

Challenges and Complexities in Teacher Conceptualization of Dynamic Assessment in the L2 Classroom: A Case Study in Türkiye

Desafíos y complejidades en la conceptualización docente de la evaluación dinámica en el aula L2: un estudio de caso en Turquía

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Dynamic assessment is a dialectic procedure requiring teachers to assess learners' progress by paying attention to students' errors while providing graduated prompts to help them fix them. Although previous studies have focused on the teachers' competence in carrying out the dynamic assessment, this case study explores the dynamic assessment conceptualization of two English language teachers. Data were gathered through video-recorded sessions, reflective reports, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Results showed that while one of the teachers reconceptualized her role as a graduated prompt provider, the other teacher resisted adopting any roles that dynamic assessment requires. The study implies careful consideration of personal and contextual factors shaping teachers' assumptions to make a change in teacher practice.

Keywords: dynamic assessment, teacher beliefs, teacher professional development, Türkiye

La evaluación dinámica es un procedimiento dialéctico para evaluar el progreso de los alumnos prestando atención a sus errores a fin de brindarles indicaciones graduales para corregirlos. Mientras estudios anteriores analizan la competencia de los docentes para implementar la evaluación dinámica, este estudio de caso exploró la conceptualización de la evaluación dinámica por parte de dos profesoras de inglés. Los datos se recopilaban mediante videos, reflexiones, entrevistas semiestructuradas y observaciones en el aula. Se encontró que mientras una participante conceptualizaba la evaluación dinámica como una forma de proporcionar indicaciones graduales, la otra se resistía a adoptar las funciones que requiere la evaluación dinámica. Para cambiar la práctica docente, se sugiere la importancia de considerar los factores personales y contextuales detrás de las suposiciones de los docentes.

Palabras clave: creencias del maestro, desarrollo profesional docente, evaluación dinámica, Turquía

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Introduction

In recent years, several scholars have explored the implications of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind (SCT) for the mediating activities that support second language (L2) development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; van Compernelle & Henery, 2014). As one of those, dynamic assessment brings out a novel perspective to classroom-based assessment, which views assessment and instruction as a single educational activity "aimed at promoting learner development through appropriate forms of mediation that are sensitive to the individual's (or in some cases a group's) current abilities" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004, p. 50). In practice, the dynamic assessment procedure involves a dialogical student-teacher interaction where the teacher mediates with the student by providing graduated prompts arranged from implicit forms of correction to increasingly explicit ones, if needed (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). During this dialogical procedure, the teacher intends to diagnose the student's potential for development while simultaneously promoting student development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Therefore, in a dynamic assessment procedure, the reliance on teacher prompting and the level of prompts are viewed as an indicator of how close the student is to independent functioning, and a decrease in the reliance on explicit forms of assistance and frequency of prompts is interpreted as the student's development towards being self-regulated, gaining more independence and control over language (Herazo et al., 2019).

Whereas a growing body of research in the last two decades has shown the effectiveness of dynamic assessment in L2 settings (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2007, 2008), relatively little is known about how dynamic assessment might be conceptualized by classroom teachers to be included in their repertoires and guide their feedback actions and assessment practices in the classrooms. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring a case study to answer this research question: How does teachers' conceptualization of speaking assessment change during an

eight-week professional development program focused on a dynamic assessment?

Dynamic Assessment

Dynamic assessment has originated from SCT, which suggests that human cognition develops as a result of the dialectical interaction of the mind and sociocultural activities mediated and facilitated by cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978). Through this interaction, humans process higher mental development to acquire and internalize cognitive abilities, skills, and knowledge. Social interaction, or *mediation*, is essential in SCT as it allows individuals to access the knowledge and experiences of more capable peers through language, regarded as the greatest semiotic tool. Therefore, one significant implication of SCT for L2 development is to provide mediation to learners to help them regulate the forms and functions of the target L2. Mediation is not just about offering assistance to the learner to get the correct answer but about providing the appropriate assistance to help the learner move towards independent functioning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Mediation, therefore, should be designed to diagnose and be sensitive to learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD), which has been defined 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, p. 86).

