

# Human-Centered Approaches to Promoting Democratic Values in EFL Classrooms

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## Abstract

The recent advancement of classroom practices after COVID-19 with digital communication, including AI chatbots, has sparked a renewed interest in exploring humanistic elements within classrooms. While the topic of AI generative chat is relatively new (launched in Nov 2022), seminal literature needs to be established. However, concerns have emerged about these technologies' potential consequences on authentic human communication. This review emphasizes the importance of maintaining human connections in educational settings, highlighting core democratic values guiding our classroom practices. An in-depth systematic mapping of literature defined by Creswell (2014) exploratory literature review guidelines was employed here to find available literature on major recurring themes and their interconnectedness through systematic mapping. It identifies the educational democratic philosophy founded by John Dewey, arguing for prioritizing creating and preserving the human-to-human interaction in the EFL classroom. Findings urged the need for classroom interventions to accommodate technological advances framed with democratic precepts and humanistic upbringing so that EFL classrooms remain exciting spaces for language learning, democratic engagement, and active participation.

**Keywords:** digital communication, exploratory, democratic values, learning environment, humanistic education

## 1. Introduction

The G7 Education Ministers' Meeting in Japan (2023) raised the importance of upholding universal values in education and embracing digital advancements. In the course of discussions, the use of generative AI in education emerged, daunting but promising. While AI, including chatbots, provides personalized responses and strengthened learning environments, valid concerns arise about the artificially divorced nature of learning, thus depriving it of authentic resources and genuine human interaction. The nature of interconnectedness in the cyber and physical domains in the digital age makes it prudent to examine ways through which education philosophy will respond to these changes. Ongoing discussions have interrogated the impact of AI and data-driven societies and the rethinking of the relations between "data," "information," and "knowledge." The discussion in this article centralizes on the serious examination of communication in language classrooms, with concern about friendly chatbots replacing two-way interactions affecting human connection.

The central question posed is: Where is human connection leading in this new era? By exploring this topic, the paper aims to illuminate the evolving dynamics of democracy, human connection, and communication in language education. By bridging theory with practical applications, these themes contribute to the overarching goal of cultivating humanistic values, enhancing communication skills, and instilling democratic principles in the language learning environment (Alo, 2010; Burgh & Thornton, 2021; Culp, 2019; Fernandez-Corbacho & Cores-Bilbao, 2022; Stitzlein, 2023; Woodhouse, 2022). With the above, the paper stresses for an educational system that goes beyond technological skill, integrating essential democratic values, human interaction, and communication for a holistic and transformative learning experience.

### 1.1 Aim of the Study

In this digital age, where AI is seamlessly integrated into educational activities and blue-ray screens dominate learning environments, it is essential to revisit the essence of education as a cornerstone of democracy. This paper aims to critically examine how contemporary, technology-driven classrooms can integrate human-centered, democratic values such as inclusivity, critical thinking, and authentic student to student communication into EFL setting in order to foster a more socially responsive and participatory learning environment.

The study sheds the possible ways of falling short of principles that bolster inclusive democracy yet seamlessly mesh with modernized pedagogic space. Understanding the role of non-meritocratic inclusion, critical thinking, and openness in dialogues necessitates considerable attention from the new scholarship committed to reinventing schooling in light of technology features. These questions must be reexamined, for the four walls of the classroom are particularly subject to erosion for the inclusion of the matter supported by scientific data. This systematic study will address the extent to which educational spaces can seamlessly connect the above principles by underscoring the gap in contemporary literature. Moreover, it opens up an urgent inquiry into cooperation and communication in democratic practices, as this is visibly something lost from most of the current research agendas.

### 1.2 Research Gap

Despite a growing body of literature promoting democratic, humanistic, and communicative principles in education separately, there remains a significant gap in research that critically examines how these values can be meaningfully integrated into technologically advanced modern EFL classrooms. Current studies often address these pedagogical ideals in isolation from digital learning environments or lack to offer frameworks for bridging human-centered education with technology-driven instruction. Moreover, the nuanced impact of AI tools, particularly their tendency to depersonalize communication, diminish collaborative learning, and reduce opportunities for democratic dialogue, has been insufficiently explored in the context of language education.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

This paper explores how democratic and human-centered educational practices can be successfully incorporated into contemporary classrooms to foster genuine human communication and meaningful interaction. The overarching research question driving the study is, "How can these practices be effectively embedded in modern education?"

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Humanistic Approach in Education

The humanistic approach in education, deeply rooted in human psychology, emphasizes each individual's unique existence and consciousness (Bland & Derobertis, 2017). This approach, valuing the individual's subjective reality and experiences, aligns closely with the constructivist school of thought and underscores the importance of acknowledging learners as unique human beings before learners (Khatib & Sarem, 2013; Lei, 2007). In the educational context, the humanistic approach transcends cognitive and linguistic development, focusing instead on each individual's affective domain and the inherent dignity and value (Aloni, 2007, as cited in Khatib & Sarem, 2013).

The importance of the humanistic approach, particularly in a time when artificial intelligence and technological advancements are prevalent, cannot be emphasized enough. This approach, grounded in the principles of human psychology, highlights the importance of treating each individual with respect and recognizing their unique perspectives and experiences. It promotes a learning environment that values the subjective reality of learners and seeks to nurture their growth (Aloni, 2007; Bland & DeRobertis, 2017). Similar to an education researcher, the humanistic approach goes beyond traditional methods that primarily emphasize cognitive and linguistic development. Rather, it provides equal importance to the significant aspects, ensuring the child's complete development. It emphasizes the importance of personal beliefs, emotions, decisions, and feelings, again fostering a fertile environment for a learner breaking from economic, religious, or nationalistic values. Furthermore, the humanistic approach plays a significant role in developing students' creativity, curiosity, and self-direction. As Gage and Berliner (1991) put it, this educational paradigm encourages independence, allowing students' abilities to express themselves sincerely, particularly about creative arts. This plays an invaluable role in molding behavior and skills conducive to the development of a humane and compassionate society. This thought is echoed by

et al. (2017), who argue that humanistic education underpins the creation of a healthy corporate and environmental ethos. One of the most vital parts of the humanistic approach in teaching is establishing emotional connections and developing empathy, especially in a diverse and multicultural setting. For example, personalization through personal narratives applies to language instruction and allows students to step inside the shoes of the persons they study, thus relating to various cultural and social settings.

