1979). North Korean refugees in the United States present an opportunity for a sociocultural dialectic between two opposing

paradigms in terms of vastly different mental and cultural schemata characterised by the North Korean society they left and the American society where they are learning a new language while also adapting to a vastly different sociocultural paradigm (Kim & Park, 2025). This article goes well beyond English linguistic and technical skills, towards a shift in how learners fundamentally perceive the world, resolve contradictions between vastly different societal models, and adapt to notions such as free market economics and democracy. This study highlights how dialectics contributes to language development while resulting in cognitive changes. It also demonstrates how the dialectic method may facilitate cross-cultural competence in the context of ESL learning.

2.7 Misapplication of Dialectic Method Terminology in SLA

There may be risks in properly applying concepts to interventions as previously noted in terms of Socratic questioning and the need for professionals to properly understand the concept before applying it in the field of psychotherapy (Overholser & Beale, 2023). Similarly, applied linguists in either SLA research or L2 classroom contexts must understand the dialectical method to ensure its proper application. For example, a study conducted by Negueruela-Azarola (2011) was framed as a Vygotskian dialectical intervention for university-level L2 Spanish teachers (i.e., a dialectic method delivered through an online discussion board over a 12-week period). However, a mischaracterisation of the dialectical method and mislabelling and combining of interventions without clear dialectical focus resulted in murky and conflated results. The intervention ostensibly aimed to improve all modalities: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. A clear intervention for improving the speaking starting proficiency levels were undefined as were identified outcomes (i.e., no pre or post-tests). It was also unclear how the speaking modality was to be carried out via an online discussion board. Another major weakness of the study was its failure to demonstrate a clear application of the dialectical method, and the concept of dialectic at times appears to be misapplied. The study mentioned dialectical terminology such as *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis* (as per Hegel, e.g., Michelet, 1871) but there were no clear ties between these terms and the intervention. Rather, there were multiple interventions happening at once across modalities without a clear dialectical focus. The online discussion forum posts, capturing the participants' background, were called the *thesis*, the academic theories that participants were introduced to were called *antithesis*, and the hundreds of forum posts and responses were supposedly intended to produce a *synthesis* combining the two. One problem with that approach is that one's own personal background might not be opposed to

a pedagogical theory, therefore allowing no synthesis. Another problem is that each participant will have a different view, resulting in broad discussions that do not capture a true dialectical focus (which is supposed to stay tightly focused on specific dilemmas) (Putnam et al., 2016; Woźniak, 2022). The practical misapplication of the dialectic method in Negueruela-Azarola (2011) indicates the need for implementing well-defined dialectical interventions.

Bachman (2007) provides another example of misusing the term *dialectic* by identifying *three* aspects of language assessment which are more complementary rather than contradictory, i.e., tasks, abilities, and interaction. The author claims that these are interwoven dialectically yet seems to misinterpret the meaning of the term. By combining three things that are complementary, rather than contradictory, there the term dialectic starts to attenuate and lose its true meaning by overbroad application. It might be important for academics in the field of applied linguistics and SLA to read foundational texts before applying the dialectic methods in the language classroom, as similarly noted in the field of psychotherapy by Overholser and Beale (2023).

2.8 English Language Oral Proficiency: Importance and Assessment

In this section I explore the oral proficiency assessment portion of the research question. It is vital to address the importance of the speaking modality and reasons why it might be neglected when compared to other modalities of listening, reading, and writing. Secondly, it is pertinent to consider how oral proficiency is measured so that interventions for improving English oral proficiency can be assessed for efficacy.

2.8.1 Oral Language Modality's Paradoxical Marginalisation

The oral modality of language is arguably the most important (e.g., speaking is essential in professional contexts) but often the least emphasised in many L2 curricula (Masuram & Sripada, 2020). Most of the L2 English classroom time is spent on listening and reading, while a small amount of time is dedicated to speaking (Newton & Nation, 2020). This is likely since the L2 speaking modality is more challenging to assess (e.g., availability of testers, human subjectivity factors, etc.) and is a historically neglected modality of testing listening and reading are often the modalities that L2 learners are tested on (De Jong, 2023; Fan & Yan, 2020). Testing oral proficiency is more challenging because of resource allocation: it is difficult to conduct oral assessments for large groups, and Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) require dedicated one-on-one sessions with qualified evaluators (Newton & Nation, 2020).

By contrast, the administrative burden of reading and listening comprehension tests is lower.

For instance, Don (2020) highlights the challenges of oral L2 English proficiency for learners in Malaysia, where conversational English proficiency is important in interviews and jobs but often marginalised in the teaching of English as compared to other modalities like reading and writing. Relatedly, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) proficiency level guidelines are tied to being able to perform tasks in the target language, yet do not always elucidate actual ways to carry out tasks in an L2 (Don, 2020; Council of Europe, 2020). This issue illustrates the need for oral language pedagogy that is connected to oral proficiency testing. Oral proficiency is essential for human communication and fulfilling real-world communicative needs. Classroom approaches to enhancing oral proficiency should mirror these needs.

Another reason that L2 English learners may not advance in oral proficiency might relate to not seeking opportunities to communicate orally. Finding conversation partners requires a certain level of motivation and it might be easier to default to autonomous activities like reading. Relatedly, significant barriers to L2 English advancement, may result from the lack of willingness to communicate (WTC), a lack of grit, or limited opportunities to communicate in English in real-life situations (Lee, 2022). Lee (2022) contends that EFL learners must be given opportunities to grapple with challenging topics and be able to perform oral task-based activities including oral presentations.

The dialectic method could be a means of bridging these practical gaps. For instance, task-based discourse approaches can provide speakers with opportunities to engage in discourse and produce paragraph-length utterances (Dodds, 1992). The dialectic method could be seen as a task-based activity that would provide both L1 and L2 English users opportunities to gradually increase the length and complexity of their verbal utterances (Xu & Fan, 2024; Jackson, 2022; Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Skehan, 2003) in a pressure tested environment, which explores the tension between opposing theses .

2.8.2 Metacognition and Oral Proficiency

Another domain for which the dialectic method might be helpful is metacognition.

Metacognition is well researched in the SLA but arguably much more research is needed regarding metacognitive strategies in the speaking modality because oral proficiency is complex and mastery is a particularly arduous task (Zhang et al., 2022; Wenden, 1998). This

subsection looks at the role of metacognition in English language proficiency which could apply in L2 or L2 contexts and assess the potential relevance of the dialectic method. First, there are several activities which have the potential to enhance English L2 oral proficiency by raising learner metacognitive awareness of oral fluency dialogues such as questioning, role-plays, and corrective feedback (Garbati & Mady, 2015). Relatedly, Shin (2024) studied the impact of metacognition strategies on the improvement of L2 English conversational ability from learners with an L1 Korean background. Ninety university students in South Korea participated in the intervention, which lasted for one semester (approximately four months) and included three hours of instruction per week divided into 75-minute sessions. The intervention was based on modified movie dialogues, role-playing, collaboration and feedback. Oral proficiency was assessed using a t-test, and the results suggested a significant difference between the participants pre- and post-test speaking scores (24.79 vs. 27.17), $p < .05$, even though there was no contextual explanation regarding the scores by themselves as there is no reference to any recognised language proficiency scale.

Shortcomings of the study included the absence of clearly articulated English proficiency levels, and not tying pre and post test scores to any known guidelines, e.g., ACTFL, CEFR, render stated improvements ambiguous and not anchored to discernible capabilities (ACTFL, 2024; Council of Europe, 2020). There was also no mention of the range of the measurement scale, which also makes it difficult to ascertain how significant the improvements were. The gender of participants was not mentioned. Even though teaching metacognition strategies appeared to have had a positive impact, it is not entirely clear whether there was any benefit of the intervention itself, or if the increase in speaking scores was simply a result of having more speaking practice.

Teaching metacognition strategies could be a useful component of preparing students for in-class dialectic method discussions and may enhance its efficacy as an intervention in English oral advancement (Bachman, 2024; Zhang et al., 2022). Thus, teacher-facilitated peer-to-peer dialectic method dialogues would seem to combine multiple elements in promoting L2 oral fluency in a task-based communicative language teaching methodological approach (Foster, 2020; Masuram & Sripada, 2020).

2.8.3 Oral Proficiency Interviews

There are limits to autonomous learning through passive learning modalities such as reading and listening to digital content and students may experience L2 learning fatigue if substituting genuine human interaction with autonomous L2 learning apps (Liu et al., 2021). It could be argued that SLA pedagogy ought to place a greater emphasis on L2 speaking both in class and out-of-class contexts (Lin, 2025). Humans appear to have evolved predisposition for meaningful face-to-face interactions including both oral communication and gestures (Levinson & Holler, 2014). Even proponents of cognitive approaches to language including Chomsky (2006) recognise the importance of the speaking modality as a primary mode of language externalisation. Speaking is vital during in-country target language immersion experiences (Roskvist et al., 2014) and is a critical modality in academic and professional settings in terms of presentation and collaboration (Hadizadeh, 2025). In fact, effective face-to-face oral communication is a key component of elite university admissions interviews and a fundamental aspect of job interviews (Hassan et al., 2021; Weston, 2021). In the United States Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) developed by the U.S. Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in the early 1950s was significant because it contained structured proficiency levels, assigned performance descriptions, and provided the impetus for further academic testing and development (Nakatsuhara et al., 2020). One potential shortfall of OPI assessment relates to a degree of subjectivity by evaluators, and narrative performance descriptions which are subject to interpretation (Nakatsuhara et al., 2020; De Jong, 2018). On the other hand, standardized rating scales give such assessments academic and professional credibility and are perceived as “high-stakes tests of English and other languages” (Tavakoli, 2024, p. 1). Mislevy (2018) articulates that oral communication, both generally and in OPIs, combines thoughts, actions, domain-specific reasoning and representations. In oral communication. Cultural patterns, cross-cultural awareness and pragmatic knowledge are important when interacting with people across an increasingly interconnected world (Rodiatul Audiyah Lubis et al., 2025; Bavandi Savadkouhi & Mostafaei Alaei, 2023). For example, DeCapua and Wintergerst (2016) contend that oral communication that is deficient in pragmatically appropriate and cross-cultural components may convey a perception of rudeness, poor manners, and social awkwardness despite one’s true intentions.

Looking at empirical evidence of L2 English oral proficiency assessment for advanced L2 English learners, Halleck (1992) examined L2 English ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview scores for adult learners with an L1 Chinese background. The study included 107 adult university

students in Tianjin, China majoring in a variety of subjects at university. Overwhelmingly, at the advanced level, evaluators placed greater weight on overall communicative ability and the capacity to perform communicative tasks than on grammatical mistakes. For example, out of 116 reasons that oral proficiency raters cited for awarding advanced and superior level ratings to examinees, 111 reasons were related to strategic communicative competence, while only five concerned discrete point grammatical accuracy (Halleck, 1992). This implies that it is far more important that advanced and superior speakers can convey advanced concepts effectively, and they are not penalised for minor grammar errors, provided the overall strategic message is conveyed accurately. Anecdotally, this might be comparable to a highly educated Oxford professor whose native language is not English. Lacking L1 “native-like” intuitions they might make occasional production errors despite having otherwise attained a high degree of mastery in English. Relatedly, the dialectic method might assist both L1 and L2 English learners in producing longer utterances and enhancing strategic competence by optimising argumentation, rhetoric and both the quantity and quality of speech production. Consequently, the method would likely assist advanced speakers improve their OPI scores, particularly in terms of strategic competence.

2.9 Dialectic Method Oral Language Proficiency and Artificial Intelligence

While conducting the literature review relevant literature relating to Artificial Intelligence (AI) appeared both in terms of AI’s ability to perform dialectic method conversation agents with humans and in-depth ability to explore diametrically opposed academic viewpoints (Han, 2024; Butson & Spronken-Smith, 2024). More broadly, (Crompton et al. (2024) describes AI as a tool for both oral proficiency enhancement (practice) as well as assessment (which could include OPIs with AI as the evaluator). Moreover, newer OPIs assessed and scored by Artificial Intelligence are already being implemented and are fully capable of assessing fluency, comprehensibility and holistic oral language proficiency appraisals (Tavakoli, 2024). The AI-assisted dialectic method could be used to advance L2 oral proficiency, but also in academic or classroom contexts where there are two clearly opposed paradigms. Furthermore, AI could be used for multiple pedagogical and evaluative roles such as interlocution partner, teacher or evaluator, while demonstrating emotional intelligence and empathetic communicative qualities (Xi et al., 2025).

2.10 Dialectical Method Promoting Virtue and Dialogue Civility

Inevitably the dialectic method in advanced L2 settings will inherently need to address a wide range of complex social, economic, religious, and political topics in order to push participants (either L1 or L2) to higher levels of advanced oral English proficiency. Therefore, it is essential that these environments characterised by controversial dialectics promote graceful speech, disallow hate speech, avoid extremes, and are edifying all participants (Torseth, 2022; Webster, 2015). Since the dialectic method is grounded in discussion of opposing paradigms there is a particular risk for heightened emotions and for the classroom dynamics to become potentially adversarial, especially when addressing precarious topics related to religion or politics. However, during an OPI, current geopolitical events are testable questions and examinees must be prepared to address those types of questions eloquently if they hope to attain a high mark. Therefore, during OPI preparation, there must be properly structured rules to keep classroom discourse grounded in civility with an aim of advancing proficiency, even when risks of an inflammatory classroom environment when discussing sensitive matters of an ontological, philosophical, religious, or cultural nature. Sustaining an atmosphere of mutual respect is likely one way to keep a dialectic focused on core issues and arguments based on their merits and untainted by personal animus towards interlocutors. This approach is most likely to keep thoughts and speech following in a dialectic method classroom with the aim of advancing either L1 or L2 English oral proficiency while discussing controversial topics.

2.11 Research Gaps

Since the dialectical method has been around since ancient times, there is many foundational texts and embodies the interdisciplinary wisdom of ancient Athenian philosophers (Plato, 1892b; 1894) but there does not appear to be much literature on L1 or L2 development through the dialectic method. There has been work done regarding whether debate is a useful pedagogical tool in L2 English classrooms including a systematic review by Wu (2023b). The dialectic method is arguably different from traditional debate, where the former is more of a philosophical pursuit of truth and the latter can be characterised as a competition with votes culminating in triumph or defeat (Torseth, 2022; Plato, 1892b; Wu, 2023b, The Oxford Union Society, n.d.). Hence, this systematic review seeks to examine the current state of research of the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners, who aim to increase their oral language proficiency for advanced uses for academic purposes (e.g.,

university entrance exams, graduate school performance), and in professional settings requiring advanced oral language proficiency. The review seeks to find the current state of literature and its potential efficacy on advanced L1 and L2 English proficiency in accordance with the research question identified in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

3.1 Overview and Definitions

The protocol for the systematic review was pre-registered on IDESR (Griswold & Faitaki, 2025).

