

International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



The Effect of Dynamic Assessment on Elementary EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension through Mediation Strategies

[PP: 29-45]

Ali Derakhshan

Department of English Language and Literature
Golestan University, Gorgan, **Iran**

Farzaneh Shakki

Department of English Language Teaching, Shahrood Science and Research Branch
Islamic Azad University, Shahrood, **Iran**

ABSTRACT

The present study concentrated on the theoretical and methodological issues at the intersection of second language acquisition, language pedagogy and socio-cultural theory (SCT) which were proposed by Vygotsky (1978). One of the offsprings of SCT is dynamic assessment (DA) emanating from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory which has a long history in applied linguistics but has been the hot topic of EFL studies recently. Dynamic assessment promotes language development; it assumes that mental activities are mediated by psychological instruments. Dynamic assessment has received considerable attention from researchers over the last three decades culminating in many studies which have been conducted on the effect of DA on language skills, but a few studies have focused on the effect of dynamic assessment on listening comprehension, and the unclear results have prompted the researchers to capitalize upon the impact of dynamic assessment on the listening comprehension. Therefore, the present study aimed to expand traditional understanding of listening assessment in foreign language contexts and pertain dynamic assessment to the development of learners' listening ability. To do so, thirty six elementary Iranian students studying English as a foreign language ranging in age from 12 to 17 took part in the present study. They were selected among the seventy students who participated in Oxford Quick Placement Test who were then divided into one dynamic group, one non-dynamic group, and one control group. The analysis of one-way ANOVA and Tukey test demonstrated that the dynamic group outperformed both non-dynamic and control groups, but the non-dynamic group did not have a better performance than the control group. Finally, according to the findings, language teachers are recommended to use the mediational strategies and also care about the learner's potential. Furthermore, teachers are suggested to apply more DA approaches in their classes in a more systematic way rather than the traditional kind of testing which concentrates only on the learning product.

Keywords: Dynamic Assessment, Socio-cultural Theory, Mediation, Mediation Strategies, Listening Comprehension

ARTICLE INFO | The paper received on: **19/02/2016** Reviewed on: **10/04/2016** Accepted after revisions on: **25/04/2016**

Suggested citation:

Derakhshan, A. & Shakki, F. (2016). The Effect of Dynamic Assessment on Elementary EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension through Mediation Strategies. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*. 4(2), 29-45. Retrieved From <http://www.eltjournal.org>

1. Introduction

Listening is the least explicit of the four

language skills, making it the most difficult skill to learn (Vandergrift, 1997). Listening



is of great importance in both understanding a sentence and the ability to speak. In fact, if learners prepare correct answers to the questions, learners' listening comprehension ability seems to be well, and it is a tendency toward measuring the listening product not the process.

There has been a long history of standardized testing as the most important and applicable way to evaluate the learners' language proficiency for different aims of diagnostic, placement, and selection. Dynamic assessment (DA) offering an assessment which is rooted in cognitive psychology has presented ideas of interaction and mediation as vital elements of assessment and as verified techniques to search more deeply into the learners' capabilities (Lidz & Gindis, 2003).

DA is a recently-developed method of evaluation which evokes conventional views on evaluation and pedagogy by discussing that they should be mixed into a solo performance in which different forms of reinforcement are made to discover the field of learners' capabilities while simultaneously helping their growth (Lidz & Gindis, 2003). DA methods can be taken into account as "an instructional intervention" (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, p. 23).

Therefore, DA plays not only as the traditional role as done by summative assessments, but it can also work as a reflective educational approach. Poehner (2008) discusses that the term "assessment" in DA is qualitatively different from how it is typically comprehended in education and psychology. In the scope of understanding testing as the observation and collecting of people's behaviors for the purpose of inferring underlying capabilities, assessment in the dynamic sense contains transformation of those abilities through

dialogic cooperation between learners and assessor-teachers, or mediators.

But, DA courses are different based on the learners' development so that over time students are engaged in increasingly hard tasks with less mediation. As a result, the difficulty the practitioners of DA are encountered with which is to adapt their methods of supportive intervention and increase the difficulty of the learning tasks to an appropriate level according to the development of the learners' acquisition.

Former styles of traditional assessment measure just the learning product. Here, the only feedback the learners receive is single marks for their performance on a test. As a matter of fact, it is their actual knowledge, and teachers fail to prepare context sensitive feedback necessary for deeper understanding in learning. On the contrary, dynamic assessment (DA) as a process-oriented approach proposed by Vygotsky (1978) concentrates on the process of learning. There are some studies on the effects of dynamic assessment on reading (Ajil deh & Nourdad, 2012; Caffrey, 2006), writing (Isavi, 2012; Tianshun & Lv, 2013), speaking (e.g., Hill & Sabet, 2009) and listening as a product (e.g. Field, 2008; Rost, 2001; Rubin, 1994). However, there seems to be few research studies on the process of listening comprehension (Ableeva, 2010; Alavi, Kaivanpanah, & Shabani, 2011; Emadi, 2015; Hashemi Shahraki, Ketabi, & Barati, 2015; Hidri, 2014; Shabani, 2014).

The recent research studies have mainly focused on different mediational strategies and investigated the advantages and disadvantages of these mediations such as accepting response, structuring the text, replay of a passage, asking the words, identifying a problem area, metalinguistic clues and so on, but the present study aimed

to explore the effect of dynamic assessment using mediational strategies on the listening comprehension ability of learners. The effects of DA based instruction on listening comprehension have been explored less, so this paper was an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature by conducting a study to find out the effect of DA on elementary EFL learners through mediational strategies.

