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## Dynamic Assessment Approach in Language Teaching: A Review

### *Evaluación dinámica para la enseñanza de lenguas: una Revisión*

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## A B S T R A C T

Several forms of assessment have been implemented in order to satisfy the need of evaluating students' development in the teaching and learning process; the most commonly used is Static Assessment (SA), better known as traditional assessment. However, there is an alternative form to assess students' learning, called Dynamic Assessment (DA), which is based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. This study presents an overview of Dynamic Assessment and its application in language teaching, 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 to traditional assessment, but some factors such as context, number of hours, teachers' competences and training have to be considered to ensure the effectiveness of this approach to assessment.

**key words:** Dynamic Assessment (DA); Static Assessment; Zone of proximal Development (ZPD); Vygotsky's Socio Cultural Theory; Language Teaching.

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## R E S U M E N

Distintas formas de evaluación se han implementado para satisfacer la necesidad de evaluar el desarrollo de los estudiantes en los procesos de enseñanza aprendizaje; la más utilizada es la evaluación estática o también conocida como evaluación tradicional. Sin embargo, existe otra forma de evaluar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes llamada Evaluación Dinámica, la cual está basada en la teoría sociocultural de Vygotsky. Este estudio presenta una revisión del tema Evaluación Dinámica y su aplicación en la enseñanza de lenguas, especialmente en la mejora de las habilidades de lectura y escritura. Como resultado principal se encontró que la implementación de la Evaluación Dinámica para las habilidades de lectura y escritura es efectiva, y funciona como un complemento de la evaluación tradicional, pero se deben considerar factores como el contexto, el número de horas, las competencias y la formación del docente, para asegurar la efectividad de este enfoque.

**Palabras claves:** Evaluación dinámica; Evaluación estática; Zona de desarrollo próximo; Teoría Sociocultural de Vygotsky; Enseñanza de lenguas.

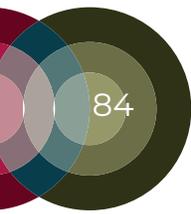
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## INTRODUCTION

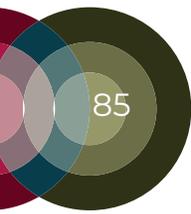
The evaluation of student's learning constitutes a very important role in the field of education since its purpose is to corroborate the achievement of the objectives previously set. It is then possible to analyze the process of teaching and learning through evaluation and then, address these issues and give them a possible solution. Nevertheless, establishing the causes of student's learning problems, and working on them, might be a very complex task.

Traditionally, the most common method to evaluate students has been Static Assessment (henceforth SA), which is usually implemented at the end of the learning process and separates testing from teaching. Considering the necessity of evaluating student's performance based on the whole learning process, Dynamic Assessment (henceforth DA) is proposed. DA is a new concept in the field of language learning, it emerges as a way to change the traditional assessment with the idea that assessment and teaching are inseparable entities. Nazary (2012) states that "assessment and instruction are firmly integrated as part of a single activity as can be seen in DA" (p. 57). SA indicates what students have already learned, in contrast DA helps to identify students' performance based on what they are learning or they can learn through interaction. (Tabatabaei & Bakhtiarvand, 2014).

Taking the previous ideas into consideration, the objective of this paper is to describe Dynamic Assessment and its possible applications in language teaching, especially in the improvement of reading and writing skills. The study begins by reporting the historical framework and different author's definitions of this concept; then a description of the teacher's role and DA application in second and foreign language teaching is presented. Finally, the study concentrates on reading and writing assessment processes.

## METHODOLOGY

A thematic review was carried out in education databases such as Eric, DOAJ, JStor, Scielo, Dialnet and Redalyc; web pages such as Readcube, and articles from specialized journals. The articles were in English, Spanish and Portuguese, and they were published between 2000 and 2015, with the following descriptors: Dynamic Assessment, Teaching and Learning English. Fifty documents were collected and 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. Finally, the documents that allowed to achieve the purpose of this review were completely analyzed.



## HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

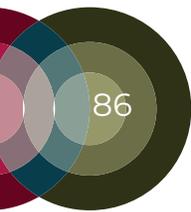
To introduce the concept of DA, it is necessary include a historical exploration of traditional assessment. Gould (1996) claims that “It was about the late nineteenth century that assessment appeared as a domain of interest for researchers and educators, and standardized assessment was first implemented in the twentieth century” (as cited in Nazari, 2012, p.4). Therefore, during the 1900’s standardized assessment was widespread in the United States, and tests of general intelligence to evaluate immigrants and army new members were used. Later on, these tests were also used in education.

