Dynamic Assessment of Speaking Skill: State of Art

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ABSTRACT
This literature review consists of three parts. In the first part, a brief introduction of speaking comprehension will be offered, followed by a discussion of the importance of speaking comprehension. Then, an overview of speaking skills will be given. Additionally, potential obstacles for students in speaking comprehension will be introduced. Last, a discussion on factors that contribute to speaking difficulties and thus affect speaking comprehension will be presented. The second part looks at defining some basic concepts and theories behind dynamic assessment (DA) such as: (a) sociocultural theory of mind, (b) zone of proximal development, (c) dynamic assessment, and (d) dynamic assessment of dynamic abilities. In the third part of this review, literature on DA is divided into the following sections: (e) components of DA, (f) models of DA, (g) approaches to DA, (h) criticism of dynamic assessment, (i) dynamic assessment and psychometric critiques, (j) previous research on DA in language education, (k) DA in the foreign language setting, (l) group dynamic assessment in the foreign language classroom, and (m) DA/GDA in Iran.

Introduction
An Overview of Speaking Comprehension

Speaking is the most fundamental skill of language learning that almost all children learn to listen as part of their first language (L1) acquisition process. Similar to the essential role speaking plays in L1 acquisition, it is certainly not less important in second language (L2) learning (Rost, 2011). Due to the growing emphasis on communicative competence in language learning and teaching in recent decades, more and more studies were carried out to enhance the teaching and learning of listening. First of all let's take a look at what is exactly speaking comprehension? Definitions of speaking comprehension have been stated by many researchers (e.g., Anderson, & Lynch, 1988; Brown, 2007a; Brown, & Yule, 1983; Rost, 2011). For instance, Brown and Yule (1983b) described speaking comprehension as a process of understanding, repeating what was heard, figuring out the meaning of an exact word, and then knowing what an expression refers to. Rost (2011) explained speaking comprehension as a process of attempting to understand what spoken language refers to in one's experience or in the real world.

Various types of knowledge must be applied to decode and interpret the incoming information so that an utterance could be understood. Buck (2001) stated that there are two types of knowledge involved in the speaking process: linguistic knowledge (i.e., syntax, lexis, semantics, and discourse structures) and non-linguistic knowledge (i.e., general knowledge of the world, knowledge of the speaking context, and personal experience). Much debate has been aroused about how these two types of knowledge and their sub-knowledge are applied to the acoustic information. Among different understandings, the top-down view and the bottom-up view are the most important and classic process of speaking comprehension.

These two perceptions are different mostly in their beliefs of the order in which different types of knowledge are applied during the comprehension process. Speaking comprehension is seen in the bottom-up view as a process of passing information from stage to stage. Acoustic input is first decoded into phonemes (the smallest sound unit), then it is determined as an individual word, followed by the sentential level and then semantic level. Eventually, the listeners pull in their own experience or the communicative context and understand what the input refers to. This means that the order of the knowledge applied in the bottom-up speaking process is like a one-way street, which is not changeable. Based on this view, speaking for details is usually trained by teachers. On the other hand, in the top-down view, the order in which different types of knowledge come into play is not in a fixed manner, instead, they may appear in any order or even simultaneously. In addition, they are all capable of interacting and influencing with one another.

Finally, according to Brown (2007a) speaking comprehension is the interactive and conscious process to send and transmit the message to the brain which influenced the process of communication. Additionally, Byrene (1984) explained speaking as the basic mechanism through which the main rules of the language are acquired. It is also the means to acquire the cultural information the listener needs. Nichols (1952) also classified speaking as one of the fundamental abilities of the language that allows the users of the language to get not only information but also instruction and comprehension in general.

In language teaching, the term speaking is applied to refer to a complex process that allows to understand spoken language. The most widely used language skill, listening, is often used in conjunction with other skills of reading, speaking and writing.

Speaking is a critical means of acquiring a second language, and it is also a skill area in language performance. Speaking is the channel in which we process language in real time employing pacing, units of encoding and pausing that are unique to spoken language (Nunan & Carter, 2001).

This study tried to develop speaking comprehension of a group of young EFL learners by a new and innovative method of assessing and instruction, known by group dynamic assessment, during a whole educational semester. Speaking comprehension was given a major priority in conducting this study. Speaking comprehension of learners was measured several times with standard instrument in order to show the development of speaking comprehension.

2.3. The Importance of Speaking Comprehension

The importance of speaking in language learning can hardly be overvalued. We internalize linguistic information through reception, without which we could not produce language. Students in classrooms always do more speaking than listening. Speaking competence is universally "larger" than speaking competence (Brown, 2007b).

Speaking comprehension has not always attracted interest of educators to the extent that it now has. Perhaps human beings have a natural inclination to look at speaking as the crucial index of language proficiency (Brown, 2007b). The emphasis on speech was given an increase in the 1930s and 1940s when anthropologists started to investigate and describe the world's spoken language influenced by this anthropological movement (Nunan & Carter, 2001). Bloomfield (1942) declared that one learns to understand and speak a language mainly by hearing and imitating native speakers (as cited in Nunan & Carter, 2001).

A complicated and very important process in the development of second language competence is second language (L2) speaking comprehension; nevertheless, the importance of speaking in language learning has fairly been identified in recent times. Since the role of speaking comprehension in language learning was underestimated, there was a little research and pedagogical attention in the past. But at present, some researchers have developed their time to speaking and believed it to be an important skill in teaching and learning (Sadighi & Zare, 2006) . For instance, Nunan (1998) believed that "speaking is the basic skill in language learning without speaking skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening" (p. 1).

2.4. Speaking Skills

Speaking is noticed as a complicated and multidimensional process. To know the complex process, several theorists have tried to describe speaking in terms of taxonomies of skills (Buck, 2001). One general taxonomy is separating speaking into two stages: comprehending and application (Carroll, 1971; Clark & Clark, 1977). At the initial stage, the learners process the linguistic information in the message, and in the second stage, they utilize the information in a communicative context. Considering the increasing attention in the communicative approach in language teaching, there are also numerous taxonomies of speaking skills described in communicative terms. Compared to the available taxonomies to date, Weir's categorization (1993) seems to be more comprehensive (See Table 2.1). As long as many of the components in the taxonomies are crucial in listening, there has not been proof suggesting that any of the taxonomies contains a complete description of speaking process.

These taxonomies are beneficial because they tell us what are considered important in speaking comprehension, and therefore shed light in the teaching of listening.

As shown in Table 2.1, Weir (1993) divided speaking process into four main sections, and each with further detailed description: direct meaning comprehension, inferred meaning comprehension, contributory meaning comprehension, and speaking and taking notes. The list is not only a description of speaking process, but also a comprehensive checklist of operations for speaking tests.

Table 2.1A List of Speaking Skills (Weir, 1993, cited in Buck, 2001, pp. 54-55).

Direct meaning comprehension
Listen for gist
Speaking for main idea(s) or important information; and distinguishing that from
supporting detail, or examples
Speaking for specifics, including recall of important details
Determining a speakers' attitude or intention towards a listener or a topic
Inferred meaning comprehension
Making inferences and deductions
Relating utterances to their social and situational context
Recognizing the communicative function of utterances
Deducing meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context
Inferred meaning comprehension
Making inferences and deductions
Relating utterances to their social and situational context
Recognizing the communicative function of utterances
Deducing meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context
Inferred meaning comprehension
Making inferences and deductions
Relating utterances to their social and situational context
Speaking and taking notes
Ability to extract salient points to summarize the text
Ability to select relevant key points

Finally, Saha and Talukdar (2008) expressed that although speaking and hearing are connected; speaking involves an active process, which requires an analysis of sounds, in contrast to hearing that only perceives sounds in a passive way. In the same way, Saricoban (1999) expressed that speaking is a "receptive skill" where people obtain the main idea according to what they hear.

