DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the effects of dynamic assessment on improving ELT learners of English as a foreign language at a large state university. The researchers followed the pre-test—treatment—post-test procedure in the study. The test type used in the assessment procedures was 'Retelling Story Test' type in which learners were provided with authentic news stories and expected to narrate the event in the story. The study involves both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The statistical data were analyzed by Mann Whitney U- Test and Wilcoxon Sign Test. As for the qualitative data, responses to a student evaluation form were analyzed at the end of the whole procedure. The researchers found significance in the performances of control and experiment groups after the treatment program implemented for the latter group. The students also in the experiment group were able to maintain their success in transfer tests applied after the post-tests. Students were observed to be less dependent on the teacher's mediation in transfer tests, which proved the power of interactions in the students' Zone of proximal development. Furthermore, the qualitative data obtained from the student evaluation form revealed that learners found the assessment procedure beneficial.

Keywords: socio-cultural theory, zone of proximal development, dynamic assessment, mediation

1. Introduction

The basic idea behind testing students is to monitor how much the students have progressed on a specific subject after teaching them for a certain amount of time.

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However, DA (dynamic assessment) in language learning focuses on process instead of product (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.28).

DA (Dynamic assessment) according to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests that instruction and assessment should be unified. It has a basis in Vygotskyan concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is considered as the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. In other words, what the child or learner can do independently shows the previous or actual level of child's/learner's development. It prescribes mediated teacher-learner dialog during the assessment procedure.

Based on the ZPD, the real focus should be on what students can achieve with the help of the teacher or peers during the class activities because what is achieved with the help of others shows the potential progress for achievement without any help (Sternberg and Grigerenko, 2002, p.vii). In Thinking and Speech, Vygotsky (1987) mentions the significance of the ZPD in instructional practices. He argued that instruction should be adjusted to learner's ZPD and not to the actual level of their development (p. 209). In this sense, Dynamic Assessment (DA) brings instruction and assessment together.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sociocultural Theory, ZPD and Dynamic Assessment
Within the framework of Socio-cultural Theory, it is argued that the development of humans is mediated by others, whether they are immediately present as in the case of parents guiding children or teachers guiding students, or displaced in time and space, as when we read texts produced by others or participate in activities such as work, organized in specific ways by a culture (Lantolf, 2007a, p. 32).

As Lantolf and Thorne (2006) point out, the SCT framework understands mediation as 'the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artifacts, concepts, and activities to regulate the material world or their own and each other's social and mental activity' (p.79). Hence, from the perspective of SCT, humans do not interact directly with the world and the environment in which they live, but they use culturally constructed artifacts created by human culture(s) over time (Lantolf, 2000, p.1). Culturally constructed artifacts include physical tools (e.g. technology, means of transportation, domestic utensils etc.) and symbolic tools (e.g. literacy, mathematics, language, etc.) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 60).

Dynamic Assessment argues that the abilities of a person can be learned by offering assistance during the assessment itself. It can provide both a lot of information of an individual's abilities, and it can also help him/her to develop those abilities by providing instruction or mediation during the assessment tasks. Therefore, in dynamic assessment procedures, the focus is on the process rather than the products of learning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004, Lidz & Gindis, 2003). There are different mediation techniques. *Helping Move Narration Along, Accepting Response, Request for Repetition, Request for Verification, Reminder of Directions, Request for Renarration, Identifying the specific site of an error, Specifying the error, Metalingusitic clues, Providing example or illustration, Offering a choice, Providing correct response, Providing explanation* are the mediation typologies used in this study (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994).

Learners' responsiveness to mediation is as important as the type of mediation supplied during the assessment procedure. *Being unresponsive, Repeating Mediator, Responding incorrectly, requesting additional assistance, incorporating feedback, Offering explanation, Using mediator as resource, Rejecting mediator's assistance* are the learner reciprocity typologies used in this study (Lidz, 1991).

2.2 Comparing and Contrasting Dynamic Assessment and Non-dynamic Assessment

Analysing the similarities and differences between Dynamic and Non-Dynamic assessment is of great significance. The discussion Sternberg and Grigerenko (2002) raised briefly explains the similarity between these two types of tests. They state that NDA tests can include dynamic features and similarly dynamic tests can include static features (p.28). For example, the pre-test-mediation-post- test format includes Non-Dynamic Assessment features in the pre-test stage. Furthermore, there are some DA studies which have made use of NDA assessment instruments as multiple choice questions.

In the light of Sternberg and Grigerenko's (2002) views, Yıldırım (2008) also discusses the discrimination between dynamic and non-dynamic assessment in his article and draws the conclusion that in non-dynamic assessment, the examiner presents items and the examinee is expected to respond to these items successively, without taking any kind of feedback or intervention. At some point in the future, the examiner receives the only feedback he or she will get. This might be an individual score or a set of scores. On the other hand, dynamic assessment is a procedure which takes the results of an intervention into consideration. During the intervention, the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the whole test. The final score is either the learning score representing the difference between pre-test (before learning) and post-test (after learning) scores, or the score on the post-test alone (p.302).

DA completely rejects the examiner's neutral or uninvolved position during the test administration. On the contrary, DA requires the examiner to involve in the test process (Sternberg & Grigerenko, 2002; Haywood & Lidz, 2007; Feuerstein et al., 1987). In DA, assessment and instruction are a unique process. Therefore, the tested abilities and content used for pre-test and post-test activities should be in the zone of proximal development, and teachers' tasks should help create learners' zone of proximal development (Sternberg & Grigerenko, 2002, p.29).

2.3 Purpose of the Study

It is hypothesized that the use of dynamic assessment increases the quality of the instruction and promotes learners' development. It is also hypothesized that the use of dynamic assessment for speaking abilities will help the prospective English teachers to realize both their actual levels and potential development. Students will feel more confident when mediated during the assessment and this will help them demonstrate a better performance when being tested alone on a similar subject.

