Dialogic theories, literacy practices and initial teacher education

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Received: 22 December 2021 / Accepted: 28 September 2022 / Published online: 28 November 2022
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Abstract
Initial Teacher Education has been informed by diverse perspectives in recent years; while the debates around what constitutes teacher quality and adequate preparedness focus on the structure and focus of programs, entry and exit requirements, the current era presents new challenges to which teachers must respond such as an increased call for cultural responsiveness. In this context, the way that literacy itself is conceptualised within teacher education requires expansion. We argue in this paper that literacy plays a key role in the ontological and epistemological development of quality teachers, beyond the way it is currently conceived as either a hurdle requirement for the successful completion of an ITE program (Barnes & Cross Teachers and Teaching, 26(3-4), 307-325, 2020) or as a set of skills to support students to develop content knowledge across the disciplines (Scott et al. Teaching and Teacher Education, 73, 1-13, 2018). We contend that literacy is central to teacher’s professional becoming (Matusov et al., 2019) and explore how a dialogic approach to teaching can support pre-service teachers’ professional meaning making. The paper proposes a dialogic framework to embrace different levels of dialogue not merely as a means of ‘doing’ in the classroom, but as central in the process of knowing, being and becoming a professional teacher.

Keywords Dialogic theories · Teachers’ becoming · Literacy practices · Initial teacher education

1 Introduction

The March 2021 announcement by Hon. Alan Tudge, Australian Federal Minister for Education, to review the quality of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs nationally, has rekindled dialogue around how we might attract and prepare quality teachers to the profession.
In Australia, as in other countries, this has been an enduring preoccupation. As Louden notes, there have been at least 101 government inquiries into Australian teacher education over the past 30 years (Louden, 2008), and more recently, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) Report of 2014 made 38 recommendations across the areas of course quality assurance and entry requirements, integration of theory and practice and teacher registration. This had significant impact on entry requirements into Initial Teaching Degrees; national approaches to final teaching performance assessment and related discourses regarding what constitutes teacher ‘readiness’ for practice.

While the debates around what constitutes teacher quality and adequate preparedness focus on the structure and focus of programs, entry and exit requirements, the current era presents new challenges to which teachers must respond such as the rapid shift to two-dimensional online learning spaces, an increased call for cultural responsiveness (AITSL, 2020) and the ever-expanding linguistic and cultural repertoires of our classrooms (Gonski et al., 2011, Moloney & Saltmarsh, 2016). In these changing contexts, new approaches to ITE are needed that focus not only on the skills and knowledge teachers develop, but acknowledge the interplay between ontology and epistemology in the development of a quality teachers. This notion of teacher becoming has not been prioritised in recent directions in ITE research, which have focussed more on pre-service teachers’ experiences of the integration of theory and practice in their ITE program (Rickards et al., 2020), rather than the integration of theory and practice with PSTs own ontological journey.

1.1 Literacy in ITE

The way that literacy itself is conceptualised within teacher education requires expansion: not only in regard to how teachers are taught to integrate literacy, but also in how they see themselves as literate persons. With Fullan and Langworthy, we argue that ‘if literacy were at the centre of the learning agenda, regardless of subject disciplines, a fundamental shift towards deeper learning would occur’ (2014, p. 3). Currently, within Australian policy and practice, the LANTITE test situates teachers as requiring a standard level of literacy which, once attained, is a completed component of their teaching-ready skillset. This situates literacy as a prerequisite, a place of arrival, not a site of becoming or the centre of a teacher’s development. With Halliday, we argue that throughout a human’s lifetime we are exposed to new knowledge, contexts and communication purposes (1993, p. 30) that situate us within ‘ever-expanding repertoires’ (Derewianka & Humphrey, 2014). Although some aspects of teachers’ development are framed as an ongoing growth in expertise, as reflected in the AITSL standards (situated in the developmental stages of Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers – AITSL 2012), the ways in which the literate repertoires of teachers are ever-expanding, are not theorised in this framework.