According to Fatemipour and Jafari (2015) “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)” (p.1). SA does not care about the particular individuality of students. It focuses on test results without taking into account the development of students’ performance, it also separates instruction from assessment.

In response to the disadvantages of SA, DA appeared. This concept is grounded in the theory of mental development elaborated by the Russian psychologist, L. S. Vygotsky, who produced a remarkably rich body of work on the nature and development of the human mind. (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). As a result of these studies, Vygotsky presented 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 DA is based on Vygotsky’s theories, it was not established by him (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005), it was introduced by Vygotsky’s colleagues Alexander Luria and popularized by Reuven Feuerstein. “Luria (1961) introduced the idea of DA to the western research community. The concept merged the instruction and assessment to re-emerge then as a learning/assessment.” (Mehri & Amerian, 2015, p. 1).

During the 1970s people saw the deployment of DA methods of mental abilities. Feuerstein’s studies are part of the results that support this new approach, who prepared the groundwork decades earlier, as well as Budoff, Campione, Brown and Haywood, who brought this work to the United States (Murphy, 2011). Additionally, it is worth mentioning Feuerstein’s contribution to DA through the Mediated Learning Experience approach (MLE) developed by him and his colleagues. “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.5)



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In addition, “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, p.6). 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 early years of the twenty-first century, DA started to take off in south Africa and expand its field of research of application to different contexts. It is a relatively new approach to second language assessment that has been introduced to second language research and educational community by Lantolf and Poehner (2004) and Poehner and Lantolf (2005).

## WHAT IS DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT?

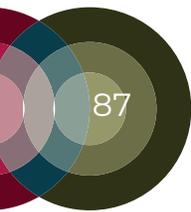
DA was developed as an alternative to “static” types of assessment, namely, standardized tests (Anton, 2009). According to Saniei, Birjandi and Abdollahzadeh (2015) dynamic assessment “offers a conceptual framework which integrates assessment into instruction and posits that learners’ responsiveness to instruction can be seen as a measure of learners’ potential.” (p.1). Moreover, Poehner and Lantolf (2005) add that the goal of DA is to unify assessment and instruction into a single activity, the goal is learning development.

A brief comparison between static and dynamic assessment can give a clear view of this concept. In DA the future performance will be different from current performance (Lantolf and poehner, 2004), something that is not evident in SA. In SA it 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 have internalized the pre-established knowledge, this is distinct from DA which makes more emphasis on the process rather than on the product (Anton, 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)

## TEACHER’S ROLE IN DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

A scaffolding process from teachers to support students’ learning is a characteristic of this type of assessment. Tabatabaei and Bakhtiarvand (2014) point out that the role of the teacher in DA



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is to be an examiner with a higher knowledge that interact with the learner. “In DA an examiner not only gives performance contingent feedback but also offers instruction in response to student failure to change or improve the student’s attainment” (p. 9). The same authors mentioned that “the 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.

DA is a rising approach that shows the importance of the interaction between students and teacher, who, as a mediator is always aware of the context that surrounds 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 p. 86, italics in original).

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 is why it is said that abilities are not fixed (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, cited in Birjandi and Ebadi, 2009).

## DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT MODELS

Numerous theorists have developed teaching and learning models to teach students the techniques of creative and productive thinking. 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) state that the key feature of these models is that the mediator actively intervenes to promote and help the students to understand the basic principles of task solution, and proceed in a strategic and self-regulated style. (See Chart 1).

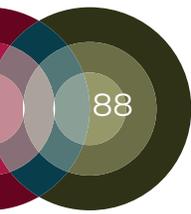
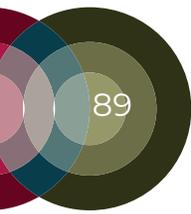
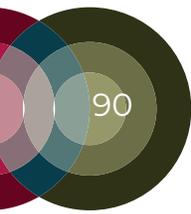


Chart 1

| Model                                    | 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 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"> <li>• A set of clues and hints (fixed &amp; prefabricated) is determined in advance and offered to learners as they move through a test item by item.</li> <li>• 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).</li> </ul> <p>Another relevant feature is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learner’s ZPD is quantitatively computed as the difference between the learners’ performances and scores before and after teacher’s intervention.</li> </ul>                                |
| 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 kind of psychological processes that the learner might be capable of displaying in the next proximal phase of development”. (p.8)   | <p>Tabatabaei and Bakhtiarvand (2014) describe this model with the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It integrates instruction and assessment together</li> <li>• It assesses and promotes the learner’s cognitive development following Vygotsky’s concept of the ZDP.</li> <li>• This qualitative approach to DA emphasizes learning over assessment.</li> <li>• Leading questions, hints, or prompts are not arranged in advance and they emerge from mediated dialogue (Lantolf &amp; Pohner, 2004).</li> <li>• Throughout the interaction, the examiner reacts to the examinee’s needs and constantly re-calibrates his/ her mediation (Ableeva, 2010).</li> </ul> |