This study attempts to address the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between the results of pre non-dynamic and pre dynamic assessment applications in both experimental and control groups?
2. Is there a significant difference between the results of post non-dynamic and post dynamic assessment applications between the experimental and control groups?
3. To what extent can the enrichment program foster students' oral performances?
4. To what extent can interactions during dynamic assessment actually provide an insight into students' abilities and promote development?
5. Considering the mediation learners need during the pre and post dynamic assessment sessions, is there a significant difference between two times?
6. Evaluating the whole assessment process, is there a significant development in the experimental group as opposed to the control group?
7. If learners show progress in time, are they able to maintain the same performance in a different assessment context?

3. Significance of the Study

There has been a growing interest in examining spoken interaction (Swain, 2011; McNamara, 2001); that is why the focus in the present study is determined as the assessment of oral performance. ELT students, who are upper-intermediate learners of English, are recruited for the study because Poehner's (2005) views explaining the lack of evidence about the L2 abilities of upper-intermediate learners are taken into consideration. According to him, the majority of published studies focus on

intermediate or beginning level language learners. Assuming that upper-intermediate learners have different language backgrounds, the researchers think some learners in this group can go comparatively farther in language development.

Besides, DA has gained a lot of interest in general education and psychology, and is gaining attention in applied linguistics all over the world; however, the amount of research about the effects of DA on foreign language acquisition processes is not still satisfying. The present study adds a new dimension to DA research on foreign language education as well as the idea of assessment in Turkey by promoting students' development.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

Thirty-six learners from the Gazi University School of Foreign Languages were recruited for the study. They were studying English within one-year intensive language training program before they started the Faculty of Education at the same university. The target group had been training for the university entrance exam solving multiple-choice tests; therefore, they were assumed to lack good productive skills; but, they were supposed to be more successful in terms of grammatical accuracy in multiple-choice exams owing to their intensive studies of language rules during the preparation period for the university entrance exam. Naturally, they cannot be expected to be as successful in their oral performances in terms of accuracy and otherwise. Considering that this group of students will be role models in the classroom when they start their professional lives, they are expected to be accurate in productive skills as well. Also, there is little research in literature that reveals that this group of students, who are the 'prospective teachers', lack accuracy in oral performance.

There were two groups of students (control and experimental groups). Eighteen students enrolled in both groups. Data collected before the assessment sessions revealed that students had similar language backgrounds. In table 1, it is displayed that the subjects got similar results in university exams, which proves that the two groups are homogeneous.

Table 1: Mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the university entrance exam

Control Group	Experimental Group
349,03	348,12

4.2 Data Collection Instruments

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data. To collect quantitative data, pre-and post- tests were used in both non-dynamic and dynamic assessment procedures. Different mediation techniques used during dynamic assessment procedures were also analysed. In addition, a student evaluation form was distributed to the experimental group two weeks after the whole process so as to receive qualitative feedback about the instruction.

The 'Story Telling Technique' was applied in the assessment procedure of the present study. Hirai and Kouzumi (2009) used this technique and proved that it enables teachers to easily and accurately connect input and output or learning and assessment, which is a vital aspect of classroom assessment (p.153). It consists of two sections: reading a story and retelling it. Before implementing it, the texts and the tasks are revised by two experts to ensure their face validity. Their suggestions are taken into account and necessary changes are made. As Underhill (1987) states authenticity is a very important feature of a speaking task. Thus, the tasks are selected among real-world news reports. They read the news and retell it. After students convey the information they receive, they state their opinions about the story.

4.3 Data Collection Procedure

This study is an 8-week experimental study based on classroom research carried out in ELT preparatory classes. It was hypothesized that learners who underwent the dynamic assessment and who were mediated by the examiner would improve their accuracy while performing their oral skills.

The statistical findings of both the pre- and post- non-dynamic assessment and the pre- and post- dynamic assessments applied to the groups were evaluated by Mann-Whitney-U Test and Wilcoxon Sign Test.

As mentioned before, this study follows Lantolf and Poehner's (2004) reasoning that DA can enhance learner abilities through Vygotsky's notion of ZPD, in which mediator and learner collaborate to perform the assessment task. This collaboration shed light onto the extent of learners' understanding and control over linguistic forms, and also helped the mediator to identify the problems which led to learners' poor performance. Hence, the methodology design of this study was adapted from Poehner's (2005) study carried out among the learners of French in the United States.

Participants from both control and experimental groups underwent a pre- Non-Dynamic Assessment (NDA) and a pre- Dynamic Assessment (DA) in which they read short English news stories about recent events and then narrated the sequence of events in English. The results of these assessments were used to structure the enrichment program because they provided insights into the kinds of problems students

encountered while carrying out tasks and into the amount of collaboration with the mediator they required in order to overcome these problems. Following the enrichment, the initial assessments (NDA and DA) were repeated. Furthermore, a "transfer assessment" was conducted to understand the extent to which participants could extend their learning beyond the actual assessment context.

4.3.1 Pre- and Post- Tests

In both pre-/post- non-dynamic and pre-/post- dynamic assessments RST technique (Retelling Speaking Test) was used. 'Retelling' is generally considered to be a powerful way to test oral proficiency. In this study, it has been used to test accuracy.

The NDA and DA tasks consisted of narratives based on news stories taken from authentic sources. In the DA sessions and transfer assessment, where mediation was provided, students were notified that the examiner would intervene at various points to ask questions, offer suggestions, and provide help when necessary, provide a correction, or make general comments. Furthermore, the learner was free to request help when needed. Therefore, the assessments were evaluated according to the kinds and numbers of errors that characterized the assessments before and after the enrichment program. The mediation itself was based on principles of the interactionist DA. That is, the mediation emerged out of the cooperative dialoguing between the mediator and the learners.