For the purposes of the search protocol, the dialectic method was defined as discussed in the literature review and variations of the dialectic method were included (Platonic, Hegelian or Vygotskian), alongside closely related terms (e.g., Socratic questioning).

Moreover, *advanced* English was defined by the proficiency levels taken from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2024), and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020). **Table 1** illustrates the proficiency levels extracted from each organisation's system for defining language proficiency. A reasonable assumption from the outset before data collection and analysis was that the dialectic method would require sufficient prerequisite skills of oral argumentation. Therefore, the top three categorical language proficiency levels were considered from ACTFL and CEFR respectively (ACTFL, 2024; Council of Europe, 2020).

Adult learners from any background were considered and defined as any person age 18 and up. The rationale for adult learners was that only advanced speakers were considered and that in either L1 or L2 contexts dialectic method conversations represent advanced content, and it was assumed that adult speakers would most likely possess the prerequisite language skills to participate in dialectic method oral conversations.

Table 1*Defining Advanced Oral Proficiency for Dialectic Method Research*

Defining Organisations	Proficiency Descriptions
ACTFL	Distinguished: The individual can negotiate, use persuasive and hypothetical discourse, comment thoughtfully on a range of general topics, and tailor language to a variety of audiences.
	Superior: The individual can support opinions, hypothesize, discuss topics in abstract terms, and handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation using multi-paragraph discourse.
	Advanced: The individual can participate in interactions on topics of personal and public interest, narrate and describe in present, past, and future time frames, and handle a situation with a complication using paragraph-level communication.
CEFR	C2: Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1: Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
	B2: Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Note. Adapted from ACTFL (2024), and Council of Europe (2020).

However, due to research on the topic being limited (as evidenced by pilot searches), literature from all time periods was considered.

3.2 Eligibility: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The development of inclusion and exclusion criteria helps to define a productive search strategy which enables gathering texts with direct applicability. Although the research question focuses on the current state of research and generally favours studies published within the past five years, no strict time limit was applied due to the anticipated scarcity of relevant publications. The intent in developing inclusion and exclusion criteria is to facilitate the efficient refinement of reports that will be evaluated in this systematic review (Boland et al., 2017). The inclusion/exclusion criteria used in the present study are presented in **Table 2** below.

Table 2

Eligibility Criteria

CATEGORY	INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA	RATIONALE
Bibliographic information.	INCLUDE 1: Studies with a full reference or sufficient information. EXCLUDE 1: Studies with insufficient bibliographic information.	RATIONALE: Without sufficient bibliographic information, retrieval of works is infeasible.
Date of publication.	INCLUDE 2: Include studies published on any date. EXCLUDE 2: Do not exclude studies based on their publication date.	RATIONALE: Preliminary scoping searches showed that research on this topic is scarce, therefore, all available work will be included.
Population.	INCLUDE 3: Adult learners ages 18 and up. EXCLUDE 3: Learners under the age of 18.	RATIONALE: This research focuses on adult learners, e.g., in college learning environments, professional learning contexts, etc., with an emphasis on upper intermediate through distinguished proficiency. In many countries L2 English is compulsory in national primary and secondary educational contexts, so there are vast populations of L2 English speakers throughout the world with novice through intermediate L2 English language proficiency. However, this systematic review focuses on learners interested in further developing their L2 English proficiency to higher levels as

		<p>the dialectic method is known to be of benefit to them and might not work for learners with lower levels.</p>
	<p>INCLUDE 4: Any adult learner of L2 English from any L1 background. EXCLUDE 4: Exclude no L2 English learner based on their L1 background.</p>	<p>RATIONALE: This systematic review considers adult L2 English learners from any L1 background to ensure a comprehensive review of the topic and efficacy of the intervention regardless of L1 background.</p>
	<p>INCLUDE 5: Any adult L1 speaker "native speaker" of English ages 18 and up. EXCLUDE 5: ALL L1 speakers "native speakers" of English below the age of 18.</p>	<p>RATIONALE: This systematic review attempts to compare "apples to apples" by comparing the intervention impacts on adult L1 speakers of English with adult L2 learners of English, which may help in ascertaining the extent to which L1 and L2 English speakers are similar / different.</p>
<p>Intervention.</p>	<p>INCLUDE 6: Studies involving the dialectic method (and closely related terms, e.g., Socratic dialogue, etc.) in the advancement of adult learners of English (as an L1 or L2) which are designed to promote the advancement of English ability with a specific focus on dialogue, conversation, interlocution, or oral proficiency. EXCLUDE 6: Exclude studies which DO NOT use the dialectic method (and closely related terms, e.g., Socratic dialogue,</p>	<p>RATIONALE: This systematic review is very focused on the dialectic method as an interventional tool to advance the L1 and / or L2 English oral proficiency of adult learners ages 18 and up. Therefore, studies that are not relevant are either not relevant or would distract from the research focus.</p>

	etc.) in the advancement of adult learners of English (as an L1 or L2) which are designed to promote the advancement of English ability with a specific focus on dialogue, conversation, interlocution, or oral proficiency.	
Comparator.	INCLUDE 7: In intervention studies: non-dialectic method intervention group (i.e., a control group), when applicable.	RATIONALE: Including a control group is an empirically grounded best practice.

<p>Outcomes.</p>	<p>INCLUDE 8: Primary research studies reporting any measure of dialectic method intervention in L1 and / or L2 English conversational skills input including cognitive, interlocution, input / output, interactional, and sociocultural dynamics. Include studies that report quantitative (e.g., pre-post test scores) and/or qualitative data (e.g., cognition, interaction, output, sociocultural theory, motivation, and self-regulation). Include outcome measures related to advanced speaking proficiency in L1 and L2 English, such as the use of logic, reason, rhetoric, persuasion, emotional appeal, style, articulation, lexical complexity, strategic competence, confidence, enunciation, speaking style, fluency, length of utterances, prosody, accent, and lexical complexity, etc. Include quantitative and qualitative data.</p> <p>EXCLUDE 8: Systematic reviews and studies that provide narrative evaluation of an educational program but provide no measures of dialectic method intervention effectiveness. Exclude theoretical and speculative thought pieces that lack actual data collection and analysis regarding the dialectic method in L1 and L2 advanced English conversational skills, unless philosophical literature that elucidates and contextualizes the topic.</p>	<p>RATIONALE: A synthesis of empirical findings in this field of literature is impossible without the reporting and evaluation of concrete data. Well defined and articulated data is vital to have a proper "apples to apples" comparison and meaningful comprehensive analysis.</p>
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Study design.	<p>INCLUDE 9: All types of study design.</p> <p>EXCLUDE 9: Do not exclude studies based on the research design but exclude studies based on research design but exclude secondary research such as systematic review.</p>	<p>RATIONALE: Due to the likely scarcity of relevant research in this field and scope, excluding studies based on design type would too narrowly restrict and possibly inadvertently exclude relevant research.</p>
Setting.	<p>INCLUDE 10: Include typical adult learning environments, e.g., colleges, universities, cram schools, prep schools, online lessons, societies, clubs, organizations, private tutoring settings, psycholinguistic laboratories, etc., where L1 and L2 English dialectic method conversational pedagogy would most likely take place.</p> <p>EXCLUDE 10: Exclude other organizational dialogue forums that lack a specifically pedagogical focus, e.g., the United Nations (UN), World Economic Forum (WEF), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), etc., unless specifically studied from the perspective of any field of linguistics (e.g., applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, etc).</p>	<p>RATIONALE: While international organizations are places for debate and even dialectical interlocution, their focus is not pedagogical in nature, and while there may be substantial amounts of published materials in English by L1 and L2 speakers of English on a range of interesting topics, the non-educational / non-pedagogical nature of those organizations make it more likely that data obtained from them would more likely conflate and confuse than elucidate the research focus of this systematic review unless specifically studied from the perspective of any field of linguistics.</p>
Publication status.	<p>INCLUDE 11: Include peer-reviewed articles, organisation reports, books, master's and doctoral thesis, organizational publications, societal publications and minutes, and conference proceedings.</p> <p>EXCLUDE 11: not exclude studies based on their publication status.</p>	<p>RATIONALE: Include the grey literature on this topic to minimise the impact of publication bias.</p>

<p>Language.</p>	<p>INCLUDE 12: Include studies published in English (the primary target language of this systematic review) and other languages known by the authors including German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish (if peripherally / incidentally acquired during the course of the search).</p> <p>EXCLUDE 12: Exclude studies that are not published in English, German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.</p>	<p>RATIONALE: Since this systematic review focuses on advanced L1 and L2 English conversation skills it is inferred that relevant literature on the topic should be published in English, yet publications in languages other than English will be considered if they are exceptionally relevant. English is largely the lingua franca of academia. Due to efficient time and resource management the primary focus will be on English language publications and in languages known by the authors including German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.</p> <p>INCLUDE: 12.1: Studies that focus on the dialectic method for the target languages of German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.</p> <p>EXCLUDE: 12.1: Studies that do not focus on the target languages of English, German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.</p>
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3.3 Information Sources: Databases Utilised

Since the dialectic method and oral language proficiency are multidisciplinary in nature, databases for all relevant academic disciplines were identified. Broadening the scope of a bit beyond linguistics and education databases to include fields such as philosophy, theology, and psychology that also utilise the dialectic method was seen as necessary as part of a robust academically rigorous search strategy. **Table 3** below lists the 53 databases that were included in the search.

Table 3*List of Databases*

Education Databases:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) ● British Education Index ● Australian Education Index ● Education Collection (including ERIC via ProQuest) ● Education Abstracts (including EBSCO)
Linguistics Corpora Databases:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LLBA (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts) ● MLA International Bibliography ● Linguistics Database ● Linguistics Collection ● CORIS ● Sketch Engine ● British National Corpus ● Oxford Text Archive ● iWeb Corpus ● Language Science Press ● Linguistic Data Consortium (LDC) ● Open American National Corpus ● Lexicons of Early Modern English ● Cambridge University Press eBooks ● Gale Digital Scholar Lab ● Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) ● Eighteenth Century Journals
Philosophy Theology Databases:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Philosopher's Index (with Full Text) ● ATLA Religion Database (with ATLASerials Plus) ● American Philosophical Association ● British Philosophical Association ● International Encyclopedia of Ethics ● Royal Institute of Philosophy ● Arts & Humanities Citation Index (ISI) ● New Testament Abstracts ● Old Testament Abstracts

Psychology Sociolinguistics Interdisciplinary Databases:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● APA PsycArticles ● PsycINFO ● CINAHL ● Sociological Abstracts ● Treatments That Work ● Oxford Academic Books (including University Press Scholarship) ● Sage Reference
Multidisciplinary and General Academic Databases:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scopus ● Web of Science Core Collection ● ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection ● Google Scholar ● Dimensions ● SOLO (Oxford University Library System) ● Cambridge University Library ● Cambridge Digital Library ● EBSCOhost eBook Collection ● Project Gutenberg ● UK Data Archive ● UK Data Service
Grey Literature Sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global ● EThOS (British Library's e-thesis service) ● OpenGrey

Note. Adapted from Griswold and Faitaki (2025).

3.4 Search Strategy

A search strategy was developed in accordance with Oxford's Department of Education Reference Library Staff and the text by Boland et al. (2017). A search methodology that is not too broad but sufficiently broad enough to capture all relevant facets of the research question was considered in the search strategy refinement process. **Table 4** shows the Bodleian search string which was used verbatim across databases contained in **Table 3**.

Table 4

Search Syntax

Databases: A-Z	Search Syntax
	"Dialectic Method" OR Dialectic* Method OR Dialectic* Reason* OR Philosophic* dialog* OR Dialectic* dialog* OR Socratic Dialog* OR Platonic Dialectic* OR Platonic dialog* OR Hegelian dialectic OR Hegelian dialog* AND English OR EFL OR ESL OR EAL OR ELL OR ELT OR L2 English* OR L2 OR "second language*" OR "Second Language Acquisition" OR SLA AND Conversation* OR speech OR dialogue OR dialog* OR discuss* OR discours* OR oral proficiency OR OPI OR Interlocution OR speaking OR communicat* AND skills OR proficiency OR persuasion OR persuas* OR rhetoric* OR Advanced OR Advancing OR Advancement OR Adult OR highly proficient OR proficient OR fluent OR high proficiency OR distinguished OR Advanced High OR Superior OR Distinguished OR skilled OR fluent OR ACTFL OR B2 OR C1 OR C2 OR language proficiency scale*

3.5 Data Management and Screening Process

Based on the search syntax, which was repeated in all 53 databases, there was a high volume of reports that needed to be sorted in a systematic way in accordance with systematic review best practices (Page et al., 2021; Boland et al., 2017; Ouzzani et al., 2016).

