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Dialogic Studies in Digital Communication: Pragmatic Analysis of Online Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Digital communication platforms have reshaped how people engage in dialogue across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This study examines online discourse through a pragmatic lens to understand how dialogic communication unfolds in multilingual, computer-mediated contexts. Dialogic communication—defined as the negotiated exchange of ideas—encourages openness, ethics, and mutual understanding, yet how these ideals are realized among second-language users online remains unclear. This research identifies pragmatic features of online dialogic discourse, explores how second-language speakers co-construct meaning, and evaluates the benefits and challenges of dialogic interaction. A mixed-methods discourse analysis was conducted on a corpus of public online discussions (≈100 participants; ≈50,000 words) involving diverse non-native English speakers, combining quantitative corpus techniques with qualitative pragmatic analysis. Findings reveal that participants exchanged multiple perspectives, signaled openness to difference, and employed pragmatic strategies to negotiate meaning. Online discourse enhanced transparency, social presence, and knowledge co-construction, though challenges such as multitasking, divided attention, and absent presence were evident. Nevertheless, digital platforms can support authentic dialogic exchanges when communicators

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adopt dialogic attitudes and when platform design facilitates sustained interaction. Grounded in pragmatics and dialogic theory, this study demonstrates that online discourse—even among non-native speakers—can embody genuine dialogue, with implications for education, identity-building, and intercultural collaboration. By aligning with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships), the findings underscore how dialogic digital spaces can advance lifelong learning and cross-cultural engagement.

Keywords: Computer-Mediated Communication; Discourse Analysis; Social Presence; Second-Language Pragmatics; Dialogic Interaction; Intercultural Communication; Knowledge Co-Construction; Lifelong Learning

1. Introduction

Dialogic communication has emerged as a critical concept in understanding interpersonal interaction in the digital age. *Dialogue* is broadly defined as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions," emphasizing mutual exchange and understanding. Originally articulated in communication theory by Kent and Taylor in the context of public relations, this definition frames dialogue as an interactive, two-way process where all parties actively participate in meaning-making [1]. Dialogic communication goes beyond casual conversation; it is characterized by qualities such as honesty, openness, ethics, and mutual respect. In dialogic theory, communicators are expected to engage with others in good faith, valuing each other's perspectives and striving for mutual understanding or consensus. Kent and Taylor's seminal works identified five key features of a dialogic orientation – *mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk,* and *commitment* – which together guide ethical and effective dialogic interactions [1]. In essence, a dialogic stance requires a willingness to listen openly, respond authentically, and embrace the risk of genuine engagement with others, even when perspectives differ.

With the proliferation of digital communication platforms, opportunities for dialogic interaction have expanded dramatically. Online forums, social media, and messaging applications enable individuals across the globe to engage in discourse unconstrained by physical location. Such digital dialogic spaces also align with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by fostering peer-to-peer learning and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by enabling cross-cultural collaboration [2]. Importantly, these digital venues often involve communication in a lingua franca (such as English) among users for whom it is a second language. This environment of linguistically and culturally diverse interlocutors makes *pragmatics* — the study of language use in context — especially salient [3]. Pragmatic competence involves understanding speech acts, implicatures, turn-taking norms, and context-dependent meanings. In second-language online communication, pragmatic nuances can be complex: users must negotiate meaning and maintain rapport despite differences in cultural conventions and varying language proficiency. Prior research into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) interactions has found that non-native speakers employ collaborative strategies to achieve understanding, such as accommodating to each other's language use, negotiating meanings, and co-constructing utterances using discourse markers and other signals. These strategies often make the discourse *"robust and 'normal'"* even when participants' language use is non-standard. Such findings suggest that multilingual online discussions can indeed realize the principles of dialogic communication, as participants work together pragmatically to overcome linguistic gaps and cultural differences.

Dialogic communication in online settings is theorized to yield several positive outcomes. First, it can foster transparency and trust in interactions. Communicators who adopt a dialogic approach share information openly and honestly, creating a transparent environment conducive to trust-building [1,4]. In organizational communication research, for example, dialogic engagement on social media is linked to perceptions of transparency and empathy, which in turn foster mutual understanding and consensus. Second, dialogic online discourse is believed to enhance social presence — the degree to which participants feel socially and emotionally connected. By actively engaging in two-way communication (e.g., responding to others' messages, showing empathy, or demonstrating personal authenticity), individuals project themselves as "real people" in the online community [5]. This sense of social presence can reduce the impersonal nature of text-based

communication and promote a feeling of togetherness among interlocutors. Third, dialogic interactions support the co-construction of knowledge and collaborative learning. When participants exchange ideas and perspectives in depth, they are effectively building new understandings jointly, rather than just transferring information. Studies of educational online forums have long observed that through dialogic processes — questioning, clarifying, offering counterpoints—participants can collectively construct new knowledge or solutions that no single individual had at the start [6]. In community and organizational contexts, dialogic communication has similarly been heralded as a means to develop mutual understanding and even social capital, by transforming isolated viewpoints into shared understandings and relationships.

At the same time, realizing authentic dialogue in digital communication is not without challenges. Scholars have noted phenomena such as "absent presence," where individuals may be physically present online (logged into a platform) but not fully mentally or emotionally engaged in the interaction [5]. Gergen's classic analysis of the "challenge of absent presence" in technology-mediated settings describes how a person's attention can be divided between the mediated conversation and their immediate environment, leading to a state of partial engagement. In text-based online forums, absent presence might manifest as participants dropping out of conversations without notice or giving only cursory, token responses while their attention is elsewhere. Closely related is the issue of multitasking. Online communicators often juggle multiple conversations or tasks simultaneously – for example, participating in several chat threads, checking notifications, or doing work offline while chatting. Such multitasking can degrade the quality of dialogue, as attention is a finite resource. Research confirms that when individuals attempt to attend to multiple communication streams at once, their responsiveness and the perceived immediacy of their communication suffer. A recent study on video call conversations demonstrated that a distracted partner (engaging in other tasks on the side) led to significantly lower perceptions of that partner's conversational engagement and social presence by their interlocutor. In text discussions, multitasking might lead to delayed replies, overlooking of questions, or disjointed conversation flows, all of which hinder the development of a coherent, trusting dialogue.

Another challenge is that online discourse often lacks the rich non-verbal cues of face-to-face communication. Tone of voice, facial expressions, and immediate backchannel feedback (like nods or "mm-hmm") are largely absent in text-based channels (unless video or audio is used). This absence can make it harder to convey or detect nuances such as irony, empathy, or urgency. Participants must rely on explicit textual strategies (emoticons, punctuation, lexical cues like *"haha"* or *"sorry"*) to simulate social cues. Misunderstandings and conflict can arise more easily from ambiguous statements in this cue-poor environment. Pragmatically, interlocutors online have to be more *explicit* in their communication to achieve the same clarity as in face-to-face dialogue – for instance, by clearly acknowledging others' points (e.g., "I see your point about X"), asking follow-up questions to probe intent, or using formatting and emojis to indicate tone. These extra efforts require skill and awareness, particularly for second-language speakers who may not intuitively catch subtle connotations or may be less familiar with the emoji/abbreviation conventions in the lingua franca.