4.3.2 Enrichment Program

Following the initial NDA and DA sessions, an enrichment program was implemented with the experimental group. This program was inspired by *Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment*, and it was used to remediate those areas that were in need of attention. These problem areas were found through initial assessments (pre- NDA and pre- DA). The pre- NDA identified problems in learners' performances, but the pre- NDA was not sufficient to identify the precise source of problems, and the pre DA session indicated the potential ways of helping learners overcome them.

During the enrichment program, students had the opportunity to see real life contexts, to use some specific grammar structures, to correct their mispronunciation, to gain fluency, to extend their vocabulary, and to carry out tasks such as role-play. The following schedule was implemented in enrichment/treatment program:

*1st week: A presentation for students that described the difficulty in oral production was held, and people from different nations who speak English as a foreign language were chosen to demonstrate the common errors that many learners make. In the same week, students watched the film 'License to Wed', and then were asked to narrate some important scenes. They were also asked to discuss the dilemma the

characters were in using the conditionals and appropriate structures. One of the tasks carried out after watching the film was to act out some of the scenes, adapting them to their own life.

*2nd week: Students read the news 'Killer Virus', and narrated the events in the news. They answered some discussion questions, and then carried out a group task in which they acted out as if they had been in a reality show.

*3rd week: Students watched the film 'Crash', and were asked to narrate some important scenes. They were also asked to discuss the dilemma the characters were in using the conditionals and appropriate structures.

It is important to note that, learners in the control group did not undergo the enrichment program, but participated in the NDAs and DAs that preceded and followed the program. They underwent the NDAs and DAs at the beginning and end of the enrichment program while the other students in the experimental group participated in all sessions, including the follow-up transfer assessment.

4.3.3 Transfer Assessment

The transfer task was designed to determine how well the enrichment learners could extend, or transfer the abilities they had developed through their interaction with the mediator to new contexts. A transfer task was carried out after the second DA assessment. The transfer task involved news, which students narrated pretending to be reporters.

In summary, there were a total of five assessment sessions for the enrichment learners and four for the non-enrichment learners. All participants underwent a non-dynamic and a dynamic assessment at the beginning and at the end of the enrichment program. In addition to that, the enrichment learners completed a transfer assessment (TA).

4.3.4 Student Evaluation Form

At the end of the whole assessment process, the experimental group was given a student evaluation form- SEF. This form was used to gather data through a number of questions. These questions were related to the difficulty level of the stories, the participants' opinions regarding the stories and the assessment procedures and how these contributed to their oral skills and how these helped them build self-esteem in the whole procedure and so on. The subjects were requested to write their own opinions, comments and suggestions.

4.4 Data Analysis

In the present study, each assessment session was audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Following Muranoi (2000) scoring rubric, learners' production of narrative verb tenses were scored for the correct use in obligatory contexts. This score then became the numerator of a ratio whose denominator was the sum of the number of obligatory contexts. The researchers determined the obligatory contexts and the finite verb phrases in collaboration with two experts in the field. Also, two experts were asked to code the correct usage of finite verb phrases and the types of mediation were noted. In this process, the researchers and two experts coded the total numbers of verbs formed and used appropriately, cases of learners self-correcting and whether they were accurate or not.

The recordings were also coded for the different kinds of moves made by the examiner/mediator and the learners during the dynamic and transfer assessment sessions. After coding, the number of each type of move that is used for each session was noted. In this way, the performances are analyzed at three levels: task completion including errors and struggles, the amount and quality of mediation used to help the learners complete the task, and the moves during learner and mediator interaction in dynamic and transfer assessment sessions.

To demonstrate the moves between the mediator and the student during their interaction, an excerpt is provided in the Appendix. Learners' oral performances were decoded using Schegloff's (1986) transcript conventions.

5. Results and Discussion

It was assumed in this study that the experimental group would display greater development over time because they received more instruction that was tuned in to their ZPD. If the two groups showed the same kinds of changes, it would indicate that the pre DA was enough for learners' improvement and the enrichment program was not essential or the learners' improvement was not the result of their work with the mediator, but might stem from their own ongoing curriculum.

First, the control and the experimental group learners' overall pre-test scores (both NDA and DA) are compared by Mann Whitney U test, a statistical analysis program, to see if their speaking performances are statistically equal. Then students' overall post- test scores (NDA and DA) are compared to see if there is a change in the performance of the experimental group.

The following tables show the statistical results of the pre- non-dynamic assessment and pre- dynamic assessment. The students' achievement in both of the groups is compared and evaluated statistically in terms of the first research question.

Table 2: The overall success of the experimental group as opposed to that of the control group according to the statistical results obtained from the pre- non-dynamic Assessment (NDA) and Mann Whitney U Test Scores

Group							Mann-Whitney U		
	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	P
Experimental Group	18	3,8	4,0	2,0	5,0	1,1	20,2	132	0,322
Control Group	18	3,4	3,0	1,0	5,0	1,1	16,8		

*(p>0,05)

The mean scores show the difference between the expected correct answers and the students' correct use of verb phrases. As Table 2 reveals, both the control and the experimental groups demonstrate statistically similar performances during the first Non-dynamic assessment and no statistically significant difference between the students' scores can be found. Therefore, it can be claimed that both of the groups are equal according to the pre- non-dynamic assessment results. It appears that both groups used finite verb phrases during their oral performances at the starting point of the study equally appropriately.

Table 3: The overall success of the experimental group as opposed to that of the control group according to the statistical results obtained from the pre- DA and Mann Whitney U Test Scores

Group							Mann-Whitney U		
	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	P
Experimental Group	18	2,1	2,0	1,0	4,0	1,0	15,8	112,5	0,101
Control Group	18	2,7	3,0	1,0	5,0	1,1	21,3		

As stated above, the mean score shows the difference between the expected correct answers and students' correct use of verb phrases. As Table 3 depicts, both the control and the experimental groups demonstrate statistically similar performances during the first dynamic assessment, in which there is flexible interaction between the mediator and the student. It can be claimed that there is not a significant difference in the oral performances of both groups, and they seem to benefit from mediation at similar levels.