Under the broad term of dynamic assessment, there are two approaches: interventionist dynamic assessment and interactionist dynamic assessment (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). Interventionist dynamic assessment involves a pre-programmed list of graded mediation (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004); that is, the hints and prompts used to mediate the learner are determined before the assessment and weighted taking into account their explicitness. During interventionist dynamic assessment implementations, the assessor does not go beyond the pre-programmed mediation, standardizing the assessment procedure for

all learners involved. In this regard, the implementation of interventionist dynamic assessment tends to be more standardized with a concern to minimise measurement errors (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004).

On the other hand, interactionist dynamic assessment incorporates mediation emerging from the interaction between the learner (or a group of learners) and the assessor without pre-determined mediation. In interactionist dynamic assessment implementation, the focus of the assessor is not on grading the learners' performance on pre-planned standards but on understanding the learner's ZPD as well as promoting learner development within their ZPD by attuning mediation during the procedure (Antón, 2009; Davin et al., 2017; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2008). From the perspective of interactionist dynamic assessment, task completion is not only the goal of the learner but a shared goal between learner and mediator (Poehner, 2008).

From Teacher Practice to Teacher Conceptualization of Dynamic Assessment

During the last two decades, the significant implications of dynamic assessment for L2 classroom practice have been revealed by researchers mainly while collaborating with individual learners in tutoring sessions (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2007, 2008; Poehner & van Compernelle, 2013). More recently, the focus in the L2 dynamic assessment field has shifted to understanding L2 teachers' implementation of dynamic assessment in the classroom and the success of teachers at carrying out mediation to capture the learners' level of development (Davin et al., 2017; Davin & Herazo, 2020; Herazo et al., 2019; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; McNeil, 2018; Poehner & Wang, 2021; Sagre et al., 2022). The professional learning activities designed to train L2 teachers to encourage them to implement dynamic assessment in their classrooms have yielded changes in teacher practices in various contexts. Davin et al. (2017), Herazo et al. (2019), and Davin and Herazo (2020), for instance, have shown how classroom

feedback acts of L2 teachers changed from corrective feedback (i.e., recasts) to scaffolded mediation after they participated in professional development program on L2 classroom dynamic assessment. In addition, Sagre et al. (2022) found changes in how three participating teachers responded to the learners' errors by adopting the role of prompt providers after participating in a professional development program focused on dynamic classroom assessment. In their study, although all teachers adopted the role of graduated prompt providers, it was only possible for one of the teachers to assume the dual role of prompt provider and assessor.

Although many L2 dynamic assessment studies have illustrated L2 teachers' implementation of dynamic assessment in the classrooms, focusing on their success in using subsequent mediational prompts, little has been revealed about the teachers' conceptual understanding of dynamic assessment (Herazo et al., 2019). However, as indicated by Lantolf and Poehner (2010), "dynamic assessment is not a pre-specified technique or method of assessing that must be followed in a prescribed manner, but in fact is a way of reconceptualizing the relationship between teaching, assessment and development" (p. 27). Thus, the immediate instructional context should be considered. In instructional contexts where summative assessment is dominant, it might be challenging for teachers to conceptualize and adopt dynamic assessment as it has brought a new and radically different assessment perspective for teachers rooted in a dualistic understanding of instruction and testing. Moreover, previous research indicates that teacher cognition is complex and shaped by various factors such as teachers' prior experiences as students (Lortie, 1975), their values and beliefs (Borg, 2003), the context in which they work (Babaii et al., 2021; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006), and their already settled personal practical knowledge (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002). Therefore, it requires time, guidance, and collaboration for teachers to change their already established paradigms and adopt the dialectical procedure of dynamic assessment in their classrooms (Davin et al.,

2017; McNeil, 2018; Poehner, 2007). Given that language assessment is a situated activity (i.e., located in particular contexts), we argue that the conceptualization of dynamic assessment can be transformative for in-service teachers. To this end, this case study reports the challenges and complexities of teacher conceptual understanding of dynamic assessment in an L2 learning context and how teachers can resist changing their perceptions to view assessment as an opportunity to assist learners in self-regulating the targeted L2 forms and functions.

