

**Examining the Role of Dynamic Assessment in the Development and
Assessment of Listening Comprehension**

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Abstract

This study employed a mixed method to investigate the effects of dynamic assessment (DA) on listening comprehension of EFL students in a foreign language learning context. The participants of the study (N=57) were randomly divided into one control group, i.e., non-dynamic, and one experimental group, i.e., dynamic. They were asked to listen to some listening comprehension teaching materials and transcribe what they hear. The participants in the control group just listened to the audio files and took the tests while in the experimental group, the participants received mediation. The qualitative analysis of the exchanges between the mediator and the participants in the experimental group indicated that the application of mediational strategies was successful enough to help the participants promote their comprehension of the listening input. In addition, participants' listening problems diagnosed in the mediation sessions and the related support helped them overcome their listening comprehension problems. The performances of the participants in the two groups on an achievement test developed based on the instructional materials showed that the dynamic group outperformed the non-dynamic group.

Keywords: dynamic assessment, Zone of Proximal Development, mediation, listening comprehension

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1. Introduction

Listening appears to be one of the most common communicative activities in everyone's life. As Morley (1991) suggests, we listen twice as much as we speak, four times more than we read, and five times more than we write. Despite the importance of listening comprehension in academic contexts, it is argued that students are rarely taught to listen effectively (Berne, 2004; Le Loup & Ponterio, 2007; Mendelsohn, 2001, 2006). In language learning contexts, listening comprehension can potentially help second/foreign language (L2) learners gain necessary input for language development. Considering the importance of listening and its essential role in academic contexts in general and in language learning contexts in particular; it appears that more attention is expected to be paid to the teaching practices, the proportion of the class time, and the teaching materials of listening comprehension.

The teaching materials and classroom practices on language skills in general and listening comprehension in particular are also expected to be affected by the suggested educational framework. Therefore, the appearance of an innovative educational framework such as Dynamic Assessment (DA) requires language practitioners to reexamine the potentiality and practicality of such a framework in their educational contexts. Although DA has been widely researched in other fields such as mathematics, physics, etc., it seems that language educators have recently begun to examine its pedagogical applications (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2005).

It is generally argued that DA can provide a more humanistic approach to the instruction and assessment of learners' listening comprehension abilities. Moreover, DA requires more interaction and provision of more feedback; therefore, it makes the second language classrooms more interactive and authentic. It is also suggested that the information that is gained through listening can also be more stable in learners' mind. Having considered these features of DA, this study aimed to investigate the development of listening comprehension within a DA framework and examine the potentiality of DA in helping language practitioners not only in diagnosing learners' problems in listening comprehension and helping them overcome their problems but also in evaluating their listening comprehension proficiency.

2. Literature Review

In order to review listening comprehension research within the framework of Dynamic Assessment, some related issues in Vygotsky's

Socio-cultural Theory (SCT), the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and DA will be brought to light in the following sections.

2.1. *Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (SCT) of Mind*

It is believed that human cognitive functions can be mediated *socially* by interacting with others and culturally through cultural artifacts (Cole & Engesrom, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). Vygotsky (1978) believes that engaging in activities which are mediated by others and by cultural objects allows learners to develop higher forms of consciousness that are unique to humans. The concept of mediation suggests that human's relation with the world is not direct. It is mediated by physical and symbolic tools. Vygotsky (1978) maintains that humans' relationship with their world is both *psychological* and *physical*.

According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006) both innatist and behaviorist approaches agree with a unidirectional relationship between humans and nature. However, there exists a difference. In the innatist approach, directionality is from the brain to the world while in the behaviorist approaches it is from the world to the brain. However, SCT offers a bi-directionality approach in the relationship between human brain and nature. On the one hand, innate endowments shape the foundation for thinking; on the other hand, interactions occur within socio-culturally organized activities in which actions are transformed and come under the control by means of employing external, self-generated, and culturally rooted mediation.