In other words, it appears that their appropriate use of finite verb phrases during their oral performances is at similar levels according to the pre- dynamic assessment results. The following chart shows the mean scores which represent the difference between the expected correct answers and the students' correct answers. There is a negative correlation between the groups' success and their high mean scores. In other words, the lower the mean scores are, the closer the group's answers are to the number of expected correct answers.
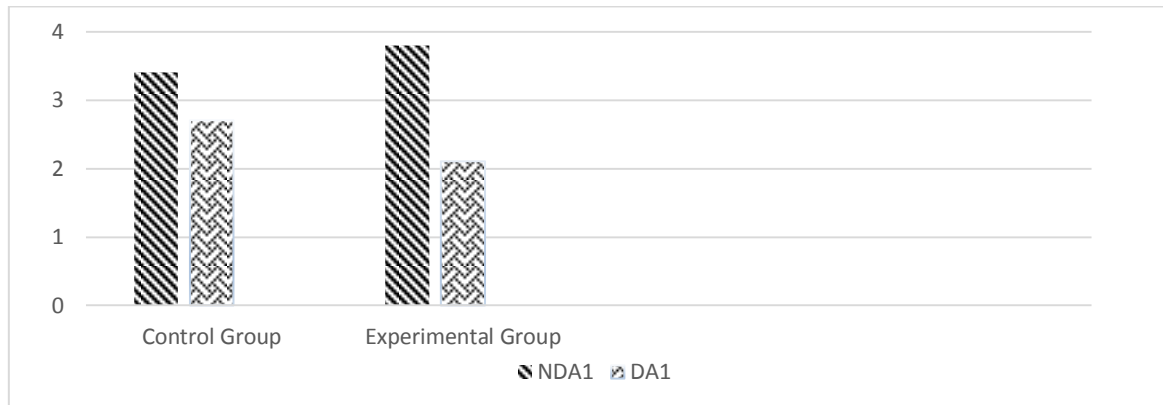

Chart 1: The pre- non-dynamic and the pre- dynamic Assessment mean scores of the control and the experimental groups

The first research question asks whether there is a significant difference in the results of pre- non-dynamic and dynamic assessment applications in both experimental and control groups. Tables 2, 3 and Chart 1 above reveal that the two groups perform similarly at the starting point of the study.

The following tables show the statistical results of the post- non-dynamic assessment and the post- dynamic assessment. The students' achievements in both groups are compared and evaluated statistically in terms of the second research question provided at the beginning of the study.

Table 4: The overall success of the experimental group as opposed to that of the control group according to the statistical results obtained from the post- non dynamic assessment and Mann Whitney U Test Scores

Group							Mann-Whitney U		
	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	P
Experimental Group	18	2,2	2,0	1,0	4,0	0,9	16,6	127,5	0,256
Control Group	18	2,7	2,5	1,0	5,0	1,2	20,4		

* (p>0,05)

As revealed by the data analysis, at post- NDA stage learners of both groups performed better than they did at pre- NDA stage. It is seen at Table 4 that the experimental group learners performed slightly better than the control group learners indicated by the fact that the difference between students' correct items and expected correct answers is 2,2 in the experimental group whereas the difference is 2,7 in the control group. However, since the value of 'p' is 0,25 (much higher than 0,05), there is not a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The slight difference may stem from the fact that learners in the experimental group might have performed better as they have undergone the Enrichment Program (EP) before the post- non dynamic and the post- dynamic assessment. Nevertheless, this insignificant difference in the post- non- dynamic assessment is an expected result because in this process, learners were not mediated, and the assessment did not involve flexible interaction between the examiner and the examinees.

The following table shows the analysis of the data gathered from the post dynamic assessment applied after the Enrichment Program. The evaluation and discussion of the results follow.

Table 5: The overall success of the experimental group as opposed to that of the control group according to the statistical results obtained from the post- dynamic assessment and Mann Whitney U Test scores

Group							Mann-Whitney U		
	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	P
Experimental Group	18	0,7	0,0	0,0	3,0	1,1	12,3	50	0,0002
Control Group	18	2,2	2,0	1,0	4,0	0,9	24,7		

*p<0,05

The table above depicts that the experimental group learners' scores are close to perfect when compared to the control group learners. It is stated before that there is a negative correlation between the mean scores and the learners' performance. As the mean score is 0,7 in the experimental group, it shows that they outperformed the control group, which has a mean score of 2,2. However, it is worth mentioning that the control group learners also improved compared to their pre- dynamic assessment results.

The outcome is expected as there is flexible interaction between the examiner and the examinees and an appropriate mediation type is offered to the learners during the dynamic assessment stage. As the result of data analysis shows, the performance of

the learners' oral narration in the experimental group significantly improved in the post-dynamic assessment. Moreover, the effect of the enrichment program is mostly reflected in the superior performance of the experimental group. One would expect that the performance of the learners at the dynamic assessment stage would naturally be high due to the offered mediation. However, one should take into account that although both groups took the same type of tests, the experimental group improved more. This proves that studies within the enrichment program have been fruitful for the experimental group learners.

The third research question asks to what extent the enrichment program can foster students' oral performances. The analysis and the discussion of the findings in terms of the third research question are given below. The table below shows the independent performance of both the experimental group and the control group before and after treatment called 'Enrichment Program'.

Table 6: The statistical results obtained from independent performance of both the experimental and the control groups before and after the enrichment program and Mann Whitney U Test scores

| | Group | | | | | | | Mann-Whitney U | | |
		N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	P
Difference Pre NDA-Post NDA	Experimental Group	18	1,611	1,000	0,000	4,000	0,979	22,5	90	0,016
	Control Group	18	0,722	1,000	-2,000	3,000	1,127	14,5		

*p<0,05

Comparing learners' performances in the two NDA sessions yield some interesting findings. One important sign of improvement in the experimental group over time is the mean score. The difference between the pre- NDA and the post- NDA mean scores is 1,611, which means the experimental group learners' appropriate use of verbs is more successful in the post- NDA session. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in terms of the learners' independent performances. The control group learners also achieve more progress in the post- NDA session compared to the pre-, though they are much behind the experimental group.