To conclude, in this study much attention was given to process of direct meaning comprehension through a longitudinal micro genetic development of speaking comprehension which was facilitated by group dynamic assessment.

2.5. Potential Obstacles for Students in Speaking Comprehension

According to Nunan and Carter (2001) through inspection about new comers psychologists have found out certain potential obstacles or difficulties that students encounter in their speaking class. They found it troublesome to keep up with the speakers in the tape recording, when they are busy working out the meaning of one part of what they hear, they miss what comes next. They are unfamiliar with the pronunciation of particular words or the accent of the speaker. They sometimes are unable to identify words that they know in writing or words that still sound familiar to them. Their vocabulary is limited just as Underwood (1993) claimed:

For people speaking to a foreign language, an unknown word can be like a suddenly dropped barrier causing them to stop and think about the meaning of the words and thus making them miss the next part of the speech (p. 17).

Therefore the effective speaking class should at least able to remove the obstacle for the students.

In this study these obstacles are tried to be facilitated by interactions, graded hints, prompts and intervention based on dynamic assessment presented by the mediator/teacher in order to promote speaking comprehension and development of students' aural language skill.

2.6. Speaking Difficulties and Factors Affecting Speaking Process

According to Rost (2011), speaking is necessary to language development. Still, it has been very challenging for L2 learners to learn. In order to help learners to become skillful listeners, factors related to learners' speaking difficulties have been recognized in many studies, for example, text types (e.g., Brindley & Slatyer, 2002; Shohamy & Inbar, 1991), speech rate (e.g., Rixon, 1986; Teng, 2002; Weinstein & Griffiths, 1992), syntactical complexity and other factors such as the listener, the speaker, the content of the message, and any visual support. In this study, speech rate, text types, syntactic complexity are discussed and brief explanations of other factors are presented.

2.6.1. Speech rate.

Speech rate has significant effect on speaking comprehension (Flowerdew, 1994, Rixon, 1986). Regarding occasional factors such as speech rate and pausing time, both Teng (2002) and Flowerdew (1994) observed that the more pauses a passage has, and the slower the speech is, the better comprehension level listeners would be able to achieve. This concept is easy to comprehend by the means that with faster speech rate, listeners would have less time to process the incoming information, and consequently, results in ineffectual comprehension. Based on Rixon's (1986) comment, L2 learners need more time than the native speakers to process each piece of information even when they have no difficulties in understanding, as a result, "any very fast delivery will therefore place an extra strain on the learner" (p. 58). To scrutinize how speech rate can affect learners' comprehension, Weinstein and Griffiths (1992) compared the comprehension levels of 24 low-intermediate Japanese EFL learners who were assigned to listen to three passages each in three different speech rates—slow, average, and fast—measured in the unit of 8 "words per minute" (wpm). The lower rates ranged from 126 to 128 wpm, average from 188 to 189 wpm and fast from 245 to 257 wpm. The results showed that learners who listened to the slow version of the passages obtained significantly higher scores than those who listened to normal and fast versions in the post-speaking test.

To provide an answer for the question of at what rate a speaking text is considered as fast, different speaking specialists have suggested different standards for distinguishing slow speech from fast speech. For instance, Weinstein and Griffiths (1992) adopted the criteria in which an average rate 125 wpm is slow, 185 wpm is normal, and 250 wpm is fast. Rubin (1994), in her well-known review, remarked that most research accepts 165 to 180 wpm as normal speech rate. Nonetheless, regardless of different interpretations of speech rate, most research accepts 165 to 180 wpm as the normal speech rate (Rubin, 1994). In this study the medium of speech rate of the video and sound clips used in pretest, enrichment program, posttest, and transfer sessions have been calculated.

2.6.2. Text types and syntactic complexity.

Text type has also been noted as a factor affecting speaking comprehension (Brindley, & Slatyer, 2002; Rubin, 1994). Speaking texts are often categorized into conversation and monologue, or interactional and transactional (Rixon,

1986). Conversations, or dialogues, as they contain information of lower density compared to monologues such as lectures or news broadcasts, are considered to be easier to listeners than monologues. In Brindley and Slatyer (2002), it is revealed that dialogues are easier than lectures and news broadcast.

One factor that comes along with text type is syntactic complexity, which is also documented as an attribute of speaking difficulty. While written texts normally contain more syntactically complex sentences and less redundancies or repetitions compared to spoken texts, it is supposed that texts similar to written texts are of higher difficulty level than texts similar to spoken texts (Rubin, 1994; Chang, 2004). Consequently, it appears that the more listenable or orally-oriented a text is, the easier it will be for the listeners to understand.

Therefore, as Shohamy and Inbar (1991) claimed the amount of 'orality' in a text does seem to be an important factor regarding the difficulty level of speaking texts, specifically, the more oral a text is, the easier it will be, and vice versa. Accordingly, as oral texts are syntactically less complex, it also seemed to suggest the notion that higher syntactic complexity contributes to higher difficulty level of speaking text, and vice versa.

2.6.3. Other factors affecting speaking comprehension.

In another view, Brown and Yule (1983a) seen speaking as a demanding process, not only due to the complexity of the process itself, but also because of factors that characterize the listener, the speaker, the content of the message, and any visual support that accompanies the message.

The listener: Interest in a topic increases the listener's comprehension; the listener may tune out topics that are not of interest. A listener who is an active participant in a conversation usually has more background knowledge to facilitate understanding of the topic than a listener who is, in effect, eavesdropping on a conversation between two people whose communication has been recorded on an audio tape. In addition, the ability to use negotiation skills, such as asking for clarification, repetition, or definition of points not understood; enable a listener to make sense of the incoming information.

The speaker: Colloquial language and reduced forms make comprehension more difficult. As discussed in text difficulty, the extent to which the speaker uses these language forms impacts comprehension. The more exposure the listener has to them, the greater the ability to comprehend. A speaker's rate of delivery may be too fast, too slow, or have too many hesitations for a listener to follow. Awareness of a speaker's corrections and use of rephrasing ("er…I mean…That is…") can assist the listener. Learners need practice in recognizing these speech habits as clues to deciphering meaning.

Content: Content that is familiar is easier to comprehend than content with unfamiliar vocabulary or for which the listener has insufficient background knowledge.

Visual support: Visual support, such as video, pictures, diagrams, gestures, facial expressions, and body Language, can increase comprehension if the learner is able to correctly interpret it.

Auditory and visual aids: For an EFL classroom, video materials help to develop the level of proficiency through different components that the real discourse contains.

Van Duzer (1997) claimed that the authentic language contains hesitations, rephrasing, and variety of accents. In this way, it should not be modified or simplified to make it easier

for learner's level. Additionally, as Van Duzer (1998) and Martinez (2002) revealed video materials applied in speaking skill, provide real situations, intonation, and real pronunciation and allow students to be exposed to a real context. To complement, Potosí, Jhoana, Guarín Loaiza, and López García (2009) stated that using video materials in an ESL classroom can motivate students, because they can experience real feelings to accomplish their understanding about the situation of the video.

The importance of video clips on speaking comprehension.