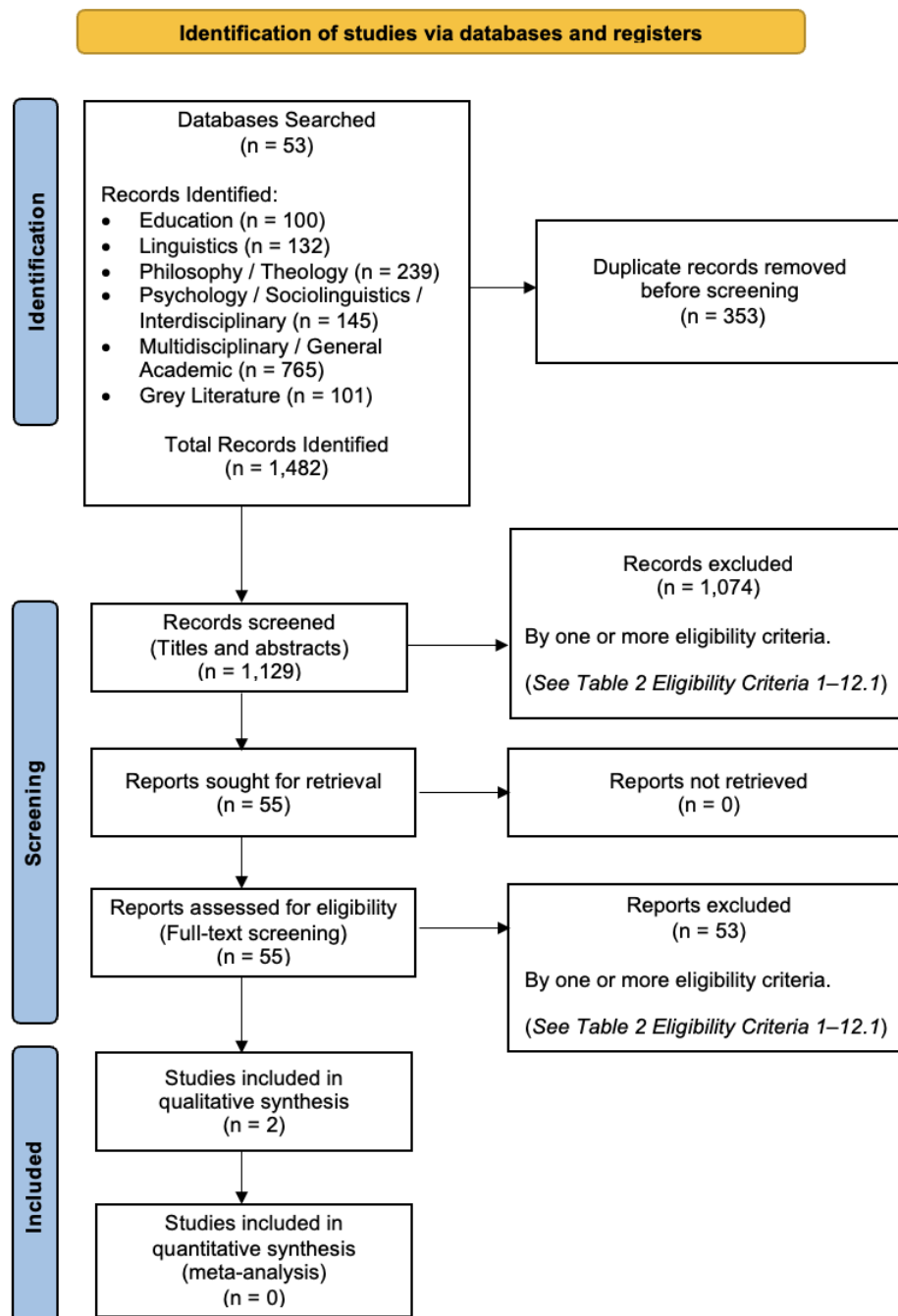
Figure 5 shows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting guidelines (PRISMA, n.d.) used for the identification, screening, filtering, and inclusion process, emphasising recent literature published within the last five years.

During the process of extracting relevant articles from the 53 databases searched in this systematic review, biographic information, titles, and abstracts were retrieved as RIS files (other standardised citation formats were considered acceptable alternatives where applicable, e.g., RefMan, EndNote). These files were uploaded to Rayyan, an online tool for managing systematic reviews for the title and abstract screening (Ouzzani et al., 2016). A total of 1,482 records were initially identified as potentially related to the research topic based on titles alone and subsequently uploaded into Rayyan for further screening. 353 duplicates were eliminated. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. First, only titles and abstracts were screened by the inclusion and exclusion criteria for efficiency and only 55 records were initially deemed applicable and sought for full text extraction. The same inclusion and exclusion criteria were then applied to the 55 complete texts reviewed in their entirety. Of those, only two records were identified to be included in the review. Zotero

(2023) was used to augment Rayyan, to track records that were screened and included in the review and Zotero was used to properly format references in APA style.

Figure 5

PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram



Note. Adapted from the PRISMA 2020 template (PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram, n.d.).

3.6 Data Extraction Methodology

Since the systematic review was open to all types of studies, data extraction methodology pre-emptively considered the need to extract quantitative and qualitative data from the studies. A custom data extraction form was developed specifically for this systematic review, based on the IDESR protocol and informed by Boland et al. (2017), *The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews* (Page et al., 2021), the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal tools, the Education Endowment Foundation's Padlock Tool (University of Oxford, Department of Education, n.d.), and the CASP Systematic Review Checklist (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme [CASP], 2018). A list of data extraction items was preidentified as part of the IDESR protocol and included: a) comprehensive reference and bibliographic data from each source; b) study design, duration, location, data type, language of publication, c) participants, educational setting, population description, L1 and L2 language(s) spoken, age, gender, and sociodemographic information, d) language(s) of instruction, intervention number of hours, description of intervention, number of participants, e) outcomes, effect sizes, unit(s) of measurement, and descriptive outcomes (Griswold & Faitaki, 2025; Boland et al., 2017; Ouzzani et al., 2016; Page et al., 2021; JBI, n.d.). A more comprehensive and refined custom data extraction form containing all potential data extraction fields is included as **Appendix B: Table 5 Custom Data Extraction Form**.

3.7 Risk of bias and Trustworthiness of Individual Studies

Boland et al. (2017) defines bias as “distorted or inaccurate study findings, which occur as a result of systematic flaws in the conduct, reporting or design of the study” (p. 245).

Boutron et al. (2019) contend that bias lays the foundation for systematic research errors which lead to faulty results which depart from the truth of a matter and are therefore misleading and inaccurate; and biases “can lead to under-estimation or over-estimation of the true intervention effect and can vary in magnitude” (p. 177). either minimally or maximally.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Padlock Tool, (University of Oxford, Department of Education, n.d.) was identified as a framework to to mitigate risk of bias. The EEI Padlock is a well-designed rubric for evaluating causal claims in educational intervention studies and emphasises sound methodology pertaining to decision-making across bias domains (Boland et al., 2017).

The systematic review protocol allowed for flexible application of the appropriate Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist to be utilised (as there are several, e.g., Checklist for Quasi-Experimental Studies or the Checklist for Qualitative Research (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2017a, 2017b; Aromataris, et al., 2024; Boland, et al., 2017). It was reported in advance that the most appropriate JBI tool for each study included in the protocol would be transparently reported.

3.8 Data Synthesis

A narrative synthesis will be conducted, following the structured approach recommended by Petticrew and Roberts (2008) and Boland, Cherry, and Dickson (2017) for synthesizing complex and mixed evidence in the social sciences, linguistics and education research.

- First, studies will be grouped by intervention type (e.g., structured dialectic method dialogues vs. informal Socratic discussions), learner profile (L1 vs. L2), and educational context (e.g., secondary vs. tertiary).
- Second, findings and associated risk-of-bias assessments will be compared within and across these groups. This will allow for examination of relationships between intervention type, context, and reported outcomes.
- Third, patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the evidence will be synthesised thematically, with reference to relevant theories of dialogic learning and advanced language development.

If at least three studies report a sufficiently homogeneous outcome measure (e.g., TOEFL iBT speaking scores or IELTS Speaking descriptors), a random-effects meta-analysis will be considered. Effect sizes will be calculated using Hedges' g (adjusted for small sample bias), and Cohen's d will be reported where appropriate (Borenstein et al., 2009; Lakens, 2013). R^2 values and confidence intervals will be presented for any regression-based analyses (Dedecker et al., 2025). Statistical heterogeneity will be assessed using the I^2 statistic (Higgins, 2003).

3.9 Meta-biases

Meta-biases are assessed to promote transparency and empirical rigour, by adhering to methodological best practices (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008; Aromataris et al., 2024; and Boland, et al., 2017).

Publication bias was mitigated to a reasonable extent through the inclusion of grey literature, including public domain publications by international organisations (if applicable), doctoral dissertations, et al., to reduce the overrepresentation of statistically significant

findings. It was determined that if a meta-analysis were feasible, funnel plots would be used to visually detect asymmetry, and Egger's regression test would be employed to assess small-study effects (Egger et al., 1997). However, a meta-analysis was not possible since no quantitative studies were identified in the search that met the inclusion criteria. Therefore, a quantitative synthesis meta-analysis could not be performed.

Selective outcome reporting would be evaluated by comparing published study results with publicly available protocols or trial registrations (where available), as recommended in the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Aromataris et al., 2024). This process would help identify discrepancies between planned and reported outcomes. Language bias was considered and partially mitigated by considering studies published in English, German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish. Searches will be conducted using language-specific Boolean search strings across relevant databases to broaden the evidence base and reduce the risk of English-language publication dominance (Boland et al., 2017). Ultimately, publications in languages other than English were not included since no studies identified in those languages were either not located in the search, and the ones that did not meet the inclusion criteria.

3.10 Confidence in cumulative evidence

The strength of the cumulative evidence in this research area was assessed in accordance with best practices for systematic reviews as articulated by Boland et al. (2017). Also, the PRISMA checklist (Page et al., 2021) was used for confidence in cumulative evidence purposes as applicable for this systematic review. Finally, the Joanna Briggs Institute *JBI Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative* (McArthur et al., 2020) was used for appraisal quality of textual evidence assurance purposes.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Analysis of Two Conceptual Studies Included for Qualitative Synthesis

As indicated in the PRISMA flow diagram (**Figure 5**), a total of 1,482 records identified across 53 databases. Of these, two were included in the systematic review as reports: a book titled *Sublating Second Language Research and Practices: Contribution from the Hegelian Perspective* by Wu (2023a), and a peer-reviewed journal article titled “Intercultural Dialogue in Diverse Classrooms: Debating the Socratic Dialogue Method from a Postcolonial Perspective,” by Skrefsrud (2024). Relevant categorical data were extracted from each study and listed in **Table 4** for visualisation, contrast, and comparison. These studies met all the inclusion criteria, but there needs to be one point of clarification. The inclusion of both of these studies is justified based on a combination of Inclusion Criterion 8 “Primary research studies reporting any measure of dialectic method intervention in L1 and / or L2 English conversational skills input including cognitive, interlocution, input / output, interactional, and sociocultural dynamics;” and Inclusion Criterion 9 “All types of study design” with the rationale that all types of studies need to be allowed due to the anticipated scarcity of recent published literature on the topic (See **Table 2**, *Eligibility Criteria*). Keeping in true dialectic form, a potential contradiction between competing criteria was identified after data collection and analysis had occurred. Criterion 8 does not explicitly eliminate the possibility of conceptual studies that identify the dialectic method as an intervention on the target population and predict likely outcomes including likely outcomes on a macrolevel. Therefore, applying Criterion 9 to Criterion 8 allows for the inclusion of theoretical or conceptual studies. The two studies identified for inclusion are recent publications and the only contemporary peer-reviewed studies identified which help answer the research question despite the limitation of lacking empirical data.

While the studies included are conceptual in nature, they, nonetheless, do identify dialectic method intervention on specific groups of learners. They are relevant to answering the research question to the extent that they provide recent peer-reviewed literature pertaining to dialectic method interventions on the types of learners identified in the IDESR protocol (albeit conceptual).

The following two studies were included in the systematic review for qualitative synthesis:

1. Wu, M. M. (2023a). *Sublating Second Language Research and Practices: Contribution from the Hegelian Perspective* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003372240>
2. Skrefsrud, T.-A. (2024). Intercultural Dialogue in Diverse Classrooms: Debating the Socratic Dialogue Method from a Postcolonial Perspective. *Religions*, 15(1), 98.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010098>

4.2 Added Impetus for Inclusion of Theoretical Studies

In addition to Criterion 9 which allows all types of study designs based on the anticipated scarcity of contemporary literature addressing the research question, there are other compelling reasons to include theoretical or conceptual studies. For instance, multiple academic disciplines make use of thought experiments or theoretical approaches to lay the foundation for subsequent empirical studies. For example, in theoretical physics, Albert Einstein routinely introduced his equations with thought experiments, such as the cat thought experiment, which laid the foundation for “universality of time dilation” (Rousseau, 2025, pp. 1, 3), or the elevator thought experiment, initially designed to assist secondary school students grasp the principle of equivalence, also enables the conceptualisation of the principles of General Relativity (Galvagni et al., 2025). Theorists make observations and articulate concepts to make sense of phenomena. Similarly, theoretical linguistics is informed by subjectivist interpretive frameworks on one hand, but also heavily informed by mathematics and logic on the other, and particularly relevant to the study of theoretical grammar (Lyons, 1995). In the field of Second Language Acquisition, there are opposing theoretical views regarding whether corrective feedback (CF) is helpful which informs empirical research aimed at determining efficacy (Chen et al., 2016). SLA hypotheses⁵ and theories become the basis of empirical research and intervention studies (Mackey & Gass, 2006). However, even decades after hypotheses are unveiled, they may still be debated among SLA scholars, and even though relevant may not be considered canonical. For example, even 40 years after Krashen (1982) proposed his Comprehensible Input Hypothesis there is still a dialectic among SLA scholars who opine over its validity and operationalisability. For example, Lichtman and VanPatten (2021) contend that “the inability to operationalize $i + 1$ in research made it an untestable construct” (p. 296). On the other

⁵ Examples: *Comprehensible Input* (Krashen, 1982), *Interaction* (Long, 1996), *Comprehensible Output* (Swain, 2000), *Teachability* (Pienemann, 2012).

hand, Jegerski (2021) points out that Krashen's theories, particularly related to acquisition versus learning have influenced SLA research and empirical studies, including eye-tracking research. Nevertheless, hypotheses and conceptual frameworks become the foundation for empirical research, and in the absence of empirical research theorisation and conceptualisation provides academic fields with preliminary scaffolding (Chen et al., 2016; Maftoon & Ziafar, 2014).

Conceptual thought experiments as a sort of mental conceptual modelling to refine research strategies and methods. For example, when playing chess players must develop strategies including planning multiple moves in advance and predicting how an opponent *might* react to any given move and developing strategies by predicting several moves in advance (Skidanov et al., 2025; Williams et al., 2025; Aggarwal, 2025). In that sense, chess is a dialectical exercise between two opponents who mutually seek to *win* by the greatest logic and reason while discerning the truth of the situation on the board at any given moment. Relatedly, Popa (2016) specifically describes dialectical thought experiments typically conducted as an exchange between at least two scholars as a sort of "logico-epistemological approach" (p. 17) of investigating opposing academic viewpoints. However, even when an individual scholar conducts a thought experiment autonomously, the thought experiment ought to be conducted dialectically, not as a monologue, but in accordance with the principle of socialisation, a simulated interactive endeavour which challenges assumptions and considers counterarguments (Popa, 2016). This approach is exemplified in *Summa Theologica* by St Thomas Aquinas who robustly investigates philosophical and ontological matters through an internal dialectic where propositions on each topic are accompanied by objections, counterarguments, rebuttals, analysis, and final conclusions (Aquinas, 2025). In this way, Aquinas not only anticipates counterarguments, but they become part of his synthesised conclusions.