Method

Context and Participants

The study was carried out in the Centre for Foreign Languages (CFL) in one state university in Türkiye that offers English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in two faculties. To prepare students for their EMI studies, the CFL offers a year-long English language training. Several standardised tests are subsequently administered to determine whether the students are eligible to take the end-of-year proficiency exam, which is used to decide if a student can be admitted to the EMI faculties. It is worth noting that the students' oral performance is evaluated over 15 points each week. This oral assessment practice was designed to ensure students' active participation and motivation to engage in speaking tasks.

All English language teachers at the CFL ($N = 45$) were invited to participate in the study. Among them, two female teachers—Aylin and Ceren (pseudonyms)—accepted to participate in the professional learning workshops designed for this study and consented to allocate time for the scheduled sessions. Both teachers were in charge of pre-intermediate language learners at the CFL. Aylin held a master's degree in English language teaching and had 17 years of teaching experience at the CFL, and Ceren held a master's degree in the field of English language teaching and was pursuing a PhD degree in the same field. She had eight years of English language teaching experience in higher education. She had been teaching in the CFL for four years. Besides her

course load, Ceren also worked as a CFL's curriculum committee member, responsible for course design and developing extra materials to be included in the syllabus.

Although the primary goal of this study was to provide in-service language teachers with an opportunity to explore an alternative approach to assessment and instruction to incorporate it in any of their language courses, the discussions in the sessions focused more on the evaluation of oral proficiency. Both teachers delivered speaking courses and expressed their need for professional development in speaking-skill assessment.

Research Design and Professional Development Program

In addressing the research question, we chose the case-study method as it allows us to capture a more holistic account of the participating teachers' established perspectives regarding the relationship between assessment and instruction and the extent of the teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment (Yin, 2003). Taking the complex structure of teacher cognition into account, we assumed that the case study method would permit understanding the multiple facets of the teachers' conceptualization of the dynamic assessment perspective.

As part of the project, Ceren and Aylin participated in eight weekly professional development sessions that lasted approximately three hours each. These were collaborative sessions where the researchers and the participating teachers discussed a series of resources on dynamic assessment (e.g., articles, book chapters, and videos). As experienced researchers and classroom practitioners interested in language assessment, SCT, and dynamic assessment, we led the sessions. The main topics of the sessions were the theoretical underpinnings of dynamic assessment and its various applications in language classes, practical considerations of implementing dynamic assessment in the participants' classrooms, and the participants' critical reflections on the pedagogical outcomes of dynamic assessment. The primary resource was the guidebook *Dynamic Assessment in the Foreign Language Classroom:*

A *Teacher's Guide* (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011) and the video materials included in this guidebook. The content of the sessions was designed with a twofold aim: (a) to understand the teachers' existing perspectives about the assessment of oral proficiency and (b) to facilitate their conceptualization of dynamic assessment. During the sessions, the teachers reflected on their context, their assessment and feedback practices, and the weekly readings on dynamic assessment. They discussed dynamic assessment and its potential to assess learners' ZPD through scaffolded mediation.¹

The permission to collect data was granted by the CFL's administrative/ethical board before data collection. Both participants gave their written full consent to participate in the study.

Data Sources and Data Analysis

The exploration of the teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment is based on multiple data sources, including video-recorded sessions, weekly reflective reports, and semi-structured interviews. We employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) for the discussion and interpretation of the qualitative data. We then translated any Turkish data into English and familiarized ourselves with the data by reading and re-reading them before the analysis. In the second phase, we engaged in the analysis of generating initial codes by segmenting the dataset into preliminary codes related to any challenges, complexities, or progress of the teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment. In the next phase, we sought overarching thematic categories by considering the codes that potentially fell under these categories. Next, we reviewed and refined the identified themes, named them, and defined them. Additionally, throughout the project, we observed the lessons of the participating teachers to capture any change in their classroom practices due to their experience in the professional development workshops. We also analyzed

the excerpts of teacher–student interactions drawn from the transcripts of the field notes and the audio-recorded classroom sessions to exemplify any possible changes in the teachers' response to student errors.