The chart below also shows the comparison of mean scores which reflect the improvement in the pre- non-dynamic session and the post- non-dynamic session.
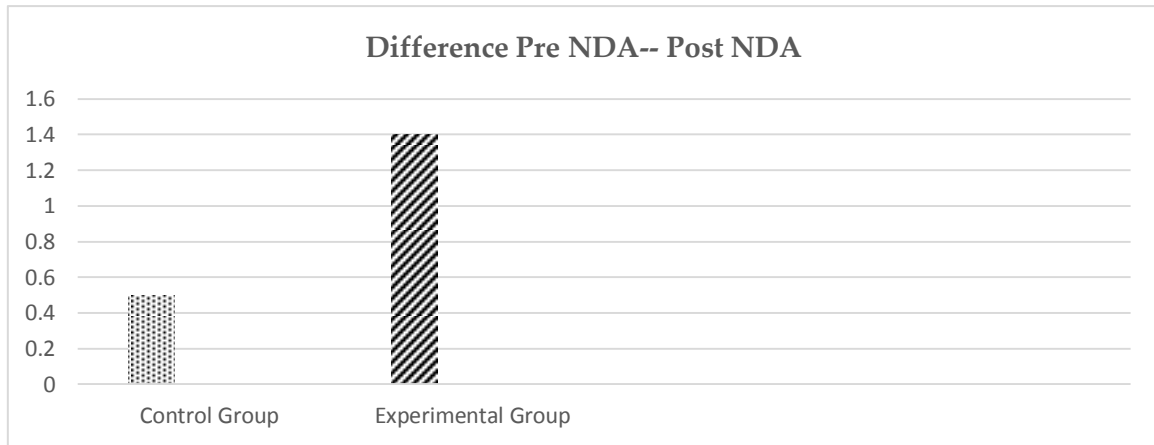
Chart 2: The difference between the experimental and the control group in terms of the mean scores obtained from the non-dynamic assessments applied before and after the enrichment program

The chart above indicates the difference between the mean scores of the pre- non dynamic assessment and the post- non-dynamic assessment. It is clearly seen that, there is more improvement in the appropriate use of verb tenses in the independent performance of the experimental group learners. The findings mentioned above are expected by the researcher. It was hypothesized that the experimental group learners, as they were offered mediation by the examiner during the DA sessions as well as the enrichment program, would show more progress in their oral performances. It was also hypothesized that the control group learners, who only received mediation during the dynamic assessments, would make more modest gains. This verifies Poehner's (2005) view that a single DA may not lead to any permanent developmental changes (p. 207).

The table below shows the statistical results of the dynamic assessment performances of both the experimental group and the control group before and after the treatment called the 'enrichment program'.

Table 7: The statistical results obtained from the dynamic assessments of the experimental group and the control group before and after the enrichment program and Mann Whitney U Test scores

	Group							Mann-Whitney U	
		N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	P
Difference Pre-DA— Post- DA	Experimental Group	18	1,389	1,000	0,000	3,000	0,850	23,75	67,5	0,001
	Control Group	18	0,500	05000	0,000	1,000	0,514	13,25		

*p<0,05

As the mean scores in Table 7 reveal, there is considerable improvement in the oral performances of the experimental group learners. The difference between the mean scores of the pre- and the post- dynamic assessment stages is 1,389. As for the control group, the corresponding improvement is comparatively little (0,500). Hence, it can be concluded that the difference between the improvement levels in the two groups is statistically significant. More precisely, it depicts that the experimental group learners have benefited from the collaborative dialogues during the dynamic assessment process. Similarly, the mediated learning experience during the enrichment program has contributed to the success of the experimental group learners.

Chart 3 also indicates the difference between the performances of the two groups during the dynamic assessment process before and after the enrichment program:
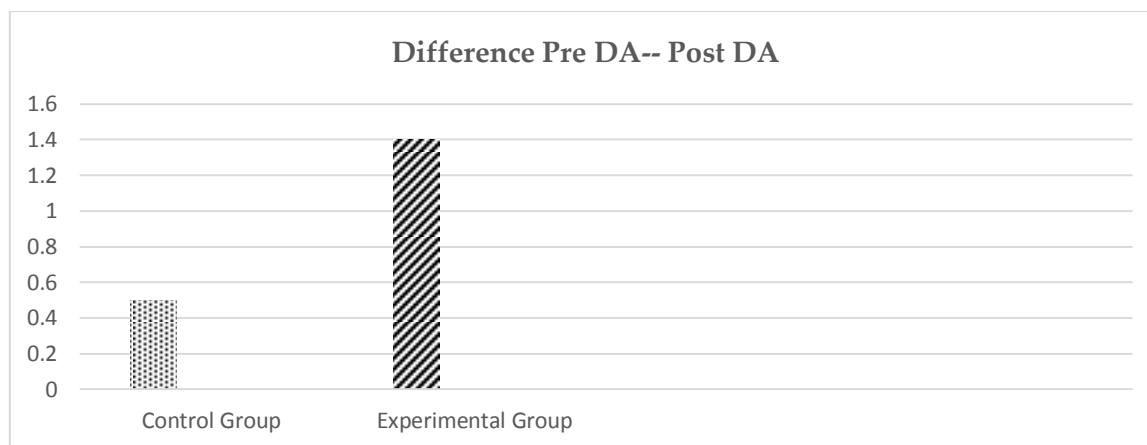

Chart 3: The difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of the mean scores obtained from dynamic assessments applied before and after the enrichment program

Chart 3 shows the differences between the mean scores of the pre- dynamic assessment and the post- dynamic assessment performances of the two groups. The columns represent the difference between the learners' earlier DA performances and later DA performances. Therefore, the high column indicates a bigger difference, which shows a marked improvement. As opposed to the improvement made by the groups in the pre- DA performances, both groups have achieved better results in the post- DA stage. Based on the results, it can be deduced that the control group, with the ongoing syllabus and with the two dynamic assessment procedures, in which they are provided mediation, perform slightly better at the post- DA session than at the pre- DA session. On the other hand, the experimental group has demonstrated a considerable success in their DA session applied after enrichment program.