2.2. *The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*

Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In Vygotskian terms, diagnostic assessment should be conducted in two steps. First, uncovering children's actual level of development (i.e., cognitive functions that have already matured) through observation of their independent problem solving. Second, assessing children's proximal level of development by analyzing their responsiveness during joint problem solving.

Vygotsky (1987) tried to redefine the relationship between development and instruction. He maintained that the developmental and instructional processes form a single unity in which instruction paves the way for development while development makes future instruction effective. Moreover, these two processes depend on and interact with each other. Furthermore, since development depends on the quality of mediation available, individuals do not follow the same developmental sequence. Vygotsky (1997) further proposed that instruction which can

be considered an important form of systematic and intentional mediation should be adjusted to ZPD rather than to the actual level of development. Vygotsky (1987) believes that assessment that aims to position individuals at defined points on a pre-established developmental path may underestimate what they are truly capable of.

2.3. Dynamic Assessment

DA can be traced back to the Socratic dialogues described by Plato. Socrates repeatedly helped his interlocutors to see the flaws in certain ideas while collaboratively constructing a new perspective by questioning and insightful responding. DA, with its roots in SCT, claims to overcome the assessment-instruction dualism by unifying them on the basis of required mediated interactions to capture learners' potential. Lantolf and Poehner (2004) consider DA as a procedure that integrates assessment and instruction into a seamless, unified activity aimed at promoting learner development through appropriate forms of mediation that are sensitive to the individual's (or in some cases a group's) current abilities. In essence, DA is a procedure for simultaneously assessing and promoting development that takes account of the individual's (or group's) ZPD (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004, p. 50).

DA can provide a qualitatively different method of assessment from what it was traditionally understood and practiced by teachers and researchers. DA emerged from an ontological perspective on human abilities. As Poehner (2008) comments, Vygotsky (1978) attempted to show that the development of cognitive abilities is not a matter of innate abilities which are developing into a mature state but that it is the emergence of new methods of thinking, acting and behaving that emerge from a person's engagement in activities which are supported (mediated) by cultural objects and by interaction with others. From this perspective, a social environment is considered both as a stage in which development occurs and as a driving force of development.

It can be argued that DA simultaneously serves evaluative and instructional purposes. In its assessment purposes, it aims to understand learners' abilities; in its instructional objectives, it aims to support learners' development. In other words, assessment and instruction are integrated activities. This pedagogical approach helps language practitioners diagnose learners' specific areas of difficulty and help them develop to reach the state of ripening (Poehner, 2009; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). The aim of DA is to revitalize Vygotsky's ZPD and the potential application of Vygotsky's SCT to bring to light learners' underlying abilities including the present abilities possessed and the future abilities that will be constructed.

2.3.1 Applying Dynamic Assessment in Educational Contexts

DA, as Lidz (1991) contends, represents a unified conception of instruction and assessment aiming to develop learners' abilities through intervention and mediation. This advantage is nonexistent in the recent methods of assessment such as portfolio assessment, performance testing, and even formative assessment, let alone the traditional static testing (Poehner, 2008).

There are two established frameworks of applying DA in educational settings. The first is one-on-one or individual and the second one is group dynamic assessment (G-DA). Poehner (2009) believes that classroom contexts should be investigated under the latter framework since the essence of social mediation and interaction are different in classroom contexts.

Ableeva (2010) focused on the application of DA to the development of learners' listening ability. More specifically, she sought to rectify the current lack of DA in language instruction and the development of listening ability. Ableeva (2010) employed intermediate university students learning French as a foreign language and compared the results of using DA with those of a traditional test of listening comprehension. The results of her study indicated that, through interactions in the ZPD, DA could establish not only the actual level of participants' listening ability but also diagnose and assess the potential level of their listening development, while at the same time promoting this development. She further came up with an *a posteriori* scale consisting of mediational strategies that fostered learner development. The strategies included accepting response, structuring the text, replay of a passage, asking the words, identifying a problem area, meta-linguistic clues, offering a choice, translation, providing a correct pattern, and providing an explicit explanation.