In summary, the shift of discourse to digital platforms raises an important question: Can authentic dialogic communication — characterized by openness, mutual understanding, and collaborative meaning-making — flourish in online environments, especially among speakers using a second language? The theoretical groundwork suggests both significant opportunities and potential pitfalls. On one hand, digital communication transcends geographical boundaries and brings together diverse voices, creating fertile ground for *heteroglossic* dialogue (in Bakhtin's terms, a dialogue of different voices) that can enrich understanding. On the other hand, issues of attention, reduced social cues, and varying pragmatic norms could impede the depth and sincerity of online exchanges. There is a need for empirical research that examines how dialogic principles play out in real online interactions – identifying the pragmatic strategies participants use to engage dialogically, and evaluating to what extent online discourse achieves the benefits of dialogue (transparency, social presence, knowledge co-creation) or succumbs to the challenges (fragmentation, superficiality, misunderstanding).

This study addresses that need by conducting a prag-

matic analysis of online discourse, focusing on discussions where participants come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and communicate in a common second language (English). By analyzing authentic communication data from digital platforms, the research seeks to illuminate the dialogic nature of online communication: How do users signal a dialogic attitude (e.g., openness to others, willingness to listen/respond)? What linguistic and pragmatic features enable or constrain meaningful dialogue? Do participants manage to co-construct knowledge and build social presence through text? And what hurdles like multitasking or absent presence are observable, and how do they affect the interaction? In tackling these questions, the study aims to contribute to both linguistic pragmatics and communication theory, offering insights into the pragmatic mechanisms that underlie successful (and unsuccessful) dialogic exchanges online. Ultimately, understanding these dynamics can inform how educators, organizations, and individuals can better facilitate genuine dialogue in digital contexts — an increasingly crucial competency in our interconnected, digitally-mediated world.

2. Literature Review

Recent research underscores the prevalence and importance of dialogic interaction in online learning environments, while also noting gaps in how effectively such dialogue achieves mutual understanding. The term dialogic here refers to two-way, responsive communication that facilitates the co-construction of meaning, as opposed to monologic, one-way transmission. In educational theory, this concept builds on socio-constructivist models which argue that knowledge emerges through social discourse and collaboration (a view originating from Vygotsky's work) [7]. Online forums and similar platforms potentially extend these dialogic learning opportunities to global, digital contexts. Educational online discussion forums, for example, "provide an opportunity for L2 learners and teachers to engage in potentially dialogic interactions," effectively functioning as written counterparts to the interactive oral discussions found in traditional classrooms [8]. Saadé and Huang further emphasize that online interaction is "central to the development of the instructional process in asynchronous computer discussion," anchoring the role of discourse in learning to the idea that the development of thought is mediated by social interaction [9]. This aligns with classic sociocultural theory: learners achieve higher-order understanding by grappling with diverse perspectives in dialogue, whether face-to-face or via computer-mediated communication.

A number of theoretical frameworks and models from discourse studies have been applied to analyze these online dialogues. For instance, Gunawardena et al. proposed an Interaction Analysis Model that delineates a progression of knowledge co-construction in text-based discussions, from sharing and comparing information to negotiating meaning and finally co-constructing new knowledge [6]. Such models echo Bakhtin's notion of dialogism — the idea that understanding emerges from the interplay of many voices [10] — and have been used to assess the depth of online discourse. Other scholars have attempted to quantify "dialogic properties" of educational discourse. Samei et al., for example, developed domain-independent measures of dialogic classroom talk (e.g., tracking interactive loops and question — response chains) to evaluate how interactive a given discussion is [11]. These approaches illustrate a consensus in the literature that meaningful learning is often tied to an active exchange of ideas rather than passive reception.

Within the context of second language (L2) communication, dialogic interaction takes on additional significance. Online platforms increasingly serve as sites of intercultural exchange where English is used as a lingua franca by non-native speakers. Research in L2 pragmatics indicates that such environments can foster pragmatic competence — the skill of using language appropriately in context — precisely because they are dialogic [12]. Participants must manage turn-taking, clarify misunderstandings, and attend to tone and politeness in the absence of many nonverbal cues. Studies of English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication have observed that speakers actively "negotiate meanings and co-construct utterances" to ensure mutual understanding [13]. In other words, L2 users often compensate for linguistic or cultural gaps through pragmatic strategies like confirmation checks ("Do you mean…?"), clarification requests, restating someone's point in their own words, and other moves that keep the conversation collaborative. Rather than being at a disad-

vantage, motivated L2 participants can exemplify dialogic principles by not taking shared understanding for granted – they explicitly work to build it. This finding aligns with Juliane House's observations of ELF dialogue [13] and suggests that diverse-language online forums, when supportive in tone, can become rich sites of intercultural pragmatic development.

Empirical research on online educational platforms (especially forums in MOOCs and similar learning contexts) provides evidence for both the potential and challenges of achieving true dialogic exchange. On the positive side, many studies report that discussion forums can facilitate learning through dialogue. Learners ask questions, share personal insights, respond to peers, and in the best cases collectively arrive at deeper understanding of the subject matter. For example, analysis of threads in community of inquiry settings finds that learners move from exploration to integration of ideas, demonstrating what Garrison et al. call cognitive presence in online discussions [14]. In these environments, one can often observe knowledge co-construction: participants build on each other's contributions, refining concepts and correcting misconceptions in a manner comparable to collaborative learning in classrooms. A study by Tajeddin and Alemi focusing on educational forums showed that students used a variety of interactional metadiscourse markers (e.g., hedges like "I think", engagement markers like "What do you mean by...") to maintain a collegial, interactive tone [8]. Such language use indicates an awareness of audience and a desire to invite responses, which are key to sustaining dialogue. Indeed, asynchronous forums — despite lacking face-to-face immediacy — allow a form of "written conversation" that can approximate the turn-by-turn development of ideas found in speech. Learners have time to reflect and compose thoughtful contributions, which can lead to substantial, reasoned dialogue spanning across hours or days.

At the same time, researchers have pointed out that simply having a forum or comment thread does not guarantee productive dialogic interaction. The medium and platform design impose constraints that can dampen interactivity. Clark and Brennan's classic theory of grounding in communication notes that computer-mediated channels remove many real-time backchannels and cues, "present[ing] potential barriers to establishing mutual understanding" [4]. For example, text-only interaction lacks the instant feedback (nods, "uh-huh" acknowledgements, interruptions for clarification) that face-to-face partners use to confirm understanding. As a result, online discussions can suffer from miscommunications or messages that participants misinterpret in tone or intent . Additionally, the asynchronous nature of forums — while providing flexibility — means that conversations can stall if participants disengage. Long gaps between replies can disrupt the flow of dialogue; a question might go unanswered if the original poster disappears, or threads might branch off before a previous point is resolved. Recent work highlights issues like "absent presence" (being logged in but not fully attentive) and multitasking, which lead to shallow engagement or dropped conversational threads in forums [3]. Thus, a critical theme in the literature is how platform affordances and social norms affect dialogic quality. Features such as threading (the ability to directly reply to a specific message), notifications or tagging users to draw their attention, and moderation can all influence whether discussions remain interactive or degenerate into a series of disjoint posts. Some studies suggest that structured prompts and facilitator interventions can strengthen dialogue online by encouraging participants to respond to each other rather than just posting isolated opinions [15]. Instructors or community moderators, when present, often play a role in weaving together participant contributions (e.g., summarizing, asking follow-ups), which can model dialogic behavior for users.