To round up, the results verify the effectiveness of the enrichment procedure to compensate for the learning difficulties which mediated interactions in dynamic assessment process revealed and to support learners' cognitive ability. Through

enrichment program the learners of the experimental group have had more opportunities to respond to assistance, which is an indispensable feature in DA for the mediator to see the development in the learners' cognitive ability (Vygotsky, 1998, p.200).

The forth research question asks to what extent interactions in the DA sessions can actually provide insight into students' abilities and promote development. During the dynamic assessment sessions, it is well seen that two learners who make the same mistakes do not have the same level of linguistic ability. One learner, for example, cannot use the appropriate verb tense in a conditional sentence (Type 3), and once she is mediated, she is able to use it in an accurate way. Another student, on the other hand, deliberately avoids using conditional clauses (Type 3), and uses Type 2 when she is guided. Then it is revealed that the learner is not aware of the two different structures. These two learners cannot be said to have the same level of linguistic ability in this respect. Their responsiveness to mediation at different levels indicates the distance they need to cover to perform well independently.

The control group learners' improving performance is evidence that the assessments themselves can bring about development. They did not take part in the enrichment program, and therefore, they were not offered mediation during the three weeks about their performances. They only followed the ongoing syllabus. The change in the group's performance in the post- dynamic assessment may be the result of their interactions with the mediator during the pre- dynamic assessment. Also, it is observed that not having a rule-based view of tenses, learners used the narrative verb tenses in a more natural way in the interactions. In other words, even control group learners have started to develop better control of the use of narrative tenses. As a result, DA not only helped the examiner to determine the level of the learners' already existing competence but also it helped the students to further develop their oral narration skills.

The fifth research question seeks an answer to the following question; 'Is there a significant difference between the learners in terms of the mediation they need during the pre- and the post- dynamic assessment sessions?'

Tables 8 and 9 show the change in the moves made by the mediator to help learners:

Table 8: Mediational Moves and Learner Reciprocity of the Experimental Group during the Pre- Dynamic Assessment

Mediation Typology	St 1	St 2	St 3	St 4	St 5	St 6	St 7	St 8	St 9	St 10	St 11	St 12	St 13	St 14	St 15	St 16	St 17	St 18
Helping Move narration Long	■		■	■		■		■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	
Accepting Response	■																	
Request for Repetition				■		■			■	■		■	■	■	■	■		■
Request for Verification									■									■
Reminder of Directions					■													
Request for Re-narration																		
Identifying Specific Site of Error	■	■		■	■	■	■	■				■		■				
Specifying Error	■													■				
Meta-linguistic Clues										■		■						■
Translation			■															
Providing Example or Illustration	■																	
Offering a Choice									■									
Providing Correct Response		■		■	■	■	■	■	■				■		■			
Providing Explanation						■					■	■						
Learner Reciprocity Typology																		
Unresponsive						■	■	■										
Repeats Mediator	■			■				■										
Responds Incorrectly					■									■				
Requests additional assistance											■							
Incorporates feedback	■	■				■			■	■		■		■	■	■		■
Overcomes problem	■	■		■		■		■	■	■		■		■	■	■		■
Offers explanation																		
Uses Mediator as a resource	■		■	■	■	■	■	■					■			■		
Rejects Mediator's assistance																		

Table 9: Mediational Moves and Learner Reciprocity of the Experimental Group during the Post- Dynamic Assessment

Mediation Typology	St 1	St 2	St 3	St 4	St 5	St 6	St 7	St 8	St 9	St 10	St 11	St 12	St 13	St 14	St 15	St 16	St 17	St 18
Helping Move narration Long	■	■			■		■			■■			■					■
Accepting Response																		
Request for Repetition							■	■					■■	■				■
Request for Verification																		
Reminder of Directions																		
Request for Re-narration		■																
Identifying Specific Site of Error	■							■						■				
Specifying Error																		
Meta-linguistic Clues																		
Translation			■															
Providing Example or Illustration														■				
Offering a Choice																		
Providing Correct Response					■								■					
Providing Explanation																		
Learner Reciprocity Typology																		
Unresponsive																		
Repeats Mediator																		
Responds Incorrectly																		
Requests additional assistance			■															
Incorporates feedback	■							■										
Overcomes problem	■			■				■					■					■
Offers explanation																		
Uses Mediator as a resource																		
Rejects Mediator's assistance																		

As the two tables depict, the experimental group learners needed less mediation during the post- dynamic assessment, and the mediation provided was comparatively less explicit. For instance, in the pre- dynamic assessment, the mediator *provided the correct response* for students 2,4,5,6,7,9,13,16. On the other hand, in the post- dynamic assessment session, this form of explicit mediation was not required for the same learners.

On the whole, the number of mediational and reciprocating moves and their quality really differed. The most striking cases were the assessment of students 6 and 9. In the pre- dynamic assessment session, they needed both implicit and explicit mediation forms such as *providing correct response, providing explanation, identifying site of*

error, *request for repetition*. It is also important to note that they participated in the reciprocating at a higher level during the post- dynamic assessment session such as *incorporating feedback* or *overcoming a problem* although student 6 stayed *unresponsive* once in the pre- dynamic session. It is very striking that students 6 and 9 did not need any form of mediation during the post- dynamic session, which means that they had highly benefited from the enrichment program and the pre- dynamic assessment session. It is also clear that students 6,9,15,16,17 seem to have taken control over their performance. The total number of moves made by student 13 during the DA sessions did not decrease much.

