



LICENCIATURA EN EDUCACIÓN CON ÉNFASIS EN INGLÉS

**DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
AND LEARNING: A REVIEW**

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**Trabajo de grado para optar al título de
Licenciado en Educación con Énfasis en Inglés**

Asesor (a)

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CARTAGENA DE INDIAS D. T y P.

2016

NOTA DE ACEPTACIÓN

JURADO

JURADO

Dedicado a

Con todo mi cariño y amor a las personas que me apoyaron hasta el final que colocaron su grano de arena ya sea con sus regaños con su amor, cariño y paciencia para que pudiera logra este sueño y motivarme hasta el final solo me queda decir muchas gracias ya que las palabras no son suficientes.

-Eric Becker-

Dedico este nuevo logro en mi vida a mis padres Alberto y Yadira, pues sin ellos y sin la educación que me brindaron, jamás hubiera podido llegar a esto que soy hoy día. Por sus consejos, apoyo incondicional y en especial por su paciencia.

Con todo mi amor y cariño a mi novia Raisa, por su apoyo incondicional en cada paso de este proceso, por sus consejos, por confiar en mí y no dejarme desfallecer en los momentos más difíciles.

-Carlos Vásquez-

Quiero dedicar este logro a mis padres, que estuvieron conmigo apoyándome y motivándome durante todo este proceso.

-Dilson Castellón-

Agradecimientos

. Quiero agradecer profundamente a mis tutores Osiris Chajín y José Luis López por acompañarme en este largo camino, por haberme formado como docente, por sus consejos cuando más los necesitaba, por darme una luz de esperanza para poder culminar este proceso. También a mi profesor José Santos, pues con él empezó todo este camino, el cual fue duro, pero que ha valido la pena enormemente. Las palabras no me alcanzarán para agradecerle todo lo que hizo, no sólo por mí, sino por mis compañeros.

Por último, y no menos importante, quiero darle las gracias a mi tutora Lizeth Vergara, por su gran apoyo y paciencia hasta el final de todo este proceso.

-Carlos Vásquez-

Quiero agradecer a todos los docentes que fueron de gran ayuda e influyeron en mí desde el primer semestre hasta este último momentos de este programa de licenciatura, y de quienes pude aprender muchas cosas. Muchísimas gracias.

-Dilson Castellón-

Muchas gracias a mi madre a mi pareja por su cariño y apoyo a mis compañeros, docentes y tutores en especial a la profesora Osiris Chajín por su apoyo y ayuda en este proceso.

-Eric Becker-

Dynamic Assessment Approach in English Language Teaching and Learning: A review

Abstract

In the teaching and learning process, several forms of assessment has emerged in order to satisfy the need of evaluating student's development. The most implemented form of assessment has been static assessment or better known as traditional assessment. As a response to change the way students have been evaluated, dynamic assessment appears as a form of assessing based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. This revision focuses on that new form of assessment, which is growing between the educators. This study presents an overview of dynamic assessment and its application in teaching foreign language, especially in the improvement of reading and writing skills. As a main result, the literature reveals that the implementation of DA in writing and reading skills is effective and it works as a functional complement of traditional assessments, but factors such as context, the amount of hours, teachers' competences and training, are elements that have to be considered to assure the effectiveness of this approach.

key words: *Dynamic Assessment (DA), Static Assessment, Zone of proximal Development (ZPD), English as a Foreign language (EFL), English as a Second Language (SLL), Vigotsky's socio cultural Theory.*

Introduction

The evaluation of students learning constitutes a very important role in the field of education, since its purpose is to corroborate the scope of the objectives previously proposed regarding to learning. It is then possible to analyze the process of teaching and learning through evaluation and then, address these issues and give them a possible solution. To establish the causes of learning problems, what the causes of learning problems are and solve them, sometimes it can be a very complex task, especially if we talk about solving problems of students' learning.

Traditionally, the most common method to assess the language ability or skills of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) has been static testing which separate testing from teaching, because many countries around the world use standardized high-stakes language tests and that could be a point against the teachers that implement Dynamic Assessment (henceforth DA). In this point DA is young in many countries, specifically a new concept in the field of language learning, and limited in the field of research in the language classroom. Contrary to Static Assessment (henceforth SA) it emerges as a way to change this traditional form of assessing with the idea that teaching and testing are inseparable entities (Nazari, 2012, pp.10, 11).

Due to SA is the most common way of assessing the students, it is necessary to change this view and implement other ways to assess, which can be a complement to their curriculum of testing. The implementation of modern ways of evaluation can bring benefits to the teaching and learning process. According to Tabatabaei and Bakhtiarvand (2014), “static assessment indicates what they have already learned, whereas measuring their performance through dynamic assessment (DA) shows what they can learn from interaction with a teacher or a more experienced peer”. (p.2)

DA also offers a conceptual framework to integrate assessment into instruction, the learner’s responsiveness to instruction is a measure of learner’s potential and teacher’s role is intervening whenever needed to help student’s performance beyond their current level of capabilities. (Saniei, Birjandi & Abdollahzadeh, 2014).