Beyond MOOCs and discussion boards, it is important to situate these findings in the broader landscape of digital communication tools. Dialogic language use is not confined to formal educational forums; it extends to social media, professional collaboration platforms, and other online venues where people exchange ideas. For example, informal social media platforms like Facebook or group chats have been examined as spaces for L2 learners to practice language in a playful, low-pressure manner. Lantz-Andersson's cross-cultural study found that the social media context provided a casual space for communication where students could play with language and humor, using diverse linguistic repertoires to engage with peers [12]. Intriguingly, such language play on platforms like Facebook was not merely recreational — it carried prag-

matic intent and helped students develop sociopragmatic competence (e.g., understanding humor, tone, and culturally appropriate teasing in the L2). This illustrates that dialogic interactions via social networks can contribute to language learning in ways that complement more structured MOOCs or classrooms. Meanwhile, in the professional realm, enterprise social networks and collaboration tools (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams, LinkedIn discussion groups) bring together people from different backgrounds to solve problems and share knowledge. Studies of workplace communication suggest that open, dialogic channels in these platforms can improve mutual understanding — but only if users actively bridge cultural communication styles. Chadha and Relly examined an online collaboration between U.S. and Yemeni students via Slack and reported that, while the tool enabled real-time exchange of ideas (mimicking a social media feed), the project still "revealed impediments to seamless cultural exchanges and ... barriers to effective intercultural communication" [16]. Differences in discourse norms (e.g., directness, response time expectations) sometimes led to misunderstandings, underscoring that dialogic success relies on participants' pragmatic skills as much as on technology. Thus, the implications of dialogic language use extend to any digital communication context: whether on a MOOC forum, a Twitter chat, or a corporate Slack channel, fostering true dialogue requires not only the platform features but also user education in communicative strategies and intercultural awareness.

In summary, the literature converges on the view that dialogic interaction is a crucial component of meaningful online communication. Dialogic exchanges have the power to engage learners in deeper processing, build community and trust, and even develop L2 pragmatic abilities [3,12]. However, achieving and maintaining a dialogic tenor online is not automatic — it is mediated by platform design, participant behaviors, and underlying social norms. The present study builds on this body of work by examining how these dynamics unfold in a corpus of online discussions involving L2 English speakers, and by exploring what patterns of interaction characterize successful dialogic communication in such environments. By connecting our findings to established theories of dialogue and pragmatics, we aim to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how digital platforms can best be leveraged to support genuine, interactive communication across a range of contexts, from education to social and professional domains.

3. Methodology

Corpus Compilation: To analyze dialogic patterns, we compiled a custom corpus of naturally occurring text-based discussions from two different online platforms. The first source was an international Q&A discussion board dedicated to general knowledge and cultural exchange, and the second source was a discussion forum associated with a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on global issues. These venues were selected to capture a broad cross-section of online dialogic interaction in English as a second language: the Q&A board represents a social, informal setting where anyone can pose questions and respond, while the MOOC forum represents a more structured, educational setting centered on course-related topics. Together, they allow comparison of dialogic communication across platform types (a public social forum vs. an academic course forum) and topic domains.

We collected threads from each platform using the following criteria: (1) threads had to involve multiple participants and at least 8–10 posts to ensure there was sustained back-and-forth dialogue (not just a single question-answer pair), (2) the content had to be in English and involve participants for whom English is presumably an L2 (inferred from self-reports or linguistic cues, since our focus is L2 dialogic interaction), and (3) the discussions had to be publicly visible (to adhere to ethical guidelines for online data use) [17]. From the Q&A board, we selected discussions that were tagged as cultural or general interest questions (for example, threads where users from different countries discuss a social custom or debate a general knowledge question). From the MOOC forum, we sampled threads from the course's discussion boards that had high engagement (multiple replies and views), covering a range of weeks and topics in the course. In total, the compiled corpus consists of approximately 50,000 words of text spanning around 1,200 individual messages contributed by 96 unique participants. By design, no personally identifying information was collected; user aliases were anonymized, and any real names or profiles were removed

in the dataset. We focused solely on the textual interaction content. All data were drawn from open forums that did not require login to read, ensuring that we did not violate any privacy or access restrictions. To further protect individuals, we refer to participants in our analysis using pseudonyms (e.g., "Participant A") and have altered any specific details in quotes that could hint at a user's identity or location.

Platform Characteristics and Considerations: The two platforms in our corpus have different interaction designs, which we took into account during analysis. The Q&A board is organized around user-posted questions; beneath each question, respondents can post answers or comments, and discussions often evolve as users comment on each other's answers. This platform allows features like upvotes or "likes" on responses and @mentions to address specific users, providing some conversational threading. However, the Q&A format means that the initial post is explicitly a question prompt, and subsequent dialogic moves often take the form of answers, clarifications, or follow-up inquiries on that same thread. In contrast, the MOOC forum is structured by discussion topics (often tied to course units or prompts from the instructors). Threads in the MOOC forum begin with a student's post (sometimes a question, other times a reflection), and peers or instructors reply in a linear thread. The MOOC forum we sampled did not have upvote/downvote functions; all replies are shown chronologically. It did allow quoting of previous messages and tagging of peers. An important platform-specific feature is the moderation and presence of authority figures: in the MOOC forum, instructors or teaching assistants occasionally participated, which could influence the tone (students might be more formal or on-topic). The Q&A board was an open community with peer moderation (no single authority), which sometimes led to more free-wheeling, conversational exchanges and the use of humor or off-topic side comments [3]. We paid attention to how these features might shape dialogic interaction. For instance, the presence of an @ mention feature can facilitate direct replies (enhancing dialogicity by explicitly linking turns), whereas the absence of such features might lead to more fragmented interaction if users don't manually indicate whom they are addressing.

Representativeness of the Dataset: Our dataset is not a random sample of all online communication, but it was designed to be sufficiently varied to capture common patterns of dialogic behavior in text-based L2 discussions. We intentionally included two distinct contexts (a social Q&A forum and an academic MOOC forum) to cover different communicative purposes and participant groups, thereby enhancing what Biber calls target domain representativeness — the extent to which a corpus includes the range of text types in the domain of interest [18]. The participants in our corpus hail from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (the content of posts often explicitly mentioned countries or the fact that English was not the first language for the majority of users). This diversity is important for representativeness, as it means the interaction patterns observed are not idiosyncratic to one cultural group or proficiency level, but reflect a mix of L2 English users globally. That said, we acknowledge certain limitations to representativeness. First, our data are confined to asynchronous, text-based discussions. We did not include synchronous chats or video/audio communications, which might display different dialogic features. Thus, our findings generalize to forums and similar written formats, but not necessarily to, say, Zoom conversations or WhatsApp chats. Second, within the genre of forums, our focus on specific topics (general knowledge, global issues in a MOOC) means highly specialized discourse communities (e.g., professional engineering forums or online gaming chats) are not represented. In corpus design terms, the sample may not include the full range of variability of all online discourse, especially more extreme styles (such as the very informal slang of some social media, or the tightly moderated tone of expert Q&A boards like StackExchange). These factors should be kept in mind when interpreting results. We mitigated some bias by including a fairly large number of messages (1,200) and participants (96) across multiple threads, which is substantial for qualitative-pragmatic analysis, but we refrain from making broad statistical generalizations beyond our context. Our goal is analytic depth into dialogic patterns, rather than frequency claims about all internet communication.