2. Review of the Literature

DA is mainly a diagnostic tool in research developments. The present study was generated by Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical principles and is in line with teaching/ learning framework of the learning process and scaffolding. Lantolf (2009) states that two approaches to DA have been developed: interactionist DA and interventionist DA. Considering both approaches, instruction as mediation and assessment are joined as a single activity with the aim of recognizing learning potential and promoting development. In these two approaches, two general kinds of mediation could be available for the mediator. The arranged hints are scaled from implicit to explicit.

Feuerstein's (2002) model combines assessment and instruction and postulates that they cannot be displayed separately. Interactionist model mentions that human cognitive skills are not fixed, and they can be classified through interventions. Cultural differences are one of the common concerns in this model of assessment. Actually, in this model, the stimulus-response model is changed. It means that the child is interacting with a more competent peer; he or she would help the child in selecting, amplifying, changing, and interpreting the objects with the child through mediations (Naeini & Duvall, 2012).

Interventionist model, on the other hand, is built on the foundation of the number of prompts that is required to extract a desired answer. Students' learning potential is estimated by the number of prompts needed to get the aim. Feuerstein's (2002) model is different from this model because in this model of dynamic assessment mediation is categorized from most implicit to most explicit and culminates in a correct answer (Naeini & Duvall, 2012).

The important point is that DA, as opposed to NDA, does not separate teaching from testing but instead takes them into account as two aspects of the same thing. Moreover, DA is a process which gets the conclusions of a treatment into account. During the intervention, the assessor instructs the examinees how to do better on personal questions or on the whole test. The total mark is obtained through giving tests before and after the treatment and calculating the difference (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002).

Moreover, following Rost (2001), listening in language teaching is a complex process that helps people to understand the spoken language. It is very important for acquiring other skills and is very important to acquire a new language. "Listening is the channel in which we process language in real time- employing pacing, units of encoding and pausing that are unique to spoken language." (Rost, 2001, p. 7).

Considering the process of listening, dynamic assessment on listening has been conducted in an ESL context. Ableeva (2010) investigated the effects of dynamic assessment on improving listening comprehension of intermediate university students of L2 French. In her study, three stages of pretest, enrichment program, and posttest were applied. The pre and posttest stages were conducted in non- dynamic



assessment. The mediator provided mediation in the enrichment program stage. After comparing the results, there was a great progress and development in the learners' listening comprehension ability in dynamic assessment group.

By the same token, Alavi et al. (2011) investigated *group* dynamic assessment as an inventory of mediational strategies for teaching listening. In this study, the researchers investigated the effects of DA based instruction on a group of learners. The results revealed that group dynamic assessment paved the way for collaboration, interaction and could explore a great practice atmosphere among the learners in which penetrates development. Therefore, the present study tends to investigate the effects of dynamic assessment on *individual* learners' listening ability. Regarding the EFL context, Hidri (2014) explored the developing and evaluating a dynamic assessment of listening comprehension. In this study, two approaches to listening comprehension were applied: static and DA approach. In static approach, the listeners listen to audio text and independently answer the questions while in DA approach, mediation and negotiation was involved when responding to listening comprehension tasks and items. To conclude, both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data revealed better understanding of cognitive processes in learning and better development.

Similarly, Shabani (2014) conducted a study to complete the concept of generalizability from a qualitatively different perspective, namely, Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory (SCT). This study, infused by Poehner's (2009) interactionist group dynamic assessment G-DA, and Feuerstein, Rand, and Hoffman (1979) Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) concept, has explained to track the

developmental trajectories of L2 learners' listening comprehension ability within a microgenetic framework in hopes to bring into perspective learners' qualitative changes in their ZPD across a set of different innovative tasks. It was shown that the learners' skill to recognize an unrecognized word of the pretest transcended beyond the posttest task to the TR session, an improvement signaling their progressive trajectories to higher levels of ZPD. On implication side, this study suggested the use of DA as a development-oriented procedure to assess the learners' abilities, a procedure which focused on the learners' emerging abilities in constantly innovative tasks.

Alternatively, Emadi (2015) represented a detailed description of the listening process framework in an interactive EFL listening classroom. The qualitative analysis of DA protocols instructed to the development of the mediational strategies includes different forms of implicit to explicit feedback. DA-based instruction helped the students move forward and to find developmental changes. Finally, according to the findings, language teachers are suggested to use the mediational strategies; moreover, teachers are suggested to apply more DA approaches in their classes in a more systematic way rather than the traditional kind of testing which focuses only on the learning product.

Hashemi Shahraki et al. (2015) conducted a research which is rooted in Vygotskian socio-cultural theory (SCT) in estimating intermediate learners' pragmatic knowledge of conversational implicatures in the context of listening when simultaneously recognizing the mediational strategies. Fifty English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners of two intermediate intact classes at a language institute in Iran were selected to participate

in their research. Both groups went through a multi-assessment procedure in the form of dynamic and non-dynamic pretest-enrichment phase- dynamic and non-dynamic posttest. Only the experimental group had mediational support during the ten-week G-DA procedure. The study employed qualitative and quantitative data analyses. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative data analyses showed that the mediational support proposed resulted in important changes in the listening ability of the learners improving their pragmatic understanding of conversational implicatures. The findings may be revealing in that they support G-DA and its applicability to Second Language (L2) listening comprehension and pragmatics instruction. A thorough review of the related literature on DA shows that few studies have been conducted on listening comprehension in general and on elementary learners, in particular; therefore the present study is an attempt to investigate the effect of dynamic assessment on EFL learner's listening comprehension through mediational strategies.