In this paper, we argue that literacy plays a key role in the ontological and epistemological development of quality teachers, beyond the way it is currently conceived as either a hurdle requirement for successful completion of an ITE program (Barnes & Cross, 2020) or as a set of skills to support students to develop content knowledge across the disciplines (Scott et al., 2018). We contend that literacy is central to teachers’ professional becoming (Matusov et al., 2019) and explore how a dialogic approach to teaching can support pre-service teachers’ professional meaning making. This call for dialogic frameworks for teaching is in response, in part, to recent moves within teacher education toward teachers’ evaluative capacities within the clinical model (Rickards et al., 2020), which has brought valuable development of teachers’
skills and renewal of expertise within the profession. Within teacher education, where knowledge is the tool and foundation of our profession, an understanding of the ways of knowing, being and doing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003) that underpin our thinking is key to ensuring that these ‘evaluative dispositions’ do not lead to exacerbations of epistemic racism and colonialism within the education system through marginalisation of othered knowledge systems. A greater focus on the dialogic literate practices of teachers, therefore, is key to developing dispositions of openness toward students’ diverse knowledge systems (Semali & Kincheloe, 2002), respect for Indigenous ways of knowing (Nakata, 2007), capacities for plurilingual responsiveness (Slaughter & Cross, 2021) and fostering richer interactions between disciplinary literacies. Following on from our colleagues call for cultural and linguistic flexibility at the center of teaching and learning (Cross et al., 2022 this issue), we propose a model of dialogic initial teacher education, focused on the literate repertoires as part of the identity formation of a teacher, as a vehicle to achieving this.

2 Conceptual and methodological framework: a dialogic approach

This paper proposes a dialogic model, drawn from philosophical standpoints of Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky et al. (1962), presented in the work of education scholars such as Wegerif (2008) Alexander (2017, 2020), among other scholars in dialogic pedagogy, as a way to situate the ‘becoming’ of teacher development as an ongoing process and to centre the literate practices of the teacher as central to their preparation and ongoing responsiveness. We introduce Bakhtinian ideology next and how it may unfold in teacher education. We draw on Wegerif’s (2008) framework to inform our analysis and discussion as well.

A Russian-Soviet literary theoretician and philosopher of language, Bakhtin’s main philosophical claim is that there is a dialogic relationship between language, culture and the formation of the self (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Dialogue, therefore, is a ‘complex metaphor that incorporates the intricate relationship between speakers, between points of views, between social discourses, between past, present and future that are held together in language’ (Hamston, 2006, p.56). This perspective acknowledges that the world is contested and full of tensions and struggles, which results in multi-voicedness (the existence of multiple voices in one utterance). Therefore, in each utterance and dialogue, we face different ideologies, worldviews and conceptual horizons which interact with each other (Wertsch, 1991). In doing so, a heteroglossia (existence of multiple and diverse worldviews and perspectives) emerges, reinforcing the integral role of unique, heterogenised narratives people tell/create as life-long learners. True dialogue, in Bakhtin’s terms, leads to transformation of the self, or what he calls ‘ideological becoming’ (Bakhtin, 1986).

According to Bakhtin, social existence occurs with dialogue and is an event of co-being with another person in simultaneous differences (Rockwell, 2011). Bakhtin believes some process of appropriation of the other’s voice (including power) shapes the self. In the same way, the idea of outsideness matters, because outsideness provides the possibility for dialogue, as one can have dialogue if the other brings a different view; otherwise, both views are identical and there would be no dialogue (Marchenkovs, 2005). For Bakhtin, intercultural understanding means to enter another culture, but at the same time, to be outside of it; this is what Bakhtin (1981) calls being in a ‘third space’. This third space is conceptualised in language education by Kostogriz (2005) and Maguire (2007) among others, to signify a constant chance in language classes to be and live at boundaries of two separate worlds, in
which an individual is both insider and outsider. This relationship and the way classroom community shapes this self-other relationship and ‘different degrees of others’ otherness’ (Holquist, 1990, p.51), is paramount in the process of learning. These self-other interactions are key ‘determinants’ of teacher dispositions, essential to creating a dialogic relationality. These in-betweenness and hybrid identities resonate strongly with the affordances of intercultural being and the boundary learning (Rule, 2015) which will be discussed in this paper through our autoethnographic narratives.