Taking the previous ideas into consideration, the objective of this paper is to know the Dynamic Assessment and its possible applications in teaching and learning English language, especially in the improvement of reading and writing skills. The paper starts by reporting historical framework of DA followed by a definition of DA from different authors that will allow us to understand DA and a wide review of articles, books, etc. that have made application of DA in Second language and Foreign Language focused on different language skills, especially on Reading and Writing, to improve the language learning in the classroom.

Methodology

It was carried out a thematic review in education databases such as Eric, DOAJ, Jstore, Scielo, Dialnet, Redalyc; web pages such as Readcube and articles from specialized journal. They were included articles in English, Spanish and Portuguese, published between 2000 and 2015, with the following descriptors: Dynamic Assessment, Teaching and Learning English. Fifty articles were collected. The documents were organized in alphabetical order by author(s) and title, highlighting the methodology, abstract, results, relevant quotes and references. Titles and abstracts were reviewed separately and references considered relevant were selected subjectively, and completely reviewed those that allowed to achieve the purpose of this review.

Historical framework of Dynamic Assessment

To present the topic DA it is necessary an initial exploration on its history. It was about the late nineteenth century that assessment appeared as a domain of interest for researchers and educators, and standardized assessments were initiated only in the twentieth century. Therefore, during the 1900’s standardized

assessment was widespread in the United States used as a test of general intelligence to evaluate immigrants and army new members. Subsequently, used in education. (Gould, 1996).

Static assessment (SA) can only measure the learner's actual level of performance (what they can perform independently) but cannot assess their potential level of performance (what they can perform with assistance). (H Fatemipour, F Jafari. 2015) Nevertheless, it does not care about the individuality of students, it is focused on the test results without thinking about the development of student's performance, it also separates instruction from assessment. As a response to types of static assessments a new form of assessment emerges, named Dynamic assessment.

The concept of DA is “grounded in the theory of mental development elaborated by the Russian psychologist, L. S. Vygotsky.”, he produced a remarkably rich body of work on the nature and development of the human mind.” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011, pp.8, 10) As a result of the studies, Vygotsky presents the Theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This metaphor is defined by Vygotsky as “the difference between what a person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support from someone else and/or cultural artifacts.” (Lantolf, 2000, p.17).

Even though Dynamic assessment is based on Vygotsky's theories, it was not established by him (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005) it was introduced by Vygotsky's colleges Alexander Luria and popularized by Reuven Feuerstein. “Luria introduced the idea of Dynamic Assessment to the western research community. The concept merged the instruction and assessment to emerge then as a learning/assessment procedure in that neither the instruction nor the assessment part of the DA could be exactly distinguished” (Mehri & Amerian, 2015, p. 1; Hamed Barjesteh & Fatemeh Niknezhad, 2013, p. 4).

Feuerstein introduced the topic in North America. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002, cited in Murphy, 2011) mention that “It is due largely to Feuerstein and his followers that DA has flourished, especially its gradual development in the West” (p.17), Then it was during the 1970s when people saw the deployment of DA methods of mental abilities. Some of them were the results of Feuerstein's studies, who prepared the groundwork decades earlier, as well as Budoff, Campione, Brown and finally Haywood, who were instrumental in bringing the work of Feuerstein to the United States. (Murphy, 2011)

According to Murphy (2011), continental european contributions to the historical development of dynamic assessment, seem to have a richer history as opposed to development in the United States and the United Kingdom, which may partly explain why dynamic assessment has been more eagerly followed and accepted there. This may explain the greater resistance to this method from mainstream assessors currently more at ease with standard intelligence tests.

Additionally, it is worthy of mention the contribution of Feuerstein to DA with the Mediated Learning Experience approach (MLE) developed by him and his colleagues, which is similar to the Vygotsky's work. The basic belief of this approach is that the cognitive abilities of people are changeable. MLE is the interaction between the learner and the teacher that ends in the cognitive development of the learner. (Mahdavi, M., 2014, p. 17)

Also, Carl and Wiedl between the 1970s and 1980s provided evidence for the validity of dynamic assessment as an alternative approach, working specifically within the information processing paradigm (Lidz, 1987, cited in Murphy, 2011). During this period various research groups came into prominence under the term "dynamic assessment", between these groups are the works of Feuerstein.

In the following decades 1990s and first years of the twenty-first century, DA started to take off in south Africa and expanding its field of research of application to novel populations, among others mature students, the elderly, gifted (culturally diverse and usually undetected), at - risk foreign language learners, psychiatric prison inmates, early brain - damaged individuals, and blind, deaf and speech - impaired populations, and is applicable to both domain - general and domain - specific contexts, perhaps "in the last two decades dynamic assessment has come to prominence in the literature." (Guthke, Beckmann & Dobat, 1997; Lauchlan & Elliott, 2001 cited in Murphy, 2011, p. 20). In addition, DA is a relatively new approach to L2 assessment that has been introduced to L2 research and educational community by Lantolf and Poehner (2004) and Poehner and Lantolf (2005).

What is Dynamic Assessment?