With this background, the present study aimed to seek the possible answers to the following research question:

Does instruction (dynamic assessment vs. non-dynamic assessment mediational strategies) have any effect on elementary EFL learners' listening comprehension?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Thirty six elementary Iranian students studying English as a foreign language ranging in age from 12 to 17 took part in the present study. They were selected from among the seventy students who participated in Oxford Quick Placement Test (2001). Persian was the first language of all the participants who were selected

from the students of Shahid Moaazezi English Language Institute in Aliabad Katul, Golestan Province, Iran. The criterion for the selection of the participants was their marks in Oxford Quick Placement Test (2001). Based on the guidelines of this test, those who scored 16-30 out of 40 were considered as elementary learners and were selected for the present study. There were 14 males and 22 females who were randomly divided into dynamic, non-dynamic, and control groups. The dynamic group consisted of 12 learners (5 males and 7 females) ranging in age from 12 to 16. The non-dynamic group had 12 learners (5 males and 7 females) ranging in age from 13 to 17, and the control group consisted of 12 learners (4 males and 8 females) ranging in age from 12 to 17.

3.2 Materials

Basic Tactics for Listening (Richards & Trew, 2010) was the textbook which was taught for 8 sessions each of which lasted for one hour for the dynamic and non dynamic groups and for the control group Top Notch Fundamentals B (Saslow & Ascher, 2006) was used to teach reading comprehension.

3.3 Instruments

Considering the differences in participants' language level and to homogenize them, an Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT) which is a time-saving and reliable English language proficiency test, was administered. The participants of the present study were taken only the first part due to their proficiency level. According to the guidelines of the test, the students who got a score between 16 to 23 were elementary, and therefore, they could participate in this research. The pretest and posttest listening comprehension test, adopted from Basic Tactics for Listening book (Richards & Trew, 2010), consisted of 2 sets of 15



questions each of which covered 3 parts. The first part in each set had 6 questions which asked the learners to choose the best picture that would match the picture. The second part of the test also included 6 questions which asked the learners to choose the best answer, and the third part consisted of 3 questions asking the learners to listen to short conversations and answer the posed questions. The questions required the participants to employ different listening strategies such as listening to find specific information as well as the main ideas. The participants were required to answer the questions in 30 minutes. The questions in the pretest and posttest were the same, but the parts were counterbalanced to minimize the practice effect. As to the scoring, each correct answer was considered as 1 point.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

3.4.1 Dynamic Group

In the first experimental group (Dynamic assessment group), Ableeva's (2010) framework was implemented.

The following steps were taken as the procedure for this group:

A. The teacher as a mediator began the class with a warm up to bring the students into the topic.

B. The students listened to the listening track from the beginning to the end with the aim to get familiar with the overall theme and context.

C. The teacher (mediator) replayed, paused portion by portion and asked any individual learner to repeat.

D. While every student tried to repeat and make guesses, the mediator provided feedback according to the student's response.

Figure 1: Typology of mediator's strategies occurred during dynamic assessment of L2 listening comprehension (adopted from Ableeva's, 2010, p. 258)

1. Accepting response
2. Structuring the text
3. Replay of a passage
4. Asking the words
5. Identifying a problem area
6. Metalinguistic clues
7. Offering a choice
8. Translation
9. Providing a correct pattern
10. Providing an explicit explanation

3.4.1.1 Accepting Response

This mediational strategy was used by the teacher to indicate the appropriateness of idea units (IU) recalled by the learner. Generally, the teacher provided this strategy to encourage the learners whenever they recalled or responded correctly. The excerpt below is taken from the first session and focused on date recall of the following segment from listening 1,

Extract 1 (Unit 1 from listening 1 part 2):

A: *When did you get here?*

B: *I arrived on the 4th.*

A: *Will you be here long?*

B: *Until the 13th. Not long enough, really.*

After two times, one of the students recalled the above extract as follows:

...uh...when did you get here?
...uh...he said ... arrived on 4th.....he said
uh...will you be here....uh...on the 13th ...

In Protocol 1, the student appeared to produce an acceptable recall of the segment in question (line 1) following two additional listening that occurred during the mediated portion.

Protocol 1

1. *Student. They are talking about the date of arriving...*
2. *Teacher. That's right. Good.*
3. *Student. I remember him saying on the 4th.*
4. *Teacher. Yeah...on the 4th but we need to know, is it the date that he arrives or the date that he leaves?*

5. Student. Right.

Protocol 1 is a representative of the mediator indicating the correctness of the learner's response. Moreover, the teacher indicated the acceptability of the student's recall twice: she provided encouragement and she stressed the importance of this segment since it included the speaker's point necessary for understanding the whole part. Additionally, Protocol 1 demonstrates the effectiveness of replay as a form of mediation Replay.

3.4.1.2 Structuring the Text

This mediational strategy was usually made right after the independent recall, mainly when the learners produced a poor quality recall. The purpose of the strategy was to appeal to the learners' top-down and bottom up knowledge. Protocol 2 provides an illustration of how this form of mediation functioned.