Ableeva' (2010) study was conducted on a one-on-one (individual) basis while Alavi, Kaivanpanah, and Shabani (2012) focused on G-DA-based instruction on the co-construction of knowledge among L2 listeners. They were able to show that G-DA was conducive to more learning. Their qualitative analysis led to the development of an inventory of mediational strategies. They also showed how collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994) could establish distributed help among learners.

SCT practitioners believe that the mediator can negotiate simultaneously with a group of learners in co-constructing several ZPDs and develop the entire group in their ZPD (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2009). Donato (1994) investigated the effect of collective scaffolding via speaking on L2 learners' morphosyntactic and lexical

competency. He found that the scaffold established zones of proximal developments enabling the less capable learner to finally accomplish the task independently. He further found that during the interaction the learners were at the same time collectively experts and individually novices.

Likewise, Gibbons (2003) applied a G-DA to investigate the learners' development in linguistic levels in English and the educational discourse and specialist understandings of the subject. Her analyses showed that through mediation, learners' discourse progressively became more specialist. That is, learners' language became more formal and scientific.

Shabani (2011) investigated the effect of G-DA interaction on the development of translation students' listening ability. His results demonstrated that G-DA interactions could diagnose learners' sources of listening difficulty and could in addition help develop those which are at the state of ripening. His qualitative analyses revealed that the ZPD of the entire class was developed during the construction of the individual ZPDs.

Despite the efforts made to apply DA in L2 studies, it is still believed that DA has not received the attention it truly deserves (Ableeva, 2010; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Poehner, 2005). DA is believed to be an emerging field and, as Poehner (2008) contents, it requires ample research to consolidate its basis and prevail it to all educational settings since it is a more humanistic approach to both instruction and assessment. DA appears to be a method that can overcome the instruction-assessment dualism.

Due to the importance and scarcity of DA-based studies, this study is aimed at using DA in foreign language classrooms and seeks to investigate the usefulness of this technique to improve foreign language listening ability. To achieve this, the following two research questions are formulated:

- 1) To what extent can DA enhance the development of L2 listening among Freshmen TEFL students?
- 2) Is there any significant difference between L2 learners' listening comprehension development in the DA group and the non-DA group?

3. Method

This study lies within an interdisciplinary framework including second language acquisition and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development. The main purpose of the study is to examine the diagnostic capacities of DA as well as the effects of DA-based instruction on the development of listening proficiency in L2 learners of English. The study

applies an interactionist DA approach as well as a microgenetic analysis that can enable the observation of listening development over time.

To conduct this study, a mixed-method design was employed. Following an SCT-based DA framework, the study prioritized a qualitative approach which is best suited to the ZPD concept. The theoretical and methodological grounds underlying the ZPD research are based on Vygotsky's (1998, p. 204) suggestion that "we must not measure the child, we must interpret the child". Vygotsky highlighted that the development of psychological functions ripening in the ZPD could be better examined through dialogic interactions between the examiner and the child. From the quantitative perspectives, this study examined the listening comprehension ability of participants in dynamic and non-dynamic assessment.

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study (N=57) consisted of the first year students of English language and literature and English Translation at Imam Khomeini International University (IKIU). They were typical Iranian undergraduate students ranging in age from 18 to 20, who started their formal university education after finishing their high school. By departmental regulations, they were enrolled in a compulsory English language conversation course where they met twice a week.

To achieve the purposes of this study, the students were randomly divided into two groups called dynamic and non-dynamic groups. The students in the two groups were approximately at the same English language proficiency level. However, to find the entry levels of the participants' listening comprehension ability before the treatments, a listening comprehension pre-test was administered to both groups.

3.2. Instruments

Finding appropriate listening comprehension teaching materials for the purpose of this study was a challenge. Having examined the existing materials, it was decided to use Richards' (2010) listening comprehension textbook entitled *Expanding Tactics for Listening* in this study. The main reason for selecting such a textbook was that it covers relatively interesting topics. Moreover, some inferential and literal comprehension questions appeared at the end of each section.