DA was developed as an alternative to "static" types of assessment, namely, standardized tests (Anton, 2009). Luria introduced the name "Dynamic" in 1961 and Feuerstein developed it as it was explained in the section above. According to Saniei, Birjandi and Abdollahzadeh (2014) dynamic assessment "offers a conceptual framework which integrates assessment into instruction and posits that learners' responsiveness to instruction can be seen as a measure of learners' potential. The outstanding feature of this mode of assessment is teachers intervening whenever needed to help learners perform beyond their current level of capabilities." (p. 39). Also Poehner and Lantolf (2005) add that the goal of DA is to unify assessment and instruction into a single activity, the goal of which is learner development. Also a brief comparison between static and dynamic assessment can give a clear view of what DA is.

In Dynamic assessment the future performance will be different from current performance (Lantolf and poehner, 2004) something that is not seen in SA. In SA is assumed that the intelligence of the learners is reflected in the results of a test (Mehri & Amerian, 2015). In other words, it does not take into consideration that students develop abilities, it just assesses what students know in the present and they have internalized the pre-established knowledge, different to DA which makes more emphasis on the process rather than on the product (Anton, 2009).

Tabatabaei and Bakhtiarvand (2014) point out that the role of the teacher in DA is to be an examiner with a higher knowledge that interact with the learner. On the other hand “In traditional testing, the examiner is a neutral participant who provides standardized directions and does not typically provide performance contingent feedback. Additionally, in DA examiner not only gives performance contingent feedback but also offers instruction in response to student failure to change or improve the student’s attainment.”(pp. 8, 9) The same authors mentioned that “the underlying assumption of dynamic assessment is that all learners are capable of some degree of learning (change and modifiability). This contrasts with the underlying assumption of standardized psychometric testing that the learning ability of most individuals is inherently stable.”(p. 9), students are also active participants in their own process.

Dynamic Assessment Models

Numerous theorists have developed teaching and learning models to teach students the techniques of creative and productive thinking. Teachers must be familiarized with these models. It is important to mention that the models listed in this section are not the main topic in this paper and also it is not an exhaustive list.

(see chart 1)

Chart 1

Model	Author
Autonomous Learner Model	George Betts
Creative Problem Solving Process	Osborn Parness
Enrichment Triad	Joseph Renzulli
Lateral and Creative Thinking	Edward de Bono
Multiple Intelligence Model	Howard Gardner
Multiple Talent Model	Calvin Taylor

According to Maker, “a teaching-learning model is a structural framework that serves as a guide for developing specific educational activities and environments” (1982, p. 57).

Common Features in these models are:

- An identified purpose or area of concentration;
- Underlying explicit and implicit assumptions about the characteristics of learners and about the teaching-learning process;
- Guidelines for developing specific day-to-day learning experiences;
- Definite patterns and requirements for these learning activities; and
- A body of research surrounding their development or an evaluation of their effectiveness

In the same way, in the field of DA there are different models and each one is characterized by a specific feature to assessment. Macrine and Lidz (2001), states that the key feature of these models is that the mediator actively intervenes to promotes and help the students to understand the basic principles of task solution, and proceed in a strategic and self-regulated style. (See Chart 2)

Chart 2

Model's Name	Definition	Features
Dynamic Assessment Interventionist Model	Poehner (2008) states that the defining characteristic of interventionist DA is the use of “standardized administration procedures and forms of assistance in order to produce easily quantifiable results that can be used to make comparisons between and within groups, and can be contrasted with other measures and used to make predictions about performance on future tests” (p.18).	<p>Lantolf (2009) states the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of clues and hints (fixed & prefabricated) is determined in advance and offered to learners as they move through a test item by item. • The hints are arranged on a scale from implicit to explicit (If the learner respond to an implicit hint, it will not be necessary the explicit ones). <p>Another relevant feature is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learners' ZPD is

		quantitatively computed as the difference between the learners' performances and scores before and after teacher's intervention.
Dynamic Assessment Interactionist Model	Minick (1987), (as cited in Tabatabaei and Bakhtiarvand, 2014), argues that DA is conceived as “a means of gaining insight into the kinds of psychological processes that the learner might be capable of displaying in the next proximal phase of development and a means of identifying the kinds of instruction, or assistance that will be required if the learner is to realize these potentials” (p. 127).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It integrates instruction and assessment together • It assesses and promotes the learner's cognitive development following Vygotsky's concept of the ZDP. • This qualitative approach to DA emphasizes learning over assessment. • Leading questions, hints, or prompts are not arranged in advance and they emerge from mediated dialogue (Lantolf & Pohner, 2004). • Throughout the interaction, the examiner reacts to the examinee's needs and constantly re-calibrates his/her mediation (Ableeva, 2010).
Budoff's Learning Potential Measurement Approach	This approach states that the old intelligence assessments is sufficient for understanding the capabilities of many children, however, for many children who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, analysis of assessment results are cooperated by the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main feature of this approach is concerning the validity of scores by using standardized measures of intelligence.