Unit 6, Listening 1, part 3

Protocol 2

1. Teacher. *So I think that in this text there is a sort of structure... because first she discusses what?*
2. Student. *Job...*
3. Teacher. *... and then?*
4. Student. *And then uh.. she loves travel and flying.*
5. Teacher. *Pilot? ... does she say pilot?...*
6. Student. *I guess she talked about a person who works in a plane. I heard her talking about uniform.*
7. Teacher. *Ok. So it's kind of job and she works in the plane.*
8. Student. *Right...*
9. Teacher. *So as we have teacher and flight attendant. Which one would be ok?*
10. Student. *That's ok. Flight attendant.*
11. Teacher. *This kind of things... so there's a sort of structure.*

Teacher's questions are intended to clarify the student's general understanding. As seen in the example, the student encountered difficulties while structuring the text. As a result, the teacher intervened by offering an overt mediation. The teacher structured the text for the student by reminding her.

3.4.1.3 Replay of the Passage

Generally this mediational strategy included the teacher's invitation to re-listen to a portion of the text, i.e. a passage of a text, a segment from a particular passage or a detail from a segment. It was used in cases when the learners produced poor independent recalls and the teacher had to replay portions of a text in order to facilitate text comprehension.

Extract 2 (from listening 3, part 1)

The speaker said:

...and this weekend the country's most popular movie was The Terror in August. It made \$20 million dollars. It seems Americans want to be really scared!

Protocol 3

1. Teacher. *Ok ... now listen to this*
2. Student. *Uh ...I think he says something abouthe talked about movies In America ... and he said \$20 million dollars Uh ...really scared..*
3. Teacher. *Yeah.... It's something about movie ... he is trying to talk about a movie and its costs.... But you need to listen again ..*

Protocol 3 demonstrates that after the additional replying student's recall of the passage in question contained only unacceptable IUs and was made of isolated words that she could pick up from the passage. In fact, this recall was similar to what the student produced during her independent recall earlier in the session: —then she says... *uh...*

3.4.1.4 Asking the Words



This form of mediation was provided when the learners were unable to produce any kind of acceptable recall after one or two additional listening tasks to a passage or an entire text. In such cases, the teacher usually asked the learners the following type of questions, e.g.: —What kind of words did you hear? and/or —Can you put these words together? It is important to note that the need for such a strategy was observed throughout all stages of the study, both at the beginning and at the end of study sessions. In fact, the teacher was compelled to use it in order to tease at least separate words from the students and then to help them make sense of these words. The following excerpt, taken from the 4th session, is illustrative of the mediator helping to achieve better text comprehension. The illustration began with a full version of the student's independent recall of unit 8, listening 1:

Extract 3 (listening 1, part 1)

The speaker said:

... OK... sports ... it sounds like ... I know... I heard ... I am saying... uh ... at the ... hate sport ... and... it's something on TV..

This independent performance clearly showed the student's inability to understand the listening. After two additional listening activities to the text, the student still exhibited comprehension difficulties and the teacher proceeded to the *Asking the Words* strategy, exemplified in Protocol 4.

Protocol 4

1. *Teacher. What kind of words did you hear? You said sport ...*
 2. *Student. Yeah.. Sport*
 3. *Teacher. Sport ... what else?*
 4. *Student. On weekend..*
 5. *Teacher. And then ... What else?*
 6. *Student. TV ...[long silence] I don't remember ...*

The teacher asked the student a question about the words that she picked up from the listening but the student's response induced her to separate more information, and she adamantly posed questions. In the student's case the use of *asking the words* helped to reveal that his comprehension of the listening was minimal at best and emphasized the need for the provision of further more explicit mediation.

3.4.1.5 Identifying Specific Problem Area

This strategy provided valuable information to the mediator regarding the underlying sources of L2/C2 problem areas that triggered breakdowns of listening comprehension. A representative example of this mediational strategy is given below; the example is taken from and begins with an extract.

Extract 4 (unit 9, listening 2):

... *Should I put them beside the dictionary?*

Protocol 5

After listening to this part

1. *Student. ..Should I put them been side the dictionary?..*
2. *Teacher. ..Yeah..but you say " been side " ... but this is not really ..this is grammar..uh... he is not saying been side...right??*
3. *Student. Right...*
4. *Teacher. He says(rising intonation)*
5. *Student. He said likelike been slide..*
6. *Teacher. No..no..no...I am talking about the preposition..*

The main purpose of the teacher's mediation in this episode was to help the learner improve her recall, which was not accurate: the student failed to recognize *beside*. As exemplified in Protocol 5, identification of the problem area often inevitably involved certain metalinguistic terms. In some cases the use of this move triggered text comprehension but in other cases the learners needed more explicit help and required the teacher to resort to more technical metalinguistic terms.

3.4.1.6 Metalinguistic Clue

In many cases the involvement of metalinguistic clues was helpful for the learners to correct errors and in so doing, to improve their text comprehension. Protocol 6 continues to analyze the episode taken from extract 3, unit 9, listening 3, in which the learner struggled to recognize the preposition *beside*. The protocol below, which occurred after an additional listening to the passage, captures mediator-learner interactions involving a metalinguistic clue:

Protocol 6

1. Teacher. Here.. what is before the dictionary?...*(rising intonation)*
2. Student. *Beside..*
3. Teacher. *Beside ... What does it mean? ..*
4. Student. *Uh ..uh*
5. Teacher. *Beside ...Do you recognize the word?*
6. Student. *Yeah but .. beside like below?*
7. Teacher. *Oh .. no.. It means next to..*

Protocol 6 provides evidence that the ability to recognize prepositions lies in the student's ZPD but is not yet fully matured. This was established through a mediated dialogue during which the teacher had to gradually increase the level of explicitness by asking her first, a question about the word and then, a question, containing a metalinguistic clue. The last question was sufficient for Erica to overcome the preposition recognition problem identified by the teacher earlier in this episode (see also Protocol 5).