It is noteworthy that the quality of the moves has changed. Some learners have stayed *unresponsive* in the reciprocating moves in the pre- dynamic session while none of them is *unresponsive* in the post- session. Similarly, a few learners needed *metalinguistic* clues in the pre- DA session; however, they did not require such a linguistic explanation in the post- session.

Tables 10 and 11 show the statistical results obtained from the pre- and the post- non-dynamic and dynamic assessment sessions.

Table 10: Statistical results obtained from the pre- & the post- non-dynamic and the pre- & the post- dynamic assessments of the control group demonstrating the difference in their overall performances by Wilcoxon Sign Test

	Control Group						Wilcoxon Sign Test	
	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	z	p
Pre DA	18	2,7	3,0	1,0	5,0	1,1	-3	0,027
Post DA	18	2,2	2,0	1,0	4,0	0,9		
Pre NDA	18	3,4	3,0	1,0	5,0	1,1	-2,22	0,025
Post NDA	18	2,7	2,5	1,0	5,0	1,2		

*p<0,05

As is seen from Table 10, the control group's performance in the post- NDA has improved compared to their performance in the pre- NDA. In the same way, the control group's performance in the post- DA has improved compared to the pre- DA. It is displayed in the table that the difference between the pre- NDA and the post- NDA is 0,027; similarly, the difference between pre- DA and post- DA is 0,025. The differences between the results regarding the two sessions are statistically significant as the 'p' value is less than 0,05 for each session.

Table 11: Statistical results obtained from the pre- & the post- non-dynamic and the pre- & the post- dynamic assessments of the experimental group demonstrating the difference in their overall performances by Wilcoxon Sign Test

	Experimental Group						Wilcoxon Sign Test	
	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	z	p
Pre DA	18	2,1	2,0	1,0	4,0	1,0	-3,61	0,0003
Post DA	18	0,7	0,0	0,0	3,0	1,1		
Pre NDA	18	3,8	4,0	2,0	5,0	1,1	-3,695	0,000
Post NDA	18	2,2	2,0	1,0	4,0	0,9		

*p<0,05

As it is clearly seen in Table 11, the difference is considerably more significant in favor of the experimental group. In fact, both groups have achieved better performances in the post- non-dynamic and the post- dynamic assessments when compared to their pre- non-dynamic and pre- dynamic assessments while the experimental group has displayed a dramatic improvement in the post- dynamic session compared to the pre-.

Research question 6 asks whether there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in terms of their development at the end of the whole assessment process. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the control group, with the help of mediation during the DA (pre- and post-) sessions, performed better, but not as brightly as the experimental group. On the other hand, the experimental group has demonstrated a very dramatic improvement in their post dynamic assessment performances after being exposed to the enrichment program in addition to their own regular syllabus.

Research question 7 asks whether learners are able to maintain their performance in different assessment contexts. To see this, a transfer assessment was implemented with the experimental group after the enrichment program. The aim of this type of assessment in this study is to assess to what extent learners can maintain their increased performance and transfer their abilities to a more complex task.

Table 12: The statistical results obtained from the transfer assessment of the experimental group and the comparison of results to the post- dynamic assessment procedure

	N	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Sd	Z	p
Transfer Test	18	0,33	0	0	3	0,77		
Post-DA	18	0,67	0	0	3	1,08	-1,561	0,119

*p>0,05

As Table 12 indicates, there is not a significant difference in learners' control over their performance in the post- dynamic assessment session compared to the transfer

assessment ('p' value is 0,119). One can draw the conclusion that the experimental group learners are able to maintain their success in the long term.

Table 13 compares the transfer assessment results with those of the pre- non dynamic session. The goal here is to see the difference between the first assessment procedure without intervention and the last assessment procedure with intervention

Table 13: The statistical results obtained from the transfer assessment of the experimental group and the comparison of results to the post- dynamic assessment procedure

	N	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Sd	Z	p
Transfer Test	18	0,33	0	0	3	0,77		
Pre-NDA	18	3,78	4	2	5	1,06	-3,752	0,0001

*p<0,05

The results demonstrate that there is a significant difference in the transfer assessment compared to the pre- non-dynamic assessment ('p' value is 0,0001). The significance of this comparison is that although the learners had the opportunity to be mediated, they did not need mediational moves so frequently. Likewise, in the pre non- dynamic session, learners did not have flexible interaction with the examiner. Therefore, table 13 shows the difference between learners' performance at the outset of the study and the performance in the final stage of the study.

Table 14: Mediational moves and learner reciprocity of the experimental group during transfer assessment

Mediation Typology	St1	St 2	St 3	St 4	St 5	St 6	St 7	St 8	St 9	St 10	St 11	St 12	St 13	St 14	St 15	St 16	St 17	St 18
Helping Move narration Long		■				■		■		■					■			
Accepting Response																		
Request for Repetition		■																
Request for Verification			■				■											
Reminder of Directions																		
Request for Re-narration																		
Identifying Specific Site of Error		■						■										
Specifying Error																		
Meta-linguistic Clues																		
Translation																		
Providing Example or Illustration																		
Offering a Choice																		
Providing Correct Response			■															
Providing Explanation																		
Learner Reciprocity Typology																		
Unresponsive																		
Repeats Mediator																		
Responds Incorrectly																		
Requests additional assistance										■					■			
Incorporates feedback																		
Overcomes problem																		
Offers explanation																		
Uses Mediator as a resource																		
Rejects Mediator's assistance																		

Most of the learners did not need assistance from the mediator, which meant that they could perform well independently. It can be concluded that for the experimental group learners, control over the use of narrative tenses shifted from their Zone of Proximal Development to their Zone of Actual Development, which indicated that they no longer needed additional support from the mediator on the target linguistic feature. However, it should be noted that there were still few learners who had difficulty in performing the task and they still relied on the mediator's assistance. To sum up, the statistical results in Table 14 indicate that experimental group learners were successful in maintaining their linguistic competence in the long term.