	division between the children's culture and the culture of the school (Budoff, 1987; Budoff & Friedman, 1964).	
Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)	According to F Feuerstein, R., Falik, L., Rand, Y., & Feuerstein, Ra.S. (2006), Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) refers to the way in which stimuli experienced in the environment are transformed by a mediating agent, usually a parent, teacher, sibling, or other intentioned person in the learner's life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mediator selects stimuli that are most appropriate to his/her intentions, and then frames, filters, and schedules them; their appearance or disappearance is arranged to structure the learner's exposure according to clearly identified and explicit goals. • The goal of MLE is to assist someone to be a more skilled and independent learner. • A mediator does not tell the child what strategy should be used. • MLE is what occurs in a child's learning zone. This is based on Vygotsky's notion of the 'Zone of Proximal Development'.
Guthke's Lerntest Approach	The Lerntest approach is based on Vygotsky's ideas & represents a myriad of testing procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation and test are combined together

Dynamic Assessment's implementations in second and foreign language.

When we talk about DA, it is necessary to highlight: "it is not for everybody on all occasions but instead constitutes a valuable part of the assessment repertoire when used in conjunction with other forms of assessment, including standardized testing, social and development history taking, observation of

performance in learning situations, and data gathered from clinical interview, parents, teachers, and others." (Haywood & Lidz, 2006, p. 2). It is worth mentioning that implementing DA is not easy, especially for those teachers who have been working with static assessment. However, the idea is not to change, but it is to work in conjunction with both of them.

There is a considerable amount of approaches that explain L2 acquisition, but there is a specific one that relies on how L2 knowledge is internalized through experiences. This approach is known as "The theory of mind" or Sociocultural Theory by Lev Vygotsky (henceforth SCT). Basically, SCT is based on the development of human cognitive and higher mental function. The theory argues that the development of human cognitive and higher mental function comes from social interactions and through participation in social activities requiring cognitive and communicative functions, individuals are drawn into the use of these functions in ways that nurture and "scaffold" them. Vygotsky's also introduced the theory of Zone of Proximal Development ZPD. Through this Theory it is possible to know the capabilities of the students in both potential and actual sections. Also, we should find information about both the existing and future abilities of the learners (Vygotsky 1978)

Lantolf and Thorne claim that the principles of the SCT can be also applied to Second Language Acquisition (SLA). They argue that "Learning is embedded within social events and occurring as an individual interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment" (2008, p. 54).

Following all this principles, also rooted in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory and Feuerstein's theory of mediated learning experiences (MLE; Lidz, 1996; Tzuriel, 2000), it was necessary to propose a new approach to break away from an incomplete, static and unfair form of assessing students to the dynamic form of assessment in order to more comprehensively bring to light learner's independent and assisted level of performance; this approach is called Dynamic Assessment (DA). According to Lussier and Swanson (2005), it is an approach that encourages promoting performance through an examiner's help and mediation in an effort to comprehend the potential for the development in learning. DA is different to the conventional or traditional views of teaching and assessment, because it states that instruction and assessment should not be considered as separate activities; instead, they should be fully assumed as an integrated one. This integration, according to Poehner (2008), occurs when an intervention is embedded within the assessment procedure to reinterpret individuals' abilities, which leads them to higher levels of functioning. But the point is not to discriminate traditional assessments, dynamic assessment "is not intended as a replacement for other types of testing but as a complement to them"(Anton, 2009, p. 3).

Taking into consideration that Dynamic Assessment is new, it demands more practice and implementation, as Barjesteh and Niknezhad, (2013) conclude "DA is not yet widely practiced and is still virtually unknown to many psychologists and educators."(p. 7)

Some applications of DA have been done in foreign and second languages. Poehner (2007) focuses on dynamic assessment and non-dynamic assessment contribution to L2 assessment and its implementation in the L2 field. The examples of L2 DA discussed in his article powerfully illustrate the benefits of moving interaction, rather than standardization, to the fore of the procedure. One of the examples is a study about a program for advanced (seventh semester) undergraduate learners of L2 French, the DA program supplemented regular classroom activities, with students meeting with a mediator outside of class to help them develop their oral abilities in French, two participants were selected (Donna and Jess; assumed names), and the objective was developing their oral abilities in French but the mediation was in English in order to be sure that they understood and could respond to help. The task demanded to participants was to compose an oral past-tense narrative recounting events from a video clip they were shown. The results of the study showed that mediator-learner interactions promoted the development and provided insights into the learner functioning.

Kozulin and Garb (2002) investigated the possibility of the learners' development and implementation of the dynamic assessment in Israel with at-risk students using the pre-test, mediation phase and a post test. They concluded that dynamic assessment provides useful information on learners' learning process and their potential which is unobtainable through the static assessment.

Sadeghi and Khanahmadi (2011) probed the role of mediated learning experience in L2 grammar of Iranian EFL learners. Sixty EFL learners (30 male and 30 female) in two institutes in Iran were the participants of the study. The results showed that the type of assessment –based instruction or mediation (DA based versus NDA-based) made significant difference in grammar learning by Iranian EFL learners.

How Dynamic Assessment is carried out?