3.4.1.7 Offering a Choice

Offering a Choice was another form of mediation that helped the learners to improve their text comprehension and typically contained one correct and one incorrect pattern. Anton (2009) and Poehner (2005), whose studies dealt with learners producing narratives in the past tenses, explained this strategy as a useful technique to differentiate whether learners

have some understanding of the structure in question or not. In the context of the present study, which deals with development of a receptive ability, it was ascertained that this mediational strategy can be also expanded to listening instruction since in many cases it triggered the recognition of the words that learners had acquired prior to the study but, for some reason, were unable to remember at the appropriate time.

Protocol 7 (Unit 7, listening 3)

1. Student. *And for the ... is the ilan? ...no?*
2. Teacher. *Uh .. say the word again..*
3. Student. *Ilan.*
4. Teacher. *With the article..*
5. Student. *Oh.. the ilan...*
6. Teacher. *The ilan ..so ..it's not island. Right?*
7. Student. *..Oh ...island ...A land in the water*
8. Teacher. *You know the word[the island]*

In line 1 the student produced an erroneous recall of the utterance *the island*. The teacher decided to prompt her by checking if she knows the word and the student correctly responds to her question (line 7).

3.4.1.8 Translation

This mediational technique was used when the teachers identified that the learner did not know a particular lexical item or grammatical structure. This strategy occurred exclusively in situations when other, less explicit forms of mediation, did not help the learners to produce a correct recall of a passage or a segment of a passage. In some cases, this form of mediation was offered as follows.

Protocol 8 (Unit 10, listening 1)

1. Student. *I don't know middle....*
2. Teacher. *You don't know ... Are you sure? .. How do you say “وسط” in English?*
3. Student. *[no response]*



4. *Teacher. When you are among the people*

...

5. *Student. Uh ... Is it middle?*

6. *Teacher. Exactly ...*

Before translating the word “middle” for the student, the teacher asked her if she would know the word in her mother tongue. Hoping that this leading question would facilitate the student’s guessing the word meaning on her own. The teacher waited for her translation and when she did not respond, the teacher moved to a more explicit hint and provided a translation. Immediately the student correctly translated it but her rising intonation revealed that she still relied on teacher’s support to be sure that she was on the right track and teacher responds affirmatively to her question.

The same procedures were followed in the dynamic group’ sessions for the rest of mediational strategies but the teacher played the listening audio file in non-dynamic assessment group without any mediation and feedback. There was another group which considered as a control group and the reading skill were taught and practiced in that group. Finally the differences among them were discussed.

3.4.1.9 Providing a Correct Pattern

This mediational strategy was generally used when other forms of mediation did not help learners improve their text comprehension. The provision of a correct pattern was the most explicit mediational technique since it occurred when the learners were completely unable to decipher aural forms of well known or unknown words and the teacher had to provide them with a correct pattern. In the case of unknown words, the teacher usually wrote down the words for the learners so that they formed correct graphic and aural representations of the lexical item in

question. Consider the following extract from Chris’s first DA session.

Protocol 9 (Unit 8, listening 3)

1. *Student. Ok ... I think what she doesn’t like is jugging..*

2. *Teacher. Jugging ...so do you know the word jogging?*

3. *Student. Jogging?...*

4. *Teacher. (Use some gestures)*

5. *Student. ...oh ... running... running slowly or fast?*

6. *Teacher. Running slowly..(The teacher writes down the word jogging on the board)*

In this example the teacher had to increase the level of explicitness of her mediation in order to correct an erroneous form of the word *jugging* produced by the student in line 1. In fact, as seen in protocol 9, the student experienced a double-sided problem regarding the word *jugging* (running slowly): the student was not able to decipher this word correctly (line 1) and also, as his questions in line 5 demonstrate, this word was absent from his vocabulary.

3.4.1.10 Providing Explicit Explanation

This strategy is consistent with DA principles and was used when the teacher identified that the learner experienced problems with a particular L2 or C2 item. In such cases, the teacher provided the learners with explicit explanations once the problem area was established. The goal of this form of mediation was to reinforce the learners’ cultural or general language knowledge related to grammar, vocabulary and phonology, depending on the source of the problem.

In the student’s initial DA, there is an example of the teacher explicitly provided an explanation related to a grammatical error continuously repeated by the student while recalling. Protocol 12 exemplifies the teacher’s explanation of a grammar point.

Protocol 12

1. Student. The speaker is sayingI meet a friend every the Wednesday and we play tennis. I am not a good player, but it's fun and we usually play for an hour....

2. Teacher. Yeah .. but one more thing ... it's grammar ...

3. Student. Meet??

4. Teacher. No ..no ..no ..When you say Wednesday or the other days of the week, basically you don't need to use articles...you say every the Wednesday ...it's a grammar point.... We are not supposed to used articles here ...we have to say every Wednesday... we have to drop the article...

5. Student. Ok.

The student's recall in lines 1-3 revealed his incorrect use of a grammar point concerning the omission of the article before the weekdays. In line 4 R signals the learner that there was a grammatical feature that needs to be discussed. After that the teacher focused the student's attention on the problem by supplying him with necessary explanations regarding this particular linguistic feature, since the student's apparent lack of knowledge in this case emerged through the mediated dialoguing that occurred earlier in this session.

3.4.2 Non dynamic Group

The same units from the Basic Tactics for Listening (Richards & Trew, 2010) were taught in the non-dynamic group based on the traditional methods without any feedback and mediation in the class. Similarly, after 8 sessions, the posttest was administered, and the results were reported.