Findings

Ceren: Emerging Conceptualization of Dynamic Assessment

In the first week of the sessions, the teachers' discussion and reflection embarked on their existing beliefs of oral proficiency assessment and assessment practices in the speaking courses. During the first session, Ceren, as one of the CFL's curriculum committee members, explained the aim of the speaking courses, the expected outcomes, and the assessment criteria of those courses. She indicated:

The starting point [of these classes] was the speaking club; in fact, this course is entirely for students' own sake. OK, there was an assessment requirement in this course, but there must be [to ensure the active participation of students in the course]. (Workshop Session 1)²

The assessment criterion of the course appears to motivate students to engage in speaking tasks other than assessing the oral proficiency development of the students. To practice such a form of assessment, Ceren stated her *focus-on-fluency perception* to explain her speaking assessment practices that do not include interrupting students' talk unless there is a mistake that hinders the intelligibility of the talk. In the case of unintelligibility, she expressed that the only method she used was providing recasts, as this was the only way she knew how to provide feedback to the students: "Frankly, I do not know other [modes of] feedback rather than recast in speaking...I do not know any other method which teaches the right utterance" (Workshop Session 1).

¹ The objectives and the content of each workshop can be found at <https://bit.ly/3znd89f>

² Excerpts from the data sessions and the participants' interviews were translated from Turkish to English for publication purposes. The excerpts from the participants' reflective reports are originally in English.

In the second session, Ceren continued to support the design of the speaking course, emphasizing that the initial aim of the course was not to demotivate students by focusing too much on incorrect utterances unless, as mentioned above, these were quite unintelligible. During the third session, Ceren demonstrated the first traces of her awareness related to the inconsistency in the design and practice of the speaking courses. Building on the discussions about the contradiction of an existing speaking course without an aim to develop students' oral proficiency, she critically reflected on the design of the course and reported her emerging feelings of discontent:

All my enthusiasm got lost. What are we doing? I feel so unhappy because [the discussion] created awareness for me...we were [so] happy when we did not know what we were doing. (Workshop Session 3)

Actually, yes, [assessing the process might be better], but how will we assess? Do we have a rubric with us? According to [which criterion] will I evaluate [the performance of] the student? According to [which outcome] will I [teach] to the student? (Workshop Session 3)

Besides the reflections on the contextual realities and instructional problems, Ceren also expressed her enthusiasm to explore dynamic assessment, evidenced by her reflective report. In the report, she stated that she found dynamic assessment quite exhilarating and promising and that she had been waiting for the program designers to understand that dynamic assessment can be implemented in the classroom. As a first impression, she mentioned some potential drawbacks of dynamic assessment, such as sparing too much time to finetune the prompts for each student in the classroom. It is not surprising that, at first, Ceren evaluated dynamic assessment from her established perspective of assessment and instruction, which led to some concerns about exploring dynamic assessment as an alternative assessment method to be implemented in her classes. Nonetheless, she reported her willingness to try dynamic assessment as an alternative technique to prompt the students: "But why not? We can give it a chance."

In the following week, Ceren continued to reflect on her assessment perception and practices during the discussions and to explore dynamic assessment. However, similar to the previous week, she was observed to frequently question dynamic assessment practices through her perspective of assessment, which had been influenced by her experience of assessing students' proficiency via prepared assessment tools that specify student learning outcomes. To illustrate, the following extract from the discussions displayed her situated belief in speaking assessment, which requires a rubric to score the performance of the students: "We always evaluate [the performance] by using the same rubric...How can it be possible to grade individually? There must be a rubric" (Workshop Session 5).

Although her established perspective acted as a filter through which she interpreted dynamic assessment, Ceren continued to show a conceptual understanding of dynamic assessment during the sixth week. Although she had some concerns about applying scaffolded mediation, she continuously reported her eagerness to implement dynamic assessment in her classroom.