According to Reza, Nordin and Mojaheri (2012), DA includes a range of materials and methods to assess student's potential for learning, rather than a static level of achievement assessed by the traditional way (standardized tests). Its aim is to reveal an individual's maximum performance, by teaching or mediating within the assessment and evaluating the enhanced performance that results.

Transmission or mediation are the main features of Mediated teaching of several important components to the learner. This mediated teaching, or the 'Mediated Learning Experience' is a fundamental component of Feuerstein's theory and characterizes the interaction between children and those who structure and interpret their experiences of the world (see Haywood, 1993 for further elaboration).

DA arose from a recognition of the inadequacy of static assessment methods to establish an individual intelligence, irrespective of cognitive, cultural,

linguistic and/or environmental differences. It includes a range of methods developed and researched to meet a number of practice and research goals, largely within educational psychology. Campione (1989) characterized the difference between DA and traditional assessments along three dimensions.

- 1) 'Focus' – the ways in which potential for change can be assessed.
- 2) 'Interaction' – the nature of the interaction between tester and subject.
- 3) 'Target' – the nature of the assessed task.

Focus: Two main methods have emerged for assessing potential for change. These are called the 'sandwich' and the 'cake' approaches" by Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002). The 'sandwich' approach, pioneered in large part by Milton Budoff and associates (Budoff & Friedman, 1964; Budoff, 1968; Corman & Budoff, 1973), primarily relies on a pretest-intervention/training-posttest format administered in either an individual or group setting, and reminiscent of traditional experimental research designs. In the cake format, the examinee is provided with mediation drawn from a standardized menu of hints, ranging from implicit to explicit, during the administration of the assessment itself. The sandwich approach may use standardized tests during the pre- and post-test; it may make use of a non-standardized procedure.

Interaction: The interaction between tester and student is altered in DA. The tester can act as a mediator to facilitate learning, rather than assess objectively without influencing the procedure.

Target: Finally, different approaches to DA differ in their 'target' or content, the majority of tasks being committed to 'domain specific' tasks, addressing specific skills or content. The Learning propensity Assessment Device (LPAD) contains tasks selected to enable assessment of more general processes of learning and it is considered to be more 'domain general' (Feuerstein et al., 2002).

These features are essential components of any DA procedures devised to assess aspects of language, where the processes of language learning and metalinguistic become the focus of investigation.

DA is the kind of approach where the weak points of the students' writing ability are identified and more attention is paid to those aspects. In this way, the students are supported and helped in case of any problem. The process of learning is evaluated by incorporating an instructional component. It is important to remember that assessment in DA is not separated from instruction.

According to Haywood (1990), rather than simply recognizing the current level of performance, dynamic assessment emphasizes the optimal performance under some specific conditions. Along these lines, DA takes the current learner's abilities and builds up their future abilities making emphasis on the weak points of their performance. Consequently, dynamic assessment acts in process and expands the situation through gradual assessment.

When the areas of problems are identified, mediation is used. The students are provided with a mediated learning experience, in this way, instruction as an assistance is presented to the students, taking into account their needs. This assessment procedure helps students improve and find a better way. Accordingly, dynamic assessment offers development by providing the interaction opportunities and internalization of them.

Dynamic Assessment of Writing

Moving on to the writing field, the development of writing proficiency is an important and inseparable part of the long process of foreign language teaching and learning. The importance lies in the fact that EFL learners of English often tend to lack sufficient linguistic means to convey their thoughts in written English. It is true that for the majority of students in EFL (English as a foreign language) writing is an activity that comprises many abilities, such as choosing suitable topics according to an specific audience, structuring rich and proper content, handling accurate language expressions and generating logical and clear ideas, and thinking skills such as evaluating, synthesizing and classifying, etc.

According to Elliott (2000), the procedural framework of DA is a chain of pretest-teach-posttest. Before pretest, the teacher should define the aim, which shows what students should be capable of doing. Then it is the pretest, in which students try to finish the given task, and the teacher observes carefully and finds problems. The third step is to teach, in which the teacher designs some mediation activities aiming to solve the existing problems in students' performance. The last is the posttest, in which students are asked to try the task again based on the teacher's intervention, and the teacher adopts appropriate methods to evaluate students' performance.

Combining Elliot's procedural framework of DA with features of EFL writing, the author designs a practical DA framework for EFL writing process. The purpose of the design is not just to get feedback from the learners' work; the idea is to promote learners' writing ability through feedback. In this sense, the framework proposed does not contribute to writing assessment but mainly to writing instruction. Despite of the main purpose of the design is not only focused on getting feedback, it is important to mention the role and importance of it in DA. DA considers mediation, provides a constant feedback in the learning process and the responses to feedback, so it is an important factor in powerful student learning. There are many benefits of successful feedback in the learning context. Successful feedback will be beneficial in the following issues: It stimulates students to improve their learning corrects errors, recognizes strengths and weaknesses and provides students with presentation improvement information.

Shrestha and Coffin (2011) investigated the value of tutor mediation in the form of text-based interaction about the assignments in the context of academic writing development among the undergraduate business studies students in open

and distance learning, following the DA. The analysis of interactions suggested that DA could help to identify and respond to the areas that students need the most support in the study. Finally, they argued that a learning theory-driven approach such as DA could contribute to undergraduate students' academic writing development. Also, results indicated that traditional assessment methods were unable to sufficiently support students. DA is focused on learning and development, on the other hand, it helps to identify participants' evolving writing abilities.