Analytic Approach: We adopted a mixed-methods

approach that combines corpus linguistics techniques with qualitative discourse analysis, grounded in the framework of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA). CMDA, as outlined by Herring, provides a set of methods for examining online textual interaction, treating the digital conversation as a corpus that can be analyzed for both form and function [3]. In practice, our analysis proceeded in two interconnected phases:

Quantitative Corpus Analysis: We used corpus analysis tools to scan the data for certain linguistic features that are hypothesized to relate to dialogic engagement. For example, we measured the prevalence of questions in the discussions, since questions explicitly invite responses and thus initiate dialogic sequences. This included not only direct question syntax (ending with "?") but also indirect questions or requests (e.g., phrases like "I wonder if…" or "Could someone explain…"). We also counted the use of first and second person pronouns ("I", "we", "you") as a rough indicator of addressivity and personal engagement. A high frequency of "I" and "you" can signal that participants are speaking in a personal, conversational tone (e.g., referencing their own experiences and directly engaging others), which is often associated with dialogue. Additionally, we looked at discourse markers such as "I think," "to be honest," "okay," "well," etc., which can serve pragmatic functions like hedging, turn-management, or indicating an upcoming response. These markers are important in an L2 context; for instance, an expression like "I agree, but..." both acknowledges the interlocutor (dialogic alignment) and signals a forthcoming polite disagreement (a pragmatic move). Using automated frequency counts, we identified how often such features appeared and in what contexts.

Qualitative Pragmatic Analysis: Beyond raw counts, we qualitatively examined the structure and content of interaction in the threads. We performed iterative reading and coding of the messages to identify categories of dialogic moves and discourse acts. We drew on prior coding schemes from discourse pragmatics and conversation analysis, adapting them to our data. The coding categories included, for example: Initiation moves (posing a question or topic for discussion), Response moves (answering a question, providing information or opinion), Follow-up moves (building on a previous post, asking a clarification or giving feedback), and Social moves (off-topic or interpersonal comments such as greetings, thanks, or jokes that maintain social cohesion). Each message in the corpus was assigned one or more codes based on its function in the dialogue. We also noted instances of particular interest, like when a participant explicitly referenced another's statement (intertextual reference), when disagreement or debate occurred, and when threads reached some resolution or conclusion. This qualitative analysis was informed by pragmatics theory – for example, we examined how participants performed speech acts like requesting or apologizing in an online setting, and how they signaled politeness or mitigated face-threatening acts (important for maintaining a constructive dialogic atmosphere).

Throughout the analysis, we maintained a focus on how the design of the platform and the linguistic choices of participants interacted. For instance, if a user did not receive a reply to their question, we looked at whether platform factors (e.g., the post quickly got buried, or no notification were sent to responders) might explain it, or whether perhaps the question was phrased in a way that did not invite a response. We also cross-compared the findings from the two sub-corpora (Q&A board vs. MOOC forum) to identify any no[table differences. This mixed-methods, corpus-based approach allowed us to quantify certain dialogic features while also interpreting their significance in context. The combination of breadth (scanning the entire dataset for patterns) and depth (close-reading excerpts to see pragmatic nuance) strengthens the reliability of our findings and enables more nuanced conclusions about dialogic interaction in these online L2 environments.

By clarifying these methodological steps — from corpus construction and representativeness considerations, to the analytic techniques employed — we aim to provide transparency and allow for reproducibility. The next section presents the key findings, including quantitative summaries of dialogic features and qualitative examples illustrating how participants engaged in dialogue. We include tables and figures to concisely show patterns (such as the frequency of certain dialogic moves), before delving into a discussion of what these patterns mean theoretically and in practice.

4. Results

The analysis revealed a number of salient patterns in how dialogic interaction unfolded in the online discussions. Overall, participants did demonstrate considerable dialogic behavior: they asked questions of each other, responded with relevant information or opinions, and frequently built on prior posts rather than posting in isolation. At the same time, we observed certain gaps or breakdowns in dialogue, as well as variation between the two platforms. Below we detail the key findings, beginning with a quantitative overview of dialogic move frequencies and then highlighting specific qualitative aspects such as referential cohesion, follow-up questioning, and the handling of disagreement.

Dialogic Move Distribution: We identified four primary types of dialogic moves in the corpus — Initiation, Response, Follow-up, and Social — based on the coding of each message's main function. Initiation moves are those where a participant introduces a new topic or poses a question/prompt to start or redirect a discussion. Response moves provide an answer, information, or direct reply addressing a previous initiation (akin to an answer or solution in the Q&A context, or a reply to someone's post in the MOOC forum). Follow-up moves occur when participants react to a response with further input — for example, clarifying something, asking a related question, or extending the discussion point. Finally, Social moves encompass postings that are not about the task/topic per se but serve interpersonal functions (greetings, thanks, jokes, or management of the conversation like "I think we're off-topic…"). Table 1 summarizes the frequency of these move types in our dataset, both as raw counts and as a percentage of all coded moves (total messages = 1,200). Each message was assigned one primary move type based on context (some messages could arguably serve multiple functions, but we chose the dominant function for counting purposes).

Table 1. Frequency of dialogic move types in the corpus (N = 1,200 messages).

Move Type	Count (n)	Percent of Messages
Initiation/Prompt	250	21%
Response/Answer	450	38%
Follow-up/Feedback	200	17%
Social/Off-topic	100	8%
Mixed/Other (uncategorized)	~200	~16%

"Mixed/Other" refers to messages that performed multiple functions or did not fit the main categories (e.g., a single post that both answered a question and added a social remark was hard to classify definitively). Percentages are rounded.

From **Table 1**, we see that roughly 38% of all messages were direct responses to a previous post — by far the largest category, which is a healthy sign of interactivity. Initiating moves (new questions or topics introduced) were about 21% of posts. Follow-ups that continue a dialogue loop after an initial response made up ~17%. Social remarks were relatively fewer (~8%), indicating that while participants occasionally engaged in small talk or courtesy moves, the majority of communication remained on-topic. About 16% of messages were mixed or didn't fall neatly into one bucket (often these were longer posts that accomplished multiple acts, such as partially responding to someone and partially posing a new question). Overall, this distribution suggests that a significant majority of the contributions (roughly three-quarters if we combine responses and follow-ups) were reactive in nature — i.e., participants were mostly writing back-and-forth to one another rather than just dropping standalone statements [14].

Figure 1 the number of messages classified under each primary move type. Response moves were the most common, followed by initiations and follow-ups, indicating an active exchange of ideas. Purely social or off-topic posts were least frequent.