In initial teacher education, dialogue is often internalised by beginning teachers only at instrumental level, as classroom talk, or as a tool for communication. Wegerif (2008) however emphasises that attention should go to deeper levels of ‘epistemological’ and ‘ontological’. Sidorkin (1999) relates Bakhtin to Buber and claims that dialogue is not only about epistemology, or how we know things, but also has a significant ontological element. He asserts that a ‘self’ becomes meaningful in a world provided that it contributes to the opening of dialogue (Sidorkin, 1999). Hence, formation of the ‘self’ (ideological becoming process) is a dynamic process, a changing entity realised through dialogue and as Vygotsky believes ‘self’ is transformed through learning and is shaped through dialogue and being open to other selves.

Dialogic teaching enables an expanded focus on the situated nature of teaching (Dewey, 1998; Haraway, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991): an explicit understanding of tools and resources (language, knowledge and cultures) for thinking/doing, as well as being/becoming a professional, and how these can be mobilised in powerful pedagogic ways to lead learners to new planes of development (new thinking, knowledge and practices).To frame teaching as dialogic is to frame it as always and necessarily open to contradiction and tension, to be open to learning through exchange and to continue to build our repertoires for interaction in response to our classroom ecologies.

More specifically, Wegerif’s (2008) translation of Bakhtin’s dialogism into pedagogy provides a model for integration. He proposes different levels of dialogue which inform our proposed model late in the paper; these include ‘dialogic as pertaining to dialogues’ (conceived in our framework as ‘dialogue as literate practice’), ‘dialogic utterance opposed to monologic utterance’, ‘dialogic as an epistemological framework’ and finally and fundamentally, ‘dialogic as an ontological framework’. Related to this, it is also dialogue at ecological and spatial sense: learning and dialogue is, inherently, relational and happens in communities where differences are appreciated.

This in turn suggests how dialogic teaching, understood as more than ‘just talk’ and as a uniting and cohesive theory for ITE—can help to create responsive and ever-expanding literate capabilities in Teacher Education programs. This multi-faceted framework for dialogue is depicted in the diagram below and informs our narratives/vignettes in the next section. While dialogic frameworks have been proposed in ITE before (Edwards-Groves & Hoare, 2012; Simpson, 2016), the distinction of what we propose is that this framework is not taught as a method or set of tools for the teacher to implement in the classroom only, but as a framework for how for how teachers understand the process and experience ‘becoming’ a professional educator.

Thus, the proposed framework in this paper seeks to embrace different levels of dialogue not merely as a means of ‘doing’ in the classroom, but as central in the process of knowing, being and becoming a professional teacher. We also use this framework to extrapolate our vignettes conducting dialogic approaches at different localities and for diverse groups of learners. The paper concludes with highlighting the ‘becoming process’ through dialogic literacy practices as fundamental in ITE evolution and promotion.
and promotes this new framework for conceptualizing teacher identity and becoming in ITE programs, where teachers cultivate dialogue as ontology, as epistemology, as spatial and ecological as well as relational (Fig. 1).

The model above illustrates how we conceive of the process by which teacher becoming occurs at ontological, epistemological and literate practice levels.

Methodologically, this paper is informed by dialogic approach as well, and this is manifested in several levels: firstly, the core argument of the paper is developed within and from a series of dialogues among authors of this paper, as experts in language and literacy and teacher education in discussing how dialogue is (mis) perceived in ITE and what we can offer through dialogic pedagogy and methodology. Secondly, the data provided here from authors 1 and 2 emerged from their reflective narratives (gathered as part of their broader research projects) which encompasses constant dialogue with self, context/ecology, students, stakeholders, etc. Thirdly, the pedagogical underling of all these narratives is informed by dialogic philosophy and dialogic teaching. The authors reflect on the complexities and heterogeneity of dialogic approaches at different places and its implications for their ideological process of becoming dialogic teachers.