| Model  | Definition   | Features  |
|--|--|---|
| Budoff's Learning Potential Measurement Approach | This approach states that the old intelligence assessment is sufficient for understanding the capabilities of many children, however, for many children who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, analysis of assessment results is cooperated by the division between the children's culture and the culture of the school (Budoff & Friedman, p. 1964). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The main feature of this approach is concerning the validity of scores by using standardized measures of intelligence.</li> </ul>  |
| Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)               | According to Feuerstein, Falik, Rand & Feuerstein, (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"> <li>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.</li> <li>The goal of MLE is to assist someone to be a more skilled and independent learner.</li> <li>A mediator does not tell the child what strategy should be used.</li> <li>MLE is what occurs in a child's learning zone. This is based on Vygotsky's notion of the 'Zone of Proximal Development'.</li> </ul> |
| Guthke's Lerntest Approach                       | The Guthke's Lerntest approach "is based on Vygotsky's ideas and represents a myriad of testing procedures" (Tzuriel, 2001, 18).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mediation and test are combined together.</li> </ul>   |



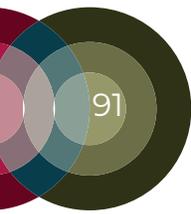
## DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATIONS IN SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

When we talk about DA, it is necessary to highlight that it can be used in conjunction with other forms of assessment, such as standardized testing, observation of performance in learning situations, and data gathered (Haywood & Lidz, 2006). 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 to work in conjunction with both of them.

There are a considerable number of approaches that explain L2 acquisition, but only one specifically 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 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, teachers should find information about both the existing and future abilities of the learners (Vygotsky 1978)

Lantolf and Thorne (2007) claim that the principles of the SCT can also be applied to Second Language Acquisition (SLA). They argue that “SCT is grounded in a perspective that does not separate the individual from the social and in fact argue that the individual emerges from social interaction and as such is always fundamentally a social being.” (p.213).

Following all these principles, it was necessary to propose an approach to break away from a static and unfair form of assessing students to a dynamic one, in order to bring to learners’ 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 from 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. However, the point is not to discriminate against 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).



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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 given 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.

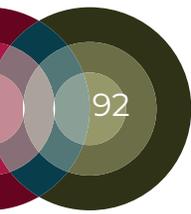
Additionally, Kozulin and Garb (2002) investigated the possibility of the learners' development and implementation of the dynamic assessment in Israel with at-risk students using a pre-test, mediation phase and a post test. They concluded that dynamic assessment provides useful information on learners' learning process and their potential, which is not possible through static assessment. In another study conducted by Sadeghi and Khanahmadi (2011), they proved 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 IS DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT CARRIED OUT?

According to Jafary, Nordin and Mohajeri (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.

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 differ-



ences. 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.

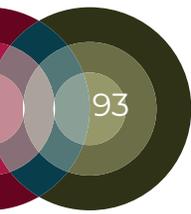
**Focus:** Two main methods have emerged in order to assess potential for change. These are called the 'sandwich' and the 'cake' approaches" by Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002). The 'sandwich' approach, pioneered in large part by Milton Budoff and associates (Budoff & Friedman, 1964; Budoff, 1968; Corman & Budoff, 1973), primarily relies on a pretest-intervention/training-posttest format administered in either an individual or group setting, and is 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 metalinguistics 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, Brown, & Wingenfeld (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 emphasising the weak points of their performance. Consequently, dynamic assessment acts in process and expands the situation through gradual assessment.



When the problem areas 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.

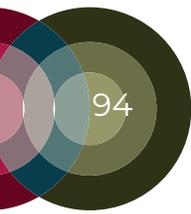
## DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

Writing skill is one of the most frequently evaluated language features in a foreign language learning process, since learners tend to have linguistic problems conveying their messages in a written form. “EFL writing, is a complicated social activity, comprising many abilities, such as choosing suitable topics according to certain audience, generating logical and clear ideas, structuring rich and proper content, demonstrating accurate language expressions, etc” (Xiaoxiao & Yan, 2010, p. 27). The same authors cite Elliot (2000), who affirms that DA is a practical approach to be implemented in the writing process, since it helps learners with their cognitive development. “Elliott 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” (As cited in: Xiaoxiao and Yan (2010) p. 27).