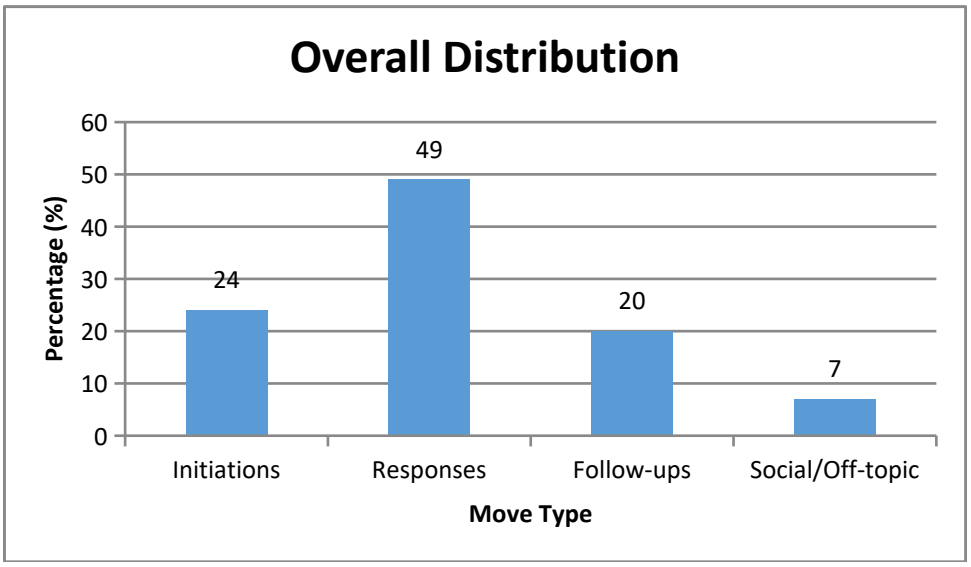

Figure 1. A visual distribution of dialogic move types identified in the online discussions.

Looking at the two sub-forums separately, we noted minor differences: the MOOC forum had a slightly higher proportion of follow-up moves compared to the Q&A board. This can be attributed to the MOOC setting where students often pressed each other for clarification or elaboration (perhaps due to academic norms of discussion), whereas on the Q&A site, once a correct or satisfying answer was given, users tended to move on unless a new question branched off. The Q&A forum also showed a few more social niceties (e.g., users saying "Thank you" or joking) likely because it was not a graded or formal environment; people were building rapport as community members. Nonetheless, in both environments the general pattern held: responses dominated, indicating that most posts were part of an interactive thread rather than isolated monologues.

Intertextual Cohesion (Referencing Others' Contributions): A strong indicator of dialogic interaction is when participants explicitly reference what others have said, thereby weaving connections between messages. Our analysis found that this was very common. In fact, over two-thirds of the messages (approximately 68%) in the corpus explicitly referred to another participant's point or message. Participants achieved this by using reply features (quoting a snippet of someone's post or tagging the user by name) or by implicitly referencing content (e.g., "I agree with what B said about X…"). This high rate of referencing shows that most contributions did not occur in a vacuum; users were listening (reading) and then building their responses in relation to specific earlier posts. For example, in one MOOC thread about global education challenges, after several people shared opinions, a participant wrote "I agree with @B's point that lack of funding is critical, and I'd add that teacher training is equally important." Here the user both acknowledges another's idea (agreement) and extends it (adding a new point), which is a hallmark of cumulative dialogue. Another participant from a different country later chimed in, directly citing both A and B: "Building on what @A and @B said, in my country the bigger issue is access to technology, but indeed all these factors connect." Such sequences illustrate how dialogic online discourse can enable knowledge co-construction: each contribution explicitly ties into previous ones, adding layers that deepen the discussion [6]. In the Q&A forum, similarly, we saw users frequently quote a part of someone's answer and respond to it point-by-point, almost resembling an in-depth conversation albeit in written form. This dense interconnection between posts contributes to cohesion in the discussion — it helps maintain a clear thread of thought, and it shows participants are actively engaging with each other's ideas rather than just posting their own thoughts independently.

Follow-up Questions and Clarifications: Another key finding was the prevalence of follow-up inquiries, which keep the dialogue going and dig deeper into topics. Not only did we quantify follow-up moves (**Table 1**), but we

also looked specifically at questions that were asked peer-to-peer (as opposed to the initial questions that started a thread). We found that about 30% of all questions posed in the dataset were follow-up questions directed at a peer (rather than at the whole forum or rhetorical). These are instances where, for example, one participant responds to another's statement by asking for more detail: "@C, that's interesting — how do schools in your area deal with the tech access issue? I'm curious if there are community programs." Such follow-ups demonstrate an effort to understand the other's perspective more fully, signaling genuine interest and an open, dialogic stance. They often function as dialogic loops: a participant raises a point, someone responds, then the original participant or a third person asks a further question based on that response, prompting additional information. This iterative questioning and answering fosters deeper exploration of the topic. In our corpus, these loops were common especially in the MOOC discussions, where several threads turned into extended Q&A exchanges between students about each other's contexts and opinions. It resembles how in a face-to-face setting one might say, "Tell me more about that," or "Why do you think that?" to continue the dialogue. From a pragmatics viewpoint, asking follow-up questions is a strong indicator of listener engagement and adherence to cooperative principle in conversation — it shows participants are not just waiting to speak, but actively processing and prompting others to elaborate, thus co-creating the conversation [17]. The fact that a sizable portion of the questions were of this type is a positive sign that these online interactions contained dialogic depth, not just surface-level exchanges.

Constructive Disagreement and Tone: We also observed how participants handled disagreement in these discussions, as disagreement can be a litmus test for dialogic quality (whether differing viewpoints are negotiated constructively or communication breaks down). In many threads, there were instances of polite, constructive disagreement — a reassuring finding, given the often-cited concern that online forums can devolve into flaming or hostility. Participants tended to use respectful language when they disagreed. For example, "I respectfully disagree with some points that @F made about directness. In my experience…." was a typical preface. The use of hedges and qualifiers ("respectfully," "in my experience") helped maintain a collegial tone. What followed usually was an explanation of an alternative perspective, and often the original speaker (or others) would acknowledge that view. In one case on the Q&A board, a user stated an opinion which another gently challenged; the first user then responded, "Ah, I see what you mean. I hadn't thought of it that way – thanks for pointing that out." This kind of civil resolution of differences indicates a dialogic attitude: participants remained open to changing their views or at least understanding another's stance. No clear instances of toxic language or personal attacks were found in our sampled data – perhaps due to community norms or moderation in those forums, or the fact that many users were mindful of language since they were not using their mother tongue. The overall tone across forums was polite and cooperative. Even when debates grew intense (for example, discussing a culturally sensitive issue), users tended to focus on arguments rather than individuals, and employed humor or apologies to defuse tension if needed. This echoes Kent and Taylor's notion that dialogic communication is characterized by mutual equality, empathy, and propinquity — conditions that our participants largely met by treating each other as peers and showing willingness to listen and explain [1]. It's worth noting that our sample may be somewhat ideal in this regard (both platforms had guidelines promoting respectful interaction). In less regulated social media, one might see harsher disagreements. But within our data, disagreement actually served to enrich dialogue by introducing new angles while participants managed to keep the discussion cordial and on-topic.

Contribution of Platform Design: We noticed certain patterns that could be attributed to how the platforms are structured. For instance, the MOOC forum, lacking an upvote mechanism, often had redundant replies — multiple people answering the same initial question without necessarily reading all previous replies. This led to some parallel sub-discussions and a bit of fragmentation (for example, three different people might answer the original poster's question in slightly different ways; the original poster then addresses one of them, leaving the others' contributions hanging). In contrast, the Q&A board's use of upvotes and threaded comments meant the "best" answer often got highlighted, and subsequent dialogue focused around that answer (users would comment under the top answer, etc.).