A unique software was developed to achieve the purposes of this study. Four recordings were fed into the software. The recordings were broken down into sentences to show the problem areas better. The software was able to record the number of times each participant listened to each sentence to understand it completely.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Two classes in their first year of studying English language and literature and English Translation at IKIU were selected. They were approximately at the same level on the basis of their scores in the official nationwide university entrance exam. However, a listening pre-test selected from *Tactics for Listening* was administered to the two classes to determine their independent performance (IP) abilities and their main sources of difficulty such as phonological, lexical, syntactic, cultural, etc. The test included 10 multiple choice and completion items. In fact, the IPs indicated participants' actual level of development (ZAD). Then, both classes were provided with two recordings parsed into sentences through the software program. Bernhardt (1991) introduced Pausal Unit Analysis (PUA) as a measure which identifies the number of propositions, or idea units, contained in a stretch of spoken language bounded by pauses in the stream of speech, which generally coincide with a 'syntactically related unit' such as 'The old man/ was happy/ above all/ about the information/ which he obtained/ recently' (Bernhardt 1991, p.209). Ableeva and Lantolf (2011) consider PUA as the most appropriate measure of assessing listening comprehension. It, however, appears to be easy for the participants of this study. To achieve the purposes of this study, a sentence-based parsing was used in this paper.

At the end of each recording, there were five comprehension questions. The first group was supposed to listen to each sentence and transcribe it and then, at the end, answer the comprehension questions. During the process they were provided with some meditational strategies such as offering a choice, translation, asking the words, and replay of the passage (Ableeva, 2010). The second group, however, was only asked to listen to each sentence and answer the comprehension questions without receiving any mediation. All the sessions were video-taped and there were about 40 hours of footage. This study, similar to that of Ableeva's (2010), followed a one-on-one mediator-learner tutoring design. According to Ableeva (2010), the mediator has two main goals in an interaction with the learner. First, the mediator diagnoses the source of the problem impeding the comprehension. Second, the mediator offers the learner an opportunity to improve his listening comprehension ability. Unlike G-DA in which individuals' ability will be overlooked and the completion of task requires the participation of some of the learners and not all of them, in individual DA every individual receives mediation based on his/her own level and the hints are personalized. This can show the unique way of improving the zone of proximal development for every learner since no two learners have exactly the same problems.

A one-on-one mediator design was preferred in this study as there are some problems inherent in G-DA. First of all, only a couple of participants take part in most of the exchanges and there is no room for shy students to develop their ZPD. Second, the study may come to a wrong conclusion about the development of the class as a whole since the correct response is the exchange between some more proficient participants, which is counted for the whole class.

4. Results and Discussion

This study is a mixed-method research, so the analysis of the data will be conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively. In the qualitative analysis of the data, some exchanges that took place between the mediator and the individual participants are reported. It is worth mentioning that unlike some researchers who adopted a G-DA design (Alavi *et al.*, 2012; Donato, 1994; Gibbons, 2003; Poehner, 2009; Shabani, 2011), this study, following Ableeva (2010), was conducted based on a one-on-one mediator participant design. Participants were allowed to speak Persian during the conversations to avoid problems participants may have in expressing themselves or asking the questions they may not be able to do in English (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011).

4.1. Qualitative Analysis of Data

In order to examine the effect of providing mediation and feedback on the comprehension of the participants, six samples of exchanges are presented here. These samples were chosen because they were representative of the whole strategies used during the DA sessions.

As appears in Figure 1, lines A2 and A6 show that the participant is not able to recall the sentence individually (IP). In line A7, *indirect exemplification strategy* is used to help the student. It was successful. In lines A9 and A17 two *different alternatives* are suggested to draw the participant's attention to the correct form. The mediator's *confirming response* was observed a couple of times in lines A11, A17, and A23. This strategy offers affective scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Rose, 1976) by providing feedbacks such as 'excellent', 'OK', and 'exactly' to motivate the silent participants to cooperate and take part in the conversation. Another strategy which is used in this exchange was *replaying* observed in lines A3 and A15. This strategy helped the participant improve recall processing and notice the parts that were neglected in the first listening. Using *contextual factors* is another strategy which helps participants use their background knowledge, world knowledge and topical (thematic) knowledge to comprehend the recording better. This strategy is also used in line A21.