Hence, this systematic review includes two conceptual studies which are contemporary and relevant to the research topic and provide up-to-date insight into the current state of literature pertaining to the potential efficacy of the dialectic method on advancing L1 and L2 English conversational skills. Critical analysis of these studies shows their strengths and shortcomings, and readers of this dissertation should also engage these studies dialectically to thoroughly examine the arguments of the authors as well as limitations and counterarguments.

4.3 Included Reports

As identified in **Figure 5**, of the 1,482 reports identified two were ultimately included in the review. **Table 6** illustrates both reports (conceptual studies) side-by-side.

4.4 Narrative Syntheses

In accordance with best practices identified by Boland et al. (2017) a qualitative “textual narrative synthesis” (p. 210) of both studies is achieved. Accordingly, attributes of both studies are identified and assessed, individually, comparatively, and culminating in a narrative synthesis. **Table 6** below illustrates an overview of general characteristics of the included studies.

Table 6

Overview of General Characteristics of Included Studies

Citation (In-text)	Wu (2023a)	Skrefsrud (2024)
Title	Sublating Second Language Research and Practices: Contribution from the Hegelian Perspective	Intercultural Dialogue in Diverse Classrooms: Debating the Socratic Dialogue Method from a Postcolonial Perspective
Study	Hegelian Dialectic (Philosophical / Conceptual) L2 Research	Dialectic / Socratic (Conceptual) Advanced dialogue
Publication Status	Book Published (Routledge, 1st ed., 2023)	Peer-reviewed Journal Published (12 January 2024, <i>Religions</i> , MDPI)
Study Design	Philosophical contribution to SLA research from Hegelian dialectical framework	Theoretical / Conceptual (without empirical data)
Intervention Type	Hegelian Dialectic Method (Conceptual) for L2 Research	Dialectic Method Socratic Dialogue (Conceptual)
Country / Location	Not specified Eastern and Western philosophical traditions identified	Norway (Faculty of Education, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences)
Sample Size	Not applicable: Philosophical	Not applicable: Conceptual intervention
Appraisal Tool	JBI Textual Evidence: Narrative (Appendix C) Overall Appraisal: Include ✓	JBI Textual Evidence: Narrative (Appendix C) Overall Appraisal: Include ✓

Risk of Bias	EEF Padlock (Deemed non-applicable for theoretical study)	EEF Padlock (Deemed non-applicable for theoretical study)
L1 Background(s)	Unspecified	English as a global lingua franca; speakers of other global languages (including marginalised / oppressed)
L2 English (et al.)	L2 English	English as a global lingua franca, but includes global populations therefore speakers of other languages are implied
Target Population	Adults / Advanced learners implied	Adults / Advanced learners implied
Educational Setting	Broadly applicable to entire educational system on a macro level and individual classrooms on a micro level; in additional to theoretical frameworks	Language education contexts and language classrooms with global applicability
Publication Language	English	English
Data Management	Rayyan: Screening Zotero: Citation	Rayyan: Screening Zotero: Citation
Effect Size Summary (Hedges' g; Cohen's d; R² values and confidence intervals; I² for statistical heterogeneity)	Not applicable (not empirical data)	Not applicable (not empirical data)
Outcomes	Furthering collective human consciousness on a range of complex topics in SLA contexts through Hegelian dialectical interventions.	Pedagogical intervention employing critical Socratic dialogue and dialectic method discussion in classrooms to bring diverse groups together to respectfully engage with complex and controversial topics. These include 'moral dilemma' topics related to politics, economics, social, philosophical, religious issues, et al.

4.4.1 Study 1.

The first study included in the qualitative synthesis is the following:

Wu, M. M. (2023a). *Sublating Second Language Research and Practices: Contribution from the Hegelian Perspective* (1st ed.). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003372240>

Table 7 provides a qualitative summary of this study with more in-depth qualitative information than provided in **Table 6** and specifically focused on the study by Wu (2023a).

Table 7

Qualitative Summary of Study 1

(Wu, 2023a)	
Title	Sublating Second Language Research and Practices: Contribution from the Hegelian Perspective
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hegelian dialectic method heuristic for enabling L2 learning and research ● Developing human consciousness through Hegelian dialectic which explores opposites and contradictions ● Key emphasis placed on in person human interaction through oral communication ● Hegelian dialectic method promoting dialogue characterised by intersubjectivity and specifically designed for promoting L2 learning.
Impetus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scarcity of Hegelian dialectic method for oral proficiency in SLA research
Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hegelian dialectic method discussions intersubjectivity and interaction for increased L2 oral proficiency and motivation for learning.
Proposed Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conceptual intervention applies the Hegelian dialectic method for L2 enhancement by focusing on advanced topics related to analysis of all things of an ontological, philosophical, political, societal, and phenomenological nature, and with a teleological aim promoting collective human awareness.
Predicted Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hegelian intersubjectivity and interaction ought to promote increased L2 oral proficiency and motivation for learning.
Potential impact on L1 or L2 Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting multiple aspects of L2 learning comprehensively and synergistically to promote oral fluency through a Hegelian

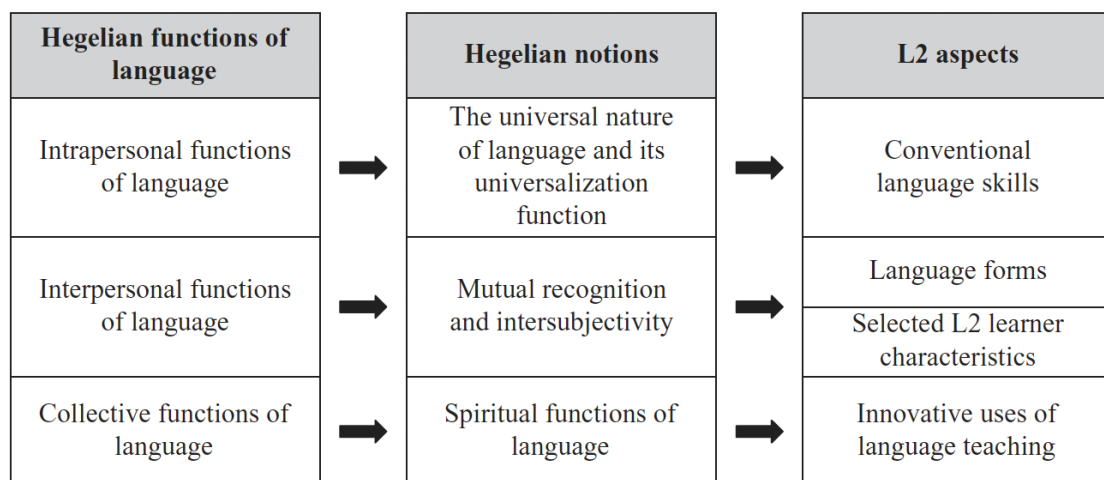
English Oral Proficiency	dialectic method which should simultaneously promote critical thinking, metacognition, self-reflection, capacity for mutual reflections.
---------------------------------	--

The conceptual study by Wu (2023a) uses the framework of Hegelian dialectic method which is grounded in conceptual and material divisions with a specific intention of expanding L2 research using this paradigm and with an emphasis on advanced L2 English. Opposites and contradictions are explored in philosophical and material domains with respect to politics, economics, culture, civilizations and societies. Synthesis comes about through exploring mutual intersubjectivity (including shared understanding and co-constructing meaning): parts of each side cancel out and the aspects that remain after contradictions are resolved create a synthesis of a higher view. This promotes L2 learning in a social dialectical process.

Figure 6 articulates how the concepts of the Hegelian dialectic method relate to multiple language functions more generally and corresponds with L2 language skills more specifically.

Figure 6

Hegelian Dialectical Method Applied to L2 Proficiency Advancement



Note. Figure reprinted from Wu (2023a, p. 22). Description by the author.

According to Wu (2023a), "Hegel's philosophy on language emphasizes the micro and the macro of language in society, including dialectically contrasting socioeconomic, sociocultural, and political forces and their influences on language" (p. 6). This Hegelian dialectical model, when applied to language, surpasses the mere acquisition of language for the sake of language: it fundamentally transforms consciousness itself to achieve a heightened awareness of the world. Just as Plato regarded the dialectic method as supreme among the intellectual disciplines, so too does the Hegelian model when applied to L2

learning seem to push language ability to its supreme teleological end (Plato, 1894; Wu, 2023a; Michelet, 1871). In other words, since Hegelian dialectical L2 learning penetrates all dimensions of human knowledge and can be applied to any field, it provides the impetus for ever advancing language capabilities at their maximum. Hence, the Hegelian dialectic method becomes a powerful heuristic for L2 English oral advancement and SLA research as a corpus of inquiry (Wu, 2023a).

Under the Hegelian dialectic method framework, Wu (2023a) contends that imperfections in speech and grammar are organic features of language that are mutually beneficial; this approach stresses the necessity of in person dialogue and fact-to-face interaction. It is precisely through the human imperfections that are natural and authentic that are part of the journey of intersubjectivity, a blending of consciousnesses, and a synthesis of collective knowledge and oral L2 advancement.

According to Wu (2023a), there is a dialectical process between one's own L1 and their L2, reconciling discrepancies between the two leads to a process of transformation and synthesis. This notion implies an additional synergy in participating in dialectic method discussions in both an L1 and L2 and alternating between implies even greater synergies between dialectic synthesis in the topics being discussed in tandem with the dialectic process between a learner's L1 and their L2, also articulated as "intrapersonal functions of language" Wu (2023a, p. 22).

Moreover, Wu (2023a) argues that the Hegelian dialectic method will enhance metacognition related to L2 learning through heightened intersubjectivity, a merging of consciousness through organic, intimate interpersonal collaborative processes amongst L2 learners.

Lastly, Wu (2023a) recommends further research by L2 scholars, namely theoreticians and those conducting empirical studies, so that more conceptual ideas can be generated and supported by concrete intervention studies and data analysis.

4.4.1.1 Weaknesses of Study 1

While Wu's (2023a) text provides compelling theoretical impetus for Hegelian dialectical approach for L2 language advancement and specifically addresses the interaction and intersubjectivity, which are hallmarks of peer-to-peer and group conversations, it lacks more precise guidelines for L2 classroom operationalisability. This conceptual study seems primarily concerned with providing the SLA research community with a theoretical impetus to conduct empirical intervention studies. Nevertheless, it is useful in providing a Hegelian

dialectical framework for the advancement of L2 language and conversational skills and heightened intersubjectivity amidst robust peer-to-peer, face-to-face interlocution and collaborative classroom activities. Consequently, researchers attempting to operationalise Wu’s theoretical model would need to develop more specific L2 classroom intervention methodology and guidelines.

4.4.2 Study 2

The second study included in the qualitative synthesis is the following:

Skrefsrud, T.-A. (2024). Intercultural Dialogue in Diverse Classrooms: Debating the Socratic Dialogue Method from a Postcolonial Perspective. *Religions*, 15(1), 98.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010098>

Table 8 provides a qualitative summary of this study with more in-depth qualitative information than provided in **Table 6** and specifically focused on the study by Skrefsrud (2024).

Table 8

Qualitative Summary of Study 2

Skrefsrud (2024)	
Title	Intercultural Dialogue in Diverse Classrooms: Debating the Socratic Dialogue Method from a Postcolonial Perspective
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applying Socratic Method dialogue to classrooms which focus on dialectical exploration between opposing cultural and religious paradigms, factoring in points of agreement and contention, with the aim of promoting intercultural and interreligious understanding. ● Foundation in postcolonial theories to amplify the voices of marginalised and oppressed students.
Impetus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Global dialogue initiatives of international organizations including the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization of Economic and Social Development (OECD) initiatives to optimise academic and social achievements are economically marginalised students from diverse cultural, ethnic, religious backgrounds and closing gender achievement gaps. ● The advancement of intercultural understanding in the classroom.
Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Critical Socratic Dialogue and Sociocultural Dialectic Method Applied to material disparities between diverse

	global populations.
Proposed Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Calls for classroom interventions which promote dialectical intercultural and interreligious understanding with an emphasis on empowering globally marginalised populations employing Socratic Dialogue and applying a critical postcolonial framework.
Predicted Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced oral proficiency, specifically in terms of dialogue focused on pragmatics, cross-cultural competence, enhanced philosophical articulation, and longer utterances. ● Increased communicative ability for empathy, self-reflection, self-awareness, societal power structures, and inequalities. ● Heightened fluency and articulation in terms of contrasting paradigms. ● Increased oral dialogue ability.
Inferred impact on L1 or L2 Advanced English Oral Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This article lucidly articulates oral dialogue at the advanced level and primarily focuses on complex topics of a postcolonial, socioeconomic, sociocultural, religious, philosophical nature and through a dialectic and epistemological lens. When viewed from the ACTFL (2024) and CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) oral proficiency and conversational skills ability lenses, tasks described in this article indicate communicative abilities of learners with specific tasks associated with advanced and superior level proficiency users.