The overall mode of teaching allows the learner to become inquisitive and put themselves in the shoes of others, thus facilitating interaction and understanding between human beings - a really important asset in a world today characterized by intense global interconnectedness. Thus, the humanistic approach provides a fair tempo to the technology-oriented typical models of education, which are highly dominant today. Hence, its essence puts forth the considerable role accorded to the emotional and social aspects of learning that reassuringly might never slip out of notice, as they are supposed to concisely develop with the deflation of rapid technological growth. Eyeing the balanced development of the students, humanistic education ensures that they will not only be ready for the academic world but also for overcoming future emotional and social hurdles. Focusing on the holistic development of the student, the humanistic educational process would prepare students not just for academic scenarios but also for emotional and social dilemmas that they have to tackle in navigating through versatile and tumultuous living in the ever-colliding civilizations and value systems that grow more integrated daily.

### 2.2 Communicative Approach in Education

Language is not solely acquiring four core skills to function academically to excel in school subjects. The main aim of learning a Language is to be able to communicate. By engaging in topics that span various cultural and political spectrums, students are exposed to a diverse array of viewpoints. Such diversity not only enhances the learning experience but also sets an arena where the viewpoints are being exchanged and expressed critically. The promotion of communicative concern in pedagogical approaches has become the heart of contemporary pedagogy. Thus, it brings forward student-centeredness, collaboration, and positive environments of inclusivity and support (Culp, 2019; Woodhouse, 2022). In this way, students' linguistic competence and communicative capability are enhanced through the incorporation of various communicative activities, opportunities for active listening, and constructive feedback (Fernandez-Corbacho & Cores-Bilbao, 2022; Stitzlein, 2023).

The communication approach is one of the few approaches in learning that actually brings forth the skills of collective decision-making in a social context. In the words of Samuelsson (2018), democratic processes are collaborated upon, not in direct competition, allowing a wide

variety of ideas and feelings. It usually results in a consensus of normative, epistemic, and preference nature, allowing the co-existence of agreement and disagreement. In addition to this, the practice of communicative action nurtures dialogic relationships that give the opportunity for a person to develop democratic capabilities that will allow him or her to practice freedom of expression, reflection, and consensus in multifarious senses. For instance, we can apply Socratic seminars in social studies classrooms where the students dissect on highly complicated historical or environmental issues, engaging the students in open-ended questions and respectful debates, allowing active and aware listening and critical thoughts to blossom.

### 2.3 *Democratic Values in Education*

Democracy is based on cooperative cohabitation and collaboration, achieved through dialogue and open conversation along with empathy toward each other. Democratic settings require active participation from their constituents, acceptance of diverse perspectives, compromise on each other's behalf for the good of both parties, and joint endeavors toward genuine development of individuals and society. Democratic practices cannot be achieved without constant interaction; this is the core of negotiation and the willingness to listen to conflicting opinions. This can be created only if their background, a society that works as a microcosm itself, samples such practices within the classrooms. It takes time and grim determination to nurture values such as liberty, freedom of expression, and other elements of democracy that promote freedom of engagement. These practices are not mere improvements in the pursuit of academic excellence; they are integral to the continuity of the very democratic values. Without them, democratic values may probably decay faster than expected.

Education must transition toward a human-centered model that emphasizes genuine communication and holistic learning. While modern classrooms are often viewed as advanced spaces for fostering intellectual development, this study examines their potential to undermine critical democratic values such as inclusivity, critical thinking, and open dialogue—an oversight commonly observed in existing research. Addressing these challenges demands immediate attention and a renewed focus on best practices informed by humanistic and communicative approaches.

Similarly, the United Nations has pointed out that education draws on democratic values and is the center of justice-building in the presence of active citizenship, even within a dire macro- and local-level austerity setting. Basically, the whole of democracy is not just dynamic in itself, but it is continuity in grim forces that tend to press for change and resilient equilibrium suited to differing interests. Democracy is not imposed but developed through constant discussion and active listening, willingly done by the people. Though this is rigorous, this helps in re-ensuring some of democracy's aspirations: liberty, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression. If any of the above-mentioned is disregarded, then certainly the path ahead may seem too taxing to fill up all such gaping holes left by their neglect, which may also flood the citizens' spirit with all the more possible descent.

This study proposes an educational model that harmoniously integrates the emotional and psychological dimensions of the humanistic approach (Bland & Derobertis, 2017), the collaborative principles of the communicative approach (Culp, 2019; Woodhouse, 2022), and the democratic values of freedom and equality (Leshchenko et al., 2020; Samuelsson et al., 2022). This model underscores effective communication as a means of fostering democratic engagement and building interpersonal relationships within the educational process. It situates democracy in education as a practice grounded in equality, openness, dignity, and tolerance (Leshchenko et al., 2020).

These principles create an avenue for the learners to make informed decisions, bestowing them with myriad contexts of learning and humanizing their life experiences. The approach places education within the progressive, participatory community context, which lines up with democratic principles (Samuelsson et al., 2022). English classrooms, in particular, stand out as the perfect habitats for realizing these values. Language education is, at its very core, an enabler for free discussions, serious engagement, respectful dialogue, and providing students with an opening into further practices of democratic discussion.

This highlights precisely the important integration of democratic values into education to ensure that when these students, upon graduation, not only have the academic qualifications for employability but also become active members of civil society with the knowledge and ability to contribute to and engage with democracy. By juxtaposing education with humanistic and communicative approaches, we can sustain democracy in this continuously changing, digitally evolving world in a manner that supports inclusive respect, critical consideration, and open dialogue.

While the advocacy for integrating democratic values into language education is widely acknowledged, their actual application in contemporary classrooms often remains limited or inconsistent particularly in digitally mediated environments. In many EFL contexts, classrooms increasingly rely on AI-driven tools, standardized testing systems, and screen-based instruction, which can inadvertently marginalize dialogic engagement, suppress student agency, and reduce interpersonal interaction to algorithmic exchanges. Critical democratic practices such as open dialogue, inclusive participation, and reflective discussion are frequently sidelined in favor of efficiency, performance metrics, or individualized, depersonalized learning paths. This study addresses this gap by contextualizing how core democratic values are often undercut by current technological trends, and it calls for re-centering education around communicative and humanistic frameworks that actively preserve democratic engagement, especially in language learning settings where authentic communication is paramount.