This sometimes resulted in deeper exploration of one answer, but also meant other answers were ignored. From a dialogic perspective, each system has pros and cons: the MOOC forum encouraged broad participation (everyone chimes in, even if repetitively) whereas the Q&A platform encouraged focused dialogue (concentrating on one thread of discussion). Moreover, the notification systems (or lack thereof) played a role. The MOOC platform would send an email if someone replied to your post or mentioned you, which helped draw people back; however, if a user didn't log in for a while, the conversation could advance without them. We saw instances where a user asked a question, got many responses, but that user did not return promptly — later apologizing like "Sorry, I was busy and just saw these replies now." By that time the momentum was lost. On the Q&A site, active users seemed to check back frequently (perhaps motivated by the gamified aspect of earning upvotes or seeing if their answer was selected). This difference suggests that platform design and incentives (extrinsic or intrinsic) shape the degree of sustained dialogic engagement [15]. Threads in the MOOC sometimes needed an instructor or another student to re-ignite a stalled discussion (e.g., by tagging the absent user: "@X, do these answers help you?"), whereas the crowd-driven nature of the Q&A site often meant someone else would step in with a new angle if the original asker disappeared.

Quantitative Linguistic Features: In addition to move types and interaction patterns, our corpus analysis of linguistic features provides some context. We found a high frequency of first/second-person pronouns and interactive markers, supporting the observation that participants adopted a conversational register. Phrases like "I think", "I feel that", "you should", "let's consider" were abundant. These phrases personalize the discussion and often explicitly acknowledge the audience (e.g., "As you mentioned, ..."). The prevalence of questions was also confirmed quantitatively: approximately 11% of all sentences in the corpus were questions (which is higher than typical in non-dialogic text) [15]. This aligns with the earlier note that questions drive the dialogues. We also noted frequent use of polite modal expressions ("could you explain...," "would it be possible...") especially in the MOOC forum, reflecting awareness of politeness in a multi-cultural group. Emoticons and emoji usage was minimal (a few smiley faces appeared in the social chat parts of Q&A threads, but not much in MOOC posts, which tended to be more formal in writing style). This may be because participants stuck to a relatively academic tone in the course setting, whereas on the open forum a bit of playful tone was acceptable.

Taken together, the findings paint a picture of online L2 forums as venues where substantial dialogic interaction can occur. Participants in our study frequently engaged directly with one another's ideas, leading to threaded, coherent dialogues that in many ways mirror spoken conversation dynamics, albeit stretched out over time. There were genuine conversations happening: ideas were introduced, considered from multiple perspectives, questioned, clarified, and sometimes even resolved or summarized. Importantly, participants often acknowledged what they learned from others or how their perspective shifted – an indicator of productive dialogic exchange. For example, one MOOC participant concluded a thread by saying, "Thank you all, I've really learned a lot about different countries' approaches to this issue from this discussion," explicitly recognizing the knowledge gained through dialogue.

However, the analysis also highlights where the dialogic ideal encountered hurdles. Not every thread was a model of interaction — a minority of questions received little engagement (especially if the question was too broad or unclear), and a few discussions showed signs of participants talking past each other (e.g., each giving their opinion but not really responding to previous posts – essentially parallel monologues). These outliers remind us that the mere presence of a forum doesn't ensure dialogue; how participants choose to engage (or not) is crucial. In our corpus, these less interactive cases were often those without a strong facilitator or where the initial prompt didn't invite debate (e.g., a factual question that, once answered, left no room for further discussion).

In summary, our findings demonstrate robust dialogic behaviors in online written discussions among L2 English users. There is clear evidence of multiple perspectives being shared and integrated, high levels of responsiveness, and pragmatic strategies employed to maintain a respectful and coherent dialogue. The next section will discuss the implications of these results in light of existing theories and models of dialogic interaction and L2 pragmatics, and explore how these insights might apply to broader digital

communication contexts such as workplace collaboration tools and social media platforms. We will also consider how the design of platforms can facilitate or impede such dialogic exchanges, and provide recommendations for leveraging these findings to improve online communication and learning experiences.

5. Discussion

Linking Findings to Dialogic Interaction Theory: The evidence from our study reinforces several core tenets of dialogic communication theory, extending them to the realm of online, text-based interaction. One clear outcome was the co-construction of knowledge observed in many threads — participants collaboratively built understanding by iteratively responding to and elaborating on each other's contributions. This aligns strongly with sociocultural learning theories (Vygotskian perspectives) [7] and with the Community of Inquiry framework used in online education research [14], which posits that cognitive presence (deep understanding) emerges from sustained dialogue. Garrison et al. argued that online educational experiences benefit from learners engaging in discourse that involves sharing information, negotiating meaning, and confirming understanding. Our findings exemplify this: the threads where participants actively questioned and referenced each other showed signs of collective insight that no single individual started with. This mirrors the Interaction Analysis Model of Gunawardena et al. [6], which outlines how group dialogue can progress from phase 1 (information sharing) to higher phases like synthesis and application of new knowledge. Indeed, in several cases we documented, the group arrived at a more nuanced conclusion than any single post initially offered — a hallmark of what Bakhtin termed the "meeting of voices" producing novel meaning.

Crucially, these dialogic achievements occurred even though the participants were geographically dispersed and communicating through written text. This provides empirical support for the idea that dialogue is a mode of communication not bound to physical co-presence but to certain attitudes and practices. Our participants demonstrated honesty and openness in sharing their views, and mutual respect in how they responded — reflecting what Kent and Taylor describe as the spirit of dialogic engagement [1] (originally conceptualized for public relations communication, but clearly applicable more generally). For example, the prevalent use of personal anecdotes and candid opinions ("In my experience…", "From my perspective as a parent…") suggests participants felt safe to voice their true thoughts. This transparency, coupled with the polite tone observed, likely fostered a sense of trust in these forums. Although our study did not explicitly measure trust or rapport, prior research notes that dialogic communication — say, between organizational leaders and publics on social media — can increase trust by humanizing the interaction [1]. By analogy, in our peer-to-peer discussions, the open and respectful exchanges probably enhanced interpersonal trust and encouraged sustained participation. Participants often thanked each other for insights or acknowledged learning from others, which indicates a level of goodwill and mutual recognition not always present in online spaces.

It is also noteworthy that L2 speakers were able to fulfill these dialogic ideals. One might assume that communicating in a non-native language could hinder nuanced dialogue due to limited vocabulary or fear of misunderstanding. However, our findings suggest that L2 English users, when motivated, employ compensatory pragmatic strategies that uphold dialogic interaction. The frequent use of clarification questions, restatements, and confirmation checks in our corpus is a case in point. Rather than letting possible confusion fester, participants actively asked for explanations or confirmed they understood correctly – behaviors that are textbook examples of communicative strategies in second language use. This resonates with findings by ELF researchers like House [13], who observed that successful ELF conversations involve a lot of "negotiation of meaning" where speakers collaboratively ensure comprehension. In our data, such negotiation was evident and seemed to come intuitively: participants didn't assume shared background knowledge and often took the extra step to explain their references or paraphrase someone else's point to double-check it. Far from being a hindrance, the L2 context might have enhanced dialogic awareness — participants were careful and attentive, knowing that miscommunication was possible, so they behaved in ways that actually exemplify good dialogic practice (listening, checking, asking). This suggests that second-language on-

line discourse can be highly dialogic in quality, possibly even more so than some native-speaker discussions where participants might take mutual understanding for granted and not put in as much effort to clarify. In essence, our L2 participants often did what good dialogue requires: they approached interaction with humility ("maybe I didn't understand, let me ask") and a cooperative attitude to make meaning together. This is an encouraging implication for educators and moderators of international forums — with the right norms, multilingual online discussions can be very productive and richly dialogic.