In terms of positionality of these teachers/researchers and how it informs and is informed by dialogic approach, both are young female scholars coming from diverse background, author 1 has a Persian background and experienced teaching and researching in a challenging context of Tehran University as well as in Australian university as both a PhD researcher and an academic. Thus, her stories capture tertiary level of teaching at local and global scales. Author

![Diagram: Dialogue as teacher becoming (informed by Wegerif, 2008)]
2 is a non-Indigenous educator working in an Indigenous community, seeking to become reflexive and responsive to student repertoires distinct from her own. Her stories explore interaction within remote Indigenous secondary classrooms. Both stories have strong implications for how dialogism can be a basis for unifying the seemingly fragmented aspects of teacher becoming in ITE.

For the purpose of this paper, authors have chosen diverse dialogic events, as their unit of analysis, for further discussion and reflection. These stories have been gathered from previous research projects authors were involved in, locally and globally. Those narratives which involved others (students, stakeholders, schools, etc.) have had obtained ethics, such as the one at Tehran university, whereas some others are drawn from authors’ personal journals as they gathered insights from their research and as their self-reflections in the process of doing dialogic pedagogy in different places/times.

In this analysis phase, we examined the episodes for moments of dialogic exchange. By this, we mean that we examined the ways that the teacher was being and becoming, through interaction. In so doing, we examined dialogue not only as literate practice, but also as pedagogy—and deeper than that, as the ontology that drives our pedagogies, and the epistemology that frames how we represent ‘knowing’ in our classrooms. We also examined the multiple dimensions of dialogue in learning, as the co-creation of a classroom ecology, and as an alternative to more monologic ways of framing the learning experience. These six dimensions formed the analytic framework by which we examined our reflective narratives.

We unpack these narratives below and draw on different dialogic event as our unit of analysis and we propose a framework for ITE, inspired by dialogic theories, Wegerif’s model and literacy approaches.

3 Reflective narratives: dialogic dilemmas

3.1 Author 2

For the purposes of this section, I draw on my first 4 years of teaching practice in a ‘remote Indigenous community’ in the Northern Territory. The site in which I was teaching was one of rich cultural and linguistic diversity, with a language ecology that includes 17 distinct languages and dialects. Students in this year 7–9 classroom spoke up to four languages (and a Kriol dialect) before English. Human ethics were obtained to deeply explore my emerging practice and pedagogies through autoethnography at this site.

3.1.1 Narrative 1

A guest speaker had arrived to set up the classroom for a workshop about wellbeing and mental health. As they wanted the session to be interactive and to prioritise student voice, they asked to push the tables back and arrange the students into a circle to facilitate this. I hesitated, because I had not found this arrangement to ‘work’ with my students. I agreed though, and slowly the students began to appear at the door, from recess. Their reactions were striking: to see the arrangement of the room changed, they recoiled, hesitating and uncertain. When we managed to coax them in to sit and join the
circle, the ensuing conversation was stilted. The speaker posed questions, the students responded with silence. The configuration that seemed designed to facilitate exchange and dialogue, seemed to completely miss the mark. This was familiar – my attempts to ‘make dialogue happen’ had been much the same, a trial and error of a template in my mind that, in practice, did not create the effects that I sought.

3.1.2 Narrative 2

I had begun conducting interviews with local Indigenous teachers, regarding their perspectives on effective partnerships in the classroom. I typed my questions. There were things I had an earnest desire to know, resplendent with key words that each resembled conversations I was interested in having with these teachers. During the interviews, I found myself experiencing a mild frustration – I asked a question, and the nature of the responses seemed to wind away from what I wanted to know, arcing around in loops in which the teachers provided broad context for themselves, their role in the community, their values and priorities – the responses that slowly unfolded were not fitting into the answer I was anticipating, looking for: as though I already had a ‘template’ in my head in which I would locate the answer I wanted. I noticed that I started to reach for deficit explanations for this – ‘question lost in translation’, ‘maybe I’ll ask the question again a different way’.