In one of the speaking lessons in week seven, Ceren decided to provisionally try unplanned mediated prompts in her speaking class in an interactive way. The following excerpt from her speaking class shows one of her initial attempts to use scaffolded prompts to help a student narrate his problems in a free-speaking activity:

1. Student: I get tired of everything?
2. Ceren: Why? What happened?
3. Student: Well...I am in depress.*
4. Ceren: Huh?
5. Student: I am in depress.*
6. Ceren: You are in what?
7. Student: In depress.*
8. Ceren: You are in...noun form, noun form.
9. Student: Ahaa...I am in depression.
10. Ceren: Depression...good, good.

In the interaction with the student, Ceren did not provide an instant recast but implied a problem in the fourth move (Huh?). The student uttered the same inco-

rect utterance, leading Ceren to ask a question indicating which part of the utterance was incorrect (Move 6). The students' repetition of the incorrect response triggered Move 8, where Ceren provided metalinguistic support. The third and relatively more explicit mediation of Ceren was responded to correctly by the student. This excerpt shows Ceren's willingness to consider scaffolded mediation to help the student self-correct rather than ignoring the incorrect utterance or only providing a recast.

Ceren reflected on her unplanned action in the following session, where she shared her excitement about approaching student errors with scaffolded prompts. Although she was successful at carrying out the role of prompt provider, she was aware that it would have been better to have a language focus to approach student errors other than providing prompts for random errors, which was tiring for Ceren on the first try. She explained: "I tried [graduated mediation] from time to time. Actually, I did (laughs). I did but [the first mediation, the second mediation] ... anyway, my passion may not be enough, for now, I need to have a plan" (Workshop Session 8).

Ceren's willingness to implement mediation in her classroom indicated her reconsideration of feedback acts limited to recast use. Ceren seemed to adopt scaffolded mediation in her teaching repertoire to respond to the students' incorrect utterances rather than entirely

changing her conceptualization to apply dynamic assessment as one educational activity unifying assessment and instruction. It is predictable, considering that she had already begun to learn about dynamic assessment during the workshop sessions, and conceptualizing the contrastive perspective of dynamic assessment requires time and effort. Still, Ceren's intention of having a planned focus for the language or skill she would work with considering the students' potential development indicated her emerging conceptualization of dynamic assessment. The experiences of Ceren throughout the sessions showed how she had changed her perspective of speaking assessment from only focusing on fluency to focusing more on students' responsiveness to the teacher's mediation. Such mediation helped Ceren understand her students' language difficulties and see their potential to self-regulate their correct use of language. She commented on the extent of her conceptualization of dynamic assessment in the semi-structured interview at the end of the sessions: "My viewpoint toward students and the classroom has changed. I said to myself: 'OK, they do not know, but I can make them produce with one or two mediations'... my definition of students' success has also changed." Table 1 summarizes the key themes identified in Ceren's discourse during the sessions.

Table 1. Themes Identified in Ceren's Discourse

Key themes	Week(s)
Focus on fluency perception	Weeks 1 & 2
Awareness of inconsistency in the design and practice of the speaking courses	Week 3
Discontent with the design of courses and realization of her limited knowledge of how to approach student errors	Week 3
Enthusiasm to explore dynamic assessment and willingness to explore options to try a new role	Weeks 3, 4, & 5
Provisional implementations of scaffolded mediation in the classroom	Week 7
Satisfied with her acquired knowledge of approaching student errors (other than recasts) and critical reflection on her unplanned action	Week 8
Change in her feedback actions and perception of student potential	Semi-structured interview following the workshop sessions

Aylin: Conflicts With the Established Perspective of Assessment

In the first week of workshop sessions, and similar to Ceren, Aylin reported that she had a focus-on-fluency perception in speaking assessment as she thought that it would be demotivating for the students to be interrupted by a teacher at every mistake. During the session, she shared a personal story about how she felt unhappy when being explicitly corrected by her English teacher in secondary school. Therefore, she was now building empathy with the students, which led her to consider that students should not be interrupted while speaking and that fluency should be the criterion to assess students' oral performance in the speaking class. Aylin's reflections revealed that prior personal experiences as a student, rather than any theoretical perspectives, influenced her focus-on-fluency perception of speaking assessment. She said: "The problem is that there was nothing about theory in our minds; we try to do something on our own and do not think about what is in the background [of the practice]" (Workshop Session 1).