Democratic ideals remain the undercurrents of an inclusive system, exercising almost every bit of empowerment therein. Such values advocate a progressive paradigm where the approach must be student-directed. In general, it is in such an approach where group work is favored; resource management goes hand in hand with effective work partnerships, and peer support enriches learning and solidifies the essence of everything learned into practice. Such practices reinforce their feeling of agency, encouraging them to participate actively in

making decisions about their learning journey in the same spirit with which democracy is upheld. Such an introduction reinforces the crux behind integrating democratic values into language education, whereby, with such an ensured academic capability-led preparation, students get ready for active participation in economically responsible democratic practices, not only academically equipped but also prepared for active, responsible participation in a democratic society.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study was carried out with an organized, systemic review of literature in accordance with the exploratory thematic literature review approach delineated by John Creswell in 2014. This approach for exploratory studies comprises an in-depth review of existing literature regarding themes, gaps, and new areas of research. The process started with detecting keywords that were important for finding relevant materials, both stemming from the primary subject and the limited scanning of text done initially. These keywords were used to conduct extensive database searches on databases such as ProQuest, JSTOR, Google Scholar, ERIC, PubMed, and EBSCO to obtain 50 research reports, including books and articles, to understand the issue sufficiently. The sources were then thoroughly skimmed for their potential contribution to the research, and their contributions were laid out in the form of a literature map. The map illustrated the addition of the current study to existing literature while also formulating the literature review in a manner to identify specific niches this study aims to fill, alongside the drafting of thematic summaries for the most relevant articles, which were to make up the final literature review that was sequentially well-ordered according to APA 7th standards.

The recurrent themes were reviewed and organized thematically, focusing on important concepts and culminating in a summary that highlighted major themes and articulated how the study filled in gaps in existing literature, including a critique of any failures on the part of previous literature regarding methods and content. Besides, the review delineated the methodologies necessary for the efficacious contribution to the expansive body of literature, data collection, and analysis. The data were filtered out in such a way as to focus on important literature emerging from national journals, respected books, conference papers, and dissertation abstracts, notwithstanding an in-depth scrutiny of Internet-based materials.

Furthermore, the review outlined the methods necessary to contribute to the existing body of literature, including data collection and analysis. Priority was given to reviewing literature like national journals, respected books, recent conference papers, and dissertation abstracts while carefully screening Internet sources. Used to frame the problem in the introduction and presented in a separate section per Creswell's guidelines for qualitative research, this methodological approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, facilitating an informed exploration of the research question.

#### 3.2 Study Total Number of Articles Included

Based on the weekly selection rate, 72 articles were initially screened. Through a two-tiered process of abstract scanning, relevance assessment, and methodological evaluation, this number was narrowed down to approximately 32 scholarly articles. Only journal articles were included for review, while academic books, dissertations, and significant conference proceedings were screened for discussion. Each evaluated article was based on its contribution to the core theme of this research, which were later organized in a literature map that helped visualize thematic interrelations.

#### 3.3 Data Source Selection and Exploration

In the initial phase of the study, spanning 36 weeks, extensive research was focused on exploring various scholarly sources. This organized phase was crucial to comprehensively understanding the pertinent academic discourse. During this time, 2-4 scholarly articles or texts were carefully selected each week for in-depth analysis. This deliberate pace facilitated a thorough examination of the complexities inherent in each piece, enriching the understanding and critical evaluation of themes relevant to democratic education in EFL contexts. The use of varied academic databases and platforms, including ERIC, Scribd, Research Gate, Academia, and the Social Science Citation Index, was instrumental in ensuring a wide-ranging and inclusive literature review. This methodological rigor was essential to ensure that the literature review comprehensively encompassed diverse viewpoints, specifically focusing on democratic education in EFL classrooms, with specific attention to topics such as democratic citizenship, classroom dynamics, humanism, John Dewey's philosophy, Philosophy for Children (P4C), communicative competence, and effective communication strategies.

The second phase involved a careful re-evaluation of each shortlisted article. This process thoroughly focused on abstracts, research gaps, methodologies, findings, and discussions of each article. This stage was crucial to establishing the merit, relevance, and contribution of every single literature to the subject matter. It went a long way in confirming the relevance and currency of studies selected for review. Upon the evaluation of the articles for their relevance, the next stage would be the close examination of each work's content to match it up against the theme of Democratic Education in EFL Classrooms. This step was, thus, intended to reaffirm the focus and coherence of the literature review by including only the most relevant and contextually viable sources.

#### 3.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Systematic inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied throughout the literature review phase to maintain academic rigor. Finally included were articles that were internationally indexed, double-blind peer-reviewed, published within the past two decades, and directly aligned with core themes such as humanism, communicative competence, and democratic values in education, particularly within the context of EFL. Studies were excluded if they were redundantly indexed multiple times, or those lacking conceptual depth, or fell outside

the scope of human-centered pedagogical frameworks in EFL. Additionally, papers focused solely on social studies or general education without explicit relevance to EFL contexts were also omitted. This process were undertaken to ensure only articles offering theoretical or empirical insights into democratic practices within EFL classrooms were retained.

#### *3.4 Data Organization, Management and Synthesis*

In this phase, the summaries of the articles were noted and written, properly referencing the guidelines, and were systematically organized. All the summarized data were then compiled in a Microsoft Excel sheet as a perfect repository for the accumulated information. This organization provided a good foundation for efficient data management and retrieval during this research's analysis and synthesis phase. The well-organized data obtained from the Excel spreadsheet were then subjected to the subsequent analysis and synthesis stages. During this phase, the major themes, the patterns, and the connections within the literature were identified, and gaps and possible areas for further studies were recognized. This phase ultimately aimed to accomplish a holistic comprehension of the field, giving new insight or delivering perspectives based on the evidence compiled.

#### *3.5 Literature Review Mapping*

Following Creswell's (2014) guidelines, an exploratory thematic literature review methodology was employed for the literature review mapping as shown in Figure 1. The thematic literature review involved the systematic structuring of the review from key independent variables like democratic citizenship, classroom dynamics, humanism, John Dewey's philosophy, Philosophy for Children (P4C), communicative competence, and effective communication strategies. Besides, other scholarly resources bolstered the claims and arguments put forth in this study, which lent an added degree of rigor and credibility to the review. A comprehensive mapping exercise was characterized by delineating the intricate interrelations among the identified themes and arguments within the selected articles.