[I didn't have anything to do on Saturday afternoon]

A1. T: what does it say?

A2. S: [silence] (after listening three times)

A3. T: listen again please.

A4. S: I didn't have to do anything ... in the afternoon Saturday

A5. T: is the rest of the sentence ok?

A6. S: yes (and goes to the next sentence)

A7. T: you wanna say *jome sobh* (Friday morning) how do you say it in English?

A8. S: Friday morning..

A9. T: morning Friday or Friday morning?

A10. S: Friday morning....

A11. T: OK... so if you wanna say

A12. S: ahan.... Saturday afternoon

A13. T: there is another problem in the sentence... 'I didn't....'

A14. S: have to do anything

A15. T: listen again!

A16. S: anything to do...

A17. T: OK. What is the difference between 'I didn't have to do anything' and 'I didn't have anything to do'?

A18. S: (repeating the question for herself) *man majbor nabodam kari anjam bedam* (I didn't have to do anything) *badish chi bod?* (What was the next one?)

A19. T: I didn't have anything to do ... (emphasizing anything)

A20. S: *man kari bara anjam nadashtam* (I didn't have anything to do)

A21. T: which one is meant here considering the context?

A22. S: with the meaning *man kari bara anjam dadan dar gozashte nadashtam*

A23. T: OK. Go to the next one.

Figure 1. Exchange A. Mediator-learner interaction on "I didn't have anything to do on Saturday afternoon"

Figure 2 shows that the participant cannot make a distinction between the meaning of *barn* and *mall*, as is evident in line B2. In line B5, the mediator tries to draw the participant's attention to the next sentence to activate his world knowledge about a department store. Therefore, with the help of *offering contextual clues* strategy, the mediator becomes successful in line B11. The mediator's *confirming/rejecting response* energized the participant to continue the conversation in lines B3, B8, B12, and B14. In line B14 the mediator takes advantage of another strategy called *using a dictionary*. With the

help of this strategy, the participant was able to find the spelling of the word *mall* and meanwhile learn a new word.

<p>[So I went to a mall]</p> <p>B1. T: she went to the /ma:l/ ... (knowing that the student has not got the right spelling) what is the meaning of it?</p> <p>B2. S: somewhere... that they keep animals</p> <p>B3. T: no.</p> <p>B4. S: <i>establ mishe ostad?</i> (referring to barn)</p> <p>B5. T: Listen to the next sentence please.</p> <p>[I went into a department store to look around]</p> <p>B6. T: so where is a department store?</p> <p>B7. S: somewhere that we shop there.</p> <p>B8. T: Excellent. Don't you think that the meaning of department store should be related to /ma:l/ in the previous sentence?</p> <p>B9. S: I am not sure about the dictation...</p> <p>B10. T: she went to the /ma:l/. Where is it?</p> <p>B11. S: market?</p> <p>B12. T: Ohoom. So if you want to guess the spelling of it...? How do you pronounce what you have written?</p> <p>B13. S: /meIl/ (male)</p> <p>B14. T: no, use the dictionary. You know the meaning but you don't know the spelling.</p> <p>B15. S: Is it mall?</p> <p>B16. T: exactly, excellent. Go on please.</p>
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Figure 2. Exchange B: Mediator-learner interaction on “So I went to a mall”

As Figure 3 shows, the mediator tries to help the participant to have a wild guess using the strategy *saying the erroneous guess questioningly* in lines C2 and C10. With the help of *offering meta-linguistic reminders*, the mediator tries to help the participant improve her response in lines C8, C10, C12, and C14. Meta-linguistic information includes grammatical (subject, verb, noun, adjective, etc.) and lexical (idioms, collocations, etc.) cues that exist in the text and provide support for the participants to solve listening comprehension problems. In line C16, the mediator uses another strategy called *guessing the first letter* to help her guess the verb before ‘answer’. And finally, when no other technique is useful in helping the participant, the mediator uses *providing correct response and explanation* strategy in line C21. This meditational

strategy reflects the instructional function of DA since DA is aimed at helping students develop to higher levels of their ZPD through explicit teaching. This strategy is used whenever the participants could not decode a word or structure.