The shapes of the conversation would feel like tangents to me, I would ask a question regarding how Indigenous knowledge and western knowledge should interact in the classroom, and the response would entail an orientation to place, orientation to the teacher’s life narratives, an orientation to values systems, and then coming in to land at an entirely different location to what I had hoped.

Listening back over the interviews later, what is striking is the insufficiency of my listening. With fresh ears I hear differently, not as focused on the didactic ‘ask’ and ‘get’ model of questioning, but instead hearing the ways that my indigenous colleagues were able to together chime in and support each other’s statements as though there was silent collaboration going on beneath the surface. In the absence of the responses I had anticipated, was an opportunity to listen deeper for what is actually being shared. I begin to recognize a deeper kind of listening than I have yet known how to do. I recognized that here, in the very process of conducting interviews, was a kind of learning opportunity and ‘becoming’ in its own right, as I recognized the limits of my own repertoires for communicating. This has implications for my partnership with local teachers, my pedagogy, my ‘listening’ to my students, and my identity as a teacher. My ‘becoming’ as a teacher, deeply connected to my literacy repertoires, continues to develop as I start to reflect on my speaking and listening, and the way I ‘do’ dialogue.

3.2 Author 1

As a language and literacy scholar, dialogism has been my core philosophical ground which informed my ethical positioning in the teaching and learning profession. In the narrative here, I bring my insights from and within two very different contexts, where my dialogic approach
was implemented differently. The former is from engaging with a dialogic approach overseas, teaching English for medical students in an Iranian university for which I had obtained ethics. The latter comes within my engagement in teaching in TESOL/Additional Languages programs in an Australian University. These reflections came from my broader autoethnographic research in exploring how my academic identity as an immigrant were (re)shaped continuously as a result of dialogue with new self, other culture, context and literacy practices.

3.2.1 Narrative 1: Overseas context (medical English pedagogy in Iran)

I did my doctoral research fieldwork in the medical school at Tehran University in Iran where I used to teach English courses (English for Medical Purposes). I aimed to apply a critical dialogic intervention in medical English pedagogy. This was challenging at multiple levels: contextually/ecologically, Iran was under severe political unrest at the time of my research. Raising the idea of applying dialogic and critical research at that context, by a young female and a researcher from a western university was compelling and I had significant interest in my advertised workshops.

The workshop series began with ontological dialogue with ‘self’ and community members, by reflecting on ‘who am I’ question as medical student or as a future doctor and practising listening to patients as important part of their profession, and hospital/clinic as their future place of being, doing and becoming (Fecho, 2010). This was a breakthrough for creation of a dialogic community where they shared their challenges and occasionally identity concerns and not judging each other on accent, fluency, or superficial aspects of language/classroom talk.

I found the students ready to absorb dialogue on epistemological level: dialogue with diverse texts, such as narrative medicine, clinical scenario, research papers, medical English textbooks, video-clips from local or global sources, the discourse of hospital and clinical communication. Similarly, dialogue was designed to serve the professional purposes of acquainting students with the existing discourses of clinics and doctor/patient communications through role-plays and simulation practices in English. This moved to practising dialogue with ‘imaginary patients’ and finally shaping/creating real scenarios from clinical space and then reproduce it in the class, as a clinic. In these clinic-wise classrooms, we practised many dialogic diagnoses and integrating stories and evidence.

3.2.2 Narrative 2: Australian context (TESOL/additional languages)

Though my experience of conducting a dialogic approach in difficult context and circumstances of Iran at the time made me aware and confident of the holistic and dynamic nature of dialogic approach, the teaching in the new context of Australian University brought rich insights to that infinite process of being and becoming a dialogic pedagogue.

Unlike the Tehran University experience where students were in a scientific medical field, and the way ‘dialogue’ needs to be defined and internalised for them was very
different, in the Australian context, as students are potential or actual teachers themselves, they could embrace the idea of ‘dialogism’ explicitly. This highlights the ways that dialogic pedagogy is deeply rooted in context, requiring responsiveness and openness to how it will unfold in particular cultural settings. For this reason, my initial lecture is always to acknowledge their experience, and expertise as teachers and the fact that we are co-learning and co-constructing knowledge together.