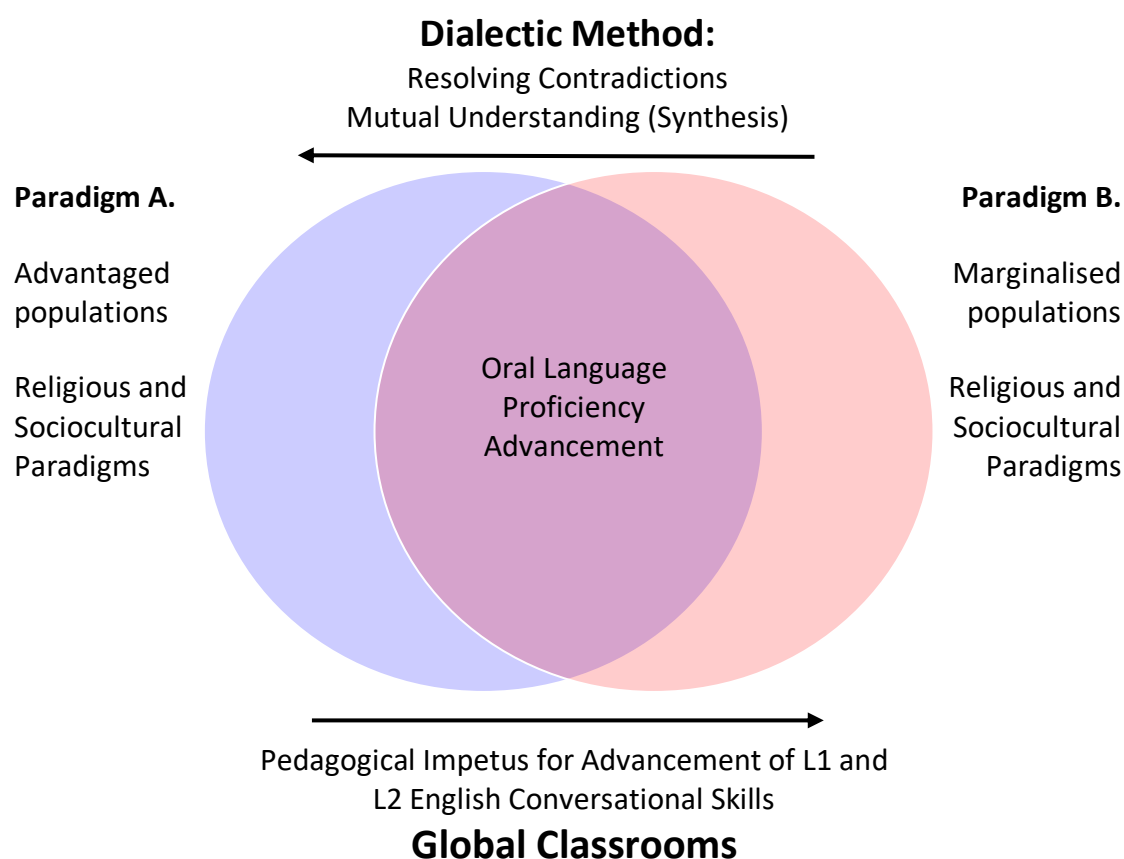
The conceptual study by Skrefsrud (2024) was included due to reconciliation of Criterion 8 and 9, thus allowing for conceptual studies pertaining to the dialectic method and L1 or L2 English conversational skills. Inclusion Criterion 6 specifically allows for the inclusion of Socratic dialogue, particularly when used in a way that denotes the dialectic method which the conceptual intervention study by Skrefsrud (2024) does. The study's context and content are hallmarks of the dialectic method.

Like (Wu, 2023a), Skrefsrud's (2024) is a conceptual study which, as explained before, was allowed due to scarcity on the topic. Skrefsrud's article is a call to action but not just for language development and applies more broadly to education as a whole with a broader impetus for positive social change using dialectic discussions as an intervention. The focus is targeted to specific dialectically opposite learners from different social, economic, and religious strata throughout the world. The entire model requires dialectically contrasting

groups to come together in conversation (e.g., rich vs. poor). **Figure 7** illustrates a dialectic method postcolonial framework to promote intercultural competence, language and educational advancement in global classrooms (Skrefsrud, 2024).

Figure 7

Applied Dialectical Method Interpretation



Note. Conceptual interpretation figure created by the author, based on Skrefsrud’s (2024) text.

The conceptual dialectic method intervention study by Skrefsrud (2024) focuses on achieving intercultural and interreligious recognition, empathy and shared understanding in classrooms across the globe. Ostensibly, the goals of the intervention would be achieved through a critical theoretical postcolonial heuristic which breaks down barriers between different classes of people, and particularly conscious of historically oppressed groups of people; the dialectical framework is ingrained through the illustration of distinct opposites, e.g., marginalised versus privileged, which are substitutes for thesis and antithesis (Skrefsrud, 2024; Michelet, 1871; Plato, 1894).

This study is reflective of Hegelian, Marxist and Vygotskian dialectical thinking which illustrates how the dialectical framework manifests in the material world in terms of social, economic, and class divisions, while also promoting a synthesis of understanding in socially mediated classroom contexts (Ellis, 2001; Michelet, 1871; Marcuse, 2013; Kaplan, 2010; Lantolf & Poehner, 2023; Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1979, 1980). Skrefsrud (2024) asserts: "The study calls for an academic challenge to the idealization of dialogue, urging deeper reflection to identify blind spots and ensure an inclusive intercultural dialogue" (p. 1). Consequently, it denotes implications for promoting both L1 and L2 English advanced conversational skills through high-level dialogues on religious, cultural and social issues (Skrefsrud, 2024). More broadly, this conceptual study carries significance for applied linguistics, and for the field of education. It illustrates how the dialectic method and the English language become the vehicles for advancing conversational skills to include intercultural competence for both L1 and L2 speakers of English. According to Skrefsrud (2024) a key impetus for this type of cross cultural interreligious dialogue comes from international organizations including the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Organization of Economic and Social Development (OECD) with humanitarian mandates to promote the optimisation of education for all learners worldwide regardless of "social and academic achievement of students, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds" (p. 1) which reflects elements of Marxist and Vygotskian dialectics (Lantolf & Poehner, 2023; Kaplan, 2010) which characterise the societal dynamics which transcend classrooms.

4.4.2.1 The Socratic Dialogue Method

Skrefsrud (2024) describes Socratic dialogue between diverse groups of students but uses the term in a way that clearly indicates the dialectic method, by illustrating a clear contrast between groups of people, holding dialectically opposing views, and representing stratified groups across dialectically opposite socioeconomic and sociocultural aspects of the global population. There is a particular emphasis on intercultural and interreligious dialogue with a strong emphasis on empowering marginalised populations. The types of dialogues that Skrefsrud (2024) articulates closely mirrors many of the debates at the Oxford Union Society which deal with a postcolonial framework with an emphasis on human rights and marginalised groups (The Oxford Union Society, n.d.). However, the Oxford Union Society structures these discussions as debates where there is a proposition, counterproposition and a vote taken by participants at the end, where there is a clear winner and loser. By

contrast, Skrefsrud (2024) articulates a true dialectic because the process being referred to therein is about continuous movement towards a goal of mutual understanding and invokes Hegelian type language (Nikulin, 2020; Michelet, 1871).

In terms of operationalisation, Skrefsrud's Socratic dialogue intervention framework further is characterised by the following attributes:

- Free expression of viewpoints and critical examination of democratic principles and social structures
- Encourage all students to share personal opinions along a common and continuous Socratic thread of discussion; meaning the discussion flows seamlessly (in true dialectical form)
- Promote a philosophical framework for conversations which include a clear moral dilemma and binary opposition. Examples include whether mobile phones should be allowed in schools; or whether Western democracy is the ideal societal model; or whether to return excess money to a cashier that was dispensed by mistake.
- Teachers must ensure that students have a clear understanding of the dilemmas presented and maintain dialogues on the right course to address opposing sides of the dilemma.
- Students discuss dilemmas then present opposing arguments to the entire groups in tandem with exploring counterarguments.
- The goal is to continuously elevate levels of abstraction for illuminative purposes and to resolve conflicts and eventually arrive at common solutions.
- A postcolonial perspective is a heuristic for Socratic dialogue in the classroom as students discover principles for themselves through exploring opposing religious, cultural, political, and social paradigms.
- Promote participation by all members, paying particular attention to those hesitant to freely express their views due to past marginalisation.
- Apply a critical interpretive framework to discussions while remaining deeply philosophically grounded in the Socratic dialogue model.

4.4.2.2 Significance

Published in English therefore the inference is at a minimum L1 English and since it describes global perspectives evokes UN and international organizations in promoting global humanitarian values it seems to apply to L2 learners as a natural consequence of English being a global language (Skrefsrud, 2024). Skrefsrud describes the intervention from a

theoretical perspective and contends that the Socratic Dialogue intervention may help in developing intercultural communications and connections which seems to invoke ACTFL-type communicative goals (ACTFL, 2024). English is a global lingua franca (Köylü & Tracy-Ventura, 2022) and so these types of advanced Socratic dialogues require advanced oral English language abilities either as an L1 or L2, and offer the ideal setting for testing the dialectic method in SLA research as there are large population groups across the world that will meet all population criterion, i.e., adult learners with advanced English proficiency seeking higher levels of oral proficiency to include those seeking to move from advanced through superior and distinguished. Skrefsrud (2024) articulates specific types of in-class Socratic dialogue exercises with clear dilemmas and opposing thesis and antithesis, e.g., whether Western democracy is the ideal form of government, or whether mobile phones should be allowed in schools. In this way, Skrefsrud articulates specific examples of Socratic and dialectic classroom discussions that L1 and L2 teachers could operationalise. Socratic; Theoretical / conceptual; Norway; English; Students worldwide with an emphasis on marginalised and oppressed; classrooms

4.4.2.3. Weaknesses of Study 2

The major limitation of the study by Skrefsrud (2024) might be a heuristic that oversimplifies the world into binary camps, and this can erect a type of strawman argument against groups seen as elitist or holding the power. Skrefsrud may also be overly fixated on characterising groups at a macro level while not paying enough attention to individual differences or implying that learners who share similar demographic backgrounds will respond to the Socratic / dialectic classroom in the same way. More attention should be placed on Socratic / dialectic conversations between individual learners without preconceived notions or biases on the part of researchers or classroom teachers that may skew conversational outcomes in the Socratic / dialectic classroom.

4.5. Results of Narrative Syntheses

In accordance with best practices identified by Boland et al. (2017) a qualitative “textual narrative synthesis” (p. 210) of both studies is achieved.

4.5.1. Results of the Qualitative Synthesis

RQ1: What is the current state of research on the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners?

As identified in the *PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram (Figure 5)*, of a total of 1,482 records identified from 53 databases, only two studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis. There is a scarcity of contemporary literature available, as identified in this systematic review, that answers the research question. In fact, it could be argued that contemporary literature on the topic only adds marginally to what is known about the dialectic method, and more specifically addresses the dialectic method as an intervention to improve L1 and L2 conversational skills. However, there is one distinct difference noted between the foundational texts identified in the literature review and the studies included in the systematic review. The foundational texts appear to primarily address the dialectical method as, primarily, a philosophical means of discerning the truth of a matter, and secondly, a way of training the mind philosophically. Implicitly there is the notion that the dialectical method is a sort of mental exercise to be applied to any mentally rigorous endeavour.

The contemporary literature identified in this systematic review applies the dialectic method more specifically to the study of languages, either L1 or L2. For example, Wu (2023a) highlights how the dialectical process between a learner's L1 and their L2 serves to reconcile discrepancies between leading to a synthesis in the minds of learners. More specifically, Wu (2023a) illustrates how Hegelian dialectical language functions provide impetus for the advancement of L2 conversational skills. Wu's provides a theoretical framework which articulates overarching concepts at a strategic level which provides impetus for more concerted empirical SLA research and actual intervention studies. The theoretical study by Skrefsrud (2024) complements Wu's study and the two studies combined form a synthesis would further inform future SLA empirical research. Skrefsrud (2024) provides more concrete interventional modelling by describing the specific socioeconomic and sociocultural groups of learners and provides a postcolonial framework which invokes the legitimacy of international organisations and a human rights framework. Additionally, Skrefsrud (2024) provides specific and lucid moral dilemma exercises that could be straightforwardly operationalised in L1 and L2 classrooms. The types of language development which Skrefsrud (2024) invokes relates to intercultural competence which is an important aspect of L1 and L2 language ability (ACTFL, 2024). Moreover, Skrefsrud inherently focuses on advanced learners due to the topics which deal with high-level social, political, cultural, and economic issues through a postcolonial lens. Merging the best aspects of Wu (2023a) and

Skrefsrud (2024) could feasibly lead to the development of an empirical quantitative SLA intervention study.

Nevertheless, based on the information obtained in this systematic review, there is no conclusive evidence that the dialectic method has any positive impact on L1 or L2 English conversational skills even though there are very compelling philosophical and rhetorical arguments in favour of this method for such purposes.

4.6 Data Evaluation: Quality Appraisal Methodology of Selected Studies

The two studies included in this review were assessed by means of the JBI *Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative* (McArthur et al., 2020). **Table 9** represents a consolidated appraisal for both studies using the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative (See **Appendix C** which is the appraisal template). Both reports passed the checklist criteria in the affirmative and were recommended for inclusion based on credibility, logical argumentation, narrative flow and pertaining factors.

Table 9

JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative (Conceptual Studies)

JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative					
Reviewer: Tarin Christopher Griswold Data: 5 Aug 2025 Author: Wu, M. M. Year: 2023 Record Number: 1		Yes	No	Unclear	Not Applicable
1. Is the generator of the narrative a credible or appropriate source?		✓			
2. Is the relationship between the text and its context explained? (where, when, who with, how)				✓	
3. Does the narrative present the events using a logical sequence so the reader or listener can understand how it unfolds?		✓			
4. Do you, as reader or listener of the narrative, arrive at similar conclusions to those drawn by the narrator?		✓			
5. Do the conclusions flow from the narrative account?		✓			
6. Do you consider this account to be a narrative?		✓			
Overall Appraisal:	Include: ✓	Exclude:		Seek further info:	
Comments (Including reason for exclusion)	Wu's narrative is a cohesive, coherent, and consistent theoretical intervention framework. It is credible and firmly grounded in Hegelian dialectics, and useful because it specifically addresses theoretical and conceptual L2 language intervention and articulates how Hegelian dialectical functions of language might influence L2 language skills. The primary limitation is that it is a theoretical model and could articulate more precisely how to operationalise theoretical concepts in L2 classroom interventions.				
Reviewer: <u>Tarin Christopher Griswold</u> Data: <u>5 Aug 2025</u> Author: <u>Skrefsrud, T.-A.</u> Year: <u>2024</u> Record Number: <u>2</u>		Yes	No	Unclear	Not Applicable

1. Is the generator of the narrative a credible or appropriate source?	✓			
2. Is the relationship between the text and its context explained? (where, when, who with, how)	✓			
3. Does the narrative present the events using a logical sequence so the reader or listener can understand how it unfolds?	✓			
4. Do you, as reader or listener of the narrative, arrive at similar conclusions to those drawn by the narrator?	✓			
5. Do the conclusions flow from the narrative account?			✓	
6. Do you consider this account to be a narrative?	✓			
Overall Appraisal:	Include: ✓	Exclude:	Seek further info:	
Comments (Including reason for exclusion)	Overall, Skrefsrud (2024) effectively describes a dialectic model presenting as Socratic dialogue between contrasting groups of global learners. The impetus for the approach is clearly defined and tied to the United Nations framework grounded in global equality and overall framed from a postcolonial lens. The classroom activities are clearly defined in terms of concrete moral dilemmas which provide clear contrasts which are appropriate in dialectic method-type interventions including Socratic dialogues which seek a greater view of phenomena through the exploration of opposites. One critique could be that Skrefsrud might be that it lacks nuance and at times may be overstating global divisions. Even so, the overall framework appears to be solid, and therefore, the recommendation is to include the study.			