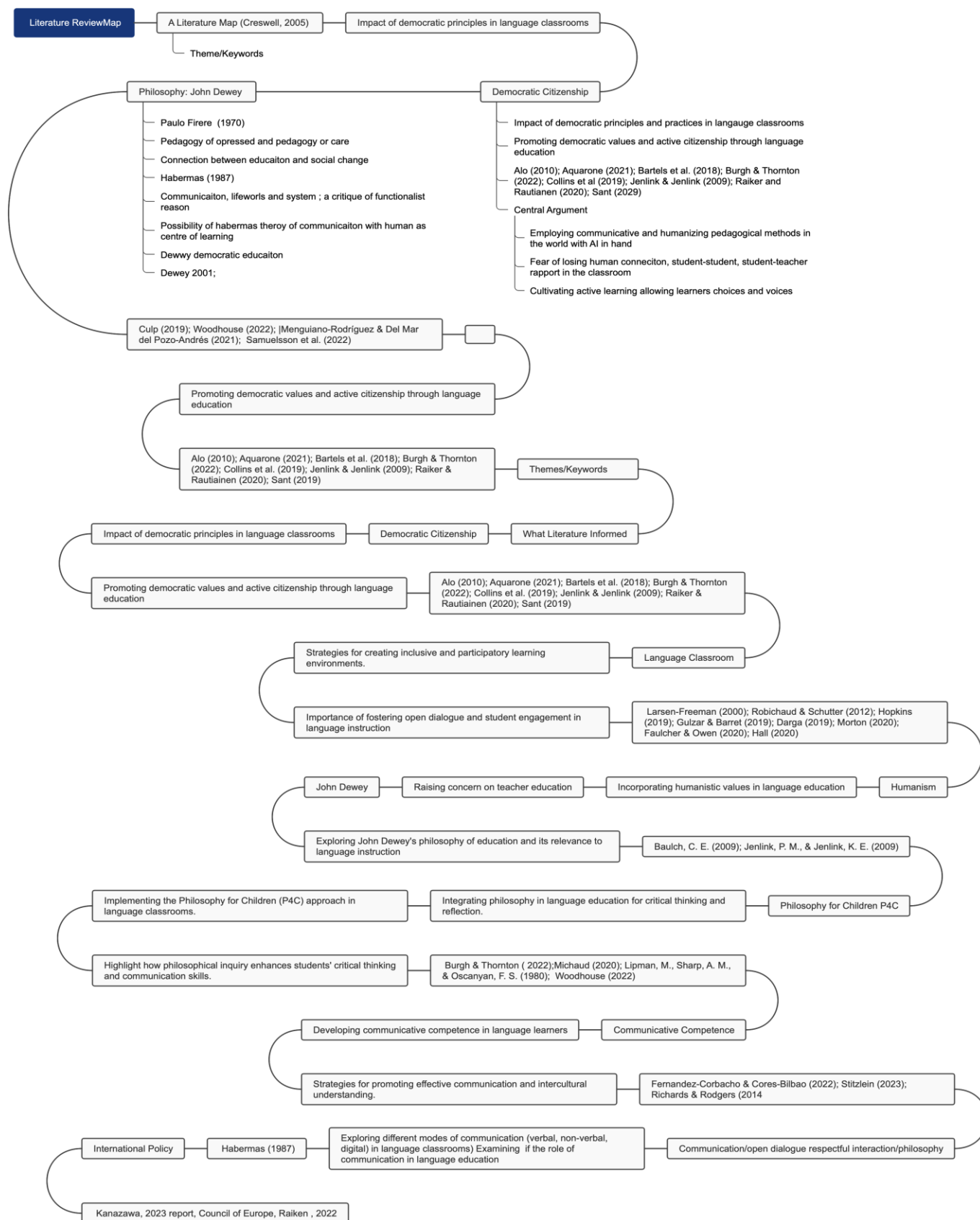


Figure 1. Literature Mapping for Systematic Review

#### 4. Findings and Discussions

A key focus of this research has been on the philosophical aspects of democratic education. The literature reviewed emphasized that much of education is founded on the belief that it fosters greater understanding and harmony. Dewey's experiential educational theory highlights active participation and reflection as critical practices for cultivating democratic values, particularly within language education.

Educational practice is mainly based on the assumption that it broadens understanding and fosters harmony. Dewey's theory of experiential education emphasizes active participation and reflection in the learning process, providing a valuable framework for understanding how education can foster the development of democratic values and practices. Dewey's emphasis on the connection between education and social change aligns with the ideas of critical pedagogy advocated by Paulo Freire, who highlights the importance of empowering students to become active and engaged citizens in their communities. By incorporating both Deweyan and Freirian theories into research, a deeper understanding of how educational experiences can be designed to foster democratic participation and social change can be gained. Dewey and Freire both emphasize the importance of education as a tool for promoting social justice and empowering individuals to participate in the democratic process (Dewey, 2001; Freire, 1970).

Building on the theoretical foundations outlined earlier, the philosophical dimensions of democratic education remain central to interpreting the present findings. This section reflects on how these ideas manifest in classroom practices and align with the observed role of language education in promoting democratic values.

Similarly, Freire (1997) emphasized the interrelationship between education and social change through his theory of critical pedagogy, aiming to empower students to act as engaged citizens in their communities. The combined perspectives of Dewey and Freire help frame educational experiences as means to promote democratic participation and social justice. Dewey and Freire agree that education supports justice and empowers individuals within democratic processes (Dewey, 2001; Freire, 1970). Dewey's view of social harmony as a continuous educational process underscores the importance of experience, imagination, and thought. As Jenlink and Jenlink (2009, p. 230) note, education is always situated within a larger social context, making participatory and democratic practices inherently relational.

This raises the question of how democratic practices are experienced within classroom spaces. Dewey's reflections on democracy in education emphasize its participatory and social value, oriented toward the progressive development of communities. From this viewpoint, the core concerns in democratic education involve the creation of a humanizing community structure, ongoing collaborative growth, and communication as a means of personal recognition. The philosophy of democratic education is grounded in the idea that education is a process of continuous renewal beyond physical regeneration to include the reawakening of beliefs, ideals, hopes, and practices. For Dewey, communication is the channel through which this renewal occurs in educational and social contexts. Likewise, Habermas (1987) underscores communication as fundamental to fostering democracy and a shared sense of community.

This reinforces the significance of democratic schooling practices in providing all learners with equal opportunities for growth and reaffirming what it means to be human self-renewing and engaged. In language classrooms, such practices stimulate communicative competence, which lies at the heart of intercultural understanding and the development of democratic citizenship. Integrating democratic values into English language education allows students to step into roles as global citizens who can navigate diverse contexts. As Sercu et al. (2005) point out, foreign language teachers play a crucial role in teaching the language and developing learners' democratic communicative competence, with attention to practical, real-world language use.