In my early teaching practices within the western academic context, bearing in mind the insights I have learnt through my PhD journey and in dialogue with the community of diverse learners, I was mindful of different needs, expectations and discourses among the student cohort. I let the ‘dialogic need analysis’ process happen on an ongoing basis as rich insights emerged from different programs.

I could however immediately feel in my first dialogic encounter with students, that they read me as a diverse ‘text’, a non-Anglo female academic who was teaching into language education and mainly in TESOL, as the language of power/other. Both local and international students accommodated to this diversity smoothly and even passionately which encouraged me to share some of those in-between-ness stories and thus to enhance the opportunity for boundary learning and discussions. Feedback from international students suggested they became more confident about their identity as a non-native English speaker, teaching English in China or globally; equally impressive were comments from experienced local teachers who were keen to hear alternative stories. This in-between positioning put me and students in a stronger pedagogical situation to create a truly dialogic and inclusive learning community.

4 Discussion: ‘Doing talk’

Author 2’s narratives show her grappling with culturally bound models for dialogue, finding those ‘imported’ from her initial teacher education to be a poor fit for the cultural context of the classroom: they made the students uncomfortable and uncertain, and placed a cognitive load on them to make cultural transitions without adequate support. A key ontological shift occurred when author 2 engaged in authentic community-led dialogue, in which the presence of other ways of ‘doing talk’ became evident, established in othered ways of knowing being and doing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). This constituted a shift in seeing dialogue as part of an ever-expanding repertoire of literate practice, rather than fitting one culturally bound template only (such as the seating of students in circles and the responses to prompt questions). As dialogue emerges in connection to particular ways of knowing and seeing the world (i.e. culture), we see that engaging in dialogue in the classroom means moving beyond just trying to facilitate ‘talk’, and into seeking a deeper understanding of how ways of knowing in the classroom shape particular localised dialogic practices. What emerges here is the need for teachers to prepare ontologically to be able to engage in dialogue (Author 2, 2022). To be truly dialogic involves becoming open to multiple knowledge systems and ways of being (Wegerif, 2008), in order to be receptive to multi-voicedness (Matusov, 2009). Such a praxis of radical openness allows a teacher to move beyond attempting to make dialogue ‘happen’ in a one-size-fits-all template, moving responsively instead to being able to seize moments of potential dialogue, due to a disposition that demonstrates respect and openness to other ways of knowing. Such a ‘multilogicality’ (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008) seems to be an ontological turn within a teacher’s becoming, a precursor to Bakhtinian ‘dialogic’ pedagogy.
In author 1’s examples, workshops were designed in several scaffolded phases, from ontological to epistemological and then to clinical phases: moving from dialogue within the local community to the broader global community of medical professionals in English. Importantly, the focus was constantly on the inter-relationships between these two communities, rather than on moving from one to the other. The reason for this was grounded in the nature of dialogic pedagogy which aims not at enculturating students to the second culture (C2), but to invite a dialogue between local and global communities (third space). What mattered then was students felt that they are seen as experts in the ‘content knowledge’ so came to believe their roles as ‘Differently Knowledgeable Other’ and brought to the fore multivoicedness and heteroglossic perspective to the medical knowledge.

Author 1 observed the increasing emergence of professional dialogue among male and female students. While the dominance of masculine tone in the class (as a microcosm of the society) was evident at the start of the workshops but by the end, female students showed significant agency through the use of their bold voices. Also, they showed that they can embrace dialogue at different levels (instrumental, epistemological, ontological and community learning). These outcomes emerged incrementally, and this ‘emergence’ is the vital notion in dialogic approach; this could not achieve this if it were urged to them in initial sessions. Rather, it was the close analysis of the context, needs and rights of those people and their rich capability which informed the whole practice, and this is the live and dynamic nature of dialogic pedagogy, as resembled to a clinical setting of medical profession.