Tutor mediation is an important process in DA in second language teaching, but it is worth mentioning that students can not only receive instructions from the teacher, they can also receive instruction from other peers more capable. Regarding to this, Shamir and Steven (2005) conducted a study about the effect of peer mediation with young children on autonomy behavior of children mediated by trained peers. The results showed that children who received instruction in peer mediation with young children outperformed children who received general preparation for peer-assisted learning. Also, the higher level of mediational techniques and higher cognitive modifiability was associated with autonomy.

In a followed study, Zhang (2010) constructed a dynamic assessment mode in college English writing class. This study suggested that in presenting the Dynamic Assessment to the students, the instructional and graduated mediation should be offered based on the developmental requirements of the learners in the process of writing. Accordingly, the instruction and assessment are integrated and as a result, both the learner's development and the teaching are enriched.

In another study, Xiaoxiao and Yan (2010) produced a simple framework for English writing instruction. The framework, dynamic mediation process, focuses on three stages: (a) topic choice stage, (b) idea generation and structuring stage, and (c) macro-revising stage in which each stage is designed in three steps as the pre-task, mediation, and the post-task. In this study, in the process of DA, only mediation in the form of either dialogues between teacher and students or mediational tools (e.g., guidelines, reading materials, samples, etc.) were presented to the learners, and nothing was carried out regarding assessing the participants' performance. In other words, Xiaoxiao and Yan focused only on the scaffolding aspect of DA during the instruction of the writing process, and no assessment was performed with regard to the participants' ZPD. The findings of their study indicated that teaching in a dialogic manner was useful in enhancing participants' learning interest and improving the writing competence.

In conclusion, all these studies related to DA in the writing process, showed that it is an excellent approach to solve, improve and enhance the writing process in second language teaching, through instructional mediation.

Dynamic Assessment and the Reading Comprehension

Nowadays Dynamic Assessment is a rising approach that shows the importance of the interaction between the students and the teacher, who, as a mediator is always awareness of the context that surround the student, in this case The Zone of Proximal Development that Vygotsky claims as *“the distance between the actual developmental 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”* (Vygotsky 1978: 86, italics in original).

Moreover DA can be so useful in language teaching, in this case in reading comprehension. It helps to the improvement of this skill in vocabulary acquisition or in text contextualization. Lee Swanson and Howard (2005) used DA to improve the ability of reading in children with some disability, the idea is to separate or classify the children using this approaches and put them in different groups where the type of mediation will be different and focusing in students need, according to the level that they have at the moment by using testing focused in DA, this presents the cognitive performance of good readers and poor readers and put in different groups where they help each other in the different activities where the DA is an important part of the process.

DA has gained prominence and been welcomed by many educators and teachers. It is not intended as a replacement of other test types, but as a complement to them. In DA approach, learners' abilities are easily influenced or changed and can be flexible; that's why it is said that abilities are not fixed (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, cited in Birjandi and Ebadi, 2009).

On the other hand, according to Poehner (2008) DA is different from other accepted approaches. “DA challenges conventional views on teaching and assessment and states that these should not be considered as separate activities but should instead be fully integrated. This integration occurs when intervention is embedded within the assessment procedure to interpret individuals' abilities and lead them to higher levels of functioning”. (p.3)

When talking about DA in reading comprehension is important to mention that it is possible to apply this approach in other abilities to achieve the learning of a second language but in this point the focus is how this DA is a good option to teach a second language and the benefits of being aware of the important of Zone of proximal development.

According to Vygotsky, most teachers and parents have experienced the advantage of proper assistance from an adult or a more advanced peer, but it was Vygotsky who for the first time elevated this simple observation to a theoretical generalization known as zone of proximal development (ZPD). According to his theory, children's cognitive development occurs at the potential or assisted level (present to future), and at actual and unassisted level (past to present). At the actual or autonomous level, the child can do the task without any help, but at the

potential level the child needs another person's (a mediator's) assistance (Vygotsky, 1986, 1978).

It is important to know the teacher is a mediator in this process, in the reading comprehension with activities of DA the idea is not to give awareness, but to be a guidance where the children can do their own questions and answer by himself. Parviz Ajideh and Nava Nourdad (2012) claim "The study revealed that while applying DA in immediate and delayed effect on improving the reading comprehension of the EFL learners, no significant difference was observed among different proficiency levels. In other words there is no significant difference in the immediate and delayed effect of DA of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners' reading comprehension ability in low, mid and high-proficiency levels, that is to say DA can be beneficial for EFL readers and its effect remains over time. And learners of low, mid, and high-proficiency levels improve their reading comprehension ability almost equally and the proficiency level does not affect the amount of taking the advantage of dynamic assessment". (p.118) this is important because DA helps to improve the reading in different levels of proficiencies no matter if the student has an intermediate or low English level they can improve in a great measure the reading comprehension ability with the help of this approach.