During the discussions in the second and third weeks of the sessions, Aylin critically questioned the inconsistency in the CFL's policy of speaking instruction and classroom assessment of speaking. The awareness of the problems in the institutional context and discussions about them paved the way for critical self-reflection. She raised an obvious self-critique when she questioned her merits of assessing oral proficiency as an experienced language teacher, which can be exemplified by the following excerpt from her reflective report:

Do I know how to assess someone's speaking performance and progress? I don't know the exact answer, but I have some clues about it. For someone teaching for 17 years, what a shame! But I've realized after this session that we need to find our "roots" in whatever we decide to do.

Regarding adopting dynamic assessment as a theory-based assessment approach in the classroom, Aylin's

reaction was cautious. She thought that implementing dynamic assessment (in any of the courses) in her institutional context would be challenging because of a non-tentative curriculum policy in the school, which requires all the course contents to be covered before the centralized examinations. She stated: "Can I finish tasks on time because we have weekly units to cover, and they are included in the quizzes and exams? Or could dynamic assessment be better if I was teaching a class in [a degree program]?" (Workshop Session 2).

During the third week, Aylin was interested to learn about dynamic assessment and engaged in discussions about the divergence of dynamic assessment from other approaches she was familiar with. However, again, she verbalized her concerns by highlighting that the implementation of dynamic assessment did not follow the current mainstream assessment procedures of the CFL. One of her concerns was providing mediation during the assessment procedure, which had not been a part of the examination process in the institutional and nationwide education system. She expressed her ideas in the following excerpt:

In fact, this is [in stark contrast with] our education system, where teachers are not expected to assist the students during examinations or wait until students answer correctly...As we [the instructors] did not experience such a system, how do we approach [dynamic assessment]? (Workshop Session 3)

This concern indicated that contextual realities had played a role in shaping Aylin's discrete assessment and instruction perception, which ultimately influenced her hesitation to consider dynamic assessment as an alternative method. In the beginning stages of learning about dynamic assessment, Aylin seemed to evaluate it only as a contrastive assessment practice through which prompts are given to the students by interrupting their speech. Although Aylin contributed a lot to the discussion during the following sessions and displayed progress in

the theoretical understanding of dynamic assessment, she constantly emphasized the impracticality of dynamic assessment in her current context.

I would like to provide mediation individually, but there is no time for it. It would be only possible if I called them for [individual] tutoring, but the schedule [does not allow for such an arrangement]. (Workshop Session 5)

I try to be sensitive to the potential of my students, but if only the number of my students in one classroom was smaller. . . . So, I don't think this [dynamic assessment] is gonna [sic] work out...we don't have so much time. (Reflective journal)

Throughout the speaking classes, Aylin was not observed to incorporate dynamic assessment as a method of assessment, instruction, or mediation to enrich her feedback practices. In light of her conceptual process during the sessions, it might be concluded that Aylin resisted changing her perspective to interpret and adopt

a more dialectic assessment approach because of the powerful influence of her established perspective of speaking assessment and the discrete perception of the relationship between assessment and instruction. Aylin's discourse and reflective reports during the program portrayed how her personal experiences receiving feedback as a student and the professional experience in a centralized and summative assessment context hindered her consideration of dynamic assessment or scaffolded mediation as an alternative practice. Another factor might be that Aylin, as an experienced language teacher, opted to stay in her comfort zone and did not take risks to try a new instructional practice in her classes. As such, her frequent emphasis on the impracticality of dynamic assessment in her institutional context might be interpreted as an unfavourable reaction and renunciation that prevented her from delving more into the dynamic assessment. Table 2 summarizes the key themes identified in Aylin's discourse during the sessions.