In both examples, the dialogue within our classrooms served not only to facilitate learning and co-construction of knowledge, but had a cyclical transformative impact on our becoming as educators, and our own ontologies. The constant focus is to open up new horizons to learn ‘language’, ‘culture’ and ‘self’ in the dialogical sense, rather than being assimilated into it. This represents situating teacher’s literate practices as an ever-expanding repertoire, an ongoing becoming that is responsive to context. Moreover, local and global identities, or self and other can continuously and dialogically be constructed among students, between students and teacher (me/us) as well as within teachers, as both insider and outsider. As Fecho and Clifton remarked, ‘to cultivate agency in a dialogical self is also to cultivate awareness of selves in dialogue, in flux, and in progress’ (2017, p. 134).

5 Talk shaping ontology

Reflecting on how dialogism informed our philosophies as teachers and our practices in this way, it is significant to acknowledge how diverse and different those practices can unfold depending on the time, place and people we are engaged with. Author 2’s experience in her initial teacher education program was that PST understanding of ontology and epistemology were addressed through tasks such as the writing of a teaching philosophy, pre-determined before practice, as a one-off. This runs the risk of situating a teacher’s ontology and epistemology in a fixed state rather than something that is crafted over time, and through dialogic influence of students, context, community and ongoing learning. Ontology is an essential part of teaching practice on a number of levels: essential for teachers to understand that there are a multiplicity of ways of being in the world, essential for understanding knowledge construction and multiple knowledge systems, essential for situating teacher identity and becoming as an ongoing process and an essential component of the slow thinking that underpins reflexivity and praxis (Kemmis, 2012).
Much of the evolving nature of this ontological becoming is located within exchanges that occur at the site of responsiveness, interaction and dialogue with the classroom ecology. Though as a teacher, our philosophies of dialogic teaching and learning may solidify, the way dialogue is conceptualised and implemented at any certain time and place is contested and fluid. If we attended in the same context now, doing the same approach, the whole practice will be different due to the fast-changing dynamics of political, social, cultural factors and how they unfold in pedagogical contexts, as well as students’ increased level of awareness and less gaps between local and global resources, thanks to technology and social media, among other factors.

The heteroglossic perspective, the multi-voicedness and acknowledging conflicting or opposing ideas are all essential in the dialogic spaces. The challenge at the epistemological level for educators is to conceptualise dialogue beyond classroom talk, tool for communication and oral language practices. This is interwoven with the ontological aspect of our teaching when dialogue is more introduced as Inclusion and Diversity, democracy in tolerating and embracing opposite ideas and becoming fully respectful of those differences, and not trying to acculturate or socialise students into one fixated Anglo form of thinking, logic, speaking, accent, etc. This is very important for language teachers locally and globally and this was a great lesson in applying dialogic approach in a western context, especially as a non-western teacher is to ensure diversity of thoughts are not only welcomed, but also seen and practised. This is manifested in the design of our subjects, the assessment practices and classroom discussions which all allowed for translanguaging, creation of third space for each learner, promoting heteroglossic perspectives to knowledge, language, self and expansion of their learning to their workplaces as potential/actual educators and teachers locally and globally.

6 Implications for initial teacher education

In this paper, we explored the affordances of dialogic approach in literacy practices and toward ITE practice. This led us to the following table, where we conceive of the foundation of teacher identity at the ontological level. Here, in these fundamental locations of ‘ways of being’, teacher’s orientations to the world are cast and priorities are set that will shape practice powerfully. When this is nurtured into an understanding of epistemology, a teacher can reflect on how they understand learning to occur, how they understand knowledge to be constructed, with powerful implications for recognizing the limitations of knowledge systems and the multiplicity of knowledge systems available. This in turn feeds into the literate repertoires that a teacher is open to observe in their students and be responsive to. Such repertoires include the capacity for dialogue, by which a teacher’s becoming is continued in response to the ‘other’ in the classroom. This dialogic openness in turn continues to shape ontological becoming and affords dispositions and pedagogies to arise in responsive and agile ways. These are manifested in this table below (Table 1).