For Dewey (2001), social harmony is always educational, since social life caters to and enriches experiences, imagination, and thoughts. It becomes a more participatory and democratic educational practice, as it is lived in the context of "social structure and relationships" (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2009, p. 230). In this regard, the issue of the modes of manifestation of democratic practices in society, such as in school or classroom space, arises. Dewey (2001) highlights the theme of conceiving democracy in education in relation to its social function and participatory value for the progressive direction of communities. As a result, the main concerns regarding democratic practices in education are creating a community structure with a humanizing essence, collaborating toward progressive growth as a continuous process, and communicative values for individualized respects.

The philosophy of democratic education is grounded in the idea that education should be a process of self-renewal, which goes beyond physiological regeneration to include the renewal of beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, misery, and practices. (Dewey, 2001, p. 6). The renewal process within a social group is facilitated by communication, which is an essential element of education. Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action emphasizes the importance of communication and its potential to promote democracy and foster a sense of community (Habermas, 1984). Therefore, the focus of democratic education practices is on providing equal and shared opportunities for academic and personal growth for all learners, while considering the revitalization of the "self-renewing" quality of living beings.

Democratic education practices in classrooms encourage the development of communicative competence, which is crucial for intercultural understanding and communication, and therefore democratic citizenship. Incorporating democratic values into instruction prepares students to become global citizens capable of navigating diverse contexts and working together toward common objectives. Sercu et al. (2005) emphasize the pivotal role of foreign language teachers in imparting communicative competency to learners. They underscore the importance of aligning existing teaching practices in foreign language education with the criteria of foreign language and democratic communicative competence.

Alo (2010) highlights that democratic practices ensure the independent growth of students in language classrooms by encouraging them to

participate in "expressing their views, talking openly to their teachers or peers," and evaluating their instructors' teaching. The democratic education approach in English language classrooms emphasizes the importance of creating a democratic space where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas in any language, they feel most comfortable with, and where communication is valued as a means of fostering intercultural understanding and respect.

Community structure is based primarily on a single representation in relation to multiple associations. Dewey (2001) points out the ambiguous nature of social systems, as they consist of plural values and facts, leading to the progressive structure of community bonding by avoiding "undesirable features" in communities (p. 87). According to Dewey's work, promoting "free and equitable" dialogues among individuals with different and shared interests can balance intellectual stimulation and democratic practice within communities (Dewey, 2008, p. 89). This democratic practice can enhance efficiency and create an interplay of experiences contributing to a humanized society. In this context, efficiency refers to the ability of a society to function effectively and harmoniously in its technical, intellectual, and social relationships. In a humanized society, these relationships are well-balanced, and diverse values and perspectives are incorporated to stimulate intellectual growth and foster intercultural understanding. Therefore, the goal of democratic practice in education is to create a classroom environment that supports this efficient and harmonious social structure (Dewey, 2001). Although such a social structure may not have a particular ideological stance, it can still sustain efficiency by incorporating diverse thoughts and experiences. These ideas align with other literature on the democratic assumptions of classroom practices.

As mentioned above, the concern of humanized social systems resulting from the democratic approach is based on interaction or a communicative approach. Dewey (2001) claims that the interactive virtue of democratic norms not only preserves the view of separated social interests as a shared interest but also provides space for "continuous readjustment through meeting new situations" (p. 91). This shows that communication is a strength of democracy, as it provides a space in which to contribute novelty by challenging thoughts. Dewey also argues that democracy functions in social structures as a "mode of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 91). In this mode, individuals can expand their social and intellectual horizons, giving them a more "perceptible connection to one another" (p. 91). The power of communication in democratic practice is its ability to sustain associative values with diversity and educate individuals through their "personal initiatives and adaptability" (p. 92). In the process of the social organism, the human essence regulates communicative values by sustaining and empowering individuals' progressive essence as the democratic essence of education.

#### *4.1 Critical assumptions regarding the Deweyan Democratic Education Praxis*

The educational practices are based on progressive human society by yielding critically adaptive, challenging, and innovative human generation. According to Garrison et al. (2012), educational practices are founded on the idea of a progressive, humanized society that fosters critically adaptive, challenging, and innovative individuals. However, achieving this outcome requires a cultural, constructive, and communicative approach to democracy and education that is still not fully realized or implemented. Garrison et al. (2012) also point out that democratic concern disseminates the notion of interactive constructivism, which assumes that an observer and/or participant is always embedded in a cultural context full of life experiences. Therefore, valuing, and interacting with individuals' experiences as observers and participants is essential in democracy and education. The authors further state that "learning is a constructive activity of children, students, learners, and teachers as observers, agents, and participants in their life worlds or social life experiences" (p. 113). In this process, they grow with "cooperative problem-solving" competence as a lively and constructive agency (p. 113). This shows that educational practices involving interactive constructivism provide a culturally suitable and collaborative shared learning practice. It accepts the multicultural learning pattern as a shared and culturally suitable learning opportunity, which is the strength of democracy and a need for today's education. How can an interactive, shared dimension of democratic practices be integrated into education? Jenlink and Jenlink (2009) suggest that the Deweyan notion of democratic community in classroom practices can foster nuanced interactive shared values within multiple cultural structures, by sharing personal voices, breaking down cultural barriers, and embracing multiple cultural perspectives and diverse ideas. Jenlink and Jenlink (2009) further elaborate that the Deweyan notion of democratic community in classroom practices can foster nuanced interactive shared values within multiple cultural structures. This is possible by sharing "personal voices," "breaking down . . . cultural barriers," and embracing "multiple cultural perspectives and diverse ideas" (Jenlink & Jenlink, p. 230). In this regard, one component of the democratic notion—challenges-care—integrates personal respect and communication to collaborate in learning and doing. Baulch (2009) claims that care molds an individual's shared relational values by making them "reflective of human interaction" (p. 264). Baulch further remarks that it binds teachers and students not in hierarchical relations but as humans collaborating toward educational insights.

Baulch (2009) claims that a competitive orientation avoids the democratic content of care in educational practices and fosters frustration in school leaders. Similarly, it breaks the notion of competition, as all achievement is based on shared responsibilities without competitive engagement in the educational process. Therefore, the democratic essence is to capture interactive constructivism through the collaborative nature of functioning with care and within shared relationships.