As for the qualitative measure, firstly, the interpretation of learners' mediated performances was taken into consideration. Secondly, the answers gained from the open ended question in the student evaluation form.

Learners were asked whether they thought they benefited from the whole assessment procedure. The experimental group thought they had benefited from the whole assessment procedure, and all of them thought they felt enthusiastic to speak in other courses. This finding proves the ripple effect of the dynamic assessment procedures on the other courses. Most of them stated that they gained self-confidence when they realized the progress in their language abilities. This response verifies the assumption which is based on the view that integrating instruction and assessment and providing mediation will enhance learners' motivation in speaking and will make learners gain self-confidence when they see their abilities beyond their actual development level. Learners also declared that they felt comfortable in the other types of speaking tests carried out at school.

Students were asked to write their suggestions to improve the speaking tests conducted at the school of foreign languages. All of them suggested taking exams which assessed their progress. They stated that it was nearly impossible to show their language abilities performing a 5- minute speaking task. They suggested interacting with the examiner as they had done in DA sessions. They also stated that they had had dialogues with the examiners before in different tests, but the examiners' aim in those tests was to help the learners' speech move along. For this reason, they only asked follow up questions or gave reactions in a way that they were listening to the examinee. On the other hand, the subjects in this study were not only examinees, they are also learners. They mentioned that they were aware of the aim of the DA sessions, and understood the examiner's attempts to mediate them and give feedback to them. They also stated that this type of assessment approach would decrease the test anxiety of some learners.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Non-dynamic/Static assessment (NDA) is concerned with the test instruments and with the scores as they show the amount of knowledge gained as a result of instruction. Dynamic assessment (DA), on the other hand, focuses on promoting change in the learners. Furthermore, it recognizes that mediation, which is actually a form of instruction, is a necessary feature of genuine assessment. To sum up, NDA foregrounds the test instrument whereas DA foregrounds individuals (Poehner & Lantolf, 2003, p.22).

The purpose of the study was to explore the integration of DA into classroom practices such as speaking skills. The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that transforming linguistic competence into performance accurately during oral narrations was a challenging activity for ELT learners who had not taken any speaking tests at

high school during their preparation for the university entrance exam. However, the flexible interaction in the DA sessions and different forms of mediation used in the DA sessions led to learners' progress in time. To conclude, both the statistical results and the opinions of the subjects correspond in terms of the effectiveness of the whole assessment procedure, which proves the hypothesis of the study. One of the central findings of this study is that during the post-DA session learners benefited from the flexible interaction. Some learners did not require additional support from the mediator. This finding justifies the possibility of transformation of the ZPD to Zone of Actual Development. Therefore, DA deserves attention from language teachers. They should make use of underlying principle that rather than test scores, the individual's progress is important.

Providing mediation is generally considered as cheating among teachers. Therefore, in some cases, mediation is not offered or very explicit mediation is offered. This explicit mediation type forms the teacher's or the examiner's perception about the learner, and the teacher generally underscores learner's mediated performance. Instead, language teachers should be aware of the mediation forms and they should be able to discriminate whether the learners require implicit or explicit mediation. Besides, they should be able to diagnose the source of poor performance during the assessment procedure making use of the mediation forms.

Integrating a treatment program into the regular course program would be beneficial and it would foster learners' development. They can use DA as a diagnostic tool when identifying the source of problems experienced by learners during the assessment procedure. It may be helpful for the learners to build confidence in the teacher and the teaching-learning environment and it may reduce anxiety in the classroom tests.

As for the administrators, with this study, it is seen that it is possible to integrate the assessment and the instruction using the mediation techniques. The administrators may decide to train the teachers working in their institutions to use the mediation types effectively in the classroom within a teacher training program, and thus help teachers realize that assessment and teaching are not two distinct things, but they can be integrated in one single process.

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Appendix

An excerpt from student's narration in pre-dynamic assessment session.

S: They didn't do it..

T: Who didn't do what?

S: The employer of the Auckland Company. Maybe......... they should warn her.......
because of.......... she use capital letters, red and bold.

T: OK, shortly can you summarize the story?

St: ......New Zealand bosses saw red words after one employee of the Auckland
company writes her colleagues ((He mispronounces the word 'colleague'.))

T: her.....?

St: Her name is Miss Walker, Miss Nicky Walker.

T: What did you say, her ....col....

St: Colleagues ((he mispronounces again.))

T: colleagues. (provides the correct response)

St: And .... she usually uses these words in emails.

T: You are talking an event in the past.

St: she used in e-mails........to her colleagues. She ...... this is very confrontational
and disharmony in company in writing and in e-mails. Because of the situation, the
employee of the Auckland Company dismissed .... Miss Walker.

T: The employee↑, or......?

St: The employer (overcomes a problem) of the Auckland company dismissed her
from the company and they had to pay her ...... 11.500 $ but she wasn't happy with
this situation.

T: Why not? ......Did she have any problems?

St: Yes, she [thought that...]

T: [What kind of problems did she have?]

....

St: hhh.hhh... she thinks that employees aren't prepared to fight his boss because of financial and mental stress involved. Because of this, she wasn't happy. And she tried to fight them and she is useful to...she wanted to be useful to her colleagues...

T: what should the employers have done?

St: The employer should do-

T: The employer... ..past

St: Maybe they did... They should warned-

T: They should...?

St: they should have warned... or reduced her salary. Maybe they ..... they .....yetki ?↑ (requests the English word)

T: Authority ↑ [..........]

St: [..........]

T: Maybe they took her authority and what she wanted....................