Applications to Broader Communicative Contexts: While our study centered on forums and MOOCs, the insights are applicable to various digital communication arenas. One area of relevance is the digital workplace. Modern workplace collaboration frequently happens through text-based tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or enterprise social networks, where employees from different departments or countries brainstorm and solve problems via threads and chat. The patterns we observed — such as the importance of follow-up questions, referencing others' points, and maintaining polite tone during disagreements — are equally critical in these professional platforms. For instance, a team using Slack to discuss a project would benefit from members adopting dialogic habits: asking each other for clarification rather than making assumptions, acknowledging colleagues' ideas ("As X said, we could try Y…"), and constructively debating solutions. Our findings about L2 pragmatics suggest that even if some team members are not native speakers, effective dialogue is achievable with patience and clear strategies. In fact, Chadha & Relly's study of Slack-based international student collaboration [16] found that intercultural dialogic exchanges are possible but require effort to overcome barriers. This aligns with our implication that platform design alone isn't enough — participants need to consciously practice inclusive and clear communication. Organizations might take this into account by providing guidelines or training that echo some of the behaviors we saw: e.g., encouraging employees to paraphrase what they think a colleague means if something is unclear, or to use threading and mentions to keep conversations organized and coherent.

Another context is social media and online communities. There is a prevailing narrative that social media discussions (Twitter threads, Facebook comments, etc.) tend to be shallow, contentious, or echo chambers of like-minded views. Our results provide a more optimistic counterpoint: under supportive conditions, online interactions can be constructive and dialogic, even among strangers. The key is the presence of dialogic norms and perhaps moderation. For example, the civil discourse in our dataset may have been aided by the fact that both communities had norms against trolling and a culture of courtesy. Translating this to social media, communities (say, a Facebook group or a subreddit) that establish clear rules for respectful engagement and have active moderators might also achieve a higher level of dialogic quality. The finding that participants explicitly learned from each other and changed their views in our forums is particularly significant. It shows that online dialogue can lead to genuine open-minded exchange — something highly desirable in spaces like cross-cultural discussion groups or professional learning networks. Lantz-Andersson's research on language play in social media [12] further suggests that informal platforms can serve as "training grounds" for pragmatic skills. In a similar vein, one could imagine intentionally leveraging platforms like Twitter chats or LinkedIn discussion posts to foster dialogic learning. For instance, educators have begun hosting structured Twitter chats (often using a specific hashtag) to engage learners or professionals in real-time dialogue. A recent study of a medical education Twitter chat (#MedEdChat) found that participants did share knowledge and used various discourse moves to ask questions and build on answers, much like in forums. This indicates that synchronous microblogging can also support dialogic interaction, provided the discussion is guided and participants are inclined to interact.

Role of Platform Design in Interaction Patterns: Our analysis underlines that certain design features of online platforms can facilitate or hinder dialogic exchanges. For example, the threading and notification features in the MOOC forum helped sustain multi-turn conversations by alerting users to replies, yet the lack of real-time prompts meant discussions could suffer from delays. One implication is that adding more responsive features (for instance, push notifications on mobile, or indicators when someone is typing a reply even in an async forum) might reduce the problem of "vanishing" participants and make online fo-

rums feel closer to live conversation. On the other hand, too many notifications could overwhelm users — so balance is needed to avoid notification fatigue which might paradoxically cause users to disengage. Another design aspect is support for acknowledgement: simple tools like reaction emojis or "like" buttons can allow participants to signal that they have read and appreciated someone's contribution, even if they don't have a substantive reply. This could address the issue we noted of posts sometimes going unacknowledged. In a dialogic sense, even a small acknowledgment can encourage the speaker that their voice was heard, maintaining the collaborative atmosphere. Platform designers might consider features that encourage users to address each other by name or quote each other's points – effectively scaffolding the intertextual cohesion we observed naturally. For instance, Reddit and many forum softwares now have an automatic quote-reply function; if such features are used, they inherently increase the connectivity of posts (making it clear who is responding to whom, and prompting more direct engagement). In our data, participants manually did a lot of this quoting and referencing, which is great; design can make it even easier and more intuitive.

One insight from our comparison is that incentive structures (like the Q&A board's upvote system and "accepted answer" feature) influence interaction. On the Q&A platform, contributors may have been motivated to provide a helpful answers and get upvoted, which can spur fast responses and thorough explanations — beneficial for dialogue quality up to a point. However, once an answer was accepted, the dialogue often stopped. In contrast, the MOOC forum had no equivalent gamification; people participated for the sake of learning or requirement, which sometimes meant discussions extended longer and meandered more, covering various angles even after the main query was answered. Depending on the goal, platform designers might tune these incentives [15]. If the goal is efficient Q&A (i.e., finding one correct answer), then a system that ends the thread when answered is appropriate. However, if the goal is rich discussion, one might de-emphasize the notion of a single "correct" answer and instead encourage ongoing dialogue (perhaps by not highlighting one response as the final one, or by periodically injecting new prompts). Additionally, moderation and guidance emerged as factors: when an instructor intervened in the MOOC forum (e.g., by synthesizing several student posts and posing a follow-up question to the group) [19], it often reinvigorated the discussion and modeled how to engage dialogically. This suggests that having a facilitator or community leader who actively nurtures dialogue (by asking open questions, naming common ground or differences, inviting quieter voices to speak) can significantly shape outcomes. For digital communities, investing in training moderators or using AI tools to prompt users with questions could enhance dialogic interaction.

Implications for Second Language Pragmatics and Cross-Cultural Communication: Our study also contributes to understanding how second language users navigate pragmatics in online settings. The success of many L2 participants in making themselves understood and maintaining polite discourse implies that pragmatic competence can be developed and exercised online. This has practical implications: educators could incorporate forum discussions or social media tasks into language learning curricula to help students practice real-world communication strategies. Unlike contrived classroom dialogues, online interactions with diverse strangers provide an authentic context for pragmatics – learners must decide how formal to be, how to disagree politely with someone from another culture, how to signal emotions or humor through text, among other considerations. These are precisely the skills needed in global citizenship and the modern workplace. Our findings show that learners are capable of this, especially when they see good examples or are in a community that values clarity and kindness. One outcome worth noting is that participants often self-regulated their tone and proactively clarified their intent (for example, adding "I don't mean to offend, but…" or using smiley emojis to show friendliness). In cross-cultural communication research, such metapragmatic signals are known to reduce misunderstandings. Thus, encouraging L2 communicators to use these strategies (and designing platforms that allow easy use of tone markers like emojis) can enhance mutual understanding.