3.4.3 Control Group

The control group received instruction about reading comprehension adopted from Top Notch Fundamentals B (Saslow & Ascher, 2006). The students dealt with 3 passages and tests but no

listening comprehension. Not only were there any feedback and mediation in this group, but also no listening track was played during the treatment.

4. Analysis and Discussion

First, to ensure the homogeneity of the participants, a one-way analysis of variance was run on the proficiency test, Quick Oxford Placement Test, of the three groups. As can be seen in Table 1, the descriptive statistics reveals that the mean of the three groups are approximately the same which implies that the groups were homogenous (DA=18.75, NDA=19.17, and CG=18.92). To make sure, One-way ANOVA shows that there is no significant difference between the three groups with regard to their proficiency level, as can be indicated in Table 2 ($p=.98$, $p > .05$). In addition, the amount of variability between groups (SS between groups= 1.16) is lower than the amount of variability within the groups (SS within groups=1281.58), which indicates that there is no difference in the groups. In other words, it can be concluded that the groups were homogeneous in terms of their English proficiency prior to the treatment and intervention.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Proficiency	NDG 12	19.17	6.30	1.82	15.16	23.17	15	38
	DG 12	18.75	7.65	2.20	13.89	23.61	14	39
	CG 12	18.83	4.26	1.23	16.13	21.54	15	30
Total	36	18.92	6.05	1.00	16.87	20.97	14	39

Note: NDG: Non-dynamic group; DG: Dynamic group; CG: Control group;

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for Learners' Proficiency Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Proficiency	Between Groups	1.16	2	.583	.015	.98
	Within Groups	1281.58	33	38.83		
	Total	1282.75	35			



The research question was concerned with the possible effect of dynamic assessment vs. non-dynamic assessment through mediational strategies on the learners' listening comprehension. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics of the three groups. As can be seen in the same table, the dynamic group had the largest gain score (20.83-14.17= 6.66) and the control group had the smallest one (14.42-13.92=.5) from pretest to posttest.

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics of Dynamic vs. Non-dynamic Assessment across All Groups before and after the Instructional Period

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Pretest	ND	12	13.33	5.10	1.474	10.09	16.58	8	23
	D	12	14.17	5.49	1.58	10.68	17.66	8	23
	C	12	13.92	3.47	1.00	12.21	16.63	8	20
	Total	36	13.97	4.65	.77	12.40	15.55	8	23
Posttest	ND	12	14.08	3.39	.98	11.93	16.24	10	20
	D	12	20.83	3.81	1.10	18.41	23.25	17	27
	C	12	14.42	3.50	1.01	11.69	16.14	10	22
	Total	36	16.28	4.76	.79	14.66	17.89	10	27

Note: N: Non-dynamic; D: Dynamic; C: Control.

To further assess the impact of the interventions, (i.e.), dynamic, non-dynamic, and control group, on participants' scores of listening comprehension, first, one-way ANOVA was conducted, with the instruction type as the independent within group variable and listening comprehension as the dependent variable. The results, as displayed in Table 4, indicate no main effect for instruction type, ($F(2, 33) = .17, p = .84$). This means that the groups are homogenous in terms of their listening comprehension. Moreover, Table 4 illustrates that the amount of variability between groups (SS between groups= 421.5) is greater than the amount of variability within the groups (SS within groups=373.72), which indicates that there is some difference in the groups.

Moreover, the F ratio (with two degrees of freedom) is larger than the observed value of $F(14.63)$, which means that significant group differences were observed with regard to performance of the three groups. In other words, the results reveal that the interventions have a significant effect on students' listening comprehension. To put it precisely, ($F(2, 33) = 14.63, p = .00$). It can be further concluded that the null hypothesis; that is, instruction (dynamic assessment vs. non-dynamic assessment mediational strategies) has no effect on EFL learner's listening comprehension, is rejected, pertaining that the intervention has been effective.

Table 4: ANOVA for Learners' Development of Listening Comprehension in the Pretest and Posttest

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	Between Groups	7.72	2	3.86	.17	.84
	Within Groups	751.25	33	22.76		
	Total	758.97	35			
Posttest	Between Groups	421.50	2	186.86	14.63	.00
	Within Groups	373.72	33	12.77		
	Total	795.22	35			

The ANOVA table shows just the fact that there is a meaningful difference, but it does not tell us where the differences exactly are. Therefore, in order to find out exactly where the differences lie, a post hoc test of Tukey (HSD) was applied. The post-hoc Tukey (HSD) tests reveal that the participants of dynamic group outperformed the non-dynamic and control groups; more importantly, there is a meaningful difference between dynamic group and non-dynamic group. Although there is no meaningful difference between the non-dynamic group and control group, the non-dynamic group had a better performance than the control group.

Table 5: Multiple Comparisons through Post Hoc Test of Tukey (HSD)

Dependent Variable	(I) Treatment	(J) Treatment	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Proficiency	nondynamic	Dynamic	.417	2.544	.985	-5.83	6.66
		Control	.333	2.544	.991	-5.91	6.58
	Dynamic	nondynamic	-.417	2.544	.985	-6.66	5.83
		Control	-.083	2.544	.999	-6.33	6.16
	Control	nondynamic	-.333	2.544	.991	-6.58	5.91
		Dynamic	.083	2.544	.999	-6.16	6.33
Pretest	nondynamic	Dynamic	-.833	1.948	.904	-5.61	3.95
		Control	-1.083	1.948	.844	-5.86	3.70
	Dynamic	nondynamic	.833	1.948	.904	-3.95	5.61
		Control	-.250	1.948	.991	-5.03	4.53
	Control	nondynamic	1.083	1.948	.844	-3.70	5.86
		Dynamic	.250	1.948	.991	-4.53	5.03
Posttest	nondynamic	Dynamic	-6.750*	1.459	.000	-10.33	-3.17
		Control	.167	1.459	.993	-3.41	3.75
	Dynamic	nondynamic	6.750*	1.459	.000	3.17	10.33
		Control	6.917*	1.459	.000	3.34	10.50
	Control	nondynamic	-.167	1.459	.993	-3.75	3.41
		Dynamic	-6.917*	1.459	.000	-10.50	-3.34