Besides as an important point it is possible to say that DA is a not traditional approach that can be used in the development or in the process of mediation between teacher and student by helping to achieve a specific goal in the learning and teaching process. This section tries to answer with the question: how can the use of DA promote the EFL learner's reading comprehension skill by using the Guthke's Lerntest Approach?

As a matter of fact, a list of standardized hints were applied during reading test to run DA the treatment group received intervention that is Guthke's Lerntest approach which is known as Leipzig Learning Test (LLT) (Guthke & Beckmann, 2000). These approaches are based on testing or tests where DA is the only focus, so the mediation between the teacher and the students is absolute necessary in this kind of activities. To promote reading in EFL learner's it is necessary to focus on the test in the specific skill that the student or the teacher want to improve and that is why the Guthke's Lerntest Approach is taken into account.

DA is a development-oriented process which reveals learner's current abilities in order to help them overcome any performance problems and realize their potential (Shrestha & Coffin, 2012). In other words the main idea of DA is to promote and support the learner's development. Davin (2011) states that an important advantage of DA is making recommendations based on developmental potential which is not revealed by traditional non-dynamic tests, DA it is not a traditional way to assessment because according to Christenson and Ysseldyke (1989) the main goal of assessment is instructional intervention, rather than categorization of learners.

Therefore, static assessment fails to address L2 learners' instructional needs or the responsiveness of a learner to instruction, in other words assessment is only quantitative, taking into account that knowledge and the students' ideas cannot be measured by a number or a test, in addition DA is more qualitative because with the implementation of this approach the teacher can be aware of students' needs through constant interaction. That is why the Guthke's Lerntest Approach is part of the process in the improvement of reading comprehension because all the test and pre-test in this are based on DA and in teachers' preparation, because this is an important part of all the process and in words of Jarrahzade and Tabatabaei (2014) reading comprehension ability is one of the language skills which learners need to have mastery over, and assessing the learner's reading ability is one of the main responsibilities of the instructors and administrators. Knowing how to assess the process of reading helps the instructor to find out where learners have problems and need support. The uniqueness of this study lies in its attempt to address a currently problematic issue in second language learning.

Jarrahzade and Tabatabaei (2014) claim that most of the English learners have problems with regard to understanding, answering the reading questions, finding the main idea or guessing the meaning of new words, so these sequential hints will be useful and tangible to reach the best and correct answer of reading comprehension. If an examinee's first attempt to complete the sentence is incorrect, the examiner is provided with the following vague hint: "That's not correct, please, think about it one again". If the second attempt is also unsuccessful, the examiner offers a more explicit hint: "That's not correct. Think about which answers are most relevant to the one you are trying to complete". If the third attempt fails, the examiner offers an even more explicit hint: "That's not correct. Let's look at option three and four". If the response is still inaccurate, a very explicit hint is offered: "That's not correct. Let's look at option four and focus on the differences in both the positions of the objects and the words". At this point, the examinee will move on to the next item on the test.

The same standardized set of prompts is used throughout, while the items become increasingly complex. One of the most important skills in a second language acquisition is the reading comprehension and is difficult to the EFL learners because it is something that they do not know and with the help of a rising approach that takes into account the student's needs it is possible to achieve the specific goal of the learners in this case the reading skill.

To conclude this input Jarrahzade and Tabatabaei (2014) state that the results of the study revealed a significant improvement of reading performance with a statistical increase in the reading scores of the groups being assessed dynamically through Guthke's Lerntest approach. The findings were in line with the findings of some similar previous studies such as Poehner (2008), Birjandi, et al (2011), Ajideh and Nourdad (2012), Tajeddin and Tayebi pour (2012), Ebrahim Isavi (2012), Naeni and Duvall (2012), and Sahbi Hidri (2014). All of them reported similar results to the findings of the present study emphasizing that DA improved

the abilities of participants in reading comprehension and other investigated skills in this study, the treatment groups outperformed the control groups. Learners significantly benefited from treatment using the Guthke's Lerntest approach. So it is possible to affirm that DA can be useful in this specific skill and in the achievement of the learner's process and the teacher's goals in their praxis.

DA has been also implemented in technological contexts, focused on the Vygotskian perspective and the reading comprehension process. Shabani (2011), claims that the focus of the study is to explore the feasibility of computerized Dynamic Assessment (C-DA) in the context of reading comprehension and, more precisely, the effects of electronically delivering textual and visual scaffolding on L2 readers' Comprehension processes.

The assessment procedure included a short reading text along with its manipulated version and visual prompts which were gradually offered upon the student's failure to provide the correct answer. The results demonstrated that CDA could discriminate among low-achieving students with reference to their responsiveness to electronic mediation and diagnose quite vividly their underlying abilities in terms of both independent (ZAD) and assisted (ZPD) cognitive functioning. The possibility of creating an electronic environment where the student can work and a major number of learners fulfill their necessities of learning with a DA program but in a virtual process focuses in a specific skill, in this case reading.