In order to select video material, current topics according to the students' interests and suitable for their levels must be involved. Also, it is important to take into account that most materials are full of cultural aspects. Therefore, teachers should select materials which can be used appropriately and help the students to perform successfully during the activities proposed in class. To develop speaking applying a video material in the classroom is necessary not only to choose a material according to student's level but also the instruction during the lesson. In this way, Rost (2011) argued that designing instructional speaking cycles involves selecting speaking input (live, or in the form of audio/video recordings) chunking it into segments for presenting to the students, and then designing cycles of activities for learners to engage in. Also, the teacher has to be a careful designer of activities; being a reflective observer in order to catch student's attention. One of the strategies used by a facilitator is to use a variety of activities that involve them.

Similarly, Revelo (2012) pointed out that one major advantage of videos is that learners not only can listen the language but also they can see it, in order to support comprehension, videos contain visual clues such as gestures and expressions which allow students to go beyond of what they listen, and also to interpret the video in a deeper way. Because of learners can see the language in use from natural contexts; they can make connections between words and images which help them to analyze their own use of the language or even to learn new language.

The current study benefited from using video clips in the pretest sessions and enrichment program and transfer sessions. Video clips were kind of every day interactions and they were in a form of on-street interviews with ordinary questions about everyday life topics such as food, hobbies, place of living and music.

2.7. Sociocultural Theory of Mind

The basic theory behind dynamic assessment is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind, which suggested: The social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact; the individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary (Wertsch & Bivens, 1992, cited in Daniels, 2005). In other words, as Vygotsky stated, human cognition is mediated in two ways socially and culturally; socially through interaction with others and culturally through the use of cultural objects (Poehner, 2008).

From this perspective, as learners acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture, they participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalize the effects of working together. Typically, this principle has been illustrated by examining the interactions between individuals with disparate knowledge levels; for example, children and their caregivers or experts and novices (Daniels, 2005).

Engaging in activities that are mediated by others and by cultural objects allows individual to develop what Vygotsky

described as higher forms of consciousness that are unique to humans (Vygotsky, 1987, cited in Poehner, 2008).

Sociocultural theory of mind gives a satisfactory explanation of the process in which development and learning occurs (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010). It is believed that cognitive development is perceived as a result of interactions within cultural and historical context. In other words what is known as learning is nothing but leading or caring for cognitive development (De Valenzuela, 2006, cited in Shabani et al., 2010). Vygotsky (1982) restated the fact that what forms the most important part of learner's psychological development is the social interaction with cultural artifacts.

2.8. Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky viewed learning as advancement between two points which are the point of independent functioning and the point of dependent functioning. He named this symbolic space the '*Zone of Proximal Development*'. Vygotsky offered the ZPD as an alternative to the traditional IQ testing which became well-known for only presentation of merely a static measure of fully matured abilities. Vygotsky came to the idea of zone of proximal development when he understood that two children with the same IQ scores and chronologically at the same age benefited differently from the training sessions such that one could remarkably exceed in performance than the other. He concluded that although the two children had the same developmental age they were not mentally the same age. This difference between chronological age and mental age was what he technically named the zone of proximal development (Shabani, 2012).
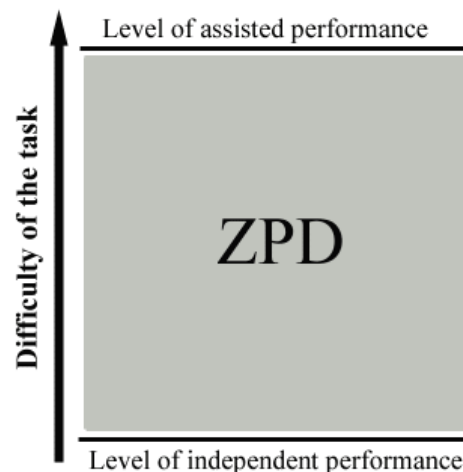

Figure 2.1. ZPD representing a continuum (adopted from Bodrova & Leong, 1995).

The concept of ZPD is that learners learn best when working together with others during joint collaboration, and based on such collaborative attempt with more capable peer that individual learns and internalizes new concepts, psychological tools, and skills (Shabani et al., 2010). According to Roosevelt (2008) the main goal of Vygotskian perspective is to keep learners in their own ZPDs as often as possible by giving them interesting and culturally meaningful learning and problem-solving tasks that are slightly more difficult than what they do alone. The idea is that after completing the task with the help of more capable peer, next time they will likely to be able to complete the task alone. This process proceeds until the learner's new ZPD requires.
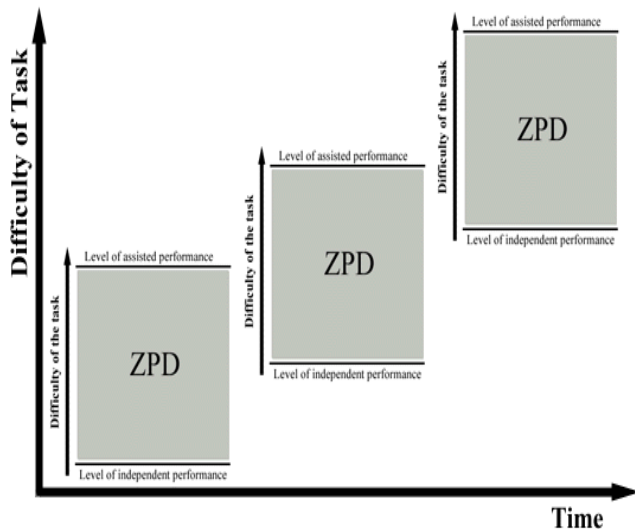
Figure 2.2. ZPD in progress (adopted from Bodrova and Leong, 1995).

Vygotsky (1998) maintained that learners with larger ZPD had comparable intellectual development. In other words, zone of proximal development gave a superior prediction or understanding of future intellectual development.

Vygotsky's notion of ZPD indicated that deciding on actual level of learners' development neither comprised the whole picture of development, and mostly nor it covered a trivial part of it (1998, as cited in Sadeghi & Khanahmadi, 2011). Hence, as Vygotsky argued, the procedures that display students' potential abilities not only at present but also for future developing are acutely needed (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011; Sadeghi & Khanahmadi, 2011).

What is important in the zone of proximal development is the way a learner's performance is mediated socially. The direction of development is guided by instruction in scientific concepts, which considered important by curriculum planners and the teacher. Through instruction, the scientific concepts relate to and become the learners' everyday concepts (Daniels, 2005).

2.9. Dynamic Assessment

Vygotsky's colleague Luria (1961) was the first person who coined the term 'dynamic assessment' (DA) in his English writings as a frame work for research on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind for children with learning disabilities (Lantolf, 2009; Shabani, 2012).

DA is different from most formal other tests in that dynamic assessment presents different purposes and requests to measure different abilities. The purpose of many large-scale tests is to measure previous development. On the other hand, the purpose of DA is twofold: to promote development and to measure developmental potential. In DA, an examiner interacts with a student to determine how he learns instead of how much he already knows (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). Lidz (1991) stated "To merely describe the child's performance does not allow us to draw conclusions or to derive recommendations" (p. 24). An important use of DA is to make recommendations based on developmental potential not revealed by traditional non-dynamic tests.

Vygotsky (1998) claimed that traditional forms of assessment reported on only fully matured functions which were the products of development, and as a result disclosed not much about the process of their information.

DA is grounded in the notion of assessment as a process rather than a product. This means that, DA is a development-oriented process which discloses a learner's current abilities in order to help them overcome any performance problems and understand their potential (Shrestha & Coffin, 2012).