According to Jenlink and Jenlink (2009), the goal of democratic education is to incorporate a humanizing essence into the educational realm, where classrooms serve as mini-societies that sustain socially just and equitable values. In order to achieve this, a tradition of "collective dialogues and actions" is required to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities to share and receive understanding and experiences from one another (p. 235). As a result of this process, people develop as they are given a voice in decision-making, are treated with respect in the classroom, and are free to share their ideas and opinions. This is possible through continuous reflection on "inquiring, participative, and inclusive" educational practices (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2009, p. 246). As a result, democratic education



ultimately strives to enhance and reinforce the lived experiences of individuals, while also promoting a sense of respect and value for human existence within social reality.

Nevertheless, democratic norms can be considered utopian values in classroom structures when educators cannot justify their practices with individual initiatives to accommodate change and diversity. Education could rely on a business model for functioning in society, as it promotes the value of “growth, not competition” (Baulch, 2009, p. 266). In the democratic process, shared growth is an essential concern, as this process visualizes every individual’s growth pattern in a way that removes any significance from the sense of competition. Baulch further argues that competition gives a false impression of social justice and growth because it ignores an individual’s context, identity, and participation. Baulch (2009) emphasizes the importance of ethical duty in education, which extends beyond the managerial aspect of school leadership. This duty requires teachers to consider the intangible elements of education, such as spirituality, and recognize the value of human context and interaction in promoting growth and development. Although these aspects may not be quantifiable, they are essential for fostering hope and creating a supportive environment for learning. By acknowledging and embracing their ethical responsibilities, teachers can significantly influence the growth and development of their students, reinforcing the human aspect of education and promoting overall well-being.

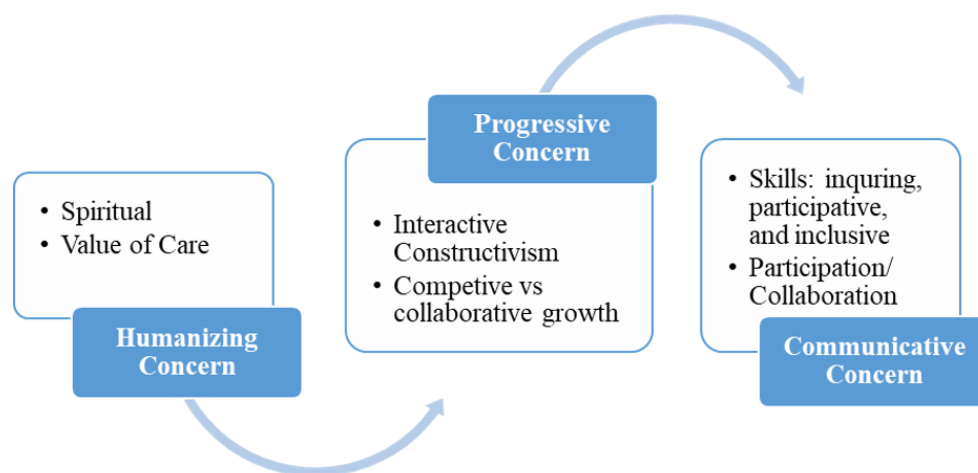


Figure 2. Integration of Democratic Education

Figure 2 shows how the roots of democratic education are interconnected, with humanizing aspects leading to progressive notions that address communication as a critical aspect of classrooms. This includes valuing each individual’s spiritual nature and demonstrating care and compassion in the classroom—leading to progressive possibilities in which communication is the objective of constructivism and collective evolution—and honing learners’ inquiry skills through care, compassion, and collaboration.

Reoccurrence of themes related to democratic practices in education in articles highlighted democratic practices, communicative practices for growth, and humanistic educational values, aligning with Dewey’s approach to democratic education. These themes encompass Dewey’s vision of fostering critical and social individuals who can challenge, innovate, and progress as democratic citizens. The Philosophy for Children pedagogical approach aligns with the principles of democratic education as it emphasizes critical thinking, dialogical skills, collaboration, and reflection on one’s practices. It provides an optimal classroom environment for introducing philosophical reasoning and storytelling. It promotes a culture that opposes hierarchical systems and fosters an equitable and socially just society. Harvey (2023) mentioned that teachers are crucial in championing democratic classroom practices by encouraging students to form opinions based on knowledge and reasonable doubt. The community of inquiry, as advocated by Lipman and Sharp, strengthens teacher education and challenges the prevailing market model in schools. Michaud (2020) examines the international success of the Philosophy for Children movement and its implications for teacher education. Philosophy for children has transformed the culture of schools worldwide by introducing the community of inquiry as a valuable educational practice. Teachers who exercise independent judgment and apply reflective philosophical thought can create a classroom culture that promotes democratic ideals. Woodhouse (2023) highlights Lipman’s belief that the inquiry process should develop reasonableness among students, encompassing rationality tempered by judgment.

What is the role of the teacher in promoting a culture that incorporates the notion of human existential strength in the classroom? Woodhouse (2022) argues that teachers can become champions of democratic classroom practices by encouraging their students to form opinions based on knowledge and reasonable doubt. Education involves participation in a teacher-guided community of inquiry, fostering understanding, good judgment, and an acknowledgment of the ambiguous and mysterious nature of the world.

Burgh and Thornton (2017) argue that the development and production of Philosophy for Children (P4C) literature reflects different philosophical, educational, and strategic positions on curriculum material and resources in philosophy classrooms. They suggest exploring

how purpose-written materials and children's literature can complement each other, creating a new genre in educational literature. Implementing the Philosophy for Children approach and a tradition of inquiry in the curriculum is crucial for promoting democratic educational practices (Burgh & Thornton, 2017). Teachers are vital in championing these practices by exercising independent judgment and reflective philosophical thought (Woodhouse, 2023). Encouraging students to form their opinions based on knowledge and reasonable doubt helps cultivate intellectual independence, contributing to developing a healthy democracy. By creating a counter-culture that challenges the hierarchical system of the market model, teachers can contribute to establishing an equitable and socially just society (Woodhouse, 2023). In conclusion, teachers who embrace independent judgment and reflective philosophical thought catalyze democratic classroom practices, offering hope for a fair democratic future (Burgh & Thornton, 2017; Woodhouse, 2022; Michaud, 2020; Lipman & Sharp, 1984).