In line with the ‘reflective’ nature of these narratives and the role of reflection in teacher becoming, the following reflective questions emerged as instrumental to the development of dialogic teacher identity.

To conclude this paper, we provide final statements which will be informative for ITE policy and practice, in light of dialogic approaches:

Classroom are conceived as dialogic spaces where teacher educators decide meaningfully when, how and why to use their toolkit resources: this is in response to those with
whom they are communicating. This responsiveness, however, is informed by the kind of reflexivity that is enabled when the dialogue is also educative for the teacher. It is through dialogue that a teacher learns to be responsive to their students, through better understanding the worldviews from which they come, and which shape their ways of ‘doing talk’. This is how dialogic practice impacts teacher ontology, identity and becoming. In this model, pedagogy is not limited to a set of techniques for new teachers to duplicate in their classes. Rather, it requires teachers with an understanding of themselves as teachers of language, and of the fluid nature of knowledge. The role of teachers as ‘symbolic mediators’ in the leadership of classroom clinics and as ‘texts’ themselves is worthy of attention. ‘Dialogic pedagogy’ would simultaneously address ontological and epistemological aspects of teaching as well as on the ‘technical’ level of ‘doing talk’ as a literate practice. This awareness is vital for teachers in order that they might support students own capacities for ontological and epistemological awareness, that is, the understanding of ways of knowing, being and doing. It is valuable for teachers to be able to create tension or paradoxes in the material presented to students in order to encourage fruitful and dynamic inter- and intra-addressivity among peers. Dialogue means going beyond rehearsing a set of pre-set conversation lines to read through in the class in a specified time, manner and order. Rather, dialogue is an emergent and fluid construct through which learning is continuously built, community becomes fostered, students’ challenges become negotiated and sense of belonging is enhanced. In this light, the community is not only dialogic in the sense of giving everyone the chance to speak, but creating a space for addressivity of ‘self-other’ (Bakhtin, 1981). Dialogue emerges within and from the context. Sometimes we are blind to the dialogue which already exists within the context, and the main attempt relies on applying the presumed perception and understanding of dialogue into a new pedagogical space and

| Types of dialogue | Location of dialogue | Reflective questions for beginning teachers |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Dialogue as talk and literate practice (language and literacy level) | Between speakers (differently knowledgeable others) | How can I hear a multiplicity of voices? What conditions need to be created for students to be able to participate? What other ways of ‘doing talk’ are available in this context, beyond those that I am accustomed to recognizing? How can my literate repertoires expand through classroom exchanges? |
| Dialogue as ecology (spatial level) | Between students, teachers, community, schooling institutions (spatial) | How can I incorporate understandings of students’ funds of knowledge and cultural/home literacies into how we interact as a classroom ecology? |
| Dialogue as opposed to monologism | Between points of view (co-constructing knowledge) | How can I move beyond monologism by embracing multiple voices? How can I model respectful dialogue with multiple and ‘othered’ perspectives? |
| Dialogue as epistemological framework | Between social discourses (ways of knowing, diverse disciplinary discourses and literate repertoires) | How are these different ways of ‘doing talk’ embedded in different ways of knowing and seeing the world? |
| Dialogue as ontological framework | Between ways of knowing, being, doing and becoming | What have I learned from this dialogic exchange and how does this shape my identity? |
somewhat expect the similar appropriation of that. This jeopardises the open-ended nature of dialogue as a literacy practice in which an individual (and a teacher educator) is going through the process of becoming.

Developing capacity for making connections through dialogic disposition ensures that ITE prepares teachers who are radically flexible and adaptive, and therefore responsive to the diverse needs of cohorts across Australia. We do acknowledge the challenges associated with such an approach—that this dialogic way of developing teacher becoming constitutes a slow pedagogy that takes time and therefore resources in teacher education programs.

**Funding**  Open Access funding enabled and organized by CAUL and its Member Institutions

**Declarations**

**Conflict of interest**  The authors declare no competing interests.

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