However, not all interactions were perfect, and there were subtle cultural differences in styles. For instance, some users were very direct in asking for information, while others used more roundabout phrasing. In a few

cases, participants from different cultural backgrounds initially misread each other's tone (one thought another was being rude by being too blunt, when that person was just writing succinctly). Through dialogue, they worked it out — but it highlights the importance of cultural awareness in online dialogic spaces. This is where theoretical models of intercultural pragmatics (like politeness theory, speech act norms in different cultures) intersect with our findings. It would be beneficial for platform communities to cultivate a norm of charitable interpretation — assuming good intentions – and to educate users that writing styles vary. In professional settings, training in intercultural communication often emphasizes active listening and confirmation, which our results confirm are vital. The Slack collaboration example from Chadha and Relly [16] demonstrates that even with a common language (English), cultural context differences can create friction, so explicit efforts (like dedicated channels for social chat to build rapport, or having participants share their communication preferences) can improve outcomes.

Recommendations and Future Directions: Drawing on our findings, a few practical recommendations emerge. Earlier work on Language MOOCs has already highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of designing effective environments for sustained interaction [20,21]. For educators and facilitators of MOOCs or online courses: incorporate specific instructions or rubrics that encourage students to reply to peers and ask follow-up questions. This aligns with findings in recent MOOC research, which emphasize the importance of interactive tasks and sustained peer engagement [22]. Simply prompting students to make an initial post isn't enough; encourage them to return and engage with at least two classmates' posts in depth. Highlight examples of good dialogic interaction (perhaps even anonymized excerpts from our data or similar examples) to show what it means to build on someone's idea. For platform designers: consider features that support coherence (threading, quoting, notifications) and that lower the barrier for responses (maybe quick reaction buttons like "I have the same question" or "Thanks for this" to foster acknowledgment). Also, consider embedding gentle reminders or automated prompts — for example, if a user's question hasn't received a reply in 48 hours, prompt others with "Can anyone help answer this question?"; if a user hasn't responded to replies, perhaps send a nudge saying "You have 3 replies; do you want to follow up?" Such designs could help complete more dialogic loops. For community managers and moderators: actively model dialogic behavior. Such strategies also resonate with broader reviews highlighting the role of cohesion and mutual understanding in online learning environments [23]. Summarize discussions periodically, pose integrative questions (e.g., "We've heard two different viewpoints here — what does everyone think of X vs Y?"), and draw in participants who haven't spoken (e.g., "@Z, you have experience in this area, we would love to hear your take."). These actions can turn what might remain a series of parallel posts into an interconnected dialogue.

Finally, our work opens avenues for further research. One interesting direction is to examine dialogic quality over time — do individuals become more dialogically competent as they participate more in online forums? Longitudinal analysis could see if novices initially post monologues and later learn to engage more dialogically (perhaps through feedback or seeing others' examples). Another area is the role of multimodality: our study was text-centric, but many platforms allow images, GIFs, or audio notes. How do those contribute to or detract from dialogue? It is possible that a well-placed image (e.g., a meme to humorously acknowledge a point) could enhance social bonding, whereas heavy use of memes might derail serious discussion. Understanding that balance would be useful. Additionally, exploring dialogic interaction in synchronous vs. asynchronous settings (e.g., comparing something like #MedEdChat live Twitter discussions to our asynchronous forum data) could reveal how time dynamics affect the depth of dialogue. Initial evidence suggests that synchronous chats can be dialogic but often chaotic; techniques from our asynchronous findings, like explicit referencing ("as X said"), might help bring coherence to real-time flows as well.

In conclusion, our study affirms that meaningful, dialogic communication can thrive online under the right conditions. Far from the stereotype of online forums being disjointed or antagonistic, we observed many instances of genuine dialogue and community building. The task now is to harness these insights — applying them to design better platforms, guiding users in effective communication prac-

tices, and extending these dialogic principles to the myriad digital arenas where humanity increasingly converses, learns, and collaborates. With deliberate effort, forums, social media, and professional networks can evolve from basic information exchange channels into vibrant dialogic spaces that bridge cultures, foster learning, and support the co-creation of knowledge in our digitally connected world.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that digital communication platforms provide significant opportunities for dialogic interaction by enabling users to engage in meaningful, multi-perspective discourse [24]. Through a pragmatic analysis of online discussions, we found that second-language (L2) speakers from diverse backgrounds successfully employed strategies to understand each other and build upon each other's ideas in a collaborative manner. Online discourse, when analyzed pragmatically, reveals that dialogic communication fosters transparency, social presence, and the co-construction of knowledge, despite challenges such as multitasking and user absence [6]. The dialogic exchanges in our data were marked by openness to asking questions, sharing personal insights, and acknowledging differing viewpoints, all of which contributed to a climate of mutual respect and learning.

The findings suggest that digital media can support authentic dialogic exchanges by promoting openness to difference and encouraging participants to consider diverse viewpoints. In the forums studied, differences in perspectives was not a barrier but rather the driving force that propelled discussion forward and enriched collective understanding. However, to fully realize the potential of dialogic communication online, institutions and individuals must strategically incorporate dialogic principles into their digital interactions. This involves emphasizing ethical engagement (honesty, empathy, respect) and fostering sustained dialogue rather than one-off comments [1]. Practical steps include setting clear community norms that value thoughtful responsiveness and active listening, as well as providing tools or training to help users communicate attentively and civilly in fast-paced online environments.

Future research should explore how dialogic attitudes can be cultivated in digital environments to enhance critical thinking, identity building, and community formation. For example, educational programs could integrate dialogic communication practice into online learning, or social media platforms could experiment with features that encourage reflection and two-way engagement over broadcasting. Ultimately, digital dialogic communication holds promise as a transformative tool for fostering inclusive and reflective online communities. By consciously designing and participating in online spaces as "dialogue spaces" — where different voices are genuinely heard and new understandings are co-created — we can leverage the connectivity of the internet to bridge differences and build stronger, more knowledgeable communities.

In sum, the study reinforces an optimistic view: even in a digitally mediated world often criticized for shallow or polarized discourse, it is possible to achieve the depth, richness, and human connection of genuine dialogue. Realizing this potential requires commitment to dialogic principles at all levels, but the reward is significant — a more transparent, empathetic, and dialogically connected global society.

Author Contributions

Z.S. conceived and supervised the study, contributed to conceptualization, methodology, corpus design and expansion, data curation, formal analysis, and wrote the original draft of the manuscript.

S.A. contributed to data curation (forum sampling, anonymization), coding-scheme refinement, inter-coder training, and writing in the Methods and Results sections.

I.J. carried out reliability and statistical checks, validation, and assisted in tables, figures, visualization, and writing in the Results and Discussion sections.

A.H. (Independent Researcher) performed reliability and statistical checks, validation, and contributed to tables, figures, visualization, and writing in the Results and Discussion sections.

G.A. synthesized literature (ELF, pragmatics, dialogic theory), contributed to theoretical framing, and writing in the Introduction and Literature Review sections.

B.H. conducted cross-platform comparison, selected exemplars, drafted implications and recommendations, and supported visualization and proofreading.

H.A. developed the methodological framework, carried out critical review and editing across sections, contributed to coherence/style polishing, and served as guarantor for methodological integrity.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Ethics Committee of Nakhchivan State University (protocol code 06/25, date of approval: 01 September 2025). The committee reviewed the study entitled "Dialogic Studies in Digital Communication: Pragmatic Analysis of Online Discourse" and confirmed that no ethical or scientific misconduct was identified.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was not required for this study, as the analysis relied on anonymized data from publicly available online forums.

Data Availability Statement

The corpus analyzed for this study (anonymized extracts from publicly available online forums) is available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author. No proprietary or sensitive data is included.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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