#### 4.2 Humanistic Dialogues

Wood et al. (2019) argue for the importance of humanistic dialogue in fostering knowledge democratization and strengthening humanity. They emphasize the need to uphold individual voices and practices beyond epistemicide, which excludes diverse knowledge systems from marginalized groups. Hall and Tandon (2017) define epistemicide as excluding knowledge systems from Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups in higher education. They advocate for knowledge democratization by recognizing and valuing diverse perspectives and ways of knowing. Similarly, Fricker (2019) highlights the concept of epistemic injustice and the need for marginalized groups to have access to knowledge democracy. This involves sharing knowledge from lived experiences and incorporating global educational knowledge.

In educational processes, such a provision can enhance the moral and humanistic values of every individual's socially just and equitable existence. Gibson (2020) states that it is the norms of democratic education that provide a "philosophical and moral orientation to the world that honors every human" with respect (p. 433). Sant (2019) points out that diverse research has focused on a democratic education that promotes the ethical basis of human rights. This shows that democratic education inculcates a sense of social justice by incorporating human experiences as humanizing pedagogical practices.

Furthermore, humanistic dialogues in democratic educational systems challenge deliberative pedagogical practices that foster hegemony and/or supremacy. Gibson (2020) elaborates that in deliberative pedagogy, even as a process of social justice, marginalized individuals are asked to share their life experiences not as a form of social respect but as emotional labor for others' supremacy. Gibson further claims that such a pedagogical approach curtails individuals' critical understanding of their unequal social and political existence. There is a need for democratic educational practice as a humanizing dialogue in which every individual can concoct a counternarrative. Gibson (2020) claims that such a democratic pedagogy enables students to "listen" to and "imagine" marginalized voices and "talk back to dominant narratives" (p. 441). In this process, students can learn to grow beyond normative narratives of human existence by engaging with "more relevant, more just, and more transformative" human dialogues (Gibson, 2020, p. 448). Sant (2019) also highlights the theme of democratic education as a humanizing education that "fosters self-empowerment and social transformation by creating opportunities" beyond hegemonic ideologies (p. 675). This could demonstrate that democratic educational practices include a moral sense of care and respect for every counternarrative in human. Democratic educational practices prioritize inclusivity, respect for counternarratives, and the well-being of all students. When faced with offensive or harmful beliefs based on misinformation, educators must respectfully challenge and address them. This can be achieved through engaging students in dialogue, providing evidence-based information, and promoting critical evaluation of beliefs. Educators should establish clear boundaries against harmful behavior and discriminatory language. By fostering open and respectful dialogue while prioritizing safety and well-being, democratic educational practices respect counternarratives.

Hopkins (2019) contends that democratic socialist pedagogy aspires to individualism (freedom and personal rights to thought and action), community (human interdependence for caring, sharing, and collaborating with others), and collectivism (human interdependence for serving the larger needs of human society). Sant (2019) explains that Deweyan democratic education emphasizes action, participation, and engagement as humanizing attributes in classroom practices. It is important to note that respecting counternarratives in democratic education does not mean tolerating offensive or harmful beliefs. Rather, humanizing dialogues in democratic education aim to uphold individual freedom and personal rights to thought and action while promoting human interdependence for the larger needs of society. It is essential to balance individualism, community, and collectivism to create a safe and inclusive classroom environment that respects counternarratives. Hopkins (2019) emphasizes the importance of caring, sharing, and collaborating with others. Teachers should treat students as humans, alleviating their anxiety and depression, as explained by Aquarone (2021). Education with humane values promotes active participation, questioning, and authentic engagement, fostering socially responsive individuals who can contribute to the shared community. This approach avoids conventional assessment patterns and the resulting sense of inferiority by cultivating collective decision-making skills and providing recognition and representation.

#### 4.3 Democratic Education with Communicative Action

As classrooms increasingly have been adopting AI tools in recent days as a tool for learning and teaching, concerns are growing around the erosion of human to human interaction and the exclusion of diverse ways of knowing. Classroom and school success in cultivating engaged and critical thinkers who possess social responsibility relies on effective educational practices. Effective classroom communication plays a pivotal role in preparing students to engage in diverse social situations effectively. Collins et al. (2019) emphasize

that communication skills enable philosophical exploration through various means and with different individuals. Bartel et al. (2018) found that communication was most robust within the community of inquiry group during a study involving children. The children in this group engaged in “the conversation with each other, the discussion, [and] listening to other opinions” (p. 33). They engaged in “the conversation with each other, the discussion, [and] listening to other opinions” (p. 33). Bartel et al. argue communication enables individuals to engage in philosophical discussions, experience diverse opinions, and express their views. Their study shows that children improve their ability to express themselves and respect others' opinions through communicative action, which develops dialogical skills and attitudes.

Similarly, the communicative process in democratic education is vital because it fosters collective decision-making skills in a social setting. Samuelsson (2018) argues that “the democratic process is, or at least should be, a process of social cooperation with the aim of communicatively reaching a collective decision about ‘what to do,’ rather than a competitive process” (p. 2). In this process, multiple ideas and feelings come together, with minimal consensus concerning points of disagreement. Samuelsson further elaborates that communicative action in the democratic educational process can yield three patterns of consensus: normative, epistemic, and preference. Consensus is not a way to avoid disagreement, since it “is a multifaceted concept that, on its own, will not eliminate all possibilities for disagreement” (p. 7). Students can begin a dialogue with a preference consensus regarding specific content or a particular practice object, which can serve as a central issue to discuss. They can proceed with normative consensus by focusing on the value and typical attributes of the object or content. They can then reach epistemic consensus in the middle and at the end of the discussion to examine the causal effects of their choices and to suggest possible alternatives. In this process, the students exercise their freedom of expression, reflection, and consensus regarding multifaceted ideas in an environment in which agreements and disagreements co-exist in harmony.

In addition, communicative action strengthens dialogic relationships, allowing individuals to develop democratic competencies. Schools need to promote such communicative practices as integral components of education. Brugh and Thornton (2022) claim that democratic education cultivates social skills and communication to ensure that individuals develop societal decision-making skills. The authors explain that in school, teachers should facilitate students' discussions by allowing them to communicate with each other toward “defining, listing, ranking, and rating” opinions by “listening to and learning from one another” (p. 64). Through this process, students are engaged in communicative experiences in which they can bring different perspectives together to provide an appropriate meaning to lead the situation. Therefore, the students' communicative experiences are reoriented throughout their lives as social beings. These insights are increasingly relevant as education systems adopt AI, highlighting the urgency of preserving dialogical engagement as a central pillar of democratic and humanistic education.