Table 2. Themes Identified in Aylin's Discourse

Key themes	Week(s)
Focus on fluency perception	Week 1
Critical self-reflection over her merits of assessing oral proficiency	Weeks 2 & 3
Cautious toward dynamic assessment	Weeks 4 & 5
Focus on the impracticality of dynamic assessment in her context	Weeks 5 & 6
Resistance to changing her established perspective of not interrupting students as they speak	Weeks 7 & 8

Discussion

Previous dynamic assessment L2 studies have primarily focused on teachers' competence in mediating learners' language development (Antón, 2009; Davin et al., 2017; Herazo et al., 2019; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; McNeil, 2018) rather than on the complexity of conceptualization of dynamic assessment by the teachers and how the application of dynamic assessment in the classroom might increase teachers' conceptual understanding of such kind of assessment (Herazo et al., 2019; Sagre et al., 2022). This study investigated

the extent of two higher education English language teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment to address this gap, as they explored dynamic assessment as an alternative to assessment and instruction during an eight-week professional development program.

In response to the research question (see Introduction), our findings suggest that both teachers demonstrated an understanding of how assessment and instruction are divided into conventional test-based approaches and the implications of dynamic assessment as a unified approach in terms of its simultaneous action

of assessing student potential and assisting students within their potentials to overcome linguistic problems (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). The process of conceptualization of dynamic assessment was idiosyncratic for each teacher. Aylin, for example, acknowledged how assessment and instruction are divided in the traditional static assessment and how the unified assessment and instruction perspective of dynamic assessment can help identify the learners' actual performances and their needs for future development. Nevertheless, she was reluctant to act on her dynamic assessment knowledge in her classroom. The findings might suggest that Aylin resisted questioning her established beliefs from the outset, which evidenced a conflict between her prior assumptions of assessment and dynamic assessment knowledge. Although Aylin articulated some of the moral, emotional, and context-related factors that had shaped her beliefs, her established perspective might have influenced her consideration of dynamic assessment as an alternative pedagogical practice (Borg, 2003; Golombek, 1998; Williams et al., 2013). The findings from Aylin's conceptual process agree with the results of previous studies suggesting that teacher conceptualization of new approaches and their implementation in the classrooms is a complex, revolutionary, and developmental process that requires a significant amount of time and experience, as well as being subject to some conflicts and contradictions (Davin et al., 2017; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; McNeil, 2018; Smagorinsky et al., 2003).

On the other hand, Ceren attempted to try scaffolded mediation in her classroom, which indicated her emerging conceptualization of dynamic assessment at the end of the program. Like the findings of Herazo et al. (2019) and Sagre et al. (2022), it was observed that, whereas Ceren did not consider assessing students' performances in her classroom by tracking their development over time, her feedback actions in the classroom shifted from only providing recasts to using scaffolded mediation. Although she was a novice to dynamic assessment and

expressed her need for experience to provide unscripted mediation and a structured plan for a language focus, her attempts at such implementation might indicate a change in her feedback actions (Davin et al., 2017). Also, the final semi-structured interview indicated that the professional development sessions positively influenced her perception of student potential (Karimi & Nazari, 2021). Similar to the findings of Herazo et al. (2019), Ceren's praxis of dynamic assessment might have further promoted her conceptual understanding of the mediated practice. It has been well documented in the literature that teachers' decision-making in the classroom also relates to an increasing conceptualization of their actions (Herazo et al., 2019; Smagorinsky et al., 2003).

Overall, our findings, consistent with the results of previous studies (Borg, 2003; Golombek, 1998; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007), suggest that teacher conceptualization of novel perspectives and their willingness to implement new and contrastive pedagogies in the classes are influenced by various overlapping and interacting personal, affective, moral, and contextual factors. In the present study, one of these factors was revealed as the teachers' perception of focus-on-fluency in oral proficiency assessment, which was based on teachers' belief that an emphasis on students' incorrect utterances might discourage them from speaking in the target language. Therefore, the practice of dynamic assessment, which requires teachers to work with the students on the incorrect utterances interactively by providing graded prompts, was not considered by the participating teachers as an alternative practice at the beginning of the sessions.

Another factor was the teachers' situated beliefs of assessment which had been established due to their extensive experience in instructional contexts where summative assessment was dominantly practiced. Aylin, in particular, had conflicts between her already-held beliefs of assessment and the dynamic assessment perspective, which might have caused her not to consider dynamic assessment as an alternative assessment practice

in her classroom. Also, the instructional context of the teachers, which requires them to follow a strict and centralized curriculum, allowed little opportunity for them to implement individualized interactionist dynamic assessment practices. As a result of this contextual reality, both teachers tended to discuss the potential impossibility of implementing dynamic assessment in their classes, no matter how promising this approach to assessment and instruction could be.