In dynamic assessment the effort is to diagnose abilities that are still in the process of maturing as well as those which are fully developed. The perspective of dynamic assessment or as called for in Vygotsky's ZPD, assessment and instruction are logically integrated as the way to move toward a dynamic future (Lantolf, 2004).

2.10. Dynamic Assessment of Dynamic Abilities

Lidz and Gindis (2003, p. 100) indicated that for Vygotsky, abilities were emergent and dynamic and were not innate. In other words, abilities must not be considered fixed characteristics that can be measured; instead, they are the result of the individual's history of social interactions in the world. Through participating in various activities, and through being mediated by those around us, so we each come to master our cognitive functions in unique ways.

According to Vygotsky (1998, p. 205), traditional forms of assessment reported on only fully developed functions, the products of development, and consequently revealed little about the process of their formation. So there is a need for an assessment that is targeting maturing abilities, and observing cognitive functions while they are still forming. Besides, this assessment is going to offer the possibility of intervening to promote the development of certain processes or remediating functions when problems are going to occur. This assessment is known as dynamic assessment. As Lidz and Gindis (2003) observed, in DA:

Assessment is not an isolated activity that is merely linked to intervention. Assessment, instruction, and remediation can be based on the same universal explanatory conceptualization of a child's development (typical or atypical) and within this model are therefore inseparable. (p. 100)

This goal of observing and intervening in the development of cognitive functions is a distinguishing characteristic of dynamic assessment.

2.11. Component of Dynamic Assessment

In this part some important components of dynamic assessment as mediation, internalization, transcendence, and reciprocity would be elaborated. Besides, the components that the researcher considered in his study would be specified.

2.11.1. Mediation.

All DA procedures involved mediation and the person who provided this mediation was often referred to as the mediator. Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) referred to the mediator as someone who provides "adult guidance" or a "more capable peer". A mediator probes, questions and provides hints to help a learner perform a task that is within his or her ZPD, but which the learner cannot complete alone (Poehner, 2008). With DA, a mediator gains a more different understanding of a child's potential abilities than with a non-dynamic test, and the mediator is also able to facilitate development in the child by instructing at the same time as assessing (Feuerstein, Rand & Rynders, 1997).

Depending on the researcher's interpretation of DA, mediation can be standardized or non-standardized. When mediation is standardized, all learners receive the same assisting prompts during an assessment. This approach to DA produces quantitative results and allows researchers to better assess the psychometric properties of the assessment. When mediation is not standardized, a mediator can create assisting prompts based on his or her assessment of the learner's needs. Most likely, no two learners will receive the same quality and quantity of assistance.

As a result, it is not possible to assess psychometric properties such as validity and reliability in the traditional manner (Poehner, 2008). Results of non-standardized dynamic assessments are qualitative and require a detailed description of the learner. Lantolf and Poehner (2004) propose the terms '*interventionist*' and '*interactionist*' to describe these two approaches to DA.

The important point in mediation is inter subjectivity which is describe as the formation of shared understanding or shared view between an expert and a learner in a problem-solving task (Rommetviet 1985, cited in Shabani et al., 2010). Verenikina (2003) stated that inter subjectivity is considered as a key step in the process of internalization as the adult gradually removes the assistance and transfers responsibility to the child. In the zone of proximal development, we look at the way that a learner's performance is mediated socially, that is, how shared understanding or inter subjectivity has been achieved through moving the learners from current capabilities to a higher, culturally mediated level of development.

2.11.2. Internalization and transcendence.

Internalization occurred when a child no longer requires assistance or guidance to complete a task and what was within the child's ZPD is now their actual developmental level (ADL). Internalization is a core concept proposed by Vygotsky and described as the "mechanism through which control of our natural mental endowments is established" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 153). At first, a person can only complete tasks that lie within their ZPD with the assistance of a more competent peer. As a result of interaction with this peer, and as long as the task was within the learner's ZPD, he or she should be able to eventually internalize the assistance and complete the task alone. This concept emerges from Vygotsky's theory that every psychological function appears twice, first on the inter psychological plane through interaction with mediating artifacts and second on the intra psychological plane within the mind of the individual. Internalization is the development of the ability to carry out on the mental plane activities that before could only be carried out inter psychologically (Gal'perin, 1992, cited in Davin, 2011).

Vygotsky expressed in his genetic law of development that before any higher mental functions becoming internal it has to go through an external social stage in its development. Therefore, what is known as internalization is the process through which the function which is at first social becomes an internal function. The role of social mediation in internalization is strongly emphasized in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962).

Transcendence or transfer is the second important component of DA which in Feuersteins' approach to DA, is the Mediated Learning Experience (MLE). Feuerstein used this term to indicate the concept that an interaction had a purpose beyond the immediate need that elicited the interaction. The goal of a MLE interaction is to produce long-term effects that result in higher levels of thinking (Feuerstein et al., 1997). Hence, in Feuerstein's approach to DA, after the initial training phase, additional tasks are given that become progressively more difficult and require the transcendence of previous learning.

The 'multiple transfers' approach was inspired by Brown and her colleagues who viewed several transfer sessions as a highly desirable design feature of the DA framework and also used in several studies (Ableeva, 2010; Brown & Ferrara, 1985; Campione, Brown, Ferrara, & Bryant, 1984; Poehner, 2005).

The purpose of multiple transfer sessions is to reveal the learner's ability to use (or transfer) newly acquired knowledge to 'novel problems' or 'contexts'. For instance, Campione et al. (1984) utilized a set of three transfer sessions conducted directly after the posttest. In other words, to assess the '*near transfer*', the test-takers are given problems that are based on the same principles as the original problems but are presented in new combinations; to test '*far transfer*' and '*very far transfer*', test-takers are invited to solve problems similar to the original but more complex. Following Brown, Poehner, and Ableeva's approach to DA, this study tried to show the internalization and transcendence of language learning. The final three sessions of the study focused on the internalization and transcendence of previous speaking experience in a new and more complex situation, i.e. one 'very near transfer' session, one 'far transfer session' and one 'very far transfer' session.

2.11.3 Reciprocity.

In DA two moves have high importance, one is to record meditational moves during DA, and the other one is to note how learners respond to mediation. Lidz (1987) pointed out the active role that learners can take in DA interactions by realizing the importance of learner reciprocity. Before her research, focus had mostly centered on the quality of mediation. Lidz indicated that different learners respond to identical mediation prompts in different ways, in varying quantities and in varying qualities. A learner's feelings toward a mediator can affect the learner's responsiveness and performance.

Van Der Aalsvoort and Lidz (2002) developed a scale to capture these dimensions. The scale included aspects such as responsiveness to the mediator, self-regulation of attention and impulses, comprehension of activity demands, and reaction to challenge. When using a qualitative approach, the mediator often includes observations and commentary on these dimensions to create a more complete picture of the learner.

Poehner (2008) elaborated upon the work of Van Der Aalsvoort and Lidz (2002) and focused his analysis on five forms of reciprocity: negotiating mediation, use of mediator as a resource, creating opportunities to develop, seeking mediator approval and rejecting mediation. He expressed that "the signification of a given reciprocating act such as requesting mediator assistance can only be appropriately interpreted by contextualizing it within the mediator-learner dialog" (p. 53). Recording the context in which a learner rejects the assisting prompt of a mediator reveals much more than simply stating that the learner rejected mediation on two occasions. In his work, Poehner (2008) included excerpts from DA interactions so that readers can contextualize reciprocating acts within the dialogue.