Note. JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative (Adapted from McArthur et al., 2020) for Conceptual Studies

4.7 Risk of Bias and Trustworthiness of Individual Studies.

While the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Padlock Tool (University of Oxford, Department of Education, n.d.) was pre-identified in the IDESR protocol as a means of assessing bias, it was not applied since the studies included are conceptual and theoretical and did not generate primary data. Therefore, the use of the JBI *Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative* (McArthur et al., 2020) previously mentioned established credibility and textual quality. This approach aligns with best practices in critical appraisal, which

emphasises clarity, replicability, and structured decision-making across relevant bias domains (Boland, Cherry, & Dickson, 2017).

4.8 Quantitative Synthesis (Meta-Analysis)

A quantitative synthesis was not performed since zero quantitative studies meeting the inclusion criteria were identified during the search process. This is a big limitation of this systematic review but highlights the need for empirical research on this topic involving intervention studies yielding quantitative data for analysis. Conversely, this is a significant finding because it highlights the lack of quantitative data on this topic and provides impetus for future empirical research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Findings

RQ1: What is the current state of research on the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners?

A major finding from this systematic review is that there is very little research being performed in the SLA field regarding the dialectic method (as defined for the purposes of this dissertation) as an intervention for developing advanced L1 or L2 English conversational skills. More specifically, in the last five years, this systematic review only identified two conceptual peer-reviewed publications focusing on the dialectic method for the advancement of L1 or L2 English (implicitly and not the primary focus). Wu (2023a) is theoretical and focuses on Hegelian dialectics and suggests benefits for L2 conversational skills and associated benefits for L1 conversational skills in the context of interpersonal functions involving a dialectic process between a learner's L1 and their L2. The study by Skrefsrud (2024) is interdisciplinary and relates to language development in a broader context of cross-disciplinary educational focus and overlapping with theology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, politics, and economics. In Skrefsrud (2024) applied linguistics implications are presented, and global student populations groups of learners are framed in dialectically oppositional terms from across large swaths of societal, cultural, religious, political, and economic strata. English as a global lingua franca is implicitly woven into the context of global learners including both L1 or L2 users of English. Advanced prerequisite English conversational skills are also implied contextually due to the complexity of topics addressed and the classroom conversational exercises including moral dilemmas dealing with complex topics of economic, social, governmental, cultural, religious, and economic issues (Skrefsrud, 2024). Engaging with these topics Socratically and dialectically requires advanced prerequisite skills, and I argue that these types of conversations will help advanced speakers of English to progress to even higher levels of advanced proficiency. What is lacking in both publications by Wu (2023a) and by Skrefsrud (2024) is more precise conceptual modelling identifying precise populations and interventions which would yield empirical data for comparison and analysis. Empirical studies would also require target and control groups for measuring effect sizes using Cohen's *d* or Heges' *g* or I^2 statistic and *p* values to determine whether the intervention was efficacious. (Lakens, 2013; Borenstein et al., 2009; Higgins, 2003; Boutron et al., 2019).

The philosophical and rhetorical arguments supporting the dialectic method (from antiquity to the modern times) are persuasive, logical, and compelling. Even so, compelling arguments alone are not sufficient to prove the efficacy of the method. In the absence of concrete empirical data there is no way to conclude that the dialectic method is efficacious in terms of promoting L1 or L2 speakers of English from the advanced levels (as defined by ACTFL and CEFR) to even higher levels of oral proficiency.

Conceptually, the argument for the dialectic method either to advance philosophical thinking or promote advancement in oral language skills does seem to make intuitive sense due to the mental labour involved when confronting opposing ideas, resolving contradictions and synthesising a more refined and clearer picture of reality of whatever thing is the subject of inquiry; as two things (thesis and antithesis) come to occupy a single space where ostensibly only truth remains (as a synthesis) and fallacies and falsehoods are eliminated (Ryle, 1965, Michelet, 1871, Plato, 1892b, 1894). By contrast, there is the concept in political science and international relations theory, known as of a security dilemma, articulated as a zero-sum game, where security measures taken by one state, such as a new military capability, are perceived as a corresponding insecurity by an adversarial state (Pauly, 2024; Kydd, 2018). In mathematical terms it would simply be represented as plus one point for Country A resulting in minus one point for Country B, making the total score zero (i.e., $A + 1$ results in $B - 1 = 0$); this paradigm shows how the existence of one thing acts to negate the existence of another. This may occur with the dialectical method, yet thesis and antithesis do not seem to negate each other yet do compete for finite space. In mathematical terms a dialectic method *synthesis* (the product of an SLA intervention involving a conversation between two interlocutors) might be a weighted combination of 1s leading to an end product of 1. However, rather than a simplistic model (i.e., $1 \times 1 = 1$) which implies a standardised uniform outcome, a weighted synthesis involving a changeable ratio (Mascolo et al., 2025; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Weigle, 2002) would better capture the result of a dialectical method intervention. Accordingly, the thesis and antithesis may unequally and asymmetrically contribute to the synthesis, depending on the relative L1 or L2 conversational prowess of each side (Rost, 2024; Mascolo et al., 2025; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1892b, Michelet, 1871; Cramer & Howitt, 2004).

The resulting synthesis (S) can be represented mathematically in the following terms:

$$S = w_1T + w_2A$$

In the above equation *T* is the thesis, *A* is the antithesis, and $w_1 + w_2 = 1$.

In this context, the first two 1s represent the thesis and antithesis, while the resulting 1 represents the synthesis. However, one important caveat is that the final product may not always be a 50/50 mixture of the initial theses; the weights may vary, for example, (0.9, 0.1), (0.6, 0.4), or any number of ratios depending on the quality of interlocution and the rhetorical strength of each participant in the L1 or L2 classroom (Rost, 2024; Mascolo et al., 2025; Wu, 2023a; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Weigle, 2002; Cramer & Howitt, 2004; Al Maktoum et al., 2024; Wanlu, 2021). Mathematically, the synthesis might take the form of something like:

$$S = 0.6T + 0.4A$$

As illustrated in **Figure 3** in a previous chapter, a visual depiction of Hegelian dialectics inspired by Michelet (1871) shows two primary colours of yellow (*T*) and blue (*A*) representing thesis (*T*) and antithesis (*A*) form the colour green representing synthesis (*S*). However, the final shade of green could vary significantly depending on the ratio of thesis and antithesis ending up contributing to the final synthesis. This is where conversational dialectics come into play, allowing interlocutors to negotiate the relative weight and quality of competing ideas in real time (Rost, 2024; Mascolo et al., 2025; Al Maktoum et al., 2024; Wanlu, 2021; Ryle, 1965; Michelet, 1871; Plato, 1892b, 1894). This is distinctly different from traditional debate models of winner-take-all including Oxford Union Debates where either proposition or opposition is wholly ratified by simple majority of votes, and the institutional outcome is binary and lacking synthesis (The Oxford Union Society, n.d.). This is why I predict that the dialectic method would likely prepare advanced speakers of English, whether L1 or L2, to prepare for real-world requirements such as the OPI, academic interview, or professional job interview. By means of the art of conversation employing logic and reason leaves interlocutors the burden of resolving contradictions and arriving at final conclusions which are skilfully negotiated over the course of the dialectic. It is precisely in these sorts of intensive conversational contexts where I predict that oral language skills are likely to improve in a pressure-tested environment where each side attempts to skilfully articulate, reason, and persuade. However, since the dialectic method is not a debate, and non-confrontational, both sides may take turns defending and interrogating both thesis and antithesis responding in real time to developments in arguments which may also help to improve motivation and willingness to communicate (Mascolo et al., Covington, 2024; 2025; Nikulin, 2020; Wu, 2023b; Borkowska, 2022; Lee, 2022). Thus, the dialectical method process in an oral language context is not a simple mathematical equation but requires intense,

intellectually rigorous conversation in order to collectively arrive at a final synthesis, and each dialectic should arrive at an authentic and original outcome where the synthesis is skilfully negotiated between conversation partners. I argue that the type of conversational abilities employed in a well-structured dialectic method intervention are precisely the skills that will provide the basis and impetus for higher levels of advancement in L1 and L2 English conversational ability.

5.2. Operationalisability Considerations

There appear to be various obstacles hindering research of the dialectic method as an intervention in L1 or L2 English conversational skills. Firstly, there is likely a deficiency of knowledge and awareness in the educational field and particularly in the SLA field regarding the type of dialectic which describes a type of philosophical dialogue, and educators may conflate Vygotskian socially mediated dialectical processes with the dialectic method as a type of philosophical dialogue in the Platonic and Hegelian senses (Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980; Gill & Pellegrin, 2012; Plato, 1894; Wu, 2023a; Michelet, 1871). This assertion is supported by the 53 databases scanned which included some of the most common to education, social sciences and linguistics. Just as Overholser and Beale (2023) implore scholars and practitioners of psychotherapy to read the Platonic dialogues, I would make a similar appeal to applied linguists and second language teachers. Secondly, actual intervention studies need to be well-defined and have clear protocols in place in order to keep the intervention tightly focused on the dialectic method. As previously mentioned, there was an intervention study by Negueruela-Azarola (2011) which combined multiple activities and modalities together and the dialectic focus attenuated throughout the study. Thirdly, the appropriate population of learners who possess a sufficient advanced proficiency to carry out dialectical method conversations is required for empirical research. For example, the postcolonial moral dilemma classroom exercises mentioned by Skrefsrud (2024) require participants who not only possess the prerequisite language skills but also possess knowledge of relevant subjects in the political, social, cultural, economic, and religious domains. Therefore, if researchers fully understand the dialectic method, design the appropriate protocol ensuring the dialectic method intervention maintains its focus, and if possess sufficient linguistic proficiency, then an empirical intervention study could be conducted.

5.2.1 Differentiating Dialectics: Socially Mediated Dialectics vs. Philosophical Dialectics

For any empirical research involving the dialectic method as an intervention for advanced L1 or L2 English conversational skills, it is important to differentiate between different types of dialectics. As Figure 4 illustrates Vygotskian socially mediated dialectical processes involving interaction between an expert and novice (or teacher and student), which is associated with ZPD, and could be applicable to any learning tasks (Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980). It could also be seen in vertical terms as top-down and bottom-up socially mediated terms. However, it is important to highlight the distinction between dialectical processes which generally defines the educational environment as a whole (Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980) versus dialectic method discussions which are specifically focused on exploring opposites as a means of achieving synthesis and arrival at new knowledge either philosophical or material which could be seen in horizontal terms between conversational partners (Mascolo et al., 2025; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1892c, 1894; Michelet; 1871). However, Platonic dialectics actually seem to combine both vertical and horizontal social dynamics as there is usually a Socratic moderator or leader of the academy that guides Platonic dialogues and all participant towards and ultimate telos, whether in terms of knowledge, wisdom, or a combination thereof (Gonzalez, 1997; Gellrich, 1994; Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1892a, 1892b; 1892c, 1894). Ideally, researchers should be aware of the nuances between social and interactional dialectical processes, so that any intervention has established rules of intervention in order to maintain the proper focus. Moreover, any future empirical research focused on the dialectic method as an intervention for improving L1 and L2 English conversational skills should ensure that the roles of the students and the roles of the teacher or moderator should be clearly defined as part of the intervention. For example, in recruiting teachers for the experiment it might be important to not only recruit people who are at the Distinguished level of English (per the ACTFL scale) and who might hold a PhD in English, for example, but it might also be critical to recruit teachers who are philosophically trained.

5.2.2 Appropriate Content Selection

Researchers should select topics and content that are appropriately matched to the learners' levels. Even though the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis $i + 1$ (Krashen, 1982) has been criticised for being nebulous and difficult to operationalise (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021), it nevertheless, can be somewhat helpful in defining a macro level concept. For instance, contemporary SLA scholars demonstrate the importance of matching teaching materials at the appropriate level to students' current capability levels (Ha, 2022;

Namaziandost et al., 2019). This dissertation has focused on advanced English conversational skills and has identified *advanced* as the top three proficiency levels according to ACFTFL (Advanced, Superior, Distinguished) and CEFR (B2, C1, C2) guidelines (ACTFL, 2024; Council of Europe, 2020). Hence, any future research seeking to measure the impact of a dialectic method intervention on advanced English conversational skills would need to clearly define participants' proficiency levels using recognised proficiency scales. This will help establish a sufficient proficiency baseline. Additionally, pretests and post-tests should be conducted to measure effect sizes (Cramer & Howitt, 2004). For example, participants might observably move closer from C1 to C2 proficiency levels even if not actually attaining C2 level proficiency (Council of Europe, 2020). Furthermore, a control group should be included for comparison, enabling researchers to determine whether the intervention's effects are due to the dialectic method itself rather than to general increases in exposure to English oral communication (Cramer & Howitt, 2004). For example, dialectically focused L1 and L2 English oral conversation interventions could be compared with open-ended, free-style L1 and L2 English conversations to determine whether the dialectic method is superior to, rather than a simple matter of, greater exposure to conversational English.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation has compiled relevant literature on the dialectic method from ancient Greece to contemporary scholarship. Foundational texts in the literature review included the Platonic dialogues and dialectical theories of Hegel, Marx, and Vygotsky. The dialectic method as a structured philosophical discussion exploring opposites as a specific intervention was distinguished from socially mediated dialectical processes that could be generally applied to any educational task including the intervention described in this dissertation. The search syntax contained in **Table 4** was used to survey a total of 53 databases of relevant academic disciplines and grey literature. The PRISMA Flow Diagram in **Figure 5** shows that of 1,482 records identified, only two met the criteria for qualitative synthesis and none met the criteria for quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis). Inclusion Criterion 9 allowed for all types of study designs due to an anticipated scarcity of literature on the topic allowed for the inclusion of theoretical and conceptual studies, and academic precedents and theoretical impetus were discussed in Chapter 4.

RQ1: What is the current state of research on the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners?