The results of the listening comprehension test revealed that dynamic group outperformed the non-dynamic and control groups, but no significant difference was found between the non-dynamic group and the control group. With regard to the learners' listening knowledge, specifically, in the dynamic group, the data lend support to Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, ZPD, and Scaffolding since enrichment dynamic assessment sessions through mediational strategies played indispensable role in learners' listening comprehension gain. Following Poehner (2008), a person's cognition is mediated socially during interaction. In fact, human is helped to show the developmental changes, so socio-cultural theory emphasizes mediated relationship not direct relationship between the world and a person and is the basis for dynamic assessment (DA).

According to DA approach, a learner's talents are the functions that are fully internalized as well as those that are in the process of developing. The findings of this study confirm previous research on the positive effect of intervention on learners' development of listening comprehension through mediational strategies and dynamic assessment (Ableeva, 2010; Alavi et al.,

2011; Emadi, 2015; Hashemi Shahraki et al., 2015; Hidri, 2014; Shabani, 2014).

The findings of the present study can be justified on the grounds that the dynamic assessment group, as its nature requires, received different kinds of feedback and mediational strategies such as 1. Accepting response, 2. Structuring the text, 3. Replay of a passage, 4. Asking the words, 5. Identifying a problem area, 6. Metalinguistic clues, 7. Offering a choice, 8. Translation, 9. Providing a correct pattern, 10. Providing an explicit explanation. As a result, DA group outperformed the other two groups, namely non-dynamic and control group.

In line with Ableeva's (2010) study, which assumes that DA has a positive effect on the learners' listening comprehension, the present study is in favor of dynamic assessment through mediational strategies to improve the learners' listening comprehension. In the present study, the dynamic assessment group outperformed the non-dynamic group and control group, but no difference was found between the non-dynamic group and control group.

Moreover, Alavi et al. (2011) investigated *group* dynamic assessment as an inventory of mediational strategies for teaching listening. They concluded that DA has a positive effect on the improvement of listening comprehension which is in line with the results of the present study. They also highlight that the more feedback the students receive in their groups, the better performance they will have. In the present study, the learners in the dynamic assessment group, as opposed to non-dynamic and control groups, had more feedback, interaction, and negotiation. Consequently, it stands to reason why DA outperformed the other counterparts.

Correspondingly, Hidri (2014) strictly believes that increasing the process



of listening comprehension occurs through applying dynamic assessment. In his study, Hidri used two approaches to listening comprehension: static and DA approach. The results of his study are consistent with those of the present study which supports DA interaction. Quite on par with Shabani's (2014) study, concluding that the learner's ability to recognize an unrecognized word of the pretest transcended beyond the posttest task to the treatment sessions, and recommending the use of DA as a development-oriented procedure to assess the learners' abilities, the present study lends support to the positive effects of applying dynamic assessment so as to improve listening comprehension.

Equally, in a detailed description of the listening process framework in an interactive EFL listening classroom, Emadi (2015) recently conducted a study to find out which mediational strategies lead to better learning including different forms of implicit to explicit feedback. She argues that DA-based instruction helped the students move forward and to find developmental changes. Her findings substantiated that DA would have a positive effect on the learners' listening comprehension which could support the findings of the present study the rationale behind this support is due to the amount of input and the kind of feedback the DA students have received.

In line with the teachers' findings, Hashemi Shahraki et al. (2015) performed a study to figure out and test the applicability of Group dynamic assessment and the effect of dynamic assessment on intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension. Their results were the same as the present study revealing that there were significant changes in learners' listening comprehension by applying mediational strategies. The effectiveness of

G-DA procedures in diagnosing and promoting pragmatic knowledge found in this study runs in accordance with the previous attempts indicating the benefits of instruction in pragmatic development in both production and comprehension.

However, none of the studies enumerated above included the elementary participants whereas the present study was conducted on these learners. It should be stated that our learners are the key part and the basic point of any learning process, so we need to prepare some techniques to make them more eager and active with a strong feeling of capability of learning and being successful. In performed pathway in this research, the learners could achieve a sense of success and victory and feeling to have the ability that they can do what other students actually can.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The present study employed a new approach to assess listening comprehension in EFL classes. The results of this research reinforce the idea that DA could be a great diagnostic instrument to investigate the students' problems and errors. Unfortunately, since manipulation of the listening process seems very hard in EFL contexts, the teachers focus on the listening product although, teachers are required to pay more attention to the listening process and care how their students come to the right responses. Being aware of the listening process by using DA-based instruction, teachers can pave the way for the development of other language skills.

An implication of the present study is the possibilities that the teachers are required to be aware of the importance of listening and certainly it motivates teachers not only teach the listening but also test it. Moreover, DA can mediate teachers to view instruction and assessment as a unified activity because true assessment is not

possible until considering the fact that assessment and instruction are interwoven. Teachers should perform DA in listening classes; therefore, face of listening can be changed for the students because the learners understand how easily spoken discourse can be understood with a bit of teacher's assistance.