2.12. Models of Dynamic Assessment

Vygotsky's work, and particularly his writings on the ZPD, has been elucidated in several ways by contemporary researchers interested in developing DA procedures. To some extent, this is a result of differences in how Vygotsky described the ZPD at various points in time (Chaiklin, 2003, as cited in Poehner, 2005) and also various understanding and receiving of his idea, after the first introduction of these concepts by his colleague, Luria (1961) to Western researchers and scholars. Anyhow, at this time, under the general term Dynamic Assessment, there is a rapid reproduction of approaches and methods.

2.12.1. Dynamic assessment and dynamic testing.

In the literature, the term dynamic assessment is generally refers to any number of procedures that make use of intervention through assessment. It is worth considering Sternberg and Grigorenko's point about DA procedures. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) suggested two distinct terms for dynamic procedures '*dynamic testing*' and '*dynamic assessment*'. While the goal of dynamic testing is to deal with whether or how the participant will change if an opportunity is provided, the aim of dynamic assessment is actually to intervene in the development of the individual with the goal of producing changes (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, p. 30).

According to this dualism some DA procedures can be thought of as diagnostic evaluations in which a mediator offers assistance to learners and analyzes their responsiveness in order to make predictions about their learning ability. Here the important point that needs to be aware of is that the examiner does not attempt to change the learners but rather to make predictions about the individual's learning capacities that are more fine-grained than traditional, non-interactive intelligence tests, alongside, it is believed that development may occur during the procedure (Poehner, 2005). The works of Budoff followed this procedure (Budoff, 1987; Budoff & Friedman, 1964).

Other DA procedures, which Sternberg and Grigorenko referred to as '*dynamic assessment*' privileged development over prediction. In other words, these procedures do not look for predictive validity of intelligence tests but rather facilitate them by intervening in development. These approaches to DA often use the initial assessment session as the point of departure for further intervention, which continues the ZPD work begun during the assessment. In some cases, such intervention programs extend over a long time or period of years (Poehner, 2005). The work of Feuerstein and his colleagues are followed in this procedure (Feuerstein & Rand, 1997; Feuerstein, Rand, & Hoffman, 1985; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman, Miller, & Vig, 1980).

2.12.2. Interventionist and interactionist dynamic assessment.

A brief searching on dynamic assessment literature can give us with various models and approaches. According to Lantolf and Poehner (2004) there are two general approaches to DA, '*interventionist*' and '*interactionist*' DA. The difference between two approaches can be understood regarding the amount of freedom mediators have to respond and react to learner's difficulties (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). In interventionist approach tasks and materials are selected and analyzed in advanced in order to predict the kind of problems learners are possibly to encounter. In this approach a prefabricated and fixed set of hints, clues, prompts, and leading questions which are vary in their degree of explicitness are also determined and offered to learner as they move from item to item in a test. Mediation is arranged in order of most implicit to most explicit and this set is followed accurately by the mediator during the DA. Whereas interventionist DA deals with quantifying the amount of support, interactionist DA deals with qualitative assessment of interaction and process in development. In this approach the focus is on an individual learner or group of learners without concern for predetermined mediation. The mediators do anything possible to help learner or group of learners stretch beyond their current independent performance, which means that the negation is continually adapted or adjusted in accord with learner's responses (Lantolf, 2009; Poehner, 2008;

Shabani, 2012). This study benefited from the interactionist approach to dynamic assessment

2.12.3. Sandwich and cake formats of dynamic assessment.

Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) have categorized DA as '*sandwich*' and '*cake*' format. The sandwich format which represents the traditional experimental research design consists of a pre-test, mediation phase, posttest format, in which mediation is act as sandwich between pre and posttest and administered in a non-dynamic manner. Based on the comparison of pre and posttest's performance the amount of improvement as a result of mediation is determined. On the other hand, the cake format refers to procedure in which intervention (instruction) is offered during test administration and whenever there was a problem; learners receive assessor's mediation for each test item or task in a form of a graded set of standardized hints and prompts ranging from most implicit to most explicit.

2.13. Approaches to Dynamic Assessment

In this sub-section the five currently dominate approaches in the literature DA will be considered. Table 2.2 was developed by Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002, pp. 24-25) and modified and elaborated by Davin (2011) provides a brief overview of the most prominent approaches to DA and their characteristics.

2.14. Criticism of Dynamic Assessment

In order to discuss the concerns related to DA, first two main branches of DA which were mentioned in Caffrey, Fuchs, and Fuchs (2008) must be explained. DA gradually mature over time into two branches of study: clinically oriented DA and Research-oriented DA. Clinically oriented DA sat about because of an educational treatment to remediate cognitive deficiencies assumed to cause learning problems. It is a non standardized method of assessing and treatment the cognitive deficiencies of children with learning problems, its most well known operationalization is Feuerstein's Learning Potential Assessment Device (LAPD). The treatment duration can last for many years (Rand, Tannenbaum, & Feuerstein, 1979). Research-oriented DA, on the other hand, created as an assessment tool. It usually involves a standardized assessment during which, in a single session the examiner guides a student's learning. The time required for the student to reach mastery, or the necessary level of instructional explicitness to proceed the student, serves as an index of the student's learning potential. Researchers and practitioners have used this form of DA to identify students who may require more intensive intervention and to place them in settings where such interventions can be implemented (Caffrey et al., 2008).

As Caffrey et al. (2008) pointed out, three main concerns are typically stated about DA: Particularly, its construct is fuzzy, its technical characteristics are largely undetermined, and its administration and scoring are requires a lot of work. First, when DA's theory, purpose, procedures, and uses are not clear construct fuzziness occurred (Jitendra & Kame'enui, 1993). For example, when, at a most general level, researchers failed to distinguish for their audience between clinically oriented or research-oriented DA. As a second example, an important purpose of clinically oriented DA, as just indicated, is to remediate deficient cognitive processes that appear to cause learning problems. However, the procedures of clinically oriented DA are generally non standardized and require the examiner's insight and expertise to assess learning problems and adapt intervention.

Table 2.2. Dynamic Testing Approaches (Davin, 2011)

Approach and Developer	Method	Target Population	Format	Context	Outcome
Structural Cognitive Modifiability (Feuerstein)	Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD)	All individuals needing modification	Test-train-test	Outside of school	Structural cognitive changes
Potential Testing (Budoff)	Test-centered coaching	Low-achieving students	Pre-test-standardized training-posttest	Outside of school	Improved test performance
Graduated Prompt Approach (Campione & Brown)	Hinting procedure	Low-achieving students	Pre-test-mediated learning-static testing and transfer testing-mediated maintenance and transfer	Specific domains/ subjects	Measure of ZPD
Lerntest approach (Guthke)	German learning potential tests	Mentally disabled individuals	Pre-test-training-posttest	Psychometric tests within specific domains	Records of learning gain
Testing-the-limits (Carlson & Wiedl)	Teach-to-the-limit approach	All individuals	Various verbalization and feedback	Specific domains	Improved test performance
Lantolf and Poehner	Interactionist approach	Language learners	Non-standardized mediation during posttests and transfer tasks	Language learners; individual or group	Development of concept; Diagnosis of misconceptions

Second, the existing literature does not usually report the reliability and validity of DA measures. This comes partly from intentional rejection of standardized procedures by some researchers. Many advocates of clinically oriented DA believe standardization opposes its spirit and theoretical orientation (e.g., Feuerstein, 1979). A standardized approach, they say, would fail to provide truly individualized intervention in response to student failure. Advocates of research-oriented DA, on the other hand, believe standardization and technical adequacy are necessary to make it a useful tool for research and practice (e.g., Bryant, Brown, & Campione, 1983; Ferrara, 1987; Swanson, 1994).