The two studies included in the qualitative synthesis are recent publications and work together synergistically to illustrate the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners. Wu (2023a) articulates a Hegelian framework for language development, describes dialectical processes between learners' L1 and L2, and explains how functions of language lead to the development of L2 conversational skills. By contrast, Skrefsrud (2024) integrates dialectics from the material world with clearly defined dialectic conversations in global classrooms (applicable to L1 and L2 English) using a postcolonial framework. In particular, Skrefsrud includes specific examples of moral dilemma exercises which epitomise the philosophical dialectic method but are readily operationalizable in language teaching and research contexts.

Chapter 5 synthesises findings and proposes a weighted synthesis which is a variable and contingent upon language skills and conversational prowess. It also suggests that the dialectical method might be more inviting to learners than traditional debate models defined by a winner-take-all approach and binary outcomes and therefore might increase motivation and the willingness to communicate (Wu, 2023b; The Oxford Union Society, n.d.;

Borkowska, 2022; Lee, 2022). However, at this stage, without supporting empirical evidence, this contention is only based on logical inferences from the literature reviewed.

Despite compelling philosophical arguments in favour of the dialectic method, at present, there is no empirical data supporting the method as applied to the advancement of either L1 or L2 conversational English, even though the method seems to be accepted axiomatically in philosophical fields. Nevertheless, given that the systematic review was conducted by a single researcher in a finite span of time, it is possible that relevant empirical studies might have been missed. On the other hand, if no relevant empirical studies exist then the findings of this systematic review are significant and provide impetus for future empirical intervention studies.

Potential challenges to operationalisability, and strategies to mitigate them, might be the following. First, SLA researchers must possess sufficient knowledge of both the dialectic method as applied to philosophical conversations in Platonic and Hegelian traditions (Ryle, 1965; Plato, 1894; Ellis, 2001; Michelet, 1871) and socially mediated dialectical educational processes in the Vygotskian sense (Xi & Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1980) to create an effective intervention framework. From a pedagogical perspective, teachers will require training on the method, implementation strategies, mapping philosophical contexts onto pedagogical practice, and procedures for mitigating risks. In addition to distinguished-level English proficiency, e.g., per the ACTFL scale, researchers and teachers should also be philosophically trained. Finally, research should be tied to an academically recognised system of proficiency guidelines to inform topic selection and assessment metrics.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IDESR Protocol

IDESR ID

IDESR000203

Title

Assessing the Efficacy of the Dialectic Method in Promoting Advanced L1 and L2 English Conversational Skills: A Systematic Review Protocol

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Review Question

What is the current state of research of the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners?

Rationale

While there is a substantial amount of literature on second language (L2) English pedagogy, a significant amount of that research focuses on beginners and intermediate learners. Moreover, a fair amount of literature deals with proficiency modalities of listening, reading, and writing proficiency. However, there is arguably a lot more work to be done regarding advanced L2 English oral proficiency.

The dialectic method is a technique for improving oral argumentation proficiency at high levels of proficiency (Bachman, 2024; Nikulin, 2010). It is also a metacognitive approach to higher quality of thoughts (e.g., critically interrogating one's own assumptions and cognitive flexibility in terms of one's own position) facilitating improved speech (Panggabean & Triassanti, 2020; Shin, 2024).

The dialectic method is arguably different from traditional debate models with a clear winner and loser, which tend to be dependent on winning the crowd through rhetoric, emotional appeals, and presentational styles. Instead, the dialectic method is a dynamic approach to discovering an objective reality through conversation. While there has been a fair amount of work done on debate in L2 English pedagogy, including a systematic review

by Wu (2023), there has been very little work done on the dialectic method, particularly regarding advanced L2 English oral proficiency.

Hence, this systematic review seeks to examine the current state of research of the impact of the dialectic method on developing advanced L1 and L2 English conversational skills in adult learners.

This research is relevant to adult learners who aim to increase their oral language proficiency for advanced uses for academic purposes (e.g., university entrance exams, graduate school performance), and in professional settings requiring advanced oral language proficiency.

References:

Bachman, L. F. (2024). What Is the Construct? The Dialectic of Abilities and Contexts in Defining Constructs in Language Assessment 1. In J. E. Purpura & A. J. Kunnan, *The Writings of Lyle F. Bachman* (1st ed., pp. 220–250). Routledge.

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Nikulin, D. (2010). *Dialectic and dialogue*. Stanford University Press.

Panggabean, C. I. T., & Triassanti, R. (2020). The Implementation of Metacognitive Strategy Training to Enhance EFL Students Oral Presentation Skill. *English Education: Journal of English Teaching and Research*, 5(1), 32–40.

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Shin, M. H. (2024). Improving English Speaking Skills in a College General English Course Using Metacognitive Strategies. *English Teaching*, 79(3), 99-121.

Wu, X. (2023). The effectiveness of debate pedagogy in ESL/EFL speaking skills: a systematic review [Master's thesis]. University of Oxford.

Inclusion Criteria

Bibliographic information

INCLUDE 1: Studies with a full reference or sufficient information.

EXCLUDE 1: Studies with insufficient bibliographic information.

RATIONALE: Without sufficient bibliographic information, retrieval of works is infeasible.

Date of publication

INCLUDE 2: Include studies published on any date.

EXCLUDE 2: Do not exclude studies based on their publication date.

RATIONALE: Preliminary scoping searches showed that research on this topic is scarce, therefore, all available work will be included.

Population

INCLUDE 3: Adult learners ages 18 and up.

EXCLUDE 3: Learners under the age of 18.

RATIONALE: This research focuses on adult learners, e.g., in college learning environments, professional learning contexts, etc., with an emphasis on upper intermediate through distinguished proficiency. In many countries L2 English is compulsory in national primary and secondary educational contexts, so there are vast populations of L2 English speakers throughout the world with novice through intermediate L2 English language proficiency. However, this systematic review focuses on learners interested in further developing their L2 English proficiency to higher levels as the dialectic method is known to be of benefit to them and might not work for learners with lower levels.

INCLUDE 4: Any adult learner of L2 English from any L1 background.

EXCLUDE 4: Exclude no L2 English learner based on their L1 background.

RATIONALE: This systematic review considers adult L2 English learners from any L1 background to insure a comprehensive review of the topic and efficacy of the intervention regardless of L1 background.

INCLUDE 5: Any adult L1 speaker “native speaker” of English ages 18 and up.

EXCLUDE 5: ALL L1 speakers “native speakers” of English below the age of 18.

RATIONALE: This systematic review attempt to compare “apples to apples” by comparing the intervention impacts on adult L1 speakers of English with adult L2 learners of English, which may help in ascertaining the extent to which L1 and L2 English speakers are similar / different.

Intervention

INCLUDE 6: Studies involving the dialectic method (and closely related terms, e.g., Socratic dialogue, etc.) in the advancement of adult learners of English (as an L1 or L2) which are designed to promote the advancement of English ability with a specific focus on dialogue, conversation, interlocution, or oral proficiency.

EXCLUDE 6: Exclude studies which DO NOT use the dialectic method (and closely related terms, e.g., Socratic dialogue, etc.) in the advancement of adult learners of English (as an L1 or L2) which are designed to promote the advancement of English ability with a specific focus on dialogue, conversation, interlocution, or oral proficiency.

RATIONALE: This systematic review is very focused on the dialectic method as an interventional tool to advance the L1 and / or L2 English oral proficiency of adult learners ages 18 and up. Therefore, studies that are not relevant are either not relevant or would distract from the research focus.

Comparator

INCLUDE 7:

In intervention studies: non-dialectic method intervention group (i.e., a control group), when applicable.

Outcomes

INCLUDE 8: Primary research studies reporting any measure of dialectic method intervention in L1 and / or L2 English conversational skills input including cognitive, interlocution, input / output, interactional, and sociocultural dynamics. Include studies that report quantitative (e.g., pre-post test scores) and/or qualitative data (e.g., cognition, interaction, output, sociocultural theory, motivation, and self-regulation). Include outcome measures related to advanced speaking proficiency in L1 and L2 English, such as the use of logic, reason, rhetoric, persuasion, emotional appeal, style, articulation, lexical complexity, strategic competence, confidence, enunciation, speaking style, fluency, length of utterances, prosody, accent, and lexical complexity, etc. Include quantitative and qualitative data.

EXCLUDE 8: Systematic reviews and studies that provide narrative evaluation of an educational program but provide no measures of dialectic method intervention effectiveness. Exclude theoretical and speculative thought pieces that lack actual data collection and analysis regarding the dialectic method in L1 and L2 advanced English conversational skills, unless philosophical literature that elucidates and contextualizes the topic.

RATIONALE: A synthesis of empirical findings in this field of literature is impossible without the reporting and evaluation of concrete data. Well defined and articulated data is vital to have a proper “apples to apples” comparison and meaningful comprehensive analysis.

Study design

INCLUDE 9: All types of study design.

EXCLUDE 9: Do not exclude studies based on the research design.

RATIONALE: Research on this topic is scarce, and the exclusion of any one study design may provide an even narrower view of the research in this area.

Setting

INCLUDE 10: Include typical adult learning environments, e.g., colleges, universities, cram schools, prep schools, online lessons, societies, clubs, organizations, private tutoring settings, psycholinguistic laboratories, etc., where L1 and L2 English dialectic method conversational pedagogy would most likely take place.

EXCLUDE 10: Exclude other organizational dialogue forums that lack a specifically pedagogical focus, e.g., the United Nations (UN), World Economic Forum (WEF), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), etc., unless specifically studied from the perspective of any field of linguistics (e.g., applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, etc).

RATIONALE: While international organizations are places for debate and even dialectical interlocution, their focus is not pedagogical in nature, and while there may be substantial amounts of published materials in English by L1 and L2 speakers of English on a range of interesting topics, the non-educational / non-pedagogical nature of those organizations make it more likely that data obtained from them would more likely conflate and confuse than elucidate the research focus of this systematic review unless specifically studied from the perspective of any field of linguistics.

Publication status

INCLUDE 11: Include peer-reviewed articles, organisation reports, books, master's and doctoral thesis, organizational publications, societal publications and minutes, and conference proceedings.

EXCLUDE 11: not exclude studies based on their publication status.

RATIONALE: Include the grey literature on this topic to minimise the impact of publication bias.

Language

INCLUDE 12: Include studies published in English (the primary target language of this systematic review) and other languages known by the authors including German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish (if peripherally / incidentally acquired during the course of the search).

EXCLUDE 12: Exclude studies that are not published in English, German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.

RATIONALE: Since this systematic review focuses on advanced L1 and L2 English conversation skills it is inferred that relevant literature on the topic should be published in

English, yet publications in languages other than English will be considered if they are exceptionally relevant. English is largely the lingua franca of academia. Due to efficient time and resource management the primary focus will be on English language publications and in languages known by the authors including German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.

INCLUDE: 12.1: Studies that focus on the dialectic method for the target languages of German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.

EXCLUDE: 12.1: Studies that do not focus on the target languages of English, German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish.

RATIONALE: The authors have proficiency in the target languages listed in 12.1, and if studies are found incidentally focusing on these languages, they will be considered for the purposes of comparison and analysis.

Study design

INCLUDE 13: All types of study design.

EXCLUDE 13: Do not exclude studies based on research design but exclude secondary research such as systematic review.

RATIONALE: Due to the likely scarcity of relevant research in this field and scope, excluding studies based on design type would too narrowly restrict and possibly inadvertently exclude relevant research.

Information Sources

For this Systematic Review, the following databases will be consulted, which primarily focus on include prominent databases in linguistics and education. Databases for prominent literature (when relevant) in the databases of other disciplines including law, philosophy, politics, psychology, sociology, theology (and broader databases).

Education: Scopus, Education Collection (incl. ERIC), British Education Index, Australian Education Index, Education Abstracts (incl. EBSCO), Scopus.

Electronic databases:

Multidisciplinary: ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection, Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection.

Linguistics databases:

British National Corpus (alternative interfaces), Cambridge University Press eBooks EBA – Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences, CORIS, Gale Digital Scholar Lab, HathiTrust Research Centre, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Eighteenth Century Journals, iWeb

corpus, Linguistics Data Consortium, Language Science Press, Lexicons of Early Modern English, Linguistic Data Consortium, Linguistics and Language Behaviour Abstracts (LLBA), Linguistics Collection, Linguistics Database, MLA International Bibliography (EBSCO), Nexis UK, Open American National Corpus, Oxford Text Archive, Project Gutenberg, PsycINFO, ProQuest One Literature, Scopus, Sketch Engine.

Philosophy databases:

American Philosophical Association, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASeries Plus, British Philosophical Association, Cambridge University Press eBooks EBA – Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences, Digital Bodleian, Dimensions, International Encyclopedia of Ethics, Philosopher’s Index with full text, Royal Institute of Philosophy, Social Sciences Index.

Political Philosophy databases:

Isaiah Berlin Online, Past Masters – Humanities Full Text Works, Social Sciences Citation Index

Psychology databases:

APA PsycArticles, CINAHL, Oxford Academic: Books (including University Press Scholarship), Oxford Library of Psychology, Sage Reference, Scopus, Sociological Abstracts, Treatments That Work.

Broader databases:

Cambridge University Library, Cambridge Digital Library, EBSCOhost Ebook Collection, Dimensions, Google Scholar, Project Gutenberg, Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, PsycINFO, ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection, Sage Research Methods Online, SOLO, UK Data Archive, UK Data Service, Web of Science Core Collection.

Grey literature: ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Global, EThOS, OpenGrey

Theology databases:

Arts & Humanities Citation Index (ISI), ATLA Religion Databases with ATLASerials Plus, Periodical Archive Online, Periodicals Index Online, New Testament Abstracts, Old Testament Abstracts

All databases will be accessed electronically. Where possible, a subscription to the Bodleian Library (University of Oxford) will be used.

The reference lists of studies that pass the selection process and meet all inclusion criteria will be used for backward citation searches. Relevant results will be checked against the eligibility criteria. In addition, a forward citation search will be conducted in the Web of

Science database. That means, all papers which cited a report considered eligible for the current review will be reviewed as well and checked against the eligibility criteria.

Search Strategy

An experienced librarian (Ms. Rebeca Otazua, rebeca.otazua@bodleian.ox.ac.uk) at the University of Oxford's Department of Education was consulted to formulate the initial search. There are three important elements of the search string based on the review question, including:

Participants: adult L1 and L2 English learners focusing on advanced conversational skills.