It is hoped that the results of the present study are fruitful for teachers to run their classes based on DA as much as possible to form learners' learning, make them independent, and provide enough ZPD and scaffolding. The results are probably useful for materials developers to devise and incorporate some tasks to require both teachers and learners to capitalize upon DA.

The meditational strategies in the present study propose insights for teachers to apply a DA approach in classroom environment both in case of teaching and assessing listening. Regarding the meditational strategies in the present study, it can be concluded that receiving feedback can increase the student's ZPD and they can perform much better in the field. With regard to the learners, this study found that generally applying dynamic assessment provides appropriate result in listening comprehension. Moreover, it can be concluded that over time, the learners were eager to take part in the process of learning and listening, so they were more engaged in this way teachers can pave the way for their learning easier and show that DA can be a good approach in teaching the listening skill, so the learners can be aware of their learning process and enjoy attending the listening class.

To sum up, the quantitative analysis of teacher-learner interaction accounts for deeper description of the learners' actual and potential abilities; therefore, teachers can plan for the individualized instruction

of the learners according to their needs. According to Anton (2009), although interactionist DA is recognized as a time-consuming and hard approach to do, the advantages for learning plans and learners are sufficient and merit applying it in classroom. This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. A potentially productive suggestion can be comparing collaborative and individual DA-based instruction. The researchers can explore which type of instruction is better to conduct, so teachers can get insights in conducting DA-based instruction in their classes individually or in groups.

A study could be presented to the learners to know how they feel when practicing listening in a DA procedure. The teachers can be aware of students' feeling and decide to what extent they can use DA in classrooms because students' attitude is very vital toward the way of learning. Another point to be investigated can be comparing different proficiency level achievers' taking advantage of dynamic-based instruction. To do so, teachers can get insight to apply DA to the learners at the proper proficiency level. It is important to conduct more research on DA in the classroom to fully figure out the impact of this approach of teaching on learner's development.

References

- Ableeva, R. (2010). *Dynamic assessment of listening comprehension in L2 French* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Pennsylvania State University: United States.
- Ajideh, P., & Nourdad, N. (2012). The effect of dynamic assessment on EFL reading comprehension in different proficiency levels. *Language Testing in Asia*, 2(4), 101-122.
- Alavi, S. M., Kaivanpanah, S., & Shabani, K. (2011). Group dynamic assessment: An



- inventory of meditational strategies for teaching listening. *The Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, 3(4), 28-58.
- Antón, M. (2009). Dynamic assessment of advanced second language learners. *Foreign Language Annals*, 42(3), 576-598.
- Caffrey, E. (2006). *A comparison of dynamic assessment and progress monitoring in the prediction of reading achievement for students in kindergarten and first grade* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Vanderbilt University. United States.
- Emadi, M. (2015). *Dynamic assessment of listening comprehension in foreign language learning* (Unpublished MA thesis). Golestan Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Gorgan, Iran.
- Feuerstein, R. (2002). *The dynamic assessment of cognitive modifiability: The learning propensity assessment device: Theory, instruments and techniques*. ICELP Press.
- Feuerstein, R., Rand, Y., & Hoffman, M. B. (1979). *The dynamic assessment of retarded performers: The learning potential assessment device: Theory, instruments, and techniques*. Baltimore: University Park Press.
- Field, J. (2008). *Listening in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hashemi Shahraki, S., Ketabi, S., & Barati, H. (2015). Dynamic assessment in EFL classrooms: Assessing listening comprehension in three proficiency levels. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 4(3), 73-89.
- Hidri, S. (2014). Developing and evaluating a dynamic assessment of listening comprehension in an EFL context. *Language Testing in Asia*, 4(4), 1-19.
- Hill, K., & Sabet, M. (2009). Dynamic speaking assessment. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(3), 537- 545.
- Isavi, E. (2012). The effect of dynamic assessment on Iranian L2 writing performance. Retrieved February 10, 2015, from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED530902>.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2009). Dynamic assessment: The dialectic integration of instruction and assessment. *Language Teaching*, 42(3), 355-368.
- Lidz, C. S., & Gindis, B. (2003). Dynamic assessment of the evolving cognitive functions in children. In A. Kozulin, B. Gindis, V. Ageyev, & S. Miller (Eds.), *Vygotsky educational theory in cultural context* (pp. 99-119). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Manual, Q. P. T. U. (2001). Oxford University Press & University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
- Naeini, J., & Duvall, E. (2012). Dynamic assessment and the impact on English language learners' reading comprehension performance. *Language Testing in Asia*, 2(2), 22-31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/2229-0443-2-2-22>
- Poehner, M.E. (2009). *Dynamic Assessment: A Vygotskian approach to understanding and promoting second language development*. Berlin: Springer Publishing.
- Richards, J.C., & Trew, G. (2010). *Basic tactics for listening*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rost, M. (2001). Listening. In R. Carter, & D. Nunan, (Eds.), *Teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 7-13). United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Rubin, J. (1994). A review of second language listening comprehension research. *he Modern Language Journal*, 78 (2), 199 -211.
- Shabani, K. (2014). Dynamic assessment of L2 listening comprehension in transcendence tasks. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1729-1737.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2002). *Dynamic testing. The nature and*

- measurement of learning potential*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tianshun, M. I. A. O., & Lv. M. (2013). Dynamic assessment in ESL writing class. Retrieved February 10, 2014 from http://www.atlantispress.com/php/download_paper.php?id=6996.
- Vandergrift, L. (1997). The Cinderella of communication strategies: Receptive strategies in interactive listening. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81(4), 494–505.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press