When we are looking into these two views of standardization and DA we can understand that these views are reflected in the nature of feedback offered during clinically oriented and research-oriented DA. In clinically oriented DA, examiners tend to frequently change how they teach to decide the type of intervention with which the student is most successful. In research-oriented DA, examiners typically change how much they teach and the level of explicitness of their teaching rather than the intervention. So, basically, practitioners of clinically oriented DA use an ever changing process to maximize student achievement, while on the contrary those using research-oriented DA attempt to assess student achievement in response to a more standardized intervention.

Third, critics have recommended that the time needed to develop protocols and train examiners may not be worth the information dynamic assessment provides. Traditional tests already exist, and preparing examiners to use them is relatively easy and effortless. DA protocols existed for decades, too, but because of inadequate information about their psychometric properties, more time may be needed to demonstrate their validity and usefulness.

This criticism may be better understood by comparing the two types of DA. Clinically oriented DA involves fairly little time to develop since scripted protocols are scarcely developed. Here Insight and expertise are really crucial, and the responsiveness of the student to instruction is relatively dependent on the specific educator who provides the help. On the opposite side, research-oriented DA demands a difficult process of protocol development because the protocols must be standardized (and perhaps norm based) on the target population. Even so, the practitioner insight and expertise is less. Practitioners can be trained when it requires practicing examiners in traditional testing, because procedures are standardized (Caffrey et al., 2008).

From another view, every new theory and paradigm, regarding its applications and implications has some advantages and disadvantages. Taking into consideration the values of DA, it has been proposed that DA may be especially useful in assessing bilingual children, along with those from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and culture (Usmani, 1999). In fact, in a number of situations like disability and disadvantage, the one that individual functioning displays challenges to school services, DA is intuitively demanding as educational psychologists search for approaches that search for to explore learning potential rather than authenticate poor current performance (Usmani, 1999).

On the other hand, considering it's devalue it is proper to mention that the domain of DA entirety still requires a fundamental body of empirical studies. What has been presented so far is a body of literature trying to explain the theoretical foundations and concepts of DA; however, not many practical investigations have been conducted in the area of language teaching and testing. Sufficient training and support would seem to be crucial if educational psychologists are to have a real choice of approaches to assessment and, specifically, if DA is to be critically evaluated (Birjandi & Sarem, 2012). Actually, as newly developing instruction pedagogy, DA is not yet greatly practiced and is still effectively not known to many psychologists and educators. According to Thorne (2005, p. 399), DA is a procedure that integrates the goals of better understanding a learner's potential through structured sets of interactions and encouraging development through those interactions, and it is just developing into social-cultural-based L2 language research (cited in Xiaoxiao & Yan, 2010).

2.15. Dynamic Assessment and Psychometric Critiques

Lantolf & Poehner (2007) stated that Dynamic assessment has not been accepted with open arms by members of the testing community. The greater part of criticism comes from understandings of DA's psychometric shortcomings. In this section we briefly describe some of these issues.

Snow (1990, p. 1134) stated his opposition to the dynamic–static distinction which proposed by DA researchers, with disregarding the distinction as a 'propaganda device'. In his view, 'static' is an inappropriate name because both 'static' and 'dynamic' tests are involved with predictive validity (i.e., the future). There is no disagreement with Snow, but the point is that static assessment and dynamic assessment are different concerning to the nature of their predictions. The prediction of DA is about an imagined future that come forth only through mediated activity (i.e. development); in SA, prediction is about generalizing an individual's test performance to subsequent non-test situations. To recall Valsiner's (2001) discussion, DA predicts a future-in-the-making while SA predicts a future-in-the-present (cited in Lantolf & Poehner, 2007). As Caffrey, Fuchs, and Fuchs (2008) mentioned:

Prediction of future achievement is important because it can identify students at risk for school failure and in need of more intensive intervention. Students enter school with different cognitive strengths and weaknesses, different home and community experiences and expectations, and different levels of prior education. These capacities, experiences, and expectations result in various levels of academic competence and readiness (p. 256).

Traditional testing has been criticized for its limited ability to estimate accurately a student's potential for change. It is possible that DA, in conjunction with traditional testing, may provide a more accurate estimate of a student's potential for change and likelihood of school success and inform planning for appropriate instruction (Caffrey et al., 2008).

Moreover, Snow (1990, p. 1135) also objected to using the term 'assessment' to describe DA. He argued that without joining assessment in some manner to measurement, 'fundamental in all science', the term is 'meaningless'. Büchel and Scharnhorst (1993, p. 101) have reacted by encouraging DA researchers to connect assessment and measurement through "standardization of the examiner–subject interaction" as in interventionist DA. Similarly, Glutting and McDermott (1990, p. 300) criticized Feuerstein's procedure because of its dependence on improvisation and creative latitude in the administration of mediated learning experiences and because some children receive more help than others during the interaction. They also worry about 'instrument decay' as teaching prompts on early test items can result in autonomous changes in the difficulty level of subsequent items. For Vygotsky, creativity and improvisation are essential to supplying appropriate forms of mediation in the ZPD (Holzman & Newman, 2007), while measuring a child's performance provides little more than "a purely empirical establishment of what is obvious to persons who just observe the child and adds nothing new to what is already known through direct observation" (Vygotsky,1998, p. 205). This gets at the fundamental purpose behind and meaning of assessment: for Vygotsky, the task is not to '*measure*' but to '*interpret*' the child (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 204).

2.15.1. Reliability of dynamic assessment.

Additional criticism of DA is about standardization and test reliability; seemingly, without standardization there can be no reliability (Buchel & Scharnhorst, 1993). Traditionally, test reliability comes from an engagement to standardization through all sources of potential error should be minimized to guarantee that the observed score on a test is as close to the true score as possible. Reliability supposes that what is being measured is more or less steady and stable.

In the domain of DA, interventionist researchers are performed to the reduction of measurement error through standardized form of mediation. On the other hand, interactionist DA is more problematic when placed under the psychometrician's reviews. Interactionist assessors claim that abilities are innately unstable, and for being maximally useful in promoting development assistance must be proper to the responsiveness and needs of particular learners or groups of learners, a requirement which weakens standardization (Lantolf & Poehner, 2007, p. 67). For Feuerstein, Rand, and Rynders the aim is "to '*undo*' the predictive value of the initial assessment by modifying functioning through the mediational process" (Feuerstein, Rand & Rynders, 1988, p. 199). To some extent there is no doubt in that the more reliable the procedure, the less effective it is in promoting individual development. As Lidz (1991, p. 18) persuasively stated, "The word 'dynamic' implies change and not stability. Items on traditional measures are '*deliberately*' selected to maximize stability, not necessarily to provide an accurate reflection of stability or change in the 'real' world".

2.15.2. Validity of dynamic assessment.

As long as reliability is problematic to interactionist DA, validity is not. DA obtains its validity from the procedures followed in the administration of the instrument and not from the assessment instruments. Based On the assumption that pushing the person's (language) abilities forward is the aim of DA and as far as this purpose is somehow achieved, the validity of the procedure is established. In fact, the views of researchers on how they understand the abilities they want to assess (e.g., how they define language proficiency) may differ. Even so, DA can be used to promote development of the ability in question with appropriate mediation (Lantolf & Poehner, 2007). Feuerstein, Rand and Rynders (1988, p. 205) expressed that in DA, "very little attention is given to product or to the absolute magnitude of a result. More importance is attached to learning about the process that has brought about a particular product."