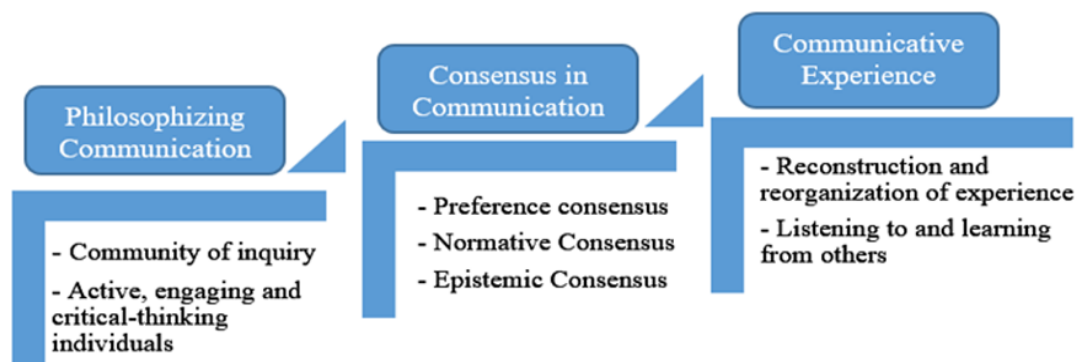


Figure 3. Communicative Action in Democratic Education

Illustrates in figure 3, philosophical communication within a community of inquiry comprising actively thinking individuals. The next theme concerns consensus in communication, including preference, normative, and epistemic consensus; this is also equally associated with the communicative experience—that is, reconstructing and reorganizing experiences and listening to and learning from others.

#### 4.4 Progressive Practices in Democratic Education

In AI-supported education systems that risk formalizing experience and minimizing student agency, such progressive practices are essential safeguards for maintaining human agency, diversity of thought, and social interdependence in educational spaces. Ultimately, democratic education plays a huge role as it is all about functioning with progressive learning experiences. Brugh and Thornton (2022) highlight the Deweyan notion of progressive educational practice and claim that it is not only a process of transmission of information but mainly a transformation in an individual's knowledge and experiences. This occurs through proper means of communication, wherein individuals transmit, transact, and transform their knowledge and experiences. According to Brugh and Thornton (2022), life and education, individual and community, and human and environment function as inseparable elements in the transformation of the educative journey of life. There is growing recognition of the need to implement progressive educational practices in the classroom that allow children to be active agents in their own social and intellectual development. This requires teachers to adopt a more dynamic role that responds to their students' diverse interests, ways of thinking, and experiences. Matusov (2021) argues that democratic education provides a framework for individualized pedagogy that promotes intrinsic motivation in learners. This approach prioritizes student motivation and

supports a more social and collaborative classroom environment in which teachers serve as facilitators rather than curriculum designers. The goal of democratic education is to empower students to make their own decisions, diversify the learning experience, and humanize the education process. In Sweden, Samuelsson et al. (2022) studied the implementation of progressive educational practices that incorporate democratic norms, such as pupil participation, interaction, and community engagement. Their research found that pupil participation led to group formation, resource management, and peer support, while pupil interaction influenced learning content and promoted lively discussion. The use of the local community as an extended classroom for real-life learning experiences was also an effective measure of progressive pedagogy. Overall, democratic progressive educational practice prioritizes participation and interaction as core elements of student-centric learning, emphasizing the importance of a collaborative, real-life learning environment.

There seems to be an escalating recognition on the necessity of putting into practice some progressive kinds of education in the classroom in which children can become powers for themselves in their own social and intellectual student training. A shift from a stagnant or relatively passive role of teachers responding to the incurred diversity and variety of any interests, approaches, and experiences takes place. Matusov (2021) says democratic education seeks to give a framework for individualizing pedagogical approaches, establishing the intrinsic motivation to learn. This framework shifts priority from true learning to student motivation, aiding in placing teachers more at the facilitator end of the spectrum than on the curriculum-designers end. The goal of democratic education is to empower students as decision-makers, diversify learning experiences, and humanize the process of education. In Sweden, Samuelsson et al. (2022) undertook research into the practice of some progressive educational theories through the lens of democratic norms of participation, interaction, and community. Their study found that pupil participation resulted in the formation of groups, management of resources, and mutual support, while pupil interaction had its impact upon specification, sustainability of discussion, and content of learning. As Apple (2007) emphasized, their conclusion on the other effective practice of progressive pedagogy pointed to the use of local communities as an extended classroom for learning in real life. Fundamentally, democratic progressive educational practice places participation and interaction as some of the central benchmarks of student-centered learning, and the significance of such interaction most often comes into being in a collaborative environment of learning in real life.

The progressive value of democratic education also inspires teachers' innovative and transformative engagement. Menguiano-Rodríguez and Pozo-Andrés (2021) discuss teachers' transformative ventures through progressive and democratic practices by conceptualizing school as a small republic in which children function with the idea of self-government. In these democratic practices, teachers focus on appropriating "the new" into their educational practices by recognizing the new, understanding the new, bonding with the new, applying the new, and internalizing the new (p. 16). Teachers join together with children in self-educative projects to make society responsible for children's learning and life experiences. This shows that teachers can erase themselves from the school space by making students the leaders of their self-education and by using self-government projects as a progressive approach to the learning experience. Howlett (2021) clarifies that in the name of progressive education, educators might develop another structural element for children. There should be a true sense of freedom in educational practices, as that is what leads to children's self-realization and self-improvement.

## 5. Conclusion

This study explored how modern, technology-driven classrooms can effectively embed democratic and human-centered educational values in practice, with a particular focus on EFL classroom settings. Addressing the pressing concerns of recent advances in digital learning tools while offering new opportunities also poses risks to core democratic values such as human-to-human communication, inclusivity, critical thinking, and open dialogue.

Guided by Creswell's (2014) exploratory qualitative methodology, the study employed thematic analysis and literature mapping to examine a curated body of scholarly work. From an initial pool of 72 sources, 32 peer-reviewed journal articles were selected for in-depth analysis to identify gaps in the literature and to propose a pedagogical framework informed by the seminal philosophies of Dewey, Freire, and Habermas.

The findings reaffirm the need for educational practices prioritizing dialogical engagement, learner autonomy, and inclusive classroom dynamics. In a time when AI heavily influences students, maintaining democratic values in education requires extra efforts to humanize learning spaces. Empowering students to contribute and participate in classroom discussions actively, shaping their learning processes, and engaging in communication is a core form of valuing democratic practice. As the learning process continues evolving with technological advancements, this study calls for pedagogical approaches that balance innovation with preserving human connection and civic responsibility.

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I declare that I have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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