Intervention: The dialectic method

Outcome: advanced conversational / interlocution / speaking skills

Database search options were chosen, where available, to limit the search to searching in abstracts, keywords and title. To account for the variety of terminology used in various educational contexts, several analogous labels were included within each category.

Different terms within each category related to the operator 'OR' and each field was joined with 'AND.'

Therefore, the Bodleian search string will be, for example:

“Dialectic Method” OR Dialectic* Method OR Dialectic* Reason* OR Philosophic* dialog* OR Dialectic* dialog* OR Socratic Dialog* OR Platonic Dialectic* OR Platonic dialog* OR Hegelian dialectic OR Hegelian dialog* AND English OR EFL OR ESL OR EAL OR ELL OR ELT OR L2 English* OR L2 OR "second language*" OR “Second Language Acquisition” OR SLA AND Conversation* OR speech OR dialogue OR dialog* OR discuss* OR discours* OR oral proficiency OR OPI OR Interlocution OR speaking OR communicat* AND skills OR proficiency OR persuasion OR persuas* OR rhetoric* OR Advanced OR Advancing OR Advancement OR Adult OR highly proficient OR proficient OR fluent OR high proficiency OR distinguished OR Advanced High OR Superior OR Distinguished OR skilled OR fluent OR ACTFL OR B2 OR C1 OR C2 OR language proficiency scale*

Data Management

After completing all database searches, bibliographic information and abstracts will be retrieved as RIS files (or other standard citation file formats) and uploaded to Rayyan, a programme for managing systematic reviews (Ouzzani et al., 2016), for the title and abstract screening. After the first screening of titles, keywords and abstracts, identified full text will be downloaded and organised in Zotero. If a study meets the inclusion criteria, the

investigator will extract data and record it in a Microsoft Excel file. Data management will also be carried out in accordance with systematic review best practices as identified by Boland et al. (2017). Moreover, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page et al., 2021) checklist will be referenced during the data management process for this systematic review. Finally, the JBI appraisal tool will be used as applicable (JBI, n.d.).

All evaluations will be performed on a MacBook Air running macOS 15.3.1 (24D70), Apple M1 Chip, 8 GB Memory, Macintosh HD Startup disk.

References:

Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona). (2017). *Doing a systematic review: a student's guide*. SAGE.

Joanna Briggs Institute. (n.d.). *Critical appraisal tools*. JBI. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tools>

Ouzzani, M., Hammady, H., Fedorowicz, Z., & Elmagarmid, A. (2016). Rayyan-a web and mobile app for systematic reviews. *Systematic reviews*, 5(1), 1-10.

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., ... Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, n71.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

Selection Process

After the completion of all searches, duplicates will be deleted using both Rayyan and Zotero as data management and selection tools. The remaining titles and abstracts will be reviewed against the eligibility criteria and tagged for full-text review. Abstracts must not contain any of the exclusion criteria. The selection process will be conducted in accordance with best practices identified for systematic reviews according to Boland et al. (2017).

Moreover, the PRISMA checklist (Page et al., 2021) will be referenced during the selection process for this systematic review. Finally, the JBI appraisal tool will be used as applicable (JBI, n.d.).

Reference:

Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona). (2017). *Doing a systematic review : a student's guide*. SAGE.

Joanna Briggs Institute. (n.d.). Critical appraisal tools. JBI. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tools>

Page, M. J., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

Data Collection Process

The data collection process will be conducted in accordance with best practices identified by Boland et al. (2017) in conducting systematic reviews. Moreover, the PRISMA checklist (Page et al., 2021) will be referenced during the data collection process for this systematic review. Finally, the JBI appraisal tool will be used as applicable (JBI, n.d.).

Reference:

Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona). (2017). *Doing a systematic review: a student's guide*. SAGE

Joanna Briggs Institute. (n.d.). Critical appraisal tools. JBI. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tools>

Page, M. J., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

Data Items

General:

Date form completed, ID of person extracting data, reference citation, study author contacts details, publication type, document source

Study overview:

Research questions, study design, data type, study duration, location and language of publication.

Participants:

School setting (educational context), population description, languages spoken, age, gender, and other relevant sociodemographic information.

Intervention:

Languages of instruction, hours per week of intervention (if reported), description of intervention, length of intervention, experimental controls, number of participants, class grouping, baseline imbalances, attrition.

Outcomes:

Outcome type, outcome name, unit(s) of measure, time points measured, descriptive outcomes, effect sizes.

The data collection process will be conducted in accordance with best practices identified by Boland et al. (2017) in conducting systematic reviews. Moreover, the PRISMA checklist (Page et al., 2021) will be used for mitigating the risk of bias for this systematic review. Finally, the JBI appraisal tool will be used as applicable (JBI, n.d.).

References:

Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona). (2017). Doing a systematic review: a student's guide. SAGE

Joanna Briggs Institute. (n.d.). Critical appraisal tools. JBI. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tools>

Oxford Education Deanery. (n.d.). About the EEF Padlock Tool. University of Oxford. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/oxford-education-deanery/online-learning/risk-of-bias-training/about-the-eef-padlock-tool/>

Page, M. J., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

Risk of bias/trustworthiness of individual studies

Risk of bias will be assessed using the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Padlock Tool, a structured framework specifically designed for evaluating causal claims in educational intervention studies (University of Oxford, Department of Education, n.d.). This tool is well aligned with best practices in critical appraisal, which emphasize clarity, replicability, and structured decision-making across bias domains (Boland, Cherry, & Dickson, 2017).

The Padlock Tool evaluates the methodological rigor and risk of bias across the following domains:

- Design – the strength of the research design used, relative to its suitability for detecting causal relationships;
- Attrition – the extent to which participants remained in the study through to completion;
- Confounding – how well potential confounders (e.g., age, gender, motivation) were accounted for;
- Concurrent interventions – whether participants were exposed to other interventions correlated with the outcome;

- Experimental effects and contamination – including teacher reactivity or between-group contamination;
- Implementation fidelity – the degree to which the intervention was delivered as intended;
- Missing data – the extent to which all data that the researchers intended to collect were actually collected, and how any missing data were accounted for in the analysis;
- Measurement of outcomes – whether outcome tools were valid, reliable, and consistent across groups;
- Selective reporting – whether all pre-specified outcomes were reported, and the extent of unplanned analyses (University of Oxford, Department of Education, n.d.)

If studies of a different design are included after full-text screening (e.g., quasi-experimental or qualitative studies), the appropriate JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist will be applied—such as the Checklist for Quasi-Experimental Studies or the Checklist for Qualitative Research (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2017a, 2017b). The exact JBI tool used will be transparently reported.

No aggregate quality scores will be calculated. Instead, domain-specific strengths and limitations will be presented in both tabular and narrative formats, as recommended in the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Aromataris et al., 2024) and in line with the structured synthesis approaches advocated by Boland et al. (2017).

References:

- Aromataris, E., Lockwood, C., Porritt, K., Pilla, B., & Jordan, Z. (Eds.). (2024). JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis. JBI. <https://doi.org/10.46658/JBIMES-24-01>
- Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona) (Eds.). (2017). *Doing a systematic review: a student's guide* (2nd edition.). SAGE
- Joanna Briggs Institute. (2017a). Checklist for quasi-experimental studies (non-randomized experimental studies). JBI. <https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tool>
- Joanna Briggs Institute. (2017b). Checklist for qualitative research. JBI. <https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tool>
- University of Oxford, Department of Education. (n.d.). About the EEF Padlock Tool. Oxford Education Deanery. <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/oxford-education-deanery/online-learning/risk-of-bias-training/about-the-eeef-padlock-tool/>

Data Synthesis

A narrative synthesis will be conducted, following the structured approach recommended by Petticrew and Roberts (2008) and Boland, Cherry, and Dickson (2017) for synthesizing complex and mixed evidence in the social sciences and education research.

- First, studies will be grouped by intervention type (e.g., structured dialectic method dialogues vs. informal Socratic discussions), learner profile (L1 vs. L2), and educational context (e.g., secondary vs. tertiary).
- Second, findings and associated risk-of-bias assessments will be compared within and across these groups. This will allow for examination of relationships between intervention type, context, and reported outcomes.
- Third, patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the evidence will be synthesised thematically, with reference to relevant theories of dialogic learning and advanced language development.

If at least three studies report a sufficiently homogeneous outcome measure (e.g., TOEFL iBT speaking scores or IELTS Speaking descriptors), a random-effects meta-analysis will be considered. Effect sizes will be calculated using Hedges' g (adjusted for small sample bias), and Cohen's d will be reported where appropriate. R^2 values and confidence intervals will be presented for any regression-based analyses. Statistical heterogeneity will be assessed using the I^2 statistic.

References:

- Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona) (Eds.). (2017). *Doing a systematic review: a student's guide* (2nd edition.). SAGE.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2008). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide*. John Wiley & Sons.

Meta-biases

Meta-biases will be assessed to ensure transparency and rigor at the review level, following guidance from Petticrew and Roberts (2008) and methodological best practices outlined in Aromataris et al. (2024) and Boland, Cherry, and Dickson (2017).

- Publication bias will be addressed through the inclusion of grey literature, such as doctoral dissertations, working papers, and other unpublished studies, to reduce the overrepresentation of statistically significant findings. If a meta-analysis is feasible, funnel plots will be used to visually detect asymmetry, and Egger's regression test will be employed to assess small-study effects.

- Selective outcome reporting will be evaluated by comparing published study results with publicly available protocols or trial registrations (where available), as recommended in the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Aromataris et al., 2024). This process will help identify discrepancies between planned and reported outcomes.
- Language bias will be partially mitigated by including studies published in English, German, Greek, Japanese, and Spanish. Searches will be conducted using language-specific Boolean search strings across relevant databases to broaden the evidence base and reduce the risk of English-language publication dominance (Boland et al., 2017).

All procedures and decisions related to meta-bias assessment will be transparently documented in an appendix to facilitate reproducibility and critical scrutiny.

References:

- Aromataris, E., Lockwood, C., Porritt, K., Pilla, B., & Jordan, Z. (Eds.). (2024). JBI manual for evidence synthesis. JBI. <https://doi.org/10.46658/JBIMES-24-01>
- Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona) (Eds.). (2017). *Doing a systematic review: a student's guide* (2nd edition.). SAGE.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2008). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide*. John Wiley & Sons.

Confidence in Cumulative Evidence

The strength of the cumulative evidence in this research area will be assessed based on the CASP checklist appraisal tool.

https://casp-uk.net/images/checklist/documents/CASP-Systematic-Review-Checklist/CASP-Systematic-Review-Checklist-2018_fillable-form.pdf

Moreover, PRISMA checklist (Page et al., 2021) will be used for confidence in cumulative evidence purposes as applicable for this systematic review. Moreover, confidence in cumulative evidence will be assessed in accordance with best practices for systematic reviews as articulated by Boland et al. (2017). Finally, the JBI appraisal tool will be used as applicable (JBI, n.d.).

References:

- Boland, A., Cherry, M. G. (M. G., & Dickson, R. (Rumona). (2017). *Doing a systematic review: a student's guide*. SAGE

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme. (2018). CASP Systematic Review Checklist.

<https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/systematic-review-checklist/>

Joanna Briggs Institute. (n.d.). Critical appraisal tools. JBI. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from

<https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tools>

Page, M. J., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

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Anticipated or actual start date: 2025-03-17

Anticipated completion date: 2025-03-17

Other language resources: None.

Current Status: Ongoing

Details of Published Review

IDESR URL

<https://idesr.org/article/IDESR000203>

Appendix B: Table 5. Custom Data Extraction Form

Table 5

Custom Data Extraction Form

1. ID	22. Sample Size
2. Date Extracted	23. Age Range
3. Data Extractor	24. Gender
4. Inclusion Criteria	25. L1 Background(s)
5. APA Reference (Zotero-exported, with DOI if available)	26. Educational Setting
6. In-text Citation Format	27. Intervention Description
7. Title	28. Number of Hours Per Week
8. Year	30. Instruction Language(s)
9. Tier Classification: Tier 3 (Foundational); Tier 2 (Conceptually / Operationally Relevant); Tier 1) Directly Relevant Study (Qual/Quant/Mixed)	31. Control Group Present (Y/N)
10. Appraisal Tool Used (JBI, CASP, Other)	32. Experimental Controls (if any)
11. Risk for Bias (EEF Padlock Tool)	33. Outcome Name(s)
12. Key Quotes (Verbatim Excerpts); Paraphrases	34. Outcome Type (Quant/Qual/Mixed)
13. General Notes / Observations	35. Outcome Measures (Oral Proficiency Test Scores)
14. Referenced Tables and Figures (from Source)	36. Effect Size Summary (Hedges' g; Cohen's d; R ² values and confidence intervals; I ² for statistical heterogeneity)
15. Primary Focus Dialectic for Oral Proficiency (Y/N)	37. Meta-Analysis Feasible? (Yes/No)
16. Intervention Type (Dialectic, Socratic, etc.)	38. Time Points Measured
17. Study Design	39. Descriptive Outcomes
18. Study Duration	40. Potential for Pedagogical Operationalisation (Y/N)
19. Location	41. Theoretical or Contextual Relevance Only (Y/N)
20. Publication Language	42. Instructional Implications / Pedagogical Notes
21. Population Description	

Note. Adapted from a master Excel sheet based on systematic review standards and mixed-methods appraisal criteria. Informed by protocols and frameworks from Boland et al. (2017), Page et al. (2021), Ouzzani et al. (2016), CASP (2018), University of Oxford Department of Education (n.d.), and Griswold & Faitaki (2025).

Appendix C: JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Textual Evidence: Narrative

Reviewer _____

Date _____

Author _____ Year _____ Record Number _____

	Yes	No	Unclear	Not applicable
1. Is the generator of the narrative a credible or appropriate source?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is the relationship between the text and its context explained? (where, when, who with, how)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Does the narrative present the events using a logical sequence so the reader or listener can understand how it unfolds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you, as reader or listener of the narrative, arrive at similar conclusions to those drawn by the narrator?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do the conclusions flow from the narrative account?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you consider this account to be a narrative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overall appraisal: Include Exclude Seek further info

Comments (Including reason for exclusion)

McArthur, A., Klugarova, J., Yan, H., & Florescu, S. (2020). Chapter 4: Systematic reviews of text and opinion. In E. Aromataris & Z. Munn (Eds.), *JBI manual for evidence synthesis*. JBI. <https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tools>