Carlson and Wiedl (2000), restated Messick's (1988) recommendations, arguing that the important fact for DA is consequential validity, especially regarding "the context of and justification for its use, a result of pragmatic judgments combined with scientific analysis, if a measure cannot be justified for its practical utility it becomes irrelevant" (p. 708). In Anton's (2003) work consequential validity took center stage as the Spanish faculty was able to make better informed placement decisions for their advanced students.

In another study Caffrey, Fuchs, and Fuchs (2008) focused on predictive validity of DA arguing that DA's twin focus on the level and rate of learning makes it a better predictor of future learning. They gave a valid example of a child who enters kindergarten with little background knowledge. She scores poorly on traditional tests, but during DA, she demonstrates intelligence, maturity, attention, and motivation, and she learns a task—or a series of tasks— with relatively little guidance from the examiner. Because of this, and in spite of her performance on traditional tests, she is seen as in less danger of school failure than her classmates who score poorly on both traditional tests and DA.

Thus, DA may correctly identify children who seem at risk for school failure but who, with timely instruction, may respond relatively quickly and perform within acceptable limits. Data from DA may also identify the type and intensity of intervention necessary for academic success (Caffrey et al., 2008).

Researchers in several studies have reported that DA can contribute to the prediction of achievement beyond traditional tests (Byrne, Fielding-Barnsley, & Ashley, 2000; Meijer, 1993; Resing, 1993). However, this seems to depend on the analysis techniques and domains of study (Swanson, 1994).

2.16. Previous Studies on Dynamic Assessment in Language Education

Despite the fact that DA is a newcomer in SLA, it is in no manner the case in other disciplines. As Haywood and Lidz (2007, p. 2) asserted, DA "is no longer a new approach to psychological and educational assessment [as] some of its current applications have been around for more than a half century." Therefore, Haywood and Lidz identify some DA-based studies such as the one on mathematics by Jitendra and Kameenui (1993); on reading by Gettinger (1984); and on speech and language by Kozulin and Garb (2001), to specify a few.

However, L2 DA studies in general and GDA studies in particular do not have such a robust literature. That is the reason Poehner (2008, p. 5) said that "to date, few studies have examined L2 performance from a Dynamic Assessment perspective, although the growing interest in Vygotskian theory among applied linguists has led to some exploration of how DA principles might be used in L2 contexts." Nevertheless, the subsequent studies are in the domain of L2 DA studies: Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), Nassaji and Swain (2000), Kozulin and Garb (2001), Poehner (2005), and Ableeva (2010).

Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) study was a pioneering study in which nine learners who were attempting to produce grammatical features such as use of tense, modal verbs, prepositions, and articles in their compositions collaborated with a mediator. The mediator met each individual learner in the writing class and made revisions on their previously written work. This revision was done on the basis of a regulatory scale which would change from most implicit to most explicit. As Poehner (2005) correctly indicated, even though Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) study was not particularly structured as DA, it is possible to regard the study within the framework of DA because the mediator tried to co-construct a ZPD with the learners, interacting with them to diagnose areas of difficulty and to help them gain control over the relevant structures.

Nassaji and Swain (2000) followed Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) study and tried to discover whether ZPD-sensitive mediation was essential to improve performance. In other words, if any kind of mediation could be adequate to help the learners move beyond what they could do independently. They were also curious to know which one of the mediations was more efficient to promote development. Thus, Nassaji and Swain (2000) paired a mediator with two ESL learners. With one, the mediation was ZPD-sensitive; and with the other it was quite random, i.e. without any attempt to adjust the level of assistance to the learner's responsiveness. The results revealed that the one receiving ZPD-sensitive mediation had practically been less accurate when producing the initial composition independently but anyway displayed considerable improvement as a result of the mediation given and outperformed the non-ZPD student on the final composition task.

Another study is that of Kozulin and Garb (2001) which was identified as interventionist DA after the pre-test, posttest design it followed. The results were obviously supporting DA since it demonstrated to be significantly effective in promoting

learners' reading comprehension skill. Even though Poehner (2005) disagreed with the dynamic nature of Kozulin and Garb's (2001) study, the study clearly included in DA framework however obviously it was on the interventionist side of the continuum.

Poehner (2005), in another study, focused on learners' oral abilities. Based on short videos, six advanced students of L2 French were asked to orally construct a series of narratives in French. The learners had to construct the first narrative independently while in a second narrative they received some help. The results of these two narratives were used to develop a program of individualized instruction. Based on the instruction, the learning of participant was assessed by the repetition of the original assessment tasks and introduction of some newly developed but similar tasks. Poehner (2005) stated "the findings suggest that DA is an effective means of understanding learners' abilities and helping them to overcome linguistic problems; this approach is especially relevant to L2 classrooms as a method for rendering formative assessment practices to a more systematic [way]" (p. 4).

And at last, Ableeva (2010) investigated the effects of DA on improving speaking comprehension of students learning French as a foreign language. The results of DA were compared to a traditional test of speaking comprehension. The outcomes of the study revealed that DA clarified the sources of poor performance which were hidden during traditional assessments. The results also indicated that, via interactions in the ZPD, DA was capable of establishing not only the actual level of learners' speaking ability but also diagnosing/assessing their potential development while at the same time promoting this development.

As it may have been observed, L2 DA studies seem to have been growing extensively. Yet, such is not the case with GDA of speaking comprehension of young EFL learners, making it necessary to carry a piece of research in this particular domain.

2.17. Dynamic Assessment in Foreign Language Setting

After the death of Vygotsky until now the literature of dynamic assessment is filled with theoretical researches and papers, but concerning experimental works it is eagerly expanding in recent years. In the foreign language setting, DA can serve multiple purposes such as determining placement program for language learners, assisting an examiner in the diagnosis of the source of a learner's misconceptions, and promoting student's proficiency in the target language. Poehner, a strong advocate of dynamic assessment, in his book stated the genesis of dynamic assessment in Vygotsky's work and how it came to practice and implemented by researchers and teacher all around the word. Besides, in the second part of his book, he explored various approaches and models which devised by proponents of dynamic assessment for unifying assessment and instruction (Poehner, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) investigated the effects of negative feedback as a regulation based on sociocultural theory of mind and ZPD through mediating written performance of nine intermediate students during eight week of writing and reading course. Their study followed an interactionist approach and conducted to give corrective feedback to learners for their composition in their ZPD, through level by level mediation, during a tutorial with learners in a one-to-one format. Based on the data analyzed in their study Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) argued that development toward independent control of features of new language would be a gradual process of moving through

different levels of mediation from implicit to explicit. They noticed two developmental criteria; one was the traditional product-oriented form which was the improvement in the learner's use of relevant linguistic feature in subsequent essays and two was the movement of learners out of the context of ZPD through reliance on self or self-regulation instead of reliance on tutor or other-regulation. This criteria was noticed by the frequency and quality of mediation or help that learners received from tutor (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994).

Similar to work of Aljaafreh and Lantolf was a study done by Thouesny (2010) which investigated the effect of both interventionist and interactionist approach to DA during computer-based assessment of French writing at university level. Thouesny followed an interventionist approach and he designed a web-based assessment that not only assess language learners' free written productions but also facilitate interactions between learners and teachers during the assessment process (Thouesny, 2010). This study was worthy because it can apply to large-scale assessment and it showed that the psychometric measures and interventions allowed teachers as well as learners to negotiate and interact with the mediation offered.