Shrestha and Coffin (2012) 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. Tutor mediation is an important process in DA in second language teaching, but it is worth mentioning that students do not only receive instructions from the teacher, they can also receive instructions from other more capable peers. The analysis of interactions suggested that DA could help to identify and respond to the areas that students need support. 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 and it helps to identify participants’ evolving writing abilities.

In a followed study, Zhang (2010) constructed a dynamic assessment mode in college English writing class. This study suggested that when presenting 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, DA mediation was presented to the learners in the form of either dialogues between teacher and students or mediational tools (e.g., guidelines, reading materials, samples, etc.), 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.

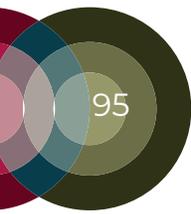
All these studies related to DA in the writing process, showed that it is an excellent approach to solve, improve and enhance the writing process in second language teaching through instructional mediation, taking into account that it facilitates student's cognitive development, and it also help learners to reinforce their writing production through the use of scaffolding techniques.

## DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT AND THE READING COMPREHENSION

DA can be useful in teaching reading comprehension, since it helps to improve this skill in regards to vocabulary acquisition or in text contextualization. When talking about DA in reading comprehension it is important to know that teachers are mediators in this process. However, in reading comprehension activities with the use of DA the idea is not to give awareness, but to be a guide where the children can create their own questions and answer them by themselves. Ajideh and Nourdad (2012) conducted a study about the difference between applying dynamic and non-dynamic assessment of EFL reading comprehension ability and examining its immediate and delayed effect. They 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 their reading comprehension in great measure with the help of this approach.



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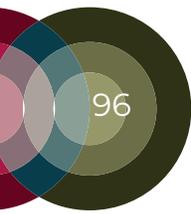
Swanson and Howard (2005) used DA to improve the ability of reading in children with some disability. The idea is to separate or classify children using this approach and put them in different groups where the type of mediation will be different and focusing on students' needs, according to their levels by using testing focused on DA. This recognizes the cognitive performance of good readers and poor readers and puts them in different groups where they help each other in the different activities where DA is an important part of the process.

According to Guthke & Beckmann (2000) "a list of standardized hints was 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)" (As cited in Jarrahzadeh and Tabatabaei, 2014, p.3). These approaches are based on testing or tests where DA is the only focus, so the mediation between the teacher and the students is absolutely necessary in these kinds of activities. To promote reading in EFL learners, it is necessary to focus the test on the specific skill that the student or teacher wants to improve and that is why 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" (As cited in Jarrahzadeh and Tabatabaei, 2014 p.2).

Therefore, static assessment fails to address L2 learners' instructional needs or the responsiveness of a learner to instruction, in other words SA is only quantitative, taking into account that knowledge and the students' ideas cannot be measured by numbers. 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, taking into consideration that the tests and pre-tests are based on DA and teachers' preparation. In words of Jarrahzade and Tabatabaei (2014) "reading comprehension ability is one of the language skills which learners need to have mastery over... Knowing how to assess the process of reading helps the instructor to find out where learners have problems and need support" (p. 2).

DA has been also implemented in technological contexts, focused on the Vygotskian perspective and the reading comprehension process. Shabani (2011) conducted a study focused on 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 students' failure to provide the correct answer. 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.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed showed that DA is effective in the improvement of reading and writing skills 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.

Based on the results, through Dynamic Assessment students can improve their performance on the aforementioned skills (reading and writing). In addition, it allows teachers to find the difficulties and the nature of their apprentices' errors and to categorize and personalize the different mediations and interactions that each student requires.

DA helps teachers to 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 test. Also, traditional assessment ignores an essential factor in communication such as interaction; in 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 a key element in DA.

However, DA has certain limitations, such as the time required to give a custom mediation to each student. For instance, most public and non-bilingual schools in Colombia offer two hours per week for English classes, which is not enough. Another limitation is the requirement of teachers' preparation in terms of second language teaching and assessment method. Teacher training is essential, and it has to be continuous.

The findings of this study conclude that the application of DA in different contexts and with 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. Subsequently, in a Colombian context this method might be effective if it is carried out in bilingual institutions or English teaching centers.

It is important to continue developing this topic in Colombian language education, considering that in most schools, the traditional methods and static forms of assessment predominate. Consequently, further research is needed in order to pilot Dynamic assessment for English teaching in a Colombian context.

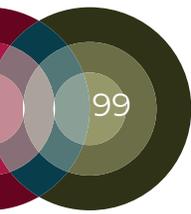
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