[All you had to do was write the answers to some easy questions about pop music.]

C1. S: part music?

C2. T: do we have part music?

C3. S: no... pop music

C4. T: listen again please. (knowing that the student has left out something in the sentence)

C5. S: [silence]

C6. T: there is something missing in the sentence.

C7. S: /raI/ the answer or ready answer?

C8. T: you need a verb here. OK?

C9. S: ready answer?

C10. T: ready answer? No ... look... it should be related to answer. What do you do with the answers?

C11. S: reply....

C12. T: no, you something answer?

C13. S: replay the answer?

C14. T: no, I give you a test and ask you to the answers.

C15. S: *tik zadan chi mishe?* (what is checking in English?)

C16. T: it starts with /r/, listen...

C17. S: rise

C18. T: can you rise the answers?

C19. S: no,

C20. T: you write the answers.

C21. S: oh yes, oh (feeling ashamed)

Figure 3. Exchange C: Mediator helps the student have a wild guess

In exchange D, as appears in Figure 4, the mediator tries to motivate the participant to continue her interaction using *confirming/rejecting response* strategy in lines D2, D12, and D16. *Guessing the first letter* strategy is used in line 6 to help her guess the subject of the sentence, but it is not successful. Drawing the participant's attention to the *context* in line D10, the mediator tries to help her guess the subject which results in a successful answer. Another strategy used to help the participant get the tense of the sentence correctly is *offering meta-linguistic clues* in line D14.

[Then they pulled out three names for a prize]
 D1. S: (After listening three times) pull out
 D2. T: OK, complete the sentence
 D3. S: then me pull out three names for a prize
 D4. T: grammatically speaking what do you need before a verb?
 D5. S: a subject
 D6. T: look at the subject, what is the first letter?
 D7. S: /m/?
 D8. T: do we have a subject starting with /m/?
 D9. S: no....
 D10. T: look at the context, what should the subject be?
 D11. S: they?
 D12. T: exactly. Now look at the verb, is it correct?
 D13. S: Then they pull out three names for a prize
 D14. T: consider the tense
 D15. S: ahan, they pulled out
 D16. T: excellent.

Figure 4. Exchange D: Mediator motivates the student to continue interaction

In line E2 of exchange E, the mediator provides support by *offering meta-linguistic clues*, and in line E4, he tries to help the participant *activate his background knowledge* and use the *contextual information* provided in the recording to guess the adjective before 'prize'. Then, he provides further support by asking him to *guess the first letter* which successfully results in a correct answer.

[And it's a terrific prize]
 E1. S: It's a prize.
 E2. T: what comes before a noun?
 E3. S: adjective...
 E4. T: OK, is it positive or negative?
 E5. S: I think positive
 E6. T: what is the first letter?
 E7. S: t...?
 E8. T: yes, now listen again,
 E9. S: tr.... Terrific terrific.
 E10. T: excellent

Figure 5. Exchange E: Mediator provides support

In exchange F, as appears in Figure 6, the mediator provides affective support by offering confirming response strategy in lines F5 and F9. In line F3, the mediator attempts to help the participant understand his problem by *saying the erroneous guess questioningly* which results in a successful correction on the part of the participant. In line F7, the mediator draws the participant's attention to the missing element in the sentence using *offering contextual clues* strategy.