In another study Lantolf and Poehner (2011) reported the efforts of an elementary school teacher of Spanish as a second language to implement principles of dynamic assessment in a normal (non-experimental) classroom setting. The teacher followed an interventionist cake format of dynamic assessment with her students for developing Spanish lexical items and grammatical structures. The teacher planned her lessons and she prepared the menus of mediating moves arranged from most implicit to most explicit. This mediation inventory enabled the teacher to be highly systematic in interactions with her students. In this longitudinal research the analysis of student-teacher interactions in the ZPD showed evidence of language development. This research is worthy not only because it illustrated the interrelation of theory and practice of DA but also it emphasized that DA is not pre-specified technique or method of assessing that must be go along in prescribed manner. It showed that DA is the realization that must take account of the immediate instructional context.

2.18. GDA in the Foreign Language Classroom: Cumulative and Concurrent GDA

In this subsection some important GDA works in foreign language classrooms are reviewed, besides two main models of GDA *'cumulative'* and *'concurrent'* approaches to group DA are elaborated.

Lantolf and Poehner (2011) examined the implementation of DA in a combined fourth and fifth grade Spanish classroom. In this study, the classroom teacher used standardized mediation prompts to dynamically assess noun/adjective agreement in Spanish. Based partially on data from this study, Poehner (2009) made a distinction between the *'cumulative'* and *'concurrent'* approaches to group DA. In the cumulative approach, the students "take turns engaging directly as primary interactants with the teacher, with the understanding that each subsequent one-on-one exchange will have the advantage of building on earlier interactions that the class witnessed" (Poehner, 2009, p. 478). When a student provides an incorrect answer, the teacher provides the same student with mediation prompts until he or she reaches the correct answer.

In contrast, the large group concurrent approach occurs when the student experiencing difficulty is not given the

chance to correct his or her statement. Rather, the teacher provides mediation and then calls on a different student, other than the student who initiated the interaction, to reformulate the response (Poehner, 2009).

In second language (L2) Classrooms, one important challenge to implementing DA is that in these situations, typically do not permit the one-to-one interactions that is focused in most DA works and studies to date (Poehner, 2009). When we are concerning group dynamic assessment (GDA), it is worth mentioning Poehner's (2009) study as mentioned earlier, who discussed the concurrent GDA with L2 learners and then move to a more extended discussion of L2 GDA. In his paper Poehner offered a brief illustration of GDA works with English language learners in Australian Primary school, a study carried out by Gibbons (2003), and GDA with Spanish language learners in U.S Primary School, a study carried by Lantolf and Poehner in (2011). Poehner pointed out the pedagogical innovation by addressing a group of learners by organizing one-to-one interaction in whole classroom setting and argued GDA broadens the mediation as in individual interactions to potentially an entire class.

In this latter approach, the concurrent GDA can be view as two models. In one model a student is not given the opportunity to reformulate his or her statement. The teacher indicates that the response is incorrect and provides assistance, but then calls on a different student to reformulate the response. It seems that this one-on-one interaction with a single student would cause less anxiety than the other model of concurrent approach in which the teacher dialogues with the entire group. Concurrent DA seems to lower the confidence of a student who does not get the opportunity to offer a second response, therefore ignoring the resulting interaction and never knowing what the correct answer was. While the concurrent approach does involve more students, Lantolf and Poehner (2011) note that with the cumulative approach, students other than the primary interactant seem actively engaged, and many times, are waving their hands in the air to volunteer the answer.

2.19. Dynamic Assessment and Group Dynamic Assessment in Iran

In Iran several studies on ZPD and dynamic assessment had been carried out in recent years. Sadeghi and Khanahmadi (2011) investigated the difference between dynamic assessment focused grammar learning and a static assessment by Iranian EFL learners. The findings of their research displayed a significant and meaningful effect on practicality and ease of L2 grammar teaching and learning and that DA-based mediation and intervention can be very instrumental during this instruction.

Shabani (2012) explored a new and innovative approach to dynamic assessment and investigated the practicality of computerized dynamic assessment (C-DA) or in other words, electronically delivering textual and visual scaffolding on reading comprehension of 100 undergraduate EFL learners. He argued the difference between C-DA and non dynamic assessment (NDA) approaches and showed that there was a striking difference between the results of these two approaches which 84 percent of the students who were classified as non-gainer according to NDA results were found to have different reading potentials or ZPDs. Besides, the finding revealed C-DA can enhance the students' reading comprehensions.

Similar to the work of Poehner (2009), Alavi and Shabani (2011) investigated the practicality of GDA in L2 Classroom setting to diagnose intermediate L2 learners' speaking

difficulties and showed GDA effects on their speaking development. Their study found three main factors that affected speaking comprehension namely '*phonological*', by confusing one word with another, '*lexical*', lack of lexical knowledge and not understanding the received word, and '*grammatical*', by ignoring a known grammatical point. Besides, the analysis of interactions in their study approved the crucial role of mediation in expanding individual and as a result group ZPD.

In another Study Alavi, Kaivanpanah and Shabani (2012) tested the feasibility of GDA with inventory meditational strategies for teaching speaking to a group of L2 learners ranging in age of 20-25. Their inventory strategies for mediation were: confirming/rejecting response, replaying consisting of speaking to the entire portion and speaking to segment from the portion, putting words together, repeating the erroneous guess with a questioning tone, offering contextual reminders, using dictionary, and providing correct response and explanation. The qualitative analysis of protocols in this research showed that these strategies can help tracking the path of learners' development over time (Alavi et al., 2012). Moreover, in GDA, primary interactants can mutually benefit from others contributions in the social space of classroom.

The present study followed Alavi, Kaivanpanah and Shabani (2012) approach and model to GDA of speaking comprehension, but worked with young Iranian EFL learners.

To conclude, there have also been several theoretical and practical studies on dynamic assessment which demonstrated the theoretical frame of ZDP and new approaches to dynamic assessment of different language skills for example: (Antón, 2009; Birjandi & Sarem, 2012; Davin, 2011; Grigorenko, 2009; Jonsson, Mattheos, Svingby, & Attstrom, 2007; Pishghadam, 2012; Poehner, 2005; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012).

2.20. Summary of the Chapter

This synthesis revealed the lack of research on DA in elementary levels of language programs, as well as the need for more research on DA in group settings. Besides, by considering the lack of a qualitative and experimental study in teaching language skills and specially speaking in young EFL classes in Iran and employing the notion of ZPD -which today has received much psychological and educational support and attention - this study was an attempt to implement group based dynamic assessment in teaching speaking and speaking comprehension in a new and innovative manner.

Given the importance of speaking in terms of second language acquisition, and the benefits brought by dynamic assessment to language learning, we attempted to investigate the benefit of dynamic assessment, specifically GDA, on the development of speaking skill. Additionally, even though factors contributing to speaking difficulties have been identified in much literature, there is virtually none, to our limited knowledge, attempting to operationalize the factors for pedagogical concerns. Last, as grading mechanisms are available for reading texts, the same mechanisms for speaking texts are still unavailable.

In light of the pedagogical needs and the research gaps, the purposes of the present study were as follows: first, to examine to what extent group dynamic assessment could benefit the learners' speaking ability; second, to provide an innovative pedagogical model for speaking teachers to operationalize GDA in classroom settings; and finally, to

identify potential areas of difficulty in speaking comprehension of young EFL learners.

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