In conclusion, it is possible to implement the C-DA but it is not conventional, it is focused on the basic theories of Vygotsky and ZPD as Shabani (2011), he computerized version of dynamic assessment (CDA), in the context of L2 reading comprehension. The results showed that electronically delivered mediatory scaffolding can enhance the students' reading comprehension processes and computer can replace humans in raising readers' consciousness by directing their attention to the key sections of the text and assisting them to understand the text better. A virtual environment can be useful but an interaction per se is probably better and DA is a way of interaction. C-DA is useful in the reading at some points but is necessary to always be aware of the learner's needs to the achievement of the proposed teaching goal.

Dynamic Assessment on EFL Reading

If we talk about the influence of DA on EFL reading and in the learning of a second language, it is necessary to show studies that prove the effectivity of this approach in the reading process. Kozulin and Grab (2002) applied an interventionist format of dynamic Assessment to assess the reading comprehension ability of ESL learners. They sandwiched their mediation phase between a non-dynamic, pre- and post-test. They used a short reading text and a set of comprehension questions as a pre-test. In the next stage they trained teachers to mediate learners correctly in responding Comprehension questions of other texts. They provided the necessary hints, guides, and suggestions to inform

the Learners how to apply different strategies to answer the various comprehension questions and how to transfer these strategies to other similar tasks.

The mediation was focused on general comprehension strategies applicable to various texts regardless of the vocabulary range or grammatical structure of specific texts. The main point about their study is their focus on developing learners' reading comprehension ability rather than solely aiming at successful task completion. At each mediation session learners were provided with four other texts and series of questions to practice transferring their developed abilities on applying these strategies. As result of this it is possible to found the important of DA in the contexts of Language teaching and in the readings comprehension test. The importance of this study is not only that students solve the task, the main idea is they can improve their reading skill by solving the activities and knowing that making a mistake is part of the process, the teacher has to be prepared to correct those mistakes and help students by using DA.

In other studies Naeni and Duvall (2012) used a mixed method to analyze the improvement in reading comprehension performance of 10 university students by applying the mediation of dynamic assessment approach to instruction and assessment. Their study had pre-test, mediation and post-test design. The mediation phase of their study included three internet session, each one with a particular reading comprehension, the idea of this is that among three different mediation session the student finding the main idea, inference, and finding out the meaning of unknown words. Their findings reveal significant improvement in the reading comprehension performance of the participants after the mediation.

Although these researchers presented scripts from the mediation sessions in qualitative part of their study, the number of extracts were limited and present only a partial picture of the whole process whereas the qualitative part of the study by nature requires a deeper presentation of the mediation sessions and a thorough interpretation of the hints and learners reaction to them. The quantitative part of the study is really short. Because comparing the number of correct answers for three reading comprehension sub skills in pre- and post-test of ten participants cannot be revealed. It would be better if the researchers had increased the number of participants in quantitative part of their study and had provided a deeper and more detailed analysis of qualitative part of their study. Similar to the other study in this one the emphasis is to improve the reading ability in a large group of students, focused on the mediation, feedback and guide the teacher gave to the student but always with DA as the principal approach in the mediation process.

Discussion and Conclusion

The literature reviewed showed that DA is effective in the improvement of the reading and writing in different contexts. Studies related to the other skills (listening and speaking), are not presented in this review, because the documents are not broad enough and most of them have restricted access.

The results suggest that students gain the performance improvement of the aforementioned skills (reading and writing), in addition to a diagnosis through the DA allows the teacher to find the difficulties and the nature of the errors of their apprentices and to categorize and personalize the different mediations and interactions that requires each student individually; this is one of the characteristics of DA that benefits teachers, as it takes into account their different learning styles and if the student requires mediation.

It is important to mention that DA does not seek to replace other types of assessment but to complement them. Lastly, DA system allows to achieve prediction and obtain real inferences about the potential of students, which is not achieved with the traditional evaluation system that only measures what students are able to do by themselves in a specific moment of a test. Also, Traditional assessment ignores an essential factor in communication such as the interaction. In the communication systems and real contexts, communication never occurs in isolation. Therefore, in order to carry out this kind of situation it is necessary that the concept of mediation is introduced as key element in DA.

However DA has certain limitations, such as the time required to give a custom mediation to each student, taking into account that in a context like Cartagena where the amount of hours in English teaching as a foreign language in public schools and non-bilingual schools, is not enough. Another limitation is that dynamic assessment requires plenty of preparation of teachers, both in terms of second language teaching and assessment method. The teacher training is essential and has to be continuous, also the total mastery of the English language.

The findings of this study conclude that the application of DA in different contexts and different skills, in this case writing and reading is effective, but only depending on certain factors, such as the context, the amount of hours, and the teacher competences in this approach. For instance, in a context like Cartagena might be effective if the method is carried out in bilingual schools or English centers like Fundación Universitaria Colombo Internacional UNICOLOMBO.

To sum up, it is important to take into account all these differences between DA and Traditional assessments in order to have an idea of the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches and to perform a better application of them in an English classroom context. Also, in a context like Cartagena where the subject of training teachers for teaching English language, it is worth knowing these tools and resources of this approach to strengthen teacher training. Therefore,

increasing knowledge about DA could improve the teaching and English language learning.

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