[I went into a department store to look around]
 F1. T: (after three times) listen again
 F2. S: I went to a apartment store around
 F3. T: do we have apartment store? It should be related to 'mall' in the previous sentence.
 F4. S: department store?
 F5. T: yes, now complete the sentence.
 F6. S: I went into a department store around
 F7. T: there is something missing.... Listen again.
 F8. S: I went into a department store to look around
 F9. T: excellent

Figure 6. Exchange F: Mediator provides affective support

As the six exchanges indicate, what participants could not do individually in their IPs which was indicative of their ZAD was conveniently accomplished through the provision of mediational strategies. This is a proof for their potential and development to higher ZPDs. These exchanges also show that the mediator provided support for the participants to help them overcome problems they could never accomplish individually. The strategies used in the mediation were *offering contextual clues, providing another context, saying the erroneous guess questioningly, offering meta-linguistic clues, activate background knowledge, guess the first letter, providing translation, indirect exemplification, providing correct response and explanation, offering different alternatives, replaying, confirming/rejecting response, and using a dictionary*. Some of these strategies were taken from Alavi *et al.*, 2012, some from Ableeva (2010), and some of the strategies were developed improvised during the mediation sessions. As the six exchanges reported above delineate, the strategies were quite helpful in helping the participants overcome their listening problems. In case none of the strategies were helpful, *providing correct response and explanation strategy* was offered since the ultimate goal of dynamic assessment is to instruct and help participants develop their ZPD.

4.2. Quantitative Analysis of Data

In the quantitative analysis of the collected data, the performance of the dynamic group and non-dynamic group in the post-test is compared. The post-test included five multiple choice listening comprehension of both inferential and literal types.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the performance of participants in dynamic and non-dynamic assessment groups. As Table 2 shows, there was a significant difference in scores for the dynamic group ($M=14.35$, $SD=4.03$) and the non-dynamic group ($M=11.51$, $SD=4.67$; $t(55)= 2.44$, $p=0.018$). The magnitude of the differences in the means was moderately large ($\eta^2=.09$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Dynamic and Non-Dynamic Group

groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dynamic group	28	14.35	4.03	0.38
Non-dynamic group	29	11.51	4.67	0.43

Table 2

An Independent-Samples T-Test

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	2.44	55	0.018
Equal variances not assumed	2.45	54.33	0.017

5. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

This paper reported the results of a mixed-method research that aimed at investigating the applicability of dynamic assessment in teaching listening comprehension. In the qualitative analysis of the data, some insights were provided into the independent performance (IP) of the participants and how they took advantage of the mediational strategies offered to them to overcome their listening comprehension problems. The problem areas which are not investigated in this study are related to phonology, vocabulary, grammar, and cultural knowledge. Although these areas are documented in the L2 listening comprehension literature, it appears that more in-depth studies are needed to have a better understanding of these problems.

During mediation sessions, the mediator could diagnose specific problem areas while at the same time trying to help the participants

overcome their problems. This is possible through DA because it enables the learners to simultaneously reveal those abilities that have already matured. With the help of this information it is then possible to accelerate the developmental procedures. In traditional assessments only those capacities that have already matured are determined and the two remaining areas, i. e., those that are maturing and those that are yet to mature, are neglected. In so doing, important opportunities to develop our assessment are missed.

In the exchanges reported here, 13 mediational strategies were employed according to the needs of the individual participants and the requirement of the problem area. They are as follows: offering contextual clues, providing another context, saying the erroneous guess questioningly, offering meta-linguistic clues, activating background knowledge, guessing the first letter, providing translation, indirect exemplification, providing correct response and explanation, offering different alternatives, replaying, confirming/rejecting response, and using a dictionary.

The results of comparing the DA group and non-DA group's performance on the post test indicated that the DA group outperformed the non-DA group. This shows that the DA group took advantage of the interaction with the mediator and solved more of their listening comprehension problems than the non-DA group.

The analysis of the data and the information obtained during the interactions also helped the mediator decide what remedial instructions are the most relevant for the participants. For example, one of the problem areas that deterred the participants' comprehension was their lack of knowledge in phonology. The relevant remedial sessions could teach them about correct pronunciation of words, liaisons, word boundaries, assimilations, and dissimilations. These issues can be the bases of further research in DA. Finally, this study attempted to examine DA of listening comprehension of first year undergraduate students at sentence levels. Another line of research can be suggested to use DA for other aspects of spoken and written discourse of different groups of undergraduate language learners.

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