Conclusions and Implications

This study aimed to investigate how dynamic assessment might be conceptualized by L2 classroom teachers to be included in their repertoires to guide their feedback actions and assessment practices in the classroom. Although this study reports a relatively short-term professional development program, the results might suggest some implications for other contexts where professional development revolves around contrasting pedagogies, like dynamic assessment. First, the reflective discourse and collaborative and dialogic meaning-making processes in professional development sessions enabled the teachers to be aware of the influences or constraints posed by the institutional status quo and the cultural and contextual histories that had shaped their instruction and assessment practices. In line with previous research (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003), the experiences of the two teachers in this study implied that in-service professional development programs should include an aim of developing a consciousness toward the structural and interpersonal constraints which could prevent free, autonomous, and intuitive teaching practices. This professional development experience can only cultivate teachers open to new perspectives, ideas, and alternative methodologies. Although the dynamic assessment-focused workshop series in this study provided critical self-reflection opportunities to the teachers (Kvasova, 2021; van der Veen et al., 2016), it would have been better to have institutional support,

which may include adopting dynamic assessment in the school curriculum. Additionally, implementing dynamic assessment in other skill courses—other than speaking ones—might have been possible, provided teachers' beliefs were not too focused on speaking skills and how students can be demotivated if interrupted while talking. One lesson from this study is that dynamic assessment professional development should be sensitive to contextual realities and personal beliefs and designed accordingly in the areas where teachers are more open to changes in their practices.

Another implication of the study is that, for changes to occur in teacher cognition and practices, teacher professional development should include opportunities for critical and reflective thinking, particularly in alternative and contrastive assessment approaches. Such thinking may contribute to in-service teacher professional development programs in countries where the education system from primary school to university is bound to quantitative test scores. The test-dominant culture of these countries, including Türkiye, impacts all stakeholders' opinions on adopting summative-oriented perspectives in every assessment opportunity. Although summative testing and quantitative test results have particular aims, teachers should differentiate and understand what summative assessment and alternative assessment approaches inform them about students' abilities (Leung, 2007; Lewkowicz & Leung, 2021; Torrance & Pryor, 2001). At that very point, the effectiveness of dynamic assessment to inform teachers about the ripening abilities of the students (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2008; Poehner & van Compernelle, 2013) and to give teachers opportunities to support students in their development process can be considered by teachers and teacher educators to empower teaching practices both in instruction and assessment. However, as indicated by Herazo et al. (2019), much of L2 dynamic assessment research has been conducted in dyads, with a tutor and individual students (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2007, 2008; Poehner

& van Compernelle, 2013). Therefore, the evidence from the implementation of scaffolded mediation in large classrooms is needed for in-service teachers to conceptualize better the possible ways of incorporating dynamic assessment in their instructional contexts.

Moreover, we suggest that centralized language programs allow teachers to try new approaches in their classrooms and support them in seeking ways to contribute to the learners' language development (Babaii et al., 2021). The opportunity of praxis might help teachers to delve more into the exploration of alternative and contrasting approaches in language classrooms (Davin & Herazo, 2020; Freeman, 2002; Herazo et al., 2019; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007), which might promote their conceptual understanding beyond professional development sessions. Finally, professional development programs on such contrastive approaches should be extended to longer periods and sustained as much as possible to foster a change in teacher cognition and practice.

Due to the case-study design and the small number of participants, the findings of this study may not provide an accurate representation of teacher conceptualization of dynamic assessment in other educational contexts. Therefore, future studies can investigate other factors influencing teacher conceptualization of mediated practice in different teaching contexts. In addition, the professional development program incorporated in this study could cover eight successive weeks. Future research could consider organizing dynamic assessment-based professional programs extended to longer periods, evaluating the complex process of teacher appropriation of new pedagogies. Last but not least, future research could, for example, investigate how L2 students respond